



FRAMEWORK PLAN FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN MULTISECTORAL TEAMS AND LOCAL MEDIA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



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FRAMEWORK PLAN FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN MULTISECTORAL TEAMS AND LOCAL MEDIA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



**ADVANCING THE ROLE OF LOCAL MEDIA IN THE PREVENTION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

UN WOMEN

Sarajevo, July 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Media and the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Violence against women (VAW) is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women, and represents serious violation of fundamental human rights. Every third woman in the world has experienced some form of violence. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, almost half of all women (48%) have experienced some form of violence since the age of fifteen, including psychological, physical, economic and sexual violence.¹

Societies with traditional and patriarchal behaviour patterns, much like the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, may encounter greatest obstacles to promoting gender equality; thus, working in that field should be understood as a continuous process, rather than a one-off intervention. Raising public awareness of gender equality, and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices assigned to the roles of women and men, is one of the longest-running processes in the field of work on gender equality and prevention of VAW. The media has essential and challenging roles in breaking gender stereotypes, as well as in professional reporting on violence against women and domestic violence.

Defining the role of the media, and establishing cooperation with the media in the field of preventing VAW was officially initiated by the United Nations member states 25 years ago at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. In its Chapter IV on Strategic Goals and Actions, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) recognises the media as a 'critical area of concern' especially when it comes to stereotypical portrayal of the role of women and the unequal participation of women in all communication outlets.² A decade later, the media and the role of the media have been tested and re-examined through various interventions designed to change public perceptions of gender equality and gender stereotypes.

One of the significant resources at the time was published by UNESCO in the form of Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media Study.³

Recognition of the role of the media in the prevention of VAW became a part of a legally binding framework through the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011)⁴ (hereinafter: the Istanbul Convention) ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013.

Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention regulating the Participation of the Private Sector and the Media lays down two commitments. The first instructs states parties to the Convention, to encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and the independence of the media and their editorial policy, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of local policies to prevent VAW. The second commitment relates to the introduction of self-regulatory policies and standards through which the private sector and the media will abandon harmful practices of gender stereotyping and promoting the degrading role of women in society.⁵

In addition to the Istanbul Convention, other relevant international documents for strengthening the role of media in prevention of VAWG are the Guidelines/Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The guidelines are a non-binding instrument, yet as a practical tool, they suggest solutions and concrete techniques on how to operationalise international and local standards. As noted in the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, in addition to Article 17, some of the important guidelines include Recommendation (84) 17 on equality between

¹ OSCE Survey on Violence against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Well-being and Safety of Women. OSCE, 2019. Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/7/439724_0.pdf (accessed on 8 January, 2021)

² Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), p. 17. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf (accessed on January 7, 2021)

³ UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media Study (GSIM) <https://www.media-diversity.org/resources/unescos-gender-sensitive-indicators-for-media/> (accessed on 8 January, 2021)

⁴ Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Council of Europe (2011) Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168046246e> (accessed on 8 January, 2021)

⁵ For more info see para. 107 and 108 of the Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16800d383a> (accessed on 7 January, 2021)

women and men in the media and Recommendation 1555 (2002) on image of women in the media.⁶ For example, the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Rec (2013)¹⁷ advocates concrete measures for Parties, but also for media organisations, where it reads:

Governments of member states should support awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns to combat gender stereotypes in the media.

Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Rec (2013) 1

Media organisations should be encouraged to adopt self-regulatory measures and develop media reporting standards aimed at ‘non-stereotypical portrayal, the role and visibility of women and men, avoiding sexist advertising, language and content that could lead to gender discrimination, incitement to hatred and gender violence’.

Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Rec (2013) 1

Professional standards for media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are defined by the legislative framework consisting of the Law on Communications of BiH⁸, and further institutionalised through the Communications Regulatory Agency of BiH (CRA BiH). The legal competences of the CRA BiH prescribe, *inter alia*, respect for and promotion of gender equality and elimination of all forms of representation of men or women in a stereotypical and offensive or degrading manner.⁹ With the Code on Audio-visual Media Services

and Radio Media Services¹⁰, the Council of the CRA BiH endorses guidelines prohibiting the broadcasting of programme content that incites gender-based hatred, violence, discrimination, or prejudice.

The Press and Online Media Council of BiH, as a self-regulatory body for print and online media, operates in accordance with the Press and Online Media Code of BiH.¹¹ Its Article 4a stipulates ‘gender equality and respect for individuality’. According to this Article, journalists must avoid direct and indirect comments that put individuals at a disadvantage and discriminate against them on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation.¹²

The UN Agency for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UN Women in BiH) has been working intensively since 2016 on prevention of VAW and domestic violence in BiH. Interventions in this area include improving the system of protection against violence by strengthening the capacity of service providers and by harmonising policies and laws with international standards. Work on violence prevention is also the focus of UN Women in BiH and includes work on changing attitudes and behaviours related to violence against women and girls (VAWG) and domestic violence. Cooperation with the media community to raise awareness and change harmful attitudes regarding VAW is of paramount importance to this work. The focus of the current work with the media community is to strengthen the role of the media in the prevention of violence at the local level, with the aim to encourage successful cooperation between the media and institutions/organisations involved in the work of multisectoral teams for the prevention of domestic violence. Thus, the media community and multisectoral teams have the opportunity to jointly define concrete proposals for cooperation to translate these proposals into practice.

6 Recommendation (84)17 available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16804ec678> (accessed on January 8, 2021) and Recommendation 1555(2002) available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=16996&lang=en> (accessed on January 8, 2021)

7 Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media. Available at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c7c7e (accessed on January 8, 2021)

8 Official Gazette of BiH, No. 31/03, 75/06, 32/10 and 98/12.

9 Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on legislative and other measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. P. 39. <https://arsbih.gov.ba/usvojen-izvjestaj-bih-o-provodjenju-istanbulske-konvencije/>

10 Code of Audiovisual Media Services and Radio Media Services can be downloaded from: <https://www.rak.ba/en/articles/108> (accessed on January 8, 2021)

11 Press and Online Media Code of BiH, available at: <https://www.vzs.ba/index.php/vijece-za-stampu/kodeks-za-stampu-i-online-medije> (accessed on 8 January 2021)

12 Article 4a of the Press and Online Media Code of BiH.

Development of the Framework Plan for Cooperation between Multisectoral Teams and the Media

The document was created as a result of consultative meetings with representatives of 11 multisectoral teams (hereinafter: MSTs) and/or coordination and advisory bodies working on the prevention and protection of persons facing domestic violence.

Consultative meetings organized within the programme on *Local Journalism and Reporting on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* aimed to gather knowledge about good practices of existing cooperation, examine the need for such cooperation and define models of cooperation between MSTs and local media. The programme is aimed at improving media coverage of gender-based violence against women and girls and domestic violence, but also highlighting the importance of a multisectoral response to violence, pointing out to all parties that work on violence prevention is a lengthy and continuous process, as well as that the contribution of the media can go much further than the usual *ad hoc* factual reporting.

Given all the specificities of the observed locations, and the different degree of harmonisation of the coordinated response to violence of 11 multisectoral teams, this document has a threefold role: to establish cooperation between multisectoral teams and the media in those communities where this has not been achieved, to improve cooperation between MSTs and the media in those communities where needed, and to encourage communities that are still working to establish multisectoral teams to consider and define the role of the media.

Multisectoral teams, depending on the observed location, have different work dynamics in terms of frequency of meetings, different organisational charts in terms of active and associate members, and thus, different experience and attitude towards local media outlets as determined by their experience. The next three chapters will present the following:

- *Measures* to establish and strengthen cooperation that can be applied in full (1-6) and/or in part (3-6), depending on the level of previous experience of cooperation with the media. Certain steps from this section can be applied to improve the work dynamics of multisectoral teams.
- The section on *Examples of Activities* provides concrete proposals for the work of multisectoral teams and media outlets.

- *Cooperation models* concern the dynamics and frequency of cooperation that can be adapted to the specifics of each target location.

Key Terms

Multisectoral response to domestic violence is a holistic and coordinated approach aimed at harmonising and linking programmes and activities developed and implemented by various institutions in the field of psychosocial protection, law enforcement (police, prosecution, and judicial authorities) and health. Multisectoral response is based on inter-institutional partnership and cooperation, requires a common philosophy in addressing domestic violence, and follows the principles and standards set by the partners involved.¹³

Local media operate at the level of local communities, municipalities, cities and cantons, and report on issues that are important for that specific local self-government, provide service and other information, and can play an important role in local democracy.¹⁴

Gender-responsive reporting avoids the use of stereotypes in portraying women and men as well as persons facing violence, does not use sensationalism and bombastic headlines that emphasize brutal details in reporting on violence against women, and pays more attention to research texts that will offer a broader picture of violence against women, its causes and impacts of the problem.¹⁵

Violence prevention is one way of combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence, and media here plays an instrumental role. Raising public awareness and responsible media reporting can substantively contribute to the prevention of violence. Professional and ethical media coverage on this topic contributes to the general education of the public about the dangers of violence against women and domestic violence.

¹³ Hrnčić, Z. and Bećirović, F. (2018). Dealing with cases of domestic violence. Multisectoral response. Sarajevo: Gender Centre of the FBiH

¹⁴ Hodžić, S. and Sokol, A. (2018). Public local media between public interest and financial dependence. Sarajevo: Mediacentar.

¹⁵ Dekić, S. (2017). Media Coverage of Gender-Based Violence - Handbook. Sarajevo: UN Women in BiH.

Measures for establishing and straightening existing cooperation between multisectoral teams and media at the local level

Networking of local teams and media outlets at the local level

Objective: Introduction and laying grounds for building greater trust among the media and institutions.

Implementation: Map professional media outlets in the community, as well as professional journalists, both men and women; organise live meetings where and when possible and enable participants to get to know each other not only on a formal but also on a personal basis; commission a credible partner to facilitate the process, if needed.

Defining a common problem and a common vision of the solution

Objective: Facilitate the agreement in defining a mutual problem. This is a prerequisite for a shared vision for the solution, and allows for results-oriented action.

Implementation: Highlight the common interest in raising public awareness of domestic violence and how media cooperation with a multisectoral team can contribute to this. Indicate better cooperation/improvement of cooperation as the first step in achieving that result. Provide uniform understanding of values and roles in cooperation.

Defining the objectives of cooperation of multisectoral teams and media newsrooms in accordance with the existing cooperation frameworks, and advocating for their improvement

Objective: Define the cooperation goals in accordance with the existing legislative frameworks, standards, and guidelines, at the municipal, cantonal, entity and state levels.

Implementation: Refer to relevant existing policies, including those related to media reporting, such as protocols on cooperation and action plans in the field of violence prevention, and set goals accordingly for cooperation in a way that is adapted to the needs and circumstances of the local community. In defining the goals, follow the examples of good practice as much as possible, both in BiH and at the regional and global level.

Creating different patterns/approaches to MSTs and media cooperation in accordance with different capacities of the community / multisectoral team / media outlet

Objective: Facilitate development of a tailored and contextualised intervention to ensure effective participation of all stakeholders, regardless of previous experience, the degree of cooperation of multisectoral teams, or the capacity of media outlets.

Implementation: Use standard methods to identify stakeholders; map capacities; include representatives of MSTs and journalists; leave sufficient time to maintain continuity of cooperation.

Connecting different sectors and media through maintaining and involving all partners in the process

Objective: Maintaining cooperation between the multisectoral team and the media through regular information sharing, mutual motivation, and communication.

Implementation: Identify a person on behalf of the multisectoral team who is interested in leading cooperation with the media; provide occasional training/capacity building for the MST members on media relations, communication skills, information exchange; formalise cooperation through a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of members of the MST and media outlets; give ownership of the process to multisectoral teams; motivate professionals with concrete and constructive ideas for progress towards joint problem solving.

Ensuring professional development and sufficient resources for sustainable cooperation and commitment by media professionals from local media

Objective: Facilitate sustainable cooperation through necessary resources such as dedicated time, qualified journalists, support in educating the media and members of the MST.

Implementation: In order to report responsibly and accurately on gender-based violence against women and girls, journalists will proactively cooperate with institutions providing response to domestic violence by reporting on topics contributing to raising public awareness on all forms of violence, and not only when violence occurs. They will receive support from the multisectoral team in terms of suggestions for reporting violence against women and girls (see Annex 3) as the perspective of a social problem, and avoiding reporting on violence as an isolated incident.

ANNEX 1

EXAMPLES OF THE ACTIVITIES

Improving cooperation between local media and multisectoral teams in response to violence			
Section 1: Journalists			
Activity	Brief description	Indicators	Activity holders
Consultations with journalists, both men and women, on problematic media coverage of violence against women; The MST can obtain advice from journalists/media with which it has established cooperation.	Based on the established direct relations with journalists, and in case problematic media reporting is noticed, organise a discussion with media representatives or committed journalists, both men and women.	Number of <i>ad hoc</i> consultations of media representatives and multisectoral team.	MST, with the help of a credible external partner to facilitate the exchange of information with the media, if needed.
Training of journalists, both men and women, on basics of gender responsive reporting in the media.	Journalists, use existing educational materials and available of knowledge and expertise.	Number of workshops held. Number of educational sessions.	Editors with the participation of experts from institutions working at the operational level with persons suffering violence/ subjects of protection.
Section 2: Editorial policy			
Activity	Brief description	Indicators	Activity holders
MST designs at least one annual campaign that addresses violence against women, promotes a social response to violence, and encourages media support for the campaign.	Encouraging the media to contribute to the campaign through simultaneous professional reporting. Once a year, editors add a concrete plan of contribution to raising awareness about violence against women and girls to the plan of activities and work, taking into account the campaign.	Number of citizens, both men and women, reached by the campaign, as well as media reporting in parallel with the campaign, which will showcase the contribution of the media in reporting.	Multisectoral team. Media. International and local NGOs.
Adjusting the communication plan of the MST activities.	As part of the activities and work of the Multisectoral team, it is necessary to plan communication activities, and journalists who are involved in their work can contribute; in general, the MST will try to engage and inform as much media as possible.	Number of multisectoral team trainings in strategic communication and communication plan development.	Media. External communication experts. NGOs.

Section 3: Media content			
Activity	Brief description	Indicators	Activity holders
Aligning media content with recommendations and guidelines for gender responsive reporting.	When reporting on topics in the field of violence against women, the media shall consult relevant interlocutors from the multisectoral team.	Number of consultations with the MST experts. Number of articles in line with standards responsible reporting on gender-based violence against women published in local media.	Media.
The multisectoral team develops a communication plan for the media.	The MST improves media coverage through systematic planning.	Communication plan developed.	Multisectoral Teams.
Section 4: Cooperation modalities			
Activity	Brief description	Indicators	Activity holders
Meetings of the multisectoral team and the media to exchange information on the activities undertaken in response and prevention of violence.	Improve cooperation and exchange of information within the community, between citizens, and institutional mechanisms, non-governmental organisations.	Number of organised regular meetings.	Multisectoral team. Media.
Organisation of thematic meetings or discussions.	The multisectoral team has thematic meetings with the media on reporting and priority topics in the field. A plan for thematic meetings with the media is being established.	Number of planned MST thematic meetings following media coverage.	Multisectoral teams.
Organising emergency meetings or discussions as an emergency response to a particularly sensitive case of violence.	The multisectoral team invites local media to an emergency meeting in order to make a multisectoral contribution to quality reporting to the public.	Number of emergency meetings.	Multisectoral teams. Media.

ANNEX 2

MODELS OF MEDIA ENGAGEMENT IN THE WOTK OF MSTs

	Description	Advantages and shortcoming
Modality 1 Media signatories to the Protocol on Cooperation on prevention and protection from domestic violence.	Local media representatives are active and equal members of the MST and regularly attend meetings and activities, and journalists/editors have a strong advisory role in public outreach.	Local media are fully informed about the details of the response to violence, with all its positive and negative aspects. Too much information can be shared with media representatives. There is a risk of sharing sensitive information and data that should not be publicly available.
Modality 2 Media as an associated member to the MST	Representatives of local media are occasional active members of the MST and attend meetings and activities on a quarterly basis.	Local media are partially informed about the response mechanisms to violence, with certain positive and negative aspects, in accordance with the public interest and the needs of the MST for public outreach. The media, and thus the general public, are limited in their access to information on potential problems that exist in the work of certain institutions in charge of protection against domestic violence and rely on the information that the MST chooses to share.
Modality 3 Media as declarative partners of the multisectoral team	Representatives of local media are declaratively ready to cooperate with the MST and are occasionally invited to get involved in discussions and activities of the MST.	Media have an insight into current thematic areas that are in the focus of a multisectoral team. Local media are rarely informed about the details of the response to violence, and when they are, it is incomplete and often scarce data, since the reporting habits of institutions are generally poor in BiH. Too little information is shared with media representatives, even potentially important and data that should have a path to public disclosure. With limited engagement, there is a growing danger of the media moving away from this topic.

GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL REPORTING

The findings from the research on media reporting on violence against women conducted by UN Women in BiH in 2016, 2018 and 2020, as well as the existing national and international laws, recommendations, ethical principles, codes, rules and good practices of responsible and accurate reporting on gender-based violence against women and girls, were taken into account to develop these recommendations on preferred media practices in approaching gender-based violence topics. They encourage journalists and editors to:

1. Promote **gender equality** through their work and activities in the media in accordance with national and international recommendations and laws and **abandon the stereotypical and sexist portrayal of women in media reports**;
2. Take greater accountability in promoting the **dignity of women**, combating discrimination against women and sexism, and working to **change stereotypes**;
3. Comply with the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which **prohibits the public portrayal and representation of any person, including women, in an insulting, degrading and humiliating manner on the basis of their sex**;
4. Use the Code for Press and Online Media in BiH and the Code on Audiovisual Media Services and Radio Media Services as fundamental principles of professional journalism, and especially not to **publish any content that directly or indirectly places women in an unequal position** in terms of gender-based violence against women or discriminates against them on the basis of their sex;
5. Continuously work, in cooperation with institutions dealing with the issues, on **raising awareness on gender-based violence against women** and all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, and economic, and **not only when the violence occurs**;
6. Deal more proactively with the topic of violence against women, **not relying solely on information provided by police sources or NGOs** in the field, but by working on more frequent **analytical coverage** to address these topics and calling on the relevant institutions to act;
7. **Report on violence against women and domestic violence systematically** and from the perspective of a social issue, rather than reporting briefly, without context and in crimes section.
8. Whenever possible, do not rely on short agency news or news from unreliable online portals on topics of violence against women; instead, whenever possible, use **longer journalistic forms** such as interviews, comments, or investigative stories;
9. If there is no clear public interest, **avoid publishing explicit photos** and recordings as such practices are contrary to ethical standards, may harm victims of violence and upset the public; the media should protect women's intimacy from unwarranted and sensationalist disclosure in public and pay attention not to publish unverified information, especially information which may endanger women who have suffered violence;
10. Topics involving personal tragedies are treated with exceptional care, as victims of violence should be approached with respect and without victimisation. **Portraying women as victims in public can give the impression that they are powerless and weak** because they are women; therefore, it is necessary to carefully find a balance between respect for them and interest in the story being published, but also the impact of that publication on the reputation and lives of those involved in the story, especially when it comes to children;
11. **Do not disclose the personal data and identity** of the woman (by name or photograph) victim of violence, except when she clearly wishes to do so, as this may harm her and her family;
12. Decide carefully on **revealing the identity of the perpetrator of violence**, which should not always be done, as this may lead to the disclosure of the identity of the victim of violence, but also due to the reasons of presumption of innocence;
13. **Encourage** women survivors of violence, **through analytical reporting** or careful personal approach, to speak out more strongly about violence;

14. Engage more experts, both men and women, from different fields, give space to sociologists, psychologists, social workers, in articles, TV and radio reports on VAW and DV.

15. Emphasise and remind of the **sanctions** for perpetrators of violence more often in media reports;

16. Avoid direct or indirect justification of violence by using stereotypical gender roles in reporting on VAW and DV (for example- assigning a woman exclusively the role of wife, mother, a partner and similar).

17. Avoid bombastic headlines and the use of sensationalist terms such as “shocking”, “brutal” or “horror”;

18. Place reporting on VAW **in the context of a social problem** instead of reporting on these as isolated cases of crime and portraying women as victims and thus further victimising them;

19. Do not **treat violence against women and domestic violence as an accident or tragedy** but rather as a social problem;

20. Exchange information with the governmental and non-governmental sector in combating gender-based violence against women, **more actively**, and be aware that, in addition to information sharing, reporting can be used in educational purposes.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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