

# PROJECT FACTSHEET

CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROJECT

Bosnia and Herzegovina – January 2023



## PROACTIVE CITIZENS STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

Despite all the efforts invested in civil society development in Bosnia and Herzegovina since late 1990s, the civic space in BiH has remained narrow. Most of the civil society organisations (CSOs) lack legitimacy in the eyes of the people, their relations with constituencies and citizens are poor and their financial viability weak.

The Civil Society Support Project “PRAGG – Proactive Citizens” aims to contribute to reshaping of the civic space in BiH by supporting CSOs in creating opportunities for citizen participation in democratic processes. The special focus is on participation of socially excluded groups. Unlike most of other initiatives, it does not support CSOs in a role of service providers but rather in representing a voice of citizens in advocating for reforms, gender equity, human rights, and social inclusion.

The project builds upon the results of previous interventions and works in synergy with other projects in the Swiss local governance portfolio. The project also uses experiences and lessons learnt of other regional initiatives in the field of civil society development and creates synergies with these.

### ENGAGE, COLLABORATE, ADVOCATE, PARTICIPATE

The project supports CSOs in increasing their engagement with citizens to articulate citizens’ most urgent concerns. The emphasis is particularly on concerns of women, youth and the socially excluded. The strategic collaboration between CSOs is also in the focus through support in forming alliances and demanding reforms and accountability from the governments. Influencing public policy and decision-making by CSOs through formal consultation mechanisms is being reinforced. Finally, the authorities and CSOs are supported in joint actions for improving environment for civil society development in BiH.

### REAL PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF CITIZENS ARE ADDRESSED

There are no predefined topics that the project is to deal with. By using the participatory bottom-up approach, the real needs and concerns of the citizens and CSOs in the target municipalities are identified. The project supports CSOs in providing opportunities to citizens to actively participate in democratic processes, in setting priorities and in decision-making. Empowered citizens will therefore shape societal changes.

The capacities of CSO to mobilise citizens are being strengthened with special outreach efforts towards socially excluded groups. The strategic alliances between CSOs are being supported in order to influence and demand reforms from the governments and institutions.

The impact of the project is expected to be evidenced in expanded overall space for civil society in BiH and improved overall civil society performance.

## CITIZENS AT THE CENTRE OF SWISS SUPPORT

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been engaged for over 20 years in numerous projects to foster sustainable development and to enhance citizens participation in decision making. The Swiss Cooperation Programme 2021-2024 places special focus on the participation of citizens.

However, this is the first project that considers civil society organizations the key actors in this process. Previously, the CSOs were just one of many stakeholders and thus CSOs' potentials to engage in democratic processes have not been addressed.



## PROJECT IN BRIEF

### NAME:

Civil Society Support in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
"PRAGG - Proactive Citizens"

### DOMAIN:

Local governance and municipal services

### LAND/REGION:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

### PARTNERS:

Consortium Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and Niras, implementing partners

Local partners: CCI- Centers of Civic Initiatives and Institute for Youth Development KULT

### STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The citizens engagement is of crucial importance in democratic processes, in shaping democratic change and demanding reforms from the governments. However, the citizens' engagement in public life in BiH is very limited. Civil society organisations can be a unique link between citizens and the governments, helping to make the voices of citizens being heard and encouraging people's active participation in the democratic process. However, most of civil society organisations in BiH are detached from their constituencies, acting more as service providers than as policy influencing advocates.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

The project is focused on citizens, in particular socially excluded groups, and their more active participation in public affairs, their influence on policy making, and contribution to democratic reforms and social change in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through their engagement with CSOs.

### TARGET GROUP:

The primary target groups include citizens - especially women, youth, and socially excluded groups - CSOs, the local, cantonal, entity and state authorities and governments.

### COSTS:

5,670,000 CHF (Phase 1)

**DURATION:** June 2022 – May 2027 (Phase 1)

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