POSITION, INCLUSION AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN BELONGING TO MINORITY AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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WOMEN'S AGENDA FOR POSITIVE CHANGES!
Position, Inclusion and Rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Publisher: CURE Foundation and the Foundation for Women’s Empowerment

For the Publisher: Jadranka Miličević

‘This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Aida Malkić and Emina Bošnjak and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union’
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SARAJEVO, 2019
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1. Introduction and Methodology

Although the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Gender Equality Law regulate and offer legal protection from discrimination on grounds that would affect women and girls from minority and marginalized groups (intersection of sex/gender with age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, etc.), as well as affirmative measures that would lead to their full inclusion in the all spheres of public life, the women and girls belonging to minority and marginalized groups are rarely, almost never, included in the decision-making processes, public policies, plans, measures and activities particularly in the areas of education, health and labor market, reforms of labor, social and pension system (women with disabilities, women with children with disabilities, returnees and internally displaced women, long-term unemployed women, survivors of gender-based or wartime violence, single mothers, women in rural areas, Roma women, LBT women and elderly women). They are even more exposed to rights violations and less aware of the mechanisms to claim them. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many researchers confirm that Roma women and girls are the most marginalized and underprivileged group.\(^1\) They are vulnerable both as women and members of the Roma community. In addition to the problems with education and employment, Roma women’s position in their patriarchal communities makes them victims on several levels. Moreover, the access to justice is particularly challenging for women belonging to other vulnerable groups such as: women living in rural areas, elderly women, women with disabilities, lesbian/bisexual/transgender women, trafficked women and migrants, Roma women and single mothers. Women from these groups are often victims of stereotyping, which may lead to bias and insensitivity within the institutions.

Therefore, women’s organizations can play a key role in contribution to socio-economic inclusion of the women and girls belonging to minority and marginalized groups through strengthening their technical as well as service and advocacy capacities in order to provide inclusive and

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tailored approach to the issues faced by this group where they need the assistance and support through training programs and mentoring support. However, in order for these capacities and the services to be designed, relevant data on the situation of rights and the position of women and girls belonging to minority and marginalized groups in BiH needs to be a crucial input in these processes, and their needs must be explored and relevant data collected.

Thus, in accordance with the above mentioned, the aim of the research was to explore the position of women belonging to marginalized and minority groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and produce a report which will serve as a tool for the design of training programs for inclusion and the rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in order to provide mentoring support for the development of an action plan for selected women’s NGOs in ten (10) targeted local communities.

In order to gain all of the necessary data, the research implied the following tasks:

1. desk review of the documentation regarding the position of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in BiH;
2. exploring and finding the exact data on the position and needs of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups related to the respect of the human rights and gender equality;
3. carrying out a needs assessment for technical support to women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in BiH and developing recommendations on key areas for the project support and assistance in active inclusion and women’s rights Agenda.

Target group for this research were women belonging to marginalized and minority groups and those are Roma women, ethnic and national minorities, women with disabilities, women survivors of war torture and GBV, women returnees, LBT and women from rural areas living in 10 local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Bratunac (Konjević Polje), Bosansko Grahovo, Vareš, Zavidovići (Hajdarovići), Konjic, Sarajevo (Novi Grad), Prnjavor, Tuzla, Pale and Bijeljina.
Assessment Methodology

In order to conduct a formative research and work in the direction of strengthening the capacities of women and girls belonging to minority and marginalized groups, and to ensure more favorable and enabling environment for them, it was necessary to collect data and information from different sources and using different methods. This mixed method approach helped to understand the needs of the target audience – in this case women belonging to minority or marginalized groups, understand the factors which influence their behavior based on identified needs and problems, the factors that put them at risk, and determining the best ways to respond to their needs through joint trainings, implementation of comparable activities and exchange of good practice.

Thus, the methodology encompassed the following steps:

1. Desk Research
   1.1. Comprehensive desk research covers the legal analysis, key policies, reports and strategies published by selected stakeholders regarding women’s rights and socio-economical position of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups. Desk research has helped to shape the context in which women belonging to minority and marginalized groups are trying to meet their needs and possible constraints they face - political, environmental, social, cultural, economic or institutional. The desk research also included an identification of resources available, existing programs and interventions and suitable models or mechanisms for inclusion and cooperation between actors and stakeholders in the field of human rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups, and their socio-economic empowerment.

2. Primary Research

In this case, aside from desk research, and to gain a proper insight into the characteristics, experiences and needs of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in 10 municipalities, a key step was to conduct a survey on a sample of 10 women organizations working in selected municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, primary research helped addressing the gaps in the knowledge on the position and needs
of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups related to the respect of human rights and gender equality.

2.1. Multiple questionnaires were developed and disseminated to women’s organizations, municipal administration, social work centres, health institution and employment bureaus working in 10 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 50 in total.

a) considering that this target group is hard to reach due to different contextual factors, the first part of the questionnaire was designed to capture the situation revolving women belonging to minority and marginalized groups from the perspective of these organizations and the data they have collected while working with these women as well as their socio-economic needs related to different areas such as access to healthcare (mental and physical), employment (sustainable income), social services, institutions, education, safe spaces, public transportation, training opportunities if they have been identified, etc.

List of women’s organizations working in selected municipalities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>City/Municipality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Jadar</td>
<td>Bratunac (Konjević Polje)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Grahovo</td>
<td>Bosansko Grahovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Zvjezdangrad</td>
<td>Vareš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Pašinke</td>
<td>Zavidovići (Hajdarovići)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Žena za ženu</td>
<td>Konjic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Group Posebne mame</td>
<td>Sarajevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Romaška djevojka – Romani Ćej</td>
<td>Prnjavor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association HO Horizonti</td>
<td>Tuzla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Viktorija Pale</td>
<td>Pale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Association Romkinje</td>
<td>Bijeljina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) the other questionnaires were designed specifically to cover the work of
different institutions concerned, to assess the situation revolving around the human rights situation of women and what are different activities (if any) intended for women belonging to minority and marginalized groups. The institutions involved were targeted municipalities, social work services, employment bureaus, and health institutions.

Out of the total number of questionnaires that we distributed (50) during March 2019, answers were provided by all 10 women’s NGOs working in 10 targeted local communities, 7 municipalities (Bosansko Grahovo, Vareš, Zavidovići, Novi Grad (Sarajevo), Tuzla, Pale and Bijeljina), all 10 social work centres from the targeted municipalities, 6 healthcare institutions (Zavidovići, Konjic, Novi Grad (Sarajevo), Prnjavor, Pale and Bijeljina) and 3 employment bureaus (Bosansko Grahovo, Konjic and Tuzla). The response rate was 72%, so the analysis was based on a sample of 36 questionnaires.

This approach with triangulation of data has helped us identify gaps, develop and strengthen the evidence-based recommendations on key areas for the project support and assistance and serves as a focal input and a tool for the design of training programs for inclusion and the rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in order to provide mentoring support for action plan development for selected women’s NGOs.
2. Legal Regulations and Initiatives at the State, Entity and Cantonal level

The Dayton Peace Agreement recognizes the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender and it stipulates direct application of the European Convention on Human Rights and the CEDAW Convention. Unfortunately, despite the civil society initiatives, the Constitution still does not recognize gender equality as a basic constitutional value in Bosnia and Herzegovina. BiH is one of the first countries in the Western Balkans to have passed the Gender Equality Law (ZoRS). The Law guarantees gender equality and equality of opportunity in all spheres of life. The Gender Equality Law of BiH: a) prohibits discrimination (direct and indirect) and recognizes specific forms of discrimination (harassment, sexual harassment, incitement of discrimination); b) prohibits gender-based violence (including domestic violence); c) guarantees equal opportunity in education, employment and work, access to social care and healthcare, sport, culture, the media and other spheres of life. The Law sets solid foundations for gender equality, but its practical application is limited, because most laws have not been harmonized with it, and the ones which have been, have mostly not been implemented, which is demonstrated by the low number of women on executive boards of institutions at all levels of government. Although ZoRS stipulates the possibility of filing discrimination complaints to the institutional mechanisms for gender equality (ARS BiH, GC RS and FBiH), the number of complaints is consistently very low and has not surpassed 10 during the year. If this is compared to the similar statistics in other countries of the Western Balkans, it can be concluded that the number of complaints received does not reflect the reality. Gender discrimination and sexual harassment are also prohibited by the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (ZZD), which was adopted in 2009.

Although ZoRS prohibits discrimination, it does not specify or define the marginalized groups of women or how the guarantee of equal opportunities shall be applied to women who belong to minorities or other underprivileged groups. On the other hand, the legal and policy framework that tackles the rights of minorities, does not take into account
gender equality, and regards women and men belonging to a minority or a certain underprivileged social group as having the same starting points, opportunities, and access to rights and services (Roma women and women with disabilities). Exception is made when it comes to the LBT women, who have been included in public policies for gender equality, but through measures that tackle LGBTI people in general, thus involving GBT men as well. The policies concerning rural women have been implemented in the Republic of Srpska. \(^2\) For women who have survived gender-based violence and violence in the war, there are special laws and provisions that nominally protect these marginalized women, but there is still a problem of their enforceability.

**Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality**

The Gender Equality Law of BiH prescribes institutional mechanisms for gender equality. The key institutional mechanisms are the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARS BiH) at the state level and the Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH and the Centre for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Srpska at the entity level. The implementation of the Gender Action Plan that stems from ZoRS is completely contingent on the Financial Mechanism for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan (FIGAP), a mechanism that depends in its entirety on the support of international development agencies. On the other hand, gender equality is still not sufficiently included in the work and policies of the other institutions and therefore there is still a need to work towards gender mainstreaming, as well as capacity building in the existing institutional mechanisms for gender equality. 2018 was another year in which no permanent gender equality bodies have been established at the level of cantonal government. Taking into consideration the fact that cantons are the ones in charge of some of the vital questions like employment, education and healthcare, it is particularly disconcerting that there are no contact persons and no bodies in charge of gathering and analyzing data, proposing measures and supervising their implementation with the aim of improving the lives of women and men. It is apparent that the Gender Centre of the Federation

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of BiH cannot address all of these issues due to their limited capacity, and so a more systematic solution at cantonal level is needed.

The Gender Centre of the Republic of Srpska, the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, and the Gender Centre of FBiH have conducted campaigns and research projects, organized trainings, published studies and developed international and regional cooperation. The Republic of Srpska adopted its Annual Operational Plan for the Implementation of GAP for the period 2013-2017 in December 2015, and continued to adopt it in the coming years. However, in the period before that, the Government of the Republic of Srpska implemented the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Position of Women in Rural Areas until 2015. The goals set in the Action Plan were the improvement of the economic status of women in rural areas, improvement in living conditions, access to public services, empowerment of women’s social status and raising awareness of women’s role, significance and contribution to society. After the expiration, the Action Plan has not been renewed.

**Parliamentary Working Bodies on Gender Equality**

The level of activities of parliamentary bodies for gender equality and equal opportunities, established in parliaments at the state, entity and cantonal levels, vary. Some of them maintain contact with the civil society organizations (the Women’s Network BiH, the Foundation CURE, Žene Ženama and Sarajevo Open Centre, among others) and make specific proposals for improvement of the position of women and men in our society. For an example, most Cantonal Assembly Gender Equality Commissions rarely meet (on average once a year), while the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH did not meet its quorum three times in a row and so could not reach decisions in the second half of 2015.

Since then, the Commission held 10 sessions, where they discussed political participation of women, bio-medically assisted reproduction in line with the competence of the state level.³ The Gender Equality Commission of the House of Peoples of the Parliament of FBiH in

³ [https://www.parlament.ba/committee/read/21?mandateId=8](https://www.parlament.ba/committee/read/21?mandateId=8)
mandate 2014-2018 was only established at the end of September 2015, almost one year after the 2014 General Elections. Since then, the Commission had 11 meetings discussing, among other things, the use of gender-sensitive language in official parliament documents, maternity and child allowances, amendments to the Criminal Code of FBiH in order to align it with the Istanbul Convention, alimentary fund (single mothers), gender sensitive budgeting, reproductive health of women and support to marginalized women - women with disability and mothers of children with disabilities.  

Public Policies for Gender Equality

The Council of Ministers has adopted a new Gender Action Plan (GAP BiH) for 2018-2022 in 2018. This is the third document that contains strategic goals, programs and measures for gender equality in all areas of public and social life. The GAP contains measures that will be implemented to achieve three strategic goals focused on development, implementation and monitoring the programs and measures for the improvement of gender equality in the state institutions by priority areas: development and strengthening of the system, mechanisms and instruments for achieving gender equality; establishment and strengthening of partnerships regionally and internationally; combating gender-based violence, including domestic violence and trafficking of women and girls; labor, employment and access to economic resources; public life and decision-making.

Obligations of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and responsibilities of ministries and institutions in each of the priority areas are clearly defined. The Gender Action Plan addresses the key issues faced by women and men in BiH and it presents a great example of a public policy document which the state can use to advance gender equality in the society. As in the previous years, the new GAP is envisioned to be implemented through Operational plans.

Due to the delays in appointing the members to the Executive Board of GAP BIH, which was not established until 2015, there were no

Operational Plans for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan in the period 2013-2015, which would further elaborate the measures aimed at improving the position of women and gender equality. The Republic of Srpska first adopted its Annual Operational Plan (in December 2015), and then in January 2017, while the federal and state plans were expected at the beginning of 2016. Without operational plans, it is virtually impossible to plan specific measures and budget commitments and thus work on issues of improving women’s rights and gender equality. Rights of Roma women, women in rural areas and women with disabilities have to be better addressed in institutional mechanisms’ future work, as in the previous Gender Action Plan, and accompanying Operational Plans they haven’t been addressed properly. So, the new operative plans for the implementation of the GAP are an opportunity in this sense. In addition to the Gender Action Plan, the ARS BiH, GC FBiH and GC RS have the obligation to conduct other important public policies (UN Resolution 1325, public policy related to the fight against violence, advancing the position of women in rural areas, gender-responsive budgeting), as well as an obligation to introduce a gender perspective into sectoral strategies.

At local level (municipalities and cities) significant progress in terms of gender equality has not been achieved. Although a substantial number of municipalities and cities have the Local Gender Action Plans (LGAP) and 47 plans were drafted and adopted in FBiH and 22 in the Republic of Srpska in the period of 2012-2015, the situation on the ground is totally different. The research carried in 2015, covering more than 50% of municipalities and cities of BiH shows that there is almost no municipality/city that understands its jurisdiction, and accordingly does not take the measures necessary to improve gender equality. There is no public debate, no research is carried out, priorities of local communities are not prioritized, nor gender equality and the specific needs of women, especially marginalized women are taken into account during planning and execution of programs and budgets.

6 Local Policies for Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Report on Local Policies in Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to the Establishment of Gender Equality in Local Communities,(Lokalne politika za ravnopravnost spolova u Bosni i Hercegovini, Izvještaj o lokalnim politikama u općinama i gradovima na području Bosne i Hercegovine u odnosu na uspostavu ravnopravnosti spolova u lokalnim zajednicama), http://fondacijacure.org/files/Lokalne%20politi%20
3. Legal Regulation and Initiative at Municipality Level

Over the past few years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced several key social and political changes. The aspiration to join the European Union and the comprehensive reforms of the system and social relations have led to the promotion of gender equality policies and equal opportunities, and especially to the establishment of the institutions at all levels of government to successfully implement these policies. Today in BiH, there are numerous institutional mechanisms for gender equality, both in legislative and executive power at all levels, from the state to the local level.

However, the lower the level of government is, the control over the local bodies for gender equality is weaker, and only in rare cases for units of local self-government can be concluded that they are genuinely working on solving the problem of gender inequality and promoting the status of women in political, economic and social life. In addition to this, from the higher to the lower level of government, we encounter different forms of gender equality bodies established by the statute of the municipality/city or the rulebooks, in different forms of commissions, council’s committees or boards, as permanent or temporary bodies of local assemblies/councils of municipalities and cities, or there is a person in charge of gender equality in the municipality. Even though there are a lot of institutional mechanisms for gender equality at the local level, a very small number is active in the implementation of legal and strategic acts which regulate this issue, as indicated by the fact that the commissions rarely convene, that citizens do not use their right to appeal, as well as that there is no regular reporting to higher levels of authority for this area.

There is no willingness or readiness at the local level to work seriously on gender equality even though the ZoRS clearly states that disrespecting this Law entails penal consequences. Nevertheless, just over 17% of municipalities and cities in BiH respect the provisions of the ZoRs when appointing, while the largest number of municipalities and cities in BiH do not observe this Law by implementing it in the wrong way or by not
implementing it at all. Related to this, many municipalities and cities (54.3%) of BiH have no strategies/plans/programs for gender equality at the level of their local community which largely explains the current negative situation in local communities when it comes to gender equality.\textsuperscript{7}

At present, there are just a few municipalities in BiH which, besides the commission/board/task force for gender equality, have the corresponding mechanism in the executive authority, or actually in the office of the municipality or the city mayor.\textsuperscript{8} Also, many members of commissions/boards/bodies for gender equality lack knowledge about the basics of gender equality, so some of them do not know enough about the ZoRS and the way it is related to the local government and the work of commissions/boards or bodies for gender equality. Wrong assumptions about the basic concepts of gender equality, mechanisms for equality and who are marginalized women present a widespread problem in BiH. However, since the issue of gender equality at the local level is not under the exclusive jurisdiction of the local mechanisms for gender equality and the municipalities themselves, but also under entity gender centres, these latter ones must take their supervisory role seriously and help the local bodies in creating the procedures which could raise the level of knowledge about the standards in the field of gender equality among the commission members as well as the level of work efficiency of the gender equality commissions.

**Situation in 10 Selected Municipalities**

An analysis of the position and needs of women belonging to marginalized and minority groups living in ten (10) selected municipalities where ten (10) women’s associations/groups are engaged has been conducted. Each of these organizations focuses on the specific needs of users of their services so that institutional support mechanisms were analyzed to assess how much they respond to the real needs of marginalized and minority women. The data collection was navigated towards finding out the general position of women in the selected municipalities, their access to services and institutional support in the areas of employment,

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
social protection and healthcare, and the existing infrastructure possibly hindering the access to the services.

Situation revolving around each of the ten municipalities is elaborated below.

### 3.1 Bratunac Municipality

The Municipality of Bratunac is located in the eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the Republic of Srpska. According to the most recent data (the 2013 Census), there were 20,340 inhabitants residing in the municipality, of whom 10,091 were men and 10,249 were women. Out of the total number of women, 50.9% of them do not have any or have only primary education. As for the economic activity, 4,977 women are inactive due to different reasons, either being retired (1,524), doing housework (2,104), being incapable to work (175) and for other reasons. According to the data from 2016, there were 1,957 women who were registered at the Employment Bureau.

**Konjević Polje** is a local returnee community in the Municipality of Bratunac and unfavorable economic situation in the municipality is also reflected in this local community, particularly on women’s position. In the area of the local community Konjević Polje there is a large number of women who are very poor and most of them are single mothers. There is an increase in the number of women leaving the community and emigrating to other countries. Of those who stayed, many of them are living on the verge of poverty, have financial difficulties and debts or cannot fund education for their children. They do not have a possibility to find permanent employment due to different reasons such as uncompetitiveness on the market due to the level of education, work experience and similar, then discrimination (in terms of years, appearance, marital and family status). They also encounter difficulties in accessing the information, in vocational changes due to the lack of professional

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10 Information provided by a representative of the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019
11 Ibid.
12 Information provided by a representative of the Center for Social Work Bratunac, 15.03.2019
trainings, and transporting to different locations (administrative centres) due to poor infrastructure. Those women who try to survive by dealing with agricultural work often face different obstacles. There is no day-care for children to help women when they work in the field. Also, they are not provided with the opportunity to promote and sell their products.

Important issue that arose due to difficult socio-economic position is the underage marriage. Many girls end up getting married, and the number has increased over time, instead of pursuing education and later possible employment that would enable them decent life.

Access to healthcare services to women living in Konjević Polje is troublesome. The Health Centre in Bratunac is the only public health institution in primary health care in the Municipality, numbering seven ambulances dislocated to the settlements including Konjević Polje. The nearest hospital is located in Zvornik, at a distance of 40 km. Lack of personnel, as well as space and medical equipment is evident, and there is a significant need for financial investment in the modernization and expansion. All of this indicates that healthcare services are generally lacking, and particularly when it comes to women. As stated by Jadar association, women in their region do not have health check-ups and do not know how to take advantage of health services and this is also because of the fact that a large number of women are not at all able to use health services in the RS because they were registered in the FBIH. This is due to the fact that returnee women often decide to keep the place of residence in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order not to lose appertaining social benefits which would be canceled in cases when women changes the place of residence. Another factor contributing to this position is a general lack of trust returnee women have towards the authorities and the politics that the institutions have towards the returnees. Also, there is no psychosocial assistance, which is of particular importance since these are the women who all have suffered through war.

13 Information provided by a representative from the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Information provided by a representative of the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019
18 Ibid.
Enabling exercise of the right to social protection for all in needs is particularly challenging. The Municipality of Bratunac is characterized by significant underdevelopment with a very small number of employed members of the community, resulting in the greater needs for providing this protection. The fact that there is a daily increase in number of citizens living on the lower limit of social tolerance gives for a result that the Centre for Social Work cannot meet all requests for assistance. The Centre for Social Work employs a total of 8 workers, of which only one is a social worker. It is particularly difficult for women living in Bratunac, and Konjević Polje specifically. Namely, employee of the Centre said that majority of women addressing them because of the poor economic situation they are in. In addition, there are health problems that in combination with the previous one result in the fact that many women are entitled to a financial support for the help and care of another person (15% more women than men). Another important issue is the fact that very few women have the possibility and do not know how to take advantage of social protection. Those living in the rural areas are less informed, less able to move and it is harder for them to reach the information. The same case is with elderly women. The institution strives to overcome these difficulties through greater presence on the ground. There is also a specific problem for the returnee women living in Konjević Polje – many of them are not at all able to use social protection in the RS because they are registered in the FBIH.

Infrastructural problems additionally complicate already complicated and inadequate access to services. Most of the surrounding villages are 5 to 25 kilometers away from Konjević Polje, and there is an extra distance from the other local communities Bratunac, Milići, and Zvornik. There are no public ways of transportation (bus lines) connecting women with other local communities and this also prevents them to access institutions and request services they are entitled to.

20 Information provided by a representative from the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019
21 Information provided by a representative from the Center for social work Bratunac, 15.03.2019.
22 Information provided by a representative from the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019
23 Ibid.
The needs of women from the Konjević Polje (and Bratunac) are inadequately addressed in the policies of municipal administration. In the analysis of local action plans conducted in 2015, Bratunac Municipality was reported to be among the municipalities that have a Gender Action Plan, however, there are no recent data to confirm that a new Gender Action Plan is currently in place. In addition, it was not possible to obtain official data on the existence of the Bratunac Municipality’s Gender Equality Commission.

Recently, the Strategy has been developed by the Municipality, where budget line for short-term financial assistance to women victims of sexual violence during the war was introduced. However, all other categories are not represented and local authorities sometimes lack in understanding of needs of other categories of marginalized women. There is only an ongoing program for women victims of sexual violence during the war. There have been several strategies and programs tackling the needs of marginalized women implemented before, but the results are not visible. It would be of the utmost importance that all similar documents can be found in one place and be accessible to public in order for all organizations to have insight into the activities of the authorities in this regard. Generally, women organizations do not have the same treatment when it comes to working with the Municipality in developing different project proposals – Jadar is the only working Bosniak women association and they are generally not consulted when developing the programs. On several occasions, they were involved in part of drafting different documents for improvement of the status of women in the Municipality, but they are left without any feedback. However, they find the cooperation with the municipal authorities solid but they do state that there is a room for improvement and enhancing the cooperation – their suggestion is to get an annual budget line that would cover the costs of electricity, Internet and maintenance of the premises of the organization.

There have been some initiatives regarding the improvement of the position of marginalized women in this area. Local organization had the opportunity to collaborate with neighboring associations on projects related to economic empowerment of women and providing psychosocial support.
support to women in Bratunac Municipality. They collaborated with the Association “Maja” Kravica, Women Association “Priroda”, the Association “Sara” Srebrenica, the OSCE Office Srebrenica - Bratunac, the Foundation for the Empowerment of Women Sarajevo and CURE Foundation on women’s economic empowerment projects, women’s village growth programs, education projects - sewing courses, hairdressing courses, computer literacy courses.

**Conclusion/needs identified**

All of the above mentioned implies that the greatest need of marginalized women in Bratunac Municipality is their economic empowerment and improvement of access to different services. Past experience shows that all women who have managed to solve the employment issue have been able to overcome other difficulties faced by women in this Municipality.28

Thus, it is necessary to create activities/programs/projects to meet these needs:

a) programs for economic empowerment of marginalized women need to be introduced more often – making them available for women living in different parts of the Municipality. These programs need to be a joint activity between local women’s associations, municipal authorities and employment bureau.

b) cooperation between the Municipality and women’s association needs to be improved in order for both sides to have up-to-date information regarding the activities that are meant for improvement of the position of marginalized women. Another solution for the Municipality would be to ease the access to relevant information and documents by timely releasing them on their official website.

c) if and when possible, municipal authorities should include additional budget line to help the work of women’s association by covering the costs of electricity, Internet and maintenance of the premises of the organization.

d) it is necessary to establish inter-entity cooperation in order to resolve issues related to access to healthcare and social assistance. Parallel to this, and to overcome the existing situation on the ground, it is necessary to create programs/projects that would provide marginalized women

28 Information provided by a representative of the WO Jadar, 14.03.2019.
with different healthcare services (for example annual health check-ups).
e) The Municipality needs to solve infrastructure problems; it is necessary
to make a proposal for solving infrastructural problems in cooperation
with all local communities.

3.2. Bosansko Grahovo Municipality

Bosansko Grahovo is a municipality located in Canton 10 of the Federation
of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is situated in the western part of Bosnia
and Herzegovina near the border with Croatia. Its area covers 780 km²,
and according to the 2013 Census its population is 2,449, of whom 1,162
(47, 45%) were women.29

The access to primary healthcare is at a very low level, and specialized
healthcare is practically non-existent. The local community health
centre is closed, and has been institutionally incorporated to the Health
Centre Drvar. Local patients have access only to the local outpatient’s
department. General practitioner visits local community patients three
times a week for two hours.30 There is no medical staff available for
emergency situations, and nurses work only until 2pm. The Women’s
Association Grahovo has managed to renovate and bring the necessary
equipment for the ob-gyn medical office, as well as to provide for the
gynecologist to perform the pelvic ultrasound and Papanicolau test
at least once per year. Although they have requested that the relevant
Ministry of Health takes over these activities and costs, it didn’t happen
so far.31

The quality of infrastructure plays an important role, as women
from Bosansko Grahovo have to travel in order to have access to
different services and institutions. Because of the lack of regular
bus lines, and lack of funds to cover travel costs, women are not in a
position to travel for the needed medical examinations to Livno which
is 75 km away.32 Children go to elementary school in Grahovo, while
schools for secondary education have never been reconstructed since the

30  Information provided by a representative of the Women’s Association Grahovo, 13.3.2019
31  Ibid.
32  Ibid.
war. Children who have reached the age for secondary education have to attend schools in other municipalities (mostly Drvar because it’s closest), traveling more than 35 km in one direction.

**Municipality administration is focused on providing services related to socio-economic position and health status of marginalized women.** However, apart from the Women’s Association Grahovo working with and for women, there are no special programs and institutions that take into account the needs of marginalized women. Women can hardly get employment and securing their basic livelihood through growing fruit and vegetables and cattle breeding. Through the Association’s program for economic empowerment, rural women reach out for help with starting their own businesses (bee-keeping, poultry and sheep farming, food production - jams and juices, sweets, and baking), establishing contact with potential buyers, marketing, product distribution, computer literacy, and education in the area of cattle breeding and vegetable and fruit production. Many women seek seasonal jobs in neighboring Croatia or other countries of the Western Europe. Many children, with proportionally more girls, do not finish their secondary education, and they get married early, even while they’re underage. The Employment Bureau consults Women’s Association Grahovo and designs the projects and programs for employment and self-employment of women jointly with the Employment Bureau of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Cantonal Bureau. They cooperated with the Association on two projects “Reducing Unemployment of Women and Poverty through Economic Empowerment of Women Victims of Domestic Violence” and “Day care Centre Gnijezdo in Bosansko Grahovo”. They believe that projects of employment and self-employment are successful, although they point to the lack of sufficient funds for similar and other projects, which limits their work to smaller groups.

**Bosansko Grahovo Municipality is the only local unit in the Canton that doesn’t have its Centre for Social Services, and local women do not have access to professional services of pedagogues and social workers**, which is especially relevant in the light of the fact that the domestic violence is on the rise. The Deputy Mayor is the only person

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33 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality Bosansko Grahovo, 15.3.2019
34 Information provided by a representative of the Employment Bureau Bosansko Grahovo, 13.3.2019
35 Ibid.
36 Information provided by a representative of the Women’s Association Grahovo, 13.3.2019
delegated by the Municipality administration to work on issues related to social services, which falls under ten of his competencies.\textsuperscript{37} There is a \textbf{multi-sectoral team for combating domestic violence} coordinated by the Women’s Association Grahovo but the participation of other institutions in the team is very marginal.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Single mothers and women with disabilities} without any income for livelihood (or with income of less than 250 BAM) receive monetary social support. However, these funds are far from enough to cover the costs for food, sanitary and hygienic material, clothes for babies and small children, textbooks for schools and school material, as well as necessary firewood (fuel for heating) and material for the reconstruction of houses. Since there is no day care for children, women bring their children to the Association’s day care centre that currently accommodates up to 40 kids aged 6-16 from families facing a myriad of problems (low socio-economic status, violence, etc.).\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Conclusions/needs identified}

The most affected marginalized women in this local community are the women returnees and refugees as well as single mothers. Another group that was identified were children coming from families with multiple problems. The priority areas for action are in the areas of access to healthcare, road infrastructure and employment.

Thus, it is necessary to create activities/programs/projects to meet these needs:

a) to enable better access to healthcare (primary and specialized) for women, especially the women returnees, refugees and single mothers;

b) to strengthen the (self)employment programs and trainings to provide local marginalized women (women returnees, refugees and single mothers) with relevant knowledge and tools around entrepreneurship, marketing, and product distribution in the area of cattle breeding and agriculture;

c) to invest into infrastructure that would enable easier access to social and health protection for marginalized women, as well as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Information provided by a representative of the Municipality Bosansko Grahovo, 15.3.2019
\item \textsuperscript{38} Information provided by a representative of the Women’s Association Grahovo, 13.3.2019
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
easier access to education for their children;

d) to collect the relevant data on the position of marginalized women in the local community, especially the women returnees, refugees and single mothers;

e) to improve the communication and involvement between the targeted group and the municipal administration.

3.3. Vareš Municipality

Vareš Municipality is located in the Zenica-Doboj Canton and belongs to a group of highly underdeveloped municipalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the 2013 Census, Vareš Municipality has 8,892 inhabitants and data on the gender structure of the population of the Municipality show that there are more women than men (51% versus 49%).\(^{40}\) The average number of employees in 2017 was 1,314.\(^{41}\)

A large number of local communities in the area of Vareš Municipality are located 18-24 kilometers away from the city centre. Several local communities are inhabited completely by the returnee population. There are examples of local communities where there is a smaller number of returnees compared to pre-war population, what also affects the position of women in these local communities, bearing in mind that there are no regular bus lines and communication is hampered.\(^ {42}\)

The biggest problems faced by women living in this area are socio-economic issues, namely the unemployment and inability to place the products on the market. Poor socio-economic situation in Vareš and, by that, lack of job positions in general, makes it even more difficult for women to find employment. Existing laws, policies and activities at the local level only correspond to paper, but in reality it is quite different; the priority of women’s employment is played solely by political or party

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42 Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Vareš, 13.03.2019
affiliation - with the greatest influence being nepotism i.e. employment on the basis of the family relations.\textsuperscript{43} This poor position has also spilled over in the education. Thus, the most common problems in accessing education are lack of funding for education, narrow choice of secondary education for girls and women, and a large distance person has to cross to reach educational institutions.\textsuperscript{44}

**In approaching healthcare, the biggest problem is a lack of rural ambulances and a great distance to reach the facilities.** Also, the facility itself is not adequately equipped with the medical equipment and there are no specialized doctors – thus, women are forced to travel to Zenica to get proper medical care.\textsuperscript{45} In addition, many women have no health insurance. In the past couple of months, more women have been contacting Zvjezdangrad Association to report the abuse of the position of a doctor (sexual harassment).\textsuperscript{46}

**In approaching the social protection system, the most common problem is poor informing, providing inadequate assistance by the institutions and their lack of understanding of one’s situation.** Housing care is pointed out as one of the major problem in the Municipality as well.\textsuperscript{47}

**The Centre for Social Work does not have any special program for marginalized women.**\textsuperscript{48} All services are provided to beneficiaries in accordance with individual needs and assessment. As stated, because of everyday migration, there may be individual cases of women belonging to marginalized groups and minorities who do not know about the work of the institution. However, the institution actively works with representatives of the local communities, cooperates with other institutions, conducts regular field visits and works to inform the public information through the local radio and other media.

\textsuperscript{43} Information provided by a representative of the WO Zvjezdangrad, 23.03.2019
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Information provided by a representative of the Cente for Social Work Vareš, 13.03.2019
When it comes to cooperation with other institutions, they have a good cooperation in communicating when it comes to detecting individual cases as well as providing certain forms of social protection.49

The guidelines on gender equality were established in the acts/regulations adopted by the Municipal Mayor and the Municipal Council of Vareš, as the authorities in the local community. The permanent working body of the Municipal Council was established with the competencies determined in the Rules of Procedure of the Municipal Council – it is the Commission for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Drafts, Proposals and Gender Equality. Also, out of the total number of the Municipality employees in Vareš, 50% were women. Similar ratio can be found in public institutions and public companies, founded by the Municipality.50

The Municipality does not have separate programs, plans or strategies for gender equality, but in all documents adopted at the municipal level obligations have been established to take care of the representation of women and their active involvement in the work of the administrative bodies and management bodies in public institutions and public companies and in the bodies of the Municipal Council.51 However, there is no enough available data to support this claim. Local women’s association does not have any relevant information when it comes to designing projects involving marginalized women because these kinds of information in municipal structures are very unavailable - municipal authorities are reluctant to share this information with the public.52

Where planning the Budget breakdown, the municipal authorities do not consult the women’s organization to take into account the needs of marginalized women.53 This was also confirmed by the Zvjezdangrad Association. They have never been consulted by the municipal government structures or other institutions in any design of project plans or similar.54

49 Ibid.
50 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality of Vareš, 15.03.2019
51 Ibid.
52 Information provided by a representative of the WO Zvjezdangrad, 13.03.2019
53 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality of Vareš, 15.03.2019
54 Information provided by a representative of the WO Zvjezdangrad, 13.03.2019
However, as stated, the Municipality in designing projects at the local community level through the strategies (the Youth Policy Development Strategy, the Social Policy Strategy, the Tourism, Culture and Sport Development Strategy, and the Agriculture Development Strategy) provides the opportunity for women and men to apply for budget funds for the implementation of their projects – in the amount defined by the Municipal Mayor and the competent service. Funds for associations, clubs, education, etc. were also planned in the municipal Budget.55

Very few projects have been implemented to improve the position of women in this Municipality, and the results are questionable when it comes to marginalized women.56 Mainly, women have managed, on their own initiative and through associations, to gain public attention and to achieve financial gain through the organization of bazaars. The Municipality uses this and relies heavily on women’s organizations to fill the gaps when it comes to organization of the activities for the women in the community.

Conclusion/needs identified
The greatest needs identified in this community are economic empowerment, education (enabling retraining) and better access to healthcare. Thus, it is necessary to conduct programs and activities to meet these needs:

a) programs for economic empowerment of marginalized women need to be introduced more often (workshops, seminars, etc.) – making them available for women living in different parts of the municipality. These programs need to be a joint activity between local women’s associations, municipal authorities and employment bureau;
b) considering that Zvjezdangrad Association is a young association registered two years ago, they do not have much information regarding the existing laws, policies, and activities in the Municipality regarding the improvement of the position of marginalized women, so it is necessary to organize workshops and meetings with the Municipality to exchange information and identify space for cooperation;
c) The Municipality needs to solve infrastructure problems; it is necessary

55 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality of Vareš, 15.03.2019
56 Information provided by a representative of the WO Zvjezdangrad, 13.03.2019
to make a proposal for solving infrastructure problems in cooperation with all local communities and establish bus lines for all inhabitants in this local community.

3.4. Zavidovići (Hajdarovići)

Zavidovići is a town and municipality located in Zenica-Doboj Canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is situated in the central Bosnia and Herzegovina, located between Doboj and Zenica on the confluence of rivers Bosna, Krivaja and Gostović. As of 2013, it has a population of 35,988 inhabitants, of whom 18,105 (50.31%) were women.\(^{57}\) It covers the area of 590.3 km\(^2\).

In terms of infrastructure, the marginalized women face problems with water supply system during the summer months because of the reduction of regular water use that can last up to 2 months, as well as problems with other communal utilities related to garbage collection.\(^{58}\)

Employment is a priority need for marginalized women, as well as having their own income available for cases of serious illness or inability to work.\(^{59}\) Marginalized women that reach out the local Centre for Social Work claiming the financial support are women with medical issues and illness, women with low level of education and low socio-economic status. However, the local Centre for Social Work does not have specialized programs/activities that take into account the needs and problems of marginalized women in their community. Their services and information about the work and activities of the institution are not available to all categories of marginalized women in the Municipality.\(^{60}\) This is also reflected in the perspective of the organization representing one of the marginalized groups in the local community. Although local organization Pašinke\(^{61}\) does not have systematic data available on the rights and services available to marginalized

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58 Information provided by a representative of the organization Pašinke, 23.3.2019
59 Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Zavidovići, 15.3.2019
60 Ibid.
61 Organization Pašinke gathers members aged 40-60, with services offered in the areas of health and education, as well as economic empowerment through projects related to agriculture.
women through the local Centre for Social Work, they feel that there is more that they can get, but are not fully informed about their rights, and their perception is that the Centre shows support only in extreme cases.62 The lack of qualifications for jobs offered on the local labor market as well as nepotism leaves marginalized women on the sidelines and with minimal employment opportunities.

The situation in health protection and services is comparable to the situation in the area of social protection and services. Women may more or less rely only on the non-governmental organizations focused on women that suffer from certain types of diseases to offer free, targeted check-ups.63 When it comes to categories of marginalized women that the Health Centre caters to, they do not have segregated data or reports that would specifically show the categories of marginalized women or sex/gender of the patients, although their perception is that they offer services to all marginalized women under equal treatment and at the level of access other patients are entitled to. They do not have specialized programs/activities that take into account the needs of marginalized women as they are of a position that such issues do not fall under their competency.64

There are no local documents or legal regulations that support women, especially rural women, and there are no programs for the improvement of the position of women in the community, again, especially for rural women.65 The municipal administration rarely takes into account the needs and problems of marginalized women when designing and developing projects/programs/activities. Even if they do, marginalized women do not feel the effects of such actions in their everyday lives. So far, marginalized women were not consulted nor did they have the opportunity to collaborate with the municipal administration on joint projects/programs/activities aimed at improving the situation of (marginalized) women. Regarding the projects of empowerment and education on women’s rights and gender equality, and research on the level of women’s involvement in the work of the local community, they mainly rely on other organizations, primarily CURE Foundation and the Foundation for the Economic Empowerment.

62 Information provided by a representative of the organization Pašinke, 23.3.2019
63 Ibid.
64 Information provided by a representative of the Health Centre Zavidovići, 15.3.2019
65 Ibid.
of Women. On the other hand, the municipal administration does use **gender sensitive budgeting in the areas of culture and sports** with affirmative measures (extra points) for associations for sports and culture whose members are women. In 2016, with the help of the OSCE Mission in BiH, they have created an analysis of situation in sports, culture and non-governmental sector from the standpoint of gender sensitive budgeting. The municipal administration claims that they, when developing other projects/programs/activities, take into account the problems and needs of marginalized women, through setting the criteria for grants to sports, cultural and other associations, as defined by the development strategies of the Municipality Zavidovići. They claim that they have consulted the women’s organizations (Krivaja-Iskra and Sigurno mjesto) working for marginalized women in development of different public documents, activities and projects through their participation in working groups and committees, but as well as the targeted local organizations, they see the room for improvement.

**Conclusion/needs identified**

A huge gap between the perception of the efforts of the institutions and women’s organization is visible. Thus, it is necessary to conduct programs and activities to meet these needs:

a) to improve the communication and involvement between the targeted group and the municipal administration and other institutions, in order to improve the effects of the existing practices of financing the associations, as well as to create a partnership that would lead to better institutional understanding of needs and problems of marginalized women, better policies and practices;

b) an education in the area of agriculture and programs for helping women who start their own business, from the business plan development to marketing the products through sales on traditional markets or through Internet sales (education on how to effectively use the Internet for marketing and product placement);

c) to ensure the access to health protection in terms of access to urgent medical check-ups, especially having in mind the age of the target group in the targeted community;

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66 Ibid.
67 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality Zavidovići, 14.3.2019
d) to solve infrastructural problems related to water supply system, and communal garbage collection.

3.5. Konjic Municipality

Konjic municipality is one of the 9 municipalities of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. According to 2013 Census, the total number of inhabitants in the Municipality of Konjic is 26,381 - when it comes to the gender structure of the population, the share of women in the total number of inhabitants of the Municipality is slightly higher than the proportion of men (50.7% of women and 49.3% of men).\(^68\) As of December 2018, there were 3,842 unemployed persons registered in the Municipality of Konjic – of the total number, 2,074 were women.\(^69\)

There are multiple problems faced by women in Konjic Municipality, above all unemployment and poverty. Thus, mostly affected are unemployed younger women, women who have lost their jobs without conditions governing the acquisition of pension or some social benefits, mothers with children with special needs, women with health issues and with or without health insurance. Another effect of the poor socio-economic status is the increase in number of family disputes and family violence, where there is no other way to react adequately, because of the lack of safe houses or other ways of accommodating vulnerable women and their children, except for being sent to the police and the social service.\(^70\)

Marginalized women have difficulties in finding employment in Konjic Municipality. Marginalized women generally have very little chance of being employed in any public service or private sector – they face nepotism, prejudices, stereotypes, mistrust, mobbing.


\(^70\) Information provided by a representative of the WO Žena za ženu, 13.03.2019
There is no priority in employing women, both according to social, and according to professional criteria. If a woman has a disability, she has a physical barrier because there is no lift in the building or there is no access for the disabled at the entrance to the building.\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{However, there were efforts and initiatives in engaging marginalized women in projects aimed at increasing their employability in Konjic Municipality.} The Federal Employment Service’s programs implemented through cantonal services include special measures that relate solely to women’s employment.\textsuperscript{72} The aim of these measures is to facilitate the integration of unemployed women into the labor market and prevent long-term unemployment, and contribute to increasing the employment rate of women. The rights to participate have all women regardless of their age, and professional qualifications, if they were registered within the Employment Bureau. As for the projects intended specifically for marginalized women, the Agency for Economic Development Prvi korak, in cooperation with the USAID and the Municipality of Konjic, implemented a project covering marginalized groups of women in 2017. The project financed the procurement of the necessary funds for 10 women to start their own businesses, and these projects were supported by the measures of the Federal Employment Service “Start-up 2017”. In addition, good cooperation between Konjic Municipality, Konjic Employment Bureau and the Agency for Economic Development Prvi korak results in providing support to all interested women and offers the greatest measure of assistance in project implementation. Thus, they find that all interested women get timely information on all projects whether it is the municipal or federal project and they provide the utmost help in realization.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{Also, Konjic Municipality, through its Employment Action Plan, provides support to marginalized groups of women.} Konjic Municipality, the Agency for Economic Development of the Municipality of Konjic in cooperation with the women’s organization Žena za ženu Konjic has worked on projects related to marginalized groups of women in the previous period and currently negotiating two new projects. The project “Empowering women’s position through support to women

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} This applies to the Start-up Measure Program - “Entrepreneurship for Women”, as well as a measure of co-financing employers for employment, Measure - “Employment of Women”.
\textsuperscript{73} Information provided by a representative of the Employment Bureau Konjic, 12.03.2019
entrepreneurship in the Municipality of Konjic” will be implemented in the period from May 2019 to December 2020, with the aim to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurship to enable women to participate more equally in the society and to facilitate the incubation of independent women’s businesses and women’s self-employment in targeted sectors of food production, services, crafts and tourism.\(^{74}\) This proves that the municipal administration, to a certain extent, recognizes the needs of this marginalized group and consults women’s organization when developing activities intended for improving the position of marginalized women.\(^{75}\) They have also provided necessary help and information for the realization of the Association’s activities and projects and provided them with office space without any fees.

They also have a municipal body for gender equality – the Gender Equality Commission of Konjic Municipality. However, not much data is available on the work of the Commission or the frequency of their sessions. The same goes for the local gender action plan; there is no data to confirm that such a document is developed or already being implemented.

Access to education is limited for women belonging to marginalized groups and minorities. There is no accurate data, but it is evident that due to the poverty of the population there is already a critical number of female children who have no possibility of schooling after primary education.\(^{76}\) Also, marginalized women are confronted with physical and psychological problems in education. The physical problem is that there is no access for disabled persons in schools - only several schools have solutions for entering the facility for persons with disabilities, while most of them do not even have this barrier resolved. As for the psychological problems, they come hard on women and girls due to the fact that teaching staff does not cooperate with social services to solve cases of violence and neglect, which is often a product of domestic violence, and in cases where delinquent behavior occurs, women are found solely responsible for delinquent children.\(^{77}\)

Where women belonging to marginalized and minority groups wish

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74 Information provided by a representative from the WO Žena za ženu, 13.03.2019
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
to continue their education, it is almost impossible. Women who for a variety of reasons have been left without primary and secondary education are faced with high prices for taking external exams for primary and secondary schools. In addition, they cannot find quality education they can afford.\footnote{Ibid.}

Access to social protection is also hindered by accessibility to information and different institutions and transportation issues.\footnote{Transportation is not adapted to the needs of women with disabilities, nor there is, for example, special tariffs for taxi services for women living in distant areas, for retired women, for pregnant women, etc.} However, representatives of the institution consider that their services are available, to the extent laws enable it, to marginalized women. They mostly provide support to women who have not resolved their socioeconomic status, and those going through the process of mediation before divorce.\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the Social work centre Konjic, 12.03.2019} Thus, they find economic empowerment and working with a multidisciplinary team of highest importance for this group.

The most common problem in the area of healthcare is related to socioeconomic issues and lack of knowledge on how to regulate health insurance. There are many unemployed or employed women who do not have health insurance due to non-regulation of health contributions by employers.\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the Health-care centre Konjic, 12.03. 2019} Healthcare Institution works jointly with the Health Insurance Institute in Konjic and the Centre for Social Work to resolve these issues.

Konjic Municipality is the largest spatial area in BiH and there are areas in which women, due to distance, can hardly go to regular medical examinations in Konjic.\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the WO Žena za ženu, 13.03.2019} Due to the apparent increase in the number of women diagnosed with malignant diseases of female reproductive system and breasts, the mobile mammography and the annual systematic examination of women in every inhabited place in the Municipality of Konjic should be instated as a part of the regular healthcare service. Oncological patients travel over 100km to receive therapies, all of which is funded from personal means (own transport, regular bus lines), and for all of these is necessary to allocate large amount of money. 

When dealing with severe and rare illnesses where drugs are the most

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Transportation is not adapted to the needs of women with disabilities, nor there is, for example, special tariffs for taxi services for women living in distant areas, for retired women, for pregnant women, etc.}

\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the Social work centre Konjic, 12.03.2019}

\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the Health-care centre Konjic, 12.03. 2019}

\footnote{Information provided by a representative of the WO Žena za ženu, 13.03.2019}
expensive, it is often the case that these medicines are not on the essential lists and it is almost impossible to provide funding for their procurement. On the other side, representatives of the Healthcare Institution state that given the existence of ambulances and medical workers employed at their Institution, they consider that healthcare is available to all residents. The Health Centre has organized a good patrol service in the city area and much better in the rural area. Through medical technicians they are informed about the problems of people from the areas they cover, and depending on their capabilities, they solve identified problems.

The most common problem faced by younger women is of psychological nature and they come to the Mental Health Centre where they can seek help from a psychiatrist and a psychologist. Also, they have organized psychotherapy in MHC’s premises for a group of women from different backgrounds, led by a trained medical technician.

Conclusions/needs identified:
All of the above implies that the largest area within which interventions need to be addressed in meeting the needs of marginalized women are the employment, followed by access to healthcare services. It is, therefore, necessary to take the following steps:

a) even though there have been some efforts in this regard, it is necessary to increase efforts in developing programs for economic empowerment of women belonging to marginalized and minority groups. Additional education, trainings and seminars should be implemented;
b) to increase efforts in helping and raising awareness on greater care for women’s health after alarming data on breast cancer and cancer of female reproductive system. This can be done through organizing specific health services as annual check-up for women;
c) to make every effort towards solving the issue of health insurance through developing policies and solutions by multiple stakeholders;
d) to provide greater psychological assistance to women victims of domestic violence;
d) to provide safer conditions for women in families with multiple children.

83 Information provided by a representative of the Healthcare Centre Konjic, 12.03. 2019
84 Ibid.
3.6. Municipality Novi Grad Sarajevo

Novi Grad is a municipality of the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is the westernmost of the four municipalities that make up the city of Sarajevo. It covers an area of 1\(\text{km}^2\), and its population is 118,553\(^\text{85}\), out of which women make up 62,818 or 52.99% of the municipal population.

**Mothers of children with special needs are one the most marginalized groups of women.**\(^\text{86}\) Their most urgent problems are related to the fact that their free time is devoted to childcare, which further influences their access to medical care and health care as well as their employability. These mothers are very often the victims of physical and psychological violence perpetrated by their partners, since they are compelled to stay at home. The data available shows that all these factors influence a high level of divorce (80%).\(^\text{87}\)

The Municipality Novi Grad has a Committee for Gender Equality as the permanent committee in the Municipal Assembly, and its scope of work is defined by the Gender Equality Law of BiH. Within the municipal administration, the Office for Education, Culture and Sports is in charge of monitoring the state of gender equality in the Municipality and proposing measures to improve municipal programs in this aspect. Its budget, as well as the Strategy of Development of the Municipality Novi Grad 2014-2020 are cited as institutional mechanisms for gender equality. The Office for Education, Culture and Sports has its Annual Work Plan, which includes measures and activities for economic empowerment of women and support to programs and projects that contribute to gender equality. Currently, there is a training program for 15 unemployed women from the Municipality Novi Grad focused on strengthening the participation of women in the IT sector, implemented by the association NAHLA. Previously implemented programs and projects also include program Localizing Gender in FBiH supported by the UN Women, SNV and the Gender Centre of the FBiH, which resulted in two projects, one of which was related to economic empowerment of Roma women.

\(^{86}\) Information provided by a representative of the organization Posebne mame, 15.3.2019
\(^{87}\) Ibid.
The Municipality, when designing other projects/programs/activities, takes into account the needs and problems of marginalized women through maternity allowance to unemployed women, co-financing the women entrepreneurs, etc.88

The Municipality has a history of cooperation with non-governmental organizations that work on human rights and gender equality through their participation in conferences and seminars, grant giving and project co-financing. It also engages non-governmental organizations in the process of development of different municipal documents and plans. The Municipality has included representatives of the different organizations working on gender equality in the process of development of the Local Gender Action Plan for 2011-2015, and the current municipal Development Strategy. They recognize the need for improvement of the cooperation with organizations working on the rights of marginalized women, and the need to strengthen their institutional capacities.89 On the other hand, municipal administration doesn’t take into account the needs and problems of mothers of children with special needs. So far, there was no cooperation between these groups in the implementation of joint projects/programs for the improvement of the position of marginalized women, nor they have been consulted in the development of different public documents, work plans or projects. They have relied on the cooperation with CURE Foundation, and are looking forward to their future collaboration.90

Access to social services is hindered by the mother’s lack of time to get all the necessary paperwork to claim their rights related to social services.91 Regulation related to the work Centre for Social Work of Canton Sarajevo doesn’t prescribe marginalized women as a separate category, and hence the Centre doesn’t have available data about this social group, nor about their needs, problems and rights.92

Mothers of children with special needs are under a higher risk of different stress-related illnesses, and they lack the time for regular

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88 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality Novi Grad, Sarajevo, 20.3.2019
89 Ibid.
90 Information provided by a representative of the organization Posebne mame, 15.3.2019
91 Ibid.
92 Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Novi Grad, 12.3.2019
According to the Health Centre in Novi Grad Municipality, the priority in terms of needs of marginalized women is social acceptance and livelihood. The categories of marginalized women using their healthcare services are women with disabilities, women victims of domestic violence, women victims of war, women of low socio-economic status, single mothers, and Roma women. The biggest problem they face in relation to their rights is stigmatization which prevents them from receiving adequate health protection. Although aware of the different marginalized groups of women, there are no relevant programs of the Centre that take into account the needs of marginalized women. They share relevant information about the work of the institutions (the municipal administration, NGOs, the Centre for Social Work) that could provide help to marginalized women on the Health Centre’s bulletin board.

Due to the fact that these mothers take care of their children and therefore have to spend most of their available time at home they are rarely in a position to be employed. In cases where some of the mothers decide to look for a job, they face a high probability of discrimination by potential employers. In their job interviews, these mothers are forced to hide the information about their children and their needs.

None of the services related to public transportation, access to institutions, water supply system, electricity, other communal utilities, Internet and mobile phone network, as well as access to information are on a satisfactory level when it comes to the needs of mothers of children with special needs.

Conclusion/needs identified
Although the Municipality Novi Grad has a history of good cooperation with different non-governmental organizations, including those working on gender equality and women’s rights, and relatively agile institutional mechanisms for gender equality, there is still a need to be more inclusive of needs and problems of different marginalized groups of women. It is, therefore, necessary to take the following steps:

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93 Information provided by a representative of the organization Posebne mame, 15.3.2019
94 Information provided by a representative of the Healthcare Centre Novi Grad, 15.3.2019
95 Information provided by a representative of the Organization Posebne mame, 15.3.2019
96 Ibid.
a) recognition of marginalized women as a category in the realm of social services, training for the Centre for Social Work (and the other local institutions) in order to sensitize the staff to needs and problems faced by marginalized women, as well as to create innovative solutions to enable mothers of children with special needs to have better access to social services, employment, healthcare system, and other relevant institutions;
b) regulating the status of parent-caretaker which would then enable mothers of children with special needs to be able to exercise their right to a pension as well as to have the remuneration for the time spent at home taking care of their children;
c) precedence in access to medical check-ups and proper information provided to mothers of children with special needs through adequate channels by the local health centre;
d) strengthened dialogue between marginalized women, especially mothers of children with special needs with municipal administration and local institutions;
e) activities focused on promoting and encouraging the father’s/partners role in the care-taking of children with special needs, and combating domestic violence in families with children with special needs.

3.7. Prnjavor Municipality

The Municipality of Prnjavo is located in the northwestern part of the Republic of Srpska. According to the latest the 2013 Census, in the Municipality live 34,357 inhabitants - 48.53% of men and 51.47% of women, which makes up about 3% of the population of the Republic of Srpska. Total number of working-age population is 29,403, of whom 14,149 were men and 15,254 were women. Of that, 10,135 of them are employed and 2,193 unemployed.  

Socio-economic empowerment, employment and improvement of quality of life have been recognized as of the highest priority for

97 Official website of Prnjavor Municipality, visited on 24.03.2019
marginalized women in Prnjavor Municipality. Marginalized women are often economically dependent on their spouses and cannot leave them even in cases of domestic violence because they lack institutional support in cases they decide to divorce from the abuser. Thus, these women need support in respecting their rights during divorce, when fighting for custody of the children, when violence occurs – and institutions in particular need to empathize and be sensitized to help them exercise and enjoy their rights.

As for the institutional framework, there is a Gender Action Plan of Prnjavor Municipality and a Local Roma Action Plan which has not yet been implemented. However, a part of the work and activities intended for marginalized women is carried out by the women’s organization Romska Djevojka – Romani Ćej. Aside from their work directly with marginalized groups, in terms of information sharing and advocacy work, they implement health programs with the support from the Institute of Public Health of the RS, i.e. annual preventive gynecological and ultrasonic breast examinations and workshops on health protection and prevention. They organize workshops on how to act in cases of discrimination or domestic violence together with the representatives of different institutions in order to build trust between institutions and beneficiaries. Also, they were included in drafting process of the Local Roma Action Plan, and consulted for the information when the Gender Action Plan was revised in 2018. As for the concrete cooperation with the Municipality, they do have a signed memorandum of cooperation and were included in the Gender Action Plan and the Local Roma Action Plan, but they have never had any joint activity. This implies the need for the improvement of the cooperation and the implementation of the existing action plans.

Discrimination and stereotypes when recruiting Roma women or women belonging to any marginalized group are still heavily present

98 Information provided by a representative of the WO Romani Ćej, 12.03.2019; Information provided by a representative of the Center for Social Work Prnjavor, 12.03.2019
99 Information provided by a representative of the WO Romani Ćej, 12.03.2019
102 Information provided by a representative of the WO Romani Ćej, 12.03.2019
on the labor market. If a woman was offered a job, it is mostly manual and low paid job (for example cleaning job). There are also cases of abuse of the system where the employer decides to employ women from these categories (Roma in particular) via employment subsidies programs to gain additional profit and cheap workforce - unfortunately, once a one-year contract expires, the woman gets fired from the workplace and gets replaced by another woman via same channels.\textsuperscript{103} Also, strong traditional and patriarchal setting hinder their possibility to work. Mostly, a man decides that it is better for a woman to stay at home and do all the housework than to work for a lesser salary – the case where women is not being in charge of the house and taking care of the children, and paying for the day-care service, is seen as too costly and unnecessary.\textsuperscript{104}

There are barriers to access the basic rights in some institutions, most often to centres for social work because marginalized women usually seek their rights via these institutions – rights to one-time financial assistance, allowance for assistance and care of another person, divorce, child custody, etc.\textsuperscript{105} Most of the women seeking assistance are unemployed mothers, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, and mothers of multiple children and from poor families. They mostly have requests related to financial assistance, counselling and job placement services.\textsuperscript{106} When the conditions are fulfilled, employees of the institution try to alleviate the procedures of exercising rights by seeking specific documentation ex officio from other institutions, try to resolve the requests timely; however there are still limitations in the ability to regulate childcare and lack of support from relatives.\textsuperscript{107}

As stated, the Centre for Social Work finds the information on the work of the institution and services they offer accessible to marginalized women in Prnjavor Municipality area. Aside from their work, they find safe houses and local NGOs (Romska đjevojka – Romani Ćej and Vaša Prava) useful when addressing the needs of the women belonging to marginalized and minority groups.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Prnjavor, 12.03.2019
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
Even though almost all marginalized women generally have the health insurance regulated via the Employment Bureau, they rarely use these services. Apart from the payment of participations, all of the medical findings have to be paid additionally, and once they get the diagnosis most of them are referred to private medical institutions or in Banja Luka, which requires additional financial resources. Also, medical drugs that are on the lists are still expensive for women so they refrain from going to the doctor due to lack of finances. Another issue common for the community is the lack of care for their own health conditions – they pay visits to the doctors only when is too late and when the disease is already in an advanced stage. In addition, there is no public transportation which would ease the situation of going for the health check-ups.

There are no healthcare services specially designed for the marginalized groups of women. However, there are support groups for people with mental health problems including women from the marginalized categories and educational workshops for women belonging to minority groups – organized with the aim to identify possible mental health issues and offer solutions. This is a joint activity of the Mental Health Centre of the Healthcare Centre Prnjavor in cooperation with NGOs. Also, there have been some attempts coming from the Association to establish cooperation with the healthcare institution to conduct preventive medical examinations, where part of the funding would be covered by the Association and where the institution should provide the necessary medications for the beneficiaries, but they refused due to the lack of resources.

Conclusion/needs identified
Given the specific situation faced by marginalized Roma women in Prnjavor community, they find the employment as the most important need to meet, in order for them to live independently and without having to suffer through problems such as domestic violence, lack of services and other problems mentioned in this chapter. The steps that should be taken to help marginalized women in this community are:

109 Information provided by a representative of the WO Romani Ćej, 12.03.2019
110 Ibid.
111 Information provided by a representative of the Healthcare institution Prnjavor, 14.03.2019
112 Information provided by a representative of the WO Romani Ćej, 12.03.2019
a) bring in activities related to breaking stereotypes related to Roma people and active inclusion in the community;
b) to develop programs for economic empowerment of Roma women. This also needs to be recognized by the Employment Bureau (and the Employment Service of the Republic of Srpska) through their active employment policies;
c) given the healthcare expenses, it is necessary to regulate health-care costs via subsidies meaning the covering of costs for this marginalized category;
d) considering that there is no public transport in the Municipality of Prnjavor, it is necessary to carry out a needs assessment with all local communities in this Municipality and draw up a strategy for the development of public transport;
d) to increase efforts in helping and raising awareness on greater care for women’s health, especially for Roma women;
e) to introduce activities that would tackle an issue of domestic violence and develop a strategy for combating violence;
f) to establish continuous cooperation between women NGOs and the Municipality.

3.8. Tuzla

Tuzla is the third-largest city of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the administrative centre of Tuzla Canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As of 2013, it has a population of 110,979 inhabitants, of whom women make up 52,47% or 58,234.113

The Gender Equality Committee in the City Council of Tuzla is one of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality. **Tuzla adopted the Gender Equality Action Plan 2013-2016** in 2013, based on the analysis of the state of gender equality in Tuzla, both done as a part of the project “Advancing the Gender Equality on the Local Level”, and as such was in line with the Law on Gender Equality, objectives of the GAP and the EU Gender Equality Charter. Local Gender Action Plan was focused on strengthening local capacities, designing the methodology for development, and gender mainstreaming in all segments of local

community development. The new Action Plan for 2020-2022 is being developed, and in its development, apart from the representatives of the City Council and relevant institutions, members of organizations working with marginalized groups will be included.\textsuperscript{114} One of the priority areas in their co-financing and financing of the projects implemented by non-governmental organizations are human rights and gender equality, and special attention is given to projects which include youth, women and marginalized groups. New open call for project proposals will be published at the end of March 2019, and one of the priorities, among others, will be economic empowerment of women, prevention of violence against marginalized groups, and economic empowerment of people with disabilities. The works of the local safe house, which is being administered by the association Vive žene\textsuperscript{115} is financed from the budget of the City.

The City Council emphasizes its support for the LGBTI community in Tuzla and shows their unique support to this marginalized community through the support of the Merlinka Festival, and inclusion of this group in the working groups for developing the Youth Strategy 2017-2026, adopted by the City Council in August 2017, as well as the other different projects and programs. The Mayor of Tuzla set up a Team of Local Dialogue Platform as a part of the “Dialogue for Future” project which includes Tuzla Open Centre, Women’s Association Tuzla, and Vive žene.\textsuperscript{116}

The top needs of marginalized women are better healthcare, and the need for an economic and political empowerment. The poor socio-economic status of women causes problems with the health and social protection. When it comes to access to healthcare, the problems of women include the partial health coverage for certain medical services in spite of existing medical insurance and long waiting lists for important medical check-ups. There are no exact data on the numbers of girls from rural areas who do not attend obligatory elementary education. There is no recognition of women as mothers and caretakers in the families at the workplace and in the labor market.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{114} Information provided by a representative of the City of Tuzla, 20.3.2019 \\
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{117} Information provided by a representative of the Association Horizonti, 11.3.2019
\end{flushleft}
The Centre for Social Work Tuzla recognizes the variety of groups of marginalized women: women victims of violence (sexual, physical, psychological, economic), single mothers, minority women, women with disabilities, mothers of children with disabilities, unemployed young women, and women without healthcare coverage. Women coming from these marginalized groups most often seek the support of the Centre for Social work in cases of domestic violence, issues related to divorce (contacts with children, child support), requests for financial and material aid, requests for healthcare coverage, housing, long-term unemployment, psychological support in upbringing of children, and support for children with disabilities. Most common problems in access to social support and services is the lack of funds that are available to the Centre in order to fulfil the requests of all clients, census in entitlement to social support that is set too low thus preventing many clients to claim their rights. For example, the census for child allowance in the amount of 20 BAM is 7% of average personal income in the Canton Tuzla, and is not sufficient to ensure basic food for the child. The Rulebook on Disability Assessment contains discriminatory provisions towards women who have had certain parts of their bodies removed, and are therefore not fit for work, and prevent these women from accessing their disability allowance, and they are often without any income. Single mothers without employment and housing are not recognized as categories in the relevant legislation, and therefore the Centre is not in a position to adequately help these women and their children.118

Since they do not have the specialized programs/activities that take into account the needs and problems of marginalized women, the Centre applies for funds with public companies in order to fundraise the financial assistance necessary to ensure the support to aforementioned groups of marginalized women. In the past, they have supported the projects related to underage marriage in the Roma community and foster parenting. Information about the work of the Centre is available at their web page, and periodical communication through digital and print media. However, there is awareness that the information needs to be made accessible to marginalized groups, and that the Centre does not currently take into account all differences in the abilities and access to information within their user groups. Good practice of the Center for Social Work is

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118 Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Tuzla, 7.3.2019
the opening of a local office in Kiseljak, populated with predominantly Roma community, with a social worker available to the clients. They highlight the importance of the direct work in the community and making information about their services easily accessible, and suggest closer cooperation with local communities and associations in order to reach all potential users of social services.¹¹⁹

None of the services related to public transportation, access to institutions, water supply system, electricity, other communal utilities, Internet and mobile phone network, as well as access to information are on a satisfactory level when it comes to the needs of marginalized women with whom Horizonti works.¹²⁰

The Employment Bureau in Tuzla Canton co-finances and finances programs of employment and self-employment, in cooperation with the Employment Bureau of the FBiH. All of these programs are designed in line with the strategic documents in the area of employment with special emphasis on the employment of women. Their data shows that there are more registered unemployed women than men, and in line with that, the co-financing programs are allocating more funds for the employment of women. In 2018, through the employment co-financing program, more than 707,000 BAM was invested, and 226 women have been employed with 145 employers. In the self-employment program, women started 39 small businesses, in the worth of over 202,000 BAM. Women entrepreneurs also had the chance to hire one more employee with the co-financing, so 6 more women were employed.¹²¹

Unfortunately, there is no information on how marginalized women were included in the program, from which groups, and in which percentage. When it comes to the accessibility of their information to marginalized women, the Bureau publishes its information on the web page, as well as on the bulletin boards in municipal bureaus. Most of the local and cantonal media relay the relevant information about the program of co-financing and financing the self-employment and employment. The Bureau also provides information in person or by phone.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.
¹²⁰ Information provided by a representative of the Association Horizonti, 11.3.2019.
¹²¹ Information provided by a representative of the Employment Bureau Tuzla, 11.3.2019
In 2012, Horizonti partnered with Forum žena from Bratunac on a research project carried out with women from 4 municipalities (Lukavac, Kalesija, Srebrenica and Bratunac) with a focus on rural areas on topics of economic stability/security, access to basic services, educational security, land ownership, participation in decision-making processes, and peace and security. The research results showed that there is a weak connection to vicinal communities, low level of employment, significant distances to schools and outpatients’ departments, and lack of basic infrastructure (drinking water and water supply system, roads, public lighting, non-involvement in decision making processes and low level of access to information).

Local laws do not reflect the needs and problems of marginalized women. The practice of asking the women at job interviews about their marital status, number of children, private attitudes and views, is very present, despite the legal prohibition of such practices in labor laws. The legislation set up to combat domestic violence is not implemented in practice: in cases of domestic violence, the perpetrator remains in the home, and the victims of domestic violence (usually women and children) have to leave.

The budgets are not gender sensitive and marginalized women’s needs are not taken into account in the distribution of the funds. Association Horizonti did not have the opportunity to work together with the local administration or institutions in the implementation of joint projects/programs aimed at advancing the position of women. However, they have been consulted by the Committee on Gender Equality in the initiative for naming the streets and city squares, but they would like for that cooperation to be continuous and more intensive. They have good cooperation with other institutions and organizations aimed at advancing the position of women in activities of observing the important dates, street activities, etc. but they believe there is a room for improvement in the number of joint project.

Conclusion/needs identified
The most urgent needs of marginalized women are better healthcare, and the need for economic and political empowerment. Thus, the steps that should be taken to help marginalized women in this community are:
a) employment programs need to take into account and engage marginalized groups of women;
b) non-governmental organizations should offer life-long education training/modules for (marginalized) women;
c) data collection by the organization working with marginalized groups and local institutions on the position of marginalized women;
d) ensure the participation of organizations working with marginalized women, and raise their capacities for efficient participation in the process of development of the new local gender action plan.

3.9. Pale Municipality

The Municipality of Pale is located in the eastern part of the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are 22,282 inhabitants in this Municipality. As of 2015, 2,829 persons were actively seeking employment, as registered by the Employment Bureau Pale, and more than 50% of the registered unemployed were women.\textsuperscript{122}

The biggest difficulty and, thus, the biggest need for marginalized women in Pale Municipality is finding employment. Existing laws do not address this need adequately nor are there any programs intended for marginalized women currently realized. The municipal administration did not express any interest in cooperating or consulting with women NGOs working in the area nor takes into consideration the needs of marginalized women in developing programs/projects/activities. Thus, cooperation is qualified as not good. Women’s organization Viktorija has been cooperating with other organizations present in other municipalities through organization of workshops covering different topics and education of relevance for women.\textsuperscript{123} Also, employers refuse to hire women who recently got married or plan to, while nobody wants to employ or


\textsuperscript{123} Information provided by a representative of the WO Viktorija Pale, 14.03.2019
provide education/training to women over 40 years of age. There is a lack of trainings for women of this age, they cannot be retrained or get other employment.124

However, there were attempts to address the issue of employment of marginalized women. The Employment Service of the Republic of Srpska, based on the Action Plan of Employment adopted by the Government of the Republic of Srpska, and on the basis of the Public Call, allocated funds in 2018 for the employment and self-employment project for the target categories in the economy.125 This project included women victims of domestic violence and women in rural areas through the financing of employers and persons who independently run their own business. There was a great interest in the mentioned project of employers and unemployed persons from Pale Municipality, and upon the approval of the funds, contracts have been concluded and the realization is ongoing.

The Municipal Assembly of Pale has formed the Gender Equality Commission which meets when needed. However, they did not provide the data on the frequency of organizing the meetings. The Department for Economic and Social Affairs has an expert associate whose job includes dealing with issues of gender equality. Otherwise, this municipal department prepares information about gender equality annually, which is then considered by the Municipal Assembly. The Local Gender Action Plan does not exist, but important dates or some campaigns are marked according to the Action Plan of the Gender Centre of the RS, and so are the Gender Centre’s campaigns being promoted (by posting, municipal website, broadcasting of jingles and local media reports).126

Recently, there has been a trend in the establishment of women’s associations in the area of Pale Municipality, and they are becoming more active, applying for various calls and thus implementing projects with a focus on issues of women and marginalized groups.127 This year, these associations are financed through budget allocation for non-governmental organizations. Experts from various fields, including those on the issues of marginalized women, were consulted when drafting

124 Ibid.
125 Information provided by a representative of the Employment Bureau Pale, 15.03.2019
126 Information provided by a representative of the Municipality of Pale, 13.03.2019
127 Ibid.
strategies and plans.\textsuperscript{128} Quite contrary to the opinion of the organization Viktorija Pale, municipal authorities have stated that, when designing activities, the needs and problems of marginalized women are being taken into account (e.g. through incentives for agriculture, fruit growing, greenhouses, taking into account women in the village etc.). They find that the cooperation with all NGOs is regular (joint meetings, visits, consultations.) Cooperation is good, but they hope for it to be upgraded with regard to the increased interest of women to associate and work in the non-government sector.\textsuperscript{129}

Wide range of needs for healthcare services was identified with women belonging to marginalized groups - ones who are 50 years old or older and have no permanent employment, women of fallen soldiers, women with unfavorable socio-economic status, those of poor educational profile, bad health profile etc. However, due to this heterogeneous structure of the group, the institution has not come up with a way to collect and analyze the data in order to create specific services.\textsuperscript{130}

Healthcare service is provided to all categories of marginalized women who, because of the lack of funding for participation, avoid using healthcare services - this group of marginalized women is also the largest. When they do decide to pay a visit to a health facility, they often come with a seriously neglected pathological condition. While working on the Depression project, they have identified that, of the total sample of depressed patients, over 75% were women, which suggests that women are more vulnerable to the environment condition than men.\textsuperscript{131}

Thus, there are no programs attuned to the needs of marginalized women. The institution has an accredited Mental Health Centre available to everyone in need, but stigmatism does not allow marginalized people to come and talk about their problems. Lack of coordination and systematic inter-sectoral support is visible in cases when domestic violence is identified, for example the Municipality does not have a safe house for both children and women victims of violence.\textsuperscript{132} In addition to healthcare

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Information provided by a representative of the Healthcare Institution Pale, 08.03.2019
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
institutions, local communities, social work centres and the police, and even all other corporate entities, should be involved in the entire process and employ a team approach to address the problems. **There are no specific social protection services intended for women belonging to marginalized and minority groups.** The fact that there are no extended forms of social protection at the local community level\(^\text{133}\) makes it even more difficult for marginalized women to navigate the system and respond to their needs.

The biggest needs of marginalized women as the Centre for Social Work has identified are employment, housing care and transportation of children to school. Thus, requests towards this institution reflect these needs. Mostly, marginalized women ask for financial and in kind assistance, healthcare assistance, assistance with regulating marital status (resolving family relations). Those who are not employed, and have not regulated their status to another person’s account (member of the family), do not have paid health insurance.\(^\text{134}\)

**Conclusion and needs identified**
Finding employment and enabling business start-ups for women were recognized as the biggest needs for women belonging to marginalized and minority groups in Pale Municipality. Thus, it is recommended to do the following:

a) to introduce employment programs and encourage business start-ups for women and provide all the support necessary in the process;
b) cooperation between municipality and women’s association needs to be established in order for both sides to have up-to-date information regarding the activities that are meant for improvement of the position of marginalized women;
c) it is needed to invest efforts in resolving the issue of health insurance through developing policies and solutions by multiple stakeholders.

\(^{133}\) Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Pale, 13.03.2019
\(^{134}\) Ibid.
3.10. Bijeljina

Bijeljina is a city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is located in the Republika Srpska entity and is the provincial centre of Semberija, a geographic region in the country’s northeast. As of 2013, it has a population of 107,715 inhabitants, of whom women make up 50.95% or 54,888.\(^{135}\)

**City of Bijeljina has a Gender Equality Committee** appointed by the City’s Council, but they do not have a local gender action plan. Although they cooperate with associations representing marginalized women such as women with disabilities and Roma women, their cooperation is mostly focused on supporting (financially and otherwise) public one-off events and awareness raising activities, joined by financial support to different projects. Exception to this is that Bijeljina supports a safe house for victims of domestic violence, administered and run by Lara Women’s Foundation. An important role in this cooperation is local Office for National Minorities. They practice involvement of non-governmental organizations working with and for marginalized women in development of different public documents, work plans and projects, but they generally see room for improvement of that cooperation.\(^{136}\)

The position of marginalized women has seen some improvement in the last 10 years, especially of marginalized women belonging to minorities, survivors of violence, and women with disabilities. The removal of architectural barriers in access to the City’s institutions was made due to strong efforts made by the local organizations representing women with disabilities.\(^{137}\)

**Local Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma People** in the City of Bijeljina is partly dedicated to the improvement of the position of Roma women, and currently this Action Plan is in the revision phase. Association Romkinja is taking an active part in the working group for the entity Action Plan for the Education of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Srpska.\(^{138}\)

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\(^{136}\) Information provided by a representative of the City of Bijeljina, 11.3.2019

\(^{137}\) Ibid.

\(^{138}\) Ibid.
Women’s Association Romkinja is active in Bijeljina and the region, and offers services foremost to Roma women, but to other marginalized women as well. They are the first contact point for different services to Roma women, but primarily offering advisory services. They serve as a referral point to their partner organization UG Otaharin, which provides support in economic empowerment, psycho-social support for domestic violence victims, assistance in formal and informal education, housing projects and mediation between Roma women and healthcare officials and the Public Health Fund. Their cooperation with local administration is currently manifested through a low level of financial support, and it’s more symbolic and focused on awareness raising (support to observing and marking the important dates for women and Roma people).139

Although the Law on Social Protection of the Republic of Srpska does not recognize special category(ies) of marginalized women, the Centre for Social Work Bijeljina recognizes that women survivors of violence, women with special needs, women belonging to national minorities (Roma women), and rural women could have different levels of access to rights and services. The Centre cooperates with different non-governmental organizations working with marginalized women (Lara, Otaharin, etc.) in order to improve the general situation of marginalized communities. However, a lot of Roma women are not familiar with their rights in the area of social protection, as well as the existing limitations in the social services and support to adequately tackle all the problems these marginalized women are facing.140

The problems faced by marginalized women (especially the Roma women) are poverty and high rates of unemployment, gender-based domestic violence and underage marriage, need for mediation with health protection and services providers. Currently, the project to combat domestic and partner violence, whose objective is to empower victims of gender based violence, and creation of more supportive environment that would help these women survivors of violence to overcome their situation is being implemented.141

139 Information provided by a representative of the organization Romkinje, 12.3.2019
140 Information provided by a representative of the Centre for Social Work Bijeljina, 11.3.2019
141 Information provided by a representative of the organization Romkinje, 12.3.2019
As their patients coming from the communities of marginalized women, the Health Centre Bijeljina distinguishes between different levels of access to rights and services and needs of Roma women, women of low socio-economic status, unemployed single mothers with no income, women with disabilities, women with psychological impediments, and women survivors of violence. These women reach out Health Centre in small numbers and only in cases where the Centre for Social Work and police are involved. The biggest problems in exercising their rights related to healthcare is that the women from marginalized communities do not have regulated healthcare coverage, and a very small number of them have been registered for the services of family medicine, so they remain invisible to the medical professionals, especially for services related to family medicine - prevention and free check-ups. They do not have specialized programs for marginalized women, but they organize sporadic free preventive medical check-ups, which cannot cover the needs of all marginalized women patients. As with the social protection and services, the same issue arises with the healthcare; a lot of Roma women are not familiar with their rights in this area.142

Roma women are not competitive in labor market due to their low level of education, lack of labor market demanded skills, no previous work experience, discrimination by potential employers, and young Roma women taking care of multi-member families.143 Associations Romkinje and Otaharin carried out the research on the needs of Roma women in the area of employment, and have jointly implemented the project of economic empowerment of women through greenhouse production, whose objective was to advance the skills, labor market competitiveness, and employment of Roma women.

There is no organized public transport, and access to institution is made difficult because Roma women do not have access to relevant information about the work of these institutions, and because channels and means of communication are not adapted to the needs of marginalized groups, and marginalized women. For example, both associations, Romkinje and Otaharin, translate the information about

142 Information provided by a representative of the Health Centre Bijeljina, 12.3.2019
143 Information provided by a representative of the organization Romkinje, 12.3.2019
institutional work and service to Romani language. Most of the Roma settlement has access to water supply and electricity while Romkinje notice the infrastructural problems with roads, Internet provider (only mobile Internet is available at a higher cost), and public lighting. A certain number of Roma families do not have basic living conditions, and live on the verge of poverty.\textsuperscript{144}

**Conclusion/needs identified**

The most urgent problems faced by marginalized women (especially the Roma women) in Bijeljina are poverty and high rates of unemployment, gender-based domestic violence, underage marriage and need for mediation with health protection and services providers. Thus, it is recommended to do the following:

a) to enable participation for organizations working with and for Roma women in the development of the new Action plan for the inclusion of Roma people in order to include measures focused on Roma women;

b) to create programs and trainings, with the support of the local administration, that will raise the competitiveness of Roma women in the labor market;

c) campaigns for registration of Roma women to services of family medicine;

d) to improve the infrastructure (especially roads and lighting) in the communities where marginalized women (especially Roma women) live;

e) to translate the information on the work and services of local institutions to Romani language;

f) to enhance the current level of cooperation of organizations working for and with marginalized women, especially Roma women, and the city administration.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Responses from the representatives of several municipalities, including centres for social work, healthcare institutions and employment bureaus point to the lack of knowledge on groups of women who are marginalized in their local communities. This is due to the lack of the exact and relevant data on the position and the needs of marginalized women, and the lack of understanding how the intersectionality influences the quality of life, access to rights, services and institutions for women who belong to ethnic and national minorities, have varying degrees of ability, women survivors of war torture and GBV, women returnees, LBTIQ and women from rural areas.

Marginalized women, faced with complex network of obstacles of legal, institutional, socio-cultural and sometimes even physical (in the case of women with disabilities) nature that result in their unprivileged status, are confronted with the general lack of prospects in the labor market together with the weak economy that affect all of them. If we include their additional identities, abilities and status, marginalized women are shrunk further into a dependent position in which they are more vulnerable and exposed to domestic violence, health risk factors, and often left as only caretakers for the multi-member families. Creating a local environment where marginalized girls/women are able to have enough free time, access, skills, tools and resources to become (self)-employed, and breaking down the gender stereotype barriers will not only affect their participation in the labor market and their ability to earn, but will also have a beneficial impact on their overall position in the local community.

When institutional responses are juxtaposed to those received from women’s organizations, there is an evident gap in perception of quality of support from the municipality, and their level (and nature) of engagement in improving the services and access in the areas of employment, healthcare and social protection for marginalized women. On one hand, municipality administration considers financial support to women’s organizations through grants and projects as sufficient for “good cooperation” with the organizations representing or working for marginalized women, while women’s organization look to institutional
involvement in the form of advancing local public policies and practice to evaluate their partnership with the local institutions.

Thus, the general recommendations are as follows:

1. Local municipalities and institutions in place need to collect the data on the representation of marginalized women in their communities in order to map their needs emerging from the unprivileged position they enjoy in the society. It is of particular importance to have in mind different facets to their identities - of them being women returnees and refugees, Roma, LBT, single mothers, etc. Women’s organizations present in these municipalities make great allies in this regard with their field presence and know-how on the matter.

2. Where absent, it is necessary to develop a Gender Action Plan which would introduce measures to improve the position of women belonging to marginalized and minority groups in their municipalities. Women’s organizations should contribute and be included in the process of developing the document, ensuring that all underrepresented groups are included.

3. Due to increase in number of documented cases of domestic violence in the respective communities, it is necessary to develop, where absent, a strategy for combating violence and introduce activities that would tackle the issue of domestic violence.

4. Cooperation between municipalities and women’s associations in their communities have to be improved in order for both sides to have up-to-date information regarding the activities that are meant for improvement of the position of marginalized women.

5. When addressing the issues faced by marginalized women, it is necessary to employ a multi-sectoral approach and include all relevant actors in improving their position. Joint cooperation between different stakeholders (NGOs, municipalities, social-work centres, healthcare institutions, and employment bureaus)
may lead to better long-term results in improving their position.

6. Where unresolved, it is necessary to establish inter-entity cooperation in order to resolve issues related to access to healthcare and social assistance. In addition to that, to bridge the existing situation in the field, it is necessary to create programs/projects that would provide marginalized women with different healthcare services (for example, annual health check-ups and awareness raising activities).

7. Programs for economic empowerment need to be introduced more often and tailored to the needs of marginalized women, making them available for women living in different parts of the municipality. These programs need to be a joint activity between local women’s associations, municipal authorities and employment bureau.

8. It is necessary to increase the number of educational programs/trainings for marginalized women. These education should go in a direction of familiarizing women with their rights and services they are entitled to, but also providing education that would equip them with the necessary knowledge on how to, for example, start their own business, prepare for the job search, create joint platforms for placing the products on the market, etc.

9. The municipality needs to solve infrastructure problems - it is necessary to develop a strategy for solving infrastructural problems in cooperation with all local communities in their respective municipalities.

The local strategies of financial support to different non-governmental organizations should take into account that organizations representing or working for marginalized women have limited access to funds, therefore they should foresee that either different gender equality projects should contribute to the better position of marginalized women or that organizations working for marginalized women need to get sufficient funding.
Summary of the Project “Women’s Rights Agenda for Positive Change”

Project “Women’s Rights Agenda for Positive Change” in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a two-year project of CURE Foundation and the Foundation for Women’s Empowerment (FWE), funded by the European Union through European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project aims to contribute to the promotion and respect of women’s human rights, eradication of discrimination against women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in BiH. The project represents an outstanding opportunity for engaging mechanisms in continuation of practical work around human rights of women belonging to minority and marginalized groups, through organization of joint trainings, implementation of comparable activities and exchange of good practice among actors and stakeholders.

Objectives of the Project are to directly contribute to the promotion and respect of women’s human rights and increase socio-economic inclusion of women and girls belonging to minority and marginalized groups through strengthening of their capacities and creating concrete actions to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia and address their human rights issues in BiH.

The project will take an integrated approach seeking to address the pervasive marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination against women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) who are facing the unfavourable attitude and who are not only exposed to extreme poverty, discrimination and prejudice, but are also largely excluded from decision-making processes at various levels.
About CURE Foundation

CURE Foundation is a feminist-activist organization that promotes gender and sex equality and works for positive social change through educational, cultural and research programs. By organizing affirmative collective actions, CURE celebrates the strength and power of women, and helps to empower individuals to become initiators of social change in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world. The feminist activism has created a safe space where women are strong, fearless, competent, and united with all their differences. CURE is an organization of professionals and volunteers who take to the streets to protest against violence, discrimination, violation of laws and basic human rights. Furthermore, CURE organizes art performances against violence, inviting artists, scholars, lecturers, activists, and citizens to act, participate, and contribute to the creation of a better, sounder Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

About partner organization Foundation for Women’s Empowerment:

The FWE for Women’s Empowerment (FWE) is an independent and non-profit local women’s foundation based in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) which is fully committed to supporting initiatives by Women’s Grassroots Organizations (WGOs) aimed at promoting empowerment of women, women’s human rights and gender equality. The FWE was born in response to enormous calls by WGOs across the country to create a mechanism for channelling technical and financial assistance for supporting their relevant initiatives in improving women’s human rights, gender equality and social justice.
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POSITION, INCLUSION AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN BELONGING TO MINORITY AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

AUTHORS: Aida Malkić and Emina Bošnjak

WOMEN’S AGENDA FOR POSITIVE CHANGES!