



## **Žene sa Une Staff Wellness and Resiliency-Building Program**

Organization Name: Udruženje Žene sa Une (ZSU)

Duration: 12 months

Location: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Target Participants: ZSU staff members

**Brief Description of Organization:** Žene sa Une (ZSU) was established as an association in 1992 in Bihać, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), at the beginning of the three-year Bosnia-Herzegovina civil war, with an objective of supporting individuals and families with diverse needs. ZSU has now grown to include a community safe house; a day care center for children and families at risk; a local volunteer service (LVS); and a department for project implementation and international cooperation, which delivers a variety of programs to respond to community needs. For this award, ZSU's support will be directed to the program's survivors of GBV, domestic violence (DV), and war-related trauma. Some of these programs were adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to adhere to government restrictions (i.e., stay-at-home orders and social distancing measures) but continue to serve those in need. Since the start of the pandemic, ZSU has seen a 30–40 percent increase in need for services in safe houses, mostly from DV incidences, and an increased need for support from the day care center for children and families at risk. COVID-19's impact has stretched the organization's and staff's ability to respond effectively and compassionately to the social crises taking place in their community.

**Brief Description of Conceptual Approach and Staffing Plan:** Those who work on the front lines of GBV response programs and other social crises are often exposed directly to traumatic events and to the primary trauma of populations with whom they work. These committed professionals would benefit greatly from a systemic and integrated response that addresses different levels of experience from psychophysiology to organizational structures, and many layers in between. The project proposes an approach to begin meeting these needs in a holistic way that promotes human dignity and personal, team, and organizational strategies, and aims to embed these principles in the work context to sustain its beneficial impact across the organizational culture.

For this program, ZSU will work somatically (i.e., with the body) to begin to regulate the autonomic nervous system. This will initiate a process of slowing down that allows groups to move from a sense of threat to a sense of safety, and ultimately build a renewed sense of bonding and attachment to facilitate more social engagement. After individual weekly practice is established, staff will examine the sociopolitical context of each project and look at the impact of each system on every other system, taking account the wider context and the overlap between the personal and professional.

**Learning Plan:** The project focuses on facilitating learning among GBV prevention and response organizations about staff wellness, care, and resilience and on demonstrating and modeling approaches to embed the principles into organizational culture.