



# Stuck in limbo<sup>1</sup>

## - gender, displacement and labor market -

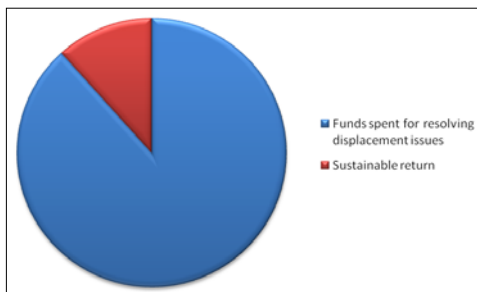
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### GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND DISPLACEMENT

#### 1) Return policies - property return vs. sustainable return

The Government of BiH has focused its policies for resolving displacement issues on reconstruction and return of property. BiH has one of the highest rates of property return. **Almost 99%<sup>6</sup> of property issues have been resolved.** This kind of policy for resolving displacement issues is problematic since it resulted in a lack of initiatives and programs for sustainable return. Those who had decided to return to their homes, due to the lack of incomes fled again to their places of displacement.

Table 1



International organizations and donors which were dealing with displacement issues focused their activities on humanitarian aid particularly after the war. Consequently, many of displaced persons became highly dependent on humanitarian aid. This resulted in erosion of their skills and high unemployment rate for displaced women.

<sup>1</sup> This brief is prepared on the basis of the author's study „Position of displaced women in today's BiH - A study in situational gaps and good practices related to access to employment“ available at: [www.soros.org.ba](http://www.soros.org.ba)

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2010 10th edition available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4ef9c7269.html>

<sup>3</sup> Verheyden, J., 2005

<sup>4</sup> Only available data on estimated cost for vacancy is from 2005, but nevertheless cost of one vacancy today could only be higher due the rise of prices and other factor

#### 2) Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII - addressing gender issues in displacement

The Government of BiH in 2002 adopted the Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII, which was revised in the Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII (hereafter the Revised Strategy) and adopted in 2010. The Revised Strategy was made to re-evaluate policies of the Government for resolving displacement issues. **The Revised Strategy recognizes the problem of unemployment of displaced persons and gender inequality on the labor market.** The problem is that the Revised Strategy fails to provide recommendations for resolving gender issues in regards to access to the labor market. Every recommendation from the Revised Strategy for addressing employment issues is not gender specific. It is very important to make this document more gender sensitive and to include Agency for Gender Equality in creating recommendation for resolving displacement issues.

### DISPLACEMENT AND GENDER IN FIGURES - STRIKING FACTS

#### 1) Collective centers

As aforementioned, the rate of property return is 99%, whilst there are still more than 113 000 displaced persons living in BiH. This number includes only those internally displaced. On the other hand most frightening fact is that **8000 people are still living in collective centers** and that **there are still 88<sup>7</sup> collective centers in BiH.**

Since our goal was to analyze access to labor market we decided to focus our research on those who are most vulnerable in terms of access to incomes, so we conducted interviews in collective center Mihatovići. Mihatovići is placed

### Summary

Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH) has 113 000<sup>2</sup> internally displaced persons (hereafter displaced persons). Opening of one vacancy costs around 2000 Euros<sup>3</sup> according to available statistical data from 2005.<sup>4</sup> By multiplying number of displaced persons with costs of vacancy we get a sum of 226 million Euros. So far government has invested 119 million KM<sup>5</sup> (around 60 million Euros) in resolving displacement issues. Furthermore, only a small proportion of the money invested in sustainable return was for projects related to employment of displaced persons. Employment is recognized as one of the key factors of sustainable return in the Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII of Dayton Peace Agreement (hereafter Revised Strategy). High unemployment rate for displaced persons affects more displaced women than male members of the population.

*We propose partnership between the Government, the NGO sector and international donors as the solution that has the potential to yield the best outcomes and to improve overall position of displaced women in terms of access to labor market.*

<sup>5</sup> Audit Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012

<sup>6</sup> Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII, 2010

<sup>7</sup> UZOPI, 2011 available at: <http://www.uzopibih.com.ba/Publikacije/UZOPI%20-%20KOLEKTIVNI%20CENTRI%202011.pdf>

in northern part of BiH near the city of Tuzla, and it is the largest collective center in BiH. The problem is that this collective center is placed in very rugged terrain. Also people living there are mostly using services of public kitchens in order to feed. This was reported by the woman living in Mihatovići, who is working in kitchen.

The focus of our interviews was on the flaws of initiatives from different actors for resolving employment issues. Since recently there was initiative that aimed to resolve employment issues through program of employing women as hairdressers they mentioned some of the facts that are clearly showing the mistakes in employment policies.

The women who were attending this course identified two major problems:

1. They did not have any practical work;
2. The Bureau for Employment did not recognize their diplomas and certificate which were given to them after successful completing the course.

The fact that the Bureau for Employment (hereafter Bureau) did not recognize certificates and diplomas demonstrates a lack of interest of governmental bodies dealing with employment for resolving employment issues of displaced women. However, also the problem of lack of practical work is even worse since those who finished the course did not venture into opening of hairdresser salon due to the lack of needed skills.

One woman reported that the Bureau did not allow her further access to the Bureau since she had not checked on time. She could not check on time because she gave a birth. According to her answer she needs four hours to get to Bureau since she does not have money for the bus ticket even though bus ticket in one direction costs around 1€ Other story even more shocking was told by the woman whose daughter was not able to enter high school even though she was one of the best pupils in elementary school. Problem is that she cannot afford to pay 100 KM (50€), amount of money needed for tuition fees.

## 2) Gender and displacement

Regarding the gender dimension of displacement we will mention just few most important facts which will clearly show that displaced women are most vulnerable population in term of access to labor market, incomes, education, etc.

**BiH is ranked in the 74<sup>th</sup> place<sup>8</sup> when it comes to gender inequality index.** BiH has the lowest rank compared to other countries in the region. According to the available statistical data on poverty issues in BiH, displaced persons have much higher chance to suffer from poverty than the rest of general population.

There is a significant lack of gender equality in employment in BiH. **According to statistical data from the Labour and Employment Agency of BiH employment rate for men is 41,5% and for women only 22,6%.<sup>9</sup>** Considering that **almost 32%<sup>10</sup> of displaced households are female-headed** households and those displaced persons are suffering from high risk of poverty these data are showing us the magnitude of the problem related to resolving displacement issues.

By comparing data on employment rate for women with data on poverty risk among displaced persons we can conclude the extent of vulnerability of displaced women.

## DISPLACED WOMEN, SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND GOOD PRACTICES

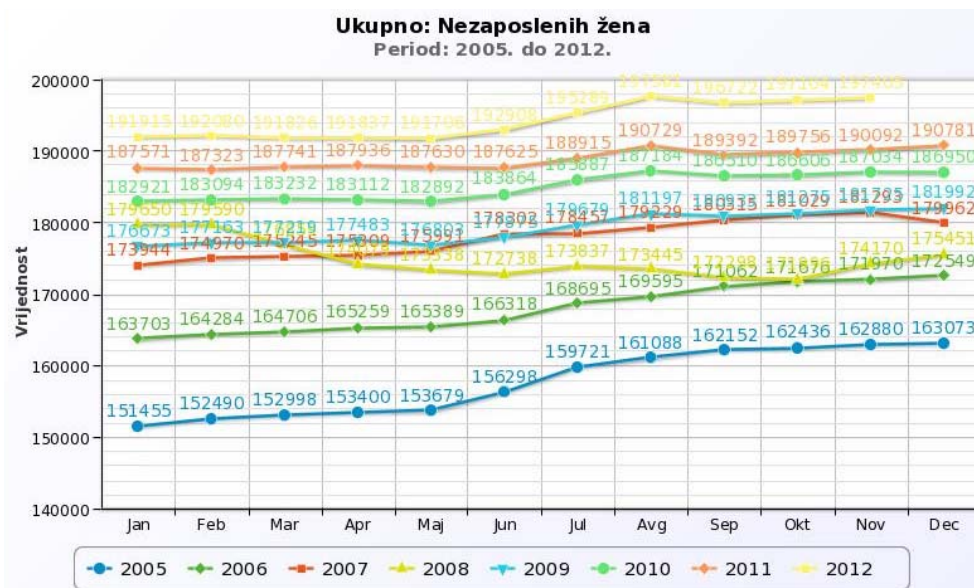
### 1) Self-employment

Displaced persons are mainly employed in the informal economy due to the fact that they are facing difficulties in getting access to formal employment. Displaced women are less prone to venture into self-employment due to their traditional role in their families in BiH. Costs of opening one vacancy are 2000€ which means that for employment of every displaced person which does not include refugees, the Government would need to provide 226.000.000€ Since the Government cannot afford costs of vacancies, it is important to address self-employment of displaced women and to provide them with basic skills and funds that would improve their possibility to venture into self-employment.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP, Gender inequality index and related indicators, 2011 available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2011\\_EN\\_Table4.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table4.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Agency for Statistic, 2012

<sup>10</sup> MHRR, 2005



**Table 2**

Table 2 is showing us the total number of unemployed women in BiH from 2005 to 2012. According to data from the table number of unemployed women has been increasing over the years.

The Government is focused on property return and international donors on relief efforts, so we propose a partnership between the Government, international organizations and local NGOs as the best way to resolve employment issues of displaced women.

## 2) Good practices

We identified two examples of good practices that could be used and implemented by the Government. These two examples are BH Crafts and Catholic Relief Service (hereafter CRS).

BH Crafts was established to help women from Srebrenica who fled to Tuzla in 1995 to get access to employment. They are providing displaced women with raw materials, and after they get the final product they are paying these women for their services. In addition BH Crafts use full scale of services to address employment issues of displaced women. Based on interview with Ms. Lejla Radončić, director of BH Crafts, we identified two most important steps for employment of displaced women:

1. Workshops for improving labor skills of displaced women;
2. Providing psychosocial help to displaced women in order to improve their overall position and by doing so to facilitate their access to the labor market.

CRS is identified as an example of good practice because they are making a socio-economic

card for each family. By doing so they are able to understand real needs of their beneficiaries. Also, they are conducting monitoring of their employment initiatives through constant contacts with employers and employees, which is significantly decreasing possibilities of flaws in their initiatives.

**The problem related to different initiatives for resolving displacement issues lies in the lack of coordination.** This was identified in a report made by the Audit Agency of BiH in regard to implementation of projects related to property return and reconstruction. Lack of coordination was also reported by the Ms. Sanela Imamović, the project manager in CRS. However, these critiques are only related to initiatives of different ministries dealing with displacement. It is necessary to evaluate coordination among the Government initiatives, initiatives from different international and domestic donators and NGOs.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE

1) Since the Government and UNHCR are currently working on establishing Action Teams for implementation of the Revised Strategy, the Government should first change the Revised Strategy and include specific recommendation that would target displaced women. To do this the Government should include the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH in process of changing the Revised Strategy. Under term the Govern-



A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options. The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Ninety fellowships have been granted in three cycles since the starting of the Program. All policy studies are available at [www.osfbih.org.ba](http://www.osfbih.org.ba)



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ment we consider ministries for refugees and IDPs on the state and entities levels.

2) Actions Teams should be focused on establishing coordination between different initiatives by establishing independent body consisted of experts from NGO sector and international organizations dealing with displacement issues that would work on monitoring of different initiatives from governmental bodies. By doing this they would significantly improve results of policies for resolving displacement issues.

3) Also the Government should use data collected by the CRS and based on their socio-economic cards for each family should priorities their policies for resolving issues related to displacement with particular focus on collective centers. Action Teams should try to identify some more examples of organizations that were collecting data from the field.

4) Action Teams should consult with Association BH Crafts and CRS and establish network of NGOs that in the beginning would be financed by the Government and international donors. Network would deal with employment issues of the displaced population and after while when they became financially independent, the Government would use available funds for other programs related to resolving displacement issues.

5) Also it is vital to organize workshops for improving labor skills of displaced women, so the partnership with NGO sector would also include workshops organized by the NGOs. In this way the Government would include full scale of services, since one of their major goals, property return is already almost 99% successfully implemented.

Information gathered by the CRS and successful example of employment of displaced women such as the BH Crafts already exist so the Action Teams should only use what already exist in practice which considerably lowers costs of sustainable return policies.

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