



2003 Annual Report of the United Women Association, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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1. Introduction

The United Women Banja Luka is nongovernmental organization founded on August 16th 1996 in Banja Luka. Through the activities and projects of our association, we are advocating for improving social position of woman and her right to life without violence in family and public life. We want to see more women at decision making positions in official institutions of Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Our vision is: "Woman aware of her power, equal, respected, employed and happy".

Our mission is: "Strengthening and affirmation of women through advocacy and work on implementation of women's human rights".

Here we are presenting to you the 2003 annual report of our Association. It consist from following sections: overall strategic objectives/priorities for 2003, description of political, social and economic environment in which we implemented our activities, description of implemented activities and projects of United Women in 2003 (activities of fighting against violence against women, activities for increasing public awareness about trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, activities of fighting for gender equality and improving position of women in public and political life and our public advocacy actions for strengthening position of women in our society and diminishing gender based discrimination), strengthening cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations and official institutions, seminars and workshops we attended during 2003, obstacles in our work, strategic priorities for 2004 and financial overview for 2003.

We hope these information will give you overall picture about our work during 2003 and our plans for 2004. Members and professional staff of the United Women Banja Luka will be happy to provide you any additional information you need to get better insight about our activities and work.

2. Overall Strategic Objectives/Priorities for 2003:

- Fighting against violence against women through following activities: offering free legal and psychosocial assistance for women and children victims of violence, work on introducing new official policies and institutional mechanisms of fighting violence against women (new legislative and institutional measures, increasing sensibility of police workers, more efficient work of centers for social work), providing shelter for victims of violence in moments of the most severe violence (opening safe house in Banja Luka), strengthening awareness of wide population about violence against women through media advocacy (organizing TV and radio programs/discussions), and strengthening and increasing cooperation with other NGOs working on issues of violence against women in the country and abroad;

- Empowering women to participate in social changes through their active role in creation of public policies, and political decision making on local, entity, and state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina and fighting for gender equality in public and political life in B&H through following activities: intensifying cooperation with women political representatives in local councils, as well as entity and B&H assemblies, empowering women in political parties through providing them with support and new skills (public policy advocacy, lobbying, communication with media, campaigning), media activities related to encouraging women to take an active role in political and public life (TV and radio programs/discussions etc.), organizing public discussions/round tables for men and women citizens of Banja Luka, and other similar activities;

- Public advocating for strengthening position of women in our society, and diminishing discrimination of women in political, economic, and social sphere through monitoring of the positive legal regulation and initiating procedures and initiatives for changes of discriminatory laws;
- Increasing public awareness about trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and public advocacy for more efficient work of official institutions in Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina on prevention of trafficking of people;
- Strengthening cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations and official institutions in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region (developing joint projects and initiatives, exchange of information and expertise, offering our assistance in developing skills and increasing knowledge about women's human rights and gender equality etc.);
- Developing internal capacities of the Association through engaging new staff and volunteers and working on development of organizational sustainability through long term financial, program and management planning;

3. Political, Social and Economic Environment in which We implemented Our Activities:

- In the period from January to July 2003, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina enacted numerous legislative and policy changes which were intended to make an influence on improvement of overall situation in our country. He appointed the members of the B&H Criminal Court, and enacted several important legislative acts in the area of Criminal Law; such are the Law on Protection of Witnesses under Threat and Vulnerable Witnesses, the Criminal Code of B&H, the Criminal Procedure Code of B&H, and the Law on Judicial Police of B&H. Furthermore, during May 2003, he enforced several important decisions in the field of protection of property rights of refugees and displaced persons, such are the following: Decision in the field of authority of Commission for Property Claims of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Republika Srpska, and changes in Law about Dismissing Law about Usage of Abandoned Property in Republika Srpska. Furthermore, the High Representative announced decision about changes in the Constitutions of Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and required erasing provisions in using terms of statehood related to the Entities. However, several politicians in Republika Srpska made comments about this decision, connecting it to the attempts of the international community to wipe out Republika Srpska. In addition, in early July 2003 the European Stability Initiative (ESI) based in Berlin and Sarajevo published very critical report about OHR activities during the past period, accusing them for hindering the democratic processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- We can notice that position of refugees and displaced persons in Republika Srpska did not changed generally, regardless the fact that some international organizations, such as the International Crisis Group report about 150 000 of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that succeeded to get their property back, which is 62% of total applications for property returns. Media in Republika Srpska reported about official position of the RS Government that refugees who decided to stay in Republika Srpska will not be supported through budget funds. According to the Annex 7. of the Dayton Peace Agreements, refugees have right to return, exchange of property, and just compensation. Despite this, until now, official authorities and international community only supported return to the previous homes, and there is no initiative or support for just compensation. This provoked protests from refugee associations; such is the Association "Ostanak" in Republika Srpska that advocate rights of refugees to stay in current places of residence.

- During January 2003, the People's Assembly of Republika Srpska, appointed the new Government of RS. Mr. Dragan Mikerevic from the PDP (Party of Democratic Progress) was appointed as the Prime minister, and on 16 ministerial positions ministers were appointed in compliance with the constitutive decision of all peoples in the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina – 8 ministers from the side of Serb people, 5 from Bosnijak people, and 3 from Croat people. The most disappointing fact for us was that no women were appointed for executive positions as Ministers, and we consider this step back in our efforts to strengthen position of women in political life in Republika Srpska, and equal opportunity of women to participate in decision making processes. We reacted immediately, and sent our protest letter to the Prime minister, Mr. Mikerevic. In his letter from January 30th 2003, he informed us that he asked political parties in Republika Srpska to nominate female candidates, however no party responded positively. Furthermore, during our meeting with the RS Prime minister in April 2003 we used the opportunity to lobby for female candidate for empty position of the Minister of Finance, and we suggested several women for this position. Even our requests did not find positive response in the Government we consider this small step forward in opening dialogue and communication between government and nongovernmental initiatives, as well as our public advocacy and lobbying effort for more women in political structures of our society. We will continue with initiatives of pressuring the highest executive authorities to participate in positive changes related to the gender equality and improving of the position of women.
- As the part of extensive economic and social reform policy, the Government of Republika Srpska introduced initiative of law reforms, so called “Buldozer Initiative”, which should introduce 150 new laws in a short procedure. In the period from May 7th until June 15th 2003, RS Government conducted the initiative called “40 Days of Dialogue about Social Reforms” through organizing public discussions with government officials about current legislative and policy reforms and how they will affect citizens of Republika Srpska. These discussions were held on the municipal level under slogan “Say it, Government Listen”.

Although this process exemplifies gradual improvement in openness of the governmental institutions toward wide public and citizens and wide advertisement of the campaign, we noticed that a small number of citizens have participated in the discussions, which certainly reflects lack of trust in sincere efforts of the governmental institutions to improve difficult social situation in Republika Srpska, reflected through three strikes in Republika Srpska within the first six month period. First strike was organized by the workers of “Elektroprivreda”, the state owned company from strategic importance for Republika Srpska, which entered into the process of privatization. The strike has been organized by the workers who oppose privatization, with arguments that they are frightened with threat that many of them will loose jobs. The second strike was organized by the university workers in Republika Srpska, for the first time in postwar period. The main initiating reason for protests was decision of the RS Government to reduce salaries of the university professors. However, the Government did not react on their demands. The third strike was organized by the medical workers of the Clinical Center in Banja Luka, due to bad working conditions and unpaid salaries for the last six months.

- In May 2003, Parliamentary Assembly of B&H adopted the Gender Equality Law in B&H, and it entered into the force in June 2003. We consider it very important that together with numerous organizations from the Gender Coalition of NGOs in B&H we participated in drafting the provisions and lobbying for this Law, since its implementation is important for our work in a future. This Law should certainly represent a starting point for many official policy actions for diminishing gender based discrimination in B&H, but it also provides important tool for us who work on the level of civil society to use it in pressuring for changes in discriminative legislation and forcing affirmative action initiatives in governmental structures. Important thing is that

Gender Equality Law includes penalty provisions and obligation of state and entity institutions to adjust all other legislative to this Law. For example, in the practice this means that we can insist on changes of the Election Law, which as been gender discriminative, but also to request from all levels of governance to secure equal number of women in all decision making structures, and to initiate other similar activities. During the period August - September 2003, there were intensive negotiations between RS Government and representatives of different syndicates in relation to the issue of development of social program for improving position of employed workers, as well as creating clear official policy related to the protection of unemployed people. Requests of syndicates were directed toward faster reconstruction of economy and state owned companies as well as finding solutions for those workers who stayed without job due to the privatization. The main syndicate leader in RS Čedo Volaš had several media statements where he pointed on promises received from RS Government that they will adopt new social policy at the beginning of December 2003, which unfortunately still did not happen.

- During 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina started intensive process of economic, social and political reforms aimed for creating condition for joining international associations, such is the Partnership for Peace program of NATO, and initiating process of joining European Union. The process has been characterized with increased pressure of international organizations and foreign diplomatic representatives made on entity and state institutions and officials, and the main objections in Republika Srpska were that this process seriously enter into changes of Dayton Peace Agreement in the favor of reducing power of entities and strengthening state institutions. This process will be continued intensively during 2004, and will highly influence further political and social developments in the country.

4. Implemented Activities/Projects:

Our activities in 2003 were corresponding to our strategic objectives/priorities and mission and vision of our Association.

Activities of Fighting Against Violence Against Women

a). Woman and Law - Phase VII 2003 - Free Legal and Psychosocial Assistance for Women Victims of Violence. We are implementing this project in cooperation with the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka since 1997, thanks to understanding and long term support from Kvinna till Kvinna foundation from Sweden. The activities we implemented in 2003 were following: free legal assistance and representation of women in courts and other official institutions, free assistance of the social worker and clinical psychologist, SOS lines and assistance of volunteers for young women, girls and children victims of violence, organization of the twelve workshops about family violence for Council for cooperation of parents, teachers and students in elementary schools in Banja Luka, Prijedor and Gradiska, organization of weekly discussion groups for women victims of violence, organization of regular monthly meetings with women politicians, representatives in the People's Assembly of Republika Srpska, monthly radio programs on topics related to protection of women's human rights and gender equality, publishing booklet - Guide for Abused Women, with basic information about self protection, legislative protection, and contact information about nongovernmental organizations and official institutions that can protect women against violence.

Accomplished Results: During 2003, we provided legal and psychosocial assistance to **669** women beneficiaries from Banja Luka and surrounding region, and successfully closed **82** cases (some of them were cases continuing from 2002). The office had regular volunteers' duties on SOS line every day from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM, and they received **976** calls for assistance from women victims of violence, and their close relatives, such are daughters and sons, sisters, brothers, aunts,

and mothers. In several cases, neighbors of the victims called when the violence was taking place, so our volunteers called police, which went to intervene. Women victims of domestic violence got support from other women who survived domestic violence and with whom they had an opportunity to meet and speak openly about their problem and try to overcome it together. Our assistance and organized discussion groups also served as education for women to learn how to fight their problems in the future, as well as to help other women in their environment.

New and improved edition of Women's Notebook - Guide for Abused Women proved to be very useful in providing basic information for victims of violence and introducing them to the facts about violence and profile of abusers, possibilities of self help, protection and assistance offered by nongovernmental organizations and official institutions, as well as legislative protection in domestic laws.

Through our workshops for councils for cooperation of parents, teachers and students in Banja Luka, Prijedor, and Gradiska we were able to educate them about violence against women and children, and support them to fight against domestic violence in their own local communities. Our meetings with women politicians initiated our joint work on lobbying for important legislative changes, and therefore securing better protection of women. Regular meetings improved our cooperation and helped us to get better understanding of internal procedures within governmental institutions, which will certainly increase effectiveness of our future advocacy actions. The project will continue in 2004.

During past years, our project and initiative became more recognizable among women in Banja Luka and RS as one of the possibilities for fighting for solving their legal, social and psychological problems related to violence and securing their rights in front of the various official institutions. Although with numerous obstacles, we succeeded to establish good level of cooperation with official institutions, especially with the Center for Social Work in Banja Luka and police.

b). Opening of the Safe House/Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Domestic Violence from the Banja Luka Region

The project is result of long term efforts and lobbying of the international organizations and local official institutions by the women and men activists of the United Women Association Banja Luka. Main objective of the project is providing temporary shelter for victims of domestic violence in the moments of acute violence.

Thanks to our long term lobbying of the municipality institutions in Banja Luka and Prime minister of RS, we succeeded to get financial support for buying the safe house/shelter for women and children victims of violence in Banja Luka. In this initiative, we got support from our friends, women politicians in the People's Assembly of RS and Local City Council of Banja Luka, as well as Gender Center of RS, as they provided us the letters of support.

We had problems to realize decision of the Banja Luka City Government about previously granted land spot for placing prefabricated house, because the High Representative in B&H changed the legislation, therefore we decided to buy the house.

Since we were short for the money for paying taxes and part of the price for the house, we applied for urgent intervention support with the Open Society Fund in Sarajevo, which supported us with funds to cover these costs.

Thanks to the support and understanding we had from Ms. Vivian Bang, Crime co-locator from the European Police mission in Banja Luka, we successfully lobbied Danish Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide additional sources for final works on the house, and this initiative is currently under realization through the Danish Refugee Council from Mostar as implementing organization for the final construction and renovation work on the house. The shelter should be opened during 2004.

c). Participation in Writing of the Alternative Report on 1979 Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention).

In cooperation with the numerous women's NGOs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina we produced the part of alternative report related to the violence against women and trafficking of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This action was developed with support of the International Human Rights Law Group. In December 2003, the United Women member participated in the public hearing and discussion about official B&H CEDAW Report in front of the State Commission for Gender Equality of the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H.

d). Prevention of the Domestic Violence - Joint Project With Official Institutions in Republika Srpska

This project started in December 2003 and will be completed in August 2004. It consist from multidisciplinary activities of working with both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. It is important that we are partners in this project with the Center for Social Work Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska and Center for Public Security (Police) Banja Luka.

This project is result of cooperation between Center for Social Work Banja Luka, United Women Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska, Organization of the Family Therapeutics "Pro Familia" and Center for Public Security (Police) Banja Luka. Activities of the project are directed toward organization of trainings about domestic violence for police workers and center for social work in several police stations of Banja Luka, organization of the round table "Prevention of Domestic Violence", and program of direct work with families affected by the domestic violence, through experimental counseling work with perpetrators.

e). Participation in the Working Group for Drafting the Law for Protection Against Family Violence

This initiative was intended to join representatives of nongovernmental organizations working on the issue of violence against women, representatives of judicial institutions, police and centers for social work from both Republika Srpska and Federation of B&H. Members of the United Women Banja Luka were invited on several meetings, and noticed that NGOs are unfortunately excluded from narrow working groups composed from judges and police workers, and we were invited only to satisfy formal consultation role without ant possibility to make influence on the people who are actually drafting the Law. We have conflicting opinions about penalties for domestic violence, which they wish to regulate as minor offence by this Law, not a criminal act as previously regulated by the Criminal Code in both RS and Federation of B&H. Furthermore, there is a good initiative for introducing protection measures in the cases of domestic violence (for example, restricting order for perpetrator and his obligatory detention), however they have been confusingly formulated which opens possibilities for manipulation in the practice.

After consultations we had with several women's organizations in both entities of B&H, as well as members of the Gender Coalition in B&H, especially discussion we had on the workshop for creating Platform for Action of the Gender Equality Law in B&H that we organized in December 2003 in Banja Luka, we decided to work on developing our own proposal for this Law and lobby legislators for legislation that will have real effects and assistance to the victims of violence in the practice.

Activities for Increasing Public Awareness About Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

a). Implementation of the Project "One Time Action–Activities on Fighting Against Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Activities of the project were lectures about trafficking of people organized in elementary schools in Banja Luka and Bosanska Gradiška, radio programs and TV programs with guests from official institutions and NGOs, actively involved in finding solutions for this issue. Additionally, we organized small poster campaign as integral part of this project. This project was implemented in the period from December 2002 until March 2003.

b). Organization of the Round Table "Prevention of the Trafficking of People in B&H - Possibilities of Cooperation Between NGOs and Official Institutions". We organized this round table in April 2003, in cooperation with women's association LARA Bijeljina, and with financial support of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe. The main objective of this round table was exchanging experiences and current strategies, and searching for possibilities for cooperation between NGOs and official institutions in fighting against trafficking of people in B&H. The participants were representatives of the official institutions, and local and international NGOs that are working on the problem of the trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

c). Participation in the RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the period from April 2003 to November 2003, the United Women Banja Luka was coordinating office for the Network, and organized several meetings and exchange of information between members of the Network. This was possible thanks to the financial support received from Mama Cash Foundation from the Netherlands. Organizations members of the Network founded the Network with objective of organizing joint initiatives, exchange of information and better coordination on fighting trafficking of women and girls in B&H, as well as pressuring of the official institutions to develop sustainable policies on fighting trafficking of people.

d). Working Meetings with Regional Working Group organized on the Initiative of the OSCE Banja Luka. During the period from August 2003 until October 2003, the United Women members were participating in working meetings in the OSCE Regional Center Banja Luka and supported the initiative for creating anti-trafficking group on the regional level. Representatives of OSCE want to start with the projects of anti trafficking education in final grades of elementary schools in Banja Luka region, and United Women members were invited to provide training and consultant services.

e). Meeting with the State Working Group for Prevention of Trafficking and Illegal Migration of People. The meeting was organized in December 2003 in Sarajevo. Representatives of local authorities involved in fighting trafficking of people in B&H organized this meeting to present previous activities and plans for future period. Although we noticed that local nongovernmental organizations were invited just formally, we find it useful for receiving first hand information about official anti-trafficking actions and use it as tool for development our advocacy activities.

Activities of Fighting for Gender Equality and Improving Position of Women in Public and Political Life

a). Woman Today - Phase VII 2003. We are implementing this project in cooperation with the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka since 1997, thanks to understanding and long term support from Kvinna till Kvinna foundation from Sweden. The activities we implemented in 2003 were following: preparatory meetings with representatives of political parties in the offices of hCa Banja Luka and United Women Banja Luka, public discussions in Banja Luka, TV public discussions, round tables, TV round tables, workshops for women in public and political life, press conferences

about the activities of our two organizations, and publishing a booklet about activities of our two organizations. The overall project objective is decreasing all forms of discrimination toward women, and creation of social environment in which women and men are equal.

Accomplished Results: Problems of women and burning issues of our society were presented in media through various public and TV sessions. We developed good cooperation with women from different political parties. During implementation of the project, we provided support for women in public and political life. Beside women from political parties, we also established cooperation with numerous men from public and political life. Through using logical framework analysis approach in our public discussions and workshops, we educated women from nongovernmental organizations and political parties about importance of women's participation in all levels of public life - from political to other fields. Our activities were well covered in media in paid programs. This year, media were interested for problems of women and they were covering our activities in terms that were not paid. We held one round table where we discussed about CEDAW Reports in the states emerged after dissolution of SFRY. Unfortunately, we did not have representatives of all countries, however, through exchange of experiences we were able to realize that our problems are similar and that our countries do not provide enough attention to the problems of women, as it is regulated in the CEDAW Convention. In order to complete our tasks in 2003, we organized six public meetings, one regional round table, five workshops, eight TV programs, three press conferences, and eleven meetings of the Advisory Board. We also prepared leaflets for our activities and final project booklet.

b). Implementation of the Project "From the Law to the Real Equality". This project will be implemented in partnership with the Women's Center ZAR from Sarajevo, thanks to the financial support from the Open society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project will be implemented in the period from November 2003 until March 2004, with the main objective of creating joint Platform for Action of the nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina that will determine long term and short term strategies for the implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H, at all levels - from the local community to the state level. As the part of project activities we are planning two entity workshops and one conference at the B&H level, in order to enable women's organizations and women politicians to work together on priorities in the implementation of the Gender Equality Law through developing common Platform for Action. We hope these workshops and conference will provide us with concrete steps and strategy for future activities of fighting for equal position of women and men in our society. We have great support for these activities from nongovernmental organizations, members of the Gender Coalition of B&H and International Human rights Law Group in B&H.

Public Advocacy for Strengthening Position of Women in Our Society and Diminishing Gender Based Discrimination

a). Implementation of the Media Project "Strengthening of Public Awareness for Discrimination of Women and Gender Related Violations of Human Rights in B&H". This one -year project started in June 2003. United Women Banja Luka are implementing it in cooperation with the women's association AmicaEv Freiburg, Germany, and thanks to the financial support of the EED Germany. The project is directed toward improvement of awareness about women's human rights and issues determined in 1995 Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action. The project activities are following: organization of the eleven TV programs/discussions about specific topics related to the protection of women's human rights, position of woman in our society, and implementation of the Platform for Action of the Beijing Declaration, conducting of the two field survey researches - one at the beginning of the project and one at the end of the project in order to get insight and concrete information about condition and respect of women's human rights

and position of women in our society, printing of the brochure with the texts from our guests in TV discussions and results of the survey, and organization of the press conference in order to present results of the project to the public and push authorities in Republika Srpska to improve conditions of the women's human rights in our country.

Accomplished Results: We believe we succeeded to make public visibility of the problems and encouraged authorities to make additional efforts to implement 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. This is clearly noticeable from the fact that official authorities showed interest for our project, and made effort to participate in public TV discussions about women's issues organized by the local nongovernmental organization, as well as to make existence/nonexistence of proper state response transparent to the common population and the public. This will certainly reflect toward opening of the dialogue between "government and the public", and encourage debate about gender discrimination and lack of state initiative to fight to improvement of women's human rights in our society. The results of the project can be visible since great number of citizens, both sexes showed interest for our TV program/discussion. There were 124 people - 47 men and 72 women that contacted us to give their comments about the topics and ask for additional information about our activities. We can emphasize that at least 25 women expressed their interest to participate (either directly or through providing public support) in our activities related to initiating campaigns for fighting women's problems in our community, especially the problems related to the violence against women and children, securing better health protection for women and improving position of women in economy and education. This gives us possibility to have long term effects of the project through initiating numerous follow up activities related to the identified problems and start campaigns and advocacy activities directed toward relevant authorities. Although we have had a possibility of direct calls to the TV studio during broadcast of the TV programs/discussions, majority of interested women and men contacted us afterwards to our office, or they called television and asked for our contacts.

b). Organization of the Public Discussion "Transparency of the Legislative Process - Promotion of the Public Participation and Responsibility of the Legislator as Guarantee for Democracy". We organized this round table in May 2003, in cooperation with the International Human Rights Law Group (IHLRG), office in Sarajevo. The participants were women politicians, representatives of parliamentary political parties in Republika Srpska, members of local nongovernmental organizations, and representatives of the international organizations from Banja Luka. We discussed the openness of the People's Assembly for outside initiatives, and procedures for disseminating information from parliamentary meetings. The women politicians especially emphasized possibilities for using the parliamentary mechanisms; such is the Commission for Gender Equality and Social Position of Woman in RS, as well as political parties, in order to lobby for important legislative changes that could improve economic, social, and political position of not only women, but also all citizens of Republika Srpska.

c). Organization of the Public Hearing "Priorities for the Implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H". We organized this public hearing in November 2003, in cooperation with the International Human Rights Law Group (IHLRG), office in Sarajevo. Participants were women and men representatives in the People's Assembly of Republika Srpska, and we informed them about opinion of civil society organizations and defining models for encouraging citizens' participation in creating policies for implementation of the Law.

As the part of our public advocacy/lobbying activities, United Women Banja Luka conducted monitoring of the work of official institutions, especially legislative processes within the People's Assembly of Republika Srpska and Parliamentary Assembly of B&H and preparing amendments on legislation important for securing protection of the women's human rights and gender equality in B&H.

5. Strengthening Cooperation with Other Nongovernmental Organizations and Official Institutions

Accomplished Results

As important part of our long term strategy and strengthening our visibility in local and regional environment, we are directing our efforts to develop cooperation, exchange of information and joint initiatives with other nongovernmental organizations in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the region. Here we would like to emphasize our cooperation with local women's organizations - members of the Kvinna till Kvinna Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gender Coalition in B&H and RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network in B&H, with which we developed numerous initiatives and joint projects. Our friends from international organizations - Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden, AmicaEv Germany and International Human Rights Law Group (IHRLG) office in B&H enabled us to widen our perspectives on fighting for better position of women in our country through learning from their experiences and examples from other countries. It is of great value that they remind us constantly how important is for us to work not only on local issues, but also be visible regionally and globally, in order to offer our support to other women and to increase our perspective about international instruments of fighting for women's human rights and gender equality.

In eight years of our existence, United Women Banja Luka developed good cooperation with official institutions, especially those who are by their official duty responsible for policy development and implementing specific steps for improvement of women's human rights and gender equality in our society. During 2003, we especially improved our cooperation with Government of Republika Srpska, which offered us financial support for opening shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence in Banja Luka. We strengthened our cooperation with women politicians from local political parties and women in executive governance, such are People's Assembly of Republika Srpska and Local City Government in Banja Luka. They are regularly supporting our advocacy initiatives within policy and decision making structures and we assist them with providing information and advices, legal expertise and analysis.

Furthermore, our cooperation with police and Center for Social Work in Banja Luka improved in terms of more efficient interventions, protection and assistance to the victims of domestic violence.

Here is an overview of our activities directed toward developing cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and official institutions:

As the part of Women and Law VII project activities supported by Kvinna till Kvinna from Sweden, in March 2003 we organized seminar "Logical Project Planning – Exit Strategies" for women's organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported by Kvinna till Kvinna from Sweden. The seminar was facilitated by Ms. Kari Ortengren, consultant from SIDA Sweden. At this seminar, we were able to exchange experiences with our sister organizations, and define in which stage we are now, to get assistance in order to develop common strategy of survival after ending support from Kvinna till Kvinna and other international organizations. We learned new approach in project planning and writing (LFA method), which will enable more us to be more realistic and concrete in planning of our future activities.

In September 2003, as the part of Women and Law VII activities supported by Kvinna till Kvinna from Sweden we organized workshop "How to Present Yourself to the Wide Public" facilitated by our friend Lena Ag from Sweden provided a space for women members of the nongovernmental organizations from Kvinna till Kvinna Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina to improve their knowledge and communication skills with media, and acquire skills of developing campaigns and

presentation of their projects, objectives and initiatives in local community. This will certainly improve recognition of women's initiatives and development of greater support from different social groups in local community for improving position of women and respect of women's human rights.

In November 2003, member of the United Women Banja Luka visited our sister organization Women's Center Trebinje to pay a visit to their project and present experiences of our organization in the work with victims of violence.

At the beginning of December 2003, our sister organization LARA from Bijeljina opened SOS phone for women victims of trafficking and invited members of United Women Banja Luka to conduct trainings for SOS phone volunteers about basic principles of working on the SOS line.

In December 2003, as the part of our cooperation with Women's Center ZAR from Sarajevo on the project "From Legislative Protection to Real Gender Equality", supported by the Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, we organized workshop under title *"Development of the Strategy for Real Implementation of the Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Platform for Action"* Workshop participants were women from nongovernmental organizations, women politicians, and women from media from Republika Srpska - from Banja Luka, Visegrad, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Gradiska, Novi Grad, Modrica and Prijedor. Workshop objectives were following: a). introducing workshop participants into the Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and areas regulated by this Law, b). development of the long term strategy for implementation of this Law - where are our concrete and common interests of work, c). defining priorities and directions for activities of nongovernmental sector in the area of Republika Srpska in developing NGO Platform for Action for implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H in the whole territory. The project will last from November 2003 until March 2004.

In the period from December 2003 until August 2004, United Women Banja Luka will participate in the implementation of the project "Prevention of Domestic Violence", through developing multidisciplinary activities of working with both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. This project is result of cooperation between Center for Social Work Banja Luka, United Women Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska, Organization of the Family Therapeutics "Pro Familia" and Center for Public Security (Police) Banja Luka. Activities of the project are directed toward organization of trainings about domestic violence for police workers and center for social work in several police stations of Banja Luka, organization of the round table "Prevention of Domestic Violence", and program of direct work with families affected by the domestic violence, through experimental counseling work with perpetrators.

In December 2003, United Women Banja Luka joined the working group for monitoring the textbooks on gender components, initiated by UNICEF and Gender Centers in Republika Srpska and Federation of B&H. This group had initial meeting on December 15th 2003 in Sarajevo, in order to develop working strategy and determine textbooks for monitoring. The main objectives of this working group are following: gender sensitive textbooks in elementary schools education and creating preconditions for more qualitative production of textbooks. Beside representatives of the nongovernmental organizations, members of this working group are representatives of Pedagogical Institute of RS, School of Philosophy in Sarajevo and Gender Center of RS.

In December 2003, United Women Banja Luka joined Advisory Board in the project *"Promotion and Education for Improvement of Health and Social Status of Women in B&H"* initiated by the ADL Barcelona. The main objectives of this project are field research about needs and possibilities for using social services of the official institutions and their quality, and conducting health and social education of women and young girls in local communities. We are cooperating on this project

with our sister organizations Zene Zenama Sarajevo, Zene sa Une Bihac, Medica Zenica and Most Visegrad.

During 2003, members of our Association continued their activities as trainers and facilitators on workshops and seminars, as the way of our support for local and international nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in following areas: public advocacy skills, building capacity and institutions, strategic planning, organizational development, human rights, gender equality, development of project proposals and logical framework analysis for implementation of projects in local community, development of fundraising strategy, campaigning, collaboration, and networking, estimation of needs in local community and field research, leadership development and facilitative leadership, trainings for development of facilitative skills, communication skills, media presentations, and management for nongovernmental organizations.

6. Seminars and Workshops:

In May 2003, United Women Banja Luka representative attended the presentation of research results "Domestic Violence for the area of Banja Luka and Trebinje", held on the University of Banja Luka, Philosophy College – Social Work Department. The research was conducted in the joint cooperation of the Gender Center Republika Srpska and Union of Student of the Social Work, University of Banja Luka. The research was conducted as pilot project in March 2003, in urban area of Banja Luka, and urban and rural communities of Trebinje. The field researches were 3rd year students of Social Work, and they developed research questionnaires based on open and closed questions and multiple choices answers on already defined answers. The research was based on three target groups: 20% people 18-25 years of age, 40% people 25 – 35 years of age, and 40% people over 35 year of age. The presentation included only results of research for Banja Luka urban population.

The first question was: What do you consider as family violence, and responses were as follows: physical violence (96% of responses), mental violence (77%), sexual violence (76%), preventing of the decision making (31%), and verbal quarrels (29%). On the question how frequent is domestic violence, 96% of people considering it huge problem, 66% of women, and 47% of men. On the question would you report domestic violence if you know for it, 72% of people responded yes, and 28% of people would not report it. On the question would you report family violence if it happen in your family, 84% of people responded yes, and 16% would not. On the question do you know someone who is victim of domestic violence, 60% of people know, and 40% does not know, 60% of victims are women, and 28% are girls. The most frequent causes of violence are: alcohol, jealousy, and financial dependence from perpetrator, identified from all three age groups. The most frequent causes identified for suffering from violence are: fear, children, financial dependence, and tradition, as believes that women should be quiet and listen her husband and partner.

In July 2003, United Women Banja Luka representatives participated on "Lilja 4ever" movie projection in Sarajevo, organized by the Swedish Embassy in B&H, Kvinna till Kvinna, and Swedish Institute. After projection of movie related to the experiences with trafficking of people in Sweden, we had discussion about the movie. We got idea that, after we get the copy of the movie with translation on local language, to develop the project of organizing the movie projection within the women's sections of political parties in order to lobby for changes of Criminal Code of RS related to the trafficking of people, as well as increasing awareness about this problem. We will develop these activities as pilot project, and apply for support to SIDA Sweden.

In December 2003, United Women Banja Luka representative participated in the regional conference "Implementation of the Gender Policy and Practice" in Banja Luka, organized by the Gender Center of Republika Srpska. Participants were women representatives of nongovernmental

organizations and official gender commissions from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia and Montenegro. The main conclusions from the conference were following: establishing regional cooperation on the activities for reaching gender equity and equality, identifying persons for organizational and technical work on establishing regional network, establishing regional network of the official institutions that will work on concrete steps for developing regional cooperation, defining activities and priorities of regional cooperation.

In December 2003, United Women representative participated in the round table about Beijing Declaration and its Implementation in Republika Srpska, organized by the Gender Center of RS. Introductory speakers were Olivera Kunjadic from the Ministry of Labor in RS and Anka Seranic from the Social Protection Fund. The main focus of the discussions was on following topics: women and poverty, women and armed conflicts, women's health and protection of female children. The representatives of United Women presented our activities related to promotion of Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action.

7. Obstacles in Our Work:

In 2003, United Women's Association Banja Luka did not face significant obstacles in implementation of our projects and planned activities. Thanks to strategic development of our projects and successful fundraising, we did not have financial difficulties to implement our activities. However, the major difficulty for our future sustainability and long term planning represents the fact that we are, as well as practically all local nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, heavily dependant on financial support from international organizations and foreign governmental agencies. This certainly slow down our organizational growth and influence overall success of our projects in terms of long term planning.

Additional difficulty represents complicate political, social and economic situation in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite declarative support for the internal process of Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of opening toward integration into European Union and NATO Partnership for Peace program, it is broadly visible that official institutions on entity and state level of Bosnia and Herzegovina reflect absence of clear indicators of progress in terms of fighting poverty, criminal networks, corruption of officials and establishing sustainable official policies in all segments of social and economic progress and development.

All of this signalizes need for extensive work of local nongovernmental organizations in a future, especially in terms of creating conditions for further democratic developments and strengthening civil society in all fields of life - from education, politics and economy to implementation of gender equality and strengthening women's human rights.

8. Strategic Priorities in 2004:

During 2004, we will continue to follow our strategic objectives from previous period, and especially focus on following priorities:

- Fighting against violence against women and diminishing gender based discrimination;
- Empowering women to participate in social changes through their active role in creation of public policies, and political decision making on local, entity, and state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Public advocating for strengthening position of women in our society, and diminishing discrimination of women in political, economic, and social sphere through activities on implementation of the Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- Strengthening cooperation with other nongovernmental organizations and official institutions in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region;
- Developing internal capacities of the Association.

9. Financial Overview for 2003:

Year	Activity & Project	Donor	Amount
2003	Women and Law Project - Phase VII	SIDA Sweden - Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	66623,00 EURO
2003	Woman Today VII - through implementing partner Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka	SIDA Sweden - Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden	52760,00 EURO
2003	One Time Action - media and educational activities against trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with LARA Bijeljina	Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe	8670,91 USD\$
2003	Organization of the round table: Prevention of the Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Possibilities for Cooperation Between Nongovernmental Organizations and Official Institutions, in cooperation with LARA Bijeljina	Embassy of the Czech Republic Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe	4000,00 EURO
2003	Support for six months of coordination activities of the RING NGO Network Against Trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mama Cash, The Netherlands	3855,71 EURO
2003	Media Project "Strengthening of Public Awareness for Discrimination of Women and Gender Related Violations of Human Rights in B&H", in cooperation with AmicaEv Germany	EED Germany	37618,00 EURO
2003	Safe House/shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Banja Luka	Government of Republika Srpska Open Society Fund in B&H	70000,00 BAM 7500,00 BAM
2003/2004	From the Law to Real Gender Equality - NGO Platform for Action for the Implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H, in cooperation with the Women's Center ZAR Sarajevo	Open society Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Women's Program	19750,00 BAM

Banja Luka, February 2004