

JA GLAS AM ZA ZENU



Jasminka Šahinagić



Jelena Gugić



Vanja Pavlović



Selma Memović



Subhija Fazlić



Lejla Hodžić



Melisa Hujć



Zorana Tovilović



Zoe Ibrahimović



Fatima Midžić



Gorica Ivić



British Embassy
Sarajevo



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Ambasada Švicarske u Bosni i Hercegovini

NL Netherlands



NAHLA
CENTAR ZA ŽENSKU IZOBILIAZINU
I OBLASTI ZAPOSLENOSTI

WHY the “I Vote for Women” Campaign?



The Constitution and legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina stipulate equality between women and men. However, gender inequalities are found across all social domains. Women are still underrepresented in politics, and particularly so in top positions and elected offices. When a country has a higher representation of women in politics, the effects are multifold, resulting in tangible benefits for democracy. Women play a key role in peace-building and their work, engagement and contributions to society should be in the spotlight.

This is particularly the case with the local administration. In the last 2016 local elections, women comprised only 18 percent of the elected officials in municipal councils, and only 6 women were elected as mayors.

The “**I Vote for Women**” campaign presented strong and successful women, who have created positive change in the local communities of B&H. The personal stories of women who inspired other women to thrive showed the strength and solidarity women possess in creating prosperity and wellbeing in their communities. Building trust in women as leaders, these stories aimed to motivate voters to elect more women in legislative bodies of B&H in the local election of 2020.

The “**I Vote for Women**” campaign was supported by the Government of the United Kingdom, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and implemented by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in partnership with the Nahla organization.

What did we achieve?



Posting various content throughout October and November 2020 via TV stations, social media, daily newspapers and magazines as well as web portals, the campaign communicated strong messages and interacted with citizens across Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thirteen courageous women shared stories about women who inspired them and contributed to important changes – stories in which they serve as living evidence that women can be successful officers, lawyers, football players...

Apart from inviting people to vote for women, these stories pointed out the importance of the active participation of women in decision-making processes. The stories of interesting, brave and successful women came through by being an example to others, and these personal stories and TV appearances incited a public discussion on the topic. Since the stories had a positive tone and were creatively written in an authentic and original way, the campaign was widely acclaimed and received positive responses. This is clearly evident in the reactions and comments on social media, but also the portals.

With strategic placement of additional content, the campaign reached even more people through statements and stories that were posted up to 70 times on traditional and online media. The wider context of the stories was shared through TV appearances in which, apart from the campaign, the conversation included different aspects of empowerment of women, women in society and, of course, women in politics. The campaign was also personally supported on social media by influential personas, such as director Dino Mustafić, professor of gender studies Zilka Spahić Šiljak and actress Amila Terzimehić.

Content created as part of the campaign included:

- 13 individual video messages
- 2 group videos
- More than 50 photographs

Media Partners:

Televisions: BHT, FTV, RTRS, BN, FACE, Hayat TV, N1 BiH, Nova BH, OBN

Web portals: 6yka.com, klix.ba, avaz.ba, ba.n1info.com, oslobodjenje.ba, nezavisne.com, radiosarajevo.ba, bljesak.info, lolamagazin.com

Daily newspapers and magazines: Dnevni avaz, Dnevni list, Nezavisne novine, Oslobođenje, Magazin Gracija

1,5 mil

The campaign reached more than 1,5 million of B&H citizens using various media.

300.000

The campaign was seen by more than 300.000 people on social media.



Today we share with you stories about female courage and female achievements that have shaped individuals and communities. These are examples of fighting for their rights, overcoming obstacles, fulfilling dreams through education and in areas seen as reserved for men. Increasing the number of women meaningfully participating in politics cannot wait until corruption is ended or until the economy has recovered. In fact, it is essential to reach those goals. Think of these amazing women when voting, let them be your inspiration. British Ambassador to B&H, Matthew Field.

"I am deeply convinced that a society can only advance if women and men are equally represented in political life. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a small percent of the candidates who are running for a political mandate are women. These women need Your support. The Embassy of Switzerland got engaged in the campaign "I Vote for Women" because it is a genuine local initiative. It puts into the spotlight women as strong leaders capable of delivering tangible results in your community." Director of Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Barbara Dätwyler Scheuer.



Mina Noor

"We firmly believe that higher visibility and active participation of women in public and political life can be useful for all citizens. Women are often those working on inclusion and political cooperation and are capable of overcoming ethnic, religious and other differences, keeping in mind the wellbeing of the society and community." Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to B&H, Mina Noor.



Nermina Voloder

"Women make up half the population of B&H and deserve to be equally represented in the government. There is a need for more women in politics, in positions of authority, so that the voice of women is heard in places where important decisions are made. A perfect depiction of that was given by former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, saying 'when one woman becomes a leader, she changes; when more women become leaders, politics change'" Country Representative at the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in B&H, *Nermina Voloder*.



Sehija Dedović

"This is a campaign about our choices and attitudes. A campaign for equal opportunities, for reclaiming the trust we put in women, who we're excited and amazed to see as a wonderful teacher, a successful director or a caregiver for the vulnerable - but who we also hold so many prejudices against, when we're to trust her to lead our municipality, to manage our public funds, and to decide on the living conditions in our municipality. We want this campaign to contribute to changing such an attitude." President of CEI Nahla, Sehija Dedović.

“I Vote for Women” Campaign for more women in decision-making positions


Women are equally capable of creating positive change

“What bothers me the most is that persons with physical disabilities are considered to be less capable and competent. We need systematic solutions for access to buildings, transportation and services and, through such systematic solutions, to change the perceptions of society as well. I believe women can make that change, because they have a special sense for and a better understanding of marginalized groups,” says **Merima Dervović**, one of the participants of the “I Vote for Women” campaign, which presents strong and successful Bosnian and Herzegovinian women who have created positive change in their local communities. Around ten days prior to the local elections in B&H, it is extremely important to send a strong message that women are equally capable, if not more so, in different life situations, and so there’s no place for doubt or prejudice when their names are listed on voting ballots. These stories aim to motivate voters to elect more women for functions in legislative bodies in B&H.

Art historian and professor of Italian who, even though using a wheelchair, participated in the theatre play “All Inclusive”. ***“I didn’t know what to expect, but the process of working on the play was***

fun and I particularly appreciated the support and unconditional acceptance by Amila (Terzimehić) and Ena (Kurtalić)”, explains Merima, emphasizing how much this project meant to her, because she could tell her story and the story about disability in a new and different way. After years of activism, with limited results, Merima believes that through arts and direct contact with the audience she made a great step forward, because the show inspired them to question themselves. Even though she’s academically educated, she has never worked in her professional field, but she will soon embark on a career in entrepreneurial art, starting with silk painting.

Her story in particular inspired custodian, designer and costume designer Lejla Hodžić. “The “All Inclusive” play explored the body and its limitations, and the possibilities of accepting oneself, the other and the different. Playing her role in the play, Merima amazed me with her spirit and positive energy,” said Lejla, who’s participated in over forty theatre projects as well as numerous films, including Jasmila Žbanić’s “Grbavica”. According to her, since her upbringing and family environment nurtured equality, it took



some time for her to experientially understand inequality in her profession as well, and particularly how some individuals treat female directors and her, and how additional requirements by female professionals are interpreted as erratic or labelled differently – treatments their male colleagues don't experience.

That is why her experience of working on the "All Inclusive" play was so important, because it has changed her understanding of the body, herself, her love towards self and enabled her to see the world differently, as the process highlighted some of its problems. ***"One of my college mates used a wheelchair, but it wasn't until the play that I met a woman with disability – an educated woman, full of energy, who would splash me with her positive vibes during our conversations on her future, her business and education plans!"*** says Lejla Hodžić, concluding her story about Merima Dervović.

ABOUT MERIMA DERVOVIĆ

The "All Inclusive" play explored the body and its limitations, and possibilities of accepting oneself, the other and the different. Playing her role in the play, Merima amazed me with her spirit and positive energy.

Lejla Hodžić

A message to all those doubting
women on voting ballots

Draženka Panić is proof that not even the sky is the limit for women!

"The military doesn't care if you're a man or a woman. What matters is your physical capacity, courage and integrity. And it has been proven that women are better strategists and tacticians," said **Draženka Panić** – an officer in The Armed Forces of B&H. She is a participant in the "I Vote for Women" campaign, which presents strong and successful women from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who have created positive changes in their local communities. These stories aim to motivate voters to elect more women for functions in legislative bodies in



ABOUT DRAŽENKA PANIĆ

My Draženka returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a female officer and showed that for us, women, not even the sky is the limit!

Zorana Tovilović

B&H. It is evident that Bosnian society is still reluctant to elect women in the upcoming election, and only 29 women out of a total of 425 candidates are running for chief municipal office. However, if women can be pilots, they can rightfully expect a seat at the decision-making table.

When she was leaving for Greece, the community saw her off with doubt and prejudice, believing the Military Aviation Academy was not suited for a woman, because we all know where she belongs and that she certainly would not complete the studies. She returned as the most successful foreign cadet and so those who did not support her at first were now celebrating her as the pride of her community. Draženka's iron will was strengthened by her upbringing, and her role model was her mother, who raised her as a single mom from her early childhood, serving as a living example that women can be whatever they wish to be. ***"Prejudices will always be there, but women must believe in themselves and be ready for the tasks they set for themselves, and at some point, they'll realize women belong to all important positions,"*** said Draženka, who believes that she draws some of her willpower from the fact that she comes from a village where people work hard and have no time for whining.

More than ten years ago, attending martial arts training, Draženka became friends with Zorana Tovilović, who saw Draženka as living

proof that for women, not even the sky is the limit! ***"It means a lot to me to be part of this campaign promoting inspiring women, because I believe that women are still, unfortunately, on the margins of Bosnian society. I'm glad I had the chance to tell the story about my best friend, who's a role model both as a human and a professional, and not only to women but everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Everyone should hear what it means to come from a rural place, with expectations on how a woman should behave and what her role is in society. It takes enormous courage to push all that aside, follow one's dreams and stay persistent. I have doubted myself at times, but I never doubted Draženka!"*** emphasized Zorana who, even though she graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Banja Luka, works in the civil sector, in the Institute for Youth Development KULT, devoted to policy development for youth.

"We try to encourage and empower young people to participate in decision-making processes and we emphasize the importance of elections. I think that equality doesn't mean voting for someone simply because she's a woman, but voting for a woman because we believe in her professionalism and capabilities. Equality means not disregarding a candidate simply because she's a woman. This campaign shows strong, extraordinary and inspiring women, who move the boundaries every day, even beyond the skies, and I'm proud to say that my Draženka is one of them," concluded Zorana.

Just like in football, there are women in politics who are more successful than men

When fans of the city rivals cheer for you, you know you've made it

"In a predominantly male sport, I'm an example of one of the most successful people – even more successful than most of the men. I was raised to see no difference between male and female jobs – you're either capable or not!" said **Samira Hurem**, selector of the Bosnian national female football team, the coach of the female football club SFK 2000 Sarajevo, and one of the participants of the "I Vote for Women" campaign, aiming to motivate voters to elect more women for decision-making positions.


Talking about her journey, Samira emphasizes it was quite a rocky road, because she always had to score better than men to be taken seriously. At one point in her career, when it seemed that no competence, knowledge or certification would suffice, she wanted to quit, but decided to persist because of all the young women looking up to her as a leader, a sport and life mentor. ***"I decided to fight for all that I'd achieved up until then, to be a role model for young women. Today, our club plays in the Champions League more often than our male colleagues, and***

receives support from those who used to doubt us. That tells me that the persistence paid off. When fans of both "Sarajevo" and "Željo" cheer for you, then you know you've made it!" said Samira laughing.

Samira, whose journey to success and human integrity are an inspiration to many young women, is described by Selma Memović, a player at SFK 2000. ***"She taught me never to give up!"***

"Coach Samira isn't only our coach, she's our second mother, our best friend, our support, even a shoulder to cry on!" says Selma, who emphasizes that for her and her fellow players, Samira's presence at their trainings was of key importance. While she was having some issues in her private life, Samira was there for her, which she finds invaluable.

She spent her childhood playing football in the streets with boys and she desperately wanted to start practicing in a club.



When she found herself in an SFK jersey eleven years ago, she naturally attracted a lot of attention as a girl, particularly when they realized she's "good with the ball". Yet she was supported by her family and friends, who eagerly attended her trainings and matches. She says that today, as coach of the new SFK team, when she has the opportunity to be a role model for another generation, she notices among the parents some remains of the patriarchal concept where, even though they bring girls to the trainings, they don't believe that the sport is for them. ***"I'd like for them to support them, because our trainer Samira is proof that women, with adequate education and persistence, can achieve even better results than men across all areas!"*** concluded Selma.

ABOUT SAMIRA HUREM

She taught me never to give up! Coach Samira isn't only our coach, she is our second mother, our best friend, our support, even a shoulder to cry on.

Selma Memović

Fear of the system is unacceptable

**The values we
nurture in our
families are
the foundation
for female leaders
who change
the system**



**ABOUT
DUNJA PEJIĆ**

Her courage taught me that following your heart means doing the right thing, and that you can't fight for justice if your heart's not in it.

Vanja Pavlović

“My essential guiding spirit after I filed and won the lawsuit for mobbing was to show that there are laws in this country that must be respected regardless of one’s function and position. I wanted to show that you can win a case against your superiors, particularly in the public sector, in order to encourage other people experiencing such a situation, which is now finally behind me,” emphasized **Dunja Pejić**, one of the successful, courageous women who participated in the “I Vote for Women” campaign. Several days prior to the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to vote not only for women, but for those who treat their male and female colleagues responsibly and honorably.

“Even though we grew up in a family in which equality was a given, after some time, and particularly since I started my law firm, I realized that my clients including women, perceive me differently and that being a woman in a predominantly male profession is truly more difficult,” emphasizes Vanja Pavlović, Dunja’s younger sister, but the one charged with a more rational approach. According to her, Dunja’s always been led by her heart, which used to bother her a lot, but then she realized that that’s what empowered Dunja to persist in her legal battle, so that she could set an example for others.

“Her courage taught me that to follow your heart means to do the right thing, and that you can’t fight for justice without your heart in it,” says Vanja, emphasizing the importance of being brave in standing up for your principles, because that’s the only way to create systematic change. She also points out that, in that process, it is important that we change the way we bring up our children, and ensure women are educated as well as economically empowered, since, without the latter, there’s no equality.

According to Dunja, society should encourage people to fight for their rights, but, since that’s not the case here, our upbringing and the values we learn as children largely determine our readiness and courage for such life battles. ***“In the family of lawyers in which I grew up, we often talked about law, justice, equality, and today I’m the person who was encouraged to speak up as a child, regardless of whether I’d be supported or not, fearless in my fight for my own but also others’ rights,”*** explains Dunja, who received her master’s degree in the tourism and culture industry.

Women's success should be more promoted in the public discourse


We have to become a society that acknowledges people's success

“To relentlessly work on yourself, to be persistent and unremitting, is the right road for every woman to success, even though they have to work twice as hard as men to be held equal,” said ***Nermina Jerković***, one of the women participating in the “I Vote for Women” campaign. Two days prior to local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important, once again, to remind citizens to equally question the competencies of women and men, and not to hesitate to vote for women, in order for them to make decisions and thus contribute to creating a better and more just society.

At the beginning of her career, Nermina was the only woman in her department, working as an investigator of war crimes and crimes against humanity. After successfully graduating in criminalistics studies and getting her master's in democracy and human rights, which she completed in English with an average grade of 10, as the best student of the UN training, in 2016 she went to Cyprus for a peace mission, representing Bosnia

and Herzegovina. She is currently the holder of a scholarship from the French government, doing her doctoral studies at the University of Montpellier. ***“Regardless of all professional and academic success, I was still surprised by Subhija's invitation to be part of this campaign and that's when I realized that this is her greatness, something we all lack – acknowledging other people's success. We didn't spend a lot of time together, but I'm glad she recognized my work as worthy of mention to the wider public, as evidence that women can be successful in all domains,”*** accentuated Nermina, highlighting in particular the importance of such a campaign, which puts the success and strength of women in the spotlight, because women are mostly portrayed as victims in the media and public discourse.

Herself being in predominantly male surroundings, ***Subhija Fazlić***, police officer, professional E category (trailer truck) driver, and mediator, noticed Nermina's relentless work on herself, and her effort to give more to her family and community.



“I grew up with my two brothers and father, who always insisted that I did everything on my own. Later in life, spending time and working with men, I realized they are less vain, are more likely to forgive things and encourage one another. That’s what women need!” concludes Subhija, emphasizing that through the Network of Female Police Officers association, they continuously work on raising awareness about important topics in the field of gender equality. ***“We haven’t taken up enough space in the public discourse, so that’s why I believe that this campaign is important for young women as well, to empower them to change stereotypes and keep progressing,”*** adds Subhija.

**ABOUT NERMINA
JERKOVIĆ**

Hard-working, persistent, self-sacrificing for family and community, our society, country. She works for the benefit of everyone. And what’s more, she never ceases to work on herself.

Subhija Fazlić

“

**ABOUT MIRSADA
FETAHAGIĆ**

My cousin Mirsada has never let her illness stop her from enjoying everything she can in her life. All of us, her family and friends, still go to her for another shot of optimism

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Jasminka Šahinagić

“

**ABOUT SANJA
PRIMORAC**

Sanja's vision of a library is much more than a room with book shelves. Sanja the librarian will do whatever's in her power to ignite children's imagination and love for books!

”



Jelena Gugić

“

**ABOUT SNEŽANA
BEJATOVIĆ**

Snežana can do it all and she'll always give her best. A police officer, a good friend, and a mother of three, with her Maša using a wheelchair. Her strength and spirit cheers everyone around her up.

”

Melisa Hujić

“

**ABOUT NADA
GOLUBOVIĆ**

Numerous laws improving the status of women, different services of support for female victims of violence, and particularly safe houses, wouldn't be there if it hadn't been for the work of Nada Golubović.

”

Gorica Ivić

“

**ABOUT DINELA
DIZDAREVIĆ**

She still keeps fighting against domestic violence - helping and empowering other women: she decided to employ female violence survivors and single mothers. Her courage and nobility should be an example to all of us!

“

Fatima Midžić

“

**ABOUT FAHRA
BULBUL**

She showed us how to communicate our problems and solve them as a community. She took care of our mental health, not only our academic success.

“

Zoe Ibrahimović

Effects of the Campaign

In order for the effects of the “I Vote for Women” campaign not to be interpreted only subjectively, and for a more precise evaluation, in January 2021 a short online survey was conducted on a sample of 305 persons, in which all age groups above 18 were involved, including people above 60.

The largest number of participants in the study (80.9%) understood the main aim of the campaign as supporting women in general, their capacities and the importance of political leadership. Recognizing such a message as prominent seems encouraging. Among other data important for understanding the effects of the campaign, voting for a female candidate was highlighted (41.6%), and generally thinking about the significance of electing women.

Simultaneously, the data are encouraging in as much as they indicate the readiness of a large part of the research participants (71.9%) to vote for women in an election, when there is an opportunity to do that.

* source, Evaluation of the “I Vote for Women” campaign (NAHLA, 2021)

In order to get a clearer image of the participants' impressions, they were given space to leave their own comments. The following are some of them:

“It motivated me to consider actively participating in politics in the future.”

“My reaction to the campaign was positive. I believe female politicians should be supported throughout the year, not only before elections.”

“Women in politics serve to fulfill statistics and legal quotas. This campaign managed to present women in politics as both visible and equal, and people could actually hear and see their message.”

“A story about women as heroines across different fields.”

“I vote for women – I support what a woman can do and has the potential to do, or perhaps, I vote for women knowing I won't make a mistake, because we, women, have better and more advanced instincts, a sense for business, for progress, etc.”

“I experienced the stories of many successful women through this campaign and saw, once again, that there are no obstacles for women to participate in politics and that they can be very successful at it.”

