



Evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans (GAP 2 and GAP 3)

Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Case Study

Evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans (GAP 2 and GAP 3): Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Case Study

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For further information, please contact:

Evaluation Office

United Nations Children’s Fund
Three United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
evalhelp@unicef.org

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The country case study was conducted and prepared by Minja Damjanović, with the contribution of Celine Mazars and quality-assurance by Erika Fraser, from [Social Development Direct](#) between May and October 2024.



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Acronyms and abbreviations

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina | IP | Implementing Partner |
| CCC | Core Commitments for Children | IT | Information Technology |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women | KII | Key Informant Interview |
| CO | Country Office | M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| COAR | Country Office Annual Report | NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| CPD | Country Programme Document | OECD-DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-Operation Development-Development Assistance Committee |
| CPMP | Country Programme Management Plan | PSEA | Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse |
| CRM | Child Rights Monitoring | RO | Regional Office |
| CRME | Child Rights Monitoring and Evaluation | RS | Republika Srpska |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | SDDirect | Social Development Direct |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child | SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization | SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| ECARO | Europe and Central Asia Regional Office | STEM | Science Technology Engineering Mathematics |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development | ToC | Theory of Change |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education | ToR | Terms of Reference |
| EO | Evaluation Office | UN | United Nations |
| EQ | Evaluation Question | UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| EU | European Union | UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| FBiH | Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina | UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion | UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| GAP | Gender Action Plan | UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence | UN-SWAP | UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| GEM | Gender Equality Marker | UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women |
| GFP | Gender Focal Point | USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| GII | Gender Inequality Index | WHO | World Health Organization |
| GPR | Gender Programmatic Review | | |
| HQ | Headquarters | | |
| HR | Human Resources | | |



Executive summary

Introduction

This evaluation case study forms part of the evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans (GAPs). Its purpose was to explore the implementation of the Gender Policy, GAP 2 and GAP 3 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), including its contribution to shifts in workplace culture and accountability, as well as to assess gender-related programmatic results for women and girls. Conceived as a learning exercise, it aims to support the country office (CO) in improving its work on gender.

BiH has set up a comprehensive normative framework for gender equality. However, its implementation is lagging, hampered by limited government resources and capacities, as well as harmful gender norms. BiH has a high prevalence of violence against women and girls with every second woman and girl from 15 years of age experiencing some form of violence during her lifetime. The country has a large gender gap in employment, as women are less active, have lower employment rates (28.9 per cent versus 52.1 per cent) than men. Women are more likely than men to experience sexual harassment at work (37.5 per cent women versus 21.2 per cent men), mostly by their male supervisors or men in higher positions. Educational and occupational segregation is pushing women towards lower paid sectors such as education, health and social protection, while men dominate higher paid information technology (IT)

and engineering sectors. BiH's context is marked by a rising anti-gender movement, which is succeeding in overturning progress in the normative framework.

The projected budget of the current country programme document (CPD) 2021-2025 was US\$4.26 million (regular resources) and US\$26.74 million (other resources). In relation to its work on gender equality, UNICEF BiH has three programmes that target adolescent girls: IT Girls programme, Adolescent Girls programme and UPSHIFT¹. The IT Girls programme focuses on skills building and empowering girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) areas. In 2023, IT Girls was implemented in 110 schools in BiH and empowered 756 adolescents (543 young women and girls), with digital and programming skills. The Adolescent Girls programme focuses on localization of the global Adolescent Girls Strategy to BiH, through several activities with involvement from different sections. These focused on topics of mental health, violence prevention, addressing harmful social norms and gender equality, through working with schools, centres for social welfare, mental health centres and civil society organizations (CSOs). Through this programme UNICEF BiH reached a total of 214,068 beneficiaries (51 per cent female), out of which 21,276 direct beneficiaries (40 per cent female) and 192,792 indirect beneficiaries (52 per cent female) enhanced their access to mental health and social protection services. UPSHIFT directly engaged up to 150 people in 2023 (70 per cent girls) to enhance their capacities to become active innovators and entrepreneurs.

Purpose, objectives and scope

This evaluation case study aimed to assess UNICEF's performance and results in implementing GAP 2 and GAP 3 and the new Gender Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 2018 and 2023, including the progress made in the course of 2024. It is a learning and accountability exercise and is part of the evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans. The global evaluation report will be presented to the UNICEF Executive Board in 2025. The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- ▶ To assess the relevance and coherence of the current Gender Policy and Gender Action Plans 2 and 3 in supporting gender equality and adolescent girls' empowerment from the point of view of UNICEF's mandate (i.e., Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Core Commitments to Children (CCCs) and the organization's commitments to the UN systems-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP), as captured in the UNICEF Strategic Plan in development and humanitarian settings.
- ▶ To assess the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of implementing gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, programming processes, organizational commitments, and accountability mechanisms.
- ▶ To determine the extent to which UNICEF meets the programmatic results set for all children, adolescents and women on gender equality across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and in both development and humanitarian settings.

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR), the primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF employees at all levels, government and partners working with UNICEF to advance the rights of women and girls, women and Bosnia and Herzegovina – in particular, the senior leadership and the gender team – to strengthen gender integration in policies and programmes.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used an analytical framework described in the theory of change (ToC) model developed during the inception phase, and the country case study in BiH offers an opportunity to test whether the logic and assumptions of this model are verified in practice.

The case study used a mixed method approach, drawing on both primary and secondary data sources, including: a desk review of over 50 documents; monitoring and financial data from the CO; responses to the evaluation staff survey from UNICEF BiH; 31 individual key informant interviews (KIIs) with UNICEF staff, government stakeholders, UN and implementing partners from civil society (23 female; 8 male); two gender-segregated workshops with UNICEF staff (12 female; 6 male) on organizational culture on gender equality; and two gender-segregated adolescent workshops with 19 adolescent girls and focus group discussions (FGDs) with six boys to discuss the contribution of the programmes to transformative results for gender equality. Data collection involved a field visit to Sarajevo and Banja Luka. Following the mission, a debrief session was organized to discuss emerging findings with UNICEF BiH, in which Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and the UNICEF Evaluation Office (EO) participated.

The evaluation was informed by ethical and safety considerations for research and by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and UNICEF evaluation and ethical guidance. Additionally, external ethical clearance was obtained from an independent review board for the overall evaluation.

Key findings

1. Gender Policy and GAP 3 conceptual framework

Although UNICEF BiH's guiding policy framework shows modest reference to the global gender framework, the GAP and Adolescent Girls Strategy were successfully used by senior management in mobilizing resources for large initiatives on gender and adolescent girls in BiH, which shows the relevance of the GAP to the country context. However, the knowledge of CO staff about the global gender framework varies, and is higher among senior, gender, programme and female staff.

In 2023, UNICEF BiH developed its first GAP for the period 2023-2025, based on the findings of the Gender Programmatic Review (GPR) conducted in 2022. Gender targets have been set in all four priority areas, including organizational effectiveness. The document was designed after a thorough consultation and training process, aimed at prioritizing the recommendations that will be taken forward. It was spearheaded by senior management and facilitated by the Gender Focal Point (GFP). However, the level of engagement of middle management and programme staff was limited, partly because of lack of knowledge and time. It is shaped as a micro-workplan which is realistic and adapted to the current capacities of the CO but does not have a long-term gender equality vision and includes gender-related activities which are already in implementation. UNICEF BiH is yet to set a functional monitoring mechanism to track the implementation of the national GAP.

2. Organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs

UNICEF BiH has been investing in growing the capacities of its staff to work on gender equality, mostly through online and in-person trainings and is meeting the global targets on this. However, there are mixed views on the usefulness and quality of the training sessions. While young female programme staff show the highest level of knowledge, interest and motivation to work on gender equality, the remaining staff show significantly lower levels of knowledge and interest, particularly in transformative programming for gender results. The demands placed on staff to demonstrate their work on gender (i.e. gender tagging), as a cross-cutting issue, constitutes an additional burden to overstretched staff and has led some to consider

working on gender as an imposition from the rules established by headquarters (HQ). In this context, work on gender is mostly conducted by the national GFP.

UNICEF BiH's work on gender is managed by two GFPs, a nominated national staff expected to spend 20 per cent of their time on gender (responsible for internal technical support and corporate compliance) and the deputy representative (responsible for overall programming and external positioning on gender). The national GFP, who built strong capacities on gender at the onset of their mandate lacks time (despite spending more than 20 per cent on gender), specific sectoral knowledge and influence to provide the type of support required by the GAP priorities. The engagement of the deputy representative yielded positive results in positioning UNICEF as a key gender partner, both within the United Nations (UN) system and with donors. This translated into successful resource mobilization and the development of joint UN programmes on gender. The regional gender advisor has been a key actor of the CO architecture, through ongoing technical support.

Although there is a growing effort in the CO to conduct gender analysis, especially during the programme design phase, low level of knowledge on gender, combined with the lack of funds and time to commission external expertise, makes this a challenging task. The regional office (RO) represents the main source of gender data; however, these data are not being integrated systematically across the programme sections.

UNICEF BiH successfully fundraised for gender. Data show gender expenditure in two of the four priority areas (education and child protection), with additional funds secured for the implementation of gender equality programming through joint UN Gender Accelerators project in the upcoming period.

UNICEF BiH has established successful partnerships with youth-led organizations and those with the mandate to advance the position of children and adolescents in the country. UNICEF is seen as a valuable and trusted partner, particularly critical for bringing innovation in formal education. However, programming modalities such as short duration of the projects, which are at times extended, but with no guarantee, represent the key challenge in non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) partnerships with the CO. Most CSOs understood the requirement to integrate gender equality as establishing a prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) system

and to analyse the project's impact on gender equality at the design phase and collect sex-disaggregated data. Partnerships with two women- and girl-led organizations were established recently, following the GPR recommendation, which have led to programmatic benefits and high transactional costs for both sides, largely due to the cumbersome nature of UNICEF corporate policies and standards.

UNICEF BiH has established good cooperation with government institutions and there are several gender-related initiatives being implemented in partnership with public institutions, such as centres for social work and employment bureaux, schools and institutes of public health. However, gender institutional mechanisms, such as the Agency for Gender Equality, do not have an established cooperation agreement with UNICEF BiH although they would like to do so and there is currently no partnership related to gender with the Federation of BiH (FBiH) Ministry of Health and Canton Sarajevo Ministry of Education, at the time of data collection (although some initiatives were identified in the past).

In BiH, UNICEF has established successful cooperation with other UN agencies on gender equality, which is demonstrated through the implementation of the IT Girls initiative and the design of the UN Gender Accelerators Framework.

UNICEF BiH has not yet developed a well-functioning national GAP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. Results related to gender-responsive and transformative programming are often under-reported. Country Office Annual Reports (COARs) lack outcome level gender indicators and reporting against gender results, which would enable better understanding of the type and impact of the work on gender. There is no information about the level of CO GAP implementation and gender tagging does not always accurately represent gender results and tend to stretch the marking up to meet organizational requirements.

Accountability for gender is placed on the GFPs, who are the only staff members in UNICEF BiH to have gender in their performance evaluation review. However, several staff feel that gender should be integrated in the performance evaluations of staff across the CO.

There is a high level of commitment of senior leadership to work on gender equality in the CO and the staff trusts the leadership to pursue gender programmatic work and address any manifestation of sexist values and inappropriate behaviour in the office.

In UNICEF BiH, ownership of the gender mandate is not equally distributed, with GFPs owning the largest responsibility for work on gender. As gender is a cross-cutting issue, it is perceived by some staff as representing additional work for them, which is complicated to manage in a small team, but a critical mass of staff is motivated and interested to work more on the topic.

The UNICEF BiH team consists of 70 per cent women and 30 per cent men, which led to measures being put in place to attract more male staff. The more recent recruitment of younger colleagues has positively impacted the CO's capacity to address gender issues. However, this has also highlighted differing perspectives between staff of different age groups, leading to diverse approaches to programming and innovations, as well as varying interpretations of gender norms and stereotypes. UNICEF BiH has a flexible working environment in place which is beneficial to all staff, particularly women interviewed during the KIIs who stated that this policy was important and used to balance their caregiving and work-related responsibilities.

UNICEF BiH has a strong external focus and investment on PSEA which is seen as positive by both UNICEF and its implementing partners (IPs). At the same time, the CO shows much less focus on PSEA internally and there is no clear internal reporting mechanism in place. Female staff expressed strong discontent with the implementation of the global UNICEF Policy on Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority (2019) and mistrust towards existing mechanisms. Finally, there are significant differences in the gender norms and values held by various staff in the CO, which impacts overall understanding of PSEA and what constitutes unwanted behaviour.

3. Programmatic results for gender equality

Although gender-related initiatives have been implemented in all four programmatic areas of UNICEF BiH, gender-related programming has only been prioritized in two programme sections: child protection, which includes the implementation of the Adolescent Girls Fund-supported project "Breaking Barriers: Transforming Services for An Empowered Future for All Girls" (2023-2024) and education which coordinates the implementation of IT Girls programme and UPSHIFT initiative. Health (immunization and early childhood development (ECD)) and social

policy programmes have implemented interesting gender-responsive initiatives. The evaluation finds the lack of attention to immunization to be a missed opportunity to address the decreasing immunization coverage by addressing gender norms which are related to decision-making and access to information regarding immunization.

Results on gender equality programming are evident within the education section, under both the IT Girls programme and UPSHIFT initiative. Both are successful in addressing impediments to girls' empowerment by tackling gender bias and advancing leadership skills of adolescent girls. In health, some positive initiatives have been undertaken to tackle gender norms in nutrition and ECD. A combination of diligent monitoring and knowledge on gender and gender programming was crucial for identifying gender bias among health and preschool professionals and for designing transformative activities by involving more fathers in ECD workshops and giving equal attention to both boys and girls in activities related to improved nutrition.

Activities in the child protection sector show high levels of gender responsiveness, by addressing issues of stigma around sexual violence, lack of knowledge on gender-based violence (GBV) and gender stereotypes, as well as limited knowledge on how to provide mental health services that are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls. The initiative was planned and implemented with substantial involvement of adolescent girls and boys. Similarly in social policy, UNICEF BiH implemented gender-responsive social entrepreneurship schemes and supported access to the labour market for particularly vulnerable categories of women to contribute to better livelihoods for them and their children.

Results for adolescent girls were achieved under all three programmes: IT Girls, the Breaking Barriers project and UPSHIFT, in terms of increasing participation, leadership skills and their well-being. However, for the IT Girls programme, more data are necessary to confirm the impact on the leadership of women and girls in the IT sector. Furthermore, the programme seems to be missing an opportunity to tackle perceived gender norms and roles among adolescent girls who lack awareness of the gender gap in the IT sector, as well as gender stereotypes and norms more broadly. Breaking Barriers was also successful in engaging with adolescent boys, however, not enough to motivate them to further address the issues related to gender equality, which they considered to be a girl's issue. Finally, at times

when the UPSHIFT programme led to significant change in attitudes and beliefs, adolescent girls were unable to accept the change adequately, due to lack of professional psychological support.

UNICEF BiH faces significant challenges and pushback in its work to achieve transformative change. External pushback is led by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska, which is denying the implementation of projects presented as gender-transformative, due to a lack of understanding of the term, a rising public discourse that is unsupportive of gender-related work, and insufficient localization of UNICEF's global initiatives and policies. Moreover, transformative change requires long-term projects and secured funding, particularly when activities are implemented through partner NGOs, which is currently lacking.

Key conclusions and lessons learned

UNICEF BiH has seen an enhancement in its gender work during the evaluation timeframe, thanks to references to the GAP and proactive leadership. Despite an initially low level of gender programming, the CO has substantially improved this, aided by an action-oriented GPR which led to the development of a national GAP. UNICEF BiH designed joint interventions, programmes on adolescent girls, and secured additional funding for its core programmatic work and achieved substantial gender-responsive results which benefited children and adolescent girls and boys. However, the national GAP is still modest in outlining a gender-transformative vision for the CO and has not yet developed a monitoring system.

UNICEF BiH has constantly invested in increasing staff capacity to engage in gender equality programming, including through trainings to reflect on gender biases, generation of data, and quality assurance. However, most of the staff feel they need more practical training on gender and the need for more staff engagement on critical reflections on gender norms was identified. In addition, despite training received, the majority of responsibilities for gender-related work has remained with the overburdened GFP. Other programme staff still consider gender as cross-cutting and marginal and find it hard to understand and engage in this area and do not feel ownership of the work on gender.

Demands placed on staff to demonstrate their work on gender (i.e. gender tagging) as a cross-cutting issue, constitutes an additional workload to

overstretched staff and has led some to consider it as a burden, and an imposition from the rules established from HQ. However, each sector demonstrates initiatives that have the potential to be gender-transformative, and constitute opportunities to motivate staff and capitalize on this by showing them that they already work on gender in a meaningful way.

UNICEF BiH does not fully capture achieved gender-responsive and transformative results. While this gap could be partly related to lack of a gender guiding framework in the evaluation period (as GAP was designed in 2023), lack of ownership for gender results within the current underdeveloped/basic M&E system represent the largest challenge. COARs, which are the key source of qualitative information about the programmes, provide little data on gender results, and mainly focus on sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries. RO represents the main source of gender data, which are needed for gender programming, however this data does not reach the CO programme sections, and mostly stays with the GFP who has little influence and participation in sectoral programming on gender.

UNICEF BiH has a good track record of forming strong partnerships with government, NGOs, and other UN agencies, including for example recently with women-led and girl-led NGOs. Despite these partnerships being beneficial to advancements in gender equality, UNICEF's gender efforts are still not widely recognized. However, the organization's willingness to address the gender pushback in BiH is a strong sign of its commitment to better position itself in the gender equality field.

Implementation of the UNICEF policy on prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority is particularly weak due to lack of clear internal reporting procedures, which undermines staff trust in the organization.

UNICEF BiH has a successful track record in achieving gender equality results. CO programming has addressed gender norms and advanced girls' well-being and leadership. While the overall impact has been positive, there have also been some negative repercussions. For example, the Ministry of Education of Republika Srpska refused to acknowledge any gender-transformative initiatives in schools within this entity. Moreover, the personal growth experienced by adolescent girls sometimes triggered negative reactions such as additional restrictions from parents when there were not wider changes in community gender norms to support them, which girls sometimes struggled with.

Lessons learned

- ▶ A good quality GPR based on an in-depth gender analysis of existing programmes, coupled with senior management efforts and regional support are key ingredients to localize global gender frameworks in country programmes and catalyse the development of a national GAP. Ultimately, the shape of the BiH GAP and the extent to which the GPR's recommendations can be taken forward depends on middle management and programme staff's knowledge, motivation and time they can allocate to gender integration. This is challenging in small country offices.
- ▶ Hiring young female staff interested in promoting the gender agenda is important for creating a critical mass of professionals advancing gender equality in the organization and its programmes. This needs to be accompanied by internal mechanisms that enable team discussions to manage the risks for inter-generational culture clash.
- ▶ For gender equality programming to be successful, the CO needs to think beyond capacity building to ensure accountability mechanisms are in place across the office, including for non-programme staff.
- ▶ To achieve more gender-transformative results, UNICEF needs to ensure that programme staff have sufficient capacities to plan, monitor and report on gender, a better contextualized global gender framework to avoid pushback, and establish long-term partnerships which include projects not shorter than 18 months.
- ▶ Although designed with the intention to support gender-related work in all sectors, the GAP accountability and M&E mechanisms can be experienced as purely compliance-driven processes which can deter some staff from engaging meaningfully in gender integration. This turns their attention away from concrete opportunities to integrate gender that already exist in their programmes.

Recommendations

These recommendations are presented in order of priority and have been derived from the evaluation's findings and conclusions. They were validated with UNICEF BiH during a workshop held online prior to their finalization, and/or edited. They are categorized into two sections: 1) Recommendations for the UNICEF BiH CO and 2) Recommendations for HQ.


For UNICEF BiH


Recommendation 1 : Strengthen capacity to increase the understanding of gender and gender norms, and operationalize it across sectors and externally by:


- ▶ Continuing to organize regular trainings on gender equality, gender norms and transformative results, preferably in cooperation with the regional gender team. These will contribute to equal understanding, ownership support and motivation to implement the UNICEF gender agenda in programmes and in the CO. A long term capacity building plan should be designed and conducted for the CO including the below:
 - ▶ Engage staff on critical reflections about their own gender norms, where they differ from the values promoted by UNICEF, and consider how to reconcile them. This could be done through a series of innovative workshops and learning methods over time, built in an incremental way with the support of gender specialists (see recommendations to HQ below).
 - ▶ The plan should further assess and reflect different levels of staff knowledge and learning needs on gender equality, and include targeted capacity building activities accordingly.
 - ▶ Strengthen the technical capacities of staff to concretely integrate gender in their work, by identifying entry points for gender; reflecting on simple ToCs that demonstrate how working on gender can strengthen expected results.
 - ▶ Provide relevant sectoral tools, as well as mentoring sessions, with the support of regional advisors and encourage regional exchanges of best practices and possibly study tours to other UNICEF COs. Capacity building activities should be organized for all staff (programme and non-programme).

- ▶ Include in staff performance reviews specific indicators on gender, related to their work/ programme. This is particularly important for middle management to increase their ownership and accountability for achieving gender results.
- ▶ Organizing capacity building sessions for IPs, particularly on gender-responsive and transformative results. This would help to ensure that UNICEF achieves planned gender results, as well as increase the visibility of the organization's work on gender equality. UNICEF BiH could organize these trainings as a part of the current orientation sessions for IPs.

 **Priority:** High

 **Timeframe:** Ongoing, with capacity building structure to be set within the next year





 **Responsible units:** UNICEF BiH management, GFP, with support of RO and HQ

 **Cost implications:** Costs associated with capacity building in terms of staff time; potentially external support

Recommendation 2 : Strengthen internal PSEA framework and actively promote zero tolerance to violence against women, particularly sexual harassment by:





- ▶ Reviewing the CO standard operating procedure (SOP) on PSEA. The SOP should at minimum include information about how to contact the internal PSEA focal point, the inter-office reporting procedure of an unwanted behaviour and about the case management of the reported behaviour. During the review and design of the SOP, the CO should ensure that the policy is victim-centred, to ensure full protection of the victim(s), including anonymity in reporting, and provision of necessary support and protection against potential retaliation. Management should ensure that all staff are aware of the SOP.
- ▶ Organizing regular capacity building activities on PSEA. In addition to existing mandatory onboarding training on PSEA, the CO should organize additional trainings to further enhance staff knowledge, particularly about what constitutes an unwanted behaviour, but also to open the possibility of staff to ask additional questions. This can be organized jointly with trainings on gender equality.

- ▶ Senior management’s active promotion of the UN Civil Servants Code of Conduct to stress UNICEF’s zero tolerance of violence against women, particularly sexual harassment. These activities could be done periodically, during staff meetings, retreats or similar all staff platforms.
- ▶ Considering the inclusion of a review on gender values in the candidate recruitment process, especially for programme positions. This would enable the CO to understand if future staff members share UNICEF’s values of gender to avoid any future disagreements or misunderstanding.

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|  Priority: High |
|  Timeframe: Within the next year |
|  Responsible units: UNICEF BiH management |
|  Cost implications: Staff time to design the SOP and training module, to take part in the workshops, other implications are neutral/cost-saving |





Recommendation 3 : Establish a functional, national GAP M&E system by:

- ▶ Reviewing the current national GAP to include information about M&E, including the M&E time-frame, programme staff responsible for reporting, management staff responsible for the review of the implementation and GAP monitoring report template. GAP monitoring reports should also be presented and discussed in all staff platforms to ensure understanding of the work on gender equality across the CO.
- ▶ Enhancing COARs to include more data on gender results, including by reporting against gender indicators under each programme outcome. UNICEF BiH should particularly improve reporting on gender within the cross-sectoral section, to include the information about gender programme results.

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|  Priority: High |
|  Timeframe: Within the next year |
|  Responsible units: UNICEF BiH management, GFP, programme staff, child rights monitoring and evaluation (CRME) specialist and planning officer |
|  Cost implications: Staff time to review the national GAP, other implications are neutral |

Recommendation 4 (Conclusion 1): Use the CPD preparation phase to integrate gender in the CPD, prepare a new GAP and strengthen staff engagement in the gender agenda.

- ▶ In preparation of the next CPD, engage each sectoral team to reflect on entry points to embed gender considerations in each Goal Area, using examples presented in this case study report (section on gender in the five goals) and in the GPR. This could be done by integrating gender in sectoral ToCs to help establish concrete and realistic priorities that could be achieved in the next four years, building on existing results and additional opportunities that could be taken forward. The support of the regional gender advisor and relevant regional technical advisors could be sought to facilitate discussions within each team to identify these entry points.
- ▶ These priorities would need to be made specific in the CPD narrative.
- ▶ This would also support the preparation of the new GAP, to align it with the new CPD in a concurrently parallel process (mirroring the process to develop the new Strategic Plan and the new GAP at HQ level). The new GAP would establish focused gender targets (even small) in each Goal Area based on the entry points identified. These targets could in turn be included as indicators in staff performance reviews. The new GAP should also establish a longer-term vision for UNICEF’s work on gender equality in BiH.

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Priority: High |
|  Timeframe: Within the next year |
|  Responsible units: UNICEF BiH management, GFP, programme staff, M&E officer, CRME specialist and planning officer |
|  Cost implications: Staff time to review the national GAP, other implications are neutral |

For UNICEF HQ

In addition to specific recommendations for the UNICEF BiH, there are broader recommendations that are particularly relevant to this country case study but require attention at the headquarter (HQ) level. These relate to elements that are part of the recommendations set out in the main global evaluation and will be addressed in the corresponding management response.

Recommendation 5 - Update the approach used to motivate sectoral staff to engage further on gender

Existing online mandatory trainings on gender and PSEA are not enough to entrench values and capacities to enable effective work on gender at the country level. These are seen by some as “imposed from the top”, in a context where they are faced with multiple competing demands, including compliance with the demands of the GAP M&E system, also aimed at ensuring motivation and accountability. And yet, this evaluation showed that every sector has interesting entry points to work on gender, some of them still unrealized opportunities. Hence, another approach to motivating staff would be to “start from where people are at” and build on it incrementally, by engaging them in more discussions to help them identify these entry points and build on them. “Starting from where people are” would also mean building on their own gender values and enabling them to critically examine them.

This would require HQ to use existing evidence to strengthen a narrative that would demonstrate that working on gender is supporting the achievement of sectoral goals, and not an additional burden.

Recommendation 6 - Strengthen the gender capacities of regional technical (sectoral) teams

- ▶ Organize mandatory in-depth training, and inclusion of gender in performance reviews.
- ▶ Recruitment should also assess gender values and technical capacities of all technical staff.



1

Introduction

The purpose of the case study was to explore the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Policy and GAPs 2 and 3 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the contribution to shifts in workplace culture and accountability, as well as assess gender-related programmatic results for women and girls. As it was conceived as a learning exercise, it will be useful to the CO to improve its work on gender. In parallel, the findings from this case study will be compared with those from other countries, and analyses triangulated with other data sources to write the global evaluation report.

An appreciative enquiry approach was adopted to select the countries benefiting from an in-depth case study. The selection of countries was made during the inception phase. First COs that have effectively brought about institutional shifts in gender work, or countries that have reported gender equality results that are transformative were identified, according to UNICEF reporting mechanisms (GAP Standard Indicators). ROs were consulted and the final selection also took into consideration the necessity to have a sample of COs representative of a range of UNICEF specific and broader contextual factors (regional balance, humanitarian and development portfolio, country budget and size, broad gender context in the country, amongst others).²

The rationale for selecting BiH is its development context as an upper middle-income country with a low score on the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The CO also implements a gender flagship programme and reports gender equality results that are transformative, with scores above 70 per cent on the GAP Standard Score. It is a small office with the smallest regional CO budget and gender spend.

The case study report presents the findings of the evaluation of UNICEF's performance and results in implementing GAP 2 and GAP 3, and the Gender Policy in UNICEF BiH.

The report is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides the background, as well as the purpose, objectives and scope. Section 3 presents the evaluation case study methodology. Section 4 presents the findings for each evaluation question (EQ), and Section 5 presents the conclusions and lessons learned that were derived from the findings. Section 6 contains the recommendations. The report is also supplemented by nine annexes which are included in a separate document.



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2

Background

Context of the evaluation

Overview of the country context

BiH is an upper middle-income country located in Southeastern Europe with a population of around 3.5 million.³ The country has a complex political structure which comprises of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS), and the Brčko District. The country has three constitutive peoples: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. The political system in BiH is characterized by a high level of decentralization. The majority of governance jurisdictions is situated with the entity level government in RS and 10 subregional cantonal level governments in FBiH which have the most legislative power, including in education, health, social protection and policing. In December 2022, BiH was granted the status of candidate country to the European Union (EU), following years of slow progress in the accession process. Complex governance systems and inter-ethnic disputes often lead to political gridlock, which hinders policy implementation and implementation of EU accession related reforms. BiH's population is among the most rapidly shrinking and ageing in the world. Some 25 per cent of youth are actively looking for work outside the country while almost 90 per cent of young people would like to leave BiH for longer or forever.⁴ Since 2018, BiH saw an increased influx of migrants which move through the country

in an attempt to reach the EU. Official state data shows 146, 991 registered migrants which entered BiH during the period 2018 – 2023.⁵ Most migrants (around 90 per cent) are young men arriving from Afghanistan, Morocco and Syria, usually staying for about two weeks.⁶ There are two migrant reception centres in the country, located in Sarajevo and Bihać. However, available data shows that only 50 per cent of migrants are registered in these reception centres.⁷

In the area of gender equality, BiH achieved notable progress since the early 2000s, particularly in advancing the normative framework⁸. However, its implementation is still lacking, due to limited capacities and resources, as well as existing gender stereotypes and norms which are not supportive of the gender equality agenda. With a Human Development Index (2022) value of 0.779, BiH ranks as a country with high human development (80 out of 193 countries), while the GII of 0.148 places BiH 40 out of 166 countries.⁹ The Second Voluntary Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in BiH highlights progress in some aspects of SDG 5, namely ending violence against women and girls and women's participation in decision-making in political, economic and public life.¹⁰ However, the GII shows significant gaps in political participation (17.5 per cent of parliament seats are held by women) and labour force participation (41.1 per cent women compared to 61.8 per cent men).¹¹ The gender gap in education is lower, with 82.7 per cent of women and 94 per cent of

men with a secondary education degree.¹² Similarly, the Gender Equality Index for 2022 shows the highest scores in the health domain (89.8) and lowest in the power (political, social, economic) domain, measuring 51.2.¹³

In addition to being less active in the market, women have lower employment rates (28.9 per cent versus 52.1 per cent) than men.¹⁴ Women are more likely to be employed on part-time contracts and in the informal sector.¹⁵ Moreover, they are responsible for 93.8 per cent of routine domestic work and 80.8 per cent of all activities related to childcare¹⁶. When it comes to decision-making positions, 15.7 per cent of women are in management boards of companies, with 12.5 per cent of women serving as presidents of boards of the companies. Finally, women (37.5 per cent) are more likely than men (21.2 per cent) to experience sexual harassment at work¹⁷. The vast majority of perpetrators of sexual harassment are men (85.1 per cent), mostly supervisors or persons working in higher positions (69.6 per cent), but also male colleagues who work at the same level (39.2 per cent).¹⁸

Violence against women is widespread. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)-led Survey on Violence Against Women (2019) shows that every second woman in BiH (49 per cent) experienced some form of violence since 15 years of age.¹⁹ Thirty-eight per cent of women say they have experienced physical or sexual violence, while 36 per cent experienced psychological violence.²⁰ Of those women who had experienced violence, 84 per cent did not contact any institution or organization for support.²¹ Women facing intersectoral discriminations²² are particularly vulnerable as they are facing additional challenges to access available support services for GBV.²³

In the education sector, there is no gender gap in relation to enrolment rates in pre-school, primary and secondary school. However, women have lower levels of education compared to men. More women than men have only completed elementary school (38 per cent versus 20.7 per cent), while more men than women have a secondary degree (66.8 per cent versus 48.4 per cent). The gap narrows at university level, with slightly more women than men having a university degree (13.6 per cent versus 12.4 per cent).²⁴ Furthermore, there is gender-based occupational segregation, with women predominantly selecting lower paid sectors such as education (78.2 per cent versus 21.8 per cent), health and social protection (77.6 per cent versus 22.4 per cent), social

science (62.9 per cent versus 37.1 per cent) and art (69.3 per cent versus 30.7 per cent).²⁵ Men are more engaged in the IT sector (64.8 per cent versus 35.2 per cent) and engineering and construction (58.6 per cent versus 41.4 per cent).²⁶ The situation is more severe for particularly marginalized women such as Roma women, women with disabilities or single mothers.

In the past few years, BiH has experienced a growing backlash against gender equality, which is particularly visible in RS. Gender is increasingly perceived as a threat to family and traditional values, which has led the government to halt the valuable progress on harmonizing the domestic violence legislation with the Istanbul Convention, which was set to introduce femicide in domestic legislation. Moreover, the term 'gender identity' has been removed from the Criminal Code. The RS Ministry of Education and Culture has also resisted implementing programmes which use the terminology 'gender-transformative' or 'gender-responsive' in educational institutions, with the explanation that these terms are discriminatory towards boys. Finally, NGOs registered in RS have faced severe difficulties operating within a context in which the government had announced the creation of a Register of Agents of Foreign Influence to keep track of the work of foreign-funded local NGOs. This situation has created a challenging environment for NGOs in RS.

Overview of UNICEF work in BiH

The vision of the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2022-2025, which guides UNICEF's work in BiH, is that all children in BiH will benefit from an equitable realization of their rights to health, education, protection, and participation, overcoming the existing bottlenecks and in line with the SDGs. CPD's ToC sees that children will have more chances to survive, thrive and develop to their full potential if, from birth through adolescence, they enjoy greater access to and use of strengthened service delivery systems in health, nutrition, ECD, inclusive education, social protection, care and justice systems, and if parents and communities are enabled to fulfil children's rights through positive social norms and practices.

The programme is implemented in four of five UNICEF priority areas: (a) Every child survives and thrives (health and ECD); (b) Every child learns (education); (c) Every child is protected from violence and exploitation (child protection) and (d) Every child has an equitable chance in life (social policy and child

rights monitoring (CRM)). The CPD is fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021–2025. The country programme also contributes to the achievement of priorities expressed in: (a) the Action Plan for the Implementation of Priorities from the European

Commission Opinion and Analytical Report; (b) the Joint Socioeconomic Reforms for the period 2019–2022; and (c) the human rights commitments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the related treaty obligations, in particular the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Table 1. UNICEF BiH Country Office overview

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Size of the office (staff) | 37 staff, one UN volunteer, two consultants and two interns (July 2024) |
| CPD years and projected budget | 2022 – 2025; US\$4.26 million (regular resources); US\$26.74 million (other resources) |
| Field offices | Bihać |

Source: UNICEF Internal Database System: inSight

UNICEF's main governmental partners include: BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, BiH Council for Children, High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (state-level); FBiH Ministry of Health, Republika Srpska Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Department for Health and Other Services of Brčko District, entity health institutes, FBiH Ministry of Education and Science, Republika Srpska Ministry of Education and Culture, Department for Education of Brčko District, FBiH Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, Republika Srpska Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports (entity level); cantonal ministries of health and public health institutes, cantonal level ministries of education, cantonal level ministries for social protection (cantonal level); state and entity statistical institutes, ombudsmen institutions and local authorities in target municipalities. Additionally, UNICEF BiH partners with media, public universities, and international and local NGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children, Associations of Cities and Municipalities of the FBiH and Republika Srpska, legal aid organizations, and organizations focused on advancing the position of youth in BiH.

UNICEF BiH has extensive experience in partnering with UN agencies on the implementation of joint UN programmes. In 2023, UNICEF engaged in the implementation of five joint UN programmes, which constituted nearly 40 per cent of the CO's resources. More concretely, UNICEF has been partnering with UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN

Women, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank on projects in the area of migrant response, health, SDG implementation, disaster risk reduction, and empowerment of adolescent girls.

UNICEF BiH's largest four donors on gender equality are UNICEF HQ, Adolescent Girls Fund, IOM, UNICEF – United Arab Emirates and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In relation to its work on gender equality, UNICEF BiH has three programmes targeting adolescent girls: IT Girls programme; Adolescent Girls programme and UPSHIFT. In 2023, IT Girls was implemented in 110 schools in BiH, and empowered 756 adolescents (543 young women and girls) with digital and programming skills. The Adolescent Girls programme reached a total of 214,068 beneficiaries (51 per cent female), including 21,276 direct beneficiaries (40 per cent female) and 192,792 indirect beneficiaries (52 per cent female). Finally, UPSHIFT engaged up to 150 direct beneficiaries (70 per cent girls).

Table 2. Overview of UNICEF BiH gender programmes

| Programme | Focus | Target Locations | Implementing partners | Funder(s) | Budget in USD | Duration |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| IT Girls | Empowering adolescent girls in STEM | FBiH | Laboratorium Tuzla | UNICEF-United Arab Emirates | 480,000 | 2016 -2024 |
| Adolescent Girls | Advancing quality and access to adolescent girls centred services | RS, FBiH | BHIDAPA Genesis RS Association of Psychologists Nova Generacija | HQ | 480,000 | 2023 - 2024 |
| UPSHIFT | Advancing adolescent leadership | BiH | Genesis | UN Peace Building Fund; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; USAID | 898,771 | 2019 - 2024 |

Source: UNICEF BiH CO

Purpose, objectives and scope

Purpose and objectives

This evaluation case study aimed to assess UNICEF's performance and results in implementing GAP 2 and GAP 3, and the Gender Policy, across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus between 2018 and 2023, including the progress made in the course of 2024. It was conceived as a learning and accountability exercise and is part of the Plan for Global Evaluations linked to the Strategic Plan. The global evaluation report²⁷ will be presented to the UNICEF Executive Board in 2025.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- ▶ To assess the relevance and coherence of the current Gender Policy and GAP 3 in supporting gender equality and adolescent girls' empowerment from the point of view of UNICEF's mandate (i.e., Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Core Commitments to Children (CCCs) and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP, as captured in the Strategic Plan in development and humanitarian settings.

- ▶ To assess the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of implementing gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, programming processes, organizational commitments, and accountability mechanisms.
- ▶ To determine the extent to which UNICEF meets the programmatic results set for all children, adolescents and women on gender equality across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and in both development and humanitarian settings.

Scope

This evaluation is global in scope, with in-depth case studies in a sample of countries, including BiH and spans from 2018 to 2023, covering the implementation of GAP 2 and half of GAP 3.

The evaluation covered three main components:

- ▶ **Gender Policy and GAP conceptual framework:** The evaluation examined the strategic positioning of gender in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, analysing the Gender Policy, GAP conceptual framework and ToC.

- ▶ **Institutional enablers and their implementation:** The evaluation assessed how the GAP is implemented, including programming processes, monitoring systems, financial resources, leadership and accountability, at the HQ, RO and CO level.
- ▶ **Programmatic results and integration of gender equality across programmes:** The evaluation examined overall programmatic results based on available indicators and implemented activities and assessed the outputs and the contribution to outcomes as defined in the GAPs in the selected case studies. In particular, the evaluation assessed to what extent UNICEF has mainstreamed gender equality across its five Goal Areas in the Strategic Plan.

The evaluation ToC is included in Annex 9. The ToC guided the design of the data collection tools, by ensuring that interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops focused on key outputs, outcomes and tested the assumptions highlighted with a variety of stakeholders, from within and outside the organization.

Audience and use

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR), the primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF employees at all levels, government and partners working with UNICEF to advance the rights of women and girls, women- and girl-led organizations, and young people. In particular, the case study country report aims to help UNICEF BiH – in particular senior leadership and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) – to strengthen gender integration in policies and programmes. It also aims to provide strategic guidance for the next CPD. The case study country report also provides an opportunity to share learnings on how to integrate gender equality in programmes and organizations, and on building a culture of accountability, with government, other UN agencies, and implementing partners – including women- and girl-led organizations.



3 Evaluation case study methodology

Evaluation design and approach

The evaluation methodology used a mixed method approach, including qualitative methods such as key informant interviews (KIIs), document review, participatory workshops and FGDs. Quantitative data included an analysis of programme and expenditure quantitative data, survey data (conducted for this evaluation), and the GAP Standard Index.

The approach was theory-based,²⁸ and an analytical framework described in the ToC, developed during the inception phase, was used,²⁹ which helped to refine the change pathways that were implicit in the existing GAP ToC; to define explicit causal assumptions linking GAP support to identifiable results at the output, outcome and goal levels; and to refine the evaluation questions (EQs) to be investigated, against which findings and conclusions were reported. The ToC and assumptions informed the development of the evaluation matrix, including sources of information and data collection tools. It reflects a shared understanding among key UNICEF stakeholders and the evaluation team of the intended causal chains underpinning the Gender Policy and GAPs and provides the theoretical framework for applying contribution analysis to assess causal linkages and infer the contribution UNICEF has made to the observed outputs and outcomes. Appreciative inquiry is an approach to organizational culture change that focuses primarily on strengths. This approach was

adapted to evaluate the GAP 2, GAP 3 and Gender Policy, identifying lessons on what is working well to inform recommendations to accelerate organizational change.

Mixed methods included collecting data qualitatively from individuals either through interviews, group discussions or workshops (see sampling below). For the participatory workshop with adolescents, youth-friendly tools were used. For the workshop with UNICEF staff, participatory tools were used to elicit information. Quantitative data included the review of documents and analysis of country-specific expenditure data, GAP survey, GAP Standard Indicators and programmatic indicators. A survey was also conducted at the global level, and data from BiH was made available from this survey. For qualitative tools used, please see annexes.

For the financial and expenditure data analysis, data was extracted from UNICEF's Cube database for 2018 to 2023 and analysed to draw trends in gender expenditure and in gender-transformative expenditure from 2022 (the start of GAP 2) also looking at expenditure by Goal Areas and GEM scores.

Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation addressed three overarching questions related to UNICEF gender conceptual and policy frameworks, gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers and programmatic results:

1. To what extent are the current Gender Policy and the GAP 3 conceptual framework well-designed, relevant, and coherent to respond to the various needs of all children, adolescents and women, national government priorities, UNICEF normative framework (i.e., CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, CCCs) and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP on gender equality?
2. How well are the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs implemented across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, organizational commitments and accountability mechanisms at all levels?

3. To what extent have UNICEF's programmatic results for gender equality throughout the life course been met across all five Goal Areas, particularly to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, in both development and humanitarian settings?

The criteria applied to the Gender Policy and GAPs evaluation, drawing on OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria as well as UNICEF's definition of impact are described below (see *Table 3*). The EQs and sub-questions (and corresponding criteria) are outlined in the evaluation matrix in *Annex 8*.

Table 3. OECD-DAC criteria applied to the evaluation

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance | Extent to which the GAP is responsive to the various contexts in which UNICEF operates (development or humanitarian, low- and middle-income countries or middle income countries and various continents), and to the diverse gender realities and needs; extent to which it is grounded in evidence of what works. |
| Coherence | Internal coherence focuses on the alignment, synergies and interlinkages between the GAP and other UNICEF normative frameworks, including the coherence between the GAP and the Gender Policy. External coherence examines the alignment of the GAP with broader UN commitments and to governments. |
| Effectiveness | The extent to which the results intended by the GAP 2 and GAP 3 have been realized (as far as feasible to discern at this stage) and whether contribution has been demonstrated towards results which could have been reasonably expected. Analysis of the varying importance of the results and differential results across groups and sectors and understanding the enabling and hampering factors that influence results. |
| Impact | The evaluation adopts UNICEF definition of impact and seeks to identify the plausible contribution to impact results. ³⁰ |
| Sustainability | The robustness of the institutional enablers gives an indication of the sustainability of the changes observed, as well as the strength of UNICEF partnerships with governments and the civil society sector. |

Sampling and key stakeholder types included in the evaluation

The evaluation aimed to cover the breadth of stakeholder types identified in the overall evaluation methodology. The sampling was purposeful to ensure representation from all stakeholders relevant to the

evaluation. This framework was enriched through discussions with UNICEF BiH during the preparation phase and a final list was developed based on relevance and availability. The sample of respondents consulted in BiH are described below (see Table 4) and the full list of stakeholders is included in Annex 3.

Table 4. List of stakeholders met during the evaluation

| Stakeholder type | Purpose | Method (KII/FGD/Workshop) | # overall | # women | # men | # Prefer not to say |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| UNICEF CO staff (includes programme staff, GFs, human resources staff and management) | To gather information on the understanding and implementation of the Gender Policy and GAP, as well as results, enablers and hindering factors and whether this has contributed to gender equality results that are transformative | KII/FGD | 17 | 12 | 5 | 0 |
| | To understand the perceived importance of gender as part of individual roles and as a cross-cutting priority within their work and explore workplace culture in relation to gender identity and inclusion | Workshop | 18 | 12 | 6 | 0 |
| | To gather information on understanding and implementation of the Gender Policy and GAP, as well as results, enablers and hindering factors and whether this contributed to gender equality results that are transformative | Survey | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| UN agencies | To explore the scope and nature of interagency collaboration and the extent to which it contributes to better gender equality results, as well as their perceptions on UNICEF's contribution to gender equality and their comparative advantage | KII | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| CSO implementing partners | To explore the nature of partnerships between UNICEF and civil society, examining the scope and quality of these partnerships, their contribution to gender equality results. | KII | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----|---|---|
| Government stakeholders | To examine political will to support gender equality and explore their perceptions of UNICEF's contribution to gender equality. | KII | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Adolescent and youth rights holders | To explore the direct and perceived impact of UNICEF on youth. | Workshop/FGD | 25 | 19 | 6 | 0 |
| | To witness the implementation of gender programmes with adolescent girls. | Observation of programme activity | Unknown | | | |

Source: Evaluation team

Selected sites for case study locations and sampling

Sites for data collection were identified in the preparatory phase of the case study, for the evaluation to capture the contribution of UNICEF to gender equality in different contexts and programmes. Data was collected in Sarajevo and Banja Luka where UNICEF BiH and key stakeholders are located. In Sarajevo, data was collected from CO staff, state, entity and cantonal level governmental officials, partner CSOs and right holders (adolescent girls and boys). A programme site visit was also organized in Sarajevo. In Banja Luka, data was collected from CSO implementing partners and adolescent girls and boys. Data on humanitarian work conducted by the Bihac field office was collected online.

Data collection

The case study used a mixed method approach, drawing on both primary and secondary data sources, including the following:

- ▶ **Desk review:** An in-depth review of over 30 programme documents, including evaluations, reviews, and programme reporting; internal workplace policies and work documents; expenditure metrics and programmatic indicators (see Annex 4).
- ▶ **KII:** 31 interviews with UNICEF staff and stakeholders took place both individually and in groups, using a semi-structured format.

- ▶ **Adolescent workshops and FGDs:** 19 adolescent girls and six boys involved directly and indirectly with UNICEF programming participated in two girls only workshops and two boys only FGDs to explore the impact of UNICEF's work. This approach utilized participatory methods to build trust and rapport among the group and the facilitator.
- ▶ **Participatory workshop:** 18 UNICEF BiH staff (12 female; 6 male) participated in two gender-segregated workshops to explore attitudes, perceptions, norms, barriers and enablers internally and externally.
- ▶ **Evaluation survey:** An all-staff survey was disseminated by the EO to HQ, ROs and COs to collect data on the views of staff on the implementation of GAP institutional enablers, both on organizational change enablers to deliver programmatic results (including the integration of gender equality in programme analysis and planning, use of monitoring data of gender equality, human and financial resources availability, partnerships) and on performance enablers focusing on gender in the workplace. The survey was anonymous and piloted by several UNICEF staff for accessibility (including for screen reader use) and in all five UN languages (English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and French). Overall six staff members from BiH completed the survey.

Data analysis

The evaluation team used a thematic analysis approach³¹ to analyse qualitative data from KIIs, FGDs and workshop outcomes to identify key trends and patterns. Both inductive and deductive coding were used against a base coding framework aligned to the evaluation matrix, including new thematic codes as trends are identified during analysis. Qualitative data from KIIs, FGDs and the workshop was assessed using Dedoose, a qualitative and mixed methods data software. Documents provided by UNICEF BiH and other stakeholders involved in the case study were coded using Excel. Triangulation across quantitative and qualitative findings took place following the coding of the qualitative data. All data collected during the case study was disaggregated at a minimum by gender, age and disability, to ensure representation of a diverse range of voices and allow for sub-group analysis.

When the draft report was ready, virtual validation workshops were held with the CO to discuss and validate the findings and draft recommendations.

Ethical considerations

The case study was guided by a set of ethical principles to minimize the risk of doing harm, while seeking to maximize the benefits of the evaluation. The principles translated into practical measures to ensure confidentiality, informed consent, data protection, reduction of direct and indirect risks to interviewees, and safe and meaningful participation. This ensures that core principles such as do no harm and leave no one behind were adhered to and assure human rights, gender equality and equity considerations are built into the evaluation approach.

The evaluation was informed by ethical and safety considerations for research and adhered to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines, WHO's ethical research guidance,³² UNICEF's Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research and Evaluation and UNICEF's Ethical Research Involving Children, UNICEF's Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation, as well as SDDirect's Ethical Policy and Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults (Safeguarding) Policy, which sets out values and principles and describes how commitments to creating a positive and safe environment for children and vulnerable adults who may be connected to the work are met. All staff received an induction on these policies.

The national consultant involved in data collection activities attended an online workshop which covered all ethical principles and procedures in the evaluation. The training included SDDirect's safeguarding policies and code of conduct, including how to report suspected safeguarding concerns and how to act if a participant discloses situations of violence and/or abuse.

Additionally, ethical clearance was obtained for the overall evaluation through Health Media Lab³³ Ethics Review Board (ID 863MULT24).

Limitations and mitigations measures

The evaluation faced several limitations both by design and in practice, with appropriate mitigations implemented where possible. The main limitations and mitigation measures are summarized below:

- ▶ Two donors funding gender-related projects did not respond to interview requests.
- ▶ Not all identified governmental stakeholders were available for interview. None of the governmental stakeholders from Republika Srpska were interviewed.
- ▶ The evaluation was unable to reach out to many adolescent boys. From the six boys who took part in the data collection, four were not directly involved in UNICEF activities.
- ▶ Less UNICEF staff identifying as male joined staff workshops compared to their female counterparts, mostly due to the gender-skewed composition of UNICEF BIH.
- ▶ Not all participants completed the descriptive data monitoring form, which restricted the level of data disaggregation possible.

Despite these limitations in data collection, the evaluation team was able to secure participation from all stakeholder groups envisaged in the case study design. Strong participation and documentation made available by the CO means that the case study for BiH was informed by a strong evidence base.



4

Evaluation findings

EQ1: Gender conceptual and policy frameworks

To what extent are the current Gender Policy and the GAP 3 conceptual framework well-designed, relevant, and coherent to respond to the various needs of all children, adolescents and women, national government priorities, UNICEF normative framework (i.e., CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, CCCs) and the organization's commitments to the UN-SWAP on gender equality?

In summary

Although UNICEF BiH's guiding policy framework shows modest reference to the global gender framework, the GAP and Adolescent Girls Strategy were successfully used by senior management to mobilize resources for large initiatives on gender and adolescent girls in BiH, which shows the relevance of the GAP to the country context. However, the knowledge of CO staff about the global gender framework varies, and it is higher among senior, gender, programme and female staff.

In 2023, UNICEF BiH developed its first national GAP for the period 2023-2025, based on the findings of the GPR conducted in 2022. Gender targets were set in all four priority areas, including organizational effectiveness. The document was designed after a thorough consultation and training process, aimed at prioritizing the recommendations that will be taken forward. It was spearheaded by senior management and facilitated by the GFP. However, the level of engagement of middle management and programme staff was limited, partly because of lack of knowledge and time. The national GAP is shaped as a micro-workplan which is realistic and adapted to the current CO capacities but does not have a long-term gender-transformative vision and includes gender-related activities which are already in implementation. The CO is yet to set a functional monitoring mechanism to track the implementation of the GAP.

Knowledge of the GAP and gender policy, relevance in the context, use and references in key CO frameworks

UNICEF BiH guiding policy framework show modest reference to the GAP and Gender Policy. As highlighted in the GPR conducted in 2022, key CO documents – CPD 2021 – 2025, Programme Strategy Notes 2021-2025; COAR (2020, 2021), and Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) 2021-2025, have limited reference to gender. References to gender in the CPD focus on the identification of child marriage in programme rationale and the IT Girls programme related to enhancing access of adolescent girls to STEM in the education sector. Programme Strategy Notes, except in education, do not include any reference to gender. Some positive elements were identified in the CPMP where the position of GFP is clearly outlined.

Recommendations in the GPR were catalytic in enhancing the gender responsiveness of the CO policy framework, as they triggered the design of the first country-level GAP. Despite not being integrated in CO policies and the guiding framework, the GAP and the Adolescent Girls Strategy were successfully used in resource mobilization for gender equality, and used as references to design two major programmes on gender and adolescent girls – Adolescent Girls programme (under implementation) and Joint UN Gender Framework Programme³⁴ (hard pipeline). Furthermore, the gender framework was instrumental in raising UNICEF's profile as a gender agency within the BiH United Nations Country Team (UNCT). A senior manager in UNICEF BiH stressed it was GAP's clarity which helped to comfortably define UNICEF's programmatic niche in two of three programme pillars – Pillar 1 on GBV (with a UNICEF focus on addressing violence against children) and Pillar 2 on women's economic empowerment (with a UNICEF focus on ECD access to primary care facilities).

There is a high level of knowledge about the gender framework among senior management and the GFP. However, this has not yet extended to the remaining programme and CO staff. Knowledge of the gender framework is diverse and is generally higher among senior, female and programme staff. Staff who have successfully engaged with the framework see it as useful as managers are very clear what needs to happen for the CO to meet the institutional benchmarks. On the other hand, most programme staff are aware there is a global gender framework but are not familiar with its content. To a large extent, the framework is seen as complicated and difficult to

understand (in terms of terminology), but also quite marginalized in the overall corporate requirements. Non-programme and male staff are, in general, unaware of the gender framework.

Gender guiding framework used in the country

In 2023, UNICEF BiH developed the first national GAP for the period 2023-2025, based on the findings of the GPR conducted in 2022 with the active support of the regional gender advisor. GPR recommendations were catalytic in enhancing the gender responsiveness of the GAP, which was designed to support the CO and its governmental and NGO partners in the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and Gender Policy 2021 – 2030³⁵. Although the national GAP does not reference the domestic gender equality framework, it is important to note its alignment with the government, state-level GAP 2018 – 2022 in priority areas related to education, employment, combating GBV, and health.

The GAP has five outcomes which reflect the four CPD programme priority areas: i) child protection; ii) health and ECD; iii) education; and IV) social policy and CRM; with an additional outcome related to programme effectiveness. While the GAP reflects all CO priority areas, the vast majority of activities include ongoing gender-related projects and initiatives. In a small number of cases, initially planned activities were reviewed and enhanced in line with the GPR recommendations. In brief, the country GAP's activities focus on: addressing gender roles of parents in child nutrition and immunization (health and ECD)³⁶; addressing stereotypes in educational system and advancing the participation of girls in STEM (education); enhancing access to violence against women and children prevention and response service in humanitarian and development settings (child protection); improving sex-disaggregated data and impact analysis (social policy and CRM); enhancing staff capacities to work on gender, and strengthening UNICEF's external perception as a gender agency (programme effectiveness).

Although it was designed to help track the implementation of GPR recommendations, the national GAP reflects only a small segment of the document. In that sense, office management noted the need and the challenge of prioritizing GPR recommendations, due to the limited capacities of a "small" office with limited available funding to engage with gender programming. Since this was a first time activity, UNICEF BiH

opted for a design of activities which were clear and realistic in terms of their implementation within a two-year timeframe and the available capacities.

Notably, the GAP was designed in a participatory way, with the involvement of programme staff across all sectors. The process was facilitated with a high level of involvement from the national GFP and regional gender advisor who supported programme staff in defining sectoral GAP priorities. The process was thorough and included an all-staff training workshop on gender which was followed by a dedicated session with each programme section, to ensure adequate buy-in.

However, the level of participation and interest to meaningfully engage in the design of the CO GAP remained low. There is a consensus among staff that, despite the inclusive process spearheaded by senior management, the GAP's design sessions were considered by many as a "tick the box" exercise. Limited knowledge on gender and transformative programming, as well as lack of time and genuine interest to work on gender, were stated as key impediments to a more meaningful involvement in this exercise.

Successful implementation of the IT Girls programme which enables the CO to meet the corporate gender indicators, often deters staff from additional thinking on transformative programming and systematic gender integration within Goal Areas. Low involvement and prioritization of the task among middle management was conclusive for the design of a document which reflects what the CO is already doing, and not "what we think we should do when we say gender equality" (UNICEF staff member). Finally, in terms of participation, lack of involvement of the planning officer, could be seen as a missed opportunity for a deeper integration of the document into CO-level planning and reporting structures.

The evaluation was unable to collect information about the level of implementation or mechanisms used to monitor the implementation of the CO GAP. Quarterly monitoring reviews by senior management were envisaged in the GAP's design phase, however there is no data to confirm that this occurred. The CO struggled to use other available all-staff platforms to monitor and discuss the GAP's implementation, such as bi-weekly programme meetings.

EQ2: Gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers

How well are the gender-related organizational changes and performance enablers of the GAPs implemented across UNICEF policies, practices, systems, organizational commitments and accountability mechanisms at all levels?

In summary

UNICEF BiH has been investing in growing the capacities of its staff to work on gender equality, mostly through online and in-person trainings and is meeting the global targets on this. However, there are mixed views on the usefulness and quality of the training sessions. While young female programme staff show the highest level of knowledge, interest and motivation to work on gender equality, remaining staff show significantly lower levels of knowledge and interest, particularly in gender equality programming. The demands placed on staff to demonstrate their work on gender (i.e. gender tagging), as a cross-cutting issue, constitute an additional burden to overstretched staff and has led some to consider working on gender as an imposition from the rules established from HQ. In this context, work on gender is mostly conducted by the national GFP.

Work on gender is managed by two GFPs, a nominated national staff expected to spend 20 per cent of their time on gender (responsible for internal technical support and corporate compliance) and the deputy representative (responsible for overall programming and external positioning on gender). The GFP, who built strong capacities on gender at the onset of their mandate lacks time, specific sectoral knowledge, and influence to provide the type of support required by GAP priorities. The engagement of the deputy representative yielded positive results in positioning UNICEF as a key gender partner, both within the UN system and with donors. This translated into successful resource mobilization and the development of joint UN programmes on gender. The regional gender advisor has been a key actor of the CO architecture, through ongoing technical support.

UNICEF BiH used gender analysis and data in programming, and in particular a good quality GPR, which was commissioned in 2022, which informed the design of the national GAP. However, gender analyses are not systematically used to their full potential. Although there is a growing effort to conduct gender analysis, especially in the programme design phase, low level of knowledge on gender, combined with the lack of funds and time to commission external expertise, makes this a challenging task. The RO represents the main source of gender data, however this is not systematically integrated across the programme sections.

UNICEF BiH has been successfully fundraising for gender. Expenditure data shows gender expenses in two of the four priority areas (education and child protection), with additional funds secured for the implementation of the transformative programming through the joint UN Gender Accelerators Framework in the upcoming period.

UNICEF BiH has established successful partnerships with youth-led organizations with the mandate to advance the position of children and adolescents in the country. UNICEF is considered as a valuable and trusted partner, particularly critical for bringing innovation in formal education. However, programming modalities such as short duration of projects, which are at times extended, but with no guarantee, represent the key challenge in NGOs' partnerships with the CO. Most CSOs understood the requirement to integrate gender equality as a request to establish a PSEA system and to analyse the project's impact on gender equality at the design phase and collect sex-disaggregated data. Partnerships with two women- and girl-led organizations were established recently, following the GPR recommendation, which have led to programmatic benefits and high transactional costs for both sides, largely due to the cumbersome nature of UNICEF corporate policies and standards.

UNICEF BiH has established good cooperation with government institutions, and there are several gender-related initiatives that are being implemented in partnership with public institutions, such as centres for social work and employment offices, schools and institutes of public health. However, gender institutional mechanisms, such as the Agency for Gender Equality, do not have an established cooperation with UNICEF BiH, although they would like to do so and there is currently no partnership related to gender with the FBiH Ministry of Health and Canton Sarajevo Ministry of Education, at the time of data collection (although some initiatives were identified in the past).

In BiH, UNICEF has established successful cooperation with other UN agencies on gender equality, which is demonstrated through the implementation of IT Girls and the design of UN Gender Accelerators Framework.

UNICEF BiH has not yet developed a well-functioning national GAP M&E system. Good results related to gender-responsive and -transformative programming are often underreported in activity reports. COARs lack outcome level and reporting against indicators, which would enable better understanding of the type and the impact of work on gender. There is no information about the level of CO GAP implementation and gender tagging does not always accurately represent gender results and tend to stretch the marking up to meet organizational requirements.

Accountability for gender in UNICEF BiH is placed on the GFPs who are the only staff members to have gender in their performance evaluation reviews. However, several staff feel that gender should be integrated in performance evaluations of staff across the CO, as the agency is determined to promote gender equality.

There is a high level of commitment of senior leadership to work on gender equality in the CO and staff trusts the leadership to pursue gender programmatic work and address any manifestation of sexist values and inappropriate behaviour in the office.

In UNICEF BiH, ownership of the gender mandate is not equally distributed, with GFPs owning the largest responsibility for the work on gender. As gender is a cross-cutting issue, it is perceived by some staff as representing additional work for them, which is complicated to manage in a small team, but a critical mass of staff is motivated and interested to work more on the topic.

The UNICEF BiH team is composed of 70 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men, which has led the CO to put in place measures to attract more male staff. The more recent recruitment of younger staff has positively impacted its capacity to address gender issues. However, this has also highlighted differing perspectives between staff of different age groups, leading to diverse approaches to programming and innovations, as well as varying interpretations of gender norms and stereotypes. The CO has a flexible working environment in place which is beneficial to all staff. For women with younger children policy is particularly important for balancing their caregiving and work-related responsibilities.

In summary

UNICEF BiH has a strong external focus and investment in PSEA which is seen as positive by both UNICEF and its IPs, yet shows much less focus on internal PSEA where there is no clear internal reporting mechanism in place. Female staff expressed strong discontent with the implementation of the UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (2019) and mistrust towards existing global mechanisms. Finally, there are significant differences in the gender norms and values held by various staff in the office, which impacts staff understanding of SEA and what constitutes unwanted behaviour.

Enablers for gender-responsive work

UNICEF uses standard programme indicators to track its global performance on gender equality. The framework is comprised of nine institutional elements/benchmarks and 29 indicators which are grouped in three categories – institutional readiness (culture, staffing, capacity), accountability structure (leadership and accountability, partnerships, resources) and programming (gender analysis and

planning, gender data and M&E, quality of gender results)³⁷. UNICEF BiH has consistently met the minimum benchmark of 70 per cent since 2020. In 2023, the CO scored the best in capacity, leadership and accountability, partnership, resources and quality of gender results. On the other hand, the CO has the lowest scores in staffing and gender data and M&E. The values of the GAP Standard Indicators for the period 2019-2023 are outlined below (see Table 5).

Table 5. GAP Standard Index analysis for the BiH CO

| Criteria and Indicators | Year | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| 1) Culture | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Have a system in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Percentage of staff who agree with the gender equality statement. | | | | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| At least one senior staff trained in gender equality. | | | | 0 | NA |
| Overall | | | | 50% | 75% |
| 2) Staffing | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Meeting the GAP staffing guidance | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Virtual parity at all international professional/national officer/general service levels | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Overall | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 50% |
| 3) Capacity | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| At least one staff GenderPro Credentialed | | | | 0 | 1 |
| At least 50 percentage of staff took the mandatory foundational gender (pro) training | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Overall | | | | 50% | 100% |

| 4) Leadership and accountability | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| CO has a Gender Action Plan | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| CO has the leadership, oversight and accountability at an appropriate management level (deputy representative) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| CO Programme Management Plan defines accountabilities to achieve gender results across sectors | | | | 1 | 1 |
| CO organizes regular meetings on the implementation of the gender priorities | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Overall | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 5) Partnerships | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Partnership with women and youth groups in programme design and monitoring | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Partnerships with grassroots girls' and women's rights groups | | | | 0 | 1 |
| Integration of gender issues in key partnership documents (proposals, request for proposals, programme cooperation agreements etc.) | | | | 1 | 1 |
| CO has a joint programme on gender equality with other UN entities | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Overall | | | | 75% | 100% |
| 6) Resources | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| % expenditures | 0% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 7) Gender analysis and planning | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| GPRs: Systematic analysis of gender power dynamics and gender relations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Clear gender results identified clear in key documents - CPD, annual workplan, regional office management plan/office management plan | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Integrating UNICEF's minimum standards for gender in the CCCs' in Emergencies | | | | 1 | 1 |
| If operating in a humanitarian context, has the CO conducted a rapid gender analysis? | | | | NA | 1 |
| Core package GBV risk mitigation activities conducted during the reporting year? | | | | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Completion of gender analysis in the emergency preparedness platform | | | | 0 | 0 |
| Overall | 17% | 17% | 0% | 80% | 83% |
| 8) Gender data and M&E | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Gender results assessment module (RAM) standard indicators used in programming platform | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.45 |
| Level of sex-disaggregation on RAM standard indicators | | | | 0.33 | 0.33 |
| Level of sex-disaggregation on CSIs | | | | NA | 1 |
| Overall | 100% | 100% | 100% | 67% | 59% |
| 9) Quality of gender results | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Reporting gender equality results that are transformative | | | | 1 | 1 |
| OAt-scale programmes addressing gender discriminatory roles and practices are implemented | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Gender-transformative child rights policies and programmes identified and financed | | | | 1 | 1 |
| GBV risk mitigation results reported against by sectors | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Overall | | | | 100% | 100% |
| OVERALL | GAP 2 | | | GAP 3 | |
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| | 63% | 83% | 80% | 77% | 85% |

Source: UNICEF Internal Database System: inSight

Staff capacity and gender architecture

UNICEF BiH staff show various levels of knowledge and capacities on gender. In addition to the GFPs, young female programme staff have the highest level of knowledge, interest and motivation to work on the issue of gender equality. Remaining staff however, particularly male non-programme staff, show significantly lower levels of knowledge and interest in gender, particularly in transformative programming.

In terms of staff capacity, standard programme indicator data show a positive trend with the CO meeting the corporate standards in 2023 (see Table 5). This was confirmed during KIIs with CO staff, who expressed their content with the fact that RO shows

that 86 per cent of staff completed UNICEF's gender (pro) training. In addition to mandatory trainings, with the support of the regional gender advisor, UNICEF BiH organized several trainings on gender, including on gender bias and the UNICEF GAP. Furthermore, a number of staff, particularly in programme, had prior knowledge on gender before joining UNICEF.

Staff expressed different opinions about the quality and usefulness of trainings, from being extremely useful in terms of knowledge and user-friendly in design, to being very basic and unengaging. These various perceptions may reflect the different levels of previous awareness of gender concepts held by various staff members. Moreover, in-person trainings have often been perceived as an additional burden.

The majority of staff stated that they lack time to engage in gender-related work, which, in the context of the “small” office, is perceived as an excessive engagement for a cross-sectoral issue. In this environment, gender-related work is seen by some as a push from the top, and prioritization of one cross-cutting issue over many. Notably, a significant number of programme staff were open to receive more concrete support to engage in gender-transformative programming, particularly by receiving guidance from sectoral regional sections and regional examples of good practice.

Therefore, there is a huge reliance on the national GFP to manage all gender-related work. The gender advisory function is shared between a nominated national staff and the deputy representative, as UNICEF BiH does not meet the budget for a full time gender specialist position.

Since October 2020, the role of the national GFP is being performed by the social behaviour change officer (NOA), who is mostly engaged in providing internal technical support and ensuring compliance with global and regional gender-related requirements. Due to capacity building received, the GFP feels capacitated to perform their daily corporate duties on gender, however, they lack specific knowledge and time to provide more nuanced support for gender equality programming across the CO's priority areas. Moreover, the national GFP lacks time and influence on decision-making with middle and senior management. Gender-related work takes up more than the envisaged 20 per cent of the staff's time (at times even 50 per cent)³⁸, given growing corporate requirements, and the low level of engagement of the remaining programme staff. This impacts the ability of the GFP to provide quality support. On the other hand, because of the entry level officer grade, the national GFP lacks decision-making power and struggles to influence gender integration in the various sectors. Finally, there is a lack of clarity on how the GFP role is assigned. The current GFP (and previous ones) did not meet all the necessary criteria for the role, including having prior substantial knowledge or experience on gender at the time of appointment. Of note, the current GFP filled this gap by attending several gender training sessions. The role is also understood as rotating, preferably between female and male staff, with little clarity of when the rotation will happen next.

In parallel, the GFP function is also held by the deputy representative, whose work on gender is mostly externally facing. Splitting the role has meant that the deputy representative supports the national GFP in discussions with other UN agencies, including participating in the UNCT Gender Theme Group. This has yielded positive results in increasing UNICEF's perception as a gender agency, as well as decision-making power and ability to mobilize resources on gender, where the deputy representative was particularly successful. However, a significant number of staff were unaware of this role as co-GFP, particularly males and non-programme staff. And while influence is high (internally and externally), the deputy representative lacks time for a more in-depth involvement in gender-related work within the CO. This is particularly relevant for ensuring the accountability and ownership of middle management's work on gender, as they are making the final decision on sectoral gender programming and are directly accountable to the deputy representative.

The regional gender advisor provides a critical role in advancing CO's work on gender. They are particularly valuable in supporting the work of GFPs by producing gender data, designing gender analysis, organizing trainings and providing quality assurance on corporate gender requirements. For a better impact on CO work, gender integration support should also be extended to regional programme sectors, where programme staff usually turn for support in specific thematic programming.

Gender analysis, use of data research and evaluation to inform policies and programmes

Gender analysis and the use of data in programming represents a small segment of the CO's work on gender (see *Table 5*). In the evaluation timeframe, UNICEF BiH conducted two dedicated gender analysis, a RO-initiated GPR in 2022 and a donor-requested gender analysis of the USAID project “Strengthening Social and Health Protection in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Bosnia and Herzegovina” in 2021. Both analyses were used as reference points in CO planning, across all priority areas/project components, however, in the case of the GPR, it was not used to its full potential (as explained in section 6.1.2 above). Depending on staff's knowledge on gender integration, the GPR recommendations are seen either as useful, or difficult to understand and integrate into programming. Programme staff also noted the difficulty of engaging in gender equality programming at the project level, within a CPD which has little

reference to gender. Growing corporate demands on gender have led to increased demand for gender analyses, which are being conducted for project proposals in their preparatory phase. However, with limited time available, this activity is mostly done internally by the GFP through a desk review of available data and documents and with limited participation of responsible programme staff, which limits the usefulness of the analysis for programme implementation and monitoring. In general, lower level of knowledge on gender, combined with the lack of funds and time to commission external expertise, make gender analysis a challenging task for this CO.

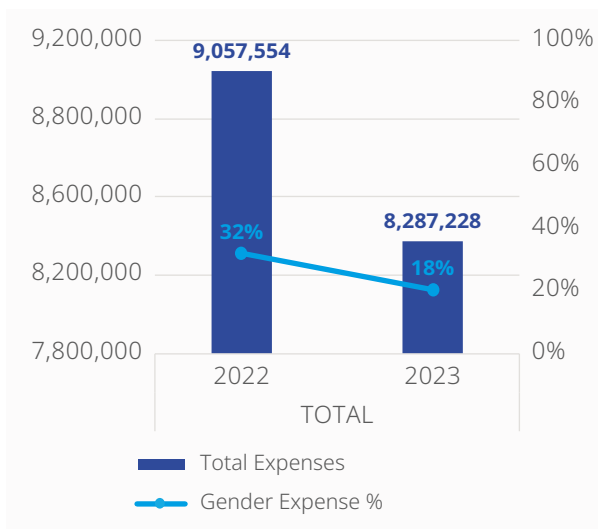
The RO represents the main source of gender data however this is not being mainstreamed across the programme sections. Programme staff have consistently raised the issue of lack of gender data, particularly by referring to the current situation analysis and show no reference to other available internal or external analysis which could address this gap. It should be noted that the CO has acknowledged the issue and is set to commission several research studies and evaluations in the current CPD framework, including impact analysis of the IT Girls programme, and evaluation of the Adolescent Girls programme.

The work of UNICEF IPs shows indications of a gender-responsiveness approach in the design and implementation of project evaluations and baseline analysis. IPs are showing examples of continuous monitoring and review of activities based on the feedback received from their beneficiaries, including from adolescent girls. IPs are not required to conduct a gender analysis of their projects; however they are required to collect and report sex-disaggregated data on project beneficiaries.

Resource mobilization

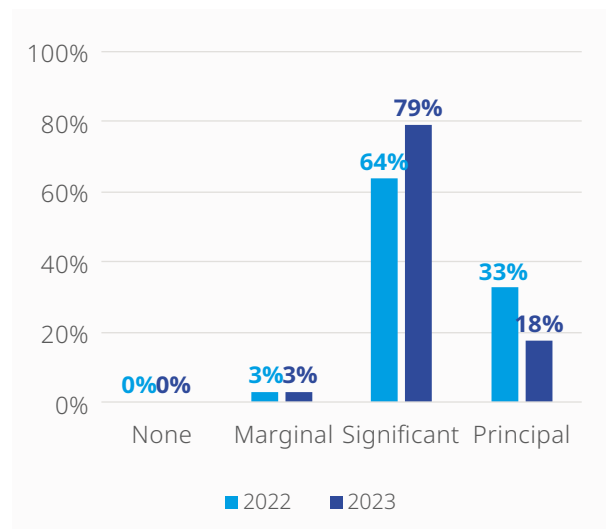
UNICEF BiH has met the criteria for gender-transformative financing since 2020.³⁹ In 2022, the CO had 32 per cent of total expenditure marked as gender-transformative. In 2023, there was a decrease of the gender-transformative expenditure to 18 per cent of its total budget (see Figure 1). UNICEF tracks its gender expenditure, as per UN Women guidance, through a dual approach of Gender Equality Marker (GEM) at output level, and through gender-tagging of activities reflecting actual gender expenditure. Between 2022 and 2023, UNICEF BiH significantly decreased the proportion of expenditure tagged as principal from 33 to 18 per cent, while the proportion of significant expenditure increased from 64 to 79 per cent (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. UNICEF expenditure and gender expenditure 2022 and 2023, total (USD)



Source: UNICEF Strategic Plan expenditure cube, 2022-2025, authors' calculation

Figure 2. Proportion of GEM tagging for 2022 and 2023 expenditure total



Source: UNICEF Strategic Plan expenditure cube, 2022-2025, authors' calculation

The level of investment in transformative results has been situated in two Goal Areas: Goal Area 2 (learn) and Goal Area 3 (protection from violence and exploitation). Between the two Goal Areas, the majority of gender expenses were marked in Goal Area 3 (88 per cent in 2022 and 50 per cent in 2023). In 2022, Goal Area 3 constituted 29 per cent and in

2023 21 per cent of total CO budget. In Goal Area 2, gender expenses formed 17 per cent of Goal Area budget in 2022 and 23 per cent in 2023. Goal Area 2 expenses formed the highest share of total budget in 2022 with 34 per cent and second highest in 2023 with 30 per cent.

Table 6. UNICEF BiH Goal Area expenditure and gender expenditure 2022 and 2023, by Goal Area (USD)

| | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | GA % out of total | Gender % within GA | GA % out of total | Gender % within GA |
| 1 Survive and thrive | 25% | 0% | 38% | 0% |
| 2 Learn | 34% | 17% | 30% | 23% |
| 3 Protection from violence and exploitation | 29% | 88% | 21% | 50% |
| 4 Safe and clean environment | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% |
| 5 Equitable chance in life | 10% | 0% | 10% | 0% |

Source: UNICEF Strategic Plan expenditure cube, 2022-2025, authors' calculation

In addition to the presented data, UNICEF BiH has used gender as an entry point to secure UNICEF's position in the Joint UN Gender Accelerators Framework (see more under 2.2.3). Based on the latest data, the

CO has secured up to 0.8 million EUR in hard pipeline for the work on addressing violence against children, and gender equality in education, and is currently negotiating additional funding with other donors.

Table 7. Ten major sources of funding and proportion of gender expenditure in 2023 (USD)

| | Expenses | Gender expense | % Gender expense |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Grand Total | 8,287,228 | 1,472,024 | 18% |
| 1 UNICEF (for GR allocations only) | 1,191,335 | 450,073 | 38% |
| 2 International Organization for Migration | 1,050,618 | 408,241 | 39% |
| 3 UNICEF-United Arab Emirates | 442,524 | 351,928 | 80% |
| 4 USA - USAID | 3,781,142 | 185,412 | 5% |
| 5 SIDA - Sweden | 144,665 | 70,228 | 49% |
| 6 Global – Child protection | 126,777 | 47,482 | 37% |
| 7 Belgian Committee for UNICEF | 79,202 | 12,611 | 16% |
| 8 Global - Thematic humanitarian response | 195,293 | 12,106 | 6% |
| 9 United Nations multi partner trust | 141,520 | 8,912 | 6% |
| 10 Global – Gender equality | 3,517 | 3,517 | 100% |

Source: UNICEF Internal Database System: inSight

Partnerships

With girl-, youth- and women-led organizations

UNICEF BiH has established partnerships with youth-led organizations with the mandate to advance the position of children and adolescents in the country. All NGOs consider UNICEF as a good and trusted partner, with devoted and supportive staff and noted that they feel listened to by CO staff, including in the design and re-design of project proposals. UNICEF BiH is also seen as a critical partner in supporting innovative initiatives particularly within the formal education sector, including on gender equality. The short duration of projects, which are at times extended, but with no guarantee, represent the key challenge in partnerships between UNICEF and NGOs. The low benchmark for project staff salary and short duration of the projects, prevent organizations from employing staff to manage project implementation, which is particularly relevant for smaller organizations. Pressure to deliver results in a short period, made some NGOs decide not to engage in projects less than one year. In terms of gender-related work, IPs did not receive additional support or guidance from UNICEF BiH to engage in gender equality programming. The CO's focus on gender equality is seen through formal requirements to establish a PSEA structure, explain a project's impact on gender equality in the design phase, and collect sex-disaggregated data. In relation to PSEA, IPs see the process as cumbersome, but also beneficial in overall organizational capacity building.

UNICEF BiH did not see women- and girl-led organizations as their typical partners until late 2023. Based on the GPR recommendations and the need to meet the corporate requirements on gender, the CO published its first targeted call for project proposals for women- and youth- led grassroots organizations. Following the call, in 2024 UNICEF BiH established partnerships with two grassroots organizations, which is seen as programmatically beneficial from both sides. However, the selection and contracting process was done at a high transactional cost, primarily in terms of investment of staff time and capacity, which were necessary to meet corporate policies and standards. For IPs, the project proposal process was seen as simple, unlike the review and contracting process which was lengthy and complicated for projects with maximum duration of six months.⁴⁰

With government

There are several gender-related initiatives that UNICEF BiH is implementing in partnership with public institutions. The social policy sector is working closely with centres for social work and employment offices, the education sector is working closely with schools, while the health section is collaborating closely with Institutes for Public Health and preschool institutions on activities related to ECD.

However, the Agency for Gender Equality, the country's state-level gender institutional mechanism, notes that gender machinery at state and entity level do not have an established cooperation with the CO, although they see a need to establish closer communication. Furthermore, contacted governmental partners from the health and education sector, confirm they do not cooperate with UNICEF on topics related to gender. Nevertheless, FBIH Ministry of Health was able to identify several good gender initiatives from the previous period that were discontinued due to the lack of funding. In terms of quality of existing partnerships, UNICEF is seen as one of the preferred partners, as the CO is following government's priorities and manages the partnership through a dialogue.



“The programmes which we were implementing together were good, some were better as they were implemented for a longer period of time. The problem is that due to lack of financing we have longer gaps in the implementation which are long enough to disrupt the work which was done previously.” - UNICEF government partner.

All partners have stressed that UNICEF's enhanced involvement would bring positive impact on enhancing gender equality in the country.

With other UN agencies

UNICEF BiH engages in successful cooperation with other UN agencies in achieving gender equality change. The IT Girls programme stands for one of the most successful joint UN initiatives, which has been implemented since 2016 (see more under 3.2.). The project is seen as “UN joint work as it should be” (as noted by UNICEF's UN agency partner) due to joint planning, decision-making, implementation and fundraising of three UN agencies (UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women), including in instances when UNICEF was the only agency with available funding.

In addition to IT Girls, UNICEF BiH secured its role in joining the UN response to gender-based discrimination and violence in BiH, by engaging in the UN Joint Gender Accelerators programme together with UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women. The programme is composed of three pillars: Pillar 1 - GBV; Pillar 2 - women's economic empowerment, and Pillar 3 - women's political participation. Using the UNICEF Gender Policy, the CO has defined its programmatic niche by addressing the issue of violence against children (Pillar 1); increasing the access to primary care facilities, strengthening ECED and continuing to increase access of adolescent girls to STEM (IT Girls) (Pillar 2). Joint design of the Gender Accelerators Programme is seen as an example of good practice as the process was approached systematically by all agencies which dedicated sufficient internal capacities and had sufficient time for proper planning. Additionally, agencies have been engaged in joint fundraising, which has to this date resulted in securing the funds (hard pipeline) for the implementation of Pillar 1.

Overall, partnerships with other UN agencies work well when they are rooted in the common need for programming and when partnerships mature over time through joint project design and implementation. However, when partnerships are top-down, donor driven and pressed with a short timeframe for joint programming, they create tensions and competition, which do not yield positive results for design on implementation.

Accountability and leadership

GAP M&E system utilization

UNICEF BiH does not have a well-developed country GAP M&E system. Although it was set up as a tool for monitoring the implementation of GPR recommendations, the CO is yet to establish a functional monitoring mechanism. Furthermore, the GPR noted a gap in CO reporting on gender results, which was confirmed in several discussions with UNICEF BiH staff.

Good results related to gender-responsive and -transformative programming are often underreported by the responsible programme staff in activity reports, who are primarily focused on reporting about key programmatic achievements and less on gender as a cross-cutting issue. COARs also lack outcome level and reporting against indicators, which would enable better understanding of the type and the impact of the work on gender. In 2022 and 2023, UNICEF BiH

COARs missed the opportunity to report on gender programmatic results, under the new report section on cross-sectoral issues. RO-prepared data on gender results for 2023 also show that gender norms and roles were addressed in three Goal Areas: education, child protection and social policy, however there was no additional qualitative data that would provide information about how this was achieved⁴¹. The CPD lacks gender-transformative indicators that are available in the GAP results framework, while sex-disaggregated targets for indicators were only set in two priority areas (education and child protection) which corresponds to areas where gender-transformative expense was reported. The gender tagging exercise is in general found to be easy, although it seems to contribute to the misrepresentation of gender-transformative results. On the one hand, staff feel pressured to stretch the marking of the results to have as many principal and significant outputs as possible. On the other hand, some gender-transformative programmes can fall under lower GEMs, as they are placed under the same output as activities which are unrelated to gender. For the CO, this creates a perception that the organization is more concerned about meeting the form requirements rather than focus on the content of the programmes. To ensure that the M&E system adequately captures tagged outputs and marked activities and ensure accurate presentation of the programme's performance on gender, more nuanced feedback on gender reporting needs to be provided. UNICEF BiH complies with the corporate M&E requirements related to gender, however more efforts need to be put in place to design and use a comprehensive national GAP M&E system.

Commendably, IPs collect data from beneficiaries, including adolescent girls. The feedback they receive is then used to review the initially planned activities to better reflect the changing needs of the beneficiaries. Most IPs report they have conducted baseline research which has informed their programming, including within the Adolescent Girls programme. However, the CO does not have available data on the impact of gender-transformative programming. This gap has been acknowledged by the CO as several research studies are already ongoing or in the planning stage, including an impact analysis of IT Girls and UPSHIFT initiatives. UNICEF BiH and its IPs collect sex-disaggregated at activity and output level.

Accountability mechanisms

Accountability for gender in UNICEF BiH is placed on the GFPs. Both the national GFP and deputy representative are the only staff to have an indicator related to gender as one of the evaluation criteria in their performance evaluation review. Several staff agreed that gender should be integrated in the performance evaluations of staff across the CO, as the agency is determined to promote gender equality. However, there was no consensus on this issue, as some staff, mainly male non-programme, stressed that gender is not part of their jobs. This would address one of the key institutional impediments on the work on gender - lack of accountability of programme staff and middle management for the work on gender.

Senior leadership commitments to gender equality

Senior management demonstrate a high degree of commitment and engagement to gender equality⁴². As noted above, the deputy representative co-shares the role of GFP with the national officer and was instrumental in defining the CO's key gender-related priorities and raise funds for gender-related activities. Some longer-term staff agreed that they have seen an increase from no commitment to significant commitment of the senior management to gender equality in the past decade. However, a number of staff noted that the responsibility of the leadership on gender is not clear to everyone. The newly appointed representative, in post for six weeks at the time of data collection, widely communicated an open-door policy and has promoted a speak-up culture that will help create an office environment supportive and respectful of gender equality. This is recognized and appreciated by the staff, who trust the leadership to pursue gender programmatic work and address any manifestation of sexist values and inappropriate behaviour in the office.

Staffing and culture

Ownership of the gender mandate at all levels

In UNICEF BiH, ownership of the gender mandate is not equally distributed across the office, with GFPs owning the largest responsibility for the work on gender. Most of the programme staff noted that they lack the capacity to engage in gender programming (as explained in the section 2.1.1). Staff further explained that it was difficult to work on gender as it is a cross-cutting issue and represents additional work for them, which is complicated to manage in a small team. Some, mostly under 35 years of age, expressed interest and motivation to work on the topic, and felt frustrated to not be able to do more. On the other hand, some staff explained that they do not feel accountable to deliver on gender results, as gender is not related to their job or included in their performance. For a minority of staff, mainly male, there was a correlation between the expression of beliefs and attitudes rooted in traditional gender norms (for example the belief that "some jobs are better suited for women than others") and their resistance to consider gender in their work.

Gender equality in the workplace: Human resources (HR) policies, inclusion, PSEA

In terms of gender parity, the CO team is composed of 70 per cent women and 30 per cent men. The senior leadership team (representative, deputy representative and operations manager) has in general been well balanced, although the previous leadership was all female and the current one all male⁴³. The CO has all female middle management, including a staff member under 35 years of age. Male staff seem to believe that middle management positions are reserved for female staff, although they also report that they feel their voices are heard. The CO has introduced certain measures to attract more male staff to join the organization, such as flagging in vacancies ToRs that men are encouraged to apply. In addition, UNICEF BiH is committed to enforcing implementation of the 'young UNICEF' policy and employing more staff under 35 years of age, including in decision-making positions. Employing more young people is seen as particularly relevant to male staff, noting it was previously very difficult for a young person with less experience to join the organization. This suggests they support initiatives based on affirmative action. However, in parallel, male staff see using candidate's gender as a criterion for employment as discriminative, as the key criteria for employment should be candidate's expertise.



“If the qualification is your main criteria, how can you apply gender as an additional criterion? If you are encouraging male or female candidates to apply for a job, the perception is that other gender cannot apply. For example, we have the IT Girls project in our office. When the project started, it implied that somebody was forbidding girls to pursue the carrier in IT. But the fact is that they are not interested in IT for different reasons. But at the end of the day, when I am hiring, I will hire the best candidate, regardless of their gender.” (UNICEF BiH staff member)

“Why is my gender relevant for the job application? Why can't there just be an application without gender, and the best candidate based on their experiences can get the job? If you are having a job application where you are encouraging men or women to apply you will always have this discrimination, if you remove the gender section, then candidates will only be selected based on their experience.” (UNICEF BiH staff member)

The more recent recruitment of younger staff has positively impacted CO's capacity to address gender issues. However, this has also highlighted differing perspectives between staff of different age groups, leading to diverse approaches to programming and innovations, as well as varying interpretations of gender norms and stereotypes. This diversity of thought presents an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration, which could be more systematically explored to enhance understanding and cohesion within the team. These observations align with findings from the global review, confirming that similar generational dynamics are noted across various contexts, partially attributed also to the young UNICEF policy.

UNICEF BiH promotes a flexible working environment, which is utilized by all staff for various reasons, including work-life balance and personal responsibilities. While teleworking is an option equally available to everyone, some women with caregiving responsibilities have indicated that given the limited uncertified sick leave and family emergency leave days available, they often use teleworking during family emergencies, such as when their children are ill and require at-home care, which creates an additional burden to them. In the context of BiH, where maternal policies allow mothers to take 12 months of maternity leave, UNICEF's 20-week maternal policy is seen as defying child well-being policies which UNICEF is externally promoting, and disproportionately affecting female staff.

UNICEF BiH externally invests in PSEA which is seen as positive by both UNICEF and IPs, as it contributes to the reporting of violence against girls. However, the CO shows much less focus and structure about the issue internally. Except for the mandatory online training on PSEA, staff did not receive any additional capacity building on the issue. The evaluation team was not made aware of a staff member that serves as an internal PSEA focal point. The CO HR advisor, who was also appointed as the ethics focal point, is often consulted by staff in need of support on issues related to organizational culture, including in cases of inappropriate behaviour, including of sexual nature. However, HR (a general service position), does not have the power to act, other than to advise senior management and offer advice or counselling. This is often done, not because it is required by the job post, but because of HR's willingness to provide support and personal counselling skills. The use of this informal support proves there is no formal report mechanism in place that is well identified, despite some efforts to strengthen internal prevention of inappropriate behaviour. Additionally, UNICEF BiH has two staff members which serve as peer support volunteers trained for providing psychological first aid with no obligation to report.

Female staff expressed strong discontent with the implementation of the global UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment and mistrust towards existing global mechanisms. The way a past complaint was handled by the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation in New York made the team feel that there is insufficient protection of victims and their anonymity, which creates a fear of retaliation and low levels of willingness to report any case. Some women felt that the policy does not offer the necessary level of safety in case SEA is reported against a colleague or a supervisor, which explains the low levels of willingness to report a case. Lengthy investigation processes and lack of information about its status due to confidentiality, additionally feed into a picture that UNICEF pays little attention to addressing the issue in a women-centred way.

Finally, information collected from the single-sex workshops points to a significant difference in the gender norms and values held by various CO staff. This impacts staff understanding of SEA and what constitutes unwanted behaviours in the office.

EQ3: Programmatic Results

To what extent have UNICEF's programmatic results for gender equality throughout the life course been met across all five Goal Areas, particularly to advance adolescent girls' leadership and well-being, in both development and humanitarian settings?

In summary

UNICEF BiH has implemented gender-related initiatives in all four programmatic areas. The CO prioritized gender-related programming in two programme sections: child protection, which includes the implementation of Breaking Barriers, and education which coordinates the implementation of the IT Girls programme and UPSHIFT. Health (immunization and ECD) and social policy have implemented interesting gender-responsive and gender-transformative initiatives. The evaluation finds lack of attention to immunization to be a missed opportunity to address the decreasing immunization coverage by addressing gender norms which are related to decision-making and access to information regarding immunization.

Results on gender equality programming are evident in the education section, under IT Girls and UPSHIFT. Both programmes have been successful in addressing impediments to girls' empowerment by tackling gender bias and advancing leadership skills of adolescent girls. In health, some positive initiatives have been undertaken to tackle gender norms in nutrition and ECD. A combination of diligent monitoring and knowledge on gender and gender programming, was crucial for identifying gender bias among health and preschool professionals and for designing gender-transformative activities by involving more fathers in ECD workshops and giving equal attention to both boys and girls in activities related to healthy nutrition.

Activities in the child protection sector showed high levels of gender responsiveness, by addressing issues of stigma around sexual violence, lack of knowledge on GBV and gender stereotypes, as well as lack of knowledge on how to provide mental health services which are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls. The initiative was planned and implemented with substantial involvement of adolescent girls and boys. Similarly, in social policy, the CO implemented gender-responsive social entrepreneurship schemes and supported access to the labour market for particularly vulnerable categories of women to contribute to better livelihoods for them and their children.

Results on adolescent girls are achieved under three programmes: IT Girls, Breaking Barriers and UPSHIFT. All three achieved significant results in increasing the participation, leadership skills and well-being of adolescent girls. However, for IT Girls, more data are necessary to confirm the impact on leadership of women and girls in the IT sector. Furthermore, the programme seems to be missing an opportunity to tackle perceived gender norms and roles among adolescent girls who lack awareness of the gender gap in the IT sector, as well as gender stereotypes and norms more broadly. Breaking Barriers was also successful in engaging with adolescent boys, however, not enough to motivate them to further address the issues related to gender equality, which they consider as a girl's issue. Finally, at times when UPSHIFT led to significant change in attitudes and beliefs, adolescent girls were unable to accept the change adequately, due to lack of professional psychological support.

UNICEF BiH faces significant challenges and pushback in its work to achieve transformative change. External pushback is led by the RS Ministry of Education and Culture, which is denying the implementation of projects presented as gender-transformative, due to a lack of understanding of the term, a rising public discourse that is unsupportive of gender-related work, and insufficient localization of UNICEF's global initiatives and policies. Moreover, transformative changes require long-term projects and secured funding, particularly when activities are being implemented through partner NGOs, which is currently lacking.

Gender equality across all Goal Areas

The UNICEF BiH CPD 2022-2025 shows limited attention to integrating gender. The GPR notes the mention of IT Girls programme, child marriage in programme rationale and sex-disaggregation of indicators data in education and child protection Goal Areas. Although rather modestly, GPR recommendations were integrated in all four CPD priority areas in 2023, after a prioritization process aimed at setting realistic targets for a small office that does not have a full-time gender specialist. The national GAP thus plans for gender-related interventions across CO programming including organizational effectiveness, setting the targets and benchmarks for 2025.

In terms of achieved results, data on gender results for 2023 indicates that gender norms and roles were addressed in three out of four priority areas: education, child protection and social policy⁴⁴. Expenditure data shows that gender expenditure were captured only in education and child protection priority areas (see Table 6). The two sectors have been mentioned as best performing on gender in several interviews with staff, mostly due to implementation of Adolescent Girls programme (child protection) and IT Girls programme (education). Despite the understanding of many CO staff that health (immunization and ECD) and social policy find it difficult to engage in gender-transformative programming, both sections show interesting gender-responsive and gender-transformative initiatives, fully aligned with global gender equality framework

Overall, gender results can be found in all programme priority areas, however not all are seen as gender-transformative results, as explained below in more detail. UNICEF BiH has met the corporate requirements on achieving gender equality results due to the long-term implementation of the IT Girls programme. However, the results of this girls-focused programme are not commensurate to results in integrating gender in other Goal Areas and, as noted by a staff member, the IT Girls programme is seen somewhat of a silver bullet “because we have IT Girls and this is a transformative programme, so we don’t have to do anything else” (UNICEF staff member).

Goal Area 1: Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives with access to nutritious diets, quality health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies

In BiH, the health section is focused on three main issues: immunization, nutrition and ECD. The GPR noted that on the gender continuum, the programme can be categorized as gender-responsive, with limited entry points for gender-transformative work. However, this evaluation found evidence of positive initiatives that have been undertaken to tackle gender norms in nutrition and ECD. In nutrition, staff identified the gender bias of preschool professionals as an impediment to ensuring healthy nutrition of both boys and girls. The perception of some professionals is that boys should be given more nutritious food than girls and were excluded from healthy nutrition cooking classes which were directed towards girls. Similarly, in ECD, health professionals were perpetuating the stereotype of women’s responsibility for childcare by advising mothers and female caregivers on issues regarding the care for children with disabilities. Commendably, a combination of diligent monitoring and knowledge on gender and gender programming, was crucial for addressing gender stereotypes and designing gender-transformative activities by involving more fathers in the ECD workshop and giving equal attention to both boys’ and girls’ nutrition needs.

With this, the CO addressed one of the key points made by the GFP for this priority area, to ensure that programmes are focusing on fathers and mothers equally, in order avoid the implementation of gender-blind project and reinforcement of traditional gender roles and norms.

In emergencies, the CO’s programming is focused on nutrition. Mother and baby corners in migrant reception camps represent safe and private spaces for breastfeeding and contribute to the prevention of GBV. Furthermore, nutrition and hygiene counselling are provided to pregnant women and single fathers. Overall, interesting interventions on addressing gender bias, which yielded transformative results were documented. The work on involving fathers in childcare should be seen a pilot initiative with scaling up potential, which reportedly will be further explored by the CO.

Finally, while noting that UNICEF BiH decided not to prioritize gender programming in the health sector, this evaluation finds a lack of attention to immunization as a missed opportunity. UNICEF is considered by the government as the strongest stakeholder in large-scale immunization, which is seen as gender neutral. In the context where immunization rates of children are decreasing, investment in addressing gender norms which are related to decision-making and access to information on immunization should be seen as an important niche of the CO's intervention. This is why it is encouraging to note that this gap has been identified and captured by the national GAP as well as the newly appointed chief of section.

Goal Area 2: Every child including adolescents learns and acquires skills for the future

The GPR notes that education programming is comprehensive and in alignment with UNICEF education and gender policies and guidelines; strategic frameworks and EU guidelines; SDGs and key recommendations of the CRC. The document further notes several good gender-related practices such as gender-responsive pedagogy, promoting early childhood education (ECE) through edutainment interventions tackling socio-emotional development while breaking gender stereotypes, and gender-responsive parenting, Roma specific interventions, as well as assessment of the situation of the well-being of teachers in the post-coronavirus disease era.

The education section manages the CO's gender programme IT Girls. With the goal to enhance the access and participation of girls in STEM and the IT sector, IT Girls is aligned with one of the key priorities of the GAP and Gender Policy on advancing adolescent girls' education, learning and skills in STEM. IT Girls is implemented as a joint project between three UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women), with UNICEF's focus being formal education. Notably, project activities are focused on addressing impediments to girls' access to STEM, including lack of IT equipment, lack of supportive environment in schools and society as a whole, and limited awareness on women in STEM⁴⁵. In addressing them, UNICEF BiH uses targeted activities to address gender norms and gender bias, primarily among teachers who are found to be the most relevant enabling factor. Teachers are trained on gender equality and gender bias through transformative teaching methods, to become more aware of attitudes and behaviours which are preventing girls to join or stay engaged in STEM workshops.

Trainings are informed by feedback from participants and adolescent girls, and since 2020 by the findings of a dedicated behavioural study "Gender Gaps in STEM Field and Proposed Interventions Programme" to ensure that the approach is evidence-based. The programme is currently being implemented in 110 schools in FBiH with positive feedback from both teachers and adolescent girls, recorded through regular programme monitoring and programme evaluation conducted in 2021. However, the CO is yet to collect the information about the programme impact, by commissioning an IT Girls impact analysis by the end of the current programming cycle.

UNICEF BiH is also implementing UPSHIFT, a programme designed to enhance the capacities of adolescents to become active social innovators and entrepreneurs⁴⁶. Based on skills development and social entrepreneurship, the programme is working on advancing the leadership skills of adolescent boys and girls by actively engaging and supporting them to create solutions for social problems. Although the programme does not exclusively target adolescent girls, due to its design, focus and implementation model, UPSHIFT attracts more adolescent girls than boys (70 per cent girls versus 30 per cent boys). Often, initiatives are implemented in partnership with schools. In addition to supporting their leadership, the programme regularly addresses issues of GBV and discrimination, such as body shaming, mental health, sexual and reproductive health or femicide, thus directly addressing gender bias and gender norms which are underpinning the problems. Adolescent girls participating in the project have experienced a change in their attitudes and beliefs regarding gender equality but have also engaged with their peers in deconstructing some of the stigmatized gender concepts, such as menstruation. While CO staff are aware of the IT Girls transformative impact, UPSHIFT's gender equality achievement was not captured by CO staff, potentially due to the fact that the project does not exclusively focus on adolescent girls and does not have a clear gender component in its design. This represents an additional missed opportunity for achieving better quality reporting on gender equality results, but also in building on positive results, especially those which are achieved in formal education.

Gender is integrated in the preschool education programme, where UNICEF is using the 'economy of care' angle to advocate for the greater availability of preschool education facilities. Efforts have been made to integrate gender in strategic processes, such

as in defining common BiH priorities in the global Transforming Education Process, where gender equality was included as one of eight priority areas.

Goal Area 3: Every child including adolescents is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices

In child protection, gender-related programming has been primarily focused on primary and secondary prevention of violence in schools and enhancing system-based response to violence against children and adolescents. In the past two years, activities have been implemented through Breaking Barriers. The programme IPs report a number of successes, such as raised capacities of schools to prevent violence through: the establishment of a referral mechanism for violence against children prevention in schools; design of teaching manuals on prevention against violence; trained teachers and school staff on preventing violence against girls and boys; informed adolescent girls and boys on their rights and available mental and social protection services; and raised capacities of schools and first responders to respond to GBV against adolescent girls, including on sexual violence. The activities have been implemented by establishing partnerships with local NGOs, with substantial inputs and involvement of adolescent girls and boys. In terms of scope, the 2023 implementation report of the Breaking Barriers project shows that the project reached 214,068 adolescents (50.6 per cent girls), out of which 21,276 adolescents were reached directly (40.3 per cent girls).

Programming showed high levels of gender responsiveness, with activities addressing issues of stigma around sexual violence, lack of knowledge on GBV and its consequences, and lack of knowledge on gender stereotypes, and on how to provide mental health services which are responsive to the needs of adolescent girls. The programme also supports empowerment and enhances well-being of both adolescent girls and boys. Furthermore, with additional support from UNICEF BiH, BHIDAPA's project to address gender bias in responses to adolescent girls who are victims of sexual violence has the potential for transformative change.

Good gender-related practices were found in child protection work in emergency settings. They include deployment of 24/7 guardians for unaccompanied and separated children, child-friendly spaces, provision of mental health and psychosocial support

provision and establishment of boys' parliament as a participation and rights enforcement mechanism for unaccompanied and separated children. The analysis further noted the GBV prevention and response mechanism which was established through the cooperation with UNFPA and centres for social work in both migrant reception centres, as a good result of the UN agencies cooperation on this topic.

Goal Area 4: Every child including adolescents has access to water, sanitation and hygiene and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment

Social policy and CRM show notable examples of gender-responsive programming in the design and implementation of social entrepreneurship schemes, as also noted by the GPR. The programme has recognized the particular vulnerability of women, especially mothers of children living with disabilities, women with more than three children and women living in rural areas living in poverty, to access the labour market competitively. Hence, the project has successfully engaged 432 women (54.2 per cent of all beneficiaries) and 229 girls (53.4 per cent of total number of children) in social entrepreneurship and integrated case management schemes. The project specifically targeted women who were long-term unemployed with low education and skills, victims of domestic violence, and single mothers, aiming to improve their socio-economic situation through income-generating activities. It also provided free access to pre-school education and other extra-curricular activities for children of female beneficiaries. The activities are directly contributing to the implementation of the global GAP provisions regarding establishing gender-responsive social protection systems (Goal Area 5).

The sector also participated in the design of an investment case for children (aged 0-6 years) on social protection, ECE and ECD health services, which is aligned with one of the GPR recommendations. Cost-benefit and cost-of-inaction analyses of the short- and long-term socio-economic consequences of adequate, equitable and cost-effective investments were prepared as an advocacy paper for decision-makers to push for informed public investments at all government levels to expand ECD services.

Results on adolescent girls

There are three programmes focusing on adolescent girls: IT Girls, Breaking Barriers: Transforming Services for An Empowered Future for All Girls and UPSHIFT programme.

IT Girls is an initiative developed to specifically target adolescent girls (see more under 3.1. Goal Area education). The project is focused on filling the digital gender gap, promoting equal opportunities for girls and boys in education and access to technology, and fostering gender equality in the marketplace, workplace, and community⁴⁷. Over the years, the project has adapted to different contexts and needs, including the opening of IT Girls clubs for both girls and boys. Within the UN joint programme, UNICEF is working in primary and secondary schools to improve the access of adolescent girls (aged 13-19 years) to existing IT or robotics clubs by providing equipment and training teachers to facilitate club activities. Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging girls to join the clubs and ensuring they remain engaged, addressing structural issues, such as being overshadowed by louder, more confident boys, working in an unfriendly environment, or engaging in projects they do not find interesting.

In terms of participation, IT Girls is constantly growing in scope. In 2023, the programme was implemented in 110 primary and secondary schools (in FBiH and District Brčko) with active participation of 727 girls and 259 boys⁴⁸. In terms of its effect, there is no available information to track how long the girls remain in IT Girls clubs. Information collected from programme implementation shows encouraging results, with girls participating in IT Girls clubs for many years, through both primary and secondary education, where there are clubs on both levels. This opportunity proved to be very important as the behavioural study “Gender Gaps in STEM Field and Proposed Interventions Programme” showed that girls tend to change their mind in the last two years of high-school, and opt out from pursuing their education and career in IT and STEM.

There is currently no strong evidence of the impact of the IT Girls programme on the leadership of women and girls. Following a GPR recommendation, the CO is preparing to commission an impact analysis to better understand the value addition of this initiative towards the progression of girls in the labour market especially in non-traditional sectors. Nevertheless, during the evaluation workshop adolescent girls confirmed that IT Girls clubs were important for advancing their skills in programming

which otherwise would not be possible. The adolescent girls reported that the clubs have had a positive impact on their well-being, with the work enhancing their self-esteem, increasing their knowledge on IT, and engaging them in teamwork as equals. Girls particularly valued learning something completely new, which clearly supports their empowerment. The programme also supports their leadership skills, with teachers providing support and guidance without imposing ideas. There is also a high level of motivation to continue participating in the IT Girls clubs.

However, the programme seems to miss an opportunity to tackle perceived gender norms and roles of adolescent girls. Girls show no awareness of the gender gap in the IT sector, nor are they aware of the project’s rationale. Examples of stereotypical behaviour and attitudes from both boys and girls were extensively shared, highlighting a lack of understanding gender equality. For example, adolescent boys were saying that robotics is not for girls as girls are not skilled with assembling. On the other hand, adolescent girls were supporting the claims of gender equality by saying that boys always remember to buy flowers for girls to commemorate International Women’s Day, without any discrimination. Addressing these norms could be beneficial for removing wider structural barriers in formal education that perpetuate gender inequalities. Hence, while transformative in its design, and focused on advancing the role of adolescent girls in STEM, the project should also explore ways to address harmful gender norms and beliefs among adolescent girls and boys regarding gender equality and gender roles in BiH.

The project “Breaking Barriers: Transforming Services for An Empowered Future for All Girls” (2023 – 2024) is designed for the implementation of the Adolescent Girls Strategy and is funded by the global Adolescent Girls Fund. The project targets both boys and girls in initiatives related to preventing violence, increasing access to support services in mental health and social protection and increasing the knowledge on adolescents about their rights and available services.

The project is designed in a participatory way with substantial involvement of adolescent girls and boys. Information was collected through baseline research (primary prevention of violence in schools), FGDs (addressing sexual violence of adolescent girls) and an advisory group (provision of social and mental health support services).

Adolescent girls reported feeling more empowered and having higher self-esteem as a result of activities implemented under this project. They have established better communication with their parents, ended toxic relationships, and refocused their purpose, substantially improving their well-being. Some girls also noted that they feel empowered to speak up and act in cases of violent behaviour and peer violence. Furthermore, IPs reported cases of violence disclosure and reporting as a result of project activities.

BOX 1

Quotes from the workshop with adolescent girls

“For me this project helped me to get out of my comfort zone to even talk about the problem, let alone to talk about this problem to other people. Also, I think that my social skills have improved, I am able to speak to people more easily.”

“The project workshops helped me to fully embrace myself and to be completely comfortable in my own body. I don’t get offended with other people’s comments about my body anymore.”

“After I designed my project for UPSHIFT, I am much more aware of what I can do, and what are my capacities and abilities. Now I see that all the hard work I’ve put in this, has really paid off and that I can achieve things.”

“The IT girls club showed me how many things I can do. Before I joined the club, I never coded, now I would love to see how I can do even more.”

Consulted boys, however, confirmed that project activities were not sufficient to motivate them to engage more in gender equality, which they still consider a girl’s issue. On the other hand, they did confirm that the project provided space for more involvement of boys who were already motivated to engage in prevention of violence against women and girls.

In addition, at times, girls consulted by the evaluation team were not always satisfied with the way the consultations were organized, noting they were confusing, time-consuming and with limited active participation. Notably, where the project aimed to enhance the access to service provision, these results were achieved. Blue Phone⁴⁹ data show an increase in the number of calls and counselling sessions, including for adolescent girls, however still more boys (69 per cent) than girls (31 per cent) access the services and receive available support (56 per cent boys versus 44 per cent girls).

Finally, results collected on the implementation of UPSHIFT, confirm that the project had a direct impact on enhancing adolescent girls’ leadership and well-being and achieving transformative change. Due to the way the project is designed, adolescent girls are free to propose and (if selected) develop their own responses to social problems they see relevant. Many of those proposals involve addressing gender-related issues, such as femicide, body shaming, stigma and ignorance surrounding menstruation, and come from girls from rural parts of the country. Adolescent girls confirm that participation in the UPSHIFT project has been rewarding and empowering in many aspects. Girls gained more courage to voice their opinions, to pursue their ideas and to trust their knowledge, capacities and intuition. Many adolescent girls and boys continued to be very active in their communication and continued to use the skills and knowledge they gained, also by joining or establishing their own NGOs.

Notably, many girls experienced a change in their environments, primarily within their families and friends, which were not always supportive of this change. Without professional support, girls found it hard to understand and process this evolution, often by internalizing the blame for the actions of others.

To ensure their well-being and a proper internalization of the changes in norms, adolescent girls need to have access to psychological support during and beyond the duration of the project.

Transformative changes in gender norms and systems

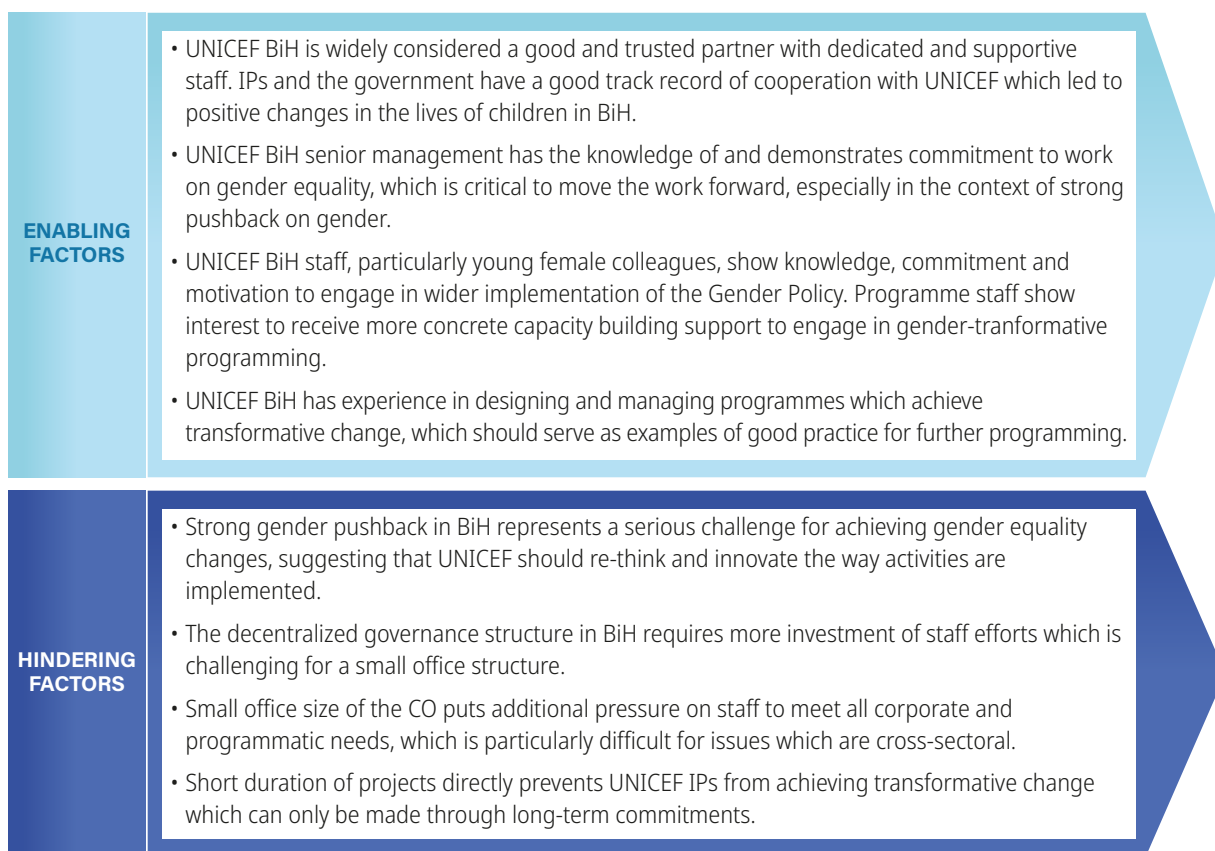
UNICEF BiH is contributing to transformative changes in gender norms and systems, particularly regarding its work with adolescent girls, through IT Girls and UPSHIFT initiatives. However, the approach to the work on transformative changes has faced significant challenges with open pushback and resistance, including from the RS Ministry of Education and Culture. The ministry's position to prohibit the implementation of gender-transformative programmes in schools, with the explanation they are discriminating boys, had the most impact on the implementation of the IT Girls programme. In this case, the ministry denied its implementation because it used a gender-transformative manual for teacher training. IPs report many similar situations where projects which address gender norms or gender stereotypes were not allowed to be implemented in RS schools. On the other hand, UNICEF IPs reported on the implementation of a number of gender-responsive and gender-transformative initiatives, including Breaking Barriers and UPSHIFT programmes. Hence, it seems that most of the resistance comes from the lack of understanding of the terminology and poor localization of the work on gender-transformative change. NGO informants agree that government officials do not understand the concept of gender-responsive or -transformative change. Furthermore, in the public discourse where gender is being associated with sex change, gender-transformation can be easily interpreted as a medical procedure of sex transformation. Therefore, programming on gender-responsive and -transformative change needs to be more innovative and reflect the essence of the work such as addressing mental health, increasing the well-being of girls or prevention of violence. As the work of some NGOs has shown, this approach does not lead to objections by schools, parents or the Ministry of Education.

This requires good localization of UNICEF's global policies and initiatives, which is often lacking. In the BiH context, particularly in less developed and rural areas, discussions about violence against women and children are often considered taboo. Hence, it is important that both UNICEF BiH and its IPs mirror the gist of what gender policy is set to achieve to prevent the initial resistance which comes from the lack of knowledge and an unsupportive environment.

Another issue with achieving transformative change is that it takes time. Many informants emphasized that it is impossible to achieve transformative change when projects are short, discontinued and small-scale. This is particularly valid in the educational system, where transformative NGO projects often introduce ideas that are completely different from those that are shared by the official curriculum that has been in place for years. These new ideas are difficult for adolescents to accept, making it unlikely for them to change their attitudes and beliefs. Hence, to be successful, transformative projects need to tackle the educational system itself, but also need to be supported by long-term investments. This is particularly the case when the work is implemented through partner NGOs, where short-term interventions increase the demand for more sustained efforts that cannot be met.

Enabling and hindering factors and processes, within and outside UNICEF

Figure 3. Enabling and hindering factors for UNICEF BiH to integrate gender



Source: Evaluation Team

Lessons learned for broader application in UNICEF programme design and implementation

Based on the collected information, the evaluation draws the following lessons learned for broader application in UNICEF's programme design and implementation:

- ▶ Global gender policy framework represents a good tool for the positioning of UNICEF's work on gender equality. The experience of UNICEF BiH shows that the Gender Policy can be successfully used to secure substantial funds for core UNICEF programmes.
- ▶ The gender architecture, in which the role of the GFP is co-shared between a national staff member and the deputy representative, shows a positive impact on UNICEF's wider work on gender equality, particularly on external positioning and over-all programme planning on the work on gender.
- ▶ Gender programming is done properly when there is management leadership and support as well as allocation of sufficient time, which is confirmed by the design of the UN Gender Accelerators Framework .
- ▶ In cases where UNICEF BiH invested in long-term planning and implementation of gender-related projects; the project had the strongest impact on achieving transformative change (UPSHIFT, IT Girls).
- ▶ Diligent monitoring and skillful and trained staff are critical for identifying and addressing gender norms and bias in programme implementation, even in cases when original project activities were not planned as gender-transformative.
- ▶ Clear contextualization and localization of gender terminology are important to ensure that governmental partners fully understand the concept and aim of gender-transformative work.



5 Conclusions and lessons learned

Conclusion 1

UNICEF BiH has seen an enhancement in its work on gender during the evaluation timeframe, thanks to references to the GAP and proactive leadership. Despite an initially low level of gender programming, the CO has substantially improved its programming, aided by an action-oriented GPR which led to the development of a national GAP. The CO designed joint interventions, programmes on adolescent girls and secured additional funding for its core programmatic work and achieved substantial gender-responsive results which benefited children and adolescent boys and girls. However, the national GAP is still modest in outlining a gender-transformative vision for the CO and has not yet developed a monitoring system. Overall, the CO is in a good position to embed gender in the next CPD cycle, with a solid GPR, existing entry points, committed leadership and a pool of motivated staff.

Conclusion 2

UNICEF BiH has constantly invested in increasing staff capacities to engage in gender-transformative programming, including through trainings and reflection on gender biases, generation of data and quality assurance. However, most staff feel they need more practical training on gender and the need for more engagement on critical reflections on gender norms was identified. In addition, despite training received, the majority of responsibilities for gender-related

work remains with the overburdened GFP – as the one accountable for the work on gender. Other programme staff still see the issue as cross-cutting and marginal and find it hard to understand and engage with it and do not feel the ownership of the work on gender.

Conclusion 3

The demands placed on staff to demonstrate their work on gender (i.e. gender tagging), as a cross-cutting issue, constitute an additional burden to overstretched staff and has led some to consider working on gender as an imposition from the rules established from the HQ. However, each sector demonstrates initiatives that have the potential to achieve gender-transformative results. These initiatives constitute opportunities to capitalize on to motivate the staff, by showing them that they already work on gender in a meaningful way.

Conclusion 4

UNICEF BiH is not fully capturing the achievement of its gender-responsive and -transformative results across programme sectors. While this gap could partly be related to lack of gender guiding framework in the evaluation period (as GAP was designed in 2023), lack of ownership for gender results within the current underdeveloped/basic M&E system represent the largest challenge. COARs, which represent the key source of qualitative information about the programmes, provide little data on gender results,

and are mainly focused on sex-disaggregation of data. RO represents the main source of gender data, which is needed for gender programming, however this data do not reach the CO programme sections, and mostly stays with GFP who has little influence and participation in sectoral programming on gender.

Conclusion 5

UNICEF BiH has a good track record of forming strong partnerships with NGOs, government and UN agencies, including recent partnerships with women-led and girls-led NGOs. These partnerships have been beneficial for advancing the work on gender equality. Despite this good work, UNICEF's work on gender equality is still not widely recognized, although the willingness to address the gender pushback is a strong sign of the CO's commitment to position itself in the gender equality field.

Conclusion 6

UNICEF BiH has a strong focus on building organizational capacities to work on gender, however the approaches and content were not sufficient to equip the CO with the concrete know how. There is a clear gap in attitudes, beliefs and norms among different staff in the office which influences the organizational culture, but also quality of external programming on gender. Implementation of the PSEA policy is particularly weak by lack of clear internal reporting procedures, which undermines staff trust in the organization.

Conclusion 7

UNICEF BiH has a successful track record in achieving transformative results through gender programming that addresses gender norms and the advancement of girls' well-being and leadership. While the overall impact has been positive, there have also been some negative repercussions. For example, the RS Ministry of Education has refused to acknowledge any gender-transformative initiatives in schools within this entity. Moreover, the personal growth experienced by adolescent girls sometimes triggered negative reactions when there were not wider changes in community gender norms, which girls sometimes struggled with.

Lessons learned:

- ▶ A good quality GPR based on an in-depth gender analysis of existing programmes, coupled with senior management efforts and regional support are key ingredients to localize gender global frameworks into country programmes and catalyse the development of a national GAP. But ultimately, the shape of the national GAP and the extent to which GPR recommendations can be taken forward depend on middle management and programme staff's knowledge, motivation and the time they can allocate to gender integration. This is challenging in small country offices.
- ▶ Hiring young female staff interested in promoting a gender agenda is an important factor to create a critical mass of professionals advancing gender equality in the organization and its programmes. This, however, needs to be accompanied by internal mechanisms enabling team discussions to manage the risks for inter-generational culture clash.
- ▶ For gender equality programming to be successful, the CO needs to think beyond capacity building to ensure accountability mechanisms are in place across the office, including for non-programme staff.
- ▶ To achieve more gender equality results, UNICEF BiH needs to ensure that programme staff have sufficient capacities to plan, monitor and report on gender, better contextualized global gender framework to avoid pushback, and established long-term partnerships which include projects no less than 18 months.
- ▶ Although designed with the intention to support gender-related work in all sectors, the GAP accountability and M&E mechanisms can be experienced as purely compliance-driven processes which can deter some staff from engaging meaningfully in gender integration. This turns their attention away from the concrete opportunities to integrate gender that already exist in their programmes.

6

Recommendations

These recommendations are presented in order of priority and have been derived from the evaluation's findings and conclusions. They were validated with UNICEF BiH during a workshop held online prior to their finalization.


For UNICEF BiH


Recommendation 1 (Conclusion 1): Use the CPD preparation phase to integrate gender in the CPD, prepare a new GAP and strengthen the staff engagement on the gender agenda.


- ▶ In preparation of next CPD, engage each sectoral team to reflect on entry points to embed gender considerations in each Goal Area, using examples presented in this report (section on gender in the five goals) and in the GPR. This could be done by integrating gender in sectoral ToCs. This will help to establish concrete and realistic priorities they could achieve in the next four years, building on existing results and additional opportunities that could be taken forward. The support of the regional gender advisor and relevant regional technical advisors could be sought to facilitate discussions within each team to identify these entry points.

- ▶ These priorities points would need to be made specific in the CPD narrative.
- ▶ They would also support the preparation of the new GAP, to align it with the new CPD in a parallel process (mirroring the process to develop the new Strategic Plan and new GAP concurrently at HQ level). The new GAP would establish focused gender targets in each Goal Area based on the entry points identified. These targets could in turn be included as indicators in staff performance assessments. The new GAP should also establish a longer-term vision for UNICEF's work on gender equality in BiH.

 **Priority:** High

 **Timeframe:** Ongoing, with capacity building structure to be set within the next year

 **Responsible units:** UNICEF BiH management, GFP, with support of RO and HQ

 **Cost implications:** Costs associated with capacity building in terms of staff time; potentially external support

Recommendation 2 (Conclusion 2, 3, 6, 7): Strengthen capacity to increase the understanding of transformative results and gender norms, and operationalize it across sectors and externally by:

- ▶ Continuing to organize regular trainings on gender equality, gender norms and transformative results, preferably in cooperation with the regional gender section. These will contribute to equal understanding, ownership support and motivation to implement the UNICEF gender agenda, in programmes and in the CO. Trainings should be conducted based on a designed CO capacity building long-term plan on gender equality that would outline activities to:
 - ▶ Engage staff on critical reflections on their gender norms, where they differ from the values promoted by UNICEF and how to reconcile them. This could be done through a series of innovative workshops and learning methods, over time, built in an incremental way with the support of gender specialists (see recommendations to HQ below).
 - ▶ The plan should further assess and reflect different levels of staff knowledge and learning needs on gender equality, and plan for targeted capacity building activities accordingly.
 - ▶ Strengthen the technical capacities of staff to concretely integrate gender in their work by supporting them to identify entry points for gender integration; reflecting on simple theories of change demonstrating how working on gender will strengthen their expected results, to concretely demonstrate the benefits of gender integration and increase motivation; provide relevant sectoral tools, as well as mentoring sessions, with the support of regional advisors; encourage regional exchange of best practices and possibly study tours in other UNICEF COs. Capacity building activities should be organized for all staff (programme and non-programme).
- ▶ Reviewing the staff performance assessments to include a specific indicator on gender, related to their work/programme. This is particularly important for the middle management to increase their ownership and accountability for achieving gender results.

- ▶ Capacity building should be organized for IPs, particularly on gender-responsive and -transformative results. This activity would help to ensure that UNICEF achieves the planned gender results, as well as to increase the visibility of UNICEF's work on gender equality. UNICEF BiH could organize these trainings as a part of the current orientation sessions for IPs.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority: High |
| Timeframe: Within the next year |
| Responsible units: UNICEF BiH management |
| Cost implications: Staff time to design the SOP and training module, to take part in the workshops, other implications are neutral/cost-saving |

Recommendation 3 (Conclusion 3, Conclusion 6): Establish a functional national GAP M&E system by:

- ▶ Reviewing the current national GAP to include information about its M&E, including the time-frame, programme staff responsible for reporting, management staff responsible for the review of the implementation and GAP monitoring report template. GAP monitoring reports should also be presented and discussed in all staff platforms to ensure understanding of the work on gender equality across the office.
- ▶ Enhancing COARs to include more data on gender results, including by reporting against gender indicators under each programme outcome. The CO should particularly improve reporting on gender within the cross-sectoral section, to include the information about gender programme results.


| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority: High |
| Timeframe: Within the next year |
| Responsible units: UNICEF BiH management, GFP, programme staff, CRME specialist and planning officer |
| Cost implications: Staff time to review the national GAP, other implications are neutral |


Recommendation 4 (Conclusion 5): Strengthen internal PSEA framework and actively promote zero tolerance to violence against women, particularly sexual harassment by:

- ▶ Reviewing CO SOP on PSEA. The SOP should at minimum include information about how to contact the internal PSEA focal point, the inter-office reporting procedure of an unwanted behaviour and about the case management of the reported behaviour. During the design, the CO would need to ensure that the SOP is victim-centred, meaning that it ensures full protection of the victim(s), including anonymity in reporting, provision of necessary support and protection against potential retaliation. Management should ensure that all staff is aware about the SOP.
- ▶ Organizing regular capacity building activities on PSEA. In addition to existing mandatory onboarding training on PSEA, the CO should organize additional trainings to further enhance staff knowledge, particularly about what constitutes an unwanted behaviour, but also to open the possibility of staff to ask additional questions. These trainings can be organized jointly with trainings on gender equality.
- ▶ Senior management's active promotion of the UN Civil Servants Code of Conduct to stress UNICEF's zero tolerance to violence against women, particularly sexual harassment. These activities could be done periodically, during staff meetings, or staff retreats.
- ▶ Considering the inclusion of a review on gender values in the candidate recruitment process, especially for programme positions. This would enable the CO to understand if future staff members share UNICEF's values of gender to avoid any future challenges.

 **Priority:** High

 **Timeframe:** Within the next year

 **Responsible units:** UNICEF BiH management, GFP, programme staff, M&E officer, CRME specialist and planning officer

 **Cost implications:** Staff time to review the SOP, other implications are neutral

For HQ

In addition to specific recommendations for UNICEF BiH, there are broader recommendations that are particularly relevant to this country case study but require attention at UNICEF HQ level. These relate to elements that are part of the recommendations set out in the main evaluation report (at global level) and will be addressed in the corresponding management response.

Recommendation 5 - Update the approach used to motivate sectoral staff to engage further on gender

Existing online mandatory training on gender and PSEA is not enough to entrench values and capacities to enable effective work on gender. These are seen by some as “imposed from the top”, in a context where they are faced with multiple competing demands, including to comply with the demands of the GAP M&E system, also aimed at ensuring motivation and accountability. And yet, this evaluation showed that every sector has interesting entry points to work on gender, some of them still unrealized opportunities. Hence, another approach to motivating staff would be to “start from where people are at” and build on this incrementally, by engaging them in more discussions to help identify and build on these entry points. “Starting from where people are” would also mean building on their own gender values and enable them to critically examine them.

This would require HQ to use existing evidence to strengthen a narrative that would demonstrate that working on gender is supporting the achievement of sectoral goals, and not an additional burden.

Recommendation 6 - Strengthen the gender technical capacities of regional technical (sectoral) teams

- ▶ Organize mandatory in-depth training, and inclusion of gender in performance assessment.
- ▶ Recruitments should assess gender values and technical capacities of all technical staff.



List of annexes

The annexes below are included in a separate document.

- ▶ **Annex 1:** Evaluation Terms of Reference
- ▶ **Annex 2:** Case study Terms of Reference
- ▶ **Annex 3:** List of persons interviewed and sites visited
- ▶ **Annex 4:** List of documents reviewed for case study
- ▶ **Annex 5:** Methodology: Application of criteria to the evaluation design
- ▶ **Annex 6:** Methodology: Interviews and focus group discussion tools
- ▶ **Annex 7:** Evaluation team composition and biography
- ▶ **Annex 8:** Evaluation matrix
- ▶ **Annex 9:** Evaluation Theory of Change.

Endnotes

- 1 Information on UPSHIFT can be found [here](#).
- 2 More details on the methodology to select case study countries can be found in the Inception Report here: https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/3836/file/Gender_Evaluation_inception_report_.pdf
- 3 Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013 Census, <https://bhas.gov.ba/>
- 4 UNICEF ECARO Gender Unit *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Gender Country Profile, 2021*
- 5 <https://bih.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11076/files/2023/iom-bosnia-and-herzegovina-annual-report-2022.pdf>
- 6 Idem
- 7 Idem
- 8 Key documents of the BiH's normative framework on gender equality include Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023 – 2027).
- 9 <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/BIH>
- 10 The Report contain information on three SDG 5 targets; Target5.1: End all forms of discrimination against women and girls; Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate; and Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. Voluntary Review: Implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023
- 11 <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/BIH>
- 12 Idem
- 13 Gender Equality Index was developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) as a tool to monitor and analyze the state of gender equality in the EU in six domains: Knowledge, Power, Work, health, Time and Money. GEI for BiH was developed for two full domains (Knowledge and Power) and two partial domains Work and Health, mainly due to lack of sex-disaggregated data. Karadjinovic, N. *Moving Towards Gender Equality Index Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo: UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022
- 14 https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2024/FAM_00_2023_TB_1_BS.pdf
- 15 UNICEF ECARO Gender Unit *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Gender Country Profile, 2021*
- 16 Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina *Uticaj rodne podjele porodičnih i kućanskih poslova na profesionalni život zaposlenih žena u Bosni i Hercegovini*. Sarajevo: Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020
- 17 Idem
- 18 Idem
- 19 OSCE, OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Well-being and Safety of Women. Bosnia and Herzegovina Report Results, 2019
- 20 Idem
- 21 Idem
- 22 Roma women, women with disabilities, displaced and refugee women, women in rural areas and single mothers
- 23 Council of Europe *GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022*
- 24 https://bhas.gov.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2024/FAM_00_2023_TB_1_BS.pdf
- 25 Idem
- 26 Idem
- 27 Based on the triangulation of several sources of data, including this Case Study (as well as 4 other case studies, quantitative and qualitative data, a comparative study)
- 28 Drawing on a methodology described in: Mayne, John, 'Contribution Analysis. An approach to exploring cause and effect', ILAC Brief 16, 2008.; Mayne, John, 'Revisiting Contribution Analysis', Canadian Journal of Programme Evaluation, December 2019.
- 29 The process to develop the ToC is described in section 1.2
- 30 The "positive and negative, direct or indirect, primary and secondary, short, medium or long-term change in the lives of children and families produced by an intervention". UNICEF (2023). UNICEF Evaluation of Impact Strategy and Action Framework 2022-2025.
- 31 Thematic analysis involves identifying and analyzing patterns or themes within qualitative data. It is a flexible and adaptable approach that can be used to analyze data from various sources, such as interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses.
- 32 See UNEG Code of Conduct for UN evaluation (2008) and WHO (2016) Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Intervention Research on Violence Against Women and UN Protocol on SEA
- 33 An autonomous committee authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services
- 34 UN Gender Accelerators Programme represent a joined intervention of four UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women) in 3 areas which are important for achieving gender equality in BiH – violence against women and children, women economic empowerment and women political participation.
- 35 UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina *Gender Action Plan 2023 – 2025, 2023*
- 36 With the work on EDC being cross-sectoral, including ECCE
- 37 CO are attributed a 1 or a 0 for most indicators within each indicator depending on whether they meet the indicator or not, while a few indicators can take any value between 0 and 1 (see for example, within the criterion "Culture", the indicator "Percentage of staff who agree with the gender equality statement" is a value between 0 and 1, 0.50 in this case, meaning 50% staff agreed with the gender equality statement). A criteria average is then calculated for each of the 9 criteria. The final score is an average of the 9 criteria averages. For more information, visit [GAP Standards \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

- 38 As noted several times, all country offices, regardless of their size have the same requirements on gender quality, which are becoming very difficult for the small offices to meet.
- 39 UN-SWAP sets the minimum requirement to 15 per cent of total expenditure
- 40 In this case, the contracting process lasted for 2 month, for the maximum duration of the project of 6 months.
- 41 UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office "Gender Annual Results 2023 for Bosnia and Herzegovina"
- 42 Senior management team experienced a number of changes in the evaluation period. Deputy Representative left the role mid 2024 after 2.5 years during which substantial amount of time was spend as Representative a.i. At the time of the evaluation, SMT was comprised of newly appointed Representative (6 weeks in office), Operations Manager (6 months in office), while the position of Deputy Representative just became vacant.
- 43 At the time of data collection, the Deputy Representative post was vacant.
- 44 UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office "Gender Annual Results 2023 for Bosnia and Herzegovina"
- 45 <https://itgirls.ba/o-nama/>
- 46 <https://upshift.ba/o-upshiftu/>
- 47 <https://itgirls.ba/o-nama/>
- 48 UNICEF Country Office Annual Report 2023 Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 49 Blue Phone is a counseling line for children and adolescents which provides free of charge expert support in issue related to mental health or violence. <https://plavitelefon.ba/>
- 50 UNICEF, Country Programme Full Approved Report. January 2024.
- 51 See, for example, Secondary Sanctions, Overcompliance and Human Rights, Note by the Secretary General, prefacing the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, UNGA, September 2023. The report references the UN response to the Syria-Türkiye earthquakes as one example in which overcompliance to secondary sanctions hampers the timely and efficient flow of humanitarian resources.
- 52 KII, 04/24.



For further information, please contact:

UNICEF

Evaluation Office

3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA

 www.unicef.org/evaluation

 [UNICEF-Evaluation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unicef-evaluation)

 twitter.com/UNICEFEval

 [EO youtube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

 evalhelp@unicef.org