UN WOMEN REPORT

October 2013 – March 2014

Submitted to UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

The Programme is funded by the European Union, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia and is implemented by UNOPS, in partnership with 25 municipalities of the South and South West Serbia

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I. List of Acronyms

CPE - Commissioner for the Protection of Equality
GBD – Gender based discrimination
GE – Gender Equality
GEC – Gender Equality Council, Republic of Serbia
GED – Gender Equality Directorate
GEM – Gender Equality Mechanisms
NDI – National Democratic Institute
LSG – local self-governance
MoLESPE – Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
SCTM – Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
UNOPS – United Nations Office for Project Services
UN WOMEN – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
II. Description of the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Contracting Partner</th>
<th>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, Serbia</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Title of the Project</td>
<td>Support to the local self-governance, local gender equality mechanisms and communities for addressing and advancing gender equality agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Start and End Date</td>
<td>4th October 2013 – 31st March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Project beneficiaries were the following:</td>
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<td>- Local gender equality mechanisms (councils, commissions, persons responsible for gender equality) in 25 municipalities from South and South-West Serbia[^1];</td>
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<td>- Local self-governance and local level institutions, service in the 7 target municipalities[^2];</td>
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<td>- Women and men, with a special emphasis on rural women, in the 7 target municipalities, direct beneficiaries of the project;</td>
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<td>- Non-governmental organizations, specifically women’s organisations from the 7 targeted municipalities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners in Implementation</td>
<td>The project objectives and expected results have been consulted with key stakeholders. The consultative process included meetings and discussions with the following institutions: the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, the Gender Equality Council of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, other UN Agencies, and the women’s organisations. Consulted partners’ feedback was taken into account in the project implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key partners in the project’s implementation included:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality</strong> is an independent human rights body responsible for enforcing the Anti-Discrimination Law, and improving the overall protection of equality in Serbia. Project partnered with this specialized state authority in order to increase awareness on gender-based discrimination and involve them in ongoing process of addressing gender-based discriminatory practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^1]: Ivanjica, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prijeponje, Raška, Sjenica, and Tutin in the South West Serbia; Blace, Žitorađa, Kuršumlija, Prokuplje in the Toplički district; Bojnik, Vlasotince, Lebane, Leskovac, Medveđa, Crna Trava, Bosilegrad, Bujanovac, Vlačin Han, Vranje, Preševo, Surdulica, Trgovište in the South Serbia
[^2]: Vranje, Bujanovac, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Prijeponje, Prokuplje and Novi Pazar

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The Gender Equality Council, Republic of Serbia is an advisory body to the Government of Serbia that deals with issues of gender equality and monitoring the implementation of projects in this area. The project partnered with the Gender Equality Council with the goal to strengthen coordination among key stakeholders in supporting local gender equality mechanisms. Local non-governmental organisations\(^3\), including women’s NGOs that have direct access to and experience with both women from the target communities and local authorities played an important role in organizing outreach and media events for the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, reaching out to rural women, and serving as a “bridge” between the communities and local authorities and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

### III. Review of Progress and Performance

#### Level of Outcome of Project Interventions

**Outcome 1: Institutional framework strengthened or re-affirmed and internal capacities needed for addressing the GE agenda and issues built or further developed**

Although the Gender Equality Law, adopted in 2009, binds all public authorities to actively pursue equal opportunity policies and gender equality principles within their competences and jurisdiction and stipulates responsibility of local self-government units to establish a permanent working body or assign an employee responsible for gender equality issues, local GEMs still face challenges and obstacles in exercising their mandate in areas of their jurisdiction. One of the reasons can be found in the fact that the existing legal framework is not conducive to gender equality and that it needs improvements, most notably the Gender Equality Law. In addition, there are inconsistencies among Gender Equality Law, Antidiscrimination Law and Law on Self-governments, which further weaken the application of the legal framework. Lack of legal provisions that regulate and stipulate the measures for its implementation, makes the Gender Equality Law ineffective. **Institutional framework for gender equality at the local level is weak**, characterised by unclear position, mandate and responsibilities within local self-governance where political changes heavily affect the activities and structure of local GEMs, which, coupled with limited and insecure funding, affect sustainability of local GEMs over time. In addition, capacities of local GEMs and local self-governance are still insufficient in such areas as gender

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\(^3\) NGO Zene za mir (Leskovac, Vlasotince), NGO Forum zena (Prijepolje), NGO EHO (Prokuplje), NGO Sandzacki odbor za ljudska prava (Novi Pazar)

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responsive policy and budget analysis, and evidence-based monitoring and advocacy for gender sensitive policies.

The Project contributed to improvements to the existing gender equality institutional and legal framework by initiating discussion and debate around the need to amend the Gender Equality Law provisions related to local self-governments, as well as inconsistencies among Gender Equality Law, Antidiscrimination Law and Law on Self-governments, involving all relevant stakeholders. Further, the project prepared the overview of relevant legal acts and provisions, including subsidiary legalisation that gender equality mechanisms can use in their work, especially in instances not regulated by the Gender Equality Law. The project interventions contributed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of gender equality institutional framework in 25 municipalities of South and South West Serbia by identifying and supporting contributing factors such as networking and peer-to-peer exchange and enhancing capacities and influencing of local Gender Equality Mechanisms (GEMs) in areas where their capacity development needs were assessed as the highest. Support has been provided through developing tools to help them in their work, such as the overview of local GEMs-related legal framework with the focus on their roles and mandate in integrating gender equality into the local strategies, policies, practices, programmes and budgets and in advocating for the importance of budgetary allocations from the municipalities for the activities of gender councils.

Outcome 2: Institutional capacities established and operational for providing women in a selected municipality with opportunity for legal advice and protection against discrimination

The project contributed to increasing women’s access to justice through specific targeted outreach activities aimed at providing services to men and women who might not otherwise have access to those services, with a particular focus on rural women. A key enabling factor of the successful outreach was the mobility of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality; they were meeting women in need of outreach services at the locations where women were. Outreach was meant to fill in the gap in the services and information provided by local government institutions by bringing the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality closer to citizens. These types of interventions led to increasing in the accessibility of information on most frequent forms and legal remedies in cases of gender based discrimination. Outreach had an educational role also, raising public’s awareness on gender equality, gender based discrimination, women’s rights and the existing services offered by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. Raising the awareness and the establishment of close and personal contacts with women activists and rural women contributed to gaining trust and the empowerment of women. Activities were organised in cooperation with women’s organisations which

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in itself was a process that enabled women’s organisations and rural women to better advocate for the priorities and interests of women in their communities. Overall, the projects’ objective of improving access to justice was achieved by enhancing capacities of local level institutions and women’s organisations in identifying and adequately reacting in cases of gender based discrimination and enabling them to act as the outreach posts for women in accessing services of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

Based on the data received from CPE, since October 2013 when outreach activities started, until beginning of March, there have been 22 complaints filed to the CPE from the municipalities the project has covered. Keeping in mind that CPE annually receives relatively low number of complaints from South and South West Serbia, it should be noted that complaints received from the project’s targeted municipalities in the period October 2013 - March 2014 comprise a significant portion of the total number of complaints received regionally, i.e. 68%. Furthermore, a significantly increased demand for CPE services was recorded in some municipalities. For instance, 2 complaints received from Vlasotince are the only complaints received in the last two years; and in Novi Pazar, prior to the CPE’s visit only one complaint had been received, compared to two complaints collected during the outreach visit.

**Level of Output of Project Interventions**

Under Outcome 1, the following was achieved:

- Program for local self-governments capacity development on gender equality developed
- 22 participants from targeted local GEMs reported the increase in knowledge on gender analysis by 17%
- 17 GEMs applied 4R method of gender analysis
- 4 issues aimed to empower the women raised by the local GEMs
- 5 GEMs committed to introduce new practices on what
- Coordination Mechanism what kind of coordination mechanism? for coordination and programming aimed at GEMs strengthened
Output 1.1: Standardised Capacity Development Program on Gender Equality for local self-governments developed

So far, support to local self-governments, including gender equality councils and commissions has been focused on ad-hoc capacity development such as training sessions frequently concerned with a particular purpose, used for specific or immediate problems or needs, and varying in terms of themes and depth based on the priorities of those supporting it. There has not been one comprehensive and universally applied curriculum for capacity development of local officials and local GEMs on gender equality. In short, capacity development was not systematic, and did not allow for long-term and sustainable upgrading of local GEMs capacities. Having this in mind, UN Women supported development of a proposal for Standardised Capacity Development Program on Gender Equality for local self-government units, including local gender equality mechanisms. The program systematised and upgraded the information and knowledge available within the existing training programs for local gender equality mechanisms. The proposed program provides overview of key concepts, tools, methods and sectorial insights to support gender responsive local strategies, practical policies, practices and budgets. Program goals, content of modules and methodology of work have been developed jointly with key stakeholders, included in a Peer Review Group: Gender Equality Institute, Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, representatives of non-governmental sector and gender experts.

The program includes three introductory modules: Gender equality and the role of local government in ensuring mainstreaming of gender equality in their work; Gender mainstreaming, key tools and methods; and the Advocacy for gender responsive policies. In addition, program elaborates seven sector modules following priority areas as defined by the National action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women: Political participation of women; Economic empowerment of women (Women in the labour market; Women and self-employment and entrepreneurship; and Rural Women); Women and education; Women’s health; Gender based violence, Women and security and Gender stereotypes and media. The Program was developed, based on the mapping of the existing national level programs (11 national level GEMs capacity development programs are reviewed and reflected in the Program) and tools and materials aimed at capacity development of local gender equality mechanisms (numerous manuals, guides and assessments were reviewed).

Output 1.2: Capacities of local gender equality mechanisms to develop gender responsive policies enhanced

Based on the standardised capacity development program for local self-governments, UN Women organised the training for Gender Equality Councils from South and South-West Serbia, which was attended by representatives of 17 Councils. The training covered introductory modules of the Program and was adjusted to reflect an initial assessment of the capacity needs and priorities of local GEMs conducted prior to launching the program. The training was designed to develop capacities around the
following areas: gender analysis of policies and budgets; advocacy for gender-sensitive policies, the use of data and working with indicators for monitoring policy implementation from a gender perspective. The training was used as a venue for more in-depth practicing of tools for gender budget analysis, with simulation exercises related to monitoring of public policies from a gender perspective. In addition to developing skills, the training was also effectively used for extensive networking and provision of mutual support and inspiration among the participants. Training was evaluated by the participants as extremely useful and its focus as very relevant for their work. A capacity assessment tool to measure overall change in knowledge as a result of the training was developed and has been applied prior and after the training. According to that, the participating GEMs reported average increase in knowledge of 17%. The capacity development efforts focused on ensuring that local gender equality mechanisms apply the knowledge and commit to introduce new gender sensitive practices. As a result, 17 GEMs applied 4R method of gender analysis in their work, based on the practicing modules. The grants received through PROGRES project, for specific interventions of local gender equality mechanisms aimed at the empowerment of women and enhancement of gender equality has been analysed using 4R method. Application of 4R method uncovered areas for improvements in the areas of needs assessment stage, design, implementation and monitoring of interventions targeting women in local communities.

With a goal of supporting and enhancing cooperation among Gender Equality Mechanisms (GEMs) and sharing knowledge, experiences and good practices of all stakeholders active in the field of gender equality at local level, UN Women organized a conference titled “Gender Equality at Local Level: Examples of Good Practices” which gathered 63 participants from local GEMs and other relevant stakeholders. The key objective of the conference was to provide a platform for all stakeholders to discuss how gender equality principles can be best integrated in local strategies, policies, programmes and budgets, with a focus on the role of gender mechanisms and their functioning in the South and South West of Serbia. Based on the discussions, four priority issues have been identified by local GEMs and reflected in the conclusions which was translated into a roadmap for future work. It was agreed that capacities of local gender equality mechanisms should be further enhanced by, among others, developing practical tools to enable them to fulfil their mandate, as well as continuous documentation and exchange of lessons and good practices. Local GEMs are encouraged to establish better cooperation with all stakeholders at local level, especially high-level decision makers, women in parliament and women`s organisations and to significantly enhance the collection and availability of gender sensitive data, in order to enable gender based analysis and advocacy.

Following ongoing networking among local gender equality mechanisms several informal peer to peer exchange groups have been established connecting local gender equality mechanisms with good practices with the gender equality mechanisms from South and South West Serbia that are committed to introduce the new gender sensitive policies and practices. Two GEMs from South and South West Serbia (Ivanjica and Priboj) agreed to introduce new models of collecting gender sensitive data, and another two (Prijepolje, Raska) committed to perform analysis of municipal budgets from the gender perspective and advocate for changes. In addition, one GEM committed to advocate for increasing number of women in the local decision making positions and ensure close cooperation with their beneficiaries.
Output 1.3: Mechanism for coordination and programming for local GEMs strengthened

UN Women supported the Gender Equality Council of the Republic of Serbia to convene for the first time a Coordinating meeting dedicated to sharing activities and plans focused on gender equality mechanisms at the local level in Serbia. The meeting aimed at exchange of information and experiences, and identification of common issues and potential areas for collaboration and it gathered 34 participants from 16 key institutions and stakeholders that are working to support local gender equality mechanisms in different ways and in different parts of Serbia.

It was agreed that a Coordination meeting will became a regular forum for the exchange of information and networking, including also discussions related to financial support GEMs. It was concluded that that it is necessary to engage more with local governments regarding broader policy frameworks on gender equality and to advocate more for gender-responsive budgeting. In addition, it was agreed that stakeholders should focus their support towards developing capacities of local GEMs and on supporting the creation, adoption and implementation of local action plans for gender equality.

Under Outcome 2, the following was achieved:

• 501 men and women received information on gender based discrimination and increased the knowledge by 38%
• 87 women from vulnerable groups increased the knowledge on gender based discrimination
• 152 representatives of local level institutions received information on gender based discrimination and enhanced their capacities to act as a referral posts
• 5 women’s organizations capacitated to act on behalf of their beneficiaries
• 22 complaints submitted to CPE had elements of discrimination
• Based on TV ratings received from local TVs, 2,500 men and women received information on gender equality and gender based discrimination
• Outreach program outlining key components, models and benefits of “institutions closer to citizens” developed and applied by the CPE

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Output 2.1: Increased knowledge about gender equality, gender based discrimination and ways to redress it among women and men from 7 municipalities

Over the course of outreach visits, organised in seven municipalities of South and South-West Serbia, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality addressed and directly communicated with 501 persons, representatives of key stakeholders at the local institutional level, citizens and rural women. As targeted, the majority of participants or 406 of them were women, i.e. 81% and 19% respectively. Through outreach visits, beneficiaries had an opportunity to learn more about discrimination in general, CPE and its way of work, as well as about gender based discrimination in particular. In total 501 persons increased their knowledge on gender equality, gender based discrimination and how to use the CPE. For many, this was the first time to hear about these subjects from a competent institution.

Number of women and men reached

406 WOMEN 95 MEN

Advancement in the level of awareness among targeted population regarding the complex mandate of the CPE, gender equality and gender based discrimination was largely determined through the analysis of the pre and post-assessment questionnaires and based on the types of questions raised at the outreach meetings. The participants in general showed the greatest interest in questions relating to various aspects of labour and employment issues.

Increased knowledge about gender equality and gender based discrimination among targeted beneficiaries

38% OF KNOWLEDGE INCREASE AMONG BENEFICIARIES

Throughout the outreach, men and women who were targeted by the interventions gradually showed better understanding of the key elements of gender equality and gender based discrimination, and started inquiring on: how to submit a complaint to CPE; if it is possible to submit discrimination complaint on behalf of an another person or a group; if there are associated costs in filing a complaint; how discrimination can be redressed within the local institutions; etc. In most of the outreach visits, the participants had difficulties in understanding “the affirmative actions” to support equal opportunities for certain groups of people (e.g. Roma population), which highlighted one of the recurring misconceptions about what constitutes gender based discrimination among the targeted population in Serbia.

4 Vranje, Bujanovac, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Novi Pazar
5 In order to quantitatively capture the change in knowledge that is a result of the outreach visits, a self-evaluation form has been introduced, measuring the change in knowledge in three areas: information on the roles and services offered by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality; the change in knowledge on discrimination; and on gender equality and gender based discrimination.

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Output 2.2: Raised awareness of GE and GBD among rural women

Furthermore, the outreach visits placed a special focus on targeting women from rural areas. 87 women from rural areas received information on gender equality and gender based discrimination. Outreach visits to rural areas were specifically designed so as to reach “hard to reach” women in villages in target municipalities, resulting in 87 women from 5 villages\(^6\) discussing their pressing needs, problems, views on how to improve their status and the existence of gender based discrimination in their communities.

Rural women had the opportunity to discuss their most pressing problems. As meetings took place from 10-12 a.m., mostly unemployed women were able to join, and it was, thus, not surprising that their pressing issues were related to unemployment, and subsequently discrimination at the labour market. Throughout discussions it could be noted that although women were aware of the fact that some questions, e.g. inquiring about marital status during a job interview, are prohibited, they did not recognize this necessarily as a form of discrimination. Some rural women could also identify that being fired after a maternity and parental leave is a violation of some kind, however they could not categorize it as a gender based discrimination. Over the course of the discussion, they learned that these are the typical cases of GBD and that they can seek protection when such situation occurs. Increase in knowledge was also reflected in their responses to the survey, as many of them stated that they knew very little about gender based discrimination in the beginning, and that they learned much by the end of the visit. Based on the survey results, significant increase in knowledge about GBD of 51% was recorded among rural women.

\(^6\) Pavlovac, Veliki Trnovac, Ladovica, Strazevo, Pozega

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Output 2.3: Local level institutions empowered to identify gender based discrimination and act as referral posts

Within the scope of outreach activities, representatives of the key institutions at local level, participated at the round tables and discussed the options on how to support the work of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in their municipalities. Institutions that attended awareness raising sessions were: local parliaments, parliamentary boards, councils for gender equality, local self-government, independent institutions, Health Centers, hospitals, centers for social welfare, shelters for victims of violence, National Employment Service, School Inspector, Police, Youth Office, representatives of Civil Society Organizations and media. Types of institutions varied depending on the municipality, but special attention was given that institutions working with those most at risk are present. 152 representatives of local level institutions from the 7 target municipalities received information on CPE’s work, gender equality and gender based discrimination and learned how to file a complaint on discrimination and how to support the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality by acting as the intermediaries to men and women in their municipalities in accessing CPE services. Representatives of local level institutions inquired on formal and informal models of cooperation with the CPE on combating gender based discrimination, which ended up with establishment of the regional CPE office in Novi Pazar.

Raised awareness of GBD and ways to redress it among representatives of local level institutions

At round tables various issues were raised, from discrimination of children with disabilities, discrimination of Roma and multiple discrimination of Roma women to gender based discrimination at the labour market and ways to redress it. Assessment data indicates that participants feel more knowledgeable on CPE’s work and discrimination by 34%, and 26% respectively.

Participation of local level institutions and organisations

152 representatives of local level institutions participated

5 grassroots organization provided support to outreach visits
Outreach visits were primarily organized through grassroots non-governmental organizations, with a goal of enhancing their understanding and capacities to act as referrals to the local level institutions and to CPE. In this way, 5 grassroots non-governmental organizations working in the area of women’s and human rights were capacitated to act as referrals in cases of discrimination. In all municipalities where women’s organizations could be identified, they participated in the visits as intermediaries; otherwise, grassroots organizations active in the field of human rights were engaged. These are: NGO Zene za mir (Leskovac, Vlasotince), NGO Forum zena (Prijepolje), NGO EHO (Prokuplje), NGO Sandzacki odbor za ljudska prava (Novi Pazar). These organizations not only provided logistic support to the visits, but they also directly communicated with the institutions and citizens so as to explain them the importance of participating at the round tables and informing them on the possibilities to file a complaint and seek CPE’s advice.

Involving grassroots organizations was deemed relevant, as they were directly engaged in working with the most vulnerable, and they can potentially play an important role especially in cases when municipal authorities are irresponsible to deal with these issues. As a way of ensuring that they can further serve as referral posts about CPE and GBD, CPE, local non-governmental organisation were included in the organisation of the outreach visits, CPE spoke with women activities from these organisations and promotional materials were left at the local premises of these organizations. Materials on gender based discrimination in minority languages, Albanian and Romani, were also developed and left at their disposal for further dissemination to direct beneficiaries who did not participate at the meetings, and/or to other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, they actively participated in the discussions with, both, representatives of local institutions and rural women, making their possible role in linking with CPE more visible. Immediate results of this cooperation could be noted in two of the municipalities covered. Namely, NGO from Leskovac expressed interest in officially addressing CPE on behalf of some of their beneficiaries after speaking to CPE representatives and UN Women, while NGO from Novi Pazar referred one of their beneficiaries to CPE during their visit to the municipality.

Outcome 2.4: Women and men empowered to demand the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality Services

Demand for the CPE services is largely determined through number of complaints to CPE received during and following outreach visits. Given that previous research conducted by CPE indicated that institution’s visibility is relatively low outside Belgrade, as well as keeping in mind the fact that it was found that targeted population knew little about the mandate of CPE prior to visits, number of persons who approached CPE for advice is also included in the report as output level result. Collection of complaints was announced in the media, through specialized networks and by announcement posters being put on the institutions buildings in the municipalities.

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7 This excludes Vranje and Bujanovac where visits were organized by an independent consultant.
**Collection of complaints**

In total some 34 persons showed interest in filing complaints in the period from October 2013 to March 2014. On this occasion, citizens had an opportunity to approach a “national authority” and speak up about their problems. They complained about variety of issues not related to discrimination such as inability to claim pension rights due to irresponsible local authorities; poor working conditions at a local company; inaccessible health care services; and similar. This high number of various complaints can partly be attributed to the fact that national authorities rarely visit local municipalities, but also low level of awareness of what constitutes discrimination. Most of these complaints had no elements of discrimination, however, CPE representatives in most cases referred the citizens to a responsible authority, and explained them how to best claim their rights. In some cases and based on the preliminary review it was not clear whether issues raised had elements of discrimination. Such was the case in Ladovica, a village situated close to Leskovac, where women complained that they could not get municipal funding for the activities of their association. Through informal discussion, it could be noted that some “men’s associations” received funding, and that perhaps a gender-responsive analysis could indicate whether these women are being discriminated based on sex. CPE called all of the citizens to contact CPE whenever they have doubts whether they can file a complaint.

**Complaints collected in South and South West Serbia since the start of Outreach activities**

- **Vranje**: 27%
- **Leskovac**: 9%
- **Prokuplje**: 4%
- **Vlasotince**: 9%
- **Novi Pazar**: 14%
- **Prijepolje**: 0%
- **Bujanovac**: 5%
- **Other municipalities**: 32%
Output 2.5: Role of media strengthened in increasing awareness of citizens on gender based discrimination

In addition to direct discussions with citizens, extensive local media coverage was organized during the outreach visits, which resulted in more women and men learning about the CPE, gender equality and gender based discrimination.

Outreach events were covered by 8 TV stations, and 14 local newspapers and online media, including media with local, regional, and national coverage. Based on the data provided by local televisions, at least 2,500 persons are likely to have been reached with the key messages\(^6\) via local media. CPE representatives provided statements to the local media, outlining the mandate and the role of the CPE, key notions of gender equality and various forms of discrimination with specific attention given to gender based discrimination. Media communicated with the audiences that gender based discrimination, for example lower wages for women, women being fired during or after the maternity leave, and similar are illegal and that they may complain about it.

CPE representatives also hosted five talk-shows at local TV stations, which provided in-depth information to the audience regarding discrimination and available legal remedies, with focus on gender based discrimination. CPE representatives, including the Commissioner Ms Nevena Petrusic helped to reinforce the messages regarding the importance of combating discrimination and that men and women can and should address the CPE in these instances.

**Project Activities**

Within the project framework, following activities were implemented:

**Activity 1.1:** The existing fact sheets on GEMs capacities did not provide sufficient information to tailor the capacity development efforts to individual GEMs. Thus, a follow up assessment was conducted to serve as baseline for envisaged training and networking events that provided additional information on GEMs scope and quality of knowledge and skills, and possible steps to be taken to ensure minimum set of knowledge and skills is in place within GEMs to effectively perform their mandates. The status of GEMs were reassessed including also needs assessment, and findings were used to consolidate capacity development gender equality fact sheet, which later PROGRES used as a basis for developing individualized recommendations for each of the selected municipalities detailing possible steps in

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\(^6\) In addition to the events being covered through local TV stations, social media and local newspapers also covered the events, thus the exact figure of persons likely to have been reached is potentially higher.
establishing new GEMs in municipalities where they do not exist or developing capacities of existing GEMs to better act.

**Activity 1.2:** Organisation of the GEMs’ Coordination meeting and collecting of national examples of lessons learnt and good practices in the field of empowerment of women, leadership skills, coalition building and networking that could be replicated in South and South West Serbia was dedicated to the exchange of information on activities and plans to support local gender equality mechanisms in Serbia. The process included the following steps:

- Consultations on format, participants and the content of the coordination meeting were organized with key stakeholders, which ensured support and ownership of the process and results by the key stakeholders (GEC, OSCE, NDI, MoLSP, GED etc.);
- Through the UN Women advocacy and lobbying actions, National Gender Equality Council took a lead in coordination of national initiatives and convened the GEMs’ stakeholders coordination meeting. Gender Equality Council, chaired by the State Secretary for Gender Equality expressed strong support to UN Women, highlighting the importance and relevance of UN Women activities;
- Coordination meeting was held on October 30, 2013, with more than 30 participants from 16 institutions where they shared their practices, experiences and future plans;
- Gender Equality Council shared their extremely positive feedback on the initiative and indicated that the key conclusions will be used as the roadmap for future coordination and programming in the work with GEMs in Serbia;
- National examples of good practices of local GEMs were disseminated through professional networks, and made available to stakeholders for replications and follow up.

**Activity 1.3:** Comprehensive capacity development program for GEMs, tailored to their needs was developed in cooperation with the key stakeholders, such as Gender Equality Institute, Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, representatives of non-governmental sector and gender experts. The process included following steps:

- Series of meeting were organised to reach the agreement, endorsed by all stakeholders on the need to map the existing capacity development curriculums and to identify gaps, in line with local GEM’s mandates and functions. Goal was to propose standardized capacity development program outlining set of minimum knowledge and skills for the local GEMs;
- Extensive consultations with key stakeholders were conducted on how to ensure the highest impact of the capacity development program for local GEMs;
- Identification of experts to map the existing capacity development materials for local gender equality mechanisms and to propose standardized capacity development program. The process included review of 11 national level GEMs’ capacity development programs and numerous tools to support the work of local GEMs;
- A Peer Review Group was established and participated in the formulation of the Program. Comments were provided in order to ensure that the Program is aligned and complementary with key tools for measuring progress of local gender equality mechanisms;
- Extensive discussions were conducted with stakeholders to endorse the program and finally the program was printed and disseminated to all GEMs and stakeholders.

**Activity 1.4:** Deliver an introductory course on gender equality. Several introductory modules of the comprehensive curriculum were delivered to local gender equality mechanisms and selected representatives of local self-governance. The modules focused on highlighting the need and improving the abilities of duty bearers to ensure gender responsive operations of local governance. The process included the following steps:
  - Project contracted gender experts to act as trainers and propose, develop and deliver training courses;
  - Jointly, trainers and UN Women developed the agenda and sessions design, outlining training goals, expected outcomes, key messages and training milestones;
  - In addition, trainers developed the methodology for measuring changes in participants’ knowledge that is a direct result of the training;
  - Training was organized for 22 representatives of local GEMs which successfully passed the first two modules of the Program on 23-25 January 2014. Participants reported increase in knowledge and skills on how to conduct gender analyses, and how to assess, collect and analyse data to design measures and monitor improvement of the position of women; Participants reported satisfaction level of 4.7 (at the scale of 1 to 5) with the UN WOMEN design, engagement and delivery of training.

**Activity 1.5:** Peer-to-peer among gender equality mechanisms with a goal of enhancing partnership, experience and knowledge. A networking event, the conference “Gender Equality at the Local Level: Good Practises” for selected GEMs was organized. The process included following steps:
  - Series of consultations were organised to agree on what constitutes good practice in the work of local gender equality mechanisms and to identify Serbia-based local level good practices that can be replicated;
  - The process of identifying GEMs innovative and pilot practices included numerous meetings and discussions and resulted in nine good practices selected to be shared at the conference;
  - The Project contracted gender experts to propose the agenda and facilitate the conference;
  - UN Women developed the agenda, conference flow, key discussion and networking points and key conference messages;
  - Conference “Gender Equality at the Local Level: Good Practices” was organized on March 4th with 63 participants from local GEMs and stakeholders who actively participated and exchanged views at the forum.

**Activity 2.1:** Development of a comprehensive outreach programme on gender-based discrimination and the role and services offered by the CPE in relation to women’s rights and gender-based discrimination. The process included following steps:
  - Consultations with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on the content, process and impact of the outreach plan was carried out and the agreement was reached on outreach plan;
- The Project contracted a consultant to develop a comprehensive outreach programme tailored to the requirements of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality which included key notions of the outreach, methodology of the outreach activities, rationale for the various outreach methods, overview of key stakeholders for women’s rights; the most adequate approach to key stakeholders and methodology to measure the results of the outreach activities;

- An outreach Programme to bring the Commissioner for Protection of Equality closer to women in 7 PROGRES municipalities was developed and used for developing detailed outreach visits to each municipality.

**Activity 2.2:** Implementation of a comprehensive outreach programme on gender-based discrimination and the role and services offered by the CPE in relation to women’s rights and gender-based discrimination. The outreach program was implemented in seven municipalities (Vranje, Bujanovac, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Novi Pazar, Prokuplje and Prijepolje) and included field visits by CPE staff and information sharing on gender-based discrimination and appropriate ways to redress it, including in minority languages. Detailed visits plans for each of the municipality were developed (including goals, format of visits, target groups, participants, agenda, speakers, materials and measurement of success) which included meetings, round tables and discussions with stakeholders (local authorities, centres of social work, police, local service providers, women’s NGOs, local Gender Equality Councils, etc.) as well as general public. Special sessions were organized with the legal aid offices and gender equality mechanisms to provide them with practical guidelines how to correctly refer cases of discrimination to different responsible institutions based on individual mandates and the particular case. Each outreach visit consisted of the following components:

- Institutional outreach - the goal of the institutional outreach was to inform stakeholders on women’s status in Serbia, access to rights and the role of Commissioner for Protection of Equality (CPE). It included all institutions that have a role in preventing and reacting in cases of gender based discrimination and in protecting women’s rights, such as different departments at municipalities, legislative bodies, educational institutions, National Employment Service, police, civil sector etc.;

- Outreach to women and men - this component had a goal of bringing the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality closer to citizens, by increasing the accessibility of information on gender based discrimination to men and women and by bringing staff of CPE face to face with the citizens. It played a role of raising the awareness of men and women on the CPE existing services and on women’s rights;

- Outreach to rural women - In addition to targeting local level institutions, outreach visits also entailed one-day-visits to the rural areas of the municipalities. This was deemed relevant so as to reach those women most vulnerable to different forms of discrimination, as well as those who otherwise have limited access to services offered in urban areas;

- Media outreach - media outreach was based on a visibility plan and included tailor-made step-by-step process with the exclusive focus on outreach and the role of media outlets as tools to inform citizens, pursue engagement opportunities among women activists, local GEMs, CPE and other stakeholders on gender equality issues, generating interest around a topic of gender
equality and gender based discrimination and finally building relationships with media. It included: media announcements, invitation to the main and side events, written and live press statements, thematic interviews, and broadcasting of the main events.

IV. Visibility

During the project implementation a special attention was paid to visibility of project activities and results. Project succeed in reaching a high number of beneficiaries, men and women and institutions and managed to ensure the visibility of the results in all reports, publications and events linked to the project activities.

Financial support of the European Union and the Government of Switzerland was emphasized in the project visibility materials - brochure, leaflets, folders and other project products. Project events, such as conference and training were reported in the media which further enhanced the project’s visibility.

Project events were reported in numerous media slots, likely reaching 2,500 citizens based on a current. Representatives of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and UN Women provided statements to media. Presence of high level governmental officials at project events further contributed to increased visibility of support provided by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a need for improved coordination, information sharing and active advocacy in the area of gender-based discrimination that could enhance capacities of local gender equality mechanisms.

- Coordination meetings initiated through the project that gathered key stakeholders at the national level should become a regular forum for coordination, exchange of information and networking, including information sharing on financial forms of support to GEMs among donors in order to ensure synergy of actions and avoid possible overlap;

- Cooperation with and guidance from national level GEMs to local level gender equality mechanisms is inadequate and frequently non-existing. Formalised communication with regular information sharing between national and local mechanism would greatly enhance the position of local GEMs;

- There is need for close and sustainable cooperation among local level gender equality mechanisms to enhance partnership, and foster regular exchange of experiences and knowledge. Format of such cooperation can vary from linking it to the existing mechanisms such as SCTM to establishing informal mail network, establishing sub-regional or thematic clusters of GEMs, or other;
- There is a need for better cooperation with other stakeholders at the local level, especially high-level decision makers, women in parliament and women’s organisations and networking with national women’s parliamentary network;

- It is necessary to work towards improving the centralized database on local mechanisms that would be accessible to all;

- There is a need to significantly enhance the collection and availability of gender sensitive data in order to enable gender-sensitive analysis and advocacy.

There is a need for building boarder consensus on gender equality priorities.

- Gender equality issues are perceived as women’s issues, thus it is necessary to involve men and ensure their support in achieving gender equality goals;

- It is necessary to increase support to women’s groups, which are faced with multiple discrimination. Special focus should be placed on supporting marginalised groups of women, such as Roma women, women with disabilities, rural women etc., especially in the area of economic empowerment;

- Establishing a national yearly Award for the local self-governments that achieved best results in promoting gender equality within their local community, and its wide promotion would raise the visibility of gender equality issues at the local level;

- There is a need to document most common obstacles faced by local GEMs over the last 10 years and based on that, to conduct a broad consultative process of required measures to address these obstacles.

Legal framework and local plans

- Initiate discussions and debate around the need to amend the Gender Equality Law provisions related to local self-governments, as well as inconsistencies among Gender Equality Law, Antidiscrimination Law and Law on Self-governments, involving all relevant stakeholders;

- In instances not regulated by the Gender Equality Law, local GEMs can rely on subsidiary legislation;

- It is necessary to increase support to the implementation of the adopted laws and regulations of the European Charter that is related to gender equality;

- Mechanisms need to be supported for the creation, adoption and implementation of local action plans for gender equality.

With respect to capacity development of local gender equality mechanisms and local self-governments, so far, support has been focused on ad hoc capacity building interventions. In this respect:

- It is necessary for mechanisms to acquire knowledge, skills and experience that would enable them to bring about change in local policies and processes, though systematic, long-term and sustainable upgrading of local GEMs capacities;

- Capacities of local GEMs should be further enhanced, based on a formalized curriculum;

- Training standards in the gender equality areas should be established;

- There is a need to invest in trainings of professionals as a long-term strategy;
- The mechanisms themselves must recognize the interests of women in their municipalities and seek to involve other local government representatives in gender equality trainings. Specifically, there is a need to sensitise local governments regarding broader policy frameworks on gender equality;
- Capacity development efforts that target various local governments’ departments should treat gender equality as a cross-cutting social issue, and not isolated effort, while recognizing the necessity of general gender budgeting;
- Efforts should be invested in developing and providing practical tools, manuals, models for reporting on gender equality for local self-governments and for local GEMs in order to implement their mandate, in addition to continuous documentation and exchange of best practices and lessons;
- As a way of ensuring maximum efficiency and effectiveness, GEMs should operate in accordance with the CLASP principles, i.e. Credibility, Legitimate, Accountability, Service Oriented, and Power Based;
- Local GEMs’ capacities are insufficient in certain areas, and they require mentorship and technical support. Focus should be on areas that fall within the jurisdiction of local self-governments.

Access to justice and outreach to women
- Citizens feel that national level institutions pay little interest to their needs, as they rarely visit areas outside administrative centres. In most villages, UN Women and CPE were commended as being the first institutions that have ever visited these areas and asked the population on their need. In this respect there is a need to institutionalize follow-up visits to municipalities so as to emphasize key messages about the CPE and provide updates and sustain dialogue with local men and women;
- The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality should expand the outreach programme so as to reach new municipalities and surrounding rural areas. Encourage greater community participation in rural areas, by covering more villages through outreach visits. Isolated villages should also be included in the visits;
- Organize discussions with the population living in urban areas, using the models that was successful with women from rural areas;
- There is a need to increase number of women to be reached through targeted outreach interventions intensifying and strengthening UN Women’s already existing working relationships with grassroots organizations and key local level institutions;
- Advocate for setting up additional local and regional offices of CPE, following the success of the first regional CPE Office in Novi Pazar;
- Citizens, men and women are still unaware of the phenomenon of discrimination, its forms, scope and grounds. In addition, the role and mandate of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality is insufficiently visible. There is number of misconceptions about what constitutes discrimination, but the most recurring one referred to the confusions regarding concepts of “affirmative action” as opposed to discrimination;
- Relatively low level of awareness of CPE’s mandate was noted among persons who approached CPE in targeted municipalities. This could be observed as many persons approached CPE to complain about wide range of issues, several of them containing elements of discrimination.

- Building capacities of the CPE for implementation of the outreach programme in terms of involving and training more staff from the institution (ensuring internal sustainability), production of relevant advocacy material in accessible formats (minority languages and easy-to-understand formats) and involvement of external consultants for successful implementation of the outreach programme;

- Ensuring the sustainability of access to equality mechanisms in South and South-West Serbia. This can include training sessions for Gender Equality Mechanisms, local legal aid offices, and NGOs with the aim of establishing allies that can support victims of discrimination to reach the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. The ways to ensure sustainability of these intermediary points should be taken into consideration, especially the possibility for local self-governments to ensure funding or logistical support for their functioning; therefore, the mechanisms are sustainable and the local self-governments show their willingness to support gender equality.
Annexes

1. Standardised Capacity Development Programme Proposal

2. Gender Equality Mechanisms Coordination Meeting; Package: Agenda, List of Participants, Meeting Overview

3. Gender Analysis Training “Gender Analysis: a Step towards Gender Mainstreaming” Package: Agenda, List of Participants, Training materials (Presentations and Exercises), Training Report, Self-assessments measuring the change in knowledge

4. Conference “Gender Equality at the Local Level: Good Practises”; Package: Agenda, List of Participants, Conference Overview, Conference materials

5. Commissioner for Protection of Equality Outreach Program to Women

6. Commissioner for Protection of Equality Outreach Materials; Package for visits to seven municipalities: Outreach Plan, Initiations, Agenda, List of Participants, Report, Self-assessments measuring the change in knowledge, Manual on gender based discrimination