

# PROJECT FACTSHEET

Bosnia and Herzegovina October 2021

## REVITALIZED LOCAL COMMUNITIES REPRESENTING VOICES OF ALL CITIZENS



Although municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have an active approach to improving living conditions of citizens there is a need to change the way citizens are voiced and heard by governments. The project *Strengthening the Role of Local Communities* focuses on empowering Local Communities (Mjesna Zajednica – MZ) to raise citizens' responsiveness, participation, and social inclusion in local development processes.

The MZs are the fundamental local structure of citizens and, as such, the best to articulate the needs of citizens and channel citizen participation in the municipal decision-making processes. Once traditionally strong, the MZs have weakened since 1990s and now operate without clearly defined functions, assignments and budgeting. Furthermore, the citizens themselves have become discouraged and lethargic due to poverty, limited reform progress, and scarce participatory approaches at the local level. Thus causing an even greater need to revitalize the work of Local Communities and increase community-led initiatives to cater for specific citizens' needs, especially those of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

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### NEW VISION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN BIH

The project focuses on developing and realizing a new vision of MZs in BiH – one that would enable empowerment and inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized groups into the economic, social and political mainstream. The project also strengthens the capacities of MZs to engage in local decision-making and represent citizens' needs in the creation of municipal plans and budgets. It also seeks to connect MZs with civil society organizations for co-creation of community-led initiatives and to serve as a democratic space for civil initiatives.

In its second phase, through direct fieldwork and activities the project includes 200 Local Communities, from 41 local governments.

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### BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Local Communities become a place where citizens can directly voice out their concerns, immerse in constructive dialogue, and be involved in the local development. Improved MZs, as grassroots community groups, represent a foundation for bottom-up approach in making changes in local governance. The MZs strive to include and represent women, youth and other marginalized groups and, with commitment of citizens and authorities, create participatory and more accountable local governance in BiH. The long-term impact of the project will be seen in more responsive and engaged citizens, effective and citizen-centred municipal service delivery, and ultimately increased general trust in public institutions.

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## MZs SHOW PROMISING RESULTS AND DEDICATION

From 2001 the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been engaged in various projects to foster sustainable municipal development and to enhance community-based participation. Support to MZs has shown visible results in raising awareness among MZ stakeholders about their democratic rights, increased capacities to engage in decision-making and significant improvement in communication between MZs and municipal authorities. The project Strengthening the Role of Local Communities (Mjesne Zajednice – MZs) is a continuation on these good foundations and previous SDC interventions.

The project represents a joint initiative of the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden. The project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in BiH and co-financed by the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden and participating municipalities. The total value of the second project phase is 10.3 million CHF. It is implemented in partnership with the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, the Ministry of Justice of the Federation of BiH, the Ministry for Administration and Local Self-Government of Republic of Srpska, the Government of Brcko District and both Associations of Municipalities and Cities.



## THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

### NAME:

Strengthening the Role of Local Communities (Mjesna Zajednica – MZ) in BiH

### DOMAIN:

Local Governance and Municipal Services

### THEME:

Governance, Institutions and Decentralization

### LAND/REGION:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

### PARTNER:

United Nations Development Program (UNDP), as Implementing Agency  
Swedish Government / Sida, the co-donor agency

### STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND

#### INFORMATION:

The MZs possess immense potential to articulate the needs of citizens and ensure their involvement in local decision making processes. However, the MZs operate without clearly defined functions, assignments and budgeting. At the same time, the citizens are discouraged and lethargic to seek inclusion and exercise their democratic rights.

#### PROJECT TARGET:

The project targets Local Communities to strengthen their capacities in order for them to successfully represent the interests of citizens to local governments. The project seeks to develop new, more inclusive visions of MZs and regulatory framework as a foundation for more participatory and accountable local governance in BiH. The MZs are to be established as democratic spaces for civil initiatives.

#### TARGET GROUP:

200 Local Communities in 41 local governments, country-wide

#### SDC BUDGET:

4,100,000 CHF (Phase 1)  
5,155,000 CHF (Phase 2)

#### DURATION:

01.07.2015 – 28.02.2020 (Phase 1)  
01.05.2020 – 31.03.2024 (Phase 2)

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

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