

IN BRIEF

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Photo ©UN Women Bosnia Herzegovina Country Office

This brief presents the key conclusions and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) for the UN Women Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office Strategic Note 2015–2020. A CPE is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women’s contributions to development results with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to struggle with traditional and patriarchal views of the role of women. There are high levels of gender-based violence, limited economic opportunity and low levels of political participation. The employment rate for women is significantly lower than that of men. Women in vulnerable groups, including Roma women and rural women, are particularly disadvantaged, struggling to achieve educational parity. The global COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has heightened these concerns.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the poorest countries in south-east Europe with a consumption-based economy and one of the lowest GDP/capita rates in the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s complex internal administrative and political structure has created a decentralized and collaboration-based decision-making process that, when combined with other legacies of the 1992–1995 conflict, often results in political and societal tensions and limited legislative progress. During and after the 1992–1995 war, Bosnia and Herzegovina underwent a retrenching of human rights, particularly as applied to women. However, since that time, the country has been on a slow but steady course to align its normative frameworks with international standards.

The UN Women Bosnia and Herzegovina country office (CO) was established in September 2014. The Strategic Note (SN) 2015–2020 reflects implementation of UN Women’s corporate, integrated mandate comprising normative work, UN coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) and programmatic work. The CO’s programmatic portfolio is primarily focused on ending violence against women (EVAW) and governance and leadership, with smaller interventions in women, peace and security (WPS) and women’s economic empowerment (WEE). The total budget for the SN period was US\$ 11.32 million, of which the CO delivered US\$ 9.21 million, with a delivery rate of 81 per cent. The CO’s total annual budget grew from US\$ 1.16 million in 2015 to US\$ 2.67 million in 2020; and from 10 personnel in 2015 to the current complement of 18 personnel, with an additional four vacancies to be filled in 2020.

3.3M

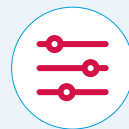
Population of 3.3 million, continuously decreasing due to outmigration and natural population decline.

51%

51 per cent of the population are **women** and 49 per cent men

16.9%

BiH has a **poverty rate of 16.9** per cent, higher in rural areas and among children and the elderly.



Ranked 75 of 189 countries in the Human Development Index 2019, BiH is one of the least developed countries in Europe.



Country susceptible to **natural disasters** and affected by migration crisis.

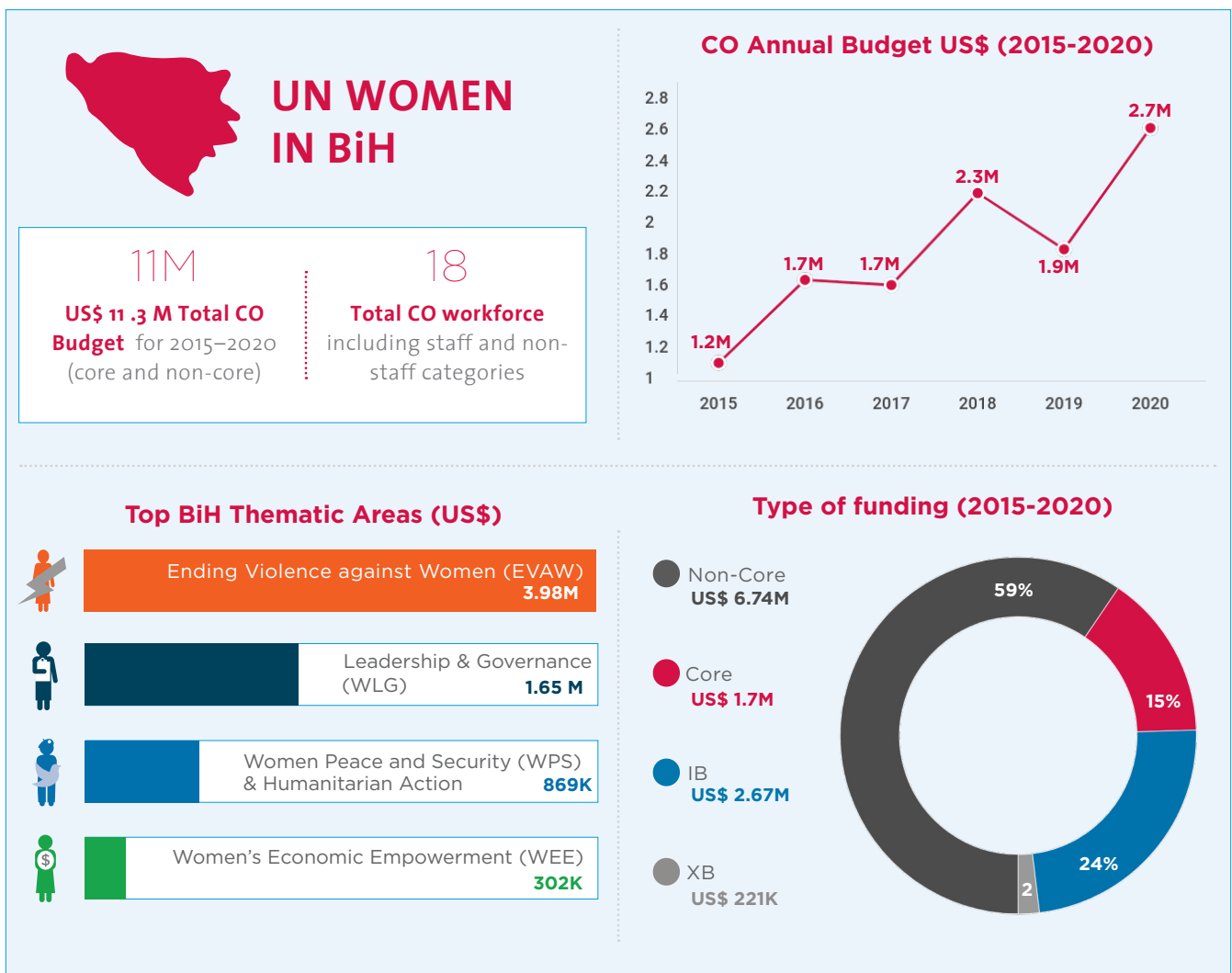
EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this CPE was conceived as a primarily formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the CO and national stakeholders’ strategic learning and decision-making for the next SN, set to start in January 2021. The evaluation had a secondary summative (retrospective) perspective, to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.

The CPE examined all activities undertaken by the CO under its current SN 2015–2020, including operational work; general support to normative policy; and UN coordination on GEEW from January 2015 to mid-2020. UN Women’s contribution to the COVID-19 response in Bosnia and Herzegovina was also taken into account. The geographical scope of the evaluation spanned the entire country, given the CO’s work at the national, entity and local level. The primary audience for this evaluation includes CO management and personnel; key government partners; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); beneficiary communities and groups; the UN system in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, including sister entities involved as partners in joint programmes; donor partners and the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

The evaluation applied a theory-based contribution analysis and cluster design methodology, applying the OECD-DAC criteria, including relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and was guided by the principles of gender-responsive evaluations. The evaluation used ‘a utilization focused lens’ to generate forward-looking and actionable recommendations to ensure that the information needs of the CO and stakeholders were met. Six country, regional and corporate level evaluations were reviewed and drawn upon as secondary material. Data collection included extensive document review; primary interviews with 52 key informants; a focus group session with CO staff; four in-depth case studies; two surveys; and an analysis of financial and key indicator reporting.



KEY CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1



Despite a complex and challenging environment, the CO could better identify and capitalize on opportunities to highlight its technical expertise; reframe its strategic approach; and foster a more cohesive environment for GEEW in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Leveraging key UN partnerships is essential to support implementation of the country's normative frameworks more effectively. UN Women needs to better communicate the implications of its GEEW coordination mandate; foster a cohesive role for GEEW across UN agencies; and provide GEEW thematic expertise in key sectoral areas. The new United Nations System Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) will support the CO's efforts in this regard. More inclusive work across the UN system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is required to ensure a targeted approach to success on the gender-relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators.

The CO could better identify opportunities to enhance its positioning and attract donor attention. Increased thought leadership; reframing its proposals to align with donor mandates; timely provision of strategic technical information; engaged coordination with civil society; and creative joint programming would permit the CO to push past perceived barriers to funding. Recent activities related to COVID-19 have positively positioned the CO in this regard.

CONCLUSION 2



CO programming has had some notable and impactful successes, including in the EAW and governance portfolios. Capitalizing on these gains will require strategic vision, programmatic innovation and creative approaches to communication.

The CO can demonstrate value and success across its three fold mandate over the SN period. Normative and operational activities in EAW and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) have had the most widespread impact. Recent gains in other governance areas and in coordination efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic are also notable. The CO has been less successful in meeting expectations around United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325

implementation. It was unable to raise meaningful funds for WPS or compete with other key actors in this area.

Strategic vision, programmatic innovation and creative approaches to communication will be required to persuade stakeholders of the importance of these areas. Recent efforts by the CO, through communication, coordination and the COVID-19 response are reigniting stakeholder interest.

CONCLUSION 3



The CO is staffed with expert and dedicated individuals but has not optimized its potential to work strategically and synergistically, with meaningful and countable measures. Despite UN Women's internal and resource mobilization limitations, the CO met its financial commitments.

Internally, the CO has not yet optimized its potential to build a synergistic approach across UN Women's thematic areas; support innovative and strategic staff engagement; and meaningfully tell the story of its contributions to the outcomes established in the SN. The CO's overall reporting process requires a strategic shift in approach, including the development of meaningful and countable measures, disaggregated data collection and the use of language

that clearly identifies the contribution and actions of the CO in achieving results.

Donor funding for implementation of the SN allowed the CO to hire a dedicated Coordination Associate, who provided significant support to the achievement of the coordination component of the mandate and cohesive functioning of the office.

CONCLUSION 4



Sustainability of the gains made by the CO and its partners, and enhanced impact for women in marginalized communities, will require a strategic and coordinated shift from localized programme-based activities to a long-term vision and plan.

The sustainability of the gains made by the CO and its partners remains uncertain. With some positive exceptions in GRB and EVAW, project activities have had largely localized or targeted impact without being scaled up. Monitoring and evaluation by both the CO and its partners does not include sufficient follow-up or long-term planning. However, capacity-building activities have generated increased institutional ownership for GEEW across different political levels.

The CO would benefit from an overarching strategic approach to ensuring that the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle impacts the lives of women in marginalized communities and those with intersectional challenges, such as rural women, Roma women, women with disabilities and the LGBTQI communities. The current project-based approach includes these communities but with limited or localized impact and without alignment to UN Women's key campaigns such as LNOB and the SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The CO to underpin the next SN with a clear theory of change (ToC) that leads to a set of cross-thematic advocacy strategies and an agenda for leveraging its programme and policy knowledge base and convening role.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The CO to develop an engagement strategy for its stakeholders that transcends individual programmes or thematic areas to highlight its strengths and increase its credibility as a thought leader and influencer in the country, including:

- Capitalizing on UN Women's convening role to bring together key stakeholders from civil society; national, entity and local governments; academia; international organizations; and the UN system to foster joint advocacy efforts.
- Showcasing UN Women's comparative advantage to the international donor community through the development of timely knowledge products and engagement on priority topics.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The CO to develop an inclusive, consultative and transparent approach to strengthening its relationships with civil society organizations (CSOs), to support their efforts to advance normative and policy transformation by ensuring civil society participation in programming in all thematic areas; re-establishing the coordination of civil society through the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) or an alternative structure; and supporting the advocacy agenda of civil society networks in advancing the principles of the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW and other international commitments and best practices.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Through its coordination mandate, the CO, in conjunction with the Resident Coordinator's Office and key UN partners in the country, to identify targeted means of optimizing its comparative advantage and complementing the expertise of other UN agencies to strengthen the overall implementation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina normative framework related to GEEW by:

- Ensuring there is clarity about the scope and intent of UN Women's mandate on coordination.
- Identifying opportunities for collective advocacy to advance the normative framework.
- Targeting initiatives that support EU accession and implementing international commitments including the SDGs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The CO to build on the momentum created by its leadership and creativity in the COVID-19 response to showcase its technical expertise with gender mainstreaming, data analysis and advocacy to donors and stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The CO to explore and prioritize opportunities to reinvigorate stakeholder interest in GEEW through innovative approaches and refocus attention on critical thematic areas including WPS and WEE.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The CO to maximize the value of its workforce and enhance the knowledge management, monitoring and reporting capacity of its personnel and partners.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The CO to ensure that a gender-transformative lens is applied to the SN, including the incorporation of human rights, fundamental UN principles related to GEEW and a cross-portfolio strategy targeting women and girls experiencing social disadvantage.