



Funded by
the European Union



Newsletter

Humanitarian response in Bosnia and Herzegovina:
supporting women and youth - Report no.1



Country:	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Emergency type:	Other
Start Date of UNFPA Response:	Oct 1, 2018
Date Issued:	Aug 21, 2024
Covering Period:	Jan 1, 2024 to Jun 30, 2024
Contact Persons:	Emina Husagić, UNFPA GBViE Programme Manager, Cell: +387 (0) 66/964 -654, E-mail: husagic@unfpa.org

Key Figures



1,819

GBV information, awareness raising, and protection services delivered to women, girls, and young men



1,154

Number of young men supported through "Green Zones"



1,305

SRH services delivered to women, girls, and young men



67

Pregnant women supported



1,371

MHPSS services provided to women, girls, and young men



1,305

SRH information, referrals and services delivered to women, girls, boys, and young men



2,525

Women and adolescent girls' participations in empowerment activities



6,213

Young Men and Adolescent boys' participation in life skills education

Highlights

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women, girls, young men, and boys, as well as persons with disabilities in Temporary Reception Centers received **tailored prevention, mitigation and life-saving response** services on gender-based violence..
- In the reporting period, with EU support, UNFPA has made significant strides in protecting and supporting vulnerable women and girls, through **comprehensive gender-based violence services**. Notably, there has been an increase in the number of women traveling alone identified as GBV survivors with violence occurring during movement or in the countries of origin, leading to a focused effort on increasing safety and promoting dignity and respect.
- UNFPA collaborates with **four local health centers across two cantons** to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information to refugee and migrant women, girls, boys, and young men. This successful partnership ensures that vulnerable individuals receive **essential sexual and reproductive care**, including specialized support for pregnant women and survivors of gender-based violence.
- UNFPA, in collaboration with the **Service for Foreigners' Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and IOM, operates the Green Zones in TRC Blazuj and TRC Lipa**, ensuring young male residents have access to protection-sensitive accommodation and services. Through this initiative, **1,154 young males have been supported**, highlighting the effectiveness and impact of the Green Zone mechanism in providing a safe and supportive environment.

FAST FACTS:



02
UNFPA Women and Girls Centers



12
LGBTQIA+ Persons supported



02
UNFPA Boys and Young Men Centers



496
Female Headed households

UNFPA HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In a significant step towards enhancing support for local stakeholders, the **UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina office** welcomed the **UNFPA Eastern Europe & Central Asia Regional Office humanitarian team** during its recent mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This visit, centered on capacity building and preparedness, aimed to strengthen humanitarian efforts in the region. Key meetings were convened with partner organizations and stakeholders from the health and GBV response sectors in Una Sana Canton and Canton Sarajevo. Discussions focused on assessing existing capacities, pinpointing critical needs, and bolstering GBV response mechanisms as part of the ongoing transition process.

These efforts highlight UNFPA's commitment to empowering local and national stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ensuring they are equipped to independently and effectively address challenges and support GBV survivors.



UNFPA, thanks to EU support, has actively fostered cooperation and improved responses to gender-based violence through various initiatives. UNFPA organized **GBV Working Group meetings for Una Sana Canton and Canton Sarajevo**, with participation of representatives from partner agencies. UNFPA presented the latest trends, statistics, updates on existing GBV referral pathways, and challenges in providing respective services. The meeting facilitated mutual discussions that supported a comprehensive and coordinated approach to GBV, encompassing risk mitigation, prevention, protection, and support for survivors.



Together with EU support, UNFPA delivered preventive **GBV awareness-raising activities** to women and girls, boys and young men in TRCs, providing essential knowledge on gender based violence, its forms, reporting mechanisms and available services within Temporary Reception Centers. Through information sharing, practical exercises and focused discussions, residents gained a deeper understanding of GBV and its consequences, reinforcing the key role of education in mitigating and preventing violence.

UNFPA together with IOM organized a **GBV introductory training session** for the staff of the **Institute of Public Health in Una Sana Canton**. This initiative, supported by the EU, aided the transition of medical screening services by ensuring that relevant staff are equipped with knowledge to recognize and address GBV effectively. Participants were introduced to GBV concepts and referral mechanisms for reporting violence in TRCs in Una-Sana Canton, empowering frontline service providers to take concrete actions within their professional roles to respond effectively to GBV.



UNFPA, as part of the **Interagency PSEA Network**, conducted training sessions in TRCs in Una Sana Canton and Canton Sarajevo to familiarize participants with the **Standard Operating Procedures for the Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanism (IA CBCM)**, emphasizing **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**. Introductory trainings on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) were also conducted with frontline service providers, enhancing capacities for both prevention and response to gender-based violence in crises.



UNFPA with EU support, has been steadfast in improving the psychological health and well-being of women, girls, and male GBV survivors. In the reporting months, UNFPA conducted numerous **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** activities with residents of TRCs and GBV survivors. These initiatives included individual consultations and group sessions focusing on diverse issues such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms. Additionally, UNFPA tailored psychosocial support to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including women traveling alone and individuals under neuropsychiatric care, ensuring access to necessary

services and fostering emotional stability. Group sessions covered topics like self-esteem, assertive communication, and coping strategies, aligning with events such as **International Women's Day and Mental Health Awareness Month**. Through these efforts, UNFPA continued to advocate for the normalization of seeking psychological support and the integration of mental health care into everyday well-being practices among residents in TRCs.

Together with the EU, UNFPA is committed to empowering women and girls, boys and young men through education and improved health services. UNFPA enhanced the **sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and overall well-being** of women and girls, as well as boys and young men, including GBV survivors, by delivering comprehensive SRH services in successful partnership with primary health centers in Bihac and Sarajevo.

These initiatives featured individual counseling, group SRH sessions, and specialized gynecological/urological examinations at **Primary Health Centers**, effectively and timely addressing diverse SRH issues encountered by residents of TRCs.



With EU support and in collaboration with local primary health centers, UNFPA provided vital **antenatal care services to pregnant women**, significantly reducing risk factors and promoting optimal pregnancy health. This prenatal care was crucial for ensuring the well-being of both mothers and their babies, helping them to maintain healthy pregnancies. EU and UNFPA continue to support pregnant women on the move with provision of **Sexual and Reproductive Health services and information** in cooperation with highly skilled health care providers in Bihac and Sarajevo, helping them lead healthier lives with their families.

With steadfast support from the EU, UNFPA dedicated efforts to **Cervical Health Awareness Month**, engaging women and girls in **preventive educational activities**. This commitment to health continued with **World Menstrual Hygiene Day**, where UNFPA in collaboration with the EU, hosted informative sessions on menstruation for female residents of TRCs. The occasion was made even more engaging with interactive workshops centered around the educational game "Ciklus," promoting menstrual health awareness in a fun and informative way.



In the first half of the year, UNFPA, with EU support, implemented a series of **empowerment activities and workshops** for women and girls. These initiatives fostered personal growth, skill development, and well-being through activities such as relaxation, dance, physical fitness, creative expression, and language learning. UNFPA also marked important **cultural awareness days**, such as **International Women's Day, Mother Language Day, Persian New Year, and Earth Day**, promoting gender equality, cultural diversity, and cohesion. Special workshops like "This is a Safe Place" and "What is Love" offered creative platforms for discussing personal experiences and strengthening community bonds. Additionally, physical activities like Zumba and aerobics were organized to boost overall health and motivation.



The **Women and Girls Committee meeting**, supported by the EU, was held for **women representatives**, providing a platform where women and girls can propose activities and initiatives to enhance well-being and mental health, and improve living conditions in the Temporary Reception Centers. UNFPA made special efforts to support **newly arrived women** who are traveling alone, informing them on protection measures and preventive activities. Additionally, UNFPA facilitated **information-sharing activities**, ensuring that vulnerable women, including single mothers, were well-informed about available supportive and preventive services within the Women and Girls Safe Spaces..

UNFPA together with the EU organized a series of **sports activities with boys and young men** in TRCs to highlight the positive effects of physical activity on physiological and mental health. Weekly visits to the sports center in Bihać allowed young men to participate in sports competitions like football and volleyball cultivating fellowship and healthy competition, while promoting a holistic approach to health and well-being. Additionally, to mark **World Refugee Day**, UNFPA supported a soccer tournament organized by UNHCR in Bihać, male residents' football team played against the local football team. This event, complete with prizes and medals, encouraged **community integration, bridged cultural gaps, and strengthened social ties**, raising awareness of the challenges and contributions of refugees.



Freedom as the final destination



*Name has been changed to protect privacy.

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina – The life of refugees and migrants is very difficult. They do not always run away from the wars fought with weapons. Sometimes it is a war with reality that limits, oppresses, humiliates and dehumanizes them.

Such was the reality of 44-year-old Fatmata* from West Africa, who now stays in one of the temporary reception centers in BiH.

"I fled to save my life. I fled violence. First, I was raped. Then, I was forced to join a secret society. In that society, I was completely tortured. Very tortured. You can see my body. You can see my body. I have many scars. Yes, I have many. That was why I fled. And then, I came here. I have been here for six months. Here in Bosnia", she said.

She left behind two children - two sons.

"I also had sisters, three of them, all of them are dead. I lost my mother, she was the leader of the secret society. When she died, they forced me to take her place. I said 'No'. So, I stayed in the forest for about a year. They beat me every day. There I found someone who helped me escape. He did everything for me. That was how I got here. I walked. But I was lucky that on my way through the forest no one... I didn't experience any violence from anyone. I can't stand it - it haunts me. It's not easy for me. Sometimes I have to take pills to sleep. Because sometimes memories of the past come back to me. I have memories. So, it's hard for me to fall asleep sometimes. But thank you God for Bosnia. I can thank God for Bosnia. They are very nice people here. They are so caring", Fatmata added.

Data shows that a large number of migrants and refugees transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina on their way to the European Union. But some of them, like our interlocutor, have decided to stay here, in their struggle for a better and safer future. While they are waiting for a decision on their status, i.e. to be granted asylum in BiH, they are receiving support along the way in TRCs in Sarajevo and Bihać. There, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, within the **EU-funded project "Individual measures to strengthen the response capacity to manage migration flows in Bosnia and Herzegovina"**, provides them with key support through the activities of the **Women and Girls Safe Spaces** in TRC Ušivak, Sarajevo, and TRC Borići, Bihać.

She is using the services of the safe space almost every day, where she has the opportunity to feel safe, important and valued. There, the residents have access to the programme of empowerment through workshops on sexual and reproductive health, and individual consultations. A female psychologist works with women and girls every day. Literacy, English and Bosnian/Croat/Serb language courses, as well as numerous creative workshops are also provided. Essential personal care items are available within the Women and Girls Safe Space to migrant women and refugees.

Fatmata, who escaped a life full of torture and violence says: "Sometimes we have workshops where we make handicrafts, such as necklaces and bracelets. We have fun and socialize. It's good here. The center is lively. Very, very lively. Sometimes you can hear music, you move your body. It makes you forget many things. Although you can't forget. Not easy. It's not easy. I really want to work in order to live".

Thanks to EU support, vulnerable women like Fatmata can safely access crucial services and information, helping them heal and rebuild their lives free of violence.

The project **"Individual measures to strengthen the response capacity to manage migration flows in Bosnia and Herzegovina"** is financed by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

Donors

UNFPA BiH IS GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

European Union, Basque Government, Austrian Development Agency and UNFPA Humanitarian Action Fund

This Situation Report was produced within the project "Individual measures to strengthen the response capacity to manage migration flows in Bosnia and Herzegovina" is financed by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

Its contents are the sole responsibility of UNFPA in Bosnia and Herzegovina and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.