

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, the empowerment of women, the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security.

UN Women supports Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement international gender equality commitments.

Seeking Care, Support and Justice for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Overview

In 2014, UN Women launched a project to **advance the rights and respond to the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)** from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 90s, and to provide redress to both them and their families. This joint project combines the **expertise** and **in-country experience** of four UN agencies: **IOM, UNDP, UNFPA** and **UN Women**.

The joint UN project consists of three main components:

- **Data collection, research and mapping of needs and capacities,**
- **Enhancement and expansion of CRSV-sensitive service provision,** and
- **Stigma reduction through advocacy and sensitisation.**

UN Women's focus in the joint project is:

- The **economic empowerment of survivors of CRSV and their families,**
- The **capacity of civil society organisations to represent and provide services to survivors of CRSV**
- The **reduction of stigma and deconstruction of myths surrounding CRSV among university students.**

2. Background

20 years after the 1992-95 war, survivors of conflict-related sexual still bear the dramatic consequences from the crimes in their daily lives. These consequences gain intensity with the lack of adequate response to the needs of survivors from the public institutions at different levels. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are often the sole support and service providers for survivors of CRSV, but they mostly depend on vital donor funding. Survivors speak out to be in need of enhanced access to **affordable and appropriate services**, such as free legal advice, health care and **economic empowerment**. Indeed, UN Women's consultations and dialogue with survivors have highlighted the recurrent requests for economic security and jobs, both for them and their children as a significant step towards women regaining their agency and position in society.

The project aims to contribute to the implementation of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and supporting resolutions** as well as to the fulfilment of BiH's obligations under the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (**Istanbul Convention**), amongst others.



Project Title

Seeking Care, Support and Justice for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Budget

334,439 USD

Duration

2014 – 2017

Donors

Project supported by the United Kingdom, Canada and UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Other Participating Agencies

- *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*
- *UN Development Programme (UNDP)*
- *UN Population Fund (UNFPA)*

Specific Features of the Project:

A Survivor-Centred Approach

This project puts survivors – women and men –, their rights, needs and choices at the centre, with feedback mechanisms in place to ensure their participation and a duly implemented “do no harm” principle.

A Comprehensive Strategy

The strategy combines:

- *Research and assessments*
- *Institutional and civil society partnerships*
- *Operationalised and standardised best practices*
- *Outreach*
- *Comprehensive survivor-centred approach*

3. Project Description

Information Gathering Component (2014-2015)

The first phase of the project was dedicated to identifying gaps in the existing support systems, through **comprehensive data collection and analysis** of the **gaps between the needs of survivors of CRSV** and their families and the **availability of services**.

UN Women is focused on:

- analysing the needs of CRSV survivors who actively seek services,
- assessing the capacities of services and institutions,
- identifying legislative gaps and obstacles survivors face in accessing social and economic rights,
- mapping the existing CSOs initiatives supporting survivors and identifying their needs for capacity building,
- mapping the economic schemes available for survivors,
- researching masculinity values regarding gender-based violence and CRSV.

Service Provision Strengthening and Advocacy Component (2015-2017)

The results from the information gathering component informed the current stage of the project, with the aim of creating an effective, comprehensive, and standardised approach for dealing with the rights and needs of survivors of CRSV.

UN Women focuses on:

- Enhanced **accessibility to social and criminal justice** and **economic empowerment** opportunities through:
 - supporting the economic empowerment of CRSV survivors through targeted economic schemes, advocacy with employment bureaus and strengthening referral mechanisms to include institutions responsible for economic rights;
 - enhancing the capacity and representation of survivors associations;
 - ensuring that the rights of survivors in court cases are safeguarded;
 - improving the professional capacity of first responders (investigators, prosecutors, judges) to deal with CRSV survivors.
- **Outreach and advocacy to combat stigma**, ensure **equality of citizens** and **social reintegration** by:
 - finalising the unprecedented research on masculinity and community values regarding gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence;
 - engaging in dialogue with university students on the topic and introducing some key facts about CRSV, its causes and consequences.;
 - building the capacity of media representatives reporting on CRSV and court cases, through the development of standards and trainings.

A Joint Approach

The joint approach combines the expertise, mandates and experience of four UN and associate agencies:

- IOM: reparations
- UNDP: justice sector
- UNFPA: psychosocial and health services
- UN Women: economic empowerment, CSO and first responders capacity building, CSO court monitoring.

UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict as Champion

This joint UN project is a concrete response to the efforts of Mme Zainab Hawa Bangura on the need to fulfil the rights of CRSV survivors in BiH.

Partners

UN Women works closely at the State, Entity and local levels, including gender institutions, to build their capacity. In addition, UN Women partners closely with civil society organisations to benefit from their networks and expertise in working with CRSV survivors and support their capacity building.

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