



FACT SHEET

Empowering Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Challenge

Full inclusion of women from across society is critical to U.S. foreign policy objectives and imperative for the economic growth and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Women are important as agents of peace, reconciliation, democracy, economic development, and stability.

Although BiH has made progress in promoting gender equality through legal and institutional frameworks, women still face obstacles to achieving full political, economic, and social participation. The economic status of BiH women remains low, and women are largely absent from national and local decision-making bodies. Nearly half of BiH women have experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, well above the global average of 35 percent, most likely from their domestic partners. Only 5 percent of BiH victims of gender-based violence turn to institutions for help. Institutions responsible for protecting them lack adequate training or proper referral mechanisms.



Members of the first ever Federation of BiH Women's Caucus.
(Photo credit: FBiH Women's Caucus)

Our Programs

USAID addresses gender equality in BiH through its democracy and governance and economic growth programs, and in close coordination with the other sections of the Embassy on a mission-wide Women, Peace and Security project. Some of our programs are described below.

Gender Equality and Human Rights

- Through direct assistance to the **BiH Gender Equality Agency**, USAID will improve the system of protection for women victims of domestic violence. This two-year activity will provide accredited training for frontline service providers and managers to improve their understanding of gender-based violence. It will also establish clear protocols and high standards for the relevant institutions, and a referral mechanism for coordinating their work.
- USAID improves the livelihoods of women victims of violence through a grant to the Foundation for Local Democracy. Funds will be used to provide this NGO with equipment and training, stipends to 20-30 women victims of violence, and psychosocial support to dozens of other women associated with the project. At the end of one year, the 20-30 women will be able to earn a living producing high-quality garments for top fashion brands. Assistance provided through the **Marginalized Population Support Program**. (Visit www.KULTbih.org for details.)
- The **Equality for All: Civil Society Coalition Against Discrimination** project helps women influence and improve anti-discrimination policies and practices, and advocate for implementation and compliance with existing gender equality laws. (Visit www.diskriminacija.ba for details.)

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- The **Civil Society Sustainability Project** supports NGO network WomenNet to advocate for physical and legal protection of women victims of domestic violence, gender-equal hiring practices, and implementation of gender equality laws. The project raises awareness about women's rights, particularly among women who suffer from "multiple" discrimination, such as Romani, lesbian, transgender, older, and rural women, as well as those with disabilities. It also advocates for government-funded safe houses. (Visit www.cci.ba for details.)
- The **Education for a Just Society** project develops and introduces an open curriculum with anti-bias educational materials in elementary schools so pupils learn without gender biases. Through critical inquiry of traditional texts and media, the project actively promotes gender integration and equity. (Visit www.coi-stepbystep.ba for details.)

Women's Entrepreneurship and Other Employment Opportunities

- The **Growth-Oriented Local Development** project promotes economic opportunities in BiH, including jobs for women. Activities also include gender sensitivity training within municipal governance and specific interventions for women-owned businesses. The project targets women municipal staff and women-owned enterprises in its capacity building programs. (For details, please visit www.goldproject.ba.)



Assistance to develop the workforce enabled Alma Ras to open a new facility and create jobs in Visoko, BiH.

- The **Partnership for Innovation** activity supports women's economic empowerment by enhancing their skills and knowledge in information and communications technologies (ICT). The project engages leaders of women-owned and -managed businesses to be role models and mentors, to help young women entrepreneurs access ICT markets, communicate with customers and provide new channels for buying and selling products. (Visit www.innovation.ba for details.)

Women's Political Participation

- The **Political Processes Support** activity strengthens women's political participation. It supports women members of parliaments to enhance their constituency outreach and develop a common legislative initiatives. This activity has been implemented by International Republican Institute (IRI) and the activity helped establish the first-ever Women's Caucus in the Federation of BiH Parliament in 2013. The activity has been extended to support joint initiatives of women members in two more parliaments, in the Sarajevo Canton Assembly and the Republika Srpska National Assembly.
- The **Trust-Understanding-Responsibility for the Future (PRO-Future)** project helps victims of war and other trauma to heal, raise self-esteem and become leaders in trust-building and reconciliation processes in their communities. The project provides them with training on social justice, peace building and advocacy, new knowledge that empowers them to organize, initiate and engage in dialogue and advocacy campaigns to promote reconciliation among various ethnic groups in the community. (Visit www.crs.org for details.)