



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BACKGROUND

During the 20 years since the end of the war in BiH, steps have been taken to rebuild democratic institutions, provide remedies for conflict-related injustice, promote peacebuilding and move the country along the EU integration path. However, in many cases progress has been slow due to political deadlocks, and accompanying economic and financial difficulties.

The governance structure of BiH is unique in the region as a result of the complex peace negotiation process in 1995 and the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords (which includes the BiH Constitution). This structure means the state is assigned with limited responsibilities, with most of the political and financial power resting with two

entities and a district (the Republika Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Brcko District). This has led to a high level of political polarization, as evidenced by the challenges from the Republika Srpska authorities to the legitimacy of state-level authorities and BiH sovereignty, unresolved issues in the education sector such as two schools under one roof, and the unresolved status of the city of Mostar, where failure to reach an agreement on the administrative structure led to exclusion from another local elections cycle.

The overall socio-economic and political situation, including high rates of unemployment (specifically among youth) and a sense of social apathy, is also believed to be a driver of a number of citizens becoming foreign fighters in Syria, Ukraine, and other conflict-affected countries. With concerns over the con-

sequences of these fighters returning home, as well as the large quantities of weapons remaining from the war in the 1990s, the BiH Council of Ministers released the 'Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Prevention and Combating Terrorism' in 2015. BiH has also outlawed participation in foreign conflicts (either as a fighter or recruiter)¹ and jailed the first people under this law,² with more arrests and convictions occurring through late 2015 and early 2016.

In 2015, BiH placed greater emphasis on reform processes through the adoption of the Reform Agenda and official submission of the EU application. In efforts to sustain peace, events such as the visit of Pope Francis and the reopening of the National Museum after three years provided an important boost to the campaign to promote coexistence and diversity throughout the country. This came on top of the solidarity seen in the immediate response to the May 2014 floods (the most devastating that the country has seen in decades)³ and the continuing flood-recovery efforts.

views, and 3,680 social platform users. In total, it is estimated that 1,138,084 persons, or close to 30 percent of the population, have been engaged in peacebuilding issues.

To improve access to justice, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, UNDP established a new free legal aid agency to ensure access to free legal aid services and information for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and women.



Taking Dialogue for the Future to the streets

Photo by: UNDP BiH

ASSISTANCE AND IMPACT

Dialogue for the Future, a project involving multiple UN agencies and funded by the UN agencies funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, continued the focus on trust building and the promotion of diversity. In an important milestone, the Presidency of BiH signed the 'Dialogue Platform Declaration', which facilitates the engagement of decision makers from all jurisdictional levels of the country at Dialogue for the Future events, including the flagship Dialogue Platform Conferences. Dialogue for the Future has directly engaged over 54,000 citizens through two Dialogue Platform Conferences, 26 youth forums, and 40 grants facility projects, which has resulted in a formal process that enables citizens and decision makers to interact and discuss peace- and trust-building. Dialogue for the Future has also reached a huge audience, including over 1,350 positive stories, 20 televised reports with an estimated 890,560 viewers, 27,494 YouTube and 135,419 Facebook

With this addition, the total number of free legal aid agencies now stands at 16, enabling access to free legal aid services for more than 800,000 citizens. Implementation of small grants programmes also significantly increased the territorial coverage and access to free legal aid in rural and remote areas. During 2015, 11,637 women and 10,332 men received free legal aid services in all types of cases and court proceedings.

UNDP also supported the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform and National War Crimes Prosecution Strategies by facilitating better cooperation among war crimes prosecution offices in the region, speeding up the processing of war crimes cases that have a regional dimension. UNDP further supported the continued expansion and improvement of the Victim-Witness Support programme to 16 fully operational offices. These offices assisted over 1,600 people in 2015.

¹ Reuters, "Bosnia introduces jail terms to curb recruitment for Syria", 29 April 2014.

Available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-bosnia-idUSBREA3S0PN20140429>

² Balkan Insight, "Bosnia Court Jails Middle Eastern Fighters", 6 October 2015. Available from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-court-delivers-first-ever-sentence-against-foreign-fighters-10-06-2015>

³ BBC News, "Bosnia and Serbia emergency after 'worst ever' floods", 16 May 2014. Available from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27439139>

"Peacebuilding [reconciliation, "pomirenje"] process within the BiH society is the most important one, on which all other positive processes in the society and the state are based. This process is moving spontaneously. We have seen in the misfortune that fell upon us through the floods and landslides some time ago [May 2014] positive moves in the right direction. People helped each other, entire villages helped others with no regard on whether the citizens were of their ethnicity, religion or nation."

– **Mr. Bakir Izetbegović**, Chairman of the BiH Presidency following official signing of the Dialogue for the Future Project

UNDP is also working on a joint UN project in partnership with IOM, UNFPA and UN Women to strengthen the ability of the judiciary, the police and the media to prosecute and report on CRSV in BiH. This joint programme, amongst other things, has provided training to representatives of the judiciary, police and media on survivors' rights and standards for processing of war crimes cases involving sexual violence.



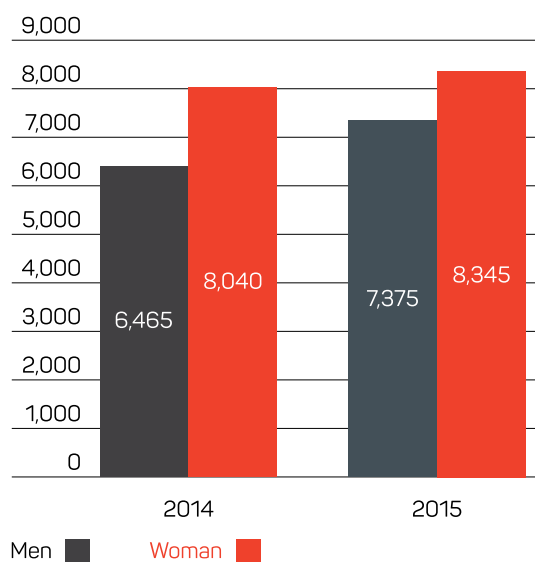
Opening of a Victim and Witness Support Office in Zenica

Photo by: Ismar Sačak/UNDP BiH

Initiated in 2009, LOD (Reinforcement of Local Democracy) is a project which aims to improve cooperation between local governments and civil society organizations, contributing to better service delivery for excluded and vulnerable population groups. The project focuses on enhancing transparency and accountability of public spending at the local level, strengthening partnerships between local governments and civil society organizations, the realization of grass-root initiatives and increasing the capacities of civil society organizations. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and various associations of municipalities and cities, LOD has worked in partnership with 50 partner local governments and 243 civil society organizations to support the implementation of 289 projects based on the needs of local communities. To date, this project has benefitted over 81,000 people.

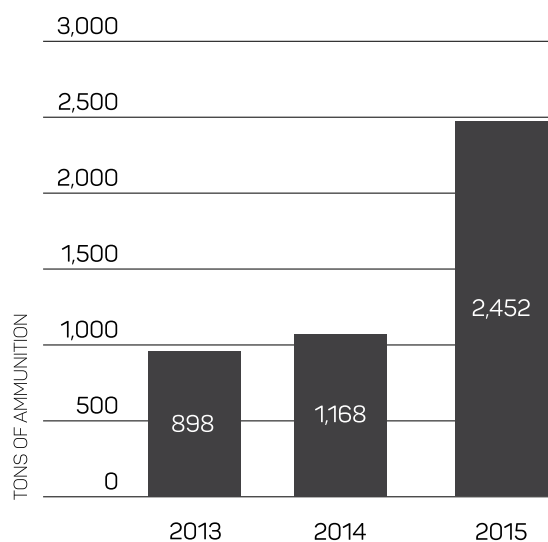
To combat corruption, in 2015, UNDP trained key law enforcement agencies and created a governance model for improved coordination among stakeholders involved in the fight against corruption in order to enable more efficient and effective identification and prosecution of corruption cases going forward.

LEGAL AID RECIPIENTS - 2014 AND 2015



Source: UNDP

In work to diminish the legacy of the war, UNDP in coordination with the Ministry of Defence, contributed to the disposal of 2,452 tons of unsafe ammunition, reducing the quantity of remaining ammunition surpluses to 12,000 tons. Due to the optimization of ammunition disposal processes, the overall rate of disposal was increased almost threefold, thus reducing the overall expected time of completion of addressing the issue of unsafe stockpile ammunition to five years. Five out of seven ammunition and weapons storage sites were also upgraded through the reconstruction of facilities, drainage, and ventilation systems as part of this process.



Source: SEESAC

CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Progress has been made in the EU integration process through the implementation of the Reform Agenda. However, the further implementation of the Reform Agenda and the EU accession process will face complexities, such as the upcoming elections. Elections typically intensify the political and ethnic dynamics in the country, limiting the capacity for political compromises and agreements. The next steps in the complex EU integration process for BiH

involves the submission of an application for membership and the presentation of and response to the questionnaire. Progress on these steps will depend on political stability and effective coordination in the implementation of the Reform Agenda.

Economically, significant challenges also lie ahead. With unemployment over 25 percent⁴ and estimated GDP growth of 2 percent in 2014,⁵ there is frustration, particularly among youth, at the lack of opportunities and slow economic growth. A new International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan agreement is necessary to ensure fiscal stability. With clear linkages between these economic challenges and the political and ethnic polarization, expectations of the BiH Reform Agenda are high, not only as an indication of the maturity of the EU integration process, but also as a way to improve socio-economic conditions and defuse political tensions.

Along with framing assistance in line with the priorities of the Reform Agenda and the necessities that arise in the EU integration process, UNDP is focused on several key priorities targeting peace-building and social cohesion.

Further improvements of free legal aid services are planned, with a focus on enhancing access to justice for survivors of CRSV, and improving the quality of services through institutional referral networks. Work on the regional dimension of war crimes cases will also be continued. Furthermore, UNDP plans to develop action plans to improve human rights and gender equality in order to better support state institutions.

Building on and scaling up the successful results of the LOD project, UNDP will support a new Regional Local Democracy Project (ReLOaD), expanding the methodology to other countries in the Western Balkans. ReLOaD aims to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society by scaling-up a successful model of transparent and project-based civil society organization funding from local governments' budgets, with a goal of encouraging greater civic engagement in decision-making and improvement of local service delivery.

⁴ The World Bank, "Databank – World Development Indicators". Available from <http://databank.worldbank.org/> (accessed 22 June 2016)

⁵ The World Bank, "Bosnia Overview".

Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bosniaandherzegovina/overview> (accessed 22 June 2016)

Finally, to improve community safety, UNDP plans to support programmes to remove ammunition and weapons from communities, as well as explore interventions to strengthen border management and prevent violent extremism. In continued partnership with the BiH Presidency, engagement in peacebuilding activities will continue with a strong focus on engaging youth through social entrepreneurship.



Key results

Over 1,138,084 people engaged (directly and indirectly) as part of Dialogue for the Future

Free legal aid provided to 11,637 women and 10,332 men

16 free legal aid agencies now in operation

Disposal of 2,452 tons of unsafe ammunition

