

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**



EMPOWERING BOSNIAN WOMEN:  
ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN WOMEN'S NGOs

by

SANJA RISTIC, M.A.

A thesis submitted to  
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Date 7 March, 2005  
© 2005, Sanja Ristic



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

0-494-06775-6

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*ISBN:*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

*ISBN:*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

  
**Canada**

## **Abstract**

In recent years, the concept of social capital has become a part of the mainstream debates in development field. Often defined as trust, norms, or networks which facilitate collective action, the concept has been used to explain why certain groups within a society advance faster than others with relatively similar characteristics. Using the concept of social capital, this thesis explores the effectiveness of Bosnian women's NGOs in empowering the local women. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess strength of the social capital within Bosnian women's NGOs and its role in empowering the women. It argues that, despite certain limitations, social capital in women's NGOs is an important avenue for empowerment of the women.

## Acknowledgements

I am very happy to have a chance here to thank all people who supported me during my work on this thesis. First, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Professor David Long and to my advisor Professor Laura Macdonald for their patient supervision and encouragement. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Michael Rosberg who convinced me that my research will be a smooth sailing as long as I remembered that: “Left is Port” and “Right is Starboard” or, maybe, it was the other way around. I am also grateful to Professor Cristina Rojas and Professor Yiagadeesen Samy who offered their comments on my research proposal. I would also like to thank very warmly all the women in Bosnia and Herzegovina who participated in my study and had patience to answer all my questions: thanks for making me feel at home. Lastly, I thank my parents who supported and encouraged me during my research as they have done my entire life.

*To my parents and my brother for their love and support*

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Background	
2 The Main Characteristics of the Women's NGOs	4
3 Definition and Operationalization of the Concept of Social Capital	6
4 Human Capital in Women's NGOs	7
5 Limitations of the NGO Sector	8
6 Method	9
7 Limitations of the Study	12
8 Conclusion	12
9 Outline of the Essay	13
<b>CHAPTER 1: Social Capital Theory</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 Introduction	15
1.2 The Concept of Social Capital	15
1.3 Modifying the Concept of Social Capital	22
1.3.1 Relational Social Capital	23
1.3.2 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital	29
1.4 Role of Social Capital in Reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina	31
1.5 Gender Sensitive Social Capital Approach	34
1.6 Conclusion	39
<b>CHAPTER 2: Status of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<b>41</b>
2.1 Introduction	41
2.2 Legal Status of Women	42
2.3 Political Status of Women	44
2.4 Social Status of Women	53
2.4.1 Violence against Women	59
2.5 Economic Status of Women	63
2.6 Conclusion	67
<b>CHAPTER 3: NGO Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1 Introduction	71
3.2 Development of the NGO Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina	72
3.3 NGOs: Civil Society or Service Providers?	75
3.4 NGO Relations with Government and Civil Society: A New Feudalism	82
3.5 The Top-down Approach: Civilizing Bosnian Civil Society	85
3.6 A Bottom-up Approach: A Leap of Faith	93
3.7 Conclusion	97

CHAPTER 4: Evaluating the Role of Social Capital in Women’s NGOs in Empowerment of BiH Women	99
4.1 Introduction	99
4.2 Social Capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina	100
4.3 Social Capital in Bosnian Women’s NGOs	107
4.3.1 Relational Social Capital in Bosnian Women’s NGOs	107
4.3.2 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital in Bosnian Women’s NGOs	114
4.3.2.1 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital Between NGOs and NGO Networks	115
4.3.2.2 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital with Government and Government Officials	118
4.3.2.3 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital with Local Business Communities	121
4.4 Social Capital in the NGOs and Empowerment of Bosnian Women	122
4.4.1 Political Empowerment of Bosnian Women	125
4.4.2 Economic Empowerment of Bosnian Women	127
4.4.3 Social Empowerment of Bosnian Women	130
4.4.4 Collective Empowerment of Bosnian Women	132
4.5 Conclusion	134
CONCLUSION	136
1 Women’s NGOs, Social Capital and Empowerment	137
2 Limitations of NGO Empowerment	138
3 Implications for Social Capital Literature	139
APPENDIX 1: Abbreviations	141
APPENDIX 2: Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina	142
APPENDIX 3: NGO Chart	143
APPENDIX 4: List of Interviews	145
APPENDIX 5: Interview Questions	146
APPENDIX 6: Questionnaire Responses	148
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	155

## INTRODUCTION

### 1 Background

The 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) destroyed not only its meagre economy and its state institutions but also shook its social fabric, which held together multiethnic communities. Divisions along ethnic lines are one of the major obstacles to reconstruction of the country and to reconciliation among its citizens. In a way, the Dayton Agreement of 1995 consolidated these divisions by giving legal status to two entities: Republika Srpska (RS) with its Serb majority and the Federation of BiH (FBiH) with a predominantly Bosniak (Muslim) and Croat populace. In addition, FBiH was further divided into ten cantons, reflecting the ethnic divisions between Bosniaks and Croats.

With regards to economic conditions, BiH remains below the pre-war levels of production.<sup>1</sup> Since the war's end, there has been some increase in economic activity triggered largely by the international community's efforts to promote peace building and reconstruction of the country. However, economic and humanitarian aid is drying up at the same time as the country's economic growth is in decline. Economic growth has slowed down since 2000 (the real growth rate in 2002 was 2.3 percent), the country's GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power parity, in 2002 was \$1,900.<sup>2</sup> In addition, war and nationalism have reinforced traditional values, which are largely responsible for the fact that many women, especially in rural areas, remain confined to the private sphere, underrepresented in the political and economic fields.

---

<sup>1</sup> One should bear in mind that before the war BiH was one of the poorest republics of former Yugoslavia, and was heavily dependant on transfer payments from the Federal Government.

<sup>2</sup> The World Factbook, [CIA website], accessed 15 March 2004: available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bk.html>

According to some authors, the spread of neoliberal ideas in the postsocialist period strengthened the notion that the state should not regulate and intervene in the private sphere.<sup>3</sup> Among other things, this deregulation of the private sphere allows for the “exclusion of gender relations in the family from public scrutiny.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, issues such as domestic violence against women and women’s economic dependence fell outside of the public concern, except for some NGOs which are dealing with those issues. Recently, the BiH government has started addressing some of the issues related to gender inequalities. Yet, as this essay argues, a more aggressive state intervention is warranted in order to close the existing gender gap.

Although women outnumber men, their share in the labour market is only 34 percent.<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising then that feminization of poverty has taken place, especially among households headed by women.<sup>6</sup> The situation is similar in the political field. Namely, “the female share in the cantonal assemblies is 21.9%; in the Federation BiH (FBiH) House of Representatives 21.4%; in the Republika Srpska (RS) People’s Assembly 16.9%; and in the BiH House of Representatives 14.3%.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, partly because of the war, domestic violence against women has become a major problem in the country. As research by one NGO estimates, “43% of all BiH women are exposed to psychological violence, 33% have been exposed to physical violence, and 24% to sexual

---

<sup>3</sup> Nanette Funk, “Feminist Critiques of Liberalism: Can They Travel East?: Their Relevance in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 3 (2004): 713.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 711.

<sup>5</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals 2003* (Sarajevo, 2003), 42.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 85.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals 2003* (Sarajevo, 2003), 47.

violence.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a successful reconstruction and development effort, which includes elimination of poverty and strengthening of civil society, must be gender sensitive.

In addition to post-war reconstruction, BiH citizens are experiencing a transition from a socialist (self-management) economy to capitalism. As one of the implications of the transition, structural adjustment policies have been introduced at request of the World Bank and IMF. It has been noted that women often pay the price of these adjustments.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the reduction in government spending on social programs tends to increase women’s workload, since they are seen as alternative providers of health and childcare, further worsening their position in the society. In addition, the privatization process largely reinforced gender inequalities, since it allowed directors of previously state-owned enterprises who were predominantly men to become owners of the companies. As an illustration of male control over privatization, it has been shown that “within the banking sector 90 percent of privatization funds are managed by men.”<sup>10</sup>

In this setting, women’s organizations have started emerging for the first time in BiH. In part, this essay will examine whether participation in women’s NGOs can help women in BiH become more resilient to relocation caused by the ongoing transition and help them improve their inferior status in the society. The main findings presented in this essay are the result of my field research, carried out from May to September 2004.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Violence Against Women: NGO Research, June 2000*. Quoted in Global Rights, *Shadow Report: On the Implementation of CEDAW and Women’s Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo, 2004): 89.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore H. Cohn, *Global Political Economy: Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2002): 399.

<sup>10</sup> Global Rights, *Shadow Report: On the Implementation of CEDAW and Women’s Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo, 2004): 74.

## 2 The Main Characteristics of the Women's NGOs

For my study, I selected 15 women's NGOs, ensuring that both rural and urban NGOs were included and that all three major ethnic groups are included. More specifically, ten of them are either rural or small to medium town NGOs while the rest are from the five larger Bosnian cities: Banja Luka, Zenica, Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bijeljina.<sup>11</sup>

With the exception of *Buducnost [Future]* from Modrica, all of the NGOs in the first category have a large membership.<sup>12</sup> Some of these NGOs, both from rural areas and small towns, select a few basic activities that can be performed by the majority of their members. For instance, the rural NGOs are involved in handcraft or milk production. The women in towns usually chose a number of more general goals such as female empowerment, poverty reduction, and eradication of ethnic intolerance and hope to receive the funding for their realization.

Unlike the NGOs in the first category, the NGOs from the large cities, including the one from Modrica, have a small but professional staff working in more specialized areas such as legal reform, democratization, trafficking of women, and violence against women. Many of these NGOs provide training and workshops for various groups and institutions. These NGOs sometimes also have a large number of volunteers who support them. However, the core group of women working in these NGOs consists of highly educated lawyers, economists and professors. They are more capable of implementing successfully various projects of the international donors, since they have higher education

---

<sup>11</sup> The map of Bosnia and Herzegovina is available in the Appendix 2.

<sup>12</sup> The main characteristics of the NGOs are summarized in the Appendix 3.

and are located in the major urban centers where the majority of the projects gets implemented. Consequently, they receive more funding than the NGOs in the first group.

Furthermore, the women who work in these urban NGOs often get paid for their work while the women in the first group are largely volunteers. Therefore, the women who work in urban NGOs are more likely to experience financial empowerment directly through their NGO membership while the women in the first group get financially empowered more indirectly, partly by utilizing their social capital. Situated in the major urban areas with relatively good infrastructure and with access to computers and the internet, these urban NGOs are in a better position to generate, maintain and institutionalize a more diverse pool of social capital. Yet, as it will be argued later in this chapter, even the women in the first group manage to create social capital and get empowered by utilizing it.

It is important to note that in this study I defined women's NGOs as the organizations that are led and dominated by female members. In fact, the majority of the interviewed women asserted that their respective NGOs also have some male members and are not concerned only with women's issues. Therefore, it seemed more prudent to classify the NGOs as "women's" when their leaders and majority of their members are female rather than just to do so when all their members are women or when they deal exclusively with the women's issues. For that reason, even the two organizations, namely *Bospo* and *Buducnost*, whose focus is on building civil society and democratization rather than on women's issues are rightly included in the study. In fact, they added a certain degree of diversity to my study, reflecting the multitude of functions that women in BiH perform through their NGOs.

The main question this essay seeks to answer is the following: Does the social capital formed in women's NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina help advance the economic, political, and social status of Bosnian women? The answer to this question is twofold. The first part of the answer requires an inquiry into women's NGOs and involves determining presence and nature of social capital in those organizations. The second part involves an analysis of the ways in which this social capital affects the emancipation of the BiH women. The initial hypothesis of the research is that by participating in NGO activities, women create social capital, which enables them to take a more active role in the economic and political realms as well as to improve their social status.

### **3 Definition and Operationalization of the Concept of Social Capital**

In recent years, social capital has become a very popular subject for debate, particularly between sociologists, political scientists, and economists. As discussions on the subject intensified, its definitions kept changing and expanding. Consequently, there are many different definitions of social capital. According to Robert Putnam, social capital "refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."<sup>13</sup> And, as it is often claimed, such norms, networks, and values can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating collective action. I will expand on this definition by supplementing collective actions with individual advancements. In other words, I will consider whether social capital empowers women to undertake both collective and individual activities. Since a thorough discussion of social capital takes place in the following chapter, just a brief definition of

---

<sup>13</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone Book, 2000): 19.

the concept of social capital used in this study will be provided here. Simply, social capital consists of ties and networks formed and maintained within women's NGOs, between various women's NGOs, and between the NGOs and various public and private organizations and institutions. This social capital is available to women in those NGOs to be used as a means for their social, political, or economic advancement.

There are three main ways in which social capital within the women's NGOs empower women. First, through regular meetings, the women get to know each other and they build networks and trust conducive to their cooperation and mutual support. Second, close ties that get developed among the NGO members serve as channels of information, benefiting the female members. Third, some NGOs develop information networks with other private or public organizations, increasing the benefits for their members.

#### **4 Human Capital in Women's NGOs**

In addition to generating social capital, the NGO sector is also important for the advancement of women since it facilitates the creation of human capital. As explained by James S. Coleman, "human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways."<sup>14</sup> For instance, many NGOs provide their female members with important organizational and technical skills that allow them to look for new employment in political and economic fields. As a result, women often experience career advancement. Moreover, women's NGOs often centre their activities on a few collectively defined issues. As a result of the discussions and critical thinking facilitated by NGOs, women generate comprehensive knowledge about the nature of those problems, becoming competent to offer their expertise to an interested

---

<sup>14</sup> James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," In *Knowledge and Social Capital: Foundations and Applications*, ed. Eric L. Lesser (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000): 22.

third party. In other words, the collective social and information networks allow the women in NGOs to increase the amount of human capital they possess.

Furthermore, socialization in NGOs allows a group of women to formulate a narrow and clear agenda that can be easily advanced in the political realm. Consequently, women become more likely to organize collective action, lobby their government, and use other means to further their interests. In this case, as a result of the increased human capital (i.e. increased organizational and agenda setting skills) women are able to make better use of the existing stock of social capital.

### **5 Limitations of the NGO sector**

In spite of its potential, some authors have raised criticisms of the Bosnian NGO sector and its value for empowerment of Bosnians. Some concerns that have been raised include the internal weaknesses of NGOs, lack of a clear agenda, and various external constraints such as a lack of funding that prevent women from adequately creating and utilizing the existing social capital.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in some cases, certain activities undertaken by women's NGOs may conform to a more traditional role for women, reinforcing the existing gender stereotypes.<sup>16</sup> In that case, social capital can have negative effects on the status of women, reinforcing their inferior position in society. Lastly, as some suggest, social capital pushes aside the question of redistribution of power and wealth, perpetuating inequalities that prevent women from attaining equality.<sup>17</sup> For example, if women are excluded from decision making with regards to communal

---

<sup>15</sup> See Bill Sterland, *Serving the Community: An Assessment of Civil Society in Rural BiH* (Sarajevo: Dadaos, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, "Women's Organization in the Rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina," In *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, eds. Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002): 75.

<sup>17</sup> Maxine Molineaux, "Gender and the Silences of Social Capital: Lessons from Latin America," *Development and Change* 33, no. 2 (2002): 14.

property, social capital created among women will have limited impact unless it is used to challenge the discriminatory power structure within the community. Notwithstanding these concerns, I argue that social capital created in the women's NGOs does empower the women. Moreover, I offer some suggestions on how to enhance the social capital and maximize its benefits for the women.

## **6 Method**

First of all, the essay surveys a large body of literature that has been written on social capital. The main findings will be presented in the first chapter, with a special attention being paid to some gender aspects of the theory. Next, the social capital theory will be applied to Bosnian context. To this end, the essay will provide an overview of the status of Bosnian women as well as historical background of the women's organizations in Bosnia. It will examine the broader processes and structures which affect the functioning of NGOs in Bosnia as well as continuation of gender inequalities.

More specifically, in this essay, social capital theory will be tested in relation to the functioning of the women's NGOs in Bosnia. The essay examines organizational and structural constraints (if there are any) which prevent the NGOs from generating social capital. To this end, I conducted interviews with the leaders and prominent members of fifteen women's NGOs, inquiring about problems that are affecting activities of their organizations.

I used a variety of sources to identify the women's NGOs in BiH. In terms of rural NGOs, a list of NGOs provided in a study on civil society in rural BiH was helpful, although some of the contacts seemed outdated.<sup>18</sup> I also used personal contacts, my own social capital, with the leaders of three NGOs to assure participation of their NGOs.

---

<sup>18</sup> See Sterland.

Furthermore, I made inquiries with the locals about the existence of women's NGOs in their communities. Identifying women's NGOs in an urban area was very easy, since they are featured in many of the publications on Bosnian NGOs that I have previously read. Yet, persuading them to participate in the study required some persistence on my behalf. In the end, all the NGOs agreed to participate. Once we met, all the women proved to be friendly and cooperative. Women in villages and small towns were exceptionally welcoming and willing to share their experiences, since they never participated in a study. I personally conducted all the interviews and distributed the questionnaires. Both research instruments were reviewed and approved by the Carleton Ethics Committee. While I recorded some of the interviews, I was taking notes of the rest of them, since I found that the interviewing process was more relaxed when I did not use the recorder. The interviews lasted a maximum of sixty minutes and were conducted in the offices of the respective NGOs.

The main aim of this study is to survey the level of social capital in women's NGOs in BiH. More precisely, the essay thoroughly examines whether there is social capital created in the form of networks between different women's NGOs and between those NGOs and other public and private organizations such as municipal governments and the business sector. This information was also gathered through personal interviews with the leaders of the NGOs as well as through a questionnaire distributed to NGO members.

Then, the essay examines whether there is a relationship between the presence of social capital within the NGOs and the social, political and economical advancement of women. The main source of data will be the survey that I developed and distributed to

members of the NGOs and to a control group of women who are not the members of women's NGOs. I used personal contacts to gain access to the women in the control group. The selected women have various backgrounds and different levels of education in order to resemble the diversity found in women's NGOs.

In total, women in the NGO group filled in thirty six questionnaires. I personally explained the answering method to all the women and offered them assistance during the process. However, one woman was inconsistent in her answering method and provided some confusing answers. Consequently, it was very difficult to analyse the data in her questionnaire, so I decided to discard it from my study. There were eighteen women in the control group who responded to my survey. Only one woman refused to participate, explaining that she does not like surveys.

The survey made it possible to generate quantitative data on the levels of social capital within those NGOs, measuring socialization and trust among the women. The same questionnaire contained a number of female empowerment indicators, which allowed for a measurement of empowerment of the women in the NGOs relative to women who are not members of the women's NGOs. Here, empowerment is defined as the increased likelihood of women's participation in political and economic activities and their resistance to unfavourable power relations in their families. Women's change of career (or intended change) during their membership in the NGOs is taken as indicator of their economic advancement. While acknowledging that many factors influence women's decision to look for a new job or to change their careers, I have made an assumption that women in an NGO groups with their stock of social capital are more empowered and, therefore, more likely to enter the workforce. With regards to political empowerment, the

data collected sheds the light on willingness of women in NGOs to lobbying government officials and participate in demonstrations. In addition, the survey also provides data on the willingness of women to participate in the local elections, held in October 2004.

### **7 Limitations of the Study**

Two major limitations of the study are related to its scope. First, in terms of gathering data on social capital among NGO members, it would have been ideal if a majority of its members participated in the survey. While I was able to achieve that in a number of NGOs with small membership, I was unable to do the same when it came to NGOs that have a large membership. Yet, since I combined the data from the questionnaires and the data gathered through personal interviews with the NGO members, I was able to obtain a fuller understanding of social capital within those NGOs. Moreover, my observations of the NGOs also enhanced my understanding, especially since I visited some of them more than once. Second, while my research aimed to cover as much area of the country as possible, my study did not cover the south-western part of the country. The main reasons for both these limitations were a very limited budget and time constraints.

### **8 Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, overall, the study proved to be valuable for gaining insights in a few areas. It re-examined the status of women in the Bosnian society as well as the main characteristics of its NGO sector. Moreover, since the major studies on women's NGOs are focused exclusively on urban NGOs, I included in my study a number of rural and small town NGOs in order to fill this research gap. Very early on in the research, differences between women's NGOs became apparent. Regardless of their

geographic location or ethnic content, rural NGOs proved to have much more in common with each other and with small town NGOs than with urban NGOs in their area. With one exception of NGO *Buducnost* from Modrica, all NGOs conformed to this pattern.

Consequently, while this study is not representative of all the country, it establishes some general patterns that should be explored further.

There was another gap in the literature that this research aimed to fill.

Specifically, a major study on social capital in BiH done by the World Bank, while representative of the country, did not provide gender segregated data. For that reason, it was impossible to make any conclusions about the state of women's social capital in the country. Hopefully, my study will initiate more research into this neglected area. On a more micro level, the study looks at relationships and dynamics within the NGOs, linking them to empowerment of women. This area of research on internal NGO relations has also been identified as being under-explored.<sup>19</sup> Finally, despite its modest scope, the study provides some insight into the nature of social capital, aiming to build on and enrich the existing literature.

## **9 Outline of the Essay**

This essay is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study. It reviews social capital literature and establishes definition of social capital which is used in this study in order to answer the main research question: Does social capital in women's NGOs empower Bosnian women? The chapter also outlines my own understanding of social capital which was drawn from my research and which later guided my classification and analysis of the data. More specifically, it

---

<sup>19</sup> Dorothea Hilhorst, *The Real World of NGO's: Discourses, Diversity and Development* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2003): 147.

explains my own classification of social capital into two categories: relational and organizational (institutional) social capital. Lastly, the chapter introduces some critiques of social capital and explains why the concept is important despite its limitations. The second and the third chapter are introduced in order to contextualize social capital within the Bosnian framework. The second chapter analyzes social, political, and economic status of Bosnian women and indicates that there is much space for improving it through women's utilization of social capital. The third chapter examines the nature of the NGO sector in Bosnia, focusing more closely on the women's NGOs. It argues that the broader framework is not very conducive to creation of social capital between the NGOs and the rest of the society. Yet, more positively, the chapter also suggests that considerable progress has been made in encouraging their cooperation. The fourth chapter provides empirical data on social capital in women's NGOs and evaluates its impact on empowerment of women. It argues that social capital is an important source of empowerment for the women in the NGOs, giving some concrete examples from my field research. However, it also indicates some limitations and weaknesses of the social capital of the NGOs. In addition, it suggests that broader improvements of the status of women are taking place, which are affecting both women in NGOs and those outside. This is understandable, since social capital is only one of many factors that are linked to women's empowerment.

## Chapter 1

### Social Capital Theory

#### 1.1 Introduction

In recent years, a large body of literature has been written on social capital. This chapter will not attempt to present all of those writing; rather, it will present the most influential authors and summarize their main arguments with regards to nature and classification of social capital. The chapter will then present some theoretical findings of my research in order to contribute to general understanding of social capital. It will introduce two categories of social capital: relational and organizational (institutional). Lastly, the chapter will discuss some limitations of the social capital. The chapter will argue that despite its limitations social capital approach is very useful, since it can explain how women who are marginalized in BiH society can utilize social capital available to them to in their NGOs to improve their political, social, and economic status.

#### 1.2 The Concept of Social Capital

The term social capital seems to be “independently invented at least six times over the twentieth century,” yet it has been brought to the mainstream of intellectual agenda by sociologist James S. Coleman in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the work of Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s stressed the importance of social capital with the intention of “linking an analysis of the cultural to that of the economics.”<sup>21</sup> One of the probably best known definitions of social capital is the one given by Robert Putnam. According to Putnam, social capital “refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the

---

<sup>20</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Schuller, Stephen Baron, and John Fields, “Social Capital: A Review and Critique,” In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Baron, John Field, and Tom Schuller (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.”<sup>22</sup> And, as it is often claimed, such norms, networks, and values can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating collective actions.

As Christiaan Grootaert observes “there is, however, no consensus about which aspects of interaction and organization merit the label of social capital, nor in fact about the validity of the term *capital* to describe this.”<sup>23</sup> For instance, two prominent economists Arrow and Solow have argued strongly against the use of the social capital concept, arguing that social capital does not fit the classical economic definition of capital.<sup>24</sup> Yet if capital is defined as “a surplus value and represents an investment with expected results” then the term social capital is appropriate.<sup>25</sup> In this case, social capital is defined as “investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, “three possible returns can be identified: economic, political, and social.”<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, my study will measure the economic, political, and social returns on investment in the social capital that women in Bosnia make as members of their NGOs. The study classifies these returns as forms of the women’s empowerment.

Since it is hard to measure social capital, it is not easy to determine “empirically its contribution to economic growth and development.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, social capital is often perceived as a fuzzy concept, according to some economists, too vague for econometric analyses. Some social scientists, on their part, criticize the concept for

---

<sup>22</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Christiaan Grootaert, “Social Capital: The Missing Link,” World Bank, 1998, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Schuller, Baron, and Fields, 25, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Nan Lin, “Building a Network Theory of Social Capital,” In *Social Capital: Theory and Research*, eds. Nan Lin, Karen Cook, and Ronald S. Burt, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Grootaert, 4.

commodifying social relations, since it defines the quality of social relations in terms of capital. As some writers believe, “the idea of seeing social capital alongside physical and human capital as inputs in the production of goods or utility is merely to extend the fetishism of commodities beyond its traditional realm.”<sup>29</sup>

Yet, the value of the social capital approaches lies in the fact that they attempt to “link the economic, social, and political spheres,” emphasizing the fact that “social relationships affect economic outcomes and are affected by them.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, social capital approaches tend to incorporate multidisciplinary knowledge, which could lead to more holistic development practices that would take into account socio-political context of specific countries. As some authors explain, what matters is the “heuristic potential of social capital—its capacity to open up issues rather than to provide definite answers...”<sup>31</sup>

While “social capital has both an individual and a collective aspect,” it also shows characteristics of both a private and a public good.<sup>32</sup> That is, while individuals within a group benefit from networks and values of the group, as they do when they consume private goods, they cannot completely exclude the wider community from deriving benefits from social capital, non-excludability being a major characteristic of public goods. In this sense, the women’s NGOs in BiH act as “rain makers,” providing collective good for their communities.<sup>33</sup> In fact, women’s NGOs do not even want to

---

<sup>29</sup> Ben Fine, and Francis Green, “Economics, Social Capital, and the Colonization of the Social Sciences,” In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Baron, Field, and Schuller, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Grootaert, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Schuller, Baron, and Fields, “Social Capital: A Review and Critique,” In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Baron, Field, and Schuller, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle, “Introduction: Generating Social Capital,” In *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle (New York: Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 14.

exclude non-members from benefiting from some of its social capital outcomes. For example, the women in the NGO *Zene Doboja* [*Women of Doboja*] have organized seminars about cervical cancer for the members of their NGO. They have mentioned proudly that the members of their organization have spread the information about the disease to all the women they knew, using other social networks they possessed, most notably neighbourhood links.<sup>34\*</sup> As a result, the knowledge the members of the NGO gained through their social capital avenues have become a public good of their local community. It is impossible to measure all this “leakage” of information, knowledge, and other benefits. Therefore, the benefits of the information disseminated through women’s NGOs can never be fully calculated.

Because of its public good nature, however, there is often underinvestment in social capital, which makes the whole community worse off. That is, social capital involves cost to its producers and benefits to others who are not sharing the costs of its production, the so-called free riders. Namely, while few women invest a great deal of their time in the NGO activities, many women who benefit from the NGO activities are “free riders” who are unwilling to invest their time or resources in the NGOs. Consequently, there is less social capital than there could be if these women became actively involved. Moreover, the women who invest in NGOs’ social capital usually do not receive financial return for their investment, although they do get moral satisfaction from helping the local women and they also benefit from the general improvements in the status of women, resulting from their actions. However, relying, for the most part, on voluntary work, women’s groups have few resources to invest in maintaining and

---

<sup>34</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Doboja, 8 Jun 2004.

\* All interviews and documents in the local languages were translated to English by author.

increasing their pool of social capital. Moreover, when the cost of participating in NGOs becomes too burdensome, women often stop investing their time in NGO activities, making everyone worse off. In other words, social capital in women's NGOs is as subject to underinvestment as are other public goods. The difference is that the women in NGOs tolerate the free riding because they believe that, once empowered and informed, those free riders would be getting actively involved in supporting their cause.

It has been claimed that the strength of social capital depends, among other factors, on the extent to which a certain group is capable of excluding non-members from benefiting from the social capital created by the group.<sup>35</sup> This is so because an exclusive group can more efficiently enforce its norms and prevent "free riding." In other words, the group would be able to internalize the external benefits of its social capital that serves as a public good. Moreover, some authors claim that closed structures are more successful in creating trustworthiness, which is considered as one of the main features of social capital.<sup>36</sup> Since women's NGOs are often relatively open structures and unwilling to ensure the exclusion of non-members which is necessary to internalize the benefits of NGO activities and to prevent free riding, the argument advanced by Coleman would suggest that the NGOs are unlikely to generate social capital. However, my study refutes that conclusion.

As indicated above, there are many different types of social capital. According to Putnam, trust-based networks between individuals are important because they facilitate development of reciprocity norms. This reciprocity and trustworthiness are important for development, because they make transactions possible, facilitating trade and development

---

<sup>35</sup> Coleman, 24.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 28.

of credit markets. Reciprocity injects certainty in social relations, providing both political and economical stability. These norms can be *specific*, where an individual acts in certain way towards a specific actor because he or she expects that the other person will reciprocate. In accordance with *generalized* reciprocity, however, an individual acts in certain ways towards anyone, expecting the same behaviour from others.<sup>37</sup>

James Coleman identifies three forms of social capital: obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms. Social capital that consists of obligations and expectations is very similar to Putnam's notion of *specific* reciprocity. Namely, person A will do something for person B, knowing that the person B will feel obligated to do the same, or similar thing, for the person A in the future.<sup>38</sup> The second type of social capital involves the use of social relations as a means to acquiring information. In the end, acquired information can serve as a basis for individual or collective action.<sup>39</sup> The third type of social capital consists of norms which facilitate some actions while inhibiting others.<sup>40</sup> In Putnam's terms, these norms create a form of *generalized* reciprocity, through which the whole group is bonded together by the means of generalized obligations and expectations.

While there are many different categorizations, the literature most commonly refers to existence of three kinds of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding social capital refers to various horizontal intra-community or intra-group ties that hold a community or social group together with a sense of common purpose. Bridging social capital represents vertical inter-communal or inter-group networks

---

<sup>37</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Coleman, 23.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

created between diverse groups and associations. Linking social capital refers to linkages that exist between various groups and decision-making bodies of the state.

A more detailed distinction of social capital is given in a World Bank study. The study distinguishes between a micro and a macro level of social capital.

At the micro level, bonding social capital brings together people with similar characteristics, such as relatives, friends, and members of the same ethnic or social group, whereas bridging social capital links people with different backgrounds but comparable political power. At the macro level, linking social capital consists of the vertical ties existing between simple citizens and influential persons in public institutions.<sup>41</sup>

Many authors claim that all three types of social capital are important for maintaining the internal cohesiveness of society. For instance, Peter Evans suggests that there is a “synergy” between different levels of social networks. That is, although they sometimes play complementary roles to each other, both private and public actors are embedded in these social capital networks.<sup>42</sup> While acknowledging that all these networks are important, Evans gives preference to the linking social capital over other types of social capital, since it crosses the public-private divide and allows for synergies to be created between the different spheres. Unlike Evans, Robert Putnam emphasises the importance of bonding social capital. In his view, vertical social relations erode the strength of social capital, creating isolated individuals who choose to go “bowling alone.” In contrast, this essay will advance the view that all types of social capital are equally important to women, since they provide them with different kinds of support mechanisms and resources necessary for their advancement.

---

<sup>41</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study 1*, The World Bank, 2002 [website], 129, accessed 19 May 2004, available from <http://www.worldbank.org/participation/BosnizMainReport.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Peter Evans, “Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy,” *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 1130.

### **1.3 Modifying the Concept of Social Capital**

This part of the chapter introduces the main findings of the nature of social capital in women's NGOs. Before I elaborate on my research findings, it is important to classify social capital further. Namely, the data in this essay is classified in two categories of social capital: relational and organizational (institutional). In short, relational social capital encompasses all the values, norms, and ties between people, in this study between women in NGOs, which influence the effectiveness of a social group or an organization. This connectedness, among other things, allows for information sharing among the women, facilitates their collective actions, and serves as a social and psychological safety net for women. Organizational (institutional) social capital refers to various connections that an organization or an institution has with other private or public organizations (institutions) or with important individuals.

One of the main reasons for introduction of the new concepts is to enhance the understanding of some of the main features of social capital present in the women's NGOs. Furthermore, these concepts could serve as model for a more comprehensive classification of different types of social capital. The new classifications enhance our understanding of social capital, demonstrating its complexities while reducing its fuzziness. The kind of classification proposed here relies on previous work on social capital, aiming to encompass all major types of social capital. What can be seen as more controversial is the fact that the two categories of social capital presented here are not in a hierarchical relation to each other; since, this study finds that they are both equally important. Lastly, a less important reason for the introduction of the concepts is the fact that they allow me to better organize my research findings.

### 1.3.1 Relational Social Capital

As indicated above, this type of social capital consists of personal relations that women in an NGO build among each other as well as with other private and public persons they come in contact with. Although this type of social capital appears to be similar to bonding social capital, the two categories cannot be equated. As mentioned above, bonding social capital consists of ties between “people with similar characteristics, such as relatives, friends, and members of the same ethnic or social group.”<sup>43</sup>

We could treat women as a specific social group and, hence, use bonding social capital as a measure of cohesiveness of their respective organizations. However, such a treatment of women would deny differences among them, failing to reflect the real situation in those NGOs. In reality, NGOs are composed of women who have number of overlapping identities. For example, some of those women belong to the same ethnic group, some have the same level of education, and some have close familial or friendship ties. Very often, however, relationships that are formed among the women cross those identity divides. This means that we cannot simply use bonding social capital as the measure of cohesiveness of the women’s NGOs.

Similarly, bridging social capital, which according to one definition “links people with different backgrounds but comparable political power,” is inadequate to be used as a sole measure of social capital in women’s NGOs.<sup>44</sup> First, as stated above, bonding social capital is also present in women’s NGOs. In fact, my research has shown that both bonding and bridging social capital are often present at the same time within NGOs.

---

<sup>43</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*, 129.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

However, the two kinds of social capital may not be evenly distributed among the women. In NGO *Uzok*, for example, less educated women have developed strong bonding ties while the more educated women possess more of the bridging ties. Second, while it can be said that the women in an NGO have similar political power vis-à-vis men, it is wrong to assume that all the women in the NGO have same or even similar political power. On the contrary, women's power is determined by various factors such as ethnic background, age, education, and social status.

In addition to encompassing bonding and bridging social capital, relational social capital includes linking social capital, if the latter is defined as “vertical ties that exist between ordinary citizens and influential persons in public institutions.”<sup>45</sup> That is, the relational social capital encompasses all three types of social capital (i.e. bonding, bridging, and linking) as long as its existence depends on personal relationship between people, regardless of their background and political power. That is, only institutionalized ties that exist between an NGO as a collective body and private or public individuals and organizations belong to the second category: organizational (institutional) social capital. This type of social capital will be explained in more detail later on in this chapter. It is, however, important to note that it is not always easy to make a distinction between the two types of social capital, since very often they exist side by side or one type of social capital transforms into the other.

The key features of relational social capital are, first, that this type of social capital largely depends on the subjective perceptions of its holders. That is to say, each woman for herself decides how much she can trust or rely on other woman. In some

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

cases, a woman will not trust the other women in the NGO, no matter how trustworthy they might be.

The second feature of relational social capital is difficulty of measurement. Largely, this difficulty is a result of subjective nature of relational social capital. For instance, in order to measure level of relational social capital in an NGO, one would have to measure attitudes such as trust and sense of duty of every single woman in the NGO towards every other member of the NGO. While this could be done—although the measure, probably, would never been perfect due to the (human) nature of the things we were measuring—comparisons across time and space would be even harder to do. Furthermore, since this type of social capital “takes different colours according to different contexts,” aggregating the findings from different countries or from “different levels of social units” according to some universal measures can invoke the charges of incommensurability.<sup>46</sup>

The third feature of relational social capital complicates further the measurement efforts. Namely, relational social capital is in a constant state of flux. Since human perceptions and human behaviour are rarely constant, it is wrong to assume that human relations are constant. On the contrary, as time passes, perceptions of many women change. The women get to know each other better; they build closer relationships or decide to end their friendships. In other words, their relationships are constantly being renegotiated and altered. Therefore, the level of relational social capital of those women also changes with time.

---

<sup>46</sup> Schuller, Baron, and Fields, 28.

The fourth feature of relational social capital is the fact that this form of social capital depends to a large extent on whether or not people use or practice it. Unlike physical capital and organizational (institutional) social capital, relational social capital accumulates when it is being used and depreciates when it is not being used. For example, it is well known that norms that are not practiced cease to be considered as norms. Similarly, trust ceases to be the “glue” that keeps women together when the women stop relying on trust in their dealings with each other.

Fifth, like physical capital, but unlike organizational (institutional) social capital, relational social capital is characterized by a very uneven distribution among the women in an NGO. For many different reasons, some women are more capable of forging close relationships with other women. As a result, very often within an NGO there emerge one or more subgroups, containing higher level of relational social capital compared to the rest of the women. The women in these subgroups are capable of achieving much more than the rest of the NGO members, gaining more from their membership. Some of these subgroups are more open for inclusion of other NGO members, while others are less so.

For instance, within two NGOs *Forum Zena- Sabina Janakovic* [*Forum of Women- Sabina Jankovic*] and *Plamen* [*Flame*], two subgroups of women emerged, both of which started small credit financing programs. The women in the subgroup of the former NGO lend money only to the members of their subgroup, while the women in the subgroup of the latter NGO lend money even to the NGO women who are outside of their subgroup.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, since their trust is more widely distributed within the NGO, women in *Plamen* have a larger stock of relational social capital than the women in *Forum Zena-*

---

<sup>47</sup> Hasna Vates, interview by author, Olovo, 5 August 2004.; Senada Dzankic, interview by author, Zavidovici, 10 September, 2004.

*Sabina Janakovic*. In fact, within *Plamen* relational social capital seems to be expanding, so that increasing number of women is forming tighter personal relationships, based on trust and solidarity. In addition, since the members of *Plamen* can have access to this credit even if they are not tightly connected to the women from the credit group, this form of their social capital seem to be institutionalized, based on generalized norm of trust.

Sixth, since women form tight relationships with many people outside of their NGOs, it is hard to exclude non-members of an NGO from benefiting from relational social capital formed within the NGO. To illustrate this, I will examine two benefits that a large percentage of women in the NGOs claimed as the main gains of their membership. Namely, 68.6 percent of women indicated that “acquiring certain skills and knowledge” was one of the main benefits of their NGO membership, while 45.7 held that “receiving various types of information” was their main benefit.<sup>48\*</sup> Undoubtedly, many forms of knowledge and information can and do get easily disseminated from women in an NGO to other women in their communities: their neighbours, their friends, and their family members. The most common ones are knowledge and information about various women’s rights and reproductive health. As mentioned previously, the literature on social capital treats this “leakage” of benefits as a negative occurrence related to public good nature of social capital. The expected reaction on part of the “losers” of the benefits is to try to internalize all the benefits and minimize the “leakage.” Accordingly, members of NGOs should be trying to exclude non-members, the so-called free riders, from enjoying the benefits of the knowledge and information that the NGO women gathered themselves.

---

<sup>48</sup> See Table 9 in Appendix 6.

\* All tables with results of my survey are available in the Appendix 6.

Yet, when the women's NGOs are in question, just opposite is the case. That is, women are encouraging this type of "free riding," promoting dissemination of knowledge, from more educated and informed women to women who have less knowledge and limited access to those kinds of information.

Truth be told, there are certain types of information that are often selfishly guarded by the members of a particular NGO. The information that is most commonly guarded relates to sources of funding and project competitions. Yet, even in this field there exists some cooperation among women of certain NGOs. Especially, that is the case with the NGOs that are situated in different regions of the country or the ones that have very different set of goals and activities, since these NGOs are rarely competing for same funds and projects.

This brings up another point. Namely, while women in NGOs transfer benefits of some forms of knowledge and information to women outside their NGOs, the reverse is also true. That is to say, women in an NGO can benefit greatly from personal ties that one of its members have with individuals outside their NGO. To give just one example, I will describe relational capital shared by leaders of two NGOs from my study: Ruza Vlajkovic, the leader of *Forum Zena Tesnja* [*Forum of Women from Tesanj*], and Hasna Vatres, the leader of *Forum Zena- Sabina Janakovic*. Their NGOs are located in towns which are far away from each other. Therefore, they do not feel that they are in competition with each other. Consequently, the two women regularly share the experiences related to the activities of their respective NGOs.

However, there is little interaction between other members of their respective NGOs, which indicates that the level of organizational (institutional) social capital shared

by the two NGOs is very low. That means that the current cooperation between the NGOs relies entirely on the relation between the two women, the leaders of NGOs. If either woman leaves her organization, all gains of their relational capital would have been lost to the members of their organizations. It is in the interest of the NGOs to try to institutionalize the relational social capital of their leaders, so that more women would form connections with each other and that their cooperation would not end with the end of the relationship of their leaders. The interest of leaders is to preserve the close relationship the two of them have and to keep it alive even if they leave their NGOs. However, the interests of the NGOs and the leaders are not necessarily incompatible, because relational social capital and organizational (institutional) social capital are not conflicting. In other words, the leaders can continue to nurture their close personal relationship and, at the same time, encourage a greater cooperation between other members of their NGOs.

### **1.3.2 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital**

As it was defined above, this type of social capital consists of institutionalized ties between an NGO as a collective body and private or public individuals and organizations. In contrast to relational social capital, organizational (institutional) social capital does not depend on the subjective perceptions of its holders. Rather, its existence is objectively verifiable. For instance, whether an NGO is a part of a network, whether it has linkages to government institutions, or whether it mobilizes outside consultants are all factual matters that can be answered in the same way by all the NGO members, since they are not the matters of their perceptions. In other words, this type of social capital is independent from particular members of NGOs. Consequently, even if we changed the

whole membership of an organization, the organizational social capital within that NGO would remain intact. In contrast, the change of membership would dramatically change relational dynamics between the NGO members, completely altering the nature and stock of its relational social capital. This leads to a conclusion that organizational social capital is more stable than relational social capital. In addition, since it makes an organization less dependent on the will of its individual members, increase of organizational social capital is likely to have a positive impact on sustainability of the particular organizations.

As a result of its objective nature, organizational social capital is far easier to measure than is the relational social capital. The measurability of this form of social capital partially comes from the fact that its level and existence do not depend on the extent to which the people in an organization are using it, as is the case with relational social capital. Its objective nature allows for creation of more universal indicators for measurement, facilitating aggregate measurement across time and space.

Another common feature of organizational (institutional) social capital is the possibility of excluding non-members from accessing it. For instance, women's NGOs that belong to a network of NGOs often receive various forms of seminars and free training for its members, provided by the network coordinators. Non-members are denied the access to these venues of social capital.

Lastly, organizational (institutional) social capital is far more evenly distributed among the women in an NGO than is relational social capital. In fact, by the virtue of being a NGO member, a woman obtains a claim to this kind of social capital. However, although the organizational social capital is supposed to be accessible to all members of an organization, we find that this is not always the case and that not all the women in

NGOs take advantage of this kind of social capital. In fact, the access to organizational (institutional) social capital is sometimes controlled by a small group of women who are in the leadership positions of the NGOs. To use the previous example, there is usually one group of women in the NGOs who regularly attends the seminars and receives the training provided by the NGO network coordinators.

#### **1.4 Role of Social Capital in Reconstruction of BiH**

Regardless of its type, social capital is inherently neither good nor bad. It could be said that social capital is what people make of it. It can be mobilized in order to achieve socially desirable aims. It can be inclusive of people with various backgrounds and different levels of political power. But it can also serve the interests of an exclusive group, while having harmful effects for wider society. This form of social capital is often called perverse social capital, which is often illustrated by describing the social capital of mafia groups. In other words, use of social capital towards positive or negative ends requires making normative choices.

As some authors suggest, social capital can have an important role to play in poverty reduction, post-war reconstruction, peace-building, and sustainable development.<sup>49</sup> Naturally, then, fostering social capital in BiH would help the country to recover from the current social, economical, and political crises. In fact, it has been suggested that the “lack of trust—a central element of social cohesion, or social capital—is one of the main constraints to recovery and development, as Bosnia-Herzegovina undergoes the double transition from war to peace and from a centrally planned to a

---

<sup>49</sup> See Nat Colletta, and Michelle Cullen, eds., *Violent Conflict and the Transformation of Social Capital: Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Somalia* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2000);, Paul Collier, *Social Capital and Poverty* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1998).

market economy.”<sup>50</sup> Yet, as Elissa Helms notes, these reconstruction and peace building efforts often reinforce the traditional view of women as mothers and nurturers, perpetuating gender stereotypes.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, it is important to do a gender analysis of social capital nurtured through reconstruction efforts.

In terms of state building, some hope that social capital of Bosnian civil society will “act as a ‘societal glue’ and as a counterbalance to the market and the state” and eventually lead to democratization of the country.<sup>52</sup> This link between social capital of civil associations and democratic government was strongly advanced by Robert Putnam. In brief, Putnam claimed that northern parts of Italy were more democratic than the southern regions due to their stronger associational life.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, fostering civil associations in Bosnia, including women’s associations, would facilitate transition to democracy, making all citizens better off. More recently, Robert Mark Silverman has argued for furthering of a progressive model for mobilizing social capital, which, among other things, emphasizes “democratic decision-making at the grassroots level.”<sup>54</sup> In addition to claims that social capital in citizens’ associations leads to democracy, recently some authors have argued that only democratic associations generate social capital. As Marc Hooghe argues, “... not all voluntary associations will actually contribute to the

---

<sup>50</sup> World Bank. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*, iii.

<sup>51</sup> Elissa Helms, “Women as Agents of Ethnic Reconciliation?: Women’s NGOs and International Intervention in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 26, no. 1 (2003): 19.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Smillie, *Service Delivery or Civil Society?: Non Governmental Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (CARE Canada, 1996), 16.

<sup>53</sup> Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>54</sup> Robert Mark Silverman, “Conclusion: A Progressive Model,” In *Community-based Organizations: The Intersection of Social Capital and Local Context in Contemporary Urban Society*, ed. Robert Mark Silverman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 192.

formation of social capital, but only those associations in which a democratic culture is present.”<sup>55</sup>

However, to reduce social capital only to its democratic forms means to limit significantly definition of the concept. My study shows that while many NGOs are not democratic in all respects, they still generate social capital. In addition, social capital is not always “democracy friendly” and some undemocratic forms of social capital lead to the empowerment of women in Bosnian NGOs. On the other hand, some democratic NGOs may be less favourable for creation of women’s social capital and empowerment of women if they are dominated and controlled by men. As many feminists more generally argue, the “ungendered nature” of democratization approaches is problematic because it obscures and marginalizes women’s issues.<sup>56</sup>

Maxine Molyneux further illuminates the political dimension of social capital; namely, decisions on what kinds of capital should be fostered and among which social groups are of a political nature.<sup>57</sup> Sometimes, fostering different types of social capital can result in conflict between different social capital initiatives. In BiH, for example, the international community aims at fostering bridging social capital between different ethnic groups in order to promote a greater interethnic cooperation. However, the major nationalist parties are more eager to promote bonding social capital, securing the strong base for their parties within their respective, ethnically defined, constituencies. Clearly, the aims of the two sides are conflicting. Similarly, fostering social capital of women is a

---

<sup>55</sup> Marc Hooghe, “Voluntary Associations and Democratic Attitudes: Value Congruence as a Causal Mechanism,” In *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle (New York: Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 106.

<sup>56</sup> Georgina Waylen, “Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics,” *World Politics* 46 (April 1994): 334.

<sup>57</sup> Maxine Molyneux, “Gender and the Silences of Social Capital: Lessons from Latin America,” *Development and Change* 33, no. 2 (2002): 176.

political decision which is unlikely to be made by the Bosnian, male dominated government, unless there is a strong pressure on the government officials.

Promotion of linking social capital between state and society can have negative consequences for the rest of society if government uses precious resources to strengthen its clientelist networks formed with a narrow elite group. Therefore, when examining social capital it is important to ask who profits from it and for what purposes it gets used. In terms of gender, social capital can be used to perpetuate or exacerbate the existing gender inequalities. But, it can also be used to advance gender equality objectives.

A social capital approach concerned with achieving equitable development has to assure that the social capital it promotes is not exclusionary. In fact, it has to assure that the poor and marginalized social groups, including women, have a greater access to linking social capital, since they often experience lack of other forms of capital while having limited access to the market and the government institutions.

### **1.5 Gender Sensitive Social Capital Approach**

As a rule, social capital is unevenly distributed and excludes certain groups. As the World Bank study on social capital shows, social capital networks in BiH often exclude the poor, marginalized minorities such as Roma people, and internally displaced persons.<sup>58</sup> In addition, women in BiH are often excluded from many social capital networks. Therefore, my study is focused on women's NGOs with their pool of social capital available to the Bosnian women. However, as my research shows, even this pool of social capital is not equally available to all women. Namely, while women's NGOs are an important source of social capital for poor women, women belonging to minority groups, and internally displaced women, in my research I have not been able to identify

---

<sup>58</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*.

any women's NGOs led and dominated by Roma women. Since then, I have been informed that there is one such NGO recently formed in Zavidovici. Yet, it is an exception rather than a regular occurrence. While they are occasionally beneficiaries of women's NGOs, Roma women have a very limited access to social capital of women's NGOs.

In terms of gender, Maxine Molyneux gives one of the most elaborate critiques of social capital. She argues that: "social capital approaches have been remarkably reticent about gender."<sup>59</sup> According to Molyneux, women are disadvantaged in social capital approaches in two major ways. First, they are largely "excluded from networks that bring economic advantage" (e.g. business and politics). Second, female networks usually rely on voluntarism and perpetuate undervaluation of female labour.<sup>60</sup>

Since women in BiH are underrepresented in the political sphere, they lack access to social capital sources that bring economic benefits. In addition, since the state is not providing adequate health service and social security, women's unpaid work has increased. As a result, it has been noted that the women are less able to participate in certain collective actions.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, a gender sensitive social capital approach should inquire whether the major collective activities planned by various actors in Bosnia are inclusive of both genders.

Promotion of social capital that empowers women and enables them to undertake both collective and individual actions can help Bosnian women to cope with political and economic hardships and make them become more resilient to relocation caused by the ongoing transition to market economy. For example, greater involvement of women in

---

<sup>59</sup> Molyneux, 159.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>61</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*, 99.

micro-credit schemes can help the women gain more influence in decision making in their households (and in society at large) and make them active participants in market economy.

Yet, use of social capital and creation of these new women's roles can lead to increased domestic violence against the women. As Aminur Rahman explains, social capital among Bangladeshi women was used as social collateral for the famous Grameen Bank.<sup>62</sup> According to Rahman, "the exercise of social collateral contribute[d] to the escalation of violence in the study village."<sup>63</sup> The violence escalated because the "women's control over their loans...undermines men's authority in the household..."<sup>64</sup> Although utilization of women's social capital can in some cases lead to negative consequences such as increased violence, it is still a positive process for empowerment of the women. In the long run, women will be able to improve their economic position, gaining a certain level of independence.

Yet, we should not overlook the negative consequences of the emancipation that the women can experience in the short run. For instance, in BiH, war forced some women to accept new roles, which made them independent from their absent husbands. When men returned home from the war, some women refused to give up their new roles and became victims of domestic violence. The important thing is to provide the women with protection from domestic violence until the men in society accept their new roles. Just because these women and women in Bangladesh were exposed to increased violence does not mean that they should give up their social capital or their quest for

---

<sup>62</sup> Aminur Rahman, "Micro-credit Initiatives for Equitable and Sustainable Development: Who Pays?" *World Development* 27, no. 1 (1999): 72.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

emancipation. Rather, they should use the created social capital networks as a support system for the women who became victims of the violence. Social capital within women's NGOs is important for providing support for these women. In addition, the NGOs such as *Medica* and *Buducnost* which provide their members and beneficiaries with access to a large stock of organizational social capital with medical institutions, the police, and legal institutions are increasing the chances of women's success when taking on some new roles and identities.

To facilitate these new roles for BiH women, new sources of social capital have to be created. However, social capital approaches often favour the existing "traditional" sources of social capital, which usually exclude women. As Molyneux warns, when the social capital approach ends in a policy that provides support for "traditional" networks, it can deepen social exclusion of women, who are often absent from those networks.<sup>65</sup> In addition to supporting "traditional" networks, social capital approaches often promote "traditional" families, in which men are sole decision-makers. Social capital literature often "treats family as a prime locus of social capital," failing to recognize "gendered divisions of labor and power within it."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, some of the writers like James Coleman consider disintegration of the family as a main source of erosion of social capital.<sup>67</sup> What is concerning about this is that these writers often oppose women's entry into paid work, since it is seen as the main reason for family disintegration. For example, as Molyneux indicates, Francis Fukuyama blames market-based childcare for the disintegration of social capital.<sup>68</sup> The main policy conclusion that one may draw from

---

<sup>65</sup> Molyneux, 182.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>67</sup> Schuller, Baron, and Fields, 8.

<sup>68</sup> Molyneux, 184.

these writings is that, for the sake of social capital, women should remain in their homes playing traditional roles of child rearing and housekeeping, which often leaves them entirely dependent on men.

Instead of sacrificing women for the sake of social capital, a gender-sensitive social capital approach evaluates social capital in terms of its role in female empowerment and emancipation. A gender sensitive approach simply means application of gender analysis to the study of social capital and examining the gender dimensions of social context in which the social capital appears. The approach should consider whether or not women are included in the social capital networks; it should determine what positive and negative effects the specific social capital networks have on gender equality; and, it should determine under what general circumstances will the examined social capital advance status of women. That is, evaluation of a certain pool of social capital takes account of whether or not women are among the “owners” of the social capital. It also considers positive and negative effects certain types of social capital have on gender equality. Lastly, this gender analysis of social capital will make it possible to provide recommendations on how social capital can be fostered among women, and how women can become included in wider social capital networks.

One of the main aims of this research is to determine the usefulness of the social capital approach in evaluating the female empowerment potential of the women’s NGOs in BiH. More generally, I argue that a gender analysis is necessary to adequately evaluate costs and benefits of social capital. First, some social capital endowed groups exclude women. Second, the creation of certain social capital can have negative impact on status

of women. Third, the presence of certain conditions might be necessary to ensure that social capital would advance status of women.

Undoubtedly, the kind of social capital proposed above is contextual and case specific. For that reason, my research on social capital focuses on women's non-governmental organizations in BiH, which function within relatively similar economic and socio-political framework. Since the focus of this research is on the NGOs that are led and dominated by female members, the women are the owners of the social capital that is being examined in this study. The main analysis of the research aims to determine whether the social capital owned by women in NGOs improves their social, political, and economic status.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter mainly discussed theoretical arguments about social capital. It offered a general introduction about the nature of the social capital as well as some classifications of the concept, including my own distinction between relational and organizational (institutional) social capital. The main argument of the chapter was that women can use social capital in their NGOs for their social, political, and economic empowerment. However, as the chapter indicated, those NGOs have certain limitations. Consequently, empowerment of women in those NGOs is limited, as well.

As it has been suggested in this chapter, social capital is context specific. Consequently, before we go on to analyze the main findings on social capital in Bosnian women's NGOs we have to examine the context in which this social capital exists. Therefore in the next two chapters we will look at the place that Bosnian women have in their society and the nature of NGO sector in which the social capital is formed. While

the following two chapters will provide us with a contextual setting of the study, the fourth chapter presents the main findings on the social capital in women's NGOs and examines its relation to women's empowerment.

## Chapter 2

### Status of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the last seventy years, status of BiH women has changed considerably. As a result of their contribution in the Second World War, the women were granted right to vote. In addition, the Communist rule that lasted until the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia introduced series of measures, aiming to increase the role of women in the society. While gender inequality persisted in many ways, under the Communist rule women started entering politics and work force.

However, after Yugoslavia fell apart and the war broke out in Bosnia in spring of 1992, women generally retreated from the public space in order to take care of their children and their parents. The nationalist propaganda of all three major ethnic groups in BiH, Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks (Muslims), insisted that the primary role of women is to give birth to and to care for the children of their respective nations. During the war, many women were unable to control their lives and to protect themselves and became victims of ethnic cleansing, violence, and rape.<sup>69</sup> In the aftermath of the war, women remained largely excluded from public life and even now continue to experience discrimination in political, social, and economic spheres.

This chapter describes in detail political, social, and economic status of the Bosnian women, indicating to what extent the women are excluded from networks and institutions that could facilitate their empowerment. Findings in this chapter not only serve to contextualize the social capital in BiH but they also serve as the basis for

---

<sup>69</sup> See Julie A. Mertus, *War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (Bloomfield, Connecticut CT: Kumarian Press, 2000).

definition of empowerment given in this study. That is, these findings are employed in the study to determine to what extent social capital in women's NGOs empowers the women to engage more actively in political, social, and economic lives of their communities and change their status.

## 2.2 Legal Status of Women

The foundation for legal protection of human rights and non-discrimination in BiH was laid down during the peace process in 1995, which included drafting of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH in Dayton on 21 November, signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. The Framework Agreement had given to the BiH citizens their first constitution, which forbade "discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."<sup>70</sup> In addition, Annex 6 of the Framework Agreement was drafted, dealing exclusively with human rights issues. The so-called Agreement on Human Rights offered to the citizens of BiH "the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms," without discrimination.<sup>71</sup>

To assure these rights, the country pledged to incorporate in its constitution the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the 1950 European Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the protocols thereto as well as the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with its 1966 and 1989 Optional Protocols and the 1966 International Covenant on

---

<sup>70</sup> OHR, "Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina," In *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Essential Texts*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Sarajevo, 2000), 42.

<sup>71</sup> OHR, "Agreement on Human Rights," *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Essential Texts*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (October, 2000), 47.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>72</sup> As one author observed, “this provided the citizens of Bosnia with more human rights protections than those of any other state in the world.”<sup>73</sup>

More specifically, with respect to women’s human rights, the Constitution stipulated BiH’s adherence to 1979 the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As a part of the Human Rights Agreement, a special Commission on Human Rights was established to oversee fulfillment of human rights provisions drafted in the agreement. A number of institutions became involved in ensuring compliance with these Constitutional pledges as well as in eliminating gender inequality. To name a few, the BiH Ministry for human rights and refugees includes the Agency for Gender Equality, the Parliament of BiH has a Gender Equality Committee, and both state entities, the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska, have Gender Centers working on a number of gender related issues.

However, in spite of these conventions and institutions, gender inequalities persist in BiH, preventing the BiH women from equal enjoyment of human rights guaranteed to them in the Constitution. In an effort to address the issue, and in response to the pressure coming from various NGOs and the international community, in 2003, the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Gender Equality Law (“Zakon o Ravnopravnosti Spolova u Bosni i Hercegovini”), recognizing that women are still discriminated against and that previous legal measures had no real impact on the situation on the ground.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> OHR, “Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 92.

<sup>73</sup> David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton* (London ; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 1999), 92.

<sup>74</sup> BiH, *Obrazloženje i Razlozi za Donosenje Zakona o Ravnopravnosti Spolova u BiH [Explanations and Reasons for Adopting Gender Equality Law in BiH]*, Gender Centar Federacije BiH [website], accessed 19 May 2004, available from <http://www.fgenderc.com.ba/txt/rezultati/zakonravnop.doc>.

However, the implementation of the Law and its harmonization with the existing legal framework is a very burdensome task and a significant reduction of gender inequalities in the country will hardly be achieved in the near future. That is in part due to the lack of a strong political will to put the country's scarce resources towards achieving greater gender equality. Through raising awareness about inequality, many of the women NGOs active in BiH help generate the political will necessary for initiating major improvements of women's status in the society. In addition, some of those NGOs such as *Buducnost* from Modrica are directly involved in harmonization of current legal system with the Gender Equality Law.<sup>75</sup>

### 2.3 Political Status of Women

The lack of political will to address the existing gender inequality and various women's issues can, partially, be explained by a very low participation of women in BiH's political life. In turn, the low participation of women can, to a large extent, be explained by the prevalence of traditional views, which hold that the roles of men are to be the heads of their families and decision makers of their communities, while the main duties of women are housekeeping and child bearing.

In fact, it has been widely recognized that even during the communist period, when the "gender issue" supposedly "withered away," gender equality existed only in principle. In reality, women were rarely able to reach the top echelons of the Party and to get involved in decision making.<sup>76</sup> The presence of women in parliament was assured by a quota system, employed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Thus, in 1986, the BiH

---

<sup>75</sup> Gordana Vidovic, interview with author, Modrica, 13 July 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, "In Tito's Time," In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 97.

Assembly included 24.1 percent of women.<sup>77</sup> However, their presence was mostly symbolic, since those women were unable to truly commit to politics due to a “fourfold burden” on their shoulders: management of households, care for their children, participation in workforce, and political commitment.

It is unclear whether women in BiH decided to shake off this “political burden” as soon as Communism fell apart or discontinuation of the quota system caused them to lose their places in politics. Either way, after the first multiparty elections in 1990 their participation in parliament dropped significantly. More precisely, the proportion of women in BiH parliament was only 2.92 percent.<sup>78</sup> Since the next elections in BiH were held in 1996, this low participation of women in the prewar and wartime decision making in BiH gives some credence to the claim that the war was, generally, a male undertaking. In her book, Swanee Hunt, an American Ambassador, notes that one idea that came out the most often in the interviews she held with 26 prominent women from BiH was that the 1992-1995 war was “not for Bosnian women, between them, nor initiated by them”.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, at the same time, one has to ask to what extent are BiH women responsible for deserting the political scene in 1990, leaving all the decision making powers to their men? Does the fact that women are failing to take on political roles today absolve them from the responsibility for a possible conflicts that may break out in the future? We will return to these questions later on in this chapter. Here it is only important to note that, by and large, the women in BiH do not see the link between their political (non)

---

<sup>77</sup> UNDP, *BiH: Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 80.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Swanee Hunt, *Ovo Nije Bio Nas Rat: Bosanke Obnavljaju Mir (This Was not Our War: Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace)*, trans. Senada Kreso (Sarajevo: Dani, 2001), 202.

participation and their (in) ability to control their own destinies and the destinies of their children.

Nevertheless, many women believe that there should be more women in politics. For example, when asked about status of women in BiH, 77.1 percent of women in the NGOs that participated in my study answered that “women are underrepresented in the political field.” However, the percentage of women in the control group who thought that there should be more women in politics was considerably smaller, only 33.3 percent.<sup>80</sup> This gap is significant because it shows that even non-feminist and non-political NGOs have an important impact on political consciousness of their members who are much more aware of their political status than are the women outside the NGOs. In part, this increased awareness is a result of the NGOs’ social capital. As a few of women explained, although their NGOs were non-political, they received political educative seminars through partnerships with other NGOs. In other words, only after joining the NGOs women became politically active.

Furthermore, NGOs such as *Lara* from Bijeljina that has institutionalized social capital with the offices of city mayor and major political parties allows its members to gain valuable insights into local politics. The key point here is that women gain political information by utilizing social capital in their NGOs in spite of the fact that their NGOs are not dealing with political issues. This points to another related conclusion; namely, NGO networks that include political NGOs have potential to increase political engagement of women in non-political NGOs of that network. In turn, increased political awareness of women in NGOs could have a positive effect on women outside the NGOs.

---

<sup>80</sup> See Table 13 in Appendix 6.

In other words, the awareness would get diffused through relational social capital ties between women from the two groups.

However, while the women's NGOs certainly have an important role to play in informing and educating the women outside their NGOs about the importance of women's political engagement, sometimes traditional beliefs are so strong that even this education has its limits. Namely, even highly educated women with successful careers who believe that women should play bigger role in politics take motherhood to be the primary role of women. According to Hunt, "Few women speak of their education, careers, even of their country, in the same idealistic, romantic way as they speak of child raising."<sup>81</sup> This is not to say that men love their children less than women. Rather, because of gender stereotypes which allege that only women know how to raise children, women are required to sacrifice their careers in order to be good mothers while fathers are supposed to have successful careers in order to provide for their families.

Consequently, convincing the women that they should give up their "holy" motherhood roles in order to engage in what many of them consider being "dirty" politics is a very difficult task. Thus, a story of how one woman, Mediha, got involved in politics is telling. Namely, she became more politically active only after her son had graduated from university and had found a job, which resulted in considerable reduction of her workload. In her own words, she came to the point where she "did not know what to do with herself," so she decided to become more active in women's organizations.<sup>82</sup> To a large extent, her example shows that many women are just too busy in their homes to become more politically active. It also gives one possible answer to the question why the

---

<sup>81</sup> Hunt, 219.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 280.

women's NGOs in BiH are led and dominated by older women. Namely, those are the women whose children have grown up, so they have time to engage in those activities. In addition, as we will see later on in this chapter, older women in BiH are, generally, granted more respect than younger women, so that the older age gives them confidence to assert their views. As in many other parts of the world, in BiH young women are considerably less involved in politics than the young men.

For instance, the results of my study strongly indicate that young women in the control group (age 18 to 29) are far less likely to vote in local elections than the women over 30. In fact, out of six women from the control group who are below thirty years of age, only one answered that she would vote in the election; one answered that she "did not know/ did not wish to answer," while four answered that they "did not believe in the effectiveness of such action." In other words, only 16.7 percent of women below thirty said that they would vote. In contrast, 75 percent of women over thirty years of age who also were not members of women's NGOs answered that they were going to vote in the election. This proves that, regardless of whether or not they are NGO members, older women are generally more politically active than young women.

Yet, young women who are members of NGOs seem far more determined to vote than the young women who are not members of women's NGOs. In fact, all three women under thirty years of age expressed their determination to vote in the local elections. Compared to the young women in the control group, young women in NGOs believe more strongly that their votes count and that they can influence decision-making bodies in their communities; so much so, that a considerably greater percentage of the young women who were members of the NGOs expressed their determination to exercise their

political power by voting (100 percent) compared to the percentage of women who were without the NGO membership (16.7 percent). This finding strongly suggests that the young women in the NGOs perceived themselves as having much more political power than do the young women who are not NGO members. This seems to suggest that the girls who have access to social capital in the women's NGOs are more politically empowered than the girls who lack such capital. In some cases, it could be hard to determine whether political empowerment of women is a result of their NGOs membership or women who are politically empowered join the NGOs because of their beliefs. However, in the case of Bosnian NGOs which are non-political, their members were not particularly keen on entering politics before they joined the NGOs. As many of the women explained, only after they joined the NGOs did they learn about the importance of political participation. For instance, the rural women in *Udruzenje Poljoprivrednica Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja* [*Association of Female Agricultural Workers of Usora-Tesanj Region*] created the NGO in order to get financial help to start commercial milk production in their region. However, their effort to secure funding for the project led them to lobby the local and the cantonal governments. The women made it clear that they would vote for anyone who helped them start the milk production despite their general dislike of politics.<sup>83</sup> As this example shows, a majority of women became interested in politics only after they joined their NGOs. Women who are not members of the NGOs but have interest in politics tend to enter political parties rather than non-political NGOs. Therefore, the women's NGOs have a positive impact on women's political participation, regardless of their initial view of politics.

---

<sup>83</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.

Yet, the fact that of the thirty five interviewed women belonging to fifteen different women's NGOs only three were below thirty years of age suggests that older women are dominating this NGO sector. The fact that neither one of the three below thirty was in a leadership position also demonstrates that the young women have considerably less decision-making power within the women's NGOs than do the older women. In fact, one of the main features of the women's NGO sector in BiH that comes out of this study is the fact that the leadership positions are reserved for older, more educated women. While this is not surprising, given the social context in which older women are more respected, it points to an important limitation of the women's NGO sector. Namely, they are not the best place for the empowerment of young women. In addition, since a majority of Bosnian youth organizations are led and dominated by men, voices of young Bosnian women are largely marginalized within the emerging civil society.

There are some rare examples of ambitious young women who have children yet have chosen to engage in politics. For example, Gordana Vidovic who is leader of the NGO *Buducnost* in Modrica became politically active when she was thirty five and a mother of three young children. In addition to establishing *Buducnost*, Vidovic also formed the "Peasants' Party" in Republika Srpska and became its president. Her achievements in the political and legal field are too many to count. To mention just a few, she actively campaigned for a rule that would guarantee the presence of at least 30 percent of women on the election nomination lists;<sup>84</sup> she successfully lobbied the government of RS to criminalize the domestic violence against women; and, she was

---

<sup>84</sup> Biljana Ristanic and others, *Women's Chronology: Women, Witnesses of Time* (Bijeljina, BiH: Lara, 2002), 182.

actively involved in the drafting of the Gender Equality Law in BiH. Furthermore, she actively promoted and was one of the founders of a coalition of women's NGOs "Jednakost 21" ("Equality 21"), seeking to unify the women in their fight for gender equality.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, Vidovic remains an exception to the rule, attributing her success to strong support of her husband.

Going back to the early post-war period, statistical data reveals that there was little improvement of women's political participation at that stage. So, for example, after the elections in 1996, there were only 2.38 percent of women in the BiH House of Representatives, 5 percent of women in FBiH House of Representatives, and 1.89 percent of women in RS National Assembly.<sup>86</sup> This low level of participation of women in politics pushed many international and local actors into action to increase their participation. One of the measures taken was the adoption of Rule 7.50 by the Provisional Election Commission, which forced "political parties to include [in their election lists] at least three women among the top ten candidates."<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, women's NGOs as well as other organizations embarked on countrywide campaigns aimed at increasing women's involvement in politics. Some of those campaigns involved educating women about the importance of their participation in elections. Other campaigns aimed at encouraging women to engage in political careers. Sometimes, just letting women know that, unlike in the former Yugoslavia, the work in parliament was well paid changed their view of political activities from seeing them as a burden to seeing them as a potential profession.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Gordana Vidovic, interview by author, Modrica, 13 July 2004.

<sup>86</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 81.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>88</sup> Mara Radovanovic, interview by author, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

As a result of these campaigns, the proportion of women in parliament increased significantly after the 1998 elections. Women's share in the BiH House of Representatives rose to 26 percent, in FBiH House of Representatives to 15 percent, and in RS national Assembly to 22.8 percent.<sup>89</sup> Since then the situation slightly worsened partly as a result of the introduction of a "model of open lists" which discloses the names and, thus, the gender of candidates, favouring men whom the voters see as traditional politicians.<sup>90</sup> Still, "as regards women's representation in parliament, BiH is the leading country in the region."<sup>91</sup>

Yet, this increase in representation has changed very little the actual status of women in society or the political situation in the country, which is still dominated by the nationalist agendas of major Serb, Croat, and Bosniak (Muslim) nationalist parties. In addition, women who were put forward on the election lists by some parties were the ones "who could be influenced by senior party members."<sup>92</sup> In fact, as a study done in RS indicates, women members of political parties in Bosnia are rarely able to influence party politics in any significant way.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, many argue that, "there was not much achieved by the increased percentage of women, since the new [parliament] members are not acting as women but as members of their parties... They are not different than men."<sup>94</sup> While this statement, in a way, reflects a widespread gender stereotype that women should be different than "dirty" male politicians, it also supports the argument

---

<sup>89</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 82.

<sup>90</sup> Global Rights, 78.

<sup>91</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 82.

<sup>92</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, Rada Stakic-Domuz, and Meliha Hubic, *Women Organizing for Change: A Study of women's Local Integrative Organizations and the Pursuit of Democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 2001), 29.

<sup>93</sup> Lara Online [magazine], "Discrimination of Women in Political Parties," news and events, Accessed 14 December 2004. Available from <http://www.online-lara.com/News%20and%20events.htm>

<sup>94</sup> Hunt, 283.

made by some feminist writers that more women in government does not necessarily lead to a government more sensitive to women's problems.<sup>95</sup> In other words, merely increasing the participation of women in the formal political sphere will not necessarily increase the state support for women's issues. Rather, in order for those issues to become central in the policy decision making circles, politicians, both male and female, need to become more gender aware. Women's NGOs have a very important role to play in raising awareness of women's issues among the politicians and gathering wide support for solving those issues.

However, part of the problem also comes from the nature of the political system in the country. In spite of all democratization efforts by the international community, especially by the Democratization branch of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the political system in BiH continues to reflect top down approach to decision making, failing to secure popular participation. While we will return to this issue in the next chapter, it is important to indicate that the social capital approach is in fact a remedy to this problem of the top down democratization, since it looks at how the local, grassroots groups get formed and how they manage to increase their influence through engaging in collective actions. In addition to being useful analytical tool for assessing Bosnian civil society, social capital approach generates practical recommendations for support of the local initiatives in the process of bottom up democratization and state building.

#### **2.4 Social status of women**

Since motherhood and family life is very important to women in BiH, to understand their position in the society, we must examine more closely their position and

---

<sup>95</sup> Waylen, 334.

their roles within their families. Although it is problematic to generalize about all different forms of familial relationships that exist in BiH, some characteristics of families are so prevalent that some general patterns can be established. Although nuclear families are widespread in the country, ties with extended families are very important. Rather than being isolated as an entity, the family is viewed as an entity “stretching endlessly backward and forward, the generations flowing almost imperceptibly one into next without sharp ruptures or discontinuities.”<sup>96</sup> Children live with their parents until they get married. Most often, married couples move in to live with the groom’s parents before they establish their own household nearby.

However, this idealized, organic view of the family conceals the power structure between men and women within the family. Namely, by getting married and by establishing their own households, men usually become empowered, gaining authority over their new families. Women who enter their husband’s household as outsiders, however, have to prove their worth by successful management of the household, by giving birth to children (preferably male children), and by being submissive to the wishes of their husbands and their in-laws.

Andrei Simic finds that women gain more power within the family as the couples grow old and husbands lose their physical strength and as the sons grow old enough to protect their mothers.<sup>97</sup> Although Simic sees this new status of older women as empowerment, it is very limited in scope, because only old women who have given births to sons can enjoy this “special” status. In addition, this respect for mothers comes at the

---

<sup>96</sup> Andrei Simic, “Machismo and Cryptomatriarchy: Power, Affect, and Authority in the Traditional Yugoslav Family,” In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

expense of younger women. Namely, mothers teach their sons to develop double standard for women: respect for the mother and exploitation of other women:

On the one hand, the mother surrounds herself with an aura of martyrdom and virginal purity, giving visible expression of the “pain” associated with sexuality and childbirth. At the same time, a mother sometimes tacitly encourages her sons to associate with “profane” women outside the home. The implicit message is that women other than family members and kin enjoy lower status.<sup>98</sup>

In other words, until they become old mothers of their grownup sons, women experience “the fixed, unchanging status of inferior beings.”<sup>99</sup> “The system of male stereotypes has become fixed between the ‘old mother’ and the ‘young whore’.”<sup>100</sup> This dichotomy is reflected in the literature, movies, and popular culture from the region. On the one hand, mothers are idealized as loving, giving and self-sacrificing.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, rape, violence against women, and other forms of ill-treatment and degradation of young women are central images of the “culture.”<sup>102</sup> According to Dubravka Ugresic, in all parts of former Yugoslavia, misogyny and patriarchalism are pervasive in all forms of culture, in mass media, in newspapers, and even in statistical data. When women are not being depicted in a degrading way, they are, largely, absent or quiet: “everywhere, both before and now, on the left and right, west and east, south and north, [one] would see the same scene: warm, friendly male togetherness, with a shadow of a women somewhere in the corner: a silent secretary, a silent cleaning-women, the silent companion of the loud Yugo-man.”<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>99</sup> Dubravka Ugresic, *The Culture of Lies*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 114.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>101</sup> Gordana P. Crnkovic, “Gender Construction in Literature: A Historical Survey,” In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 257.

<sup>102</sup> Ugresic, 116.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 117.

My own review of the 2003 and 2004 editions of the two major BiH's magazines *Dani* [*Days*] and *Slobodna Bosna* [*Free Bosnia*] shows that men dominate their pages. The rubrics in which women are regularly present in these magazines are the entertainment pages. Women who appear in these pages, next to male politicians and male leaders, are either bare-breasted, totally naked, or in some way connected to the pornography. This objectification of women continues in spite of the Article 16 of the Gender Equality Law, which stipulates that "the public expression concerning presentation of any person in offensive, denigratory or demeaning manner in regard to gender is prohibited" and that "the media are required in their programming to raise awareness on gender equality."<sup>104</sup> Obviously, the law is not being widely obeyed by the media.

Moreover, the state does not seem too eager to enforce the law more strictly. The nationalist leaders seem to be more concerned about declining fertility rates than about gender discrimination. Thus, in August 2004, FBiH introduced financial aid for women who give birth.<sup>105</sup> The news was broadcast on national television, assuring that it reached a wide audience. Since the women are those who end up taking care of children, this pro-natalist policy will likely result in more women staying home and leaving the public sphere. Moreover, women's testimonies about losing their jobs when they became visibly pregnant do not seem to reach those policy makers who are in charge of protecting the women from discrimination.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> *Zakon o Ravnopravnosti Polova u Bosni i Hercegovini (Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina)*, (Sarajevo: Gender Centar Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine; Banja Luka: Gender Centar Republike Srpske, 2003), 73.

<sup>105</sup> *Dnevnik I*, (1 August 2004) [National News], Sarajevo: BHTV.

<sup>106</sup> Lara Online [magazine], "Good While They are Young: Do not Complain or Become Pregnant," accessed on 13 November, available from <http://www.online-lara.com/Theme%20of%20the%20month.htm>

As Dubravka Ugresic suggests, a “Culture of Lies” reflected in all aspects of the former Yugoslav societies, perpetuates the belief that women hold the same economic, political and social rights as men, while, in fact, the gender inequalities persist. As she notices, in this “culture” the word ‘picka’ (a vulgar word for female genitalia) is often used as a synonym for word woman.<sup>107</sup> In addition, the word is often used, even by women themselves, to refer to someone who is weak, unreliable, cowardly, or silent. These characteristics are considered feminine and serve as a point of reference for Yugoslavian men to construct their identities in opposition to these feminine characteristics. The fact that women themselves often use the word proves that this degradation of women has become widely accepted. Branded a ‘witch’ and forced into exile from Croatia, Ugresic knows all too well what the consequences are if one tries to resist the “culture,” especially when the culture is imbued with nationalism that idealizes women as the “wombs for the Nation” but also juxtaposes this ideal to a undesirable women that are named “witches” and “whores” and are linked with “betrayal and conspiracy against the nation.”<sup>108</sup>

No doubt, this linguistic violence against women contributed to spread of mass rape of BiH women in the wartime and still continues to contribute to domestic violence against women at the present time. As Obrad Kesic explained, during the war, one of the ways in which women were supposed to support war effort was through their duties to “improve morale among the troops.”<sup>109</sup> The women were expected to show their gratitude to the soldiers who protected them by providing them with sexual favours.

---

<sup>107</sup> Ugresic, 115.

<sup>108</sup> Obrad Kesic, “Women and Gender Imagery in Bosnia,” In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 198.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

Moreover, some women were presented as having sexual desires for soldiers in uniforms. According to Kesic, this imagery of women as boosters of soldiers' morale "may fuel the psychosis of violence, rape, and destructive ritual behaviour on the part of many men returning from the front," as it seems to have happened in Belgrade, where violence and rape increased significantly as the soldiers returned home from fighting in Bosnia and Croatia.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, Kesic concludes that "the linkage between the whore image manufactured at the home front and rape at the battlefronts is a direct one."<sup>111</sup> Therefore, it is hardly possible that the systematic rape of women in BiH, that was used as an instrument of war in ethnic cleansing campaigns of warring sides, had no influence on occurrence of violence against women, trafficking of women, and "explosion of pornography and prostitution" in the aftermath of the war.<sup>112</sup> All these illegal practices contribute to creation of image of women as powerless objects, as commodities to be purchased and sold at the markets such as Arizona in Bijeljina. This view of women as powerless objects rather than active agents certainly affects their ability to influence political discourses in the country, further diminishing their ability to combat violence against women, trafficking in women and to protect women who are engaged in pornography and prostitution.

Yet, one should not blame only Yugoslavian men for the status of women in BiH society. Rather, women themselves participate in reproduction of the structures which create gender inequalities. For example, in BiH, men who do household chores are considered as having lost their masculinity. Many women want to have a "real man" by their sides, not someone who "acts like a woman." Therefore, they prefer to do the chores

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 191.

themselves. In fact, both men and women are ostracized when they reject these gender defined norms of behaviour. A man who rejects the masculine role is named “picka” and excluded from many of the “boys’ clubs.” That is, the men also suffer as a result of the gender inequalities. This was especially visible during the war, when men were forced to accept militarized masculinity as a norm and they were punished if they refused to do so. Therefore, it is important to underline that both men and women have to gain from dismantling of gender stereotypes and establishment of gender equality.

#### 2.4.1 Violence Against Women

According to the Constitution of BiH it is “the exclusive duty of the state to act on the elimination of violence against women. The state is obliged to protect victims of violence, regardless of the sphere of life in which it takes place.”<sup>113</sup> In addition, the Criminal Codes of the Federation of BiH and the Criminal Code of RS make violence against women a criminal offence; yet, the violence against women continues. In fact, although no official state-wide research has been conducted, there are some indications that domestic violence against women is on the rise. As one source estimate, “43 percent of all BiH women are exposed to psychological violence, 33 percent have been exposed to physical violence, and 24 percent to sexual violence.”<sup>114</sup>

However, it is hard to determine the exact number of women subjected to gender-based violence, since the violence remains underreported. Therefore, it is possible that the violence is not increasing, but that more women are coming forward to report it. In fact, as one leader of one women’s NGO noticed, ever since her NGO started educational

---

<sup>113</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Report on the state of Women’s human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: January – December 2001* [HCHRBH website], accessed 5 April 2004, available from <http://www.bh-hchr.org/statements/33-12-01.htm>

<sup>114</sup> Violence against Women: NGO research, June 2000, quoted in Global Rights. *Shadow Report: On the Implementation of CEDAW and Women’s Human Rights in BiH* (January 2004), 89.

programs on domestic violence, it ceased to be a “taboo” topic and more women are talking about it.<sup>115</sup>

In fact, because of the lack of reliable data on the violence against women, small research projects carried out by NGOs are an important source of information for determining the scope of the problem. For example, a small study conducted by the NGO “Women to Women” about the violence against women, which includes 160 interviewees (24 percent of men and 76 percent of women), shows that 44 percent of participants perceive the level of the violence to be “alarmingly above average,” 49% believes that the violence level is “average,” 4% think it is “low,” while 3% said they “did not know.”<sup>116</sup> While the surveys of perception may not be the most reliable source of information on incidence of the violence, they are an important source (especially in the absence of a better source) since they indicate whether or not the people recognize a particular problem, in this case the problem of violence against women. If there is no recognition of the problem, it is less likely that the public would exert the pressure on the government to address it. In this sense, the fact that over 40 percent of the participants recognize the problem is quite significant.

It is often argued that this high incidence of violence against women is “due to [a] difficult social and economic situation.”<sup>117</sup> Yet 25 percent of the participants in the “Women to Women” study believe that “the main reasons for such level of violence” are the “patriarchal system of the society (and its consequences on the mind of the people)

---

<sup>115</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Doboj, 8 Jun 2004.

<sup>116</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Report on the state of Women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: January – December 2001*.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

[and] traditionalism.”<sup>118</sup> It is important to note that an increasing number of people see patriarchy and tradition in a negative light in spite of those values being promoted by nationalists.

Another study also points to an important change in the women’s perception of the gender based violence. Namely, “it is increasingly being recognized (...) that the violence is a form of patriarchal control.”<sup>119</sup> The finding from this study conducted in the municipality of Zenica, by the NGO *Medica* also confirms the reports that the incidence of gender violence is alarming. It states that 20 percent of respondents reported having been threatened by their partners and 79 percent of those women said the abuse happened more than once. In addition, 53 percent of women responded that they knew at least one woman who had been beaten. The study concluded that “at least every other woman in the Zenica municipality has survived violence or knows someone who has.”<sup>120</sup>

Respondents in the same study identified a correlation between domestic violence and the phenomenon of “the reintegration of the family,” which was taking place in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reintegration began when men came home from the frontlines and tried to re-establish their role in their households which were managed by women during the war. In many families a peaceful reintegration took place, since many people embraced “normal” conditions from the pre-war period, characterized by a patriarchal division of gender roles. However, some of the families in which women refused to give up their new roles fell apart due to divorce. In other families, women

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Martha Walsh, “Aftermath: The Impact of Conflict on Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Working Paper No. 302 (Washington D.C.: USAID, 2000), 9.

<sup>120</sup> *Medica, A Second Look: To live With(out) Violence* (Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 1999), 52.

suffered violence perpetrated by men who tried “to regain [their] former status or to recapture [their] family’s attention.”<sup>121</sup>

It is important to note that the perpetrators of the violence against women are not only their husbands. That is, as a report from Mostar indicates, “an alarming number of mothers [are] being abused physically and psychologically by their sons, mostly unemployed demobilized soldiers.”<sup>122</sup> This means that there is a considerable erosion of the status of women in the society. Namely, older women are losing respect from and protection of their sons, which they, generally, enjoyed prior to the war.

A considerable increase of trafficking in human beings and prostitution of women in BiH also confirms a general perception that the status of women in society is deteriorating. As one source explains, “partly because of market represented by the international community and SFOR [the NATO led stabilization force], but also because of evident local demand for the service of prostitutes,” BiH is not only a transit country for trafficking but also a destination country.<sup>123</sup> Although trafficking and prostitution are forbidden in BiH, the registration and opening of nightclubs in which prostitution takes place and where so-called dancers, waitresses and nightclub hostesses offer sexual services is on the increase.<sup>124</sup> There are some sources indicating that corrupt police officers, state border officials, and legal workers are involved in criminal activities related to trafficking and prostitution.<sup>125</sup> Although there are some NGOs providing services and shelters to these women, more comprehensive state protection is largely

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>122</sup> Walsh, “Aftermath: The Impact of Conflict on Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 9.

<sup>123</sup> UNDP. *BiH Human Development Report* (Sarajevo, 2002), 86.

<sup>124</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Report on the state of Women’s human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: January – December 2001*

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

absent. Consequently, the lives of trafficked women are in constant danger. Moreover, the spread of sexually transmissible diseases poses a major threat to those women and to public health in general.

## 2.5 Economic Status of Women

As noticed by the BiH government in 2003, gender discrimination in the labour market continues and women are more often than men subjected to this form of discrimination.<sup>126</sup> While women are, perhaps, gaining from the expansion of the service industry which increased job opportunities for women, positions of power and more lucrative jobs remain largely in hands of the men.

The extent of gender discrimination in the labour market is hard to measure, especially since discrimination is illegal and, therefore, hidden. Yet, the poor participation of women in the labour force is indicative of continuing discrimination. While women represent 60 percent of the able-bodied population, their share in labour market is only 34 percent, “the lowest in all countries of South East Europe.”<sup>127</sup> In terms of employment, the largest number of women is employed in fields traditionally perceived as appropriate for women: health and social work, education and arts, and the textile industry.<sup>128</sup> In fact, in 2003, the BiH government had recognized that the existing “educational system with its curricula still contains the traditional image, which is based on patriarchal and stereotypical roles of women and men.”<sup>129</sup> It is further explained that, “perpetuation of this image contributes to gender inequality and women’s choosing

---

<sup>126</sup> BiH, “*Obrazloženje i Razlozi za Donosenje Zakona o Ravnopravnosti Spolova u BiH.*”

<sup>127</sup> UNDP, *BiH Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals* (Sarajevo, 2003), 42.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

<sup>129</sup> BiH, “*Obrazloženje i Razlozi za Donosenje Zakona o Ravnopravnosti Spolova u BiH.*”

traditional occupations, which further exacerbates gender inequality.”<sup>130</sup> Yet, since rooting out ethnic discrimination from the educational system has been the main objective of the international community in BiH (an objective that has yet to be achieved), rooting out gender discrimination has received little attention.

While during the war many women became family providers and assumed traditionally male roles, in the post-war BiH women are increasingly going back to the more traditional roles and to the private sphere. There has been an argument made that these women become empowered by “recovering the terrain of home and family.”<sup>131</sup> Yet, keeping in mind that men and women are subject to unequal power relations within home and family, this “empowerment” does not challenge the superior position of the men; it does, however, promote traditional roles for women as a source of their empowerment. In the long run, this “empowerment” will be very limited if women remain confined to the traditional roles within the private sphere.

The limits of this kind of “empowerment” are visible in the following example. In an interview, a widow from Mostar who relies on a strong financial support from her relatives said, “I don’t think about looking for work, women need to be in the house with the children.”<sup>132</sup> For this woman, the role of a mother seems to be empowering and morally desirable. While her choice can be seen as morally empowering, her belief that “women need to be in the house with the children” reflects the widespread gender bias, which perpetuates women’s inferior status in the society. In turn, this bias prevents

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Nguyen-Gillham V. quoted in Martha Walsh, “Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*, ed. Krishna Kumar (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 2001), 60.

<sup>132</sup> World Bank, *Consultations with the Poor: National Synthesis Report Bosnia and Herzegovina*, The World Bank [website], accessed 19 May 2004, available from <http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/voices/reports/national/bosnia.pdf>, p. 36.

women, including single mothers who do not receive assistance from their relatives, from entering the labour market. As a consequence of this negative social attitude toward working mothers, the women who succeed in finding employment are labelled “bad mothers,” since they do not stay home with their children. This way, employment has a negative impact on the social status of working mothers, regardless of the fact that many women are forced to work in order to assure survival of their families.

Furthermore, some less optimistic observers of women’s withdrawal to the private sphere also note that nationalist leaders in BiH have promoted this process in order to address economic problems “by getting rid of surplus labour and shifting the costs of welfare provision back to the family.”<sup>133</sup> This cost is growing, since the “transition” to market economy and structural adjustment policies encouraged by the IMF and the World Bank are forcing the BiH government to cut its spending on public services, such as health and social security. In the process, many women lose their jobs, since they are predominantly employed in those sectors. In addition, this withdrawal of women to the private sphere “has facilitated a major objective of the post-conflict rehabilitation, the employment of demobilized soldiers, thus solidifying the public-private dichotomy.”<sup>134</sup> In other words, women’s financial independence seems to be sacrificed for two goals: economic development and postwar reconciliation.

Although women play a minor role in the formal economy, in the informal economic activities in the “black market” their roles are critical and are constantly expanding. Since there is no state control over this sector, women employed in the black market activities are very vulnerable to discrimination, fraud, and ill-treatment. In

---

<sup>133</sup> W. Bracewell quoted in Martha Walsh, “Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina.” in *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*, ed. Krishna Kumar (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 2001), p. 59.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

addition, the service sector (both formal and informal) that provides employment for women is characterized by low wages and lack of social security provisions. While in the short run men are disadvantaged for being largely excluded from participating in the service sector, in the long run women will lose if, even after the economic recovery of the country takes place, they remain stuck at these low paying positions. Since both social stereotypes and market forces favour women's employment in the service sector, it is likely that the trend will continue in the future.

In addition, poverty is constantly increasing pressure on women. It has been recognized that the women play a major role in managing limited resources in their households. Even some men in BiH recognize this important role that women perform. For example, "when asked about how they make ends meet," one man replied, "ask my wife."<sup>135</sup> A similar statement is made by another man who said that, "in my household, my wife is the economist."<sup>136</sup> However, the women who carry out these managing responsibilities are not necessarily empowered. On the contrary, women are often blamed and subjected to domestic violence when they fail to successfully manage the insufficient resources in their households. Referring to "war in the house," a number of participants in the World Bank study link poverty to domestic violence.<sup>137</sup> The female participants from two cities Zenica and Sarajevo consider "arguing and disagreements a principal impact of poverty" (occurring in the majority of households). The Sarajevo women also noted that "perhaps [in] half of the households this [arguing and disagreement] would escalate to physical violence and that in one fifth of the households

---

<sup>135</sup> World Bank, *Consultations with the Poor: National Synthesis Report Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 36.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

it would lead to a break-up of the marriage.”<sup>138</sup> These findings illustrate that economic discrimination of women is interlinked with the violence against women. They prove that it is still not *passé* to say that “the personal is political” and that the economic policies affect women in both the private and the public spheres.

## 2.6 Conclusion

As noted above, women in BiH are granted all of the internationally recognized human rights. However, little has been done in strengthening the mechanisms which are to assure that those rights are respected and that Gender Equality Law is being implemented. Nevertheless, to be fair, the legal framework for achievement of gender equality has, largely, been created.

The question that arises, then, is: why do not the women in BiH take on a more aggressive campaign to claim their rights? In part, the answer can be found in the article by Sally Engle Merry, “Rights Talks and the Experience of Law: Implementing Women’s Human’s Rights to Protection from Violence.” In short, the article argues that in order to claim the human rights protection, women have to take on “rights consciousness” and new “rights-defined identities.” These new identities often demand from the women that they relinquish their identities as good wives, mothers, daughters, and family members, which is extremely hard for many of them. Therefore, to achieve emancipation, women need state institutions supportive of their rights claims, which would help them to take on the new identity.

While the state support and social services for women taking on “rights consciousness” and new “rights-defined identities” are, largely, absent, women’s

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 18.

NGOs could play this role, educating women about their rights, providing support to women and strengthening them. Although education is important tool in fighting gender inequalities, on its own, education will not end the inequality. Namely, as has been noted above, even the highly educated women with successful careers take motherhood and care of their families to be the most important roles for women. As a result, taking on some new identities such as that of politician, businesswoman, or independent woman is unlikely if it endangers their main identity: that of a mother. NGOs are important agents of change, since they can increase political awareness of women, educating them about the dangers of their exclusions from the public sphere.

Without the increase of their awareness, the women will transfer this idealistic view of motherhood to their daughters, teaching them that it is a duty of a good woman to put her education and careers in the second place to the highest role a women can play- the role of a mother. In turn, their daughters will choose traditionally women's careers in order to have time to take care of their families. Therefore, it is very important that women engage in deeper gender analyses in order to recognize the consequences of their acceptance of traditional women's roles and their idealized motherhood. Namely, without sharing some "burdens and joys of child bearing" with their men, Bosnian women will never be able to participate in the public life as much as men. Therefore, they will continue to face an unequal position in the society.

Although they make career sacrifices to raise their children, Bosnian women, having little economic and political power, are almost totally incapable of changing the world in which their children are being raised. In other words, by giving up their economic independence and political might in order to care for their children, women

give up their decision-making power. The resulting lack of economic and political power is what makes women unable to take a proper care of their children, since they are incapable of exercising effective control over their own lives or the lives of their children.

“This was not our war,” is a phrase so often uttered by Bosnian women regarding the 1992-1995 war. Supposedly, it was the men’s war. Yet, those men were raised by Bosnian women. The war was waged and horrendous crimes were committed by their fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers. Once the women accept this truth, they will realize limitations of their idealized motherhood. It is not to say that women are to be blamed for what some soldiers did to them. Rather, it is about making women recognize that their sacrifice of political participation and economic emancipation has serious consequences. It is their responsibility to take those activities more seriously. To do that, the women do not have to give up their families or raising their children. Rather, they need to start sharing their duties with their spouses and their family members. As Gordana Vidovic proved, one can be a mother of three, have a job, and still be politically active. To achieve this, however, women need strong will to engage in politics and support from their families or from relevant organizations or institutions. In reality, women in BiH generally lack the necessary will to become more politically active just as they lack the institutional support. Therefore, this is the area where women’s NGOs can (as few of them do) play a crucial role in encouraging political participation of women.

More specifically, women’s NGOs should continue acting as one of the support providers. Many of them facilitate political engagement of women by providing women with emotional support, relevant training, and even child care facilities where needed. In addition, some NGOs such as *Medica* and *Buducnost* are involved in gender sensitization

programs, informing all those who can provide support to women such as police officer, judges, and doctors about the specific issues that the women are facing. The NGOs also create linkages between women and all the agencies that could be of use to the women who are seeking political or economic empowerment. In other words, the NGOs are a source of social capital which leads to a greater inclusion of women in the political and economic spheres as well as to their social advancement. Yet, as it will be argued later in this essay, there is still room for improvement, especially in the area of facilitating economic advancement of women.

## Chapter 3

### NGO Sector in BiH

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of the NGO sector in BiH, focusing on both rural and urban women's NGOs. It provides a brief history of the sector as well as the description of the main linkages between the NGOs, the international donors, the local governments, and the local population. The majority of writers on that issue argue that Bosnian NGOs are merely puppets of international organizations and have little connections to their own society. Contrary to this argument, this chapter shows that women's NGOs are very diverse and that some of them have no relations with international donors while most of them have links to either government institutions or other civil society actors. However, as the social capital analysis in the fourth chapter will show, there is much space for improvement in this area.

In general, this chapter provides a setting in which the women's NGOs participating in my study operate. In addition, the chapter analyses whether this setting is conducive to creation of social capital in the women's NGOs and to the empowerment of women. The chapter argues that while the top down approach to democratization of Bosnia limits empowerment of the local population, it is not necessarily detrimental to empowerment of women vis-à-vis men, since it limits the power of men in the society. The chapter also analyses the link between social capital and democracy. Contrary to the claims that only democratic organizations generate social capital, the chapter argues that even undemocratic NGOs are capable of generating social capital and facilitating empowerment of women.

### 3.2 Development of the NGO Sector in BiH

The history of the NGO sector in BiH is a relatively a short one. The first citizens' organizations appeared on BiH territory in the late nineteenth century when nationalism was one of the main forces influencing the creation of cultural and literacy groups.<sup>139</sup> The first women's associations in BiH appeared during the Second World War with the primary aim of providing support for liberation forces in their fight against Nazi occupation. The secondary aim of these associations, later named the Anti-fascist Front of Women (AFW), was achievement of political and cultural emancipation of women and creation of a new society based on gender equality.<sup>140</sup> By the end of the war, 25, 000 women soldiers lost their lives and 91 women received the medal of National Hero.<sup>141</sup> After the liberation, the Communist Party granted Yugoslav women legal equality and proclaimed women's political organizations obsolete, abolishing the AFW in 1953.<sup>142</sup> After that date, all activities of women's associations as well as of other citizens' groups had to be in line with the official position of the League of Communists.

During the seventies and the eighties, feminists in the former Yugoslav republics of Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia, undertook a certain degree of activism when they recognized that the legal equality did not result in *de facto* equal status of women. However, women in BiH were, generally, unaffected by this subtle wave of feminism that never grew enough to become a mass movement of Yugoslavian women. In part, the rise of nationalism prevented women from creating a unified movement, since women

---

<sup>139</sup> Cockburn, Stakic-Domuz, and Hubic, 35.

<sup>140</sup> Ristanic, and others, 56.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 64.

became victims of nationalist divisions.<sup>143</sup> However, ironically, feminist discourse also contributed to divisions of women's groups along ethnic lines. Namely, while in the West postmodern discourse encouraged self-reflection of women through rejection of a single female identity, in Yugoslavia the rejection of a single identity made the women more susceptible to embracing nationalism as their main identity. As a result, most of the women's organizations disintegrated, ending the hope of creation a unified movement.

The situation changed during the 1992-1995 war when women's associations reappeared in BiH. Their re-emergence was closely related to the suffering caused by the war and it is therefore not surprising that the main aims of those NGOs were humanitarian. They were formed to provide support to refugees, families of deceased, and war invalids as well as to offer help to other vulnerable members in the communities.<sup>144</sup> In general, the NGOs provided services that were desperately needed but which the failed BiH government was unable to provide. Since these early NGOs did not challenge traditionalist ideology, wartime regimes, for the most part, welcomed those NGOs, seeing them as substitutes for failed state institutions rather than as a threat to their authority.

Since women played a major role in the humanitarian activities of the wartime NGOs, many were led to believe that women were more caring and "more humane than men."<sup>145</sup> In fact, this stereotypical view of women as care givers and help providers was something that came up very often during my interviews with the women in NGOs.

---

<sup>143</sup> Slavenka Drakulic, "Women and the New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia," In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York: Routledge, 1993), 129. See also in the same book "Women's Time in the Former Yugoslavia" by Dasa Duhacek.

<sup>144</sup> Duska Andric-Ruzicic, "O Nevladinim Organizacijama-Trecem Sektoru" ["On Non-governmental Organizations- the Third Sector," in *Drugi Pogled [Second Look]* (Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 1998), 119.

<sup>145</sup> Dragana Becarevic, interview by author, Teslic, 08 Jun 2004.

Generally, men were seen as those who did the killings, ethnic cleansing, and raping while women were seen as the victims of male violence, aid distributors, and health care providers. However, as a deeper gender analysis shows, rather than being less “caring” than women, men were prevented from expressing their “caring” nature the way that women could. Namely, during the war, militarized masculinity became a norm for male identity.<sup>146</sup> The roles that were imposed on men were those of protector and warrior. Consequently, in order to prove that they cared for their families, all the able-bodied men had to go to the front lines to protect them. The men who rejected those roles were proclaimed cowards, deserters, and traitors. They were arrested, imprisoned, and forced to the front lines. Joining NGOs to engage in humanitarian activities simply was not an option for most of the men. Since many of those men gave their lives in order to protect their loved ones, the claim that they were less “caring” than women is, in my opinion, false and unfair. In addition, this line of reasoning reinforces existing gender stereotypes.

In other words, the gender-based division of social roles, which still persists in BiH, put men on the front lines and women in charge of providing care for those who needed help. Since they were not forced to serve in militaries, women had time to participate in NGO activities. For many women who had lost their jobs during the war and were forced to retreat to household duties and care for family members, participation in NGOs represented a rare public space that they were capable of entering. Yet, being forced to assume traditional roles of care providers, many women were forced to take on some non-traditional roles such as those of political activists and entrepreneur.

---

<sup>146</sup> For a discussion on masculinities and violence see R.W. Connell, “Masculinities, the Reduction of Violence and the Pursuit of Peace,” in *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, ed. Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 2002).

However, for the most part, women were unable to reach significant power in either the political or the economic fields because their political activism mostly took place in an NGO setting that offered little political leverage to women and their private enterprise took place in the unregulated black market sphere. Unlike male enterprises, these female activities were, for the most part, small scale. For instance, to feed their families, many Bosnian female refugees living in Serbia engaged in cross border smuggling of consumer goods from Bulgaria and Hungary, defying the international embargo against Serbia. Since these activities were illegal and small scale, by and large, women discontinued them after the war. In contrast, many of the largest companies, especially gas companies, in BiH today are owned by men who legalized their own “wartime ventures,” which were far more profitable than the ones undertaken by women. Without a doubt, men’s political power helped them legalize their businesses.

### **3.3 NGOs: Civil Society or Service Providers?**

In the years after the war, a great number of the NGOs moved from providing humanitarian aid to promoting human rights and multiethnic tolerance, building civil society and democracy, and similar activities related to state-building and ethnic reconciliation. Usually, the aims of the NGOs are very broad and general, allowing for engagement in various activities. For example, one women’s NGO declares as its main objectives and activities the following: provision of legal help and information for women, social protection of women, education as well as promotion of small enterprises (e.g. handcraft), agriculture, sport, recreation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.<sup>147</sup> In fact, very often, the NGOs have provided, and many continue to provide, any service for which they could receive funding. Consequently, a claim has been made that NGO sector

---

<sup>147</sup> Dragana Becarevic, interview by author, Teslic, 08 Jun 2004.

in BiH works under dictate of international donors and, therefore, cannot be equated with a real civil society.

One of the most influential articles written on the nature of the NGO sector in BiH is Ian Smillie's article "Service Delivery or Civil Society?: Non Governmental Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Basically, Smillie argues that, instead of nurturing sustainable NGO sector in BiH, international donors have used local NGOs as a means for cheap service delivery, at the expense of an emerging civil society. Indeed, as women in the NGO *Bospo* have experienced, some of the international donors only look for the cheapest service providers they can find. Namely, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) readily transferred the money for implementation of a project to another NGO that offered to implement it for less money, even though *Bospo* participated in designing of the project and depended on the project funding for its survival. When the UNHCR decided to employ the other NGO to implement the project, *Bospo*'s survival was seriously endangered. It survived only because of the efforts and persistence of the leader of the NGO, who found new partners, diversifying the donor base in order to make *Bospo* less vulnerable to the whims of the donors.<sup>148</sup>

However, not all donors are looking for cheap service delivery. Some of them are truly committed to building civil society and a sustainable NGO sector in BiH. For instance, as Smillie notes, Delphi International's Star Project "support[s] non-nationalistic women's organizations throughout the former Yugoslavia with both project and sustainability support."<sup>149</sup> Similarly, *Kvinna till Kvinna*, a Swedish NGO, is among the most prominent international NGOs (INGOs) working on capacity building of and

---

<sup>148</sup> Nelvedina Meskic, interview by author, Tuzla, 26 July 2004.

<sup>149</sup> Smillie, 4.

cooperation between women's NGOs in BiH and in the region. Smillie also recognizes the role of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) in fostering "communication and cooperation among the NGOs," facilitat[ing] a coherent NGO interface with the representation of common issues" to various international and national actors, "provi[sion] of information and networking services to international and local NGOs," and "promotion of appropriate NGO legislation within BiH."<sup>150</sup> Therefore, one should be careful not to make generalizations claiming that all INGOs are using local NGOs for cheap service delivery.

Furthermore, not all NGOs in BiH are content with being only cheap service providers. While admitting that her organization used to implement the projects according to wishes of its donors, the leader of NGO *Forum Zena-Tesanj* claims that the situation has changed and that now the NGO uses the funds to address the most urgent problems in the community.<sup>151</sup> The leader of NGO *Buducnost* Gordana Vidovic is even more categorical in her refusal to obey the wishes of donors. As Vidovic explains, the women in her organization look for donors willing to finance projects that are in line with the aims of their organization. She adds that "they refuse to compromise their aims even though the adherence to that principle narrows down the list of their potential donors."<sup>152</sup> Obviously, there is a trade off between specialization of an NGO and its ability to secure funding for its survival.

The next example deserves special recognition, since it involves a rural NGO with mono-ethnic structure, which generally receive very little attention from international donors and academics. Consisting of about eighty Bosniak (Muslim) women, the NGO

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>151</sup> Ruza Vlajkovic, interview by author, Tesanj, 29 May 2004.

<sup>152</sup> Gordana Vidovic, interview by author, Modrica, 13 July 2004.

*Stublicanka* is located in Sevarlije- a small village in Dobož municipality. In order to establish the main goals of their organization and to identify their potential projects, the women in the NGO carried out a survey in their village. They asked local women to identify the main problems they face as well as the most important services they would like to have offered by the NGO. While they invested lot of resources to do the survey, they were less successful in obtaining the funds required for realization of their aims.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, the women remain genuinely committed to improving the livelihoods and promoting the social status of the local women. Consequently, they managed to provide cheaply some vital services such as child care, without any external funding. While state provision of child care would be preferable, it is unlikely to be implemented in rural areas in the near future. Although this NGO is engaged in service delivery, it is the service that is demanded by the local women, not by foreign donors.

Similarly, women who formed the NGO *Udruženje Poljoprivrednica Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja* did so in order to solve the biggest problem they face rather than to provide cheap service delivery for some INGOs. Namely, the women created the NGO in order to address local issues such as lack of milk collection facilities and appropriate market for their milk based products.

In addition, two leaders of the women's NGOs also explained that their respective NGOs simply focus on activities that the majority of their members is capable of providing.<sup>154</sup> Mainly, these activities involve handcrafts that are traditionally performed by women (e.g. knitting, weaving, and sewing). These rural NGOs are often portrayed in

---

<sup>153</sup> Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Dobož, 14 Jun 2004.

<sup>154</sup> Munevera Zecevic, interview by author, Kakanj, 13 July 2004.; Hasna Tutan, interview by author, Novi Seher, Maglaj, 06 July 2004.

a negative light, since they reinforce traditional gender roles and family values.<sup>155</sup> Yet, to rural women, even those activities are empowering when performed outside their homes and especially if the women are able to earn some income by performing those activities. As many of the interviewed women noted, it is important that women have a place to socialize outside their houses. In fact, leaders of two NGOs stated explicitly that one of the main aims of their organizations is to “get women outside their houses.”<sup>156</sup> Yet, the rural women struggle to accomplish even this modest objective, due to lack of funding and their inability to cover the basic costs associated with running an organization such as the rent and hydro. The main conclusion is that without external funding the NGOs will barely be able to provide any services for the local women.

It is common in BiH to view rural men and women as more traditional, religious, and nationalistic than people from urban regions. Generally, researchers take this view as the truth, without even going to villages to confirm its validity. So, for instance, although they make no reference of ever visiting a village in BiH, Deacon and Stubbs write that the “introduc[tion] of rural populations into urban areas” during the war tended to feudalize cosmopolitan cities.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, if Ian Smillie included rural NGOs in his research, he might have concluded that provision of cheap “service delivery” was not a problem there, since the rural NGOs hardly received any funding to deliver services. Similarly, since she focused her study on urban women’s NGOs, Cynthia Cockburn concludes that the women in NGOs are “characteristically urban people. They may have

---

<sup>155</sup> Cockburn, “Women’s Organization in the Rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 75.

<sup>156</sup> Hasna Tutan, interview by author, Novi Seher, Maglaj, 06 July 2004.; Hasna Vatres, interview by author, Olovo, 05 August 2004.

<sup>157</sup> Bob Deacon, and Paul Stubbs, “International Actors and Social Policy Development in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Globalism and the ‘New Feudalism,’” *Journal of European Social Policy* 8, no. 2 (1998): 103.

been born to families who lived in villages, but on the whole as adults they worked in *towns and cities, where a non-nationalist mindset was common* (emphasis added).<sup>158</sup>

Her statement strongly suggests that a “nationalist mindset” was prevalent in the BiH villages. Without considering the real conditions in the rural areas, these writings reinforce the existing stereotypes, hindering cooperation between the rural and the urban women in BiH.

In general, little effort has been made to enhance the understanding of structural constraints that prevent the rural women in BiH from improving their livelihoods. Instead, their status is explained through some sort of special mentality, which these women refuse give up. One of the rare studies on rural civil society in BiH was conducted by Dadalos.<sup>159</sup> However, the study was not focused on women’s NGOs, so it provides little insight on their role in improvement of status of rural women. It is a well known fact that rural areas have experienced decades of neglect, since the Communist regime stimulated industrial development in urban areas and large scale agriculture, which, mostly, took place in northern Serbia and eastern Croatia. This neglect of development of the rural areas continues, leaving villages, and women living in them, with a low quality of education, non-existent or very poor infrastructure, and lack of economic opportunities. Therefore, it is wrong to contribute unenviable position of rural women to some sort of village mentality.

During my visits to rural and small town NGOs, I did not notice any unique nationalist, religious or feudal “mindsets” of women living in those places. The women talked about corrupt clergy, about ethnic leaders who cared more about their positions

---

<sup>158</sup> Cockburn, Stakic-Domuz, and Hubic, 128.

<sup>159</sup> See Sterland.

than about their people, and about the need to build factories and schools first and new religious objects later.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, I noticed that two women had serious difficulties with reading and writing. One of the women, a vice-president of a rural NGO, had a problem with signing her name. I also heard about difficulties the rural women faced in realizing simple trips to nearby towns and their complaints about lack of employment opportunities. As one of the women explained, “Once they acquire jobs and economic security, women will easily realize their rights.”<sup>161</sup> Similarly, a leader of another rural NGO, Hajra Camdzic, who regrets having finished only four grades of school, asserts that “women in the NGO will be strengthened once they start producing milk and become able to earn their own money, since men in the village will perceive them as successful women and will have more respect for them.”<sup>162</sup> This seems to suggest that without some significant rural development efforts, for many of the women, getting out of their houses to socialize or knit in the NGOs will remain one of their few rare sources of empowerment.

It is doubtful that the rural women can advance their status by participating in the unified women’s movement that, according to some, should be formed in Bosnia. While Smillie claims that women’s and human rights NGOs are rare examples of organizations in BiH resembling NGO communities “with coherence or any particular sense of solidarity and common purpose,” hardly anyone claims that there is a unified women’s movement in BiH.<sup>163</sup> With existing ethnic divisions and a growing gap between urban and rural women, it is unlikely that a mass movement will emerge anytime soon.

---

<sup>160</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.; Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboje, 14 Jun 2004.; and Hasna Vatres, interview by author, Olovo, 05 August 2004.

<sup>161</sup> Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboje, 14 Jun 2004..

<sup>162</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.

<sup>163</sup> Smillie, 3.

Feminists like Cynthia Cockburn who advocate for the creation of a unified women's movement in BiH should make sure that the experiences of rural women are not silenced in that movement. Otherwise, the women's movement that could emerge in BiH would be elitist, having little support from rural women. Since rural women often identify poverty as their main problem rather than gender inequality, a women's movement that does not address the issue of poverty will not be joined by rural women.<sup>164</sup> In addition, since older women dominate the NGO sector, such a movement would marginalize young women as well as Roma women.

As we saw in this section, women's NGOs in BiH are very diverse in their size, aims, membership, and resources. The urban NGOs tend to be smaller and more professional. They consist of highly educated women who have better infrastructure and more resources than the NGOs in rural areas and small towns. Yet, despite these differences, women in both types of NGOs face many common hardships and obstacles such as unstable and low income, few employment opportunities and gender discrimination. In addition, women in both groups are truly committed to improving the lives of women and other disadvantaged groups in their communities and in their country. To that end, they seek all the support they can get from government officials, international actors, other civil society groups, and individuals. In the process, they form social capital which facilitates their progress.

### **3.4 NGO Relations with Government and Civil Society: A New Feudalism?**

At present time, there seems to be an increase in social capital networks between women's NGOs in BiH, the government institutions, and civil society. There are three

---

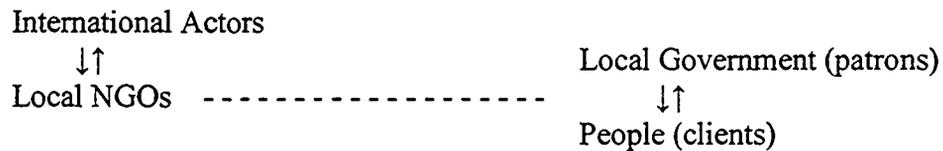
<sup>164</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.; Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboj, 14 Jun 2004.

main reasons for this increase. First, NGOs have been present in BiH for more than ten years, so that many of them have integrated into wider social networks. Second, many international actors encourage development of networks and partnerships between the public and the private sector. Third, because they required financial or other assistance, many NGOs approached government and private individuals to seek the assistance. While there is much space for improvement of those social capital networks, it is important to acknowledge the progress that has been made so far.

Early in the post war period, there were very few links between the government and NGO sector, mostly because the newly established governing bodies in BiH were very mistrustful towards the emerging NGO sector. There are a number of possible explanations for this mistrust. First, the government officials saw the NGOs as political opponents of the government, as anti-governmental organizations rather than as politically neutral actors. Second, since NGOs were receiving large funds from international donors, government officials perceived the NGOs as competition. Third, the NGOs, for their part, were too responsive to the requests of their international donors, having little interest in creating stronger linkages with the government or with the local population. So, rather than local needs, international donors' agenda determined the kinds of the projects that would be implemented as well as the terms of their implementation. In general, there was little contact between the government and the NGO sector, with little willingness on either side to increase their cooperation. In other words, there was very little linking social capital between various governmental institutions and NGOs.

While, as mentioned earlier, those links have improved, the critics of the Bosnian civil society do not seem to acknowledge the change. For instance, Bob Deacon and Paul

Stubbs argued in 1998 that in BiH “globalism,” characterized by a strong international influence on local NGOs, coexists with and perpetuates “new feudalism,” which originated in socialist organization and which is characterized by “mini-state thinking” and “client-patron” loyalties.<sup>165</sup> Their argument can be illustrated by using the following diagram.



The left side of the diagram represents “globalizing” process while the right side represents “new feudalism.” The diagram shows that there is a strong relationship between international donors and NGOs and between local government officials and their ethnically defined “clients.” The diagram also shows that there is a very weak link between the NGOs and the government and between the NGOs and the local population. In fact, the authors argue that the globalizing relations between international bodies and local NGOs have contributed to further disintegration and feudalization of the country by making NGOs responsible to INGO as opposed to the local people. They conclude that by implementing programs of INGOs, local NGOs are impeding the creation of a unified, countrywide social policy.

This “large gap between the civil society associations funded and supported by the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] and other international institutions, and Bosnian people” has been noted by many critics of Bosnian civil society.<sup>166</sup> Yet, they offer different approaches as to how this gap could be narrowed

<sup>165</sup> Deacon, and Stubbs, 100.

<sup>166</sup> Chandler, “Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building

down or closed. One approach involves top-down reforms of BiH society. The other approach consists of bottom-up initiatives to build sustainable institutions and an active civil society. This second approach encompasses the social capital approach, since it largely focuses on development of linkages between different citizens' groups and various levels of government.

### **3.5 The Top-down Approach: Civilizing Bosnian Civil Society**

In the pre-war period, due to its ethnic diversity and tolerance, BiH was often romantically described as "little Yugoslavia." After the "big Yugoslavia" fell apart and after the war that ravaged the "little Yugoslavia," ethnic identity has become a major factor shaping the lives of BiH citizens. This reality is reflected in the Dayton Peace Agreement which consolidated ethnic divisions of BiH.

Yet the dream of "little Yugoslavia" continues, with many of the dreamers seeing the emerging NGO sector as having a huge role in realization of the dream. So, for instance, Ian Smillie claims that, "Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina is, in essence, an ethnic microcosm of the old Yugoslavia. It is an attempt to rebuild the tolerance that disappeared so quickly in the early 1990s."<sup>167</sup> However, the majority of the people in BiH identify themselves as primarily as members of their ethnic groups, not as BiH citizens. Since the people of BiH are still electing the nationalist parties to power, the NGOs presumably should educate the people and encourage it to vote for non-nationalist parties. Consequently, in order to promote multiculturalism, many of the international donors channelled their funding towards NGOs with multiethnic membership.

---

Strategies," *Democratization* 5, no. 4 (1998): 9, University of Westminster [website], accessed 18 May 2004, available from

<http://imm-live.wmin.ac.uk/ssh/pdf/DemocratizationCivilSocietyBosnia.pdf>

<sup>167</sup> Smillie, 15.

While it is beneficial to encourage ethnic tolerance through NGO activities, this donors' funding policy has created huge problems for some of the women's NGOs. For instance, two rural NGOs *Cicmanka* and *Stublicanka* complain of being unable to acquire any funds largely because donors are unwilling to fund mono-ethnic NGOs and their respective NGOs are unable to achieve multiethnic status.<sup>168</sup> The former NGO is unable to attract Croat women, since they are pressured by their religious leaders and other members of their community to refrain from mixing with the Muslim (Bosniak) women. The latter NGO is located in a Muslim (Bosniak) village, so that there are no women of other nationality who would be interested in joining the NGO. It seems that to many of the international donors, projects that empower women are not valuable unless they promote ethnic integration and re-creation of little Yugoslavia.

According to Smillie, "the hope of a united Bosnia and Herzegovina will be lost" unless "accountability, legitimacy and competence in public life" are restored, "and these can only be achieved through the active participation of the electorate, buoyed by a strong, plural, associational base, by a web of social, cultural and functional relationships which can act as a 'societal glue' and as a counterbalance to the market and the state."<sup>169</sup> In his view, this 'societal glue' has to be "independen[t] from ethnic nationality."<sup>170</sup> In an ominous voice, he continues "the alternative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, well known to citizens of the former Yugoslavia, is paternalism, exploitation, corruption, and war."<sup>171</sup> Consequently, to maintain peace and encourage democratic reforms, the international

---

<sup>168</sup> Tutan Hasna, interview by author, Novi Seher, Maglaj, 06 July 2004.; Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboj, 14 Jun 2004.

<sup>169</sup> Smillie, 16.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

community should promote a strong and sustainable NGO sector free from ethnic nationalism. To this end,

The OSCE Democratization Programme for 1997 was designed to bring the international community into a closer relationship with grassroots groups and associations which could provide a counterpoint to the politics of the governing authorities and nationalist parties and, through this, to open up political debate and create new opportunities for alternative voices to be heard.<sup>172</sup>

Smillie's suggestion and the OSCE democratization approach seem like a bottom-up approach to creation of a strong civil society in BiH. However, at least at this moment in time, the aim of restoring "little Yugoslavia" free from ethnic nationalism will not be supported by majority of the people in BiH, who are supposed to become active members of the new civil society. As mentioned previously, the ethnic divisions are still strong and ethnic identities are too important for Bosnians to give them up. This is confirmed in my study, since majority of the women identified themselves according to their ethnic background. Only three women identified themselves as Bosnians, meaning citizens of BiH, and three other declined to identify their nationality.

When ethnic divisions and disparities between the rural and the urban women as well as between the young and the old women are taken in account, it is unlikely that a unified movement will be developing in the near future, although the women in Bosnian NGOs are increasingly cooperating and networking. This, however, may not be a totally negative condition. Since a majority of people in Bosnia refuse to accept the imposition of a single, unified, ethnic-free identity, it is unlikely that a unified women's movement would attract mass support. If anything, some women's NGOs would lose part of their membership due to pressures that these women would face to reject such a "multiethnic" identity. What became apparent after talking to ordinary women in Bosnia is that many of

---

<sup>172</sup> Chandler, "Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies," 4.

them highly dislike the local women's NGOs precisely because they overemphasize the multiethnic spirit of the organization. This is not to say that the NGOs should reject their multiethnic character to please those local women; rather, it is to recognize that their multiethnic rhetoric, often used to charm the international donors, alienates the locals and prevents many women from joining or supporting the organizations.

In fact, it has been shown that the Bosnians are more willing to cross the interethnic boundaries when it is not presented as the main purpose of a project or organization. As stated in the OSCE's Democratization Branch monthly report from March 1997, "while promoting inter-ethnic tolerance and responsibility is the main goal of confidence building ... this is sometimes easiest done when it is not an activity's explicit goal."<sup>173</sup> My study confirmed this conclusion when it compared the success of inter-ethnic cooperation of the Muslim and Croat women in Usora-Tesanj region to the failure of such cooperation among the women in Novi Seher.

The two bordering municipalities are characterized by a low level of interethnic cooperation. Even the children of the Croats and the Muslims living in these communities go in separate, ethnically defined schools. Therefore, it is very hard for the women living in these communities to come together in a multiethnic NGO without being ostracized by their respective communities. Yet, the women in Usora-Tesanj region were able to retain their multiethnic status because their emphasis was on economic empowerment of the women and the poor rather than ethnic reconciliation. Unlike the women in Usora-Tesanj region, the women in Novi Seher emphasised the role of their NGO projects in creating interethnic linkages between the two ethnic groups. Consequently, Croatian women in Novi Seher came under attack by their religious and ethnic leaders and were forced to

---

<sup>173</sup> Quoted in Chandler, "Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies," 5.

give up their NGO membership, even though it provided them with opportunities to participate in some projects that would bring them economic benefits.

Like Ian Smillie, Bob Deacon and Paul Stubbs hold that there is “the central choice between an integrated Bosnia-Herzegovina, within which there are common social citizenship rights, and continued fragmentation” along ethnic lines.<sup>174</sup> However, unlike Smillie, they think that NGOs are a part of the problem, not a part of the solution. That is, they believe that the “local NGOs reflect and reinforce the feudal project while articulating a multicultural face to foreign donors.”<sup>175</sup> In other words, the NGOs are only faking multiculturalism to obtain funding, but, in reality, they support ethnic feudalization of the country.

The solution that Deacon and Stubbs put forward to cure this “new feudalism” can, however, be characterized as “new colonialism.” Namely, since the three ethnic groups cannot agree on a common social policy, they propose that the unifying policy be “implemented by non-elected impartial authorities appointed from outside the conflict,” so that “no minority feels that its interests are being abused.”<sup>176</sup> In other words, they suggest that the policy should be imposed on the Bosnian people.

As a consequence of the animosities that grew during the war and political manipulations of people after the war, ethnic divisions in BiH are still very strong. In addition, when we realize that those divisions have been legitimized and consolidated in the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution of the BiH, it seem very likely that they will persist for some time. Therefore, it is as unrealistic to insist on rebuilding the “little Yugoslavia” as it would be unrealistic to insist on rebuilding the “big Yugoslavia.”

---

<sup>174</sup> Deacon, and Stubbs, 113.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

Unification of different ethnic groups, when (or if) it happens, must come from within BiH society and must be supported by the great majority of the population. Citizens of BiH must find their own way of making their coexistence agreeable to all. Otherwise, the union would not last for a long time and could lead to another conflict as the one that broke out in 1992 when Bosnia and Herzegovina announced its plans to separate from Yugoslavia against the will of Bosnian Serbs who represented about a third of the BiH population. Moreover, the unifying solutions delivered by the “outside authorities” may prove to be short lived, since many Bosnians are becoming resentful of decisions imposed by the Office of High Representative (OHR) and other international institutions.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Deacon’s and Stubbs’ solution that involves imposition of the policies from the outside goes against a major commitment of the international community to promote democracy in the country.

In fact, as David Chandler notes, the democratization process administered by the international community in BiH involves largely a top-down approach whereby “governing representatives at municipal, canton, entity and state levels have little choice but to follow international policy at the threat of being dismissed from their posts or having sanctions imposed... Bosnian people have no active role in decision making, and are instead reduced to the role of passive onlookers.”<sup>178</sup> He also considers a lack of accountability to be a major feature of international rule in BiH. That is, “while the

---

<sup>177</sup> This summer, the OHR removed from power 59 high officials from Republika Srpska, mainly because their unsatisfactory cooperation with the International Criminal Court for Yugoslavia. So, Serbs in particular are resentful of the OHR and international community in general. See OHR website for more information on the removal.

<sup>178</sup> Chandler, “Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies,” 11.

Bosnian politicians are fully accountable to the international community, there are no mechanisms making international policy-making accountable to the Bosnian people.”<sup>179</sup> Instead of democracy, people in BiH got a democratization process controlled by unelected international rulers who are unaccountable to the local people.

According to Chandler, international agencies discovered the need to democratize the Bosnian people right after the September 1996 elections, which “were held to have been democratic...yet they were also declared to be not democratic enough to allow self-rule.”<sup>180</sup> The main problem with the elections was that, contrary to expectations of international agencies, the Bosnians opted for rule by nationalist parties. By failing to give support to “a multicultural Bosnia” in the elections, the Bosnians “created a strong air of pessimism about the future of a united Bosnia...” and a “...negative view of [their own] capacities.”<sup>181</sup> Sharing this negative view of Bosnians, Duncan Bullivant who was spokesman for the High Representative stated in the *Washington Post* that “Bosnia is a deeply sick society, ill at ease with even the most basic principles of democracy.”<sup>182</sup> This incapacity of the Bosnian people was often explained by their “lack of democratic education,” which, from a point of view of a human right activist, had to be cured by NGOs through “teaching people how to behave and to know right from wrong.”<sup>183</sup>

If the role of the Bosnian NGOs is to teach people democracy, multiculturalism, and other values that international agencies find desirable, as was proposed by many, then it is natural that the people working in those NGOs have more in common with their international partners than with their own people. In this situation, it is also

---

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*, 145.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Quoted in Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*, 162.

<sup>183</sup> Chandler, David, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*, 147.

understandable that the NGOs have to remain accountable to their international donors rather than to their government or to their own people. NGOs get paid to teach those people ethnic tolerance; they are not to be left at the mercy of the Bosnians who according to many seem unable to decipher right from wrong, just because they persistently elect the nationalist parties. Yet, once the Bosnians are denied the ability to decide what is good or bad, they are denied the opportunity to form or to be a part of a true civil society or a democratic state.

Some NGOs contributed to this negative view of Bosnian society. Being overly dependent on external support, these NGOs emphasized, and sometimes exaggerated, only the negative aspects of the society in order to secure funding or international support for their activities. For example, some human rights NGOs seeking a better protection of human rights “constantly portrayed Bosnian people and their elected authorities in a negative light,” using some “isolated cases of injustice to argue that serious human right abuses were endemic.”<sup>184</sup>

In this section we have seen that the top down approach to democratization and civil society creation has resulted in a situation where it was more beneficial for Bosnian NGOs to adopt the agenda of international donors than to formulate their aims according to the needs of the local people. In addition, since the international community used the NGO sector in Bosnia as a tool to oppose and undermine nationalistic government of the country, it is logical that any cooperation with the government was actually perceived to be harmful to the NGOs. Analysing these broader dynamics caused by international involvement in BiH contributes to our understanding of causes of the relatively low level of social capital between the NGOs, the government, and the rest of the society.

---

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 96.

Fortunately, the situation is slowly changing, since many donors have started encouraging partnerships and networking between the NGOs and various public and private institutions. As a result, the NGOs are acquiring new sources of social capital.

### **3.6 A Bottom-up Approach: A Leap of Faith**

In contrast to the top down approach discussed above, a genuine bottom up approach entails a willingness to allow the Bosnians to decide themselves what kind of state they want to live in. It requires acknowledgment that the Bosnians are rational actors, capable of determining what is good for them. Yet, the necessary faith in the Bosnian people is lacking, since the international community is convinced that the choices the Bosnians would have made on their own would have led to another conflict. Similarly, letting the Bosnians to control their own civil society requires faith in the capacity of the Bosnians to form a “civilized” civil society committed to peace, tolerance, and democracy. Yet, many people fear that, as Stubbs and Deacon suggest, Bosnian civil society may turn out to be “feudalistic” and uncivilized rather than democratic.

Many Bosnian NGOs do indeed have some flaws and weaknesses. Based on her study of seven women’s NGOs in BiH, Cockburn concludes that the main weaknesses of the sector are poor management, inadequate leadership, lack of information, inadequate skills, limited opportunities, roles not well shared, and lack of cooperation between groups that are competing for funding.<sup>185</sup> However, this portrayal of the NGOs seems to be overly negative. Firstly, it is not representative of a large number of urban NGOs which have attained a relatively high level of professionalism. Secondly, it obscures the improvements made by rural and small town NGOs, which may seem insignificant if we apply the Western standards but are significant when placed in the local context. As my

---

<sup>185</sup> Cockburn, “Women’s Organization in the Rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 73.

study shows, women in those NGOs continue to manage their organizations in spite of lack of resources and limited opportunities.

Other observers of the Bosnian NGO sector claim that it does not seem to be conducive to the democratization of society. For example, some people claim that the civil sector in BiH is a privilege of urban middle class, lacking wider popular support. As Adrien Marti, the Co-ordinator for Political Party Development, said for three NGOs from Sarajevo, they “are basically the same 20 people when you scratch the surface a little. There is really no depth to this.”<sup>186</sup> Similarly, a charge has been made that the NGOs in BiH, especially rural NGOs, are overly dependent on a single dominant leader. And this, according to Bill Sterland, “raises serious concerns about the extent to which civil sector as a whole in BiH can promote democratic values and increase social capital.”<sup>187</sup> Similar to the claim that promotion of civil society should lead to democratization, arguments have been made about the link between social capital and democracy. Not only were there arguments raised that social capital should lead to democracy but some have also argued that only “democratic culture” leads to formation of social capital.<sup>188</sup>

However, I think that one has to be careful when linking democratization of civil society with social capital. Contrary to Sterland’s claim, civil sector in BiH can bring about an increase of social capital, regardless of its failure to promote democratic values. In fact, during my research, it became apparent that what appears undemocratic can be beneficial for social capital accumulation and for empowerment of women. For example, when one learns that Ruza Vlajkovic is closely involved in the work of three local NGOs,

---

<sup>186</sup> Quoted in Chandler, “Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies,” 8.

<sup>187</sup> Sterland, 38.

<sup>188</sup> Hooghe, 106.

one might conclude that, indeed, there is no depth to civil society in Tesanj municipality, since the NGO sector seems to be dominated by a few people. Yet, when analyzed in terms of social capital, the situation appeared much more positive. Namely, one of the NGOs that Vlajkovic was involved with, a women's rural NGO *Udruzenje Poljoprivrednica Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja* benefited greatly from having connections to her. Vlajkovic used her own experience and networks to link these rural women with urban institutions and the local government. In other words, she provided the rural women with vertical social capital networks. For instance, she regularly takes the women to express their grievances to the local mayor. More importantly, while attending a seminar, Vlajkovic persuaded some representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help her obtain required equipment and find appropriate market for milk products of the rural women.<sup>189</sup> As a result, the rural women will finally be able to generate their own income, which, in their own opinion, is a means to their empowerment.<sup>190</sup> The conclusion is that, while having NGOs with hierarchical structure, dominated by a few leaders does not promote democratic culture, it does increase social capital of women in those NGOs and leads to their empowerment. In turn, this empowerment of women may eventually bring about their increased participation in the public sphere and to democratization of the society. This is not to say that NGOs with democratic culture are less desirable. On the contrary, it would be beneficial for empowerment of women if they all had equal say in decision making processes of their NGOs. However, the fact that some NGOs are not democratic does not automatically mean that they do not have any value.

---

<sup>189</sup> Ruza Vlajkovic, interview by author, Tesanj, 5 August 2004.

<sup>190</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.

Similarly, the conditions that may be harmful for local democracy may be beneficial for the empowerment of local women. Although, as many note, it stifles the local democracy, the international community's (IC's) protectorate over Bosnia has a positive side when it comes to empowerment of the Bosnian women. Namely, it limits the power of Bosnian men and, to a great extent, levels the playing field for the Bosnian men and women. At the same time, the IC's support for NGO sector empowered women more than men because the women are dominating the sector. As some women have noticed, the international support helped them to assert more strongly their views and agendas in their communities.<sup>191</sup> Unfortunately, the women in rural NGO seldom receive this support, which means that the closing of the gender gap is less likely to occur in the rural areas.

Very often women's NGOs in Bosnia include and represent the interests of marginalized groups such as internally displaced persons, ethnic minorities, and the poor. As the World Bank's study on local level institutions suggests, these groups have very little social capital and their social capital seems to be declining. For them, social capital in the women's NGOs is often the only kind of social capital they possess. Therefore, their empowerment through the NGOs, as limited as it may be, is very important for their inclusion and a more active participation in the society. In that sense, the NGOs are contributing to democratization of the country. Similarly, they contribute to democratization by creating links between government and their members. In many instances, these contacts increased their mutual trust. As a consequence, the NGO members are more likely to participate in political activities and democratic processes.

---

<sup>191</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Doboj, 8 Jun 2004.; and Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboj, 14 Jun 2004.

That being said, there is no guarantee that the bottom up approach and strengthening of civil society would necessarily lead to democracy, or democracy as defined in the West. That is why adopting this approach requires the faith in the ability and willingness of Bosnians to remain committed to democratic principles. In addition, strengthening of state institutions and further legal and political reforms might be needed to facilitate the bottom up democratization. In other words, building a strong civil society is not the only factor that can facilitate democratization. Yet, as Michael Ignatieff suggests, “without civil society, democracy remains an empty shell.”<sup>192</sup>

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a general overview of the NGO sector in Bosnia. The chapter also introduced the main characteristics of the women’s NGOs which participated in my study. While the NGOs are very diverse in their aims and resources, this study found and underlined some important commonalities between rural and small town NGOs on one hand and urban NGOs on the other hand. Unlike rural and small town NGOs, urban NGOs consist of a small group of highly educated women. They have better infrastructure and have more connections to various international organizations as well as government institutions. This finding has important implications for social capital and empowerment of women. Namely, the urban women have access to more diverse sources of social capital than do the women in rural and small town NGOs. Furthermore, compared to women in rural and small town NGOs, the women in urban NGOs are more capable of institutionalizing and utilizing their social capital for their empowerment.

---

<sup>192</sup> Michael Ignatieff, “On Civil Society: Why Eastern Europe’s Revolutions Could Succeed,” *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1995): 136.

The chapter also illustrated how the NGOs in BiH are affected not only by the foreign donors but also by some broader reforms that are imposed on the country by the international community. The two main issues that have been discussed were democratization and ethnic integration. The chapter argued that top down approaches to institute these agendas affected negatively social capital between the NGOs, government, and the rest of society. To end on a positive note, the chapter also indicated that progress has been made in this field, since many donors had encouraged creation of networks and partnerships between various civil society organizations, local people, and the local government.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Evaluating the Role of Social Capital in Women's NGOs in Empowerment of BiH Women**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

While the previous two chapters helped us understand better Bosnian context in which this study is based, this chapter aims to contextualize social capital concept introduced in the first chapter within this Bosnian framework. First, the chapter summarizes the main findings of the World Bank study on social capital in BiH, giving us a general overview of the nature of social capital in the country. While the study points to some important patterns in social capital, this chapter will argue that these generalisations are sometimes misleading. The chapter will identify some limitations of the World Bank study due to its disregard for gender considerations. Second, the chapter provides the main findings of the nature of social capital within women's NGOs, which are drawn from my own research. Third, the chapter goes on to explain the role that the social capital in these NGOs has in the empowerment of the Bosnian women. It will be argued that, while social capital in these NGOs has its limitations, it still has a positive impact on empowerment of the women in the NGOs. Yet, since in some cases even the women in the control group are showing some signs of empowerment, it can be concluded that broader social changes are taking place that are conducive to empowerment of the women. No doubt, through their activities, many of the women's NGOs are contributing to these changes.

## 4.2 Social Capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The empirical evidence from the World Bank study strongly suggests that “Bosnia-Herzegovina is characterized by a low level of interpersonal trust.”<sup>193</sup> This low level of trust is often attributed to the general climate of mistrust, “created by the uncertainties and disappointments of the war and post-war periods.”<sup>194</sup> One of the ways in which this low level of trust has been demonstrated is through measuring changes in levels of socialization and mutual help. This approach is adopted by the World Bank study on local level institutions and social capital in BiH, carried out in 2001. Their administered interviews and a nationwide survey based on a representative sample.<sup>195</sup>

One of the major aims of the study was to search for the disparities in social capital patterns between different ethnic groups in BiH. Unfortunately, little attention is given to gender disparities. Since the data from the World Bank’s survey is not segregated according to gender, it is impossible to make comparisons between the nature of social capital owned by Bosnian women and that of Bosnian men. Therefore, while the study claims to be representative of the whole country, it is impossible to determine whether it equally represents both genders. While acknowledging this “gender blindness” of the study, we turn next to examine some of its main findings.

The World Bank study indicates that there is a decline of socialization and mutual help in all forms of social bonds post war Bosnia.<sup>196</sup> Yet, the survey also shows that bridging social capital has declined more significantly than bonding social capital. In BiH, as the study shows, “trust among people living in the same place (bonding social

---

<sup>193</sup> World Bank. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*. ” 9.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 9.

capital) takes precedence over trust toward people from outside (bridging social capital), affecting a range of civic values and confidence in formal institutions (linking social capital).”<sup>197</sup> For example, the study shows that, “socialization has declined much more among colleagues (35.12 percent) and neighbours—especially those of another nationality (47.4 percent)—than with relatives (15.5 percent) and closest friends (19.1 percent).”<sup>198</sup>

In addition to decline of bridging and bonding social capital, linking social capital has sharply declined. In fact, arguably, the erosion of linking social capital between society and state institutions is the most pervasive and noticeable deterioration of social capital. Undoubtedly, it has a very negative effect on state building efforts as well as on development. Empirical evidence of general lack of trust in state institutions in BiH is provided by a World Bank poverty study. Nearly all participants in the study gave a negative assessment of state institutions, expressing their lack of reliance on formal institutions. People stressed that informal institutions, such as the family, friends and neighbours, were the places where they turned for support.<sup>199</sup> In fact, although there are some regional differences, in general “the institutions which were mostly trusted by people overall are the informal institutions of the neighborhood, friends, and the family.”<sup>200</sup> When participants were asked to rank institutions according to level of trust they had in them, “these informal institutions received scores over 50 and often 100 (out of 100) on trust.”<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>199</sup> World Bank, *Consultations with the Poor: National Synthesis Report Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 4.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

The government's lack of transparency and pervasiveness of corruption and are the main reasons why people in BiH do not have trust in their institutions. Many people complained that in order to receive benefits from a certain institution you needed to be "on the list," but they were not certain as to how one was placed on this list or who was eligible. With respect to transparency, many complained that one had to have "connections" in order to have access to various services provided by state institutions.<sup>202</sup> In addition, lack of institutional transparency reduced people's ability to determine which institution to approach for addressing certain issues.<sup>203</sup> Lastly, "lack of responsiveness from formal institutions," when it comes to local concerns, "has led to a sense of hopelessness among many Bosnian citizens."<sup>204</sup> This helplessness leads to further erosion of linking social capital.

Regardless of its large decline, bridging social capital is still present in some parts of BiH and "practices of 'good neighborliness' (*komsiluk*) still exist" at the individual level.<sup>205</sup> In addition, "informal practices of material assistance contribute not only to the survival of the poorest, but also to the functioning of the community by softening tensions and creating inter-dependencies."<sup>206</sup> For that reason, it would be productive to utilize and strengthen the existing social capital. In addition, new social capital networks have to be created, since some social groups remain largely excluded from the existing networks. For example, minority returnees and Roma populations are usually excluded from social networks created by members of the local ethnic majority.

---

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*, 102.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 104.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 14.

As mentioned above, interethnic intolerance is still widespread in BiH. Under these circumstances, many wonder what will happen to the fragile peace in the country once the international community leaves. According to the World Bank's findings, war in BiH has negatively affected "interpersonal trust between members of different ethnic groups" (i.e. bridging social capital).<sup>207</sup> At the same time, however, "war has often reinforced trust between people belonging to the same ethnic group, the same place, or the same family" (i.e. bonding social capital).<sup>208</sup> As a result, BiH society remains divided across ethnic lines. Furthermore, according to many participants in the World Bank study, "the vanishing of war solidarities, the growing importance of material preoccupations, and the emergence of new inequalities have all contributed to a general climate of jealousy, competition, and selfishness," which further erode the existing bridging and bonding social capital, creating new insecurities.<sup>209</sup> Since social capital increases level of trust among people and facilitates collective action, "economic and social development will be hindered unless local governments and international actors understand how to use the "social threads" remaining after the conflict to facilitate the peace process."<sup>210</sup> In addition, many believe that by enlarging the existing stock of social capital, especially bridging and linking social capital, it would be possible to soften interethnic tensions and foster cooperation. This could lead to a more sustainable peace in the country.

Very often women's NGOs are placed on the forefront of these ethnic reconciliation efforts of the international community. However, their roles are often

---

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 2.

described in a manner that reinforces gender stereotypes. For instance, as Elissa Helms points out, it has been claimed that “women are ‘naturally’ more interested in peace, more tolerant of (ethnic) differences, and more willing to engage in dialogue and compromise to diffuse conflicts.”<sup>211</sup> While helping create a peaceful country is certainly a worthy goal for women in NGOs, it has its limits. Namely, without empowerment of the women, they will not be able to derive the same benefits from the peace that men would.

Since peacebuilding and reconstruction often go hand in hand, a collective action undertaken as a means to reconstruction of a community may, at the same time, have positive or negative effects on interethnic relations and sustainability of peace. Moreover, these reconstruction efforts also affect gender relations in the country. The following example, praised by the World Bank study, explains how reconstruction can be used as a means to ethnic reconciliation. However, it also illustrates the limits of the reconstruction efforts as well as social capital initiatives which do not take into account gender relations in the area.

In Klanac in Brcko district, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) initiated a project which facilitated the return of Bosniak refugees in a community dominated by the Serb majority.<sup>212</sup> At first, there was a strong opposition to their return, especially coming from the internally displaced Serbs who came to Klanac during the war and were living in the houses of the Bosniaks. They perceived the Bosniaks as the enemy who were trying to force them out of the only homes those Serbs possessed. However, the opposition waned when international community provided compensation to the Serbs, allocating for them a parcel of land on which they could build new homes. The project

---

<sup>211</sup> Helms, 19.

<sup>212</sup> OHR is in charge of overseeing the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

inspired solidarity between the two groups. Namely, “Bosniac minority returnees cleaning their destroyed houses have given the rubble to Serb IDPs, who have used it to build a foundation for the road leading to their future settlement.”<sup>213</sup> Through this action, interethnic tolerance and cooperation between Serbs and Muslims was, to an extent, restored in the community. In a way, the project helped the participants overcome “both the material and the moral consequences of the war.”<sup>214</sup> Certainly, a small project like this one is incapable of making a huge impact on deep cleavages between different ethnic groups in BiH. However, if an analysis of social capital took place during the project design phase of a greater number of reconstruction and development projects, it could be possible to raise the level of trust and cooperation during the project implementation phase. If, as in the case of Klanac, projects facilitate the creation of bridging social capital, greater interethnic tolerance and stability would ensue. However, it is important to note that the case of Klanac is still an exception. Usually, the efforts of international community to restore prewar multiethnic fabric of Bosnian communities are opposed and resisted by local ethnic groups.

However, if we applied gender analysis to evaluate social capital created through the project in Klanac, we can conclude that the project was not as successful as was stated by the World Bank study. Namely, since construction work is considered almost exclusively a male activity, Bosnian women are usually excluded from social capital networks created through reconstruction projects such as the project in Klanac. As a consequence, social capital created through the project empowers men, widening the gender gap. In other words, unless gender analysis is a part of the reconstruction and

---

<sup>213</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*, 113.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

social capital creation initiatives, the created social capital can further marginalize women and increase gender inequality.

Despite its large potential in peace-building, reconstruction, and development of BiH, it is problematic to perceive social capital as a panacea for all social, political, and economic ills present in BiH. As noted above, the poor in BiH remain largely excluded from many social capital networks. Increasing numbers of poor and a widening gap between the poor and the rich have led some to conclude that, “the cleavage between poor and rich seemed to be even more acute than the one between ethnic groups.”<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, the World Bank study suggests that, “A detailed analysis of the frequency of invitations and material assistance shows clearly that the poor have less social capital than the rich.” They also “have fewer possibilities of developing new personal relationships and much more difficulty maintaining closeness even with their relatives” (bonding social capital). They also mentioned that the main reason for decreased socialization is the lack of time and money.<sup>216</sup> In this sense, the poor are caught in the vicious cycle of poverty; they need social capital to escape poverty, but poverty prevents them from acquiring social capital.

Furthermore, some writers like Molyneux reject the assumption that social capital eliminates poverty.<sup>217</sup> She insists that social capital is merely a coping mechanism for the poor and that this mechanism should not be taken for granted and instrumentalized in a fight against poverty in a way that could be detrimental to the poor.<sup>218</sup> For example, the presence of social capital should not diminish the importance of redistributive

---

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>217</sup> Molyneux, 178.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 180.

mechanisms in the fight against poverty or the importance of improvements in the delivery of social services that are badly needed in BiH. Similarly, the creation of social capital networks among Bosnian women should not be seen as a substitute for the state initiatives such as reform of education and legal reforms that are necessary for ending gender disparities. In fact, a majority of the women who participated in my study believe that a multidimensional approach is necessary for ending gender inequality.<sup>219</sup>

### **4.3 Social Capital in Bosnian Women's NGOs**

While social capital in women's NGOs is not sufficient to end gender inequalities in the country, it is an important source of empowerment for many of the Bosnian women. This part of the essay provides the empirical data on strength of social capital within women's NGOs in BiH and summarizes the main findings on the way in which utilization of their social capital leads to empowerment of the women. The data on social capital will be classified into two categories: relational and organizational (institutional) social capital. This part of the essay will also point to the weakness of the social capital found within women's NGOs and it will argue that the women have lots to gain from strengthening the ties with local business persons, government officials, and members of other NGOs.

#### **4.3.1 Relational Social Capital in Bosnian Women's NGOs**

As mentioned previously, relational social capital consists of personal relationships that women in an NGO build among each other as well as with other private and public individuals with whom they come in contact. The precise level of relational social capital within an NGO is very hard, if not impossible, to calculate. While this has been acknowledged, this study examines whether some general patterns in women's

---

<sup>219</sup> See Table 14 in Appendix 6.

relations could be discovered. To this end, the study compares levels of relational social capital of the women in the NGOs with levels of relational social capital women of BiH who are not members of women's NGOs. To gather the information on the level of relational social capital, the study adapted a method used by the World Bank, used to gather the information on level of social capital in BiH. The method focuses on analyzing "invitations and material assistance as concrete forms of socialization and mutual help, and thus interpersonal trust" among women, their family members, friends, NGO members or their work colleagues, and neighbours of same and other gender.<sup>220</sup> What follows is the analysis of the survey administered to thirty five women from fifteen different women's NGOs and to eighteen women in the control group who are not members of women's NGOs. The results of the survey are provided in the Appendix 6.

The most undisputable result of the survey is in line with the World Bank findings. That is, familial relationships and friendships are greatly valued by women in BiH. As Table 1 illustrates, family members are the most common guests at the homes of these women. Yet, the women from the control group seem to invite their family members to their homes more often than do the women who are members of the women's NGOs. While 82.8 per cent of women in the NGO group invite their family members a few times, often, or regularly, 100 per cent of women in the control group do so.

Women from both groups also frequently invite their close friends to their homes. Namely, 88.6 per cent of women in the NGO group invite their friends a few times, often, or regularly, similar to the 88.9 per cent of women in the control group who do so. Yet, when we compare the data from the first two columns, we see that the women in the NGOs are inviting their friends slightly more often than they invite their family members.

---

<sup>220</sup> World Bank, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*. 11.

The opposite is true for the women in the control group, who invite their family members more often than they invite their friends. That leads us to conclude that women from the control group are slightly more bonded to their families than are the women in the NGOs. Yet, the difference between two groups is so small that it can be considered insignificant.

The table also presents the data on socialization of women with their colleagues. It shows that women in the NGO group invite their NGO colleagues more often than the women from the control group invite their work colleagues. While 48.5 per cent of women in the NGO group invite their NGO colleagues a few times, often, or regularly, only 27.9 of women in the control group do so. Presumably, greater socialization of women with their colleagues could increase their access to information about potential career opportunities.

The data in Table 2 further points to certain trends, related to the level of relational social capital of the women from both groups. One trend is that women's relations with their relatives and their friends are more stable than the rest of their relationships, since the largest percentage of women state that they associate with them as much as they did before. Another trend involves a relative decline of relational social capital shared between the women in the control group, their work colleagues, and their female friends. Namely, 50.1 per cent of the women note that, compared to the last year, they associate less with their colleagues. Similarly, 50 per cent of the women state that they associate less with their female neighbours than they used to, a year ago. The data in Table 2 also confirms that the women in the NGO group socialize the least with their male neighbours, 28.6 of them noting that the socialization has decreased since they have joined the NGOs. This may be alarming, since the women's loss of social capital with

men has a negative effect on women's integration in many social and state institutions and may worsen their position in the society.

If we take mutual help as a form of interpersonal trust and relational social capital, we again find that the women from both groups have the strongest ties with their family members and their friends. As Table 3 shows, in a three month period, 77.1 per cent of the women in the NGO group extended financial or material help to their family members while 66.7 per cent of the women in the control group have done the same. Similarly, 60 per cent of the women in the NGO group extended financial or material help to their friends while 61.1 percent of the women from the control group have done the same. In turn, a majority of women in both groups would turn to their family members and friends for help, as Table 6 indicates. While 37.2 per cent of women in the NGO group extend help to their NGO colleagues, only 16.7 per cent of women in the control group helped their work colleagues. Once again, this supports the earlier made conclusion that women from the NGOs have stronger ties with their co-workers than the women who are not members of the NGOs have with their work colleagues.

The same pattern exists in terms of the women's willingness to extend their help in future. As Table 4 suggests, women from both groups are the most willing to help their family members and, then, their friends. In general, a majority of women showed willingness to help others, especially those who are in a difficult situation. In fact, although a few women said that they did not have resources to help various people and a few showed a concern about how the money would have been spent, fraud being a common concern, not one woman said that she would have been absolutely unwilling to help. This altruism, however, is unrelated to the level of social capital within women's

NGOs, since women from the control group exhibited it to a similar degree as did the women from the NGOs.

If we assume that the family members of the women participating in this study belong to the same social group as these women, then the relational social capital shared between them is the same as bonding social capital, which helps people to “get by” but is less capable of helping them “get ahead.”<sup>221</sup> In contrast, relational social capital shared by the women and their friends, their neighbours, and their work colleagues is considered as bridging and linking social capital, helping those women “get ahead.” If we applied these propositions to the findings of this study, we can make two important conclusions. First, women from the control group own a larger stock of bonding social capital than do the women in the NGOs. Second, women in the NGOs own a larger amount of bridging social capital than the women in the control group. Consequently, women in the control group are more likely to just “get by” when they utilize their social capital. In contrast women in the NGOs are more capable of “getting ahead” when they utilize their social capital.

Yet, this categorization of social capital among various social groups may be considered as too simplistic. That is to say, not all social capital among relatives is bonding in nature nor are all the ties between friends, neighbours or co-workers examples of bridging social capital. For example, it is common for people in the towns to share information about job openings with their relatives in the countryside. Subsequently, the relatives from the countryside move to the cities and get additional education and training to advance their careers. In fact, it has already been suggested that this “information

---

<sup>221</sup> Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan, “Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy,” *The World Bank Research Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000): 227.

about jobs” should be incorporated (endogenized) in the famous Harris-Todaro Migration Model.<sup>222</sup> In this endogenized migration model, it has been recognized that social relations and social capital should be taken into account when one uses the rational-choice model to forecast future migration flows. Yet, the problem appears when one tries to categorize this type of social capital. Hence, some authors consider it to be bridging social capital, which “occurs most clearly in the case of migrants, especially poor peasants, who move to a new destination only because of their membership in an extended family network or a racial group.”<sup>223</sup> Here, as we see, membership in a family or a racial group is considered a source of bridging social capital that helps the migrants “get ahead.” This finding directly contradicts the assumption made in the World Bank study on social capital in BiH, which, like many other studies, holds that family can only be a source of bonding social capital.

This conclusion implies that we cannot assume that a woman who socializes the most with her neighbours possesses more bridging social capital than a woman who socializes primarily with her relatives. Consequently, while it is useful to look at the quality of women’s relationships in terms of bridging and bonding ties, equating a particular group of people such as neighbours, family members, work colleagues or friends with only one type of social capital, bridging or bonding, may lead us to misleading conclusions and to misguided policy recommendations.

For example, Croatian and Muslim women interviewed in a village in Usora-Tesanj region were predominantly housewives, without higher education. An assumption that social capital among neighbours of different ethnic background is bridging in nature

---

<sup>222</sup> Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Addison Wesley, 2003), 342.

<sup>223</sup> Ozay Mehmet, M Tahiroglu, and Eric A. L. Li, “Social Capital Formation in Large-Scale development Projects,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 23, no. 2 (2002): 340.

would lead to the conclusion that the promotion of socialization among these women would help them to “get ahead.” Yet, in this case, socialization among the women is barely capable of helping them “get by.” In fact, we may accomplish far more by facilitating new, and strengthening the existing, relationships these women have with more educated women outside their community. Similarly, if we assume, *a priori*, that social capital among neighbours is bonding social capital, the kind that allows women to “get by,” not to “get ahead,” we may again be wrong. For example, in another village called Radusa, the female respondents share their neighbourhood with a judge, a political party leader, local businessmen, and teachers. If we could facilitate and encourage socialization of less educated or unemployed women with these neighbours, we would have provided them with bridging and linking social capital, which could help them to “get ahead.”

It is not the intention of this author to discredit the value of large surveys on social capital such as the one done by the World Bank in BiH; rather, the intention is to warn the analysts that without a more thorough investigation of the subjects of the social relations and without a close up view of the local context in which those relationship take place, we are likely to misinterpret the data. Therefore, to find out more about the nature of social capital in a country, it might be necessary supplement country wide surveys with some more focused qualitative methods.

In addition, we should tailor our policies to the specific circumstances and needs of women in a particular region. For example, if unemployment is the main problem for women, as it is in Bosnia, we should, among other things, aim at encouraging ties and networks between the women and those in the hiring positions. However, when we

closely examine the women's NGOs in BiH, we find that, by and large, they are incapable of being a sort of conduit between the women and their potential employers. First, the NGOs are seldom in the role of employers since the majority of them rely on voluntary work. The trend is likely to continue, since foreign donations are drying up and there are fewer internationally funded projects. Second, the majority of the women's NGOs have weak ties to government, which is one of the largest, if not the largest, employers in the country. Third, the NGOs have hardly any ties with private businessmen, which could also become future employers of the women in the NGOs.

Although the women's NGOs are seldom very successful in direct provision of gainful employment for their female members, they still play an important role in the employment field. One of these roles that the NGOs play is overseeing that employers are committed to the principles of equal opportunity and gender equality. In addition, the NGOs should continue providing various forms of training programs for women. However, there is a lot of space for improvement in this area. For instance, if the NGOs cooperated with the local business owners, they could make those programs more responsive to the needs of local businesses and increase employment opportunities for their members.

#### **4.3.2 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital in Bosnian Women's NGOs**

This section presents the major findings about the presence of organizational (institutional) social capital in the women's NGOs in BiH. As explained in the first chapter, organizational (institutional) social capital refers to various connections that an organization or an institution has with other private or public organizations (institutions) or with important individuals. The data on the level of organizational social capital in

women's NGO has largely been gathered through personal interviews with the leaders and prominent members of the fifteen NGOs participating in the study. The interview questions can be found in the Appendix 5. Additional material has been obtained from various secondary sources such as organizational brochures and NGO websites. In addition, this part of the chapter will also provide an analysis of a number of survey results that are relevant for our understanding of organizational social capital. The focus of the study is on examining the institutional ties between the women's NGOs and other NGOs, government institutions and government officials, and local businessmen.

#### **4.3.2.1 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital between NGOs and NGO Networks**

Organizational (institutional) social capital consists of vertical and horizontal ties. While urban NGOs possess more of this kind of social capital, even the rural and small town NGOs often have ties with similar organizations from other parts of the country. However, many of these NGOs face the same or very similar problems which they are incapable of solving, so their cooperation most often consists of organizing joint social gatherings. Some of the women expressed their scepticism about the utility of this kind of horizontal ties, saying that they can benefit very little from cooperating with women who are in the same situation as them and are incapable of solving their own problems.<sup>224</sup>

Rather than bonding and cooperation, competition and animosity are more likely to occur when two or more women's NGOs with overlapping objectives and activities exist in the same town. In some cases, this animosity is a result of ideological differences among the women living in certain communities. For example, one woman mentioned that the local government officials who are unhappy with the multiethnic character of her

---

<sup>224</sup> Hajra Camdzic, interview by author, Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.

NGO helped create a rival women's organization with the single purpose of undermining her organization.

However, when objectives and activities are clearly separated between different NGOs located in the same region, it is possible to achieve cooperation among them. In fact, in some cities such as Tuzla and Dobož a number of local NGOs got together and organized coordinating bodies. In Tuzla, the network of local NGOs called *Referentna Grupa* (*Reference Group*) consists of around 60 NGOs working in the fields such as human rights, development, legal reforms, psychosocial counselling, NGO capacity building, and media relations.<sup>225</sup> Women in the NGO *Bospo* speak very positively about their membership in *Referentna Grupa*. They find the network useful for mobilizing NGOs around a particular issue, increasing their strength when lobbying government.<sup>226</sup>

It has also been noted by some women that creation of NGO networks enhances the efficacy of the NGO sector in BiH, since it allows for better coordination of activities, reducing the incidence of duplication of certain activities by a number of different NGOs.<sup>227</sup> In addition, women in Dobož have realized that local networks allow them to design more comprehensive projects, since different organizations are capable of offering a strong input in matters related to their area of expertise.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, the NGO "networking" also enhances the strength of individual NGOs by allowing women to "exchange ideas and knowledge."<sup>229</sup>

Yet, even networking is sometimes driven by international donors. As one woman explained, some NGOs cooperate in order to secure funding, since networking has

---

<sup>225</sup> To find out more visit Referentna Grupa [website], <http://www.linkngo.org>

<sup>226</sup> Nelvedina Meskic, interview by author, Tuzla, 26 July 2004.

<sup>227</sup> Gordana Vidovic, interview by author, Modrica, 13 July 2004.

<sup>228</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Dobož, 8 Jun 2004.

<sup>229</sup> Mara Radovanovic, interview by author, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

become “fashionable” with the donors.<sup>230</sup> For example, some donors such as the Swedish NGO *Kvinna till Kvinna* strongly encourage creation of networks between the local women’s NGOs they fund.<sup>231</sup> In fact, four of the fifteen NGOs in my study are the members of the *Kvinna till Kvinna* network. Yet, all of them are urban NGOs based in Banja Luka, Modrica, Bijeljina, and Sarajevo. Similarly, other two major networks *Ring* and *BiH Women’s Economic Network* are dominated by urban women.

Only three of fifteen NGOs participating in this study do not belong to some type of NGO network. The three NGOs are *Uzok* from Kakanj, *Cicmanka* from Novi Seher, and *Stublicanka* from Sevarlije. While *Uzok* is in a small town, the other two NGOs are located in villages. Unlike members of *Cicmanka* and *Stublicanka*, women in *Uzok* were familiar with the existence of such networks. They, however, think that NGO networks are the elite groupings of urban NGOs from the largest BiH cities and that these elite NGOs benefit from the networks while smaller NGOs only waste their time at the joint meetings.<sup>232</sup> Although they were suspicious about the usefulness of entering such networks, the women in the leadership positions of *Uzok* were so concerned about survival of their organization that they were actually considering joining a network.

However, even the three NGOs that do not belong to NGO networks have some links to other NGOs in BiH, although, in comparison with the NGOs located in the major cities, their stock of organizational social capital is more limited. In addition, as the woman in *Uzok* suggested above, NGOs in larger cities might be gaining more from these networks than do the rural and the small town NGOs. Indeed, some of the large city NGOs have received funding as a result of the networks they formed with small town and

---

<sup>230</sup> Nelvedina Meskic, interview by author, Tuzla, 26 July 2004.

<sup>231</sup> See *Kvinna till Kvinna* [website], available at <http://www.iktk.se>

<sup>232</sup> Munevera Zecevic, interview by author, Kakanj, 13 July 2004.

rural NGOs. For instance, all of the major urban NGOs have received funding for implementing various educative projects in rural areas or small towns. However, the small town and the rural NGOs can make considerable gains from these networks although their gains might be more indirect, coming from the utilization of the organizational social capital formed through the networks. Probably the best illustration of this is the case of the earlier-mentioned economic gains of women in the Usora-Tesanj region which resulted from utilization of their social capital networks.

#### **4.3.2.2 Institutionalized (Organizational) Social Capital with Government and Government Officials**

While all NGOs have some institutionalized social capital with other NGOs, considerably fewer have social capital links with government institutions and government official. In general, as Deacon and Stubbs suggest, links between government and civil society are not well developed.<sup>233</sup> That can certainly be seen as a legacy of the communist rule when government was suspicious of all independent citizens' activities and many citizens were mistrustful of government. But, it is also a consequence of international intervention in BiH, since both the government and NGOs competed for outside funding. As a number of interviewed women explained, generally, those officials saw their NGOs as competition, getting funds from international agencies to provide the services that should be in the government's jurisdiction.<sup>234</sup>

The reason why some women's NGOs have weak links to various levels of government is because of their dependence on international donors. In general, the donors

---

<sup>233</sup> Deacon, and Stubbs.

<sup>234</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Doboj, 8 Jun 2004; Ruza Vlajkovic, interview by author, Tesanj, 29 May 2004; Aleksandra Radeta Stegic, interview by author, Banja Luka, 27 August, 2004; and Mara Radovanovic, interview by author, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

have funded the NGOs to be potential opposition to nationalistic governments in power in BiH. Therefore, their aim was to strengthen the NGOs in relation to the state and not to strengthen cooperation between the two. Recently, the situation is starting to change slowly with some of the donors such as the European Commission (EC) and the World Bank starting to encourage cooperation between the local governments and local NGOs by imposing various conditions on their donations. For instance, some of the women's NGOs were offered large grants from the EC and the Bank when they secured cooperation and participation, varying from 5 percent – 10 percent of funds, of the local governments. Thus, recently NGOs have been encouraged to seek cooperation and partnership of the local governments.

At the same time, the attitudes of the government officials have changed dramatically, as they became more accepting of the newly emerged NGO sector. The change was largely a result of increased support that the NGO sector received from the international community that was determined to build a strong civil society in the country. In order to attract to their communities funding and loans from international institutions, local government officials were forced to tolerate the sector and to cooperate with various NGOs on the implementation of different projects and initiatives. For instance, as mentioned earlier, the international community insisted that women's NGOs participate in the creation of the Gender Equality Law. This cooperation resulted in the emergence of social capital based on trust between government and certain women's NGOs. For instance, one woman said that their "relationship with the local government has improved so much that they find it easier to deal with the government's officials than

with some other NGOs or with ordinary citizens.”<sup>235</sup> Some of the NGOs such as *Lara* from Bijeljina and *Udružene Žene* [*United Women*] from Banja Luka received achievement awards from their local governments and have them proudly displayed in their offices.

Some of the stronger NGOs have institutionalized this social capital. For instance, *Lara* regularly organizes an event called “Coffee with Mayor,” in which all the interested women get a chance to meet the city Mayor and to express their concerns. They also invite major local political parties to come and present their platforms to the local women who then not only decide whether to campaign for and support a particular party but also hold it accountable for keeping their promises after elections.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, *Medica*’s work on domestic violence involves constant cooperation with various government agencies and institutions such as police, legal institutions, health care agencies, and Centres for Social Work. In the words of one of the members of *Medica* members, the government has expressed willingness to support them financially, but it is unable to do so, because it lacks necessary funds. Clearly, statements like these confirm that these women have much more faith in government agencies than do the women who have no contact with government officials.

Yet, the data from the survey given in Table 5 column 2 seem to contradict this conclusion. Namely, it shows that the women in the control group trust local community institutions more than do the women in the NGO group. Consequently, 77.8 percent of the women from the former group said that they would make financial contributions to the local institutions compared to 57.2 percent of women in the latter group. However,

---

<sup>235</sup> Nelvedina Meskic, interview by author, Tuzla, 26 July 2004.

<sup>236</sup> Mara Radovanovic, interview by author, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

rather than contradicting the previous conclusion, this finding proves that the women in the control group have the most trust in the institutions in their immediate surroundings, with which the women have regular contact. This conclusion can also be reached when one analyses the data in the second column of the table. The data shows that the women in control group trust their local religious organizations more than do the women in the NGO group.

In short, the more contacts women have with an institution, the more trust they have in those institutions. In turn, the more trust that the women have in these institutions the more likely they are to approach them when they need assistance. This is important because it suggests that if we increase the level of organizational (institutional) social capital between the government and the women's NGOs, increasing generally low level of trust in government institutions, we would also encourage a more active participation of women in the society, narrowing down the gender gap.

#### **4.3.2.3 Organizational (Institutional) Social Capital with Local Business Communities**

If, as suggested in the previous paragraph, regular contacts and cooperation between the two actors is necessary for generating trust, then the women in NGOs and the local business people have little chance of generating it. As this study strongly indicates, connections between the women's NGOs and local business people are extremely weak. None of the interviewed women indicated that their NGOs have institutionalized ties with their business communities. Some contacts do occur between them but they are usually limited to NGOs asking the business people for small donations for organizing special events. As one woman explained, private individuals are unlikely

to start making larger donations in future, since current laws do not make those donations tax deductible.<sup>237</sup> Yet, regardless of the legal structure, it is unrealistic for the NGOs to expect larger donations from the local businesses due to the general weakness of economy.

In fact, none of the interviewed women expressed awareness of any value of nurturing social capital with the local business persons other than to get occasionally small donations from them. None of the organizations sees reaching out to business community as one of its aims. The fact that institutionalized social capital between the NGOs and the businesses is almost nonexistent is very unfortunate, because this kind of social capital could increase training and employment opportunities for women in the NGOs.

#### **4.4 Social Capital in the NGOs and Empowerment of Bosnian Women**

This part of the essay evaluates roles of relational and organizational (institutional) social capital in empowering women in Bosnian NGOs as well as Bosnian women in general. As previously mentioned, I defined the NGOs as “women’s” when their leaders and majority of their members are female, not when they deal exclusively with women’s issues. This definition is open to criticism from those who believe that “unless they are feminist,” women’s organizations are “products of the culture” that prevents or ignores women’s empowerment and thus “are unlikely to have developed an approach which prioritises the empowerment needs of women.”<sup>238</sup> However, whether or not non-feminist NGOs empower women depends largely on one’s definition of

---

<sup>237</sup> Mara Radovanovic, interview by author, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

<sup>238</sup> Jo Rowlands, “A Word of the Times, but What Does it Mean?: Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development,” In *Women and Empowerment: Illustrations from the Third World*, ed. Haleh Afshar (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998), 28.

empowerment. In fact, like social capital, empowerment is a contentious concept that can be defined in many different ways.

My study finds that, like social capital, empowerment is context specific. As Saraswati Raju explains “we have to contextualize the changes in order to appreciate the changes;” as a result, “one cannot have a uniformly applicable blueprint or yardstick for measurement.”<sup>239</sup> Therefore, the Rowlands’ suggestion cited above that only feminists are capable of providing an adequate definition of women’s empowerment, in my opinion, limits the scope of empowerment and fails to recognize some less radical, yet significant, empowerment successes of women in local NGOs. In addition, to avoid charges of Western feminist imperialism, it is important to seek local definitions of empowerment and to analyze the changes in the local context.

There is another reason for the inadequacy of a single definition of empowerment; namely, as Richa Nagar explains, the “concept of empowerment is fraught with contradictions” and “interventions that seek to empower women in one sphere often lead—unintentionally of course—to disempowerment in another realm.”<sup>240</sup> Therefore, while it is important to let local women themselves define their own empowerment, it is equally important to analyze their definitions and to point to their limitations or certain contradictions that they may entail. Among others, feminist analysis and critique is warranted to point to those contradictions. For instance, as mentioned earlier, women in the NGO *Cicmanka* feel that getting out of their houses to knit with other women in their NGO is empowering. Yet, it has been pointed out rightly by many feminist writers that these kinds of NGO activities reinforce stereotypical view of women’s activities. In other

---

<sup>239</sup> Richa Nagar and Saraswati Raju, “Women, NGOs and the Contradictions of Empowerment and Disempowerment: A Conversation,” *Antipode* 35, no. 1 (2003): 11.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

words, the women's activities seem to be both empowering, from their point of view, and disempowering, from the point of view of an analyst from outside.

In fact, there seems to be a conflict between a local and a more general definition of empowerment. However, the two definitions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. We can use the former to assess change of women's status in the local context while the latter can be employed to analyze how the former empowerment affects, positively or negatively, wider political, social and economic structural constraints that limit the range of opportunities for women. In addition, a more inclusive definition of empowerment can be created that would combine different approaches. For instance, as Raju suggested, a capabilities approach can be used to identify a common denominator for different definitions of empowerment.<sup>241</sup> Subsequently, empowerment can be defined as any change that increases the capabilities of women, even if it reinforces some of the existing limitations on women's capabilities.

To measure the empowerment of BiH women, my study uses both predefined, widely accepted indicators of empowerment that generated quantitative data and the local qualitative indicators. The predefined indicators employed to measure empowerment are changes in women's participation in political and economic activities and their resistance to unfavourable power relations in their families. With regards to political empowerment, the data collected sheds the light on the willingness of Bosnian women to lobby government officials and to participate in demonstrations. In addition, the survey also provides data on the willingness of women to participate in the local elections, held in October 2004. Women's change of career (or intended change) during their membership

---

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 8., See also Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

in the NGOs or in the last year for women in the control group is taken as an indicator of their economic advancement. The study also provides some data on the empowerment of women regarding decision making in their families.

As already mentioned, these predefined determinants of empowerment proved inadequate in many cases. Therefore, the quantitative data gathered from the survey was supplemented with qualitative data from the interviews with the women, which allowed the women to provide their own definitions of empowerment.

#### **4.4.1 Political Empowerment of Bosnian Women**

As Table 7 shows, women in the women's NGOs are more likely to engage in public activities than women from the control group. For instance, 48.6 percent of the NGO women said that they participated in citizens' gatherings to improve delivery of some public services while only 5.6 percent of the women in the control group did so. Similarly, 45.7 percent of the NGO women have signed petitions to improve the services compared to 16.7 percent of women in the control group who have done the same. While the NGO women participate more in public demonstrations and contact local media more often than do women from the control group, the difference in percentages is not very significant. In fact, most of the women expressed their dislike of public demonstrations. When it comes to media questions, two explanations are possible. First, the NGOs often have one person in charge of the media relations. Therefore, not all women feel comfortable with approaching the media. Second, not all NGOs have connections to media, which limits their public exposure. Generally, the low participation of women in various activities to improve public services can also be explained by their lack of time to participate in those activities. The fact that a great percentage of women made financial

contributions to improve those services suggests that the women find them valuable even though they are not always able to contribute to their improvement.

In fact, the women are even willing to engage in a more aggressive lobbying when the cause is very important to them. For instance, although the women expressed their dislike of public protests, they are likely to engage in such a political action if there is a danger to local life. As Table 8 shows, 85.7 percent of the NGO women would partake in the protest while 61.1 percent of women in the control group would do the same. The gap between the NGO and non-NGO women can largely be attributed to the latter group's lack of belief in the effectiveness of such an action, as 22.2 percent of them explained. It confirms the idea that women in the NGO group are more confident about their ability to influence the decision-making in their communities.

While it can be said that the women's participation in local protests does little to address the wider structural constraints which keep them away from decision-making positions, it is a valuable indicator of their willingness to engage in political activities when they clearly see the negative consequences of their inaction. This conclusion is significant because it shows that if women become informed about all other negative consequences of their political inaction, they might start engaging in politics more often than they do at the present time.

This conclusion is confirmed in the following example. As the data in Table 10 shows, 82 percent of the NGO women expressed their intention to vote in the local elections compared to 55.6 percent of the women in the control group who did so. In Table 13 we see that 77.1 percent of the women in the NGO group believe that Bosnian women are underrepresented in the political field, while only 33.3 percent of the women

in the control group believe so. This confirms the idea that when women are aware of the problem that has negative consequences for them they are more likely to act to solve it. This willingness to vote expressed by the NGO women is remarkable, considering that in BiH many people do not vote, feeling powerless to change or influence decision making processes.

#### **4.4.2 Economic Empowerment of Bosnian Women**

While the greatest percentage of women identifies inadequate political representation of women as the most accurate description of current status of women in BiH, fewer women are aware of the economic disadvantages that the Bosnian women encounter as a result of gender discrimination. Namely, as Table 13 shows, only 48.6 percent of women in the NGO group and 22.2 percent of women in the control group recognize that women in BiH are in a worse economic position than men.

However, a somewhat higher percentage believes that creation of new economic opportunities for women in BiH is necessary in order to change the status of women in the country. In Table 14 we see that 68.6 percent of women in the NGO group and 38.9 percent of women in the control group believe that new economic opportunities for women are necessary. The higher percentages in Table 14 compared to Table 13 can probably be explained by the fact that some women see poverty as having negative effects on both men and women. Therefore, they believe that the new economic opportunities would improve the status of poor women as well as poor men.

The study also aims to establish whether NGO membership is related to women's success in finding a job or their intention to change their career. The results can be found in the first two rows of Table 11. What can be concluded from this data is that there is no

significant difference between the NGO group and the control group. In fact, a slightly higher percentage of women in the control group answered that they looked for employment or received additional education. There are a few possible explanations for these results.

First, the women in the control group are somewhat younger on average and younger women are generally more likely to seek jobs or to go back to school. Second, during the interviews, it became apparent that the women in NGOs do not consider the knowledge and skills gained through NGO participation as a form of education in the regular sense of the word. They associate schooling (*obrazovanje*) with children's learning while referring their own learning in NGOs as "edukacija" (a word that is visibly foreign in origin and is less commonly used in BiH). Similarly, it is very likely that many women did not count the programs they attended in their NGOs as taking courses, since they consider them to be the more informal types of knowledge. Yet these programs have a positive effect on the economic position of the women. For instance, some training programs allow the women to learn various trades such as hairdressing and tailoring. They give the women opportunity to learn foreign languages (most commonly English) and teach women how to use computers, opening up some new employment opportunities for them. Other programs teach women about business and management, giving them confidence to engage in private enterprises. Third, for some women, joining NGOs means employment. Consequently, they do not seek further career advancement outside their NGOs.

However, direct employment in women's NGOs is a limited venue for women's empowerment. Namely, the six NGOs from my study which provide wages for some of

its members are all urban NGOs. These NGOs are *Bospo*, *Lara*, *Buducnost*, *Udruzene Zene* from Banja Luka, *Zene Zenama* [*Women to Women*], and *Medica*. The women in rural or small town NGOs, however, have more difficulty in obtaining project funds and in receiving salaries as NGO members. Moreover, the NGOs whose members receive salaries are not based on large membership, so only five to six women who represent the core of the NGOs receive the economic benefits.

The majority of the women who receive income from their NGO participation have succeeded in doing so by utilizing various relational and institutional (organizational) social capital networks. Using social capital networks of its urban partner Ruza Vlajkovic, even the rural women in NGO *Udruzenje Poljoprivrednica Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja* succeeded in creating economic opportunities for the members of their NGO. As previously mentioned, the women were economically empowered by being able to earn an income from milk production. In addition, this example shows that economic and social empowerments are interlinked. Namely, the social status of the women improved since they succeeded in doing what men could not: they secured regular milk collection in their villages.

Some NGOs such as *Plamen* and *Forum Zena- Sabina Janakovic* empower women economically by using their relational social capital to run micro-credit schemes. Although this form of empowerment is limited by the relatively small size of this credit, it is still significant. First, the credit is an important coping mechanism in times when the women are going through crises. Second, by providing the women with a larger sum of money than they usually possess, this credit increases the range of the women's opportunities.

#### 4.4.3 Social Empowerment of Bosnian Women

Social empowerment encompasses the individual empowerment of women as well as the more general, collective empowerment of women in society. It is important to acknowledge that some of these forms of empowerment have political implications. For instance, individual empowerment of women vis-à-vis men in the private sphere is rightfully considered as a political issue by some feminist writers. Yet, this form of empowerment is placed under the heading of social empowerment because majority of women in Bosnia would not consider it to be a political issue.

One way to look at empowerment is to measure change in women's strength within their families. In part, empowerment is expressed through women's confidence and their ability to assert their own will in deciding the future of their families. To measure this change, my study asked the women if they have challenged or considered challenging the way their families make decisions with regards to major purchases, household chores, or child care. The initial assumption was that, being more familiar with gender inequalities and having more social capital to rely on, the women in the NGO group would be more likely to challenge their power status within their families. In addition, since women in the NGO group are older than women in the control group, it is expected that their power vis-à-vis men is on the rise, making them more likely to challenge the ways in which their family decisions are made.

However, the results which can be found in Table 11 contradict this assumption. Namely, only 14.3 percent of women in the NGO group answered positively to this question while 33.3 percent of women in the control group did so. Trying to explain this contradiction, I looked at the marital status of the women, assuming that women who are

single, widowed, or divorced are more in charge of their lives. Therefore, it is expected that those women answer negatively to the question since most often they are the heads of the households. Since 45.7 percent of women in the NGO group belong to this group compared to 38.9 of women in the control group, naturally, the larger percentage of women in the NGO group do not have a need to challenge the decision making processes in their families.

While marital status of women does partially explain why more women in the control group challenge their husbands, it does not explain what empowered those women to challenge the men. Perhaps, the answer lies in the fact that broader changes are taking place in the society. That is, women are being collectively empowered although this empowerment is unequal, depending on factors such as level of women's education and place of their residence.

Another explanation was suggested to me by rural women that I interviewed. Namely, many of the women have noticed that their husbands have changed a lot since the women had joined the NGOs. Many women noted that their husbands respected them more, since they saw that their wives are capable of making improvements in their communities through their NGOs. Furthermore, women have noticed that their husbands are more receptive of the new roles of their wives than they had been before. Since the husbands of the women in NGOs are more willing to accept new roles of their wives, those women have less need to openly challenge their husbands than do the women who are not in NGOs. In other words, NGO membership not only empowers women vis-à-vis men but it also makes men more gender sensitive.

#### 4.4.4 Collective Empowerment

In addition to empowering women individually, women's NGOs play an important role in the collective empowerment of women in society. Many of the women's NGOs were directly or indirectly involved in formulation of the Gender Equality Law. Similarly, some of them played an important role in the fight to criminalize violence against women, making this "taboo topic" a subject of open discussions.<sup>242</sup> Other NGOs provide support services for women, empowering them to take on new identities and new roles. In addition, the NGOs are involved in changing attitudes of both men and women in their communities. For instance, women in village Sevarlije observed a very dramatic change of attitudes toward divorce since their NGO became active. As one of them explained, whereas before mothers would say to their daughters who were thinking of leaving their abusive husbands: "You know where [river] Bosnia is! Do not come back to me!" meaning they had better kill themselves than bring shame to their families, now the mothers encourage their daughters to leave their abusive husbands by saying: "Shame lasts until lunchtime while suffering lasts forever."<sup>243</sup>

There is little doubt that all women gain from the changed attitudes of the Bosnian people, who went from being highly mistrustful and critical of women's organizations to accepting them as something normal. As Table 12 shows, only 20 percent of women answered that people in their communities treat them differently since they became NGO members. Some of these women answered that the change in the treatment has been a positive one. This change in attitudes towards women's NGOs is important because it reflects the increasing belief of both men and women that women should play a greater

---

<sup>242</sup> Julka Erceg, interview by author, Dobož, 8 Jun 2004.

<sup>243</sup> Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Dobož, 14 Jun 2004.

role in their communities. What is interesting to note is that even more traditional NGOs contribute to this change attitudes towards women's organizations. Namely, aiming to preserve traditional beliefs, women in these NGOs are forced to enter public sphere and get involved in number of activities which are not usually performed by women. In other words, by struggling to preserve tradition, these women defy it.

This change of attitudes towards women's NGOs also has a positive impact on the confidence of women in the NGOs who believe that they are major agents of change in their communities. For instance, in Table 14 we see that the largest percentage of women in the NGO group 77 percent believe that NGOs are the most significant actors in changing the status of BiH women although all of them acknowledge the importance of a multidimensional approach to fighting gender inequalities. In other words, women feel that things are changing, that the status of women is improving. And more importantly, they feel that they are the main agents of change. And this is true for women in urban and rural areas.

While it is commonly argued that only middle class urban women are involved in Bosnian NGOs, my research finds that the organizing of rural women is also becoming viewed as ordinary. In fact, as mentioned earlier, many women identified this ability to assemble in a public space as an important form of their empowerment. The importance of women's bonding that takes place in the NGOs gets underestimated if we believe that their social capital as allowing them only to "get by," not to "move forward." For many Bosnian women who suffered tremendously during the war and who continue to face hardships in their everyday lives, the support they get in the NGOs is extremely

important. It is not only something that keeps them “get by” in spite of all hardships but is also something without which they would not be able to “move forward.”

The best illustration of the importance of bonding relationships for empowerment of women is the story about how a hairdresser in NGO *Plamen* joined the NGO. After going through an emotional crisis, the woman felt unable to continue her career, so she decided to close her salon. Finally, she decided to seek emotional support and went to *Plamen*. After a while, the woman started recovering and, as a form of gratitude to the women in the NGO, she started providing hairdressing service for the women in the NGO. Later, she started a training programme for the NGO members who are interested in learning the trade. Her old customers joined the NGO in order to receive her service and to support her.<sup>244</sup> As a result, the NGO membership increased as well as its stock of social capital. Clearly, the bonding relationships helped the hairdresser to start working again, empowering her financially. This leads to the conclusion that both horizontal and vertical ties are important for empowerment of the women.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

As the World Bank’s study suggests, in BiH bonding social capital networks take precedence over other types of social capital which seem in decline. In the case of Bosnian women, we saw that they have the strongest links to their family members and close friends. Since, by and large, these horizontal networks are incapable of providing support for the women to move forward, it is important that the women also have access to diverse vertical networks. In many cases, women’s NGOs provide women with these vertical social capital networks. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of space for improvement, since horizontal networks are dominant forms of social capital in the

---

<sup>244</sup> Senada Dzankic, interview by author, Zavidovici, 10 September, 2004.

NGOs. If the NGOs aim to empower women, as many of them declare, then they should strengthen their links with business sector and make their social capital accessible to all women.

We also saw that in many NGOs relational social capital is far more present than institutional social capital. Although, as we saw in this chapter, both types of social capital are important for empowerment of women, women in NGOs should strive to acquire more of the institutional social capital. That is so because, as we saw in the first chapter, institutional social capital is more stable than relational social capital. In addition, as opposed to relational social capital, institutional social capital is capable of empowering a greater number of women, since it is accessible to a larger number of NGO members. Lastly, institutional social capital is usually more diverse than relational social capital, since it is not confined to a single NGO.

Certainly, as in the case of other types of capital, whether and how a woman will use social capital available in her NGO is determined by her personal characteristics such as her attitude towards risk taking and her entrepreneurial abilities. So, not all women will be equally empowered as a result of their NGO membership. Yet, membership in the NGOs increases the likelihood that the women will seize the opportunities that the social capital opens for them. Namely, membership in the women's NGOs provides safety nets for the women and gives them emotional or financial support. Strengthened this way, women become more likely to utilize the social capital for their social, economic, or political advancement.

## CONCLUSION

Even ten years after war ended, Bosnia is still struggling to maintain its stability and revive its economy. As this essay explained, women have little input in the political, social and economic reforms that are taking place, since they remain marginalized and largely excluded from decision making positions. Therefore, processes like democratizations, privatization, and social security reforms are controlled by men and receive little scrutiny from Bosnian women. Among the few exceptions are women in some NGOs who are raising awareness of the effects of those reforms on the local women. In addition to being unconstitutional, this exclusion of women limits the country's growth, since its limited human resources are not adequately utilized.

Therefore, it is very valuable having women's NGOs in BiH raise awareness of the negative effects of women's exclusion. That is especially true since, as this study has proved, women are more willing to engage in political activities to resist the inequalities when they are aware of the negative consequences of their inaction. Moreover, since the NGOs act like "rain makers," spreading benefits of their social capital to the rest of their communities, the awareness raised in NGOs gets diffused through relational social capital ties to other women in their communities. It would be useful to survey local women who have relational ties with women in NGOs to determine whether such diffusion takes place. Such a study would not only shed more light on usefulness of relational social capital between women in NGOs and non-NGO members but would also provide more empirical data on the role of the women's NGOs in changing political status of women.

## **1 Women's NGOs, Social Capital and Empowerment**

This study has confirmed the value of using social capital approach in assessing the ways in which NGO membership empowers women. Social capital approach draws the attention to interpersonal relationships within NGOs which is important for our understanding of functioning of NGOs but is one of the neglected areas of the research on NGOs. In addition, social capital serves as a link between women in NGOs and empowerment. Namely, simple membership in an NGO is seldom enough to assure that women will get empowered. However, if by joining an NGO women gain access to new sources of information or if they build supportive relationships with other women in the NGOs, in other words if they gain social capital, they have more avenues for empowerment.

Indeed, this study indicates strongly that women in NGOs are more politically empowered than women who are not NGO members. A majority of women in the NGO group believe that they can influence decision making processes in their communities and that they are important agents of change of the status of women in their country. In terms of economic empowerment, women's NGOs proved to be far less successful. We saw that the NGOs have very weak links with the private sector, which diminishes their ability to open new employment opportunities to their members. While a small number of women in the urban areas receive some money for their work in NGOs, women in rural and small town NGOs are less successful in obtaining compensation for their work. However, women in both types of NGOs experience some economic empowerment through their use of social capital. In terms of wider, social empowerment of women, we saw that some positive changes are taking place. Every woman I interviewed has told me

that the status of women is improving. In addition, even the women in the control group have shown the signs of empowerment that took place in the period between year 2003 and 2004. Possibly, activities of both the NGOs and the government are having a positive effect on women. In fact, since some traditional beliefs and gender stereotypes are very strong, a more comprehensive effort that includes government incentives, media campaigns, and early education reforms is necessary to eradicate gender inequality. In fact, most of the women, especially the women in NGO group, recognize that multiplicity of actions is necessary to improve status of women.<sup>245</sup>

## **2 Limitations of NGO Empowerment**

While social capital in women's NGOs proves to be empowering for the Bosnian women, there are some limitations to this empowerment. First, women's NGOs exclude certain groups that should become more involved in the effort to end gender stereotypes and gender discriminations. Most notably, women's NGOs largely exclude men who are generally in positions of power in the society. In addition, the NGO membership is rarely extended to Roma women while young women are rarely in the leadership positions of the NGOs.

In addition, as we saw in the previous chapter, while NGOs are visibly making a difference in social and political status of women, they are less successful in facilitating economic advancement of the women. In particular, empowerment of women in rural NGOs remains very limited, since they deal with very limited opportunities and insufficient resources. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study indicates that women's NGOs contribute greatly to improvement of status of Bosnian women, since even the rural women gain by utilizing their social capital.

---

<sup>245</sup> See Table 14 in Appendix 6.

### **3 Implications for Social Capital Literature**

While examining women's NGOs using social capital approach illuminated some important characteristics of NGOs, helping us better understand the complex nature of various links and networks within women's NGOs, the reverse is also true. Examination of social capital of the women's NGOs led to better understanding of the nature of social capital and resulted in introduction of a new classification of social capital into two groups: relational and organizational (institutional) social capital. In addition, discussion about these two types of social capital provided some explanations about the problems of measurement of social capital, suggesting that it is easier to measure organizational social capital than organizational social capital. Yet, as this essay argues, both types of social capital benefit women. That is why measuring relational social capital, as difficult as it may be, is an important task.

In terms of methodology, the study confirmed the necessity of combining quantitative and qualitative data in order to gain fuller understanding of social capital. Yet, it also indicates that different types of social capital require different research methods. Studying relational social capital requires focusing on a few organizations in order to gain an in-depth understanding of relations between the women in the NGO. It also requires more reliance on qualitative methods and observations. Studying organizational social capital, on the other hand, allows for a greater employment of quantitative methods as well as large sample studies and comparative analyses.

Finally, the study strongly suggests that social capital is a valuable end in itself, not only a means for reaching an end. As few women explained, bonding with other women is the most important benefit of their NGO participation, since it provides them

with someone they can trust and from whom they get emotional support and understanding. This bonding makes women feel strong, so much so that even the women from weak, rural NGOs wanted me to write one thing about women in their NGOs: To write how strong and emancipated they were.<sup>246</sup>

---

<sup>246</sup> Hasna Tutan, interview by author, Novi Seher, Maglaj, 06 July 2004; and Alma Canic, interview by author, Sevarlije, Doboj, 14 Jun 2004.

**Appendix 1: Abbreviations**

AFW Anti-fascist Front of Women

BiH Bosnia and Herzegovina

RS Republika Srpska

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

EC European Commission

FBiH Federation of BiH

GDP Gross Domestic Product

IC International Community

ICVA International Council of Voluntary Agencies

IDP Internally Displaced Persons

IMF International Monetary Fund

INGO International Non-governmental Organization

NGO Non-governmental Organization

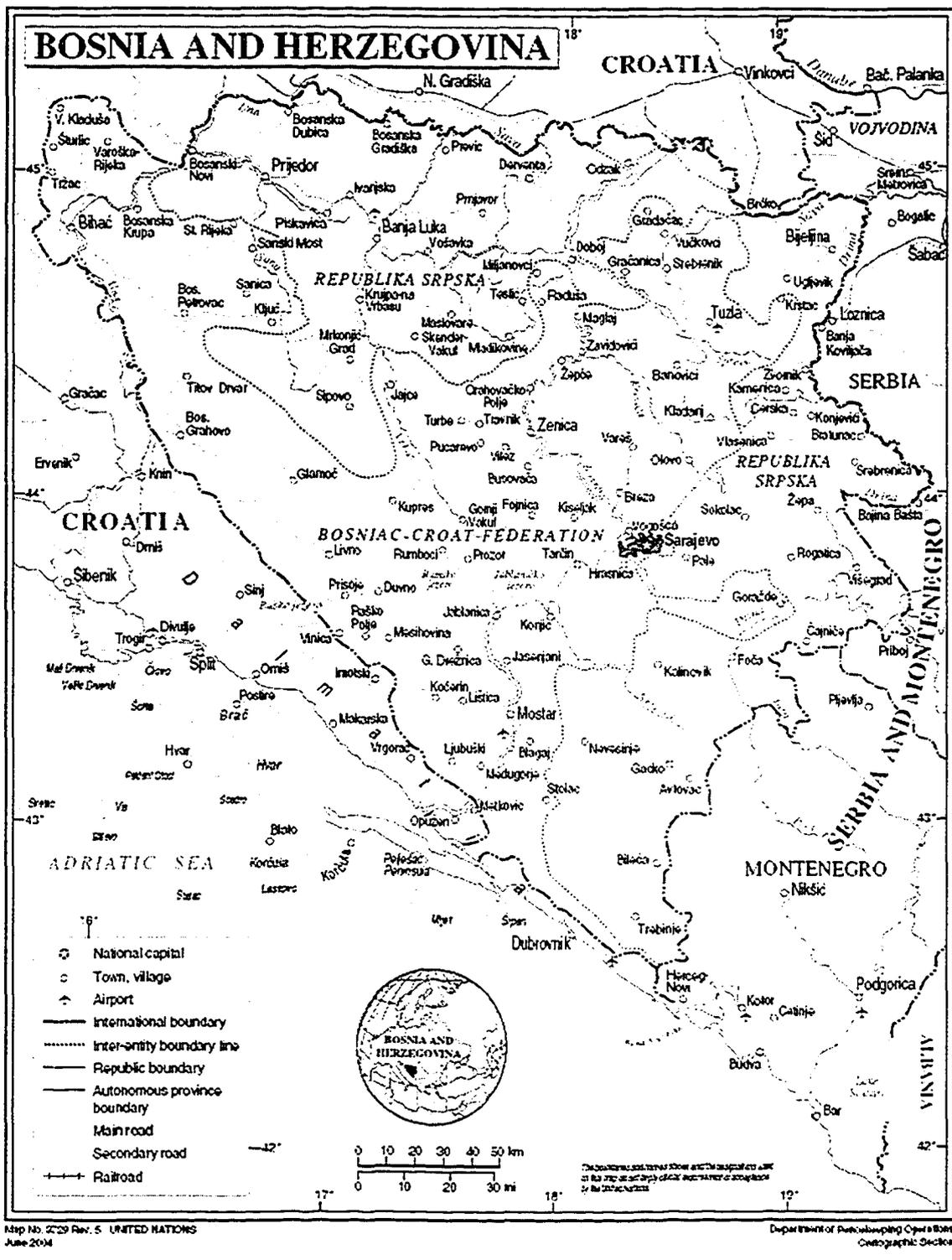
OHR Office of High Representative

OSCE Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SFOR Stabilization Force

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Appendix 2: Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



	NGO name	Place	Members	Main goals and activities of NGO
1	Cicmanka	Village- Novi Seher (Maglaj)	266 women volunteers	Helping returnees and women, socialization of women outside their houses, psycho-social help to women, hand craft production
2	Udruzenje Polj. Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja (Association of Women U-T Region)	Village- Ljetinic (Tesanj)	300 women volunteers	Development of agriculture and farming, production of healthy food
3	Stublicanka	Village- Sevarlije (Doboj)	80 women mostly volunteers	Promotion of gender equality, increasing political participation of women in local institutions, socialization and hand craft production
4	Plamen (Flame)	Town- Zavidovici	60 women, some paid	Socialization of women, psycho-social help; run a child care center, hair salon. a small coffee shob. and a fitness club
5	Zene Teslica (Women of Teslic)	Town- Teslic	45 women and 2 men- all volunteers	Provision of legal and social protection to women, hand craft, agriculture, education, sport, reconstruction
6	Forum Zena-Tesanj (Forum of Women)	Town- Tesanj	380 women volunteers	Poverty reduction in local communities, help to women in all aspects of life, increasing political participation of women.
7	Uzok	Town- Kakanj	65 women volunteers	Improving socio-economic position of women, providing help to all those who need it (old, kids), hand craft production
8	Zene Doboja (Wome n of Doboj)	Town- Doboj	100 women 5 men, all volunteers	Helping women, displaced persons, returnees, and unemployed, rising women's awareness, promoting tolerance
9	Forum Zena- Sabina Janakovic (Forum of Women S. J.)	Town- Olovo	60 women volunteers	Economic support to households, socialization of women, humanitarian work, psycho-therapy, cooperation with NGOs
10	Buducnost (the Future)	Town- Modrica	Core 7 women plus 12 volunteers	Development of civil society, support to women, promotion of women's rights. and harmonization of Gender Law with other laws
11	Udruzene Zene (United Women)	City- Banja Luka	3 women 1 men	Provision of legal help to women, increasing political participation of women, helping women victims of violence

12	Medica	City- Zenica	80 women, few men have temporary positions	Improving the quality of life of women in BiH, protection of human rights. violence prevention and help to victims of violence
13	Zene Zenama (Women to Women)	City- Sarajevo	Core 5-6 women, plus about 90 men and women	Political education of women, raising gender awareness, prevention of violence against women and prevention of trafficking of women
14	Bospo	City- Tuzla	6 women	Democratization, strengthening of civil society, provision of legal help to returnees, and provision of social aid to women
15	Lara	City- Bijeljina	Core 4-5 women	Prevention of trafficking and help to the victims, raising political awareness and participation of women

#### Appendix 4: List of Interviews

Aleksandra Radeta Stegic, secretary general of NGO *Udružene Žene* [*United Women*], Banja Luka, 27 August, 2004.

Alma Canic, leader of NGO *Stublicanka*, Sevarlije, Doboj, 14 Jun 2004.

Dragana Becarevic, leader of NGO *Žene Teslica* [*Women of Teslic*], Teslic, 08 Jun 2004.

Duska Andric-Ruzicic, director of NGO *Medica*, Zenica, 5 July 2004.

Gordana Vidovic, leader of NGO *Buducnost* [*Future*], Modrica, 13 July 2004.

Hajra Camdzic, leader of NGO *Udruženje Poljoprivrednica Usorsko-tesanjskog Kraja* [*Association of Women in Agriculture in Usora-Tesanj Region*], Ljetinic, Tesanjka, 29 May 2004.

Hasna Tutan, deputy director of NGO *Cicmanka*, Novi Seher, Maglaj, 06 July 2004.

Hasna Vates, leader of NGO *Forum Žena- Sabina Janakovic* [*Forum of Women-Sabrina Janakovic*], Olovo, 05 August 2004.

Jadranka Milicevic, program coordinator of NGO *Žene Zenama* [*Women to Women*], Sarajevo, 19 July, 2004.

Julka Erceg, leader of NGO *Žene Doboja* [*Women of Doboj*], Doboj, 8 Jun 2004.

Mara Radovanovic, deputy director of NGO *Lara*, Bijeljina, 28 July 2004.

Munevera Zecevic, one of the founders of NGO *Uzok*, Kakanj, 13 July 2004.

Nelvedina Meskic, project manager in NGO *Bospo*, Tuzla, 26 July 2004.

Ruza Vlajkovic, leader of NGO *Forum Žena-Tesanj* [*forum of Women-Tesanj*], Tesanj, 29 May 2004 and 05 August 2004.

Senada Dzankic, leader of NGO *Plamen* [*Flame*], Zavidovici, 10 September, 2004.

## **Appendix 5: Interview Questions**

### **I**

- Your name, age, occupation, nationality, marital status?
- Name of your organization? Year of its establishment?
- What are the main goals of your organization? Why do you function as a women's NGO?
- How many women and men work in your organization? Is it paid or unpaid work? Full time or half time?
- What is the ethnic fabric of your organization?

### **II**

- In what ways are you influencing public opinion? Do you organize public discussions, round tables, or seminars on the issues your organization is dealing with? How responsive are ordinary citizens to your call to public discussions?
- How successful you think your NGO is in promoting the idea of gender equality? How successful you are in eliminating discriminations among your members?
- As a result of a public discussion, has your NGO ever made any concrete proposals to the local (or federal) laws, regulations or procedures?
- Did your NGO in any way participate in the last elections? Will you play any role in the upcoming local elections?

### **III**

- Do you have citizens' trust and how did you gain it?
- What are the ways you ensure accountability to citizens you serve (issuing regular reports, using media, holding public meetings etc)? Do you have any examples of local women or men complaining about your services/work?
- Do you use voluntary community resources for your actions? How successful are you in mobilizing volunteers?
- What are the criteria for selecting your activities? How much does the input you receive from the local women influence selection of your activities?
- In what way do your knowledge, work and activities encourage women to act individually or in (interest) groups in order to raise specific issues or to undertake solutions to specific problems in their local communities?

### **IV**

- Are your projects funded by international organizations, by local business people or by the local government? Do donors restrict your activities? If yes, in what way?
- How would you describe the working relations with the governmental agency and business as donors?
- How often do you apply for funds and how successful are you (what are the reasons you do not get your projects funded?)

**V**

- What educative programs or skills development programs does your NGO offer to its members?

**VI**

- Do you belong to a network? How useful is it?
- What kind of links do you have with other NGOs operating across the country or governmental structures or business sector (joint projects, information exchange, staff training etc)?

**VII**

- How would you describe the role of women's NGOs in BiH?
- What are the weaknesses of the women's NGO sector?
- What obstacles do you face in operating? What are the main needs/ fears for the future in women's NGOs?

## Appendix 6: Questionnaire Responses

**Table 1.**

**In the last three months, how many times did you invite the following people in your house for a lunch, a diner, or a similar occasion?**

	Relatives %		Best friends %		Colleagues from NGO/work %		Neighbours/ same gender %		Neighbours/ other gender %	
	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG
Not once	5.7	0	0	5.6	17.1	66.6	20	33.3	28.6	44.4
Few times (no more than 3 times)	20	44.4	37.1	44.4	25.7	5.6	14.3	27.8	5.7	22.2
Often (more than 3 times)	37.1	44.4	34.3	27.8	11.4	16.7	28.6	11.1	17.1	5.6
Regularly (at least twice a month)	25.7	11.1	17.2	16.7	11.4	5.6	14.3	22.2	11.4	16.7
I don't know/I don't want to answer	11.4	0	8.6	5.6	34.3	5.6	22.9	5.6	37.1	11.1

**Table 2.**

**Do you socialize with those people to the same degree as before, more than before, or less than before? If you socialize less than before, what is the main reason?\***

	Relatives %		Best friends %		Colleagues from NGO/work %		Neighbours/ same gender %		Neighbours/ other gender %	
	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG
We associate a lot/ more than before	25.7	16.7	14.3	16.7	48.6	16.7	8.6	5.6	8.6	0
We associate enough/like before	62.9	50	62.9	66.7	8.6	22.2	40	44.4	28.6	44.4
We associate little/lack of time or money	5.7	16.7	14.3	5.6	11.4	11.1	8.6	16.7	5.7	5.6
We associate little/ don't live work in the same place	5.7	0	0	0	8.6	16.7	0	0	0	0
We associate little/ don't know each other well	0	0	0	11.1	2.9	16.7	5.7	11.1	2.9	5.6
We associate little/ no desire for it	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.6
We associate little/ other reasons	0	16.7	0	0	0	5.6	8.6	22.2	20	22.2
I don't know/don't want to answer	0	0	5.7	0	20	22.2	28.6	0	34.4	16.7

\* For women in NGOs "before" means before they joined their NGOs; for women in the control group "before" means a year ago.

**Table 3.**  
**In the past three months, how many times did you extend financial or material assistance to the following people?**

	Relatives %		Best friends %		Colleagues from NGO/work %		Neighbours/ same gender %		Neighbours/ other gender %	
	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG
Not once	14.3	22.2	25.7	38.9	34.3	72.2	51.4	50	57.1	55.6
Few times (no more than 3 times)	20	38.9	51.4	44.4	28.6	11.1	17.1	33.3	11.4	16.7
Often (more than 3 times)	31.4	22.2	8.6	11.1	5.7	5.6	2.9	11.1	0	5.6
Regularly (at least twice a month)	25.7	5.6	0	5.6	2.9	0	0	0	0	0
I don't know/I don't want to answer	8.6	11.1	14.3	0	28.6	11.1	28.6	5.6	31.4	22.2

**Table 4.**  
**In the case that they were to seek any type of financial or material assistance, would you be willing to give such assistance to the following people?**

	Relatives %		Best friends %		Colleagues from NGO/work %		Neighbours/ same gender %		Neighbours/ other gender %	
	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG
Yes, in any case	71.4	83.3	48.6	61.1	40	22.2	22.9	22.2	20	27.8
Yes, if I know that they are in a difficult financial situation	20	11.1	48.6	38.9	37.1	72.2	42.9	61.1	45.7	55.6
No, I do not have the resources to help them	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	11.1	0	5.6
No, I am not sure how they would use that money	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.7	0	5.7	0
No, not at all	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't know/ don't want to answer	5.7	5.6	2.9	0	20	5.6	28.6	5.6	28.6	11.1

**Table 5.**

**In the case that they were to seek some financial contribution to assist the most vulnerable members of the community, would you be willing to give such a contribution to these institutions and organizations?**

	Local community board %		Your religious organization %		Your past or present firm %		Citizens association %		Your/some* NGO %	
	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG	NGO	CG
Yes, in any case	14.3	16.7	11.4	27.8	14.3	11.1	17.1	0	48.6	0
Yes, if I know that they will help the needy	42.9	61.1	34.3	50	31.4	66.7	45.7	66.7	42.9	55.6
No, I do not have the resources to help them	8.6	5.6	2.9	5.6	8.6	11.1	8.6	11.1	2.9	5.6
No, I am not sure how they would use that money	2.9	5.6	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.6	2.9	11.1	0	11.1
No, not at all	0	5.6	0	0	2.9	5.6	5.7	0	0	5.6
Don't know/ don't want to answer	31.4	5.6	45.7	11.1	37.2	0	20	11.1	5.7	22.2

\* "Your NGO" for the women in NGOs; "humanitarian or some other NGO" for the women in the control group.

**Table 6.**

**In the case you find yourself in a serious financial crisis, to whom would you turn for help?**

	NGO %	CG %
Family	74.3	94.4
Friends	77.1	66.7
Your NGO	51.4	N/A
Neighbours/ same gender	8.6	11.1
Neighbours/ other gender	2.9	0
Past or present firm	5.7	5.6
Local community board	0	0
Center for Social Work	2.9	0
Humanitarian or other NGO	25.7	5.6
Citizen's association	5.7	0
Influential persons	2.9	0

**Table 7.**

**In the past year, did you participate in any of these actions to improve the delivery of some public services?**

	NGO %	CG %
Gave financial contribution	68.6	66.7
Participated in collective work	14.3	11.1
Participated in cleaning actions	28.6	11.1
Attended citizens' gathering	48.6	5.6
Signed a petition	45.7	16.7
Participated in citizens' delegation	8.6	0
Participated in street demonstration	14.3	0
Blocked traffic as a sign of protest	2.9	0
Informed local media	28.6	5.6
Informed international organization	14.3	0
Something else	2.9 (provided humanitarian aid)	0

**Table 8.**

**If there were a project in your municipality that endangered local life, such as opening of a waste dump or closure of a public institution, would you take part in public protests?**

	NGO %	CG %
Yes, in any case	85.7	61.1
Yes, if it has a negative impact on me	5.7	11.1
Yes, if my NGO decides so	22.9	N/A
No, I fear possible repercussions	0	5.6
No, I don't believe in effectiveness of such action	2.9	22.2
Something else	0	0
I don't know/I don't want to answer	0	5.6

**Table 9.**

**What is the major benefit that people derive from being members of NGOs?**

	NGO %	CG %
Spending free time	20	11.1
Socializing with other people	65.7	38.9
Participating in activities that benefit the community	70	38.9
Acquiring certain skills and knowledge	68.6	16.7
Receiving various types of assistance	8.6	5.6
Receiving various information	45.7	5.6
Making connections with influential people	40	16.7
Something else	2.9 (educative programs)	0
I don't know/ I don't want to answer	0	33.3

**Table 10.**  
**Do you intend to vote in the upcoming local Elections?**

	NGO %	CG %
Yes, in any case	82	55.6
Yes, if my organization decides so	8.6	0
No, from fear of possible repercussions	0	0
No, I don't believe in effectiveness of such action	0	33.3
Something else	0	0
I don't know/ I don't want to answer	8.6	11.1

**Table 11.**  
**Since you joined the NGO/ in the last year have you considered or done the following:**

	NGO %	CG %
Looked for a new job	17.1	22.2
Went back to school/took some courses	25.7	27.8
Challenged the way your family makes decisions with regards to major purchases, household chores, child care	14.3	33.3
Something else that you didn't consider to be a problem before	14 (i.e. made a prenuptial agreement, strengthened herself, helped others, attended seminars, got additional education)	5.6

\* For NGO members: "since they joined their NGOs"; for the women in the control group: "in the last year"

**Table 12.**  
**Do people perceive or treat you differently than other women in your community, now that you are the member of the NGO?**

	NGO %
Yes	20 (They see us as emancipated girls and women; Before, people had a negative view of us. Now, they have a positive view, since they know more about us; Some see us stereotypically as feminists and lesbians; Some people respects us while other think our role is trivial; People expects us to help them and to do something for our community.
No	45
I don't know/ I don't want to answer	31.4
Inconclusive	2.9

**Table 13.**  
**Status of women in BiH.**

	NGO %	CG %
Women are equal to men	20 / 11.3*	22.2 / 16.6*
Women are in a worse economic position than men	48.6	22.2
Women are underrepresented in the political field	77.1	33.3
Women have lower social status than men	42.9	27.8
Women are more constrained by culture, religion, and tradition	40	16.7
Neither of these statements is true	0	22.2

\*Adjusted for women who answered that women are equal in legal sense but unequal in reality.

**Table 14.**  
**How can status of women be changed?**

	NGO %	CG %
By government's actions	42.9	22.2
By NGO activities	77	33.3
By creation of new economic opportunities for women	68.6	38.9
By educating children about gender equality	60	22.2
By changing of social beliefs (through press or TV)	45.7	16.7
By actions of International Community	31.4	22.2
Other	2.9	0
I don't know / I don't want to answer	0	33.3

## Selected Bibliography

- Andric-Ruzicic, Duska. "O Nevladinim Organizacijama-Trecem Sektoru" ["On Non-governmental Organizations- the Third Sector"]. In *Drugi Pogled [Second Look]* Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 1998.
- "Banjaluka: Discrimination of Women in Political Parties." *Lara Online* [electronic magazine]. Accessed 24 November 2004. Available from <http://www.online-lara.com/News%20and%20events.htm>
- Baron, Stephen, John Field, and Tom Schuller "Social Capital: A Review and Critique." In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. Eds. Stephen Baron, John Field, and Tom Schuller. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- BiH. *Obrazlozenje i Razlozi za Donosenje Zakona o Ravnopravnosti Spolova u BiH [Explanations and Reasons for Adopting Gender Equality Law in BiH]*. Gender Centar Federacije BiH [website]. Accessed 19 May 2004. Available from <http://www.fgenderc.com.ba/txt/rezultati/zakonravnop.doc>
- Chandler, David. *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*. London ; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Chandler, David. "Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies." *Democratization* 5, no. 4 (1998): 1-20. University of Westminster [website]. Accessed 18 May 2004. Available from <http://imm-live.wmin.ac.uk/ssl/pdf/DemocratizationCivilSocietyBosnia.pdf>
- Cockburn, Cynthia. "Women's Organization in the Rebuilding of Bosnia-Herzegovina." In *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*. Eds. Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002.
- Cockburn, Cynthia, Rada Stakic-Domuz, and Meliha Hubic. *Women Organizing for Change: A Study of women's Local Integrative Organizations and the Pursuit of Democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 2001.
- Cohn, Theodore H. *Global Political Economy: Theory and Practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 2002.
- Coleman, James S. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." In *Knowledge and Social Capital: Foundations and Applications*. Ed. Eric L. Lesser. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000.
- Colletta, Nat and Cullen, Michelle. Eds. *Violent Conflict and the Transformation of Social Capital: Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Somalia*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2000.

- Collier, Paul. *Social Capital and Poverty*. Washington DC.: The World Bank, 1998.
- Connell, R.W. "Masculinities, the Reduction of Violence and the Pursuit of Peace." In *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping Bosnia and Netherlands*. Eds. Cynthia Cockburn and Dubravka Zarkov. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2002.
- Crnkovic, Gordana P. "Gender Construction in Literature: A Historical Survey." In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*. Ed. Sabrina P. Ramet. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
- Deacon, Bob and Paul Stubbs. "International Actors and Social Policy Development in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Globalism and the 'New Feudalism.'" *Journal of European Social Policy* 8, no. 2 (1998): 99-115.
- Dnevnik I*. (1 August 2004) [National News]. Sarajevo: BHTV.
- Drakulic, Slavenka. "Women and the New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Eds. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Duhacek, Dasa. "Women's Time in the Former Yugoslavia." In *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Eds. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller. New York : Routledge, 1993.
- Evans, Peter. "Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy." *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996): 1119-1132.
- Fine, Ben and Francis Green. "Economics, Social Capital, and the Colonization of the Social Sciences." In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. Eds. Stephen Baron, John Field, and Tom Schuller. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Funk, Nanette. "Feminist Critiques of Liberalism: Can They Travel East?: Their Relevance in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 3 (2004): 695-726.
- Global Rights. *Shadow Report: On the Implementation of CEDAW and Women's Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, 2004.
- Grootaert, Christiaan. "Social Capital: The Missing Link." Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1998. Accessed 19 May 2004. Available from <http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/scapital/wkrppr/sciwp3.pdf>

- Helms, Elissa. "Women as Agents of Ethnic Reconciliation?: Women's NGOs and International Intervention in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Women's Studies International Forum* 26, no. 1 (2003): 15-33.
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Report on the state of Women's human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: January – December 2001* [HCHRBH website]. Accessed 5 April 2004. Available from <http://www.bh-hchr.org/statements/33-12-01.htm>
- Hilhorst, Dorothea. *The Real World of NGO's: Discourses, Diversity and Development*. London; New York: Zed Books, 2003.
- Hooghe, Marc. "Voluntary Associations and Democratic Attitudes: Value Congruence as a Causal Mechanism." In *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*. Eds. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle. New York: Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Hooghe, Marc and Dietlind Stolle. "Introduction: Generating Social Capital." In *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*. Eds. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle. New York: Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Hunt, Swanee. *Ovo Nije Bio Nas Rat: Bosanke Obnavljaju Mir (This was not Our War: Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace)*. Translated by Senada Kreso. Dani: Sarajevo, 2001.
- Ignatieff, Michael. "On Civil Society: Why Eastern Europe's Revolutions Could Succeed." *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1995): 128-136.
- Kesic, Obrad. "Women and Gender Imagery in Bosnia." In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*. Ed. Sabrina P. Ramet. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
- Kvinna till Kvinna. "Country Info: Bosnia-Herzegovina" [website]. Accessed 15 January 2005. Available from [http://www.iktk.se/english/country\\_info/bosnia/bosnia.html](http://www.iktk.se/english/country_info/bosnia/bosnia.html)
- Lara Online [magazine]. "Discrimination of Women in Political Parties." News and Events. Accessed 14 December 2004. Available from <http://www.online-lara.com/News%20and%20events.htm>
- Lin, Nan. "Building a Network Theory of Social Capital." In *Social Capital: Theory and Research*. Eds. Nan Lin, Karen Cook, and Ronald S. Burt. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001.

- Medica. *A Second Look: To live With(out) Violence*. Zenica, BiH.: Medica Infoteka, 1999.
- Mehmet, Ozay, M Tahiroglu, and Eric A. L. Li. "Social Capital Formation in Large-Scale development Projects." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 23, no. 2 (2002): 335-357.
- Merry, Sally Engle. "Rights Talks and the Experience of Law: Implementing Women's Human's Rights to Protection from Violence." *Human Rights Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2003): 343-381.
- Mertus, Julie A. *War's Offensive on Women: The Humanitarian Challenge in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan*. Bloomfield, Ct.: Kumarian Press, 2000.
- Molyneux, Maxine. "Gender and the Silences of Social Capital: Lessons from Latin America." *Development and Change* 33, no. 2 (2002): 176-188.
- Nagar, Richa and Saraswati Raju. "Women, NGOs and the Contradictions of Empowerment and Disempowerment: A Conversation." *Antipode* 35, no. 1 (2003): 1-12.
- Ninkovic, Olga Lola, and Mirjana Stankovic. "Good While They are Young: Do not Complain or Become Pregnant." *Lara Online* [electronic magazine]. Accessed 25 October 2004. Available from <http://www.online-lara.com/Theme%20of%20the%20month.htm>
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- OHR. "Agreement on Human Rights." In *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Essential Texts*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Sarajevo, 2000.
- OHR. "Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina." In *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Essential Texts*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Sarajevo, 2000.
- OHR [website]. Accessed 18 January 2005. Available from <http://www.ohr.int/decisions/removalssdec/archive.asp?m=&yr=2004>
- Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone Book, 2000.
- Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Rahman, Aminur. "Micro-credit Initiatives for Equitable and Sustainable Development: Who Pays?" *World Development* 27, no. 1 (1999): 67-82.

- Ramet, Sabrina P. "In Tito's Time." In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*. Ed. Sabrina P. Ramet. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
- Referentna Grupa/ The Reference Group [website]. Accessed 15 February 2005.  
Available from  
<http://www.linkngo.org/view/pageloader.aspx?page=standard&lang=1&optionid=113&ngoid=104>
- Ristanic, Biljana, Milkica Milojevic, Dobrila Dukanovic, Sonja Lakic, Radmila Zigic, Suzana Andelic, and Mirjana Stankovic. *Women's Chronology: Women, Witnesses of Time*. Bijeljina: Lara, 2002.
- Rowlands, Jo. "A Word of the Times, but What Does it Mean?: Empowerment in the Discourse and Practice of Development." In *Women and Empowerment: Illustrations from the Third World*. Ed. Haleh Afshar. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998.
- Schuller, Tom, Stephen Baron, and John Fields. "Social Capital: A Review and Critique." In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*. Eds. Stephen Baron, John Field, and Tom Schuller. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Silverman, Robert Mark. "Conclusion: A Progressive Model." In *Community-based Organizations: The Intersection of Social Capital and Local Context in Contemporary Urban Society*. Ed. Silverman, Robert Mark. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.
- Simic, Andrei. "Machismo and Cryptomatriarchy: Power, Affect, and Authority in the Traditional Yugoslav Family." In *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*. Ed. Sabrina P. Ramet. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
- Smillie, Ian. *Service Delivery or Civil Society?: Non Governmental Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. CARE Canada, 1996.
- Sterland, Bill. *Serving the Community: An Assessment of Civil Society in Rural BiH*. Sarajevo: Dadalos, 2003.
- The World Factbook* [CIA website]. Accessed 15 March 2004. Available from  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bk.html>
- Todaro, Michael P., and Stephen C. Smith. *Economic Development*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Addison Wesley, 2003.
- Ugresic, Dubravka. *The Culture of Lies*. Trans. Celia Hawkesworth. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

- UNDP. *BiH Human Development Report*. Sarajevo, 2002.
- UNDP. *BiH Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals*. Sarajevo, 2003.
- Walsh, Martha. "Aftermath: The Impact of Conflict on Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Working Paper No. 302. Washington D.C.: USAID, 2000.
- Walsh, Martha. "Profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina." in *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*. Ed. Krishna Kumar. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 2001.
- Waylen, Georgina. "Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics." *World Politics* 46, no. 3 (1994): 327-354.
- Woolcock, Michael, and Deepa Narayan. "Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy." *The World Bank Research Observer* 15, no. 2 (2000): 225-249.
- World Bank. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study*. Vol. 1. The World Bank, 2002 [website]. Accessed 19 May 2004. Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/participation/BosnizMainReport.pdf>
- World Bank. *Consultations with the Poor: National Synthesis Report Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The World Bank, 1999 [website]. Accessed 19 May 2004. Available from <http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/voices/reports/national/bosnia.pdf>
- Zakon o Ravnopravnosti Polova u Bosni i Hercegovini (Gender Equality Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina)*. Sarajevo: Gender Centar Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine; Banja Luka: Gender Centar Republike Srpske, 2003.