



NOV
2020



HIGHLIGHTS

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In focus: Gender equality and women's rights at the crossroads [page 4](#)

KEY DATES

OCTOBER

- **20-25** UNHCR supported Platform for Investigative Journalism and Analysis (PINA) with the organization of the 4th Investigative Film Festival Skopje ("Solidarity").

NOVEMBER

- **3** 5th edition of the [Refugee Law Clinic](#) organized by the Refugee Law and Migration Centre at the Justinianus Primus Law Faculty with UNHCR support
- **4** UNHCR and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association held a workshop for journalists/photojournalists on "Reporting on the protection of the rights of refugees and stateless persons."
- **16-18** International Conference "Cultural Heritage and Multilateralism: Regional and International Strategies for the Protection of Cultural Heritage" at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of 1970 UNESCO Convention.
- **19** 2nd accreditation webinar on Direct Access to Climate Finance organized by FAO and the National Designated Authority for the GCF.
- **19-20** UNICEF-led activities marking the World Children's Day.

EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

One of the greatest concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the negative health and economic impact, has been the increase in gender-based violence due to increase in conditions allowing it and stagnation, if not regression, in combating it. This shadow pandemic presents a stark reminder that far too many women and girls are facing physical, psychological and sexual violence, often on a daily basis. In North Macedonia, some 45% of women and girls above the age of fifteen have faced some form of violence, according to the survey led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. That means almost every second woman and every second girl have been affected by violence. This is simply unacceptable!

This year's 16 Days of Activism (25 November to 10 December 2020), a global campaign against gender-based violence (GBV), has been organised following the global theme "[Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!](#)". The campaign has focused on disseminating information and materials for the society to fully fathom the severity of the issue, including these key considerations:

First, we all need to understand that broad and devastating impact of violence. It does not only affect survivors, but it also changes the lives of their families, friends, community, including those committing it. With each single case of violence, the psychological and economic losses of our communities are immense. The toll on our development is incomprehensible.

Second, there is no such thing as justification for violence: neither shocks caused by COVID-19, nor any other factor can justify it. This is key for survivors and perpetrators to understand when healing, but it also needs to be installed in our culture to help prevent it in the future. Sixteen days campaigning is an important push, but it can alone not stop nor

prevent future violence. Zero-tolerance for violence needs to be streamlined within every thread of our society, starting early on.



Third, and most important, we can successfully deal with gender-based violence only if we all act together. The role of each individual is important. From those responsible for accepting and processing reports of gender-based violence, to those surrounding the survivors of violence. We cannot allow victim-blaming and stigmatisations to exacerbate their already difficult situation. If we see or hear something, we must react, we must raise our voice.

In the past decade, North Macedonia has made remarkable progress in this regard, both in terms of policy and in establishing the tools needed for the survivors of gender-based violence to feel safe and supported when reporting it. The new law on prevention and protection of violence against women that was recently announced will contribute to even greater progress once adopted by the Parliament. But policies and laws will need to be accompanied by diligent implementation and leadership.

We can make a change, starting with us and our children. We owe that to our grand-mothers, mothers, sisters, spouses and partners. Moreover, we owe it to ourselves and to the future generations so that they are able to use all resources for sustainable development in a violence-free environment.

Rossana Dudziak
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

COVID-19 RESPONSE & OTHER UN ACTIVITIES

COVID-19 response and recovery

UN entities continue to support COVID-19 response in the country with specific and detailed analysis focused on issues within their respective field of expertise and through operational response activities.

Earlier this year the Government of North Macedonia approached the **World Bank** to seek co-financing for wage subsidy scheme developed in response to the unfolding pandemic. Support was provided through the Contingency Emergency Response Component - embedded in the Local World Bank's Roads and Connectivity Project (LRCP) - enabling the Government to draw €37/\$44.8 million in contribution to €80/\$96.8 million wage subsidy scheme from April to June 2020. The [simulation of the project impact](#) published in November showed that, in the absence of a government response to the pandemic, poverty would likely have increased to pre-2015 levels and more than 130,000 Macedonians would have fallen into poverty.

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** supported legislative amendments to allow digital recording and reporting system for home visiting and telehealth counselling, as well as adaptation of the reporting form. The project also includes three components of the software and training modules which are currently under development. The trainings will be launched early next year.

UNICEF also supported the establishment of a daily monitoring system within the Ministry of Education and Science aimed at monitoring teaching modalities, difficulties in access and quality of education, as well as to track infections among children and staff in schools.

The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, in cooperation with the non-governmental organization Humanost, launched a phone line for psycho-social support for elderly persons and organized several educational workshops and webinars on active and healthy ageing, mental health, social support

etc. Over two tons of sanitary items and personal protective equipment have also been distributed to state nursing homes in Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Bitola and the Special Institution in Demir Kapija.

In partnership with the National Red Cross, UNFPA also supported the mobile teams that are helping older people by visiting them at home, buying groceries and medicines, etc. The activities have been part of the Care of Older People Week under the motto "We Are All Their Children".

Other UN activities

In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, **UN Women** supported four workshops for line-ministries and state agencies for applying gender-responsive budgeting in the development of their strategic plans, programmes and budgets for the upcoming year. Representatives of 14 line-ministries and one state agency developed essential gender-responsive interventions to respond to the gender equality commitments set in the Government's 2020-2024 workplan.

As part of the support provided for the second draft for the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plan and marking the 20th anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, UN Women assisted the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with bringing the agenda for women, peace and security closer to the representatives of MoD and the Army during a two-day seminar. Participants discussed gender stereotypes and how they contribute to women being underrepresented in decision making, high military ranks and security sector.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, together with the National Designated Authority for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), announcing first [Open Call for Applications](#) for potential GCF Direct Access Entities from North Macedonia. The call invites all public institutions, private companies and civil society organizations in the country interested to be accredited for the assessment and implementation of the GCF-funded projects, in line with the national climate action priorities. The call has been launched under the country's [second project under the GCF Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme](#), facilitating direct access to climate finance through national ownership and more aligned national climate action priorities and plans.

UN Environment Program (UNEP), in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, organized a [public consultation meeting](#) and a [main public debate](#) on the Draft Law on Shar Mountain. UNEP also organised two online workshops on the [assessment of the status of bearberry](#) in North Macedonia, as well as training on and demonstration of methodology for monitoring of populations of collected wild plants.

UN Development Programme (UNDP) organized a conference "Moving to Skills Revolution: Harvesting inno & digi solutions for industry's future" (#skills4future) to present international experiences and findings from expert's analyses on employment and education linkages in textile and construction industry. The findings will form a basis for policy dialogue among key stakeholders and for future policy recommendations.

The event was organized within the project "Bridging the Skills Gap to Create New and Better Jobs", funded by the British Embassy, which aims to address some of the core issues of unemployment and bridge the "skills gap" in three key industries in North Macedonia – textile, construction and renewable-energy industry. For more information see www.skills4future.mk.

In partnership with the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) for economic affairs, UNDP organized the official launch of the e-platform www.bizz4all.mk, which will work as an on-line business toolkit to support companies with various mentorship packages in the time of crisis. In the upgraded version of the platform a special tailor-made search engine will enable mapping of the most suitable support schemes for each applicant.

As part of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming initiative, the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** completed its annual Participatory Assessment exercise, through which the agency builds partnerships with refugee women and men of all ages and backgrounds through meaningful participation and structured dialogue. The assessment findings were validated and prioritized with the authorities, representatives from local municipalities, UN organizations and civil society organizations.

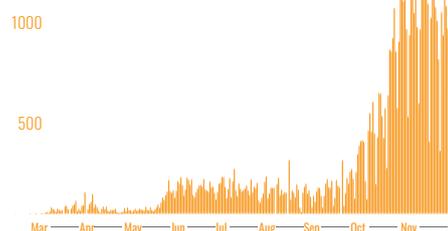
UN Volunteers organized a celebration of the International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5th of December, to promote volunteering, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national and international levels. The celebration - "Together We Can through Volunteering" included 2020 IVD campaign which started in November to thank volunteers for their actions and showcase the impact of volunteering during the COVID-19 crisis.

UNICEF led the campaign marking the World Children's Day. State institutions, EU Delegation and embassies in Skopje, turned their lights blue, honouring children. On 20 November, kids 'took over' the high-level government meeting "Reimagine Education". The meeting included the Prime Minister, Ministers of Education and Science, Labour and Social Policy, Health, Environment, the EU Ambassador, the UNICEF Representative in North Macedonia and six youth advocates.

LATEST EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA (9 Dec 2020)

68,332 CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES
32,798 CONFIRMED CASES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE
1,949 COVID-19-RELATED FATALITIES
935 FATALITIES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE

Daily new cases reported



For latest data see covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/mk

SDCF UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF 2021-2025 Country Programme Documents

The North Macedonia 2021-2025 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) is implemented through the country programme instruments of the UN development system entities that have signed the SDCF, and which are derived from the SDC. The three entities – UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA – that have the their programming cycles aligned with the SDCF have developed their Country Programme Documents (CPDs) that are summarized below. The same will be done for other entities as their programmes become available.

UNDP CPD

UNDP's 2021-2025 programme vision is that of systems transformation leading to accelerated, more inclusive and green economic growth. This will enable North Macedonia to prosper as a cohesive, inclusive society and converge more rapidly with the EU in terms of incomes and quality of life, especially for vulnerable groups. UNDP will leverage its technical expertise, strong operational presence, wide network of partnerships and trusted relationship with government to advance the achievement of the outcomes set out under the 2021-2025 SDCF. In its integrator role, UNDP will apply its thought leadership, platform approach, and programmatic focus on innovation and resilience towards the SDCF priorities and outcomes where UNDP has comparative advantage: strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of institutions particularly at municipal levels; job creation; green and inclusive economic development; and facilitating citizen engagement in decision making and climate action.



There are three challenges where UNDP will bring strategic and value-added solutions to contribute to SDCF priorities and outcomes: poverty and economic exclusion; climate change and natural resource management; and effective, people-centred governance and rule of law.

To reduce poverty and economic exclusion, UNDP will engage public and private stakeholders to invest in the business ecosystem with a focus on entrepreneurship, enhanced value chains and trade. It will support businesses to navigate economy as it recovers from the pandemic, including digital transformation. Labour market challenges call for digital upskilling programmes. Under the current programme, UNDP demonstrated its effectiveness in these areas by supporting the creation of over 13,000 formal sector jobs and 12,000 new small businesses, accounting for 12% of new companies registered during the period, and ten new social services serving vulnerable groups.

To help the country respond to the challenges of climate change, UNDP will strengthen policy

frameworks and local capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, efficient management of ecosystem resources, especially water, and disaster risk reduction. This will contribute to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase coping capacities and rural livelihoods, boosting a green and resilient recovery from the pandemic. UNDP comparative advantages were demonstrated under the current programme through the success in the Strumica river watershed, to increase land under sustainable agriculture from nearly zero to 360,000 hectares; and through the demonstrated capacities of Macedonian national institutions to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement with a national climate monitoring system. UNDP also helped “build back better” 5 dams, 4 bridges, 22 kilometers of roads, 102 kilometers of riverbeds and channels, and areas affected by landslides.

To facilitate more effective and people-centred governance, UNDP will support strategic planning, increased regulatory and oversight capacities at central level, capacity development at municipal level for analysis, decision-making, budgeting and execution. These changes will contribute to more transparent and accountable governance, greater social cohesion, and help reaffirm the Government's commitment to EU accession and the ‘fundamentals’ to build trust and to counteract polarization. UNDP has demonstrated expertise to strengthen municipal governance and capacities for economic development, service delivery, and citizen participation in the context of ongoing decentralization.

UNFPA CPD

The overall vision of the UNFPA's country programme is that by 2030, all women and men, young people, adolescents, vulnerable young people, women with disabilities, residents of impoverished settlements and rural areas, and older people in North Macedonia can fulfil their rights, and everyone has equal opportunities to be well educated, employed and access high-quality health services.



This vision is shared by the Government and reflected in its Program 2020-2024; it contributes to the three UNFPA transformative results, it is fully aligned with the SDCF, and mirrors the Government-approved national commitments for achieving the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) goals presented at the 2019 Nairobi Summit.

The new UNFPA CPD will transform the lives of women, women with disabilities, older persons, residents of impoverished settlements and rural areas and young people (aged 10-24 years), especially the vulnerable, by empowering them to be free from violence and make informed reproductive

choices. Adolescents' birth rates are targeted to reduce by 30% by 2025.

CPD will support the country's EU path, good neighbourly and interethnic relations, social cohesion, combating COVID-19, new energy, determination for accelerated economic growth, sustainable development, modern education, efficient and just governance and strong institutions. Together with its UN partners, UNFPA will engage with the Government in setting priorities in line with the 2030 Agenda and put the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ at its core.

With the first outcome sexual and reproductive health and rights will be advanced, by working in parallel on “supply side” by strengthening the health system (accessibility, acceptability of quality of care, specifically on maternal health and family planning) and on “demand side” in preventing risky behavior by increasing education of young people on child sexual exploitation through innovative solutions, especially for persons with disabilities, as well as youth's greater engagement in policy development. Key indicators are set to improve by at least 30% by 2025.

Through the second outcome, early marriages and multi-sectorial prevention and response will be strengthened, while at the same time changing behavior and social norm on these harmful practices. This focus becomes more acute with the COVID-19 and with lack of integrated data on GBV.

The significance and priority of data, census and migration, offers UNFPA an opportunity to support the strengthening of statistical systems for data collection, disaggregation and use, and evidence-based policies. The focus will be placed on policies and services for young people and older persons.

UNFPA will expand existing partnerships with the Government, donors and multilateral partners, and build new with the EU, private sector, individuals (celebrities, influencers) and other stakeholders.

UNICEF CPD

UNICEF CPD encompasses interconnected actions towards child-centred system-strengthening that stem from a holistic approach to child survival and development. Its overarching vision is to enable families and enhance services to support children to flourish, and to protect them from poverty, adversity and exclusion, which are the main themes underpinning the conceptualization of the programme.



To achieve this, UNICEF will focus on three key changes required for the fulfilment of the vision:

- (a) ensuring children's survival and their development in a nurturing, stimulating and safe family-like environment;

(b) providing children with opportunities to learn, engage and build resilience, both through quality education and a diverse menu of specialized protection services that address, mitigate and respond to risks that negatively affect children; and

(c) putting in place a child-centred enabling environment that advances children's rights by bolstering key actors' technical competences and fostering positive beliefs and attitudes to shape the way children's rights are perceived.

The programme covers the whole country, some elements focus on remote, rural or poor municipalities. It is aligned with national development priorities, including those contained in the Strategic Plan of the General Secretariat for 2020–2022, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2009–2030, the National Strategy for Deinstitutionalization 2018–2027, the Education Strategy 2018–2025, the National Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence 2020–2025, the Mental Health Strategy 2018–2025, as well as the Government's sectoral policies and strategic plans.

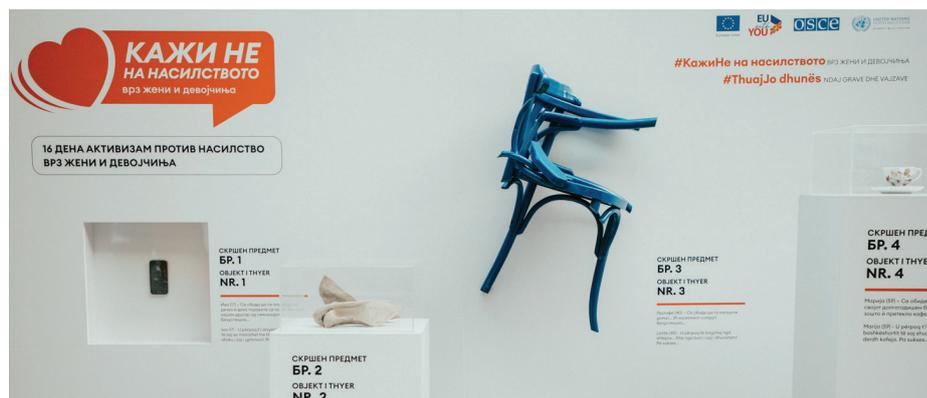
The programme will support the implementation of the Association Agreement between the Government and the EU. It will contribute to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and it support Sustainable Development Goals achievement.

Key assumptions underpinning the programme are:

- (a) the existence of political will to focus on child-related policies and increase investments in children;
- (b) Government's commitment to allocate resources for the sustainability of services, including investing in staff and taking measures for staff retention;
- (c) that the general public's views will mirror those that support changing beliefs, attitudes and norms relevant to improving children's rights.

Critical enablers for programme implementation include adequate resources; communication and advocacy; expanding partnerships; and enhancing programme coordination and cross-sectoral work.

Strategic partnerships within the UN system plays a central role for advancing equitable results for children. The CPD derives from the SDCF and is fully aligned with two of the three SDCF strategic priority areas – sustained and inclusive economic and social development; and transparent and accountable democratic governance. It directly contributes to SDCF outcomes 2 and 4 and indirectly to 1 and 3. UNICEF will proactively engage both, communities and diverse groups of young people at all stages of the programme design, implementation and monitoring, as well as through advocacy.



A wall installation from the 16 Days of Activism campaign, presenting a set of objects that illustrate the severity and complexity of gender-based violence for individuals, families and communities.

As the world commemorates three major UN milestones – 25th anniversary of the landmark [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), 20th anniversary of the [UNSCR 1325](#) on women, peace and security, and 75th anniversary of the UN Charter – our commitments to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are stronger and more unified.

In [2020 Voluntary National Review](#), North Macedonia has prioritized SDG Goal 5 and the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all goals, acknowledging that women are the driving force of sustainable development. In recognition of the shared vision in Beijing, the Government has been [pursuing legislative, policy and institutional reforms](#) to promote gender equality and uphold human rights for all, [eliminate all forms of discrimination, end violence against women and girls, provide equal opportunities, including equal pay for equal work](#), and empower women to participate in all spheres of public life.

The progress in gender equality and women's empowerment are central to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for the country's EU accession. The EU and UN agendas' convergence in this area reinforces the responsibility and incentives to align reforms with the international human rights standards.

UN has been working closely with the national authorities, civil society, particularly women organizations, and international partners on developing key legislative and policy initiatives. These include [drafting new laws on GBV, domestic violence \(DV\) and gender equality](#), amendments to the Criminal Code and Labour Relations Law. It supports the operationalisation of UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan; and is assisting with promoting [gender-responsive budgeting](#), economic empowerment, [sexual and reproductive health and rights](#), and [good quality and inclusive education](#).

The key Anti-Discrimination Law, enacted this November, explicitly recognizes, for the first time, sexual orientation and gender identity as protective grounds, as well as new serious forms of discrimination, such as harassment, victimization, incitement to discrimination, segregation, multiple and intersecting discrimination. The later disproportionately affects women and girls, like women and girls with disabilities, migrant,

asylum-seeking and refugee women. A professional and independent Commission will promote equality and protect from acts of discrimination. The draft Law on GBV and DV incorporates key principles and concepts enshrined in the [Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention](#) and [CEDAW General Recommendation 35](#). It elaborates five main pillars - prevention; protection - specialized support, shelters, legal aid, access to justice and compensation; prosecution; integrated policies and partnership and coordination among all relevant actors.

Gender equality and empowerment have been negatively impacted as the world struggles with the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, which is [disproportionately affecting women](#). UN supported the Government in developing a comprehensive socio-economic [COVID-19 Response Framework](#), which contains response and recovery measures that mainstream gender perspective and highlight the centrality of the leave no behind principle. [COVID-19 exacerbates the continued denial](#) of women's rights and violence. Women and girls [bear a heavy burden](#) as they are employed in informal and care economy, as nurses and carers in the frontlines of the response. They suffer a "shadow pandemic" of GBV, intimate partner and sexual violence, and [femicide](#).

Despite the strides in enhancing policy and legal frameworks, de facto equality is yet to be achieved in North Macedonia. Women's equality cannot be achieved in isolation, it requires structural changes within the society and addressing deeply rooted stereotypes. The country is developing equality strategies as [blueprints of continued action](#) to enhance the knowledge of women and girls how to claim their rights, as well as to scale up the mandate, capacity and resources of institutions responsible to respect and protect their rights. International women's human rights frameworks, 2030 Agenda, and recommendations of the UN and regional instruments on women's rights will continue to guide these endeavours.

The latest version of the Sustainable Development Bulletin is available on UN North Macedonia website. For additional information, please contact rcn-northmacedonia@un.org. Produced by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in North Macedonia | 10 December 2020.

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