

Gender-based violence and conflict transformation

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More than 20 years after the war, gender-based violence is still rife in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Studies show that one in four women in Bosnia and Herzegovina experiences violence. In most cases (71.5%), the perpetrators are partners or ex-partners.

In Kosovo, one third of the population believes that physical violence is part of married life, and that domestic abuse is a private family matter that should not be reported to the police. Approximately 41% of women experienced domestic violence in 2014, and 68% of women are subjected to violence in their lifetimes. Poverty is a major factor that can lead to domestic abuse.

Sexual abuse is also very common in Kosovo.

Both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo signed the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and drew up national action plans for implementing it (NAP 1325). Civil society organizations are critically monitoring this implementation. Another important measure against domestic abuse is the Istanbul Convention, which is more specific and binding. The initial implementation strategies have been in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2015. In Kosovo, too, the Istanbul Convention is regarded as an essential tool to combat all forms of violence against women. Unfortunately, in both countries there is a large gap between establishing policies and implementing them in everyday life.

Gender-based violence project focus

cfp projects are strongly focused on the key themes of participation, sensitization, protection, and prevention of gender-based violence. The “Snaga – Stärke” (“power”) project in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides a women’s shelter and a counseling center where women affected by violence can receive psychological counseling and support. cfp’s partner organization Medica Zenica maintains active links with the police and other authorities to provide better protection for those affected by domestic and gender-based violence. Training courses and psychosocial support bases in villages help women to find work and escape poverty. Women are able to use their skills and unlock their potential to become more visible in the community, which in turn breaks down stereotypical gender roles and reduces gender-based violence and discrimination.

The Ndal – Stopp (“stop”) project in Kosovo helps women who have been subjected to violence to work through their experiences using theater. Young people use creative processes to actively address issues of violence and stereotypical gender roles. Young participants present public theater performances and hold discussions afterwards, alerting communities to the problem of gender-based violence.

Integration and participation

The cfp projects in south eastern Europe make it clear that they are open to participants of all ethnicities. The Ndal – Stopp and Snaga – Stärke projects deliberately bring together women and young people of different ethnicities, from both rural and urban areas. This sets an important precedent that, although on a small scale, is essential for the entire community, and for cohesion in both countries.

The objective of cfp projects is to generally improve psychological well-being and resilience. They encourage women to get involved in politics at a local level as an introduction to more political participation. The involvement of civil society is all the more important as both countries are in a fragile, post-war state, or rather on their way to becoming failed states. cfp projects help women and young people to play an active role in combating violence and discrimination. The participatory projects offer them a new perspective. This integrated approach means they can make an important contribution towards conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

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