



## **2004 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 2004 annual report of our Association. It consist from following sections: overall strategic objectives/priorities for 2004, description of political, social and economic environment in which we implemented our activities, description of implemented activities and projects of United Women in 2004 (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 2004, obstacles in our work, strategic priorities for 2005 and financial overview for 2004.

We hope these information will give you overall picture about our work during 2004 and our plans for 2005. 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 2004:

- Fighting against violence against women through 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- Support for sustainable return in Bosnia and Herzegovina through conflict resolution workshops with women in rural communities;
- 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:**

- Military reforms on entity and state levels for accession of B&H to the NATO Partnership for Peace Program and assessment of necessary reforms for accession to the European Union were dominating public and political priorities in both entities of B&H. These reforms almost completely occupied politicians in RS, and caused lack of the media and public attention on increased social and economic destabilization, problems in providing health and social services to the population, increase of poverty and unemployment. Neglect of urgency in social and economic reforms by the Government of RS was reflected through several protests during first half of the year. The largest oppositional political parties organized first protests in March 2004, and oppositional political leaders called for new general elections and radical changes in Government of RS because of its inefficiency in solving social and economic crisis. Pensioners and farmers' associations organized other two protests in May and June 2004, and called for better social protection of pensioners and enforcement of official policy for protection of domestic products. In such a situation, problems of violence against women, protection of women's human rights, gender equality, and lack of women in political and public life of RS are pushed on social margins and became "issues of less important priority".

- Increased pressure of the international community through the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina on entity political structures to intensify activities on finding and extraditing war criminals to the Hague Tribunal. Culmination of the pressure happened in the end of June 2004, when the High Representative permanently and conditionally dismissed 59 officials in Republika Srpska, many of them closely related to the two largest national parties in Republika Srpska – SDS Serbian Democratic Party and Radical Party of Republika Srpska. This additionally draws public attention from difficult social and economic situation, and served as excuse for governance structures to appoint all men on the empty places in official institutions, and once again neglect demands for improvements in equal representation of women and men at all levels of decision-making.

- Some international organizations, such is Freedom House from Budapest, report about lack of serious action against corruption in judicial services, police and social services, and claim this represent the main obstacle to the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Return of refugees and displaced has been measured only by vague statistical information that are far away from reality. The main issue is that predominant majority of people are going back to their pre-war places of residence only to sell their property, and they do not want to live there out of fear from national tensions, and lack of possibility for employment and starting normal life again. This undoubtedly cannot be called sustainable return. Disparity in development of infrastructure and opening of employment possibilities in big cities, such are Banja Luka and Bijeljina and small municipalities also greatly influences decision of people not to return to their pre-war homes, and influences further improvements in balanced civil society reconstruction and democratization of Republika Srpska.

- During this year, we noticed small progress in state action against trafficking of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. First positive example of prosecution of the human trafficking criminal networks happened in March 2004. The Criminal Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina brought charges against Milorad Milakovic, co-owner of the Hotel "Servud" from Prijedor, and his associates, Darko Gnjatovic, Ilija Gavranovic, and Milakovic's daughter Sanja. Milakovic has been sentenced with 9 years of prison, Gnjatovic with 3,5 years of prison, Gavranovic with 3 years of prison, and Sanja Milakovic was sentenced on 4 years of probation. It is interesting to mention that whole Milakovic family was involved in trafficking of women and girls, and police is still searching for his three sons and wife.

During last couple of years, this criminal network was involved in trafficking of more than 250 women and girls mostly from Ukraine and Romania, which were forced on prostitution in 5 big nightclubs and bars in the region of Prijedor. Regardless this case, there are many indications that trafficking of women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not disappeared, but only changed its form and now traffickers force women to

work in hotels, private apartments and houses. It is encouraging that media in Republika Srpska recognized this as the problem, and we noticed occasional specialized TV programs with this topic.

- Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held on October 2, 2004, and there were no significant and visible progress in terms of improving position of women in political parties and their greater participation in governance at all levels of RS. The post - election period in Republika Srpska has been burdened with turbulent political crisis of RS Government, and this reflected to the participation of RS representatives in the work of joint institutions at B&H level. The political crisis emerged as result of continuous and strong pressure of the High Representative for B&H on officials of RS to intensify activities of searching for persons indicted for war crimes, organize their extradition Hague Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and intensify their cooperation with the ICTY through conducting concrete measures.

- Faced with inability to respond properly on, as he say "threats and ultimatum demands of the High Representative for B&H", Mr. Dragan Mikerevic, Prime minister of RS resigned from his duty on December 17, 2004. President of Republika Srpska Mr. Dragan Cavic, appointed Mr. Pero Bukejlovic from Serbian Democratic Party of RS for mandatary of new RS Government, and he currently facilitates extensive discussions with political parties of RS for composition of new RS Government. Old Government of RS will stay as technical executive body until official appointment of new Prime minister and Ministers.

- Resignation of Mr. Mikerevic provoked Serb representatives in the B&H Council of Ministers to place their resignations in the envelopes, and practically block normal functioning of this institution. The political crisis on the Entity level influenced slow process of implementation of the local election results, and delay in organizing constituting meetings of new Local Assemblies throughout Republika Srpska.

- The end of 2004, was marked with difficult political negotiations for creation of RS Government with total exclusion of female representatives of political parties. In order to change this and make public pressure on Mr. Pero Bukejlovic mandatary for creation of new RS Government and Mr. Dragan Cavic President of RS, on December 27th 2004, United Women Banja Luka sent an open letter to them, as well as all key media in RS, and demanded respect of Gender Equality Law in RS in order to enable equal treatment of women and men that would adequately perform duty of Prime minister of RS, as well as ministerial positions in the government. Unfortunately, despite significant media attention to our action, both high officials of RS totally ignored our demands. Our letter was presented as top news in key news programs on Alternative TV Banja Luka and Radio Television RS. Additionally, Ms. Tanja Topic, independent political analysts wrote a column in "Nezavisne Novine" (Independent Newspaper) under title "Equality", where she provided overview of political discrimination of women in RS and B&H, and openly criticized ignorance of our advocacy initiative by the officials of RS, which exemplifies "understanding of women as decoration in politics and public life".

In such difficult political environment, our project activities are making important contribution in the implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H, promotion of democratic principles, and empowering women in politics and public life, not only in targeted local communities, but whole society of B&H.

#### **4. Implemented Activities/Projects:**

Our activities in 2004 were corresponding to our strategic objectives/priorities and mission and vision of our Association.

#### **A. Activities of Fighting Against Violence Against Women**

##### **a). Woman and Law - Phase VIII 2004 - Free Legal and Psychosocial Assistance for Women Victims of Violence**

Since 1997, United Women Banja Luka is implementing this project in cooperation with the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka, thanks to understanding and long term support from Kvinna till Kvinna foundation from Sweden. The activities we implemented in 2004 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, discussion groups for women and girls victims of domestic violence, reprint of Guide for Abused Women under new name "Book of My Friend", preparation and broadcasting twelve radio programs on Radio UNO Banja Luka on the topics of promotion of women's problems in our local community, and two one day workshops for men and women police workers about domestic violence.

**Accomplished Results:** During 2004, we provided legal and psychosocial assistance to **736** women beneficiaries from Banja Luka and surrounding region, and successfully closed **86** cases (some of them were cases continuing from 2003). The office had regular volunteers' duties on SOS line every day from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM, and they received **987** calls for assistance from women victims of violence. 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 Guide for Abused Women called "*Book of My Friend*" 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. This year edition consist from three thematic parts - first part consist more detailed information for assisting women victims to recognize violence against them and their children, take first steps of self-help, and tips how to overcome psychological and social problems related to violence. Second part of the Guide is related to excerpts from legislation - Constitution of B&H, Gender Equality Law B&H, Criminal Codes of RS and FB&H, and Family Laws of RS and FB&H, and serves to introduce women to their rights and specific procedures related to protection of their rights. Third part of the Guide provides extensive description of services, procedures, and contact information for nongovernmental organizations and official institutions throughout B&H that are related to providing assistance for women's rights.

During 2004, we cooperated with the "*Center for Legal Assistance for Women*" from Zenica, and improved the Guide with legislative overview of FB&H, contacts of NGOs and official institutions that are offering assistance for women victims of violence in Federation of B&H. United Women and hCa Banja Luka will also distribute the Guide to our sister organizations in FB&H, as well as interested official institutions in this entity.

Regular monthly radio programs in the "Woman and Law" project became recognizable among both women and men citizens of Banja Luka, as we were contacted by many listeners that provided us with feed back about different actual topics. We noticed that radio programs in Republika Srpska are still popular among all age groups, and can attract a lot's of attention from people, especially women that are our potential beneficiaries. Since we organize this activity for a long time, it also became one of our ways for communication with citizens, women and men in our community about their common problems.

Violence against women became more visible with increase of our media visibility through organization of radio programs about issues affecting women in our society and frequent advertisement of our activities through contacts with media (participation in radio and TV programs, and statements in newspaper articles related to the violence against women). During this period, beside increased number of women beneficiaries that seek legal and psychosocial assistance, and increased number of SOS calls, we noticed increase of interest for our activities of fighting domestic violence from both men and women citizens of Banja Luka. They are contacting us asking what kind of services we are providing, and women especially showing interest for our initiative for opening of the safe house for women and children victims of violence. It is important to mention that change of our office location to the city center helped also in our better accessibility to women seeking help, but also our better efficiency in contacts with municipal services and official institutions in solving problems of our beneficiaries.

We noticed small improvement in our cooperation with official institutions in fighting violence against women and assisting women through providing legislative and psychosocial protection. Here we especially emphasize cooperation with the Center for Social Work in Banja Luka whose professional workers assist us to secure a minimum of social assistance for unemployed women and women with low income, self-

supporting mothers without proper housing, women refugees and displaced persons that still did not gain back their property and are in difficult financial situation, without right for health care and access to social services. Although it is usually impossible to secure regular financial assistance in those cases, Center for Social Work introduced practice of 'one-time financial assistance' in the most difficult cases, and sometimes pays modest housing for unemployed self-supporting mothers, women with low income, and other similar situation.

Thanks to our workshops about domestic violence for police workers in Banja Luka region, we noticed increase of their sensibility for the issue of domestic violence and more efficient approach in assisting women and children victims of violence. Our SOS volunteers noticed there is visible change in behavior of police workers, they are more ready to receive information about cases reported to us, although we were informed by women beneficiaries of the 'Woman and Law' that many of them still have a lot's of prejudices toward victims, act with neglect during investigating cases during field interventions, and do not act according to their legal obligation of bringing criminal charges against perpetrators. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to organize more extensive and continuous education of police workers about domestic violence in order to influence their attitude toward this issue and secure better protection of women and children victims.

Although we identified a lot's of prejudices and stereotypes about domestic violence among police officers, we believe workshops were very successful in terms of strengthening our cooperation with police and exchanging experiences about work on fighting domestic violence – comparing to the past period where we could not reach the police at all! It is important step forward in cooperation with key institutions that are responsible for fighting this problem in our society. It is important to mention that we got excellent support and encouragement from chief police officials in Center for Public Security in Banja Luka in initial phase of gathering groups and planning of the workshop, and they expressed need for this kind of education in a future period.

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

The main objective of this project is providing temporary shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence from the Banja Luka region in the moments of acute violence, and overcome lack of institutional protection for this target group. Thanks to our long term lobbying for this initiative, United Women Banja Luka succeeded to get financial support from RS Government and Open Society Fund in B&H for buying the safe house/shelter for women and children victims of violence in Banja Luka. In November 2003, we bought the house in Banja Luka suburb region, and during 2004 successfully lobbied the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that supported us with material and construction services, and they reconstructed and adapted the house, through the Council for Refugees in Mostar as the local implementing partner.

During 2004, United Women Banja Luka continued with lobbying city authorities of Banja Luka to provide financial support for running costs of the shelter through the city budget, since we are in possession of the Municipal Council decision from 2002, where the costs for this initiative were approved. However, since United Women Banja Luka did not have the shelter in that time, the decision was never implemented. Following this, United Women Banja Luka prepared and sent the amendments on the 2005 City Budget of Banja Luka, and called again the city authorities and local representatives to support opening of the shelter. Unfortunately, we did not succeeded to get the Banja Luka City Administration support for shelter, and during 2005 United Women Banja Luka will intensify fundraising efforts toward alternative donors in order to open the shelter for the first women and children beneficiaries in a near future.

## **B. Activities for Increasing Public Awareness About Trafficking of People in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

United Women Banja Luka have long term commitment toward developing and implementation of the actions aimed for raising public awareness about the issue of trafficking of people in B&H, especially women and children as the most vulnerable population exposed to the influence of human trafficking criminal networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During 2002 and 2003, international organizations, B&H police, state border services and judicial institutions intensified activities on prevention illegal immigration, shutting down night-bars, and prosecuting persons involved in trafficking of women foreign citizens trafficked and exploited in B&H. Due to that, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of women in B&H became more hidden, and criminal networks involved in human trafficking intensively switch to recruitment and trafficking of women and young girls from Bosnia and Herzegovina for sex trade industries in the western European countries. In order to address this issue, United Women Banja Luka actively worked on raising public awareness about the issue of trafficking of people in B&H through various media activities, participation in joint actions with official institutions and local and international nongovernmental organizations, and participated in public advocacy actions of the RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network in B&H.

### **a). Organization of Lilya4ever Movie Screening and Panel Discussion about Trafficking of Women in B&H - April 22, 2004**

United Women Banja Luka was the implementing partner to the Kvinnoforum Sweden, SIDA office in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the event of Lilya4ever movie screening and panel discussion about trafficking of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized in Banja Luka on April 22, 2004.

The participants of this event and panel discussion were from official institutions of Republika Srpska (executive, legislative and judicial governance on Entity and local level of Banja Luka), police workers from the Center for Public Security Banja Luka, Department for Organized Crime Prevention in the Center for Public Security Banja Luka, Department for Prevention of Sexual and Blood Criminal Acts in the Center for Public Security Banja Luka, SIPA office in Banja Luka, Center for Social Work Banja Luka, Public Prosecutor's Office Brcko District, Basic Court of the Brcko District, Appellation Court of the Brcko District, Center for Social Work in Brcko District, Judicial Commission of the Brcko District, Gender Commission of the Brcko District Government, NGO representatives from the Brcko District, NGO representatives, media representatives, political parties representatives and public institutions representatives of Banja Luka region, representatives of RING NGO Anti trafficking network in Bosnia and Herzegovina, diplomatic representatives and representatives of international organizations based in Banja Luka region.

After the screening of the Lilya4ever movie, panel discussion was organized in order to get insights about specific problems related to the trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and actions taken for the purpose of prevention of this problem in the region by various institutions and nongovernmental organizations. Facilitator of the panel discussion was Ms. Nada Golubovic, President of the United Women Banja Luka, and panel members were Mr. Boris Ivanovic, Director of SIPA office and former Chief of Police Department for Foreigners in the Center for Public Security in Banja Luka region, Ms. Mara Radovanovic, Vice President of the Women's Association LARA Bijeljina, and Ms. Branka Milosevic, Prosecutor in the Public Prosecutor's Office in Republika Srpska. President of Republika Srpska delegated his representative to the event and he welcomed the initiative. Representative of the SIDA office in Sarajevo, Ms. Marie Larsson read the message from the director of the Lilya4ever movie, and representative of Kvinnoforum Sweden, Mr. Pontus Werstrom, also did short introduction about the initiative of the anti-trafficking information campaign.

Discussion and introductory presentations brought several important issues related to the trafficking of women and young girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Introductory speakers and participants discussed lack of education of vulnerable target groups and lack of proper legislation in Republika Srpska that could contribute to the prevention of trafficking and prosecuting of the trafficking merchants. Penalties for them are insufficient to have prevention or retribution effects. Additional problems is that domestic legislation do not recognize compensation of damage for the victims of trafficking, and there is lack of information about

where are women and girls found in police raids in night clubs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were also questions what SIPA is doing on fighting trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lilya4ever screening and panel discussion raised many important issues and enabled us to draw several recommendations for follow up activities, as follows:

1. It is necessary to organize continuous activities on raising awareness of representatives of public administration and official institutions about the issue of trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it is undoubtedly visible that people in these institutions have insufficient knowledge about extent and all dimensions of the problem, especially now when trafficking of women and young girls became more hidden from the eyes of the public;
2. It is necessary to organize informal education of wide population about the issue of trafficking of women and young girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and focus especially on the most vulnerable population, such are children and young people in final grades of primary schools and early high school age, their parents, school teachers and pedagogs. For this purpose, Lilya4ever movie could be used as "case study" and educational tool, and nongovernmental organizations already have capacity in trained staff and activists, as well as experience in organizing similar education. United Women Banja Luka and LARA Bijeljina already developed the project proposal based on idea for using Lilya4ever movie for this purpose and will search for funds to start with its implementation.
3. It is necessary to change existing legislation related to the trafficking of people and adjust it to the already adopted international standards. Focus should be in changes of Criminal Code in Republika Srpska and its adjustment to the Palermo Protocol. Possible action could include advocacy initiative and putting pressure on People's Assembly of Republika Srpska to introduce legislative changes, and here again women's NGOs can play important role since we already have well-developed cooperation with women parliamentarians that can additionally contribute to successful legislative adjustments.

## **b). Participation in the RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

During 2004, United Women Banja Luka participated in the working meetings of the RING NGO Anti-trafficking Network in B&H, as well as joint public advocacy activities aimed for raising public awareness about the issue of trafficking of women in B&H.

As the example of our joint activities, in November 2004, together with 18 NGOs, members of the RING Network, United Women Banja Luka prepared the public statement and condemned the media portrayal of the tragic death Olena Popik, 21 year old Ukrainian, who was the victim of trafficking in humans in B&H. We distributed a letter to local and international nongovernmental organizations, governmental ministries and institutions, and media.

## **c). Coordination Activities with the State Working Group for Prevention of Trafficking and Illegal Migration of People**

During 2004, representative of United Women Banja Luka regularly participated in coordination meetings of the State Working Group for Prevention of Trafficking. Although we noticed that local nongovernmental organizations were invited on these meetings just formally, we find it useful for receiving first hand information about anti-trafficking actions of official institutions in B&H, and use it as tool for development our advocacy activities. Contribution of our organization in this work was in making suggestions for concrete joint activities of the official institutions and NGOs on fighting human trafficking in B&H, and making influence on the national action plan for prevention of trafficking of people.



## **e). Developing Activities Aimed for Prevention of Trafficking of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

During 2004, United Women Banja Luka developed joint project with Women's Association "LARA" Bijeljina aimed for prevention of trafficking of children from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The aim of the project is increasing awareness about the issue of trafficking of people among secondary school children as potential victims of trafficking of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and creating conditions for successful prevention of trafficking in a future through education of school pedagogs and other school workers about trafficking of people and creating possibilities for follow up advocacy actions against trafficking in targeted local communities.

Target groups are children in final grades of 48 secondary schools of RS and school pedagogs that are working in these schools. Activities of the project will be implemented through organizing trainings for school pedagogs about trafficking of people in B&H in initial phase of the project, in order to prepare school environment and actively involve school staff in the activities of the project.

Education of children will be organized through organized projections of the movie "Lilya4ever" of the Swedish author Lukas Modyson that has the issue of trafficking of people for the central topic. Short informational booklet will be printed and distributed to the children on follow up workshop discussions, in order to provide them additional information about trafficking of people and enable them to share it with their family, friends, and neighbors in local communities. This will enable extending effects of the project activities and dissemination of information about trafficking of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the local population, and enable them to learn more about the issue and protect themselves from becoming a victim of criminal networks of human trafficking merchants. At the end of project, United Women Banja Luka and Women's Association LARA Bijeljina will organize TV discussion in order to present the results of the activities to the wider public of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also to discuss possibilities for more efficient work on protection of children's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina through cooperation of local nongovernmental organizations and official institutions, such is the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of B&H.

United Women Banja Luka succeeded to gain financial support from the European Commission for this project, and will start with its implementation during January 2005.

## **C). Activities of Fighting for Gender Equality and Improving Position of Women in Public and Political Life**

### **a). Woman Today - Phase VIII 2004**

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 2004 were following: public discussions on actual topic *"About Election Year - Political Campaigns - Local or Party Oriented"*, workshops of public advocacy, lobbying, and media presentations for women from political parties, radio programs that we used in pre-election period to speak out, advocate, and lobby for interests of female citizens in those cities where we implemented our project activities, TV programs and press conferences that we used to emphasize condition of women's human rights and need for gender equality in our society, and networking of women, in order to strengthen stabilization of women, as well as stabilization of political scene in B&H. Target groups of this project were women from political parties (for workshops, public discussions, and round tables), citizens in the area of Northwestern B&H - Banja Luka, Prijedor, Gradiška, Kozarska Dubica and Novi Grad (for public discussions), and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (for radio programs, TV public discussions, and TV Parliament).

## **Accomplished Results:**

All activities were planned and developed in cooperation with women from our Advisory Board, in order to adjust the activities to the current social and political situation in 2004 and problems and needs of women in our region. We implemented the project through following eight levels: 1.) Support for women that participate in public and political life, 2.) Education of women about importance of their participation in all fields of society, 3.) Education of women about advocacy and lobbying through media, 4.) Advocacy and lobbying for equal possibilities of women and men in society, 5.) Education through media and introducing of women and men with problems women identified in different local communities, 6.) Strengthening of women before local elections, 7.) Networking of women from local communities in B&H, and 8. Decreasing of marginal position of women.

Preparatory meetings enabled us to create project management and policy of the project activities directed toward strengthening of women to become active participants in democratic changes of B&H. We were making visible, current, and recognizable the problems of women through the public discussions. On round tables, we analyzed of the local elections in B&H and pointed on importance of women's participation in local governance. We used workshops to educate women from public and political life about public advocacy techniques, as well as methods for identifying needs, priorities, and conducting media presentation of local issues. Through radio and TV programs, we introduced citizens of B&H with problems identified on workshops and public discussions, and through doing this; we made women's problems visible. Poster campaigns enabled us to advocate for female candidates on election lists, in order to direct the attention and support of voters for women. Press conferences enabled us to inform all media about implementation of the project activities, emphasize women's priorities, and enable visibility of women's needs in all types of media. Final brochure enabled us to introduce citizens with our project activities, and use introductory presentations as educational tool.

Approximately 500 female citizens from 5 different local communities participated in public discussions, workshops, and round tables organized within our project. With using LFA method in public discussions and workshops, we educated women from nongovernmental organizations and political parties about importance of women's participation at all levels of public and political life, as well as other fields of society. All these activities were well covered in media in paid programs. During this year, media were interested for women's issues, and covered our activities also in those programs we did not pay for. We believe media presentation made visible the problems of discrimination against women, and provided possibility for decreasing women's marginalization. Electronic and printed media were securing coverage of conclusions and recommendations that we developed in all our activities during project implementation. We used press conferences, radio and TV programs, and poster campaigns to emphasize following issues: need for participation of women in public and political life, problems of women related to all forms of violence against women, and priorities in targeted local communities.

"Woman Today" project activities enabled us to make presented issues visible and recognizable in the public. Thanks to the workshops, public discussions, and round tables, there is greater number of gender sensitive female politicians, which are skilled to recognize priorities for media presentations, public advocacy, and lobbying. Female politicians were educated to put their female and male voters in the center of their activities. During implementation of the project activities, we established communication between women from political parties and various fields of public life in these five local communities.

If we observe local elections in B&H in 2004, we succeeded to partially realize our general aim- decreasing all forms of discrimination against women and creating environment where women and men have equal possibilities, although there is still strong domination of men. Number of women that participate in local governance institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not change - women make 18% of representatives in local assemblies throughout B&H. We must emphasize there are municipalities where there are no women municipality representatives in local assemblies, while there is also opposite situation in largest municipalities and Banja Luka, where we have up to 35% of female representatives in local assemblies. We can say that discrimination of women is reduced. However, it still exists in our society.

## **b). Developing NGO Platform for Implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H**

United Women Banja Luka implemented this project in the period from November 2003 until March 2004 in partnership with the Women's Center ŽAR from Sarajevo, thanks to the financial support from the Open society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The main project objective was creation of the *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 United Women Banja Luka and Women's Center ŽAR from Sarajevo organized two workshops on the level of RS and FB&H 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. Nongovernmental organizations, members of the Gender Coalition of B&H and Global Rights - Partners for Justice, office in Sarajevo supported the initiative during the whole process.<sup>1</sup>

At the final conference held in Zenica on February 28-29, 2004 we developed six strategic priorities in the implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H, as follows:

1. Enhancement of informativeness about Gender Equality Law in B&H and its importance,
2. Ensuring empirical data which will serve as a basis for effective participation of women in the Law implementation process and B&H society transformation,
3. Creation of space for participation of as a large number of women as possible in the Law implementation process and B&H society transformation,
4. Establishing and maintaining a basis for support for the process of advocacy for implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H through activities related to fundraising,
5. Promotion of networking of women's NGOs gathered around the Platform for the Law implementation by defining institutional loci of responsibility within the NGO sector,
6. Advocacy of the incorporation of this Platform into the programs and plans of the State bodies and international organizations in B&H.

## **c.) Activities Directed toward Improving Position of Women in Political Parties and Decision Making Structures of 11 Local Communities in Republika Srpska**

In the period from March 2004 until end of February 2005, United Women Banja Luka implemented the project *"From the Law to Real Gender Equality"*, in cooperation with women politicians and women NGO activists from 11 local communities in Republika Srpska. The project was implemented thanks to the financial support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy from the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The nongovernmental organizations that participated in development of the Platform are following: Office for Human Rights Tuzla, Buducnost Modrica, Center for Legal Aid for Women Zenica, B&H Women's Initiative Foundation Sarajevo, Foundation of Local Democracy Sarajevo, Women's Forum Bratunac, Helsinki Committee on Human Rights of B&H in Sarajevo, Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka, Lara Bijeljina, Medica Zenica, Association of Women's Citizens "Grahovo" Grahovo, Association of Citizens "Pro Et Contra" Prijedor, Association of Women's Citizens "Terra" Sarajevo, Women to Women Sarajevo, Zena sa Une Bihac, Women's Association "Most" Visegrad, Association of Women Konjic, Zena B&H Mostar, Association of Women "Li-Women" Livno, Association "Woman and Family" Gradiska, Info-Center Nevesinje, Women's Center Trebinje, Women for Women International Sarajevo, and Woman and Society Sarajevo.

<sup>2</sup> The final project booklet containing detailed research and monitoring reports and analysis of the position of women in political and public life of targeted local communities is available in both electronic and printed version, and United Women Banja Luka will be happy to send it to all interested individuals and organizations.

Project objectives were following: encouraging practical implementation of the Gender Equality Law of B&H, especially provisions related to increase of women's participation in public and political life, strengthening cooperation between women politicians and women activists of nongovernmental organizations and groups in Republika Srpska on fighting for gender equality and diminishing discrimination of women in public and political life, improving public awareness about specific issues related to the gender based discrimination in public and political life, increasing public pressure on political parties and governmental institutions in Republika Srpska to improve representation of women in their leadership structures and decision-making positions.

We implemented following project activities: a). organization of the workshop for women from political parties and women NGO activists from targeted local communities in Republika Srpska, in order to work on developing public advocacy strategies for implementation of the Gender Equality Law of B&H in their local communities, b). conducting extensive field researches and prepared analysis of structures in parliamentary political parties on local level, in order to determine real position of women in public and political life in targeted local communities, policies of political parties related to gender equality and promotion of women's participation in public and political life on local and higher levels, their knowledge about Gender Equality Law in B&H and current activities on the implementation of the Law, within political parties and in public and political life of local communities, c). organization of the round table in Banja Luka, where women local coordinators from political parties and NGOs presented analyses and collected information for each local community, d). preparing press conference and public statement, where we presented concrete information related to discrimination of women in political parties of RS, e). sending the appeal to the all public officials in local communities of RS, to ensure implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H, within their authorizations and influence on creating local self-governance institutions, f). monitoring of the implementation of local elections results, and monitoring changes in terms of increase/decrease of number and role of women in new formed local assemblies and local executive governance structures, and activities on establishing local Gender Equality Commissions, their structure and activities on local level, g). and organization of the TV discussion/debate with participation of representatives of largest parliamentary political parties in RS.

### **Accomplished Results:**

Through the implementation of project activities, United Women Banja Luka succeeded to increase cooperation between women NGO activists and women politicians in 11 local communities of B&H. Although cooperation of these two interest groups of women existed before to the certain extent, their cooperation on concrete tasks of joint field research and monitoring of women's position in local organizations of political parties and local governance enabled women that participated in project implementation to strengthen their informal networks of support, build mutual feeling of trust, exchange experiences, and increase visibility of women's issues in their local communities.

The concrete information acquired through field research and monitoring of women's positions in political parties in 11 local communities of RS represented an important practical tool for making strong public pressure on official institutions to implement Article 15 of the Gender Equality Law in B&H. Although election results analysis for targeted local communities show general decrease in number of women representatives in local assemblies, there are concrete examples of increasing number of women in local executive structures. Furthermore, project activities encouraged greater attention of the local authorities toward creation of local gender equality commissions, as important channels for improvement of needs of women in public and political life of local communities.

All local coordinators said it had great effect that we developed unified letter for political parties explaining objectives of research, and further actions we will conduct on presenting research findings to the public. Additionally, local coordinators distributed copies of the Gender Equality Law of B&H to all local organizations of political parties they contacted during field research, and some responsible persons openly admitted this was the first time they saw and hear about this Law at all!

Through implementation of all project activities, United Women Banja Luka and local coordinators in 11 cities of RS succeeded to make significant influence on improving public awareness about specific issues related to the gender based discrimination in public and political life, and greater awareness about existence

of the Gender Equality Law in B&H among leaders of political parties. With the implementation of project activities, we succeeded to increase public pressure on political parties and local governmental institutions in RS to improve representation of women in their leadership structures and decision-making positions. We learned about it through contacts with women members of political parties that informed us about start of "internal discussions" in political parties about purpose of women's sections, their activities, and initiatives for changes of internal party documents that regulate party policies toward position of women.

During initiative for regional advocacy action and sending open letter to the newly appointed municipality majors in RS to lobby for implementation of Gender Equality Law in B&H, United Women Banja Luka succeeded to gain full support of the Gender Centers in RS and B&H Federation for this initiative. After consultations with these entity governmental agencies, they agreed to join our action and send a letter to all municipality majors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with appeal for respect of Gender Equality Law in B&H in forming new structures of local governance after the local elections in B&H, and enable creation and active work of the local gender equality commissions. This enabled us to extend scope of our action, and increase pressure for public accountability of municipality public officials toward securing gender balance in local legislative and executive governance structures.

We believe we gained great media attention for press conference and public promotion of the first research results because we organized it short period before local election (October 2004) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during that period media had increased interest for the topics related to the work of political parties. It was also important for us that we used this opportunity before local elections to increase public attention on difficult position of women in political parties, and therefore increase effectiveness of our project activities and public promotion of research findings.

Furthermore, negotiations between political leaders aimed for creation of new RS Government provided us excellent opportunity to use the momentum, and push for women's participation in this institution. The result was visible - for the first time after Dayton Peace Agreement, RS Government has two women ministers in two important sectors - finance and management and local self-governance!

## **D). Public Advocacy for Strengthening Position of Women in Our Society and Diminishing Gender Based Discrimination**

### **Implementation of the Media Project "Strengthening of Public Awareness for Discrimination of Women and Gender Related Violations of Human Rights in B&H"**

United Women Banja Luka implemented this project in the period from July 1, 2003 until June 30, 2004, in cooperation with the women's association Amica e.V. Freiburg, Germany, and thanks to the financial support of the EED Germany.<sup>3</sup> The project was 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 were 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.

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<sup>3</sup> The final project booklet containing summary of TV programs, opinion texts on different topics related to the implementation of Beijing Declaration in RS, detailed field research, and recommendations for future actions of governmental institutions aimed for implementation of Beijing Declaration is available in both electronic and printed version, and United Women Banja Luka will be happy to send it to all interested individuals and organizations.

## **Accomplished Results:**

Despite all difficulties in preparation and production of the TV shows, we believe that results of the project are visible through great interest of women and men citizens for topics we discussed in TV shows. During the course of the project, and broadcasting of eleven TV shows, there were around 280 people – around 85% of women and 15% of men citizens that contacted TV studio management during broadcasting TV shows or called latter to ask questions and express their opinions about topics. Significant number of citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with institutional policies of assisting women to have better position in public and private life. The key issues that attracted greatest interests of citizens in TV shows and during our field survey research were violence against women (especially family violence), access of women to economic recourses and employment, and absence of women in decision-making and political life. Unfortunately, as we already explained, due to shortness of the broadcasting time only small number of them participated with live calls directly in TV shows.

Great number of women who called TV station asked for contact information about United Women Banja Luka and called us to support our actions. Some of them mentioned they regularly watch our media activities, and suggested us to call several people from the public and political life of Republika Srpska as guests in our future TV shows. This gives us additional reasons to believe that we had significant influence on encouraging public debates about different aspects of women's human rights and discrimination against women in our society. TV shows and press conference assisted us directly in our public advocacy activities and service projects of providing legal and psychosocial assistance for women in wide region of Banja Luka, as they focused continuous public attention on problems of women, and raised additional pressure on official authorities to work on implementation of the Beijing Declaration/Platform for Action from 1995.

As direct result of our increased media visibility and continuous communication with officials in Government of Republika Srpska, we succeeded to lobby for financial support in buying the safe house for women and children victims of family violence, and actually bought the house on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2003 – symbolically signed contract on the World Day of Fighting Against Violence Against Women. This was actually the first time we got any support for our activities from our government, and we consider it important step forward in their recognition of women's discrimination in our society and readiness to act against it.

We noticed that Gender Center of RS Government, as official institution working on gender equality started with serial of public discussions about women's rights listed in Beijing Platform, and started several programs directed to fighting against gender based human rights violations, such are for example initiative for adopting new legislation for securing better protection of women against family violence, initiating gender education in preschool institutions of Republika Srpska and monitoring of textbooks for gender discriminative content. Although Law for Protection Against Family Violence is still not adopted in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can see gradual change in institutional care for securing equality between women and men in our society.

Here we must commend good cooperation, advising support and encouragement through regular communication and field visit we had from Amica e. V. and Ms. Ute Becker that contributed greatly in successful implementation of all project activities. We are grateful for her assistance in the project implementation through very useful suggestions and consultations regarding this project.

## **E. Support for Sustainable Return in Bosnia and Herzegovina through Conflict Resolution Workshops with Women in Rural Communities**

In the period from July 10, 2004 until October 20, 2004, United Women Banja Luka organized conflict resolution workshops with women in rural communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as support for sustainable return, establishing communication and rebuilding of civil society in local communities. In this activity, we had great support and financial contribution from our partner organization Amica e. V. from Freiburg (Germany) and Berghof Center for Conflict Prevention from Germany.

The project activities were implemented in rural communities of Western Bosnia and Herzegovina, as follows: Liplje, Kozarac, Petrov Gaj, Verici, Vecici, Bojici, Debeljaci, Vrbanja and Cesma.

Through organization of the informal workshops with common women, we were providing them support and encouragement for active participation in solving local issues of their priority. Project activities were also directed toward work on de-categorization and overcoming prejudices between women returnees, women refugees and displaced persons, and women belonging to domicile population.

United Women Banja Luka was working with these groups of women through interactive workshops that provide them space and opportunity to learn and experience how to de-emphasize the significance of divisions and "imagined differences" between one's own national group, as well as to feel importance of respecting diversity and cultural differences as the part of civil society development and sustainable democracy building. Workshops were also creating open space for women to redirect or turn the negative pictures of people into positive concepts and ideas, transform minority - majority conflict into leading idea of common needs of returnees, refugees and displaced persons, and domicile population.

### **Specific project objectives:**

a). supporting reconciliation and empowerment of returnees, refugees and displaced persons, and domicile population, representing different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, b). empowering women of different backgrounds to identify problems and solutions in their local communities and contribute to improvement of their lives in a future, and c). creating sustainable social conditions for sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons into their previous places of residence, and their full integration into local communities.

### **Target groups:**

Women in rural communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina with following background - women returnees that left their homes during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and came back or they are planning to come back and start their life in Bosnia and Herzegovina again, women refugees and displaced persons currently living in rural communities that we identified as target locations of the project implementation, and women belonging to domicile population, residents in those places.

### **Accomplished Results/Impact of the Project on the Target Group:**

In total, United Women Banja Luka organized forty-two (42) small workshops/sessions - in each village six sessions, and gathered hundred and twenty seven (127) women of different nationalities, belonging to domicile population, refugees and displaced persons and returnees.

We succeeded to animate women to discuss common issues, but also problems that are important for their local communities. Women in these rural areas said our joint work in sessions/workshops helped them in strengthening their self-confidence and realization of importance of their own actions for improvement situation in their villages.

Although we identified numerous difficulties in the process of dealing with war trauma, mistrust and fear from people of different nationalities, and difficult position of women in their families and as part of local communities, we succeeded to encourage them to see themselves as bearers of progress and important changes. Our work with women in these communities proved important for raising level of their women's solidarity, through providing space for exchanging of our experiences with local women, and increasing their sensibility toward gender, national, and cultural differences. We find this important step forward in reconciliation process in rural communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina that are highly neglected by official authorities, and left on margins of economic and social development in our country.

However, it is frustrating for us that we had no enough capacity to devote more time to work continuously with identified groups of women after we finish the cycle of six workshops, and assist them in the process until they reach solutions. Nevertheless, this also depends on their own initiatives. For example, in the follow up process, we will continue to work with group of women from Kozarac to develop advocacy actions for

legislative changes they identified as priority. Furthermore, women we worked with in the group from villages Debeljaci, Vrbanja and Cesma need more support in the process of learning how to organize small business initiatives, and support in identifying and communicating with donors for small farming projects.

Women from all local communities are in need further assistance in the process of communication with local authorities, in order to solve identified problems in their local communities. We believe this is also necessary for encouraging women feel important in their families and life of their villages, but also to become active on fostering sustainable progress their villages. We will continue to keep contacts with interested groups of women in order to assist them more in developing their concrete initiatives and actions. Furthermore, implementation of this project in six local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina enabled us to identify key priorities of our further work with women in rural areas, and to encourage women to become aware of their capabilities to bring positive change in their life, through seeing themselves not only as cornerstones of their families, but also important and active subjects in the organization of their villages.

## **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, Amica e. V. from Germany, Global Rights - Partners for Justice, office in B&H, and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Gender Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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.

On April 22, 2004, United Women Banja Luka received Medallion of Banja Luka City for Humanity, from the City Administration of Banja Luka as the recognition of our long term work of fighting against family violence in Banja Luka and B&H.

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. We strengthened our cooperation with women politicians from local political parties and women in executive governance, such are People's Assembly of RS 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.



## **The Overview of our Activities Directed Toward Developing Cooperation With Nongovernmental Organizations and Official Institutions:**

- **January 30, 2004** Round table "**Prevention of Domestic Violence**" organized within our joint initiative with the Center for Social work in Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska, and Center for Public Security Banja Luka and Association of Family Therapists "Pro Familia" Banja Luka. Nada Golubovic, President of the United Women Association talked about our experiences in work with women victims of domestic violence.
- **February 2-5, 2004** "Women and Law" staff members participated as trainers in the workshops "**Prevention of Domestic Violence**" for police workers in several Banja Luka police stations. This activity was part of joint initiative of the Center for Social Work in Banja Luka, Gender Center of Republika Srpska, and Center for Public Security Banja Luka and Association of Family Therapists "Pro Familia" Banja Luka.
- **February 12, 2004** Participation on UNDP meeting in Sarajevo dedicated to the development of strategy for implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H. Representative of United Women Banja Luka was appointed in UNDP working group for development of strategy for implementation of the Law.
- **February 14, 2004** Working meeting of RING NGO Anti trafficking Network in B&H, in Zenica. Discussion of current cooperation of NGOs and official institutions on fighting trafficking in B&H, coordination of the Network, participation of the Network representatives in study visits abroad, and development of fundraising strategy for joint activities of the Network.
- **April 25, 2004** As the part of World Campaign Against Violence Against Women, United Women Banja Luka were co-organizers of the theatre play "**Vagina Monologues**" in Banja Luka, together with our sister organizations Medica Zenica, LARA Bijeljina, and Zene Zenama Sarajevo. The young women from youth organization "Mladi Most" from Mostar prepared and organized performance in Student Club "Cedubal" in Banja Luka.
- **July 10-11, 2004, July 17-18, 2004, July 24 -25, 2004, August 14-15, 2004** Members of United Women Banja Luka, Lana Jajcevic, Jovanka Ivkovic and Ljiljana Sokolic held four training sessions for SOS volunteers for the members of our sister organization "Women's Center" in Trebinje.
- **September 23, 2004** United Women Banja Luka members were guest lecturers and facilitators of the public discussion/seminar "**How to Present Yourself to the Wide Public**", in Visegrad, organized by our sister organization "Most" Visegrad. Participants were women representatives of different political parties. We consider it as great success, because it was the first gathering for local female politicians from different political parties. After the meeting, Snezana Neskovic, President of the Gender Equality Commission in Visegrad invited members of "Most" to actively join this Commission.
- **September 24 - 26, 2004** Participation in networking seminar organized as the part of "**Women's Political Movement**", the project initiated by our sister organization "Future" Modrica. The main objective of the Network is creating conditions for greater participation of women in decision-making in B&H.
- **November 3, 2004** Meeting with IOM representatives, office in Banja Luka, to discuss possibilities for cooperation in providing shelter for women victims of trafficking, and possible usage of safe house/shelter for women victims of violence in Banja Luka for assisting women victims of trafficking.
- **November 11, 2003** Meeting with representatives of Center for Social Work in Banja Luka. Discussion about development of cross-sectoral cooperation and more intensive work on prevention of domestic violence in our local community.
- **On December 28, 2004**, we had visit from women activists from "Most" Visegrad. We discussed our plans for the next year, experiences in encouraging women for participation in the work of United Women, problems related to the opening of the safe house in Banja Luka, and lobbying of City Administration of Banja Luka to include financing of the safe house running costs in 2005 City budget, importance of the Gender Equality Law in B&H implementation, forming of the gender equality commissions on municipal

level and their networking on regional level, and importance of developing cooperation between NGOs, and exchange of expertise in project activities, continuous mutual support and informational exchange.

- **During 2004**, 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. Overview of the Visits to Our Project, Participation on the Seminars and Workshops**

- **February 6, 2004** Initial meeting with new contact person from the European Police, office in Banja Luka, Mary Ann Horn, crime co-locator. Discussion about our possible cooperation in organizing education of police workers about domestic violence, and their possible assistance in opening of the shelter for women and children victims of violence in Banja Luka.

- **February 11, 2004** Visit from Elieen Meyer, attorney from Maryland, USA. Ms. Meyer is a member of legal association that fights against domestic violence in USA. She was interested for our activities of fighting domestic violence, implementation of the Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and support for establishing of joint SOS help line for victims of domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She presented to us her experiences on advocating for establishment of Family Court in state of Maryland, their work with judges and police, and specific operating procedures. She brought us very valuable materials used for education of police and judges, and procedures for operating of family courts in USA.

- **March 5, 2004** Meeting with Lucio Valerio Sarandrea, legal adviser of the OSCE office in Banja Luka, and Dusanka Sekulic, OSCE educational program coordinator. They were interested about the activities of United Women Banja Luka related to the fighting against trafficking of women and girls in B&H and fighting against domestic violence.

- **March 10, 2004** Visit of Tobias Pietz, researcher from the Bonn International Center for Conversion. He was interested to learn about our experiences in using light weapon in domestic violence.

- **March 26 -28, 2004** Participation in the evaluation workshop for women's organizations in Kvinna till Kvinna Network in B&H. This workshop was very useful in terms of identifying stage of organizational development and strategic working directions for the future. It was good to work on priorities and evaluate our activities with the time distance after we had evaluation with Tanja Ignjatovic during 2003.

- **March 31, 2004** Participation in the public promotion of the NGO Platform for Action - Gender Equality Law in B&H organized in Sarajevo in Holliday Inn Hotel.

- **April 2-4, 2004** Evaluation seminar for the project "**Women Can do It**" held in Sarajevo in Hotel "Grand".

- **May 25, 2004** Participation in working meeting of the State Group for Prevention of Trafficking of People and Illegal Immigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Sarajevo. The meeting was dedicated to the sharing information about activity plan for 2004 and agreement about ways for cooperation between official institutions and nongovernmental organizations on fighting trafficking of people.

- **July 1, 2004** Participation on the conference related to the UN Resolution no. 1325 "**Women, Peace and Security**" held in Sarajevo. The main objective of the conference was opening possibilities for women's groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop strategies for connecting their activities with the UN Resolution. The conference was organized by our sister organization Women to Women Sarajevo and UNIFEM.

- **July 2-3, 2004** Participation in the conference under title "*Women's Civil Scene in B&H - Toward Women's/Gender Sensitive Policies*", organized by the Center "Woman and Society". Objectives of the conference were following: making efforts on sensibilization of the public toward specific women's interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and opening dialogue with representatives of so called institutional mechanisms for gender issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, about future policies of improving women's human rights in our society.
- **September 3, 2004** Participation in the public discussion "Defining of the Gender Equality Concept", organizers Lara Bijeljina and Norwegian People's Aid. Special emphasis of the discussion was results in implementation of the Gender Equality Law in B&H one year after its adoption by the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H.
- **October 1-2, 2004** Participation in the conference "Women and Power", held in Riga, Lithuania. The focus of the conference was development of regional cooperation and greater influence of women's NGOs in strengthening women's political power, changing discriminative representation of women in media, and encouraging greater visibility of female candidates in pre-election campaigns.
- **October 10, 2004** Visit of women activists from Amica e. V. Freiburg, Germany, to discuss current and future cooperation on activities of promoting women's issues in media and changing media policies to respect gender equality and women's human rights, as well as working on empowering of women in rural communities in B&H.
- **October 14, 2004** Visit of Maja Loncarevic, representative of IAMANEH Switzerland, and women activists from Vive Zene Tuzla, to discuss possible cooperation and support for opening of safe house/shelter for women victims of violence in Banja Luka.
- **October 15, 2004** Visit of representatives from Center for Peace and Nonviolence, Osijek, Croatia. discussion about possible cooperation on the evaluation of peace-building and reconciliation, with special emphasis on realizing basic rights of citizens.
- **October, 15 2004** Participation in the conference "*Regional cooperation of Civic Initiatives - Local Contribution to European Integration*", held in Banja Luka. The main objective of the conference was exchanging experiences and active discussion about problems of civil society development and promotion of regional cooperation and understanding between official institutions and NGOs. The conference organizers were Center for Civic Initiatives B&H and International Rescue Committee.
- **November 2, 2004** Participation in the round table "*Open Issues of Language and Cultural Identities in B&H*". Key topics were: creation of new languages, policy of abusing language, globalization and transition of language, recognizing cultural identities in our language, and enforcing cultural stereotypes. Organizers were hCa Banja Luka and Forum of Citizens' Tuzla.
- **November 11, 2004** Visit of Lawrence Robertson, USAID conflict specialist. Discussion about current situation in Republika Srpska and B&H, solving problems of refugees and displaced persons, presentation of the UW activities on reconciliation and conflict resolution in rural communities.

## **7. Media Activities of the United Women Banja Luka during 2004:**

- **February 6, 2004** Participation in morning program of the Radio Television of RS. Promotion of SOS telephones for women and girls victims of violence, and Guide for Abused Women, presentation of statistic information from our practice, and call for women and men citizens of RS to report cases of violence against women and children to official institutions, especially police and centers for social work, as well as numerous local NGOs in RS and whole Bosnia and Herzegovina that are working on this issue.
- **February 20, 2004** Participation in radio program "*Our Way*" on B&H Radio, with the topic "Trafficking of People", discussion about activities on promotion of the book "*Trafficking of People - Prostitution -*

*Where is Difference?"* published by our sister organization Women to Women from Sarajevo. We also co organized media promotion and public presentation of the book in Banja Luka.

- **March 4, 2004** Media statement for the Alternative Television Banja Luka, for their main news program on March 8th 2004. Our activists presented activities of United Women Banja Luka and gender equality in language.

- **March 11, 2004** Interview for "Independent Newspapers" Banja Luka - presentation of UW initiative of opening the safe house for women and children victims of violence in Banja Luka region.

- **March 23, 2004** RS magazine "Patriot" published article about women and children as the most frequent victims of domestic violence and United Women's initiative for opening of the safe house.

- **March, 2004** In March 2004 edition, Magazine for Refugees and Displaced Persons "Zavicaj" published the article written by the Nada Golubovic, related to the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina and perspectives for improving position of women in private and public life.

- **April 15, 2004** Participation in radio program about domestic violence organized on Radio Balkan Banja Luka. We talked about the activities of "Woman and Law" project, statistics, SOS lines, safe house initiative.

- **April, 2004** In April 2004 edition, Magazine for Refugees and Displaced Persons "Zavicaj" published the article written by Lana Jajcevic related to the real and legislative position of woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina

- **May 15, 2004** Participation in the TV program about domestic violence broadcasted on TV K3 (private TV station from Prnjavor covering whole RS with broadcasting signal).

- **May 18, 2004** Participated in radio program about domestic violence broadcasted on Radio Banja Luka (official radio station of Republika Srpska).

- **May, 2004** In May 2004 edition, Magazine for Refugees and Displaced Persons "Zavicaj" published the article titled "Recognition on Right Address", related to the award that United Women Received from City of Banja Luka for accomplishments in fighting violence against women.

- **July 19, 2004** Participation in the TV program "Working Day" on Alternative Television Banja Luka, with the topic of prevention of domestic violence. We presented our experiences from work in joint initiative of fighting domestic violence with several official institutions in our local community, promoted SOS lines and Guide for Abused Women.

- **August 28, 2004** Weekly edition of Independent Newspapers Banja Luka published the interview with Nada Golubovic, President of the United Women Banja Luka about start of campaign for greater involvement of women in politics. Weekend edition of EURO BLIC Magazine published the article about SOS telephone for women victims of domestic violence and conversation with Lana Jajcevic, lawyer on the Woman and Law project.

- **October 2, 2004** Representatives of United Women Banja Luka and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka were guests in special TV programs on Radio Television of RS and B&H Television related to commenting of the first results of local elections.

- **November 11, 2004** Participation in the contact program of Radio RS about trafficking of women for the purpose of prostitution. Guests were representatives of United Women Banja Luka and Legal Advisor in the OSCE Human Rights Department, Regional Center Banja Luka. Discussion about possibilities for protection of women victims, and need for passing new legislation in B&H that would incriminate "sex industry" customers, similar like in Sweden.

## **Media Activities - 16 Days of Activism Against Male Violence Against Women**

- **November 25, 2004** Morning program of Radio Television of RS - presentation of the action and background of 25 November

- Press conference in the International Press Center - Woman and Law legal and psychosocial assistance and SOS telephone statistics, call for support for safe house/shelter initiative in Banja Luka

- Radio UNO Banja Luka - domestic violence in Banja Luka and wider region - guests: Woman and Law staff, director of the Gender Center in RS, representative of police.

- **November 26, 2004** "Working Day" Alternative Television Banja Luka - Violence against women in Banja Luka and B&H, guests: SOS telephone volunteers, Start of the SOS poster campaign within 16 Days of Activism

- **December 3, 2004** Media statement on call of magazine "START" journalist and providing commentary on duration of sentence in the case of rape of teenage girl in Banja Luka, where perpetrator was sentenced on 1 year of prison.

- **December 10, 2004** Radio UNO - regular monthly program in WL project - 10 December - International Human Rights Day.

## **8. Obstacles in Our Work:**

In 2004, United Women 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 the majority of our planned activities.

However, we unfortunately still did not succeed to secure financial support for buying furniture and running costs of the safe house/shelter for women and children, victims of family violence in Banja Luka region. Despite long term lobbying efforts for financial contribution of the City Administration of Banja Luka, United Women Banja Luka did not succeed to enter the 2005 City Budget for running costs of the safe house, with their explanation that there is no legal ground for local administration to give significant financial support to one nongovernmental organization.

The reason why we are so persistent in lobbying for local government financial support in this initiative is that their commitment would change social perspective of domestic violence in our community, but also encourage greater responsibility and involvement of the official authorities toward providing assistance for women and children victims of family violence.

Furthermore, the major obstacle 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 durable political, social and economic crisis in both Entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is 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.

## **9. Strategic Priorities in the Work of United Women Banja Luka during 2005:**

United Women Banja Luka 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 in private and public life;
- Opening of the safe house/shelter for women and children victims of family violence in Banja Luka region;
- Increasing public awareness about the issue of trafficking of people in B&H, with special focus on prevention of recruitment, trafficking, and exploitation of children and youth people, as the most vulnerable categories of our society;
- Continuation of activities on supporting sustainable return in Bosnia and Herzegovina through work on strengthening position of women in rural communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- 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 and working on organizational development of the Association.

## **10. Current Organizational Structure of the United Women Banja Luka**

*Nada Golubović* – President of the Association

### **Professional Staff:**

*Aleksandra Radeta Stegić* – Secretary of the Association

*Lana Jajčević* – Lawyer

*Natalija Petrić* – Attorney at Law, Legal Advisor

*Amela Bašić* - Psychologist

*Miroslav Samardžić* - Financial Manager, Project Coordinator

*Aleksandra Petrić* – Human Rights Advisor, Project Coordinator

### **Volunteers:**

*Jovanka Ivković*

*Sanja Vukša*

*Minja Damjanović*

*Iva Papić*

*Danijela Bašić*

*Tanja Boromisa*

*Ana Despenić*

*Maja Kovjениć*

*Snježana Spremo*

### **Members of the Executive Board:**

*Stanka Miletić*, (retired) Teacher, Vice-president of the Association

*Mile Dmičić*, PhD, Constitutional Court of RS

*Danica Berberović*, PhD. Professor at the Faculty of Economy, Banja Luka, B&H

*Miodrag Živanović*, PhD. Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Banja Luka, B&H

*Zvezdana Rajkovača*, MD. Clinical Center of Banja Luka, B&H

*Boris Ivanović*, SIPA, Banja Luka, B&H

### **11. Financial Overview of the United Women Banja Luka for 2004:**

| <b>Year/Period</b>                | <b>Activity &amp; Project</b>   | <b>Donor</b>   | <b>Amount</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| 2004                              | Women and Law Project - Phase VIII  | SIDA Sweden - Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden                      | 62328,00 EURO |
| 2004                              | Woman Today VIII - through implementing partner Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka  | SIDA Sweden - Kvinna till Kvinna Sweden                      | 58535,00 EURO |
| March 1, 2004 - February 28, 2005 | From Legislative Protection to Real Gender Equality   | Westminster Foundation for Democracy, United Kingdom         | 46912,05 EUR  |
| November 1, 2003 - March 31, 2004 | 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  |
| July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004      | Strengthening Awareness About Discrimination of Women and Gender Related Human Rights Violations                                      | Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V. (EED Germany)          | 42 000,00 EUR |
| July 1, 2004 - September 30, 2004 | Support for Sustainable Return in Bosnia and Herzegovina through Conflict Resolution Workshops with Women in Rural Communities        | Berghof Center/Amica e.V. Germany                            | 15 592,33 EUR |

**Banja Luka, March 2005**

