

# IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**IOM**  
UN MIGRATION

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Visit of the musical orchestra from Spain to TRC Blažuj, sharing the universal language of music and fostering friendship. © IOM 2023 / IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina

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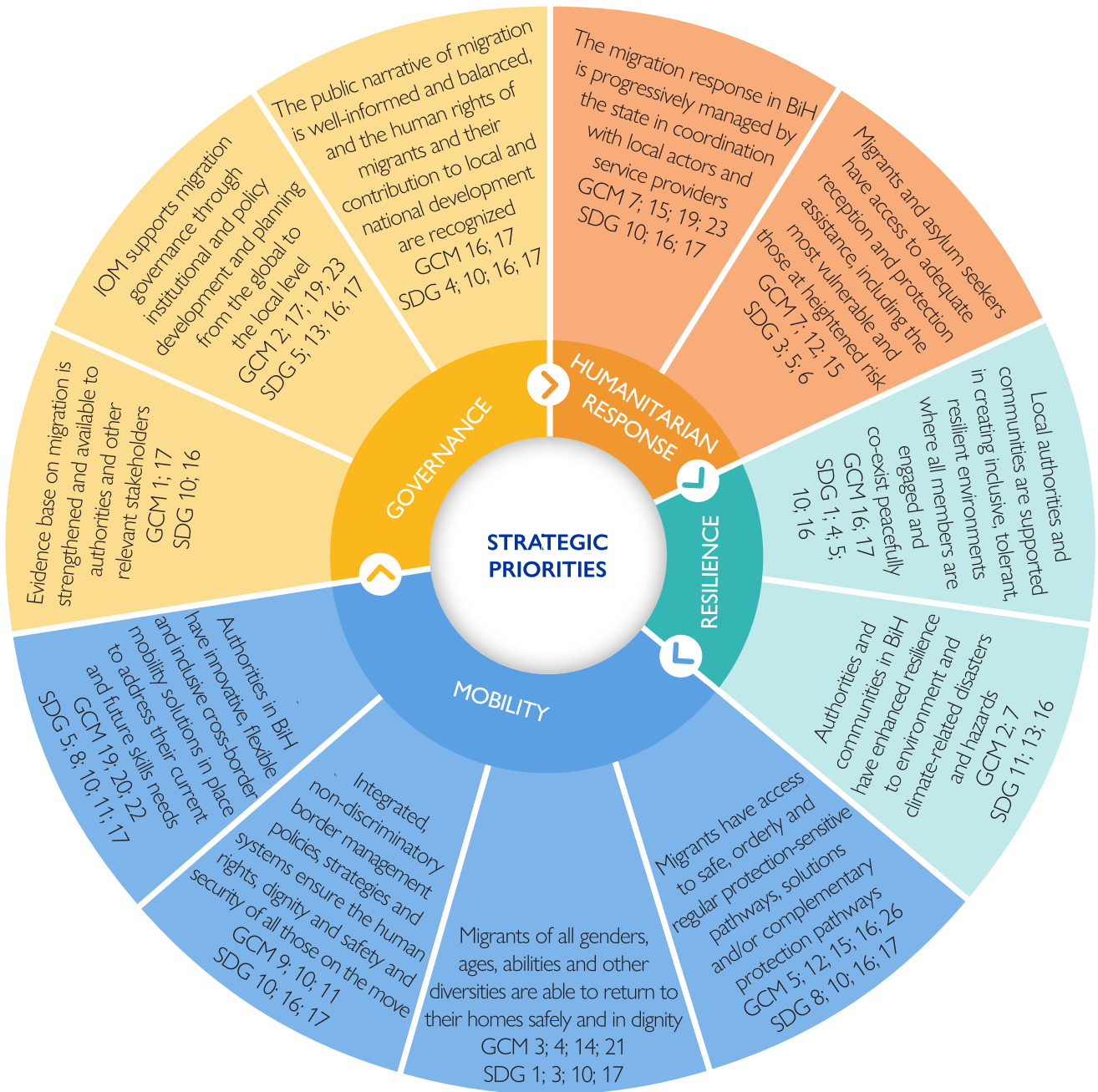


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# IOM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## STRATEGIC APPROACH (2022-2025)



THE UNSDCF FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS BUILT AROUND FOUR PRIORITY AREAS



**Priority area 1.**

Sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth



**Priority area 2.**

Quality, accessible and inclusive education, health and social protection



**Priority area 3.**

People centered governance and rule of law



**Priority area 4.**

Citizen and community engagement for social cohesion

## FOREWORD



The Annual Report highlights the 2023 key achievements and sets the context in which IOM carries out its vision in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The vision is grounded on partnership with the authorities, the UN and civil society and the understanding of the changing context in which the mission operates.

IOM has been present in BiH since 1992, providing life-saving assistance and medical evacuations for war-affected populations. Following the end of the conflict, IOM focused on programming supporting safe, regular and orderly migration, with activities on protection assistance (pillar 1), resilience and social cohesion (pillar 2), human mobility (pillar 3) and migration governance (pillar 4). Today, as the UN Migration Agency, IOM assists competent authorities, partners and communities in a wide range of relevant and pressing areas across the country.

The transition to a State-led migration response remains a critical element of our engagement with BiH authorities. As mixed migration flows continue unabated in 2023, we remain committed to supporting our partners in the delivery of assistance and protection, and to work hand in hand to build sustainable and effective response structures and capacities. The leadership demonstrated by the State in 2023 is a testimony to the progress we have achieved together since the beginning of the migration response in 2017.

The Third Sarajevo Migration Dialogue convened by the Minister of Security under the co-hosting capacities of Sweden as president of the EU Council, provides another concrete example of the excellent cooperation established in BiH with partners from the Western Balkans, and the will to transform challenges into opportunities. With a focus on regional cooperation to fight migrants smuggling and trafficking in human beings, facilitate comprehensive returns and readmissions from the Western Balkans, and open new regular pathways, the Ministerial Conference also highlighted the convergence in priorities between the EU and Western Balkans when it comes to migration in the region.

2023 was marked by global growing geopolitical turmoil which has a bearing on BiH. Our objective to support more resilient communities and individuals, to create positive narratives, to support agents of peace and to contribute to building trust within and between communities, is more important today than ever. As a candidate to EU accession, BiH is undergoing important reforms which should pave the way for more stability and a resilient society. Civic participation, trust in public institutions and the belief that the future holds promise for all will be fundamental for these transformations to happen.

I am particularly proud of all the great achievements presented in our Annual Report 2023, and efforts made to support justice and fundamental rights, including protection-sensitive approaches to migration management, survivor-centered systems to combat serious crimes taking place within the migration context, and the use of innovative tools and methods to build the capacities of competent authorities. All the dialogues we have held with passionate BiH citizens and migrants, youth, women, business owners, professionals on topics such as work, mobility, regular pathways, or climate change, have left me hopeful for the future.

We hope that the content presented in this Annual Report 2023 will provide a comprehensive picture of the work of IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the central role played by our many partners, including BiH authorities and institutions.

Laura LUNGAROTTI

*Subregional Coordinator for the Western Balkans and  
IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina Chief of Mission*

## PRIORITY 1.

# SUPPORTING A LONG-TERM, LOCAL, AND STATE-OWNED RESPONSE FOR PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS



*In 2023, the IOM Mobile Teams visited more than 600 locations in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), providing life-saving assistance and referrals to people on the move, in coordination with local authorities and partners. The Mobile Teams provide information to migrants staying outside of formal reception facilities, and help increase access to assistance.*

## ■ CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

In 2023, BiH authorities recorded close to **35,000 irregular arrivals**, an increase of 25 per cent compared to 2022. One of the key mobility trends observed pertains to the rapid transit of people on the move, with migrants spending an average 8 days in one of the four reception centres across the country, compared to 12 days in 2022 and 61 days in 2021. As in 2022, the top country of origin of people on the move in BiH is Afghanistan (42%). Morocco (21%) and Syria (7%), which were not figuring among the top 10 countries of origin in 2022, occupy

the second and third rank in the top countries of origin in 2023. Women and children represent 17 per cent of the persons assisted in Temporary Reception Centers (TRC) in BiH. In total, 17 per cent of the persons screened by IOM's protection teams were identified with protection risks and vulnerabilities.

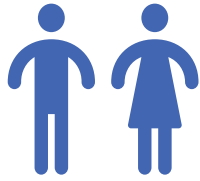
In 2023, IOM continued to support the transition to a State-led migration response and the leadership of the Ministry of Security (Mos), as well as the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA)

and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR). IOM worked closely with the MoS and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) in the management of the reception centres, ensuring that all migrants had access to direct assistance and protection. Despite busy periods and increase in the total number of beneficiaries in accommodation towards the end of the year, existing capacities were sufficient to cover for all needs.



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

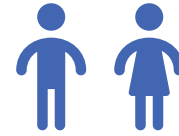
Direct assistance to vulnerable migrants in needs



In 2023, IOM assisted **54,000 beneficiaries (Male: 93% Female: 7%)** in four TRCs in the Sarajevo Canton (Ušivak, Blažuj) and the Una Sana Canton (Lipa, Borići). Assistance included shelter, food and non-food items (NFIs), water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, health, protection, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as access to information, specialized services and recreational activities.



**970,000** meals were distributed by IOM and the SFA in TRCs, with the support of partners including Pomozi.ba and the Red Cross of Bihać. IOM also continued to facilitate access to community kitchen in all TRCs, as well as assisted people requiring special diet due to health or religious reasons.



**6,000 children on the move (Boys: 86% Girls 14%)** were assisted by IOM in coordination with partners, including **4,200** unaccompanied and separated children (**Boys 99% Girls 1%**). In TRC Ušivak, in Sarajevo Canton, IOM continued to run the Mother and Baby Wash Unit, where **1,200 children and parents** accessed services.



**435,000** non-food items (NFIs) including clothes and hygiene products tailored to the season and the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls, were distributed thanks to many generous donators and community members. In addition, **more than 13,000** baby food and composite baby food meals were distributed to children accommodated in TRCs.



IOM conducts emergency screenings to identify protection risks and needs of migrants arriving in reception centres, and tailor individual assistance and referrals to specialized and non-specialized services. In 2023, IOM conducted 42,000 emergency screenings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Approximately 17 per cent of those screened were identified with protection risks and needs, including unaccompanied or separated children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI, survivors of gender-based violence, or persons with severe medical conditions.

## ■ KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



IOM's Mobile Teams assisted over **13,000** migrants **outside of reception centres**, in some **80** locations in the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), providing life-saving assistance and referrals, in coordination with the SFA and other partners. **4,000** people received transportation assistance to access safe accommodation in TRCs.



Throughout the year, IOM worked **in close collaboration with the SFA and partners active in TRCs** to improve systems and operations. The pre-registration and screening processes were revamped to enable efficient and rapid access to assistance upon arrival. For instance, in TRC Lipa, solar panels were installed to provide energy to the dining hall, while in TRC Borići, infrastructural improvements contributed to improving access to WASH.

## Protection, Information and Accountability



IOM's Protection and MHPSS team conducted close to **42,000 emergency vulnerability screenings**, leading to the identification of **7,239** persons with protection risks and needs, and the provision of more than **4,800** referrals to specialized services such as medical and mental health services or legal assistance. The team also provided individual assistance for people in a vulnerable situation including people with disabilities and beneficiaries who identify as members of LGBTQIA+ community.



IOM's Protection and MHPSS team organized **59 sessions** to provide mental health and psychosocial support in TRCs. Moreover, more than **1,600 beneficiaries** received psychological first aid, while **238** received individual case management support.



In all reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, IOM works with partners to organize sportive and recreational activities. In the creative corners, IOM supports the wellbeing of migrants through artistic expression and cultural exchanges. In 2023, the IOM teams in reception centres supported the organization of 500 activities, providing safe space for socialization and self-expression to more than 4,000 persons.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Over **350 migrants** participated in **85 Legal Information Sessions** in TRCs. The sessions, which are held in Arabic, Farsi, Pashtu, Urdu, French and English, provide accessible and reliable information on migrants' rights and obligations, as well as regular pathways, including asylum, temporary protection, as well as voluntary return. The sessions are delivered by IOM and UNHCR/Vaša Prava in all TRCs.



**Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)** mechanisms were strengthened in all TRCs. Over 100 complaint and feedback sessions and/or community representative meetings were held in TRCs to collect feedback from beneficiaries. IOM also ran biannual satisfaction surveys in TRCs with 600 persons, using the results to improve service delivery and the general wellbeing of residents.



**1,273** migrants were surveyed on their educational and professional backgrounds, with a view to organize educational activities, including language courses, based on the interests and preferences of the residents.



IOM organized **34 Mine Risk Education sessions** for **330** migrants in TRCs, with the aim to provide information about risks and hazards encountered on the Western Balkans route, including antipersonnel mines. The sessions aim to help avoid and react adequately when facing risky situations.

## Coordination of the Migration Response



IOM supported the ongoing transition to a **State-led migration response**. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Security (MoS), the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), several planning and coordination events were supported by IOM in 2023.



IOM continued to provide technical support to partners responsible for migration management. **136 participants** (Male: 74 Female: 62) attended **nine capacity building activities** organized on thematic including camp coordination and camp management, data management, identification of victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows, cultural communications and mediation. IOM also continued **on-the-job training and support** to partners in all spheres of service provision in TRCs.



IOM contributed to continued **SFA inspectors field operations** in the Una Sana Canton. IOM also supported **Border Police** operational needs in Zvornik, Bijeljina, Cazin, Laktaši, and Foča, as well as supported the **training of 120 new Border Police cadets**, including police officers and junior inspectors, in collaboration with the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Mostar.

## TRC LIPA LEADING THE TRANSITION IN BIH

Located in the Una Sana Canton, in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina, Temporary Reception Centre (TRC) Lipa was opened in November 2021 and can accommodate up to 1,500 people. In 2023, the centre provided shelter to close to 6,000 single adult male beneficiaries. TRC Lipa is the first TRC to be managed by State authorities.

Almin Imamović is currently the Deputy Director of the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA). Almin has been SFA Camp Manager in TRC Lipa from August 2021 to December 2023.

IOM has been supporting the SFA through on-the-job training and capacity-building activities since the opening of the Lipa centre. This is part of the process of transition to State-led migration response.

*The centre has had a crucial role in reducing the number of people who sleep vulnerable in public space in Bihać and in Una Sana Canton. I believe that reception which includes protection and health services as well as educational and occupational content, contributes to building resilience of beneficiaries and has a positive impact on safety and peaceful coexistence of everyone in the centre.*

- Almin Imamović

*The support provided by IOM to the functioning of the Centre was of immense significance from the opening of the centre onwards. Thanks to trainings organized by IOM, the SFA staff raised its capacities for camp coordination and camp management, learnt about the importance of minding cultural aspects in service provision, and about protocols and referral mechanisms when providing services to beneficiaries in a vulnerable situation. With the help of IOM, TRC Lipa became a pioneer in the transition of ownership over the migration response to BiH institutions, and I look forward to using lessons learned in the upcoming transition tasks in 2024*

- Almin Imamović



## PRIORITY 2.

# BUILDING VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES BY ADDRESSING PROMINENT DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY



*In 2023 IOM established strategic partnerships with UNDP, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, UNHCR, OSCE mission in BiH, EU Delegation and Council of Europe in design and implementation of peacebuilding activities. To strengthen peace and social cohesion in BiH, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and localization of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 have been put back into focus, enabling increased participation of women at all levels.*

## ■ CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

In 2023, the political and social context in BiH remains fragile, with divisive narratives and tensions in the relationships between political leaders and representatives of the international community. Meanwhile, BiH continues to face major challenges, including socioeconomic gridlock, real and perceived corruption in a wide range of sectors, discrimination, gender disparities, as well as youth disenfranchisement. Divisive political narratives and bleak socioeconomic prospects have a significant impact on social cohesion, diminishing trust

in public institutions and pushing an increasing number of citizens to leave the country.

In December 2022, the EU decided to grant candidate status to BiH, noting that significant reforms were needed to enable citizens to exercise their political rights, and citing a concerning lack of progress on rule of law and reforms. This change opened a window for advancing reconciliation under the priority five, with renewed support by the International Community. Moreover,

with BiH eligible for UN Peacebuilding funds since the end of 2022, critical interventions to support resilience, empowerment and social cohesion were launched in 2023, advancing inter-entity dialogues as well as the citizens regarding climate change and the impacts of natural disasters in BiH. In his remarks to the 114th Session of the IOM Council of Member States in November 2023, Nenad Nešić, Minister of Security of BiH, highlighted the need for international solidarity to collectively face challenges related to climate change and mobility.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### Social Cohesion

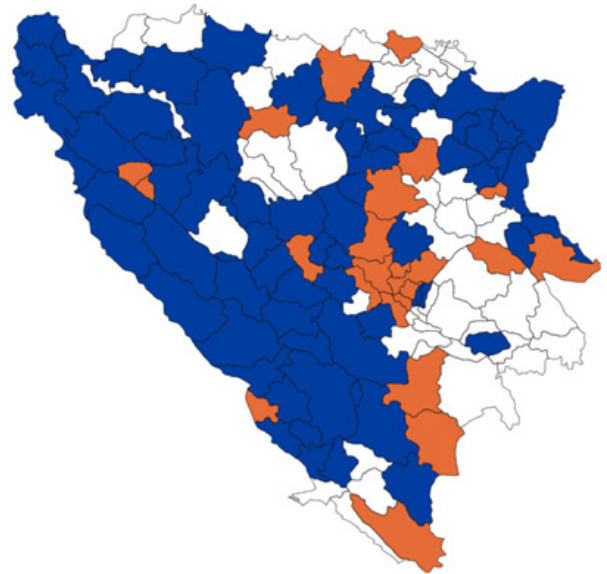


IOM worked with over **100 public institutions, 50 civil society organizations and 7,000 youth** who implemented 531 civic engagement activities in **70 municipalities** in the FBiH, RS and Brčko District. Monitoring of social cohesion shows a **higher increase in resilience** to divisive narratives in programme communities compared to control communities. Moreover, 35 per cent of beneficiaries declared being more active in their communities and 77 per cent felt more **empowered to express themselves**. In particular, female participants reported greater increase in activism and self-expression.



To increase citizens' participation in community **decision-making processes**, IOM supported municipalities to facilitate **38 community dialogues**. 516 representatives of civil society organizations, public institutions and citizens took part in the dialogues resulting in implementation of community initiatives, recommendations for policy changes and advocacy initiatives.

IOM\_2023 ● Programme area ● Wider participation

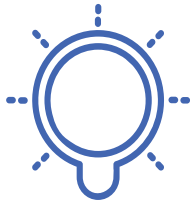


IOM promoted the importance of dedicating municipal resources to social cohesion and peacebuilding, as well as to local civil society organizations and youth. In collaboration with the Council of Europe, OSCE Mission in BiH, UNDP and EU delegation **two municipalities (Jablanica and Prnjavor) adopted the proposition** and introduced social cohesion fund as separate municipal budget lines, thus introducing new stream of programming.



The event "You(th) Speak First" gave young people the opportunity to have their voices heard. Thanks to the support of various donors, the Bosnia-Herzegovina Resilience Initiative (BHRI) has invested over 15 million dollars in social cohesion initiatives to strengthen youth leadership and activism since 2017. Through the BHRI, IOM promotes alternative to divisive narratives and civic participation in communities across the country.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



IOM's partners and beneficiaries submitted **13 advocacy initiatives** towards local and central level governments to: develop Youth Strategies (Una Sana Canton and Kalesija) and Youth Action Plan in Brčko District, engage civil society in environmental actions, provide financial assistance to people in need including children with disabilities, create pedestrian zones, install public lighting, promote youth activism in schools, increase access to scholarships, etc. **Five of these initiatives resulted in** advancing the collaboration between the government and programme beneficiaries.



To ensure quality and accessibility of social services in underserved communities, **27 infrastructure projects** were implemented of a value of 900,000 EUR in, and leading to more than 315,000 EUR in local co-financing.

### Youth Empowerment



Over **3,000 youth** have been engaged in **197 trainings on leadership, community activism and strategic planning**. More than 95 per cent of the participants stated that they have increased skills and knowledges that will be used in their everyday lives.



IOM supported Youth Associations to engage over 500 youth in **41 community initiatives** advocating for municipal budget lines or spaces for youth, conducting awareness raising street actions and media campaigns, or advancing eco-education. Moreover, 81 members of Youth Associations were capacitated during **11 strategic planning workshops**.



IOM works to increase people's awareness of environmental and climate issues and supports youth engagement in recognizing environmental challenges and proposing solutions. Through a project with the Biotechnical Faculty from the University of Bihać, the Municipality of Bihać has recognized the importance of the Una River basin, running regular analysis of the quality of the water and using flower beds as natural purifiers. The process is used to teach local students and youth about alternative systems for environmental protection.

## ■ KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



IOM partners organized **39 meetings with government representatives** (mayors, ministers and their associates) with the participation of **179 youth**. Meetings with government representatives and planning workshops contributed to increased participation of youth in community decision making processes.



The Department for European Integration of the West Herzegovina Canton participated in youth actions, which led the Department to initiate **annual consultative meetings** with youth, an important advancement reached beyond the scope of the project.



In three municipalities (Grahovo, Ribnik and Ključ), **IOM helped new youth groups make their voices heard** in municipal councils and decision-making processes. In Kalesija, the Municipality invited the Youth Association, supported by IOM, to review and comment on the Strategy for Environmental Protection, and local high schools invited members of the Association to present on their role and discuss youth activities with local students.



Through 18 networking events, 305 youth were supported in establishing collaborative bonds with members of their communities and beyond, and **217 youth received professional support** during one of the 20 mentorship events organized in 2023. Some of these mentorships flourished into new partnerships and ventures, including collaboration between Mountaineering Associations; youth engagement in cultural heritage protection and intergenerational cooperation between youth and association of professionals.

### Media engagement



To promote positive narratives, **7 social media campaigns** were implemented in cooperation with youth. Campaigns helped raise awareness on climate changes and environmental protection, natural and cultural heritage, youth success stories, local initiatives and local champions of peace.



**700 positive stories** were produced and distributed through online and social medias, reaching over 4 million views and engaging more than 300,000 individuals.

### Climate Change Adaptation



IOM supported the design and implementation of **12 environmental protection initiatives** in Bijeljina, Bihać and Jablanica. The initiatives helped create an inclusive socio-environmental mindset, introduced innovative approaches in addressing environmental challenges, and empowered eco-friendly individuals and organizations to further lobby local governments for environmental actions.



The Una-Sana Canton's **flood and landslide preparedness was improved** through the delivery of emergency response vessels to the Cantonal Civil Protection and Red Cross, and initial steps were concluded to identify infrastructural project to be supported.



## BRINGING IMPACTS TO COMMUNITIES AND WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS

As a result of the project “Empowering trust and cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina's communities”, women’s associations from Jablanica (Most), Tešanj (Merđžan) and Glamoč (Žad) established working connections outside of IOM programme framework. As part of the project, female entrepreneurship was promoted through sharing of experiences in production and delivering of goods and services by women’s associations. Outside of the project, they instigated connections between members of the associations and third parties that economically empowered the work of the associations and their members.

Furthermore, members of the associations were encouraged to approach local governments with requests that would enable women’s associations and their members to meet regularly and have more strategic planning processes.

*“ We mediated establishment of connection between association “Žad” and association “Ruka” [Tešanj], that resulted in production of squeezed juice.*

– member of the association “Merđžan” from Tešanj

*“ They taught me how to translate my own resources into a business and how to economically empower women.*

– member of the association (affiliation unknown)

*“ As a result of our initiatives toward local government, we received a new premises for the association from the Municipality of Glamoč.*

– member of the association “Žad” from Glamoč



## PRIORITY 3.

# HELPING MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY THRIVE THROUGH SAFE, ORDERLY, AND REGULAR MOBILITY PATHWAYS



Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is a critical solution for migrants who wish to return home but do not have the means to do so. Since 2017, IOM facilitates AVRR for migrants in the Western Balkans. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the AVRR team is present in all reception centres, as well as in other transit hubs, providing reliable information and helping migrants make informed decisions. In 2023, 96 migrants received assistance to return from Bosnia and Herzegovina to their country of origin.

## ■ CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

With its newly acquired candidate status, BiH advanced on the EU path by working to address the 14 key priorities set by the European Commission, with the newly formed Council of Ministers adopting several relevant strategies (e.g., on organized crime, migration) and laws. The *Strategy on Migration and Asylum 2021-2025* and related *Action Plan* provide the framework for migration management and coordination between relevant authorities. As mixed migration movements continue to feature highly on the political agenda of the WB, regional cooperation to strengthen

border management, counter-trafficking, counter-smuggling, and return and readmission remain important priorities in the context of BiH.

In 2023, authorities made important strides in the operationalization of return and readmission processes and with support of IOM, continued to engage in dialogue with countries of origin. Moreover, significant steps were taken to enhance cooperation mechanisms for smuggling and trafficking prosecution and victim-centered investigation. However, as highlighted in

recent reports, additional efforts will be needed to in the areas of identification, protection and assistance to victims, effective investigations, and prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators. Lastly, as BiH emigration rate remains high, employers are increasingly interested to recruit foreign workers in key sectors. Labour mobility is a critical dimension of migration policy in the region, with a view to increase the regular pathways available for skilled workers to work, live and contribute to BiH society and economy.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### Immigration and Border Governance



IOM facilitated **on-the-job trainings to border police officers** to strengthen criminal intelligence work and risk analysis, identify persons without personal documents, detect imposter cases and falsified documents, and vehicle inspection for the detection of hidden goods or faces. A total of **350 individuals** were trained, ensuring enhanced capabilities in critical areas of border security.



IOM provided expertise and logistical support to the **Working Group for the Establishment of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR)** in BiH, with a final report drafted at the last meeting in December 2023.

### Human trafficking and migrants smuggling



Innovative cross-border cooperation in strengthening counter trafficking and smuggling efforts was achieved through the piloting of trilateral simulation-based trainings. In total, **24 representatives** of state authorities from BiH, Montenegro, and Serbia enhanced their skills on victims-centred interviewing and parallel investigations.



IOM facilitated cross-border counter smuggling investigation between BiH and Serbia through a series of operational meetings between border police officials and prosecutors, resulting in the successful arrest of persons charged of organized crime for purpose of smuggling.



IOM provides technical support to authorities in charge of border and identity management. In 2023, with supports of various donors, IOM carried on-the-job trainings with Border Police officers conducting first and second line of border controls. Border Police were also introduced to the latest technologies used for falsifying documents and recognition techniques during an interactive training on detection of imposter and falsified documents.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

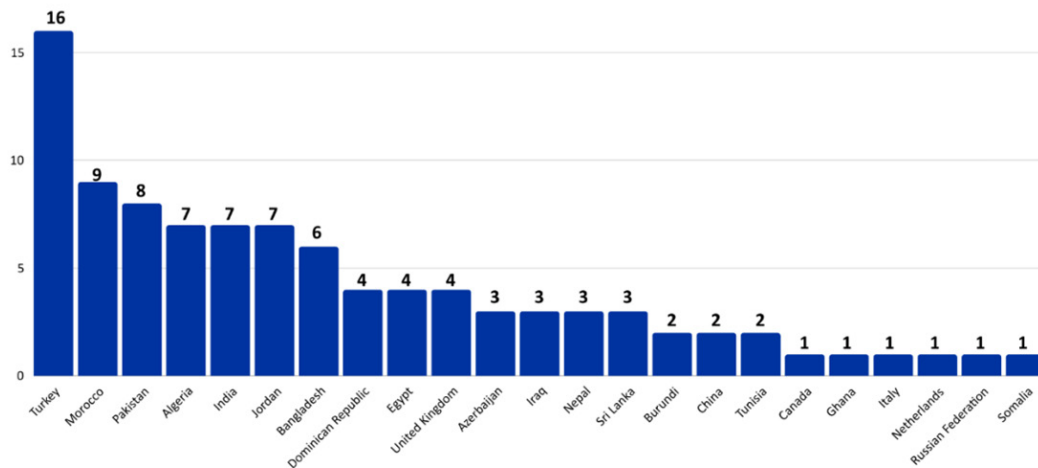


### Return, Reintegration and Readmission



**67 reintegration grants** supporting small businesses (48%), housing (45%) and medical needs (7%) helped returnees build sustainable plans upon return in the countries of origin. To ensure safe and dignified returns, all the persons assisted with return received individual counselling and devised their own reintegration plan.

IOM organized **1,658 counselling sessions** on return and reintegration, including 24 virtual counselling sessions with countries of origin, and conducted over **856 group information sessions**. As a result, 290 migrants expressed an intention to return to their countries of origin. IOM also provided information outside of reception facilities, reaching more than **11,700 migrants in** more than **130** different locations in BiH.



IOM helped **96 migrants** (7% female and 93% male, of which 4% were children) return voluntarily from BiH to 23 countries of origin, notably Turkey (17%), Morocco (9%), Pakistan (8%), Algeria (7%), and India (7%). In the process, IOM provided support in areas such as medical and psychosocial assistance, childcare, accommodation, and financial support.

### THE ROLE OF MIGRATION IN FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



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Director, Union of Employers of Republika Srpska

Modelled by Faruk Hadžić, Dean, Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), Department of Economics and Business



The conference entitled "Unleashing the Potential for Labour Migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Discussion on Evidence and Ways Forward" held in September 2023 explored barriers and policy solutions to harness the potential of regular migration pathways for long term development.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



**21 representatives of local authorities and organizations** participated in the workshop on **Return Counselling for Children and Families**, enhancing their understanding of the roles and duties of stakeholders working with children and families and capacities to apply rights-based and child-sensitive approach to return counselling.



**128 readmission specialists** from the region and from the EU took part in the **Regional Group of Readmission Specialists** established by IOM to share best practices for harmonized, effective and rights-based return, readmission, and reintegration from the Western Balkans.



IOM facilitated the visit of **14 officials of MoS, SFA, and Border Police** to meet the counterparts in Montenegro and Croatia and discuss the implementation of **readmission agreements and protection-sensitive assistance to returnees**. IOM also facilitated the visit of five Albanian and four Serbian officials to MoS and SFA in BiH. Moreover, **46 officials of ministries of interior** (cantonal, district, and entity level) participated in the **workshop on readmission of BiH citizens** organized by IOM.

## Immigration and Labour Mobility



IOM organized the conference **Unleashing the potential for labour migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, gathering over **60 representatives** of private sector, academia, labour mobility experts, and policy makers to discuss innovative solutions to harness the potential of labour mobility to support local development in BiH.



IOM organized **seven consultations on employment, labour, and social policy** with key partners, to discuss capacity building trainings, mapping of institutional needs and challenges, and local and regional cooperation between labour mobility experts.



In 2023, IOM assisted **1,335 persons through Canadian Visa Application Centre (CANVAC)**, out of which **351 regular migrants** (49% male and 51% female applicants) assisted with health assessment for visa applications to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and USA.

## CATALYZING EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING OF MIGRANTS

As a result of the project “Western Balkans Joint Actions Against Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Human Beings”, the collaborative efforts of the Border Police and Prosecutor’s Office from both Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Serbia have yielded important results in the fight against organized crime. Through a series of IOM-facilitated events, a parallel investigation was conducted leading to the apprehension of three individuals engaged in the operations of smuggling migrants through Serbia and BiH, ultimately destined for the European Union. However, this operation indirectly resulted in the rescue of about 250 migrants in dangerous situations, trapped between borders or stranded along riverbanks, when many were on the brink of drowning.

*This investigation and operational action effectively brought an end to the illicit activities of an organized criminal group engaged in migrant smuggling, thereby averting additional suffering and loss of lives. This group relied on the use of unsafe rubber boats, placing migrants in grave danger, particularly in light of prior instances of drowning in the area.*

– The Prosecutor’s Office of BiH, Head of the Section for Organized Crime and Trafficking in Persons.



## PRIORITY 4.

# LEVERAGING INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND DISCOURSES



Over the past years, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix has emerged as a unique tool to analyze migration movements in the Western Balkans. In 2023, IOM surveyed more than 5,000 migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and released 24 reports analyzing trends related to the profiles, needs, experiences and routes. By capturing, analysing and disseminating information on migration movements in the region, IOM supports evidence-based migration response.

## ■ CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

BiH continues to take steps to improve migration governance with the adoption of the new Strategy and Action plan on Migration and Asylum, and the adoption of the Law on foreigners in September 2023. Following the formation of new State, Entity and Cantonal governments in 2023, progresses were noted in many areas related to migration management and coordination. The EU enlargement agenda continued to gain momentum in

2023 with high level visits and exchanges emphasizing the need for further alignment and regional cooperation, notably in the framework of the Berlin process.

In general, in the context of the Western Balkans, access to data, analysis and migration statistics remains challenging, and IOM supports its partners with a view to promote evidence-based migration

policy and dialogues. Moreover, in order to fully harness the potential of migration and develop a long-term vision where migration enables development, IOM regularly convey dialogues to promote the engagement and combined efforts of all spheres of the society – from the government to civil society to employers and citizens associations.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### Effective migration governance



IOM supported the coordination body during the development of the **Strategy on Integrated Border Management** (2024-2029) and **Action Plan** (2024-2026), which were submitted in December 2023 to the national working group.



IOM facilitated the meeting of the National Task Force for Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Irregular Migration of BiH where participants worked on formulating the **amendments to the Criminal Code of BiH** to enhance legal provisions for countering smuggling of migrants. The proposed draft amendments were forwarded to the government for further deliberations.



In June 2023, the MoS of BiH and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) co-hosted the third **Sarajevo Migration Dialogue** in Jahorina, gathering 167 high-level representatives of the Western Balkans, the EU and other partners to discuss sustainable migration governance. The Skopje Declaration adopted in November 2022 and the related Action Plan adopted in Jahorina highlight **21 key measures** to address the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, increase access to regular pathways and work towards a holistic return management approach.



In the framework of the UN Joint Work Plan for BiH, **IOM chaired the Result Group 4: Social Cohesion** as well as the PSEA Task Force and the Mixed Migration Working Group. In 2023, IOM is the second largest UN agency in BiH in terms of resources mobilization, behind UNDP.



In June 2023, the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU co-hosted the third Sarajevo Migration Dialogue. Facilitated by IOM, the conference gathered 167 high-level representatives of the Western Balkans, the EU and other partners. During the event, Western Balkans partners identified a set of 21 key actions (the Jahorina Action Plan) to advance sustainable migration governance in the region.



## ■ KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Evidence-based migration policy and dialogues

### DTM

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) provides regular snapshots of the presence, profiles, experience and intentions of migrants and asylum seekers on the Western Balkans route. In 2023, DTM teams interviewed **6,149** migrants transiting through BiH.



DTM's reports aim to inform the policy and operational responses of partners in the region. In 2023, IOM releases a total of **11** DTM reports including **four** Migrant Presence, **six** Migrant Mobility Situation Report and **one** customized study on nationals from Morocco. To foster data usage, **11** presentations were held for external stakeholders and **five** submissions to EU blueprint processes.



IOM strengthened capacities of partners to collect, analyze and report on migration trends. More than **50 staff from the BiH Service of Foreigner' Affairs** took part in the joint data collection exercises organized every month to monitor migrants' presence, profiles, travel routes and experiences.



IOM disseminated thematic knowledge products to contribute to evidence-based governance. Exploring labour mobility and its impact on the economy of BiH, IOM supported the study ***Willing to employ migrant workers? A Labour Market Analysis in Bosnia and Herzegovina***, produced by the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology. To contribute to the discussion on migration, environment, and climate change, IOM published the study ***Exploring the Links Between Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Bosnia and Herzegovina***.

Public access to well-balanced information about migration



In total, **3,343 migrants and BiH residents** from local communities participated in community initiatives contributing to migrant inclusion. This contributes to increasing social cohesion in communities most impacted by mixed movements and decrease sources of tensions or fear in the communities.



NO NATION FASHION

IOM continued to foster migrants' inclusion and creativity through activities of the **No Nation Fashion (NNF) brand**. The initiative offers an inclusive space for migrants to showcase their stories and talents, and give back to communities in BiH. More than **500** migrants participated in NNF creative activities organized in TRCs.



IOM promoted a whole-of-society approach towards migration governance by engaging not only institutional partners and local authorities, but also civil society, communities, migrants, academia, media, and the private sector. IOM worked with more than **100 partners in the organizations of events** to increase public access to well-balanced information on a range of topics related to reconciliation, diversity, inclusion, mobility, development, and migration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina wishes to thank its partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the collaboration, trust and commitment to promote safe and regular migration for the benefits of all.

At the state level, IOM thanks the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Security, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, the Border Police and the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). Furthermore, IOM thanks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Office of State Coordinator for Combatting Human Trafficking.

At the entity and Brčko District level, IOM worked closely with the ministries of interior, social welfare, labour and social policy, European integration, health, and education. At the local level, this included centres for social welfare, primary and secondary health providers, public health institutes, and mental health institutions. On labour migration, IOM thanks partners from employers' associations, chambers of commerce, Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST) and other academic and private sector partners.

IOM also extends its sincere gratitude to all mayors and municipal partners engaged in the delivery of impactful activities in BiH.

IOM partnered with civil society organizations such as the Red Cross, Pomozi.ba and other key partners engaged in building community resilience and increasing democratic participation. IOM worked with non-governmental organizations, universities, local communities, unofficial citizens groups, parents, pedagogical experts, recreational and sports clubs, interest groups, influencers, media and community leaders in communities across BiH. Through these engagements at all levels, IOM continued to be recognized as a trusted partner invested in the development and vitality of local communities, for which we are ever grateful.

IOM extends its appreciation to the donor community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially to the European Union (EU) delegation, Austria, Catalonia, Denmark, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom and the UN Peacebuilding Fund. We are also grateful for the support from many IOM colleagues across the world, especially the IOM Regional Offices based in Vienna and Brussels and the IOM Office to the United Nations in New York.

IOM contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework in BiH, working synergistically with the UN Country Team to support long-term development and stability. IOM also thanks colleagues from OSCE, COE, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, and ILO for the partnerships and collaboration in 2023.



The senior management team of the mission of IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina engages regularly with partners to plan and coordinate the delivery of impactful activities. IOM is grateful to all partners for their resolute commitment and dedication in making a difference in the lives of citizens and people on the move.

The International Organization for Migration extends its gratitude to the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to our donors, for their continuous support.



MINISTARSTVO SIGURNOSTI BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE  
МИНИСТАРСТВО БЕЗБЈЕДНОСТИ БОСНЕ И ХЕРЦЕГОВИНЕ  
MINISTRY OF SECURITY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice Bosne i Hercegovine  
Министарство за људска права и избјеглице Босне и Херцеговине  
Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Ministarstvo civilnih poslova Bosne i Hercegovine  
Министарство цивилних послова Босне и Херцеговине  
Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina



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