INSPIRE Strategies to End Violence Against Children
Country Factsheet
Bosnia and Herzegovina
INTRODUCTION

This factsheet is largely based on the inputs and observations of 30 local and international non-governmental organizations, independent and governmental institutions working on child protection issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The survey was shared through the child protection national coalition and other groups as well as within networks of professionals from governmental institutions dedicated to end violence against children. The INSPIRE Strategies were not promoted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however many organizations and institutions conduct activities that deal with key aspects that INSPIRE aims to tackle, in some cases actually applying solutions that are perfectly in line with the INSPIRE approach. Indeed, a number of organizations working in Bosnia and Herzegovina that took part in the survey conduct activities that directly relate to one or more of the INSPIRE strategies.

Number of organisations working on INSPIRE strategies in BiH
Results based on information provided by 30 organisations which took part to ChildPact's INSPIRE mapping survey

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Number of Organisations</th>
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CROSS - CUTTING ASPECTS

The section below point at cross-cutting aspects that are relevant for all INSPIRE strategies. Examples of activities relevant to the different strategies will be outlined separately in the following section.
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NGO SECTOR AND STATE AUTHORITIES

State authorities cooperate with the NGO sector but public funding aimed at preventing or combating violence against children is limited. The support of authorities is very often given through the presence of officials at events organized by NGOs or through small grants that however are not sufficient for sustained impact. Local communities and ministries from all levels co-fund some of the services provided by NGOs, such as the space and means for running shelters and daily centers. Unfortunately though, many activities are still financed through projects supported by others donors.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY ORGANIZATIONS WHO ARE PART OF A NATIONAL LEVEL INSPIRE WORKING GROUP

The INSPIRE methodology in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still unknown and as one of the responders in the mapping survey stated: “We haven’t identified our activities with INSPIRE, but we practically work by its principles”. The Network Stronger Voice for Children will lead a national level INSPIRE working group and is open for wide partnerships in promoting and advocating for the implementation of INSPIRE strategies.

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Half of the participants in survey conduct activities to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation, being mainly oriented at education of children and youth, especially girls and women. Some of the activities are focused on the empowerment of girls and ways to identify and report sexual violence, including for persons with disabilities. In kindergarten institutions that participated to our survey, employees have access to regular trainings on all forms of violence, ways of prevention and how to react to it.

NGOs have a significant role in training and promoting the protection against sexual exploitation and violence in schools, among children, teachers and indirectly parents and families. As NGOs are more focused on prevention activities, state authorities such as the centers for social work are mainly focused on protection of victims after abuse. Still, NGOs remain the only providers of SOS hotline line services for children victims.

The laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina define that all State bodies, organizations and individuals are obliged to notify the police and the Center for Social Welfare (CSW) about violation of child’s right without delay, especially in the case of violence, abuse, sexual abuse and neglect of the child. The Network Stronger Voice for Children has been advocating for the creation of a an easily recognizable telephone line at the state level and pressured the government to take responsibility for ensuring increasing access to the child abuse reporting hotline services currently provided by NGOs. 1

Besides the awareness raising initiatives, the network members are advocating for urgent changes to the Federation Criminal code and specific provisions regarding processing of perpetrators of sexual offense against

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children, in partnership with other NGOs from Bosnia and Herzegovina and with the support of the Ombudsman for Human Rights. Other important activities are related to advocating for consistent application of Lanzarote Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Examples of practices

A few examples of good practices emerged from the INSPIRE Mapping Survey.

The program “Be a Man Club” is an interesting initiative focusing on peer-education on the topics of violence through active engagement of adolescent boys. This program was implemented by several NGOs in different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and has been evaluated as very meaningful and useful.1

Several models for strengthening the protection of children by professionals is also present in Bosnia and Herzegovina through different groups of professionals. The common characteristic is that they are formed on the local community level and consist of different professions (social and health protection, police, education, NGOs). They are called Child Protection Groups, Intersectoral Groups, and Working Groups for Child Safety and Mobile Interventions Teams. Most of them create referral mechanisms for the protection of child safety at the local level, as well as initiatives to improve support to children at risk.2

Continuous and systematic work with children, parents, educators and care givers does not exist even though it is very much needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

INSPIRE STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1: IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENTS OF LAWS

The majority of responders stated they were involved in the process of implementation and enforcement of laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- 21 of these organisations focus on laws banning violent punishment of children by parents
- 16 of these organisations focus on laws that criminalize the sexual abuse and exploitation of children

A limited number of NGOs and institutions (only 3) are involved in the issue of limiting youth access to firearms and other weapons.

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1 For more information on this program contact: hug.zemd@bih.net.ba
2 For more information on this program contact: ugotaharin@teol.net or dragana_bulic@wvi.org
3 For more information on this program contact: ugotaharin@teol.net or dragana_bulic@wvi.org
Examples:

- The creation of the referral protocol for Tuzla Canton on protection of children from exploitation and abuse on the streets
- The creation of a manual for police, judges and prosecutors on treating children and women in sexual violence cases
- The creation of manual for prosecutors, social workers and police, on treating children abused on streets
- Advocacy initiatives in the area of criminal legislation treating sexual violence at children and physical punishment
- The implementation of a Child Protection Policy through which all employees, associates and service providers, as well as users, are introduced to applicable laws regulating the right of children to live without violence.

The Network Stronger Voice for Children in partnership with World Vision BiH have been working to develop the Child Protection Index\(^4\), a monitoring tool to analyse government performance towards achieving commitments undertaken by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Viewed through an impressive number of indicators (987), the Index provides an insight into the progress made in critical areas including the protection of children from all forms of violence. The report\(^5\) issued in April 2019 includes specific recommendations on government needed actions to reinforce policies and laws, such as:

- The adoption of laws preventing persons convicted of violence or acts of sexual abuse of children to work with children or have access to children.
- A register of sexual offenders against children exists only in the Republic of Srpska. Key recommendations adhering to the article 34 is to adapt laws and establish the same register for the territory of the Federation of BiH and Brčko District.
- Urgent ratification of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in the Field of Interstate Adoption is recommended, in addition to its full alignment with the procedures for adoption with Article 21 of the UNCRC.
- Advocating for rising the upper age limit for adoption and ensure coherence between entities is also needed. Introduction of a legal provision for the explicit ban on placing children up to three years of age in institutions, as well as the explicit ban on corporal punishment of children in all settings is strongly recommended.

**Strategy 2: Norms and Values (Gender, Social, Community)**

The NGOs and institutions that took part in the present survey don’t tackle these issues in a systemic way. Bystander interventions were subject of only 3 responders.

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Some of the activities conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina are:

- The prevention of gender based violence in rural communities through youth activities
- Gender-transformative work with adolescent boys and marginalized young men / fathers;
- Programs and services directed at children to prevent victimization of children on the basis of gender and social norms (e.g. counseling on prevention of early marriages or dropping out of school in Roma population);
- Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Family strengthening projects working directly on encouraging and implementing the same rights to education, health care, employment and non-violent treatment, for children and adults of both sexes
- Direct work with couples on promotion and introduction of equal partnerships, as well as accepting parental roles.

**Strategy 3: Safe Environments**

No systemic initiatives to stop the spread of violence by supporting members of the community and detecting and interrupting conflicts have been developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past years according to the mapping survey respondents.

For many years, the In Foundation organization has implemented projects to establish support networks in order to create a safer and more stimulating school environment.

Hope and Homes for Children Bosnia and Herzegovina working mainly on DI and foster care popularization also invested a lot in promoting safe and secure environment for every child.

Governmental institutions, such as Agency for Gender Equality BH are realizing Action Plan 1325 on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" which directly or indirectly affects the establishment of the safe environment for boys and girls in BiH, but also combat spreading of different forms of violence. Centers for Social Work (CSW) are dealing with victims of violence and in accordance with the legislation protect them, participate in the processing of the perpetrator, protecting the victim through psychosocial and material care and support and monitoring the execution of the imposed measures against perpetrators of violence.

Several responders stated that they work on addressing “hotspots”, but there is no common understanding of what a “hotspot” mean, hence the variety of activities under this section that cannot be detailed here.
**Strategy 4: Parent and Care Giver Support**

According to the survey results, activities aimed for parents and care givers are mainly conducted through group work in communities or through comprehensive programs. CSW's are analyzing the situation and relationships in the family and close environment but still, CSW's are lacking necessary human, technical and financial recourses to meet all needs in communities. Large percentage of CSW’s still does not have required specialized departments, centers and shelters for children victims of violence. Home visits are delivered by CSW’s, but also by World Vision BH which work in cooperation with religious institutions and representatives.

The Center for Social Work of Sarajevo Canton cooperate a lot with governmental and NGO sector in realization of such programs of education of parents and caregivers, offering them the support needed. These programs are especially valuable in rural areas. One example of such project can be seen at this link. The initiative includes work with parents of children at risk and trainings on positive parenting.

Hope and Homes for Children BH and SOS Children's Villages through their programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina provide range of programs for support to families and care givers, including counseling support to family members, with the active involvement of all family members, representatives of centers for social work, schools and local communities.

**Strategy 5: Income and Economic Strengthening**

According to the survey results, Strategy 5: Income and economic strengthening is the least represented among all seven INSPIRE strategies in BH. In accordance with the applicable legislation, the Centers for Social Work has to monitor the situation of the needs of vulnerable categories, conducts administrative procedures and pay fees or financial assistance from the budgetary funds.

Two NGOs involved in survey are offering educational workshops, study visits and volunteering as a way of empowerment. Gender equality trainings are realized throughout the country but seems that these activities are not enough or not seen as a way of preventing violence or changing norms and values.

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STRATEGY 6: RESPONSE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Counseling and therapeutic approaches represent the most common activity under this Strategy in BH. One good example is the establishment of centers for support of children and families as well as centers for work with children at risk, coming from multi-problem families, applying trauma informed approach.7

Through the long-term programs of the Daily Center for Street and Children in Risk, counseling and referral work with children victims of violence has been provided.

Therapeutic services are provided by employees of the Center for Social Work, however, these services are provided only in exceptional situations when the person needs immediate support and cannot wait for this service in other institutions located in a different zone. This is one of the reasons why the NGO sector has been advocating for more support in order to be able to conduct and own more such facilities.

The state has still not established specialized institutions/centers for support and rehabilitation of children victims of sexual violence. Once the cases are processed, unless they are placed in a safe house, children are mainly left to their own. The Association “Nova Generacija” started a safe house for children in 2013 called “Children’s House - a Safe Place” which is intended for children victims of violence and exploitation. Another member of our network, Foundation for Local Democracy, started a house for girls. The placement of children to a safe house is a protective measure aimed at providing physical and mental protection to the victims and preventing further abuse and exploitation8.

A much sustained effort is needed at the level of BiH to develop interventions based on the INSPIRE Strategy number 6.

STRATEGY 7: EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS

Non-formal education is one of priorities of NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the experiences shared by various NGOs, children beneficiaries also identify violence as a problem and they acknowledge the need for education on this subject.

Strategy 7 and its activities seems to be the most represented INSPIRE strategy among participants to the survey.

NGOs are the main providers of trainings for various stakeholders, including governmental officials and institutions. The most recent wide range of trainings are delivered through the Association “Naša djeca” Sarajevo / Network Stronger Voice for Children, based on the Guidelines for determining the best interest of a child, supported by UNICEF BH. On the training held in June 2019, professionals from educational sector underlined need for trainings specifically on protection and interventions in cases of violence.

Many activities under this strategy are conducted through cooperation with schools, workshops, children free time activities, volunteering, researches and international exchange.

Through the long-term program of the Daily Centre for children living/working in the street and children in risk, our member Association Land of Children in BH Tuzla is managing various activities of parental counseling and children's preparation for enrollment to schools. They also conduct the following activities:

- created an algorithm for acting in cases of violence at schools;
- arranged continual education sessions for children on the topic of violence, especially on sexual violence, focusing marginalized groups of children and adolescents;
- life and social skills developing through different Daily Center activities (education, creativity expression, socialization, etc.)

The Network Stronger Voice for Children is currently involved in a regional project together with other ChildPact members and is leading activities aimed to increase the number of children enrolled in pre-school education, especially children from marginalized groups.

Other responders to the INSPIRE mapping survey are also being involved in promoting the importance of pre-school education as BH has the lowest percentage of pre-school children in Europe (13%).

**LINKS AND REFERENCES**

For a list of all NGOs that are members of child protection national coalitions, check out their official [website](#).

The table below includes a full list of the organizations that replied to the survey and made reference to activities that relate to INSPIRE, as well as links to the their homepage, and selected links to specific initiatives when relevant.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of organization / institution</th>
<th>Web homepage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>IN Foundation, foundation for social inclusion of children and youth in BiH</td>
<td><a href="http://www.infondacija.org">www.infondacija.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Zdravo da ste</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zdravodaste.org">www.zdravodaste.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Udruženje &quot;Zemlja djece u Bosni i Hercegovini&quot;</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zemljadjece.org">www.zemljadjece.org</a></td>
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9 Kindergarten “Cvrčak” Sarajevo, Center for early development and growth “Petar Pan” Tuzla, Association for helping mentally underdeveloped persons Banja Luka, Association “Sunce” Mostar, Save the Children NWB, SOS Children Villages BiH
| 4. | Hope and Homes for Children u BiH | www.hhc.ba |
| 5. | Privatna predškolska ustanova - Vrtić Cvrčak Sarajevo | https://www.facebook.com/VrticCvrcakSarajevo/ |
| 6. | Hope and Homes for Children BiH | www.hhc.ba |
| 7. | Naša djeca / Our Children Sarajevo | www.facebook.com/nasadjeca.ba |
| 8. | centar za gradansku suradnju | www.cgs-livno.net |
| 10. | Save the Children International | www.nwbsavethechildren.net |
| 11. | Mreža za izgradnju mira | www.mreza-mira.net |
| 12. | UDRUŽENJE U BORBI PROTIV OVISNOSTI " RUKA RUČI " BIHAĆ | ur.ruka.ruci@gmail.com |
| 15. | CPT |  |
| 16. | Javna ustanova Centar za socijalni rad Tuzla | www.csrtuzla.ba |
| 17. | udruženje Sunce Mostar | www.sunce-mostar.com.ba |
| 18. | World Vision International u BiH | www.worldvision.ba |
| 19. | Udruženje gradjana BUDUCNOST | www.buducnost-md.org |
| 20. | JU "Kantonalni centar za socijalni rad" Sarajevo | www.kcsr.ba |
| 21. | Udruženje Novi put BiH | www.newroadbih.org |
| 22. | GRAD MOSTAR | www.mustar.ba |
| 23. | SOS Dječja sela Bosna i Hercegovina | www.sos-ds.ba |
| 24. | Udruženje građana za promociju obrazovanja Roma "Otaharin" | www.otaharin.org |
| 25. | Udruženje za pomoć mentalno nedovoljno razvijenim licima B.Luka | www.umnrlbl.org |
| 26. | Institucija ombudsmena za ljudska prava Bosne i Hercegovine | www.ombudsmen.gov.ba |
| 27. | Udruženje žena Romkinja "Bolja budućnost" grada Tuzla | www.bolja-buducnost.org |
| 28. | UnSa | www.fkn.unsa.ba |
| 29. | Udruženje za rani rast i razvoj Petar Pan, Tuzla | https://www.facebook.com/petaranrmm/ |
| 30. | Fondacija lokalne demokratije Sarajevo | https://www.fld.ba/ |
ABOUT THIS REPORT

This factsheet is produced by ChildPact and Network Stronger Voice for Children in the frame of two regional projects funded by Oak Foundation and INSPIRE Fund. The two projects include complementing initiatives to map the activities that are currently being conducted in line with the INSPIRE framework in the extended Black Sea Region with the objective of better understanding the current efforts and improving synergies between existing actors working on the implementation of INSPIRE strategies.

The data was collected between April and July 2019. The Mapping Survey is available in English at this link.

We would like to thank all the organisations who have participated to this important mapping exercise during the last months.

Redacted by Berina Ceribašić