

Opening speech
Conference on elimination of violence against women and children in Sarajevo

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina has been collaborating with Medica Zenica for over 5 years, working together to address violence against women and children. Since 2001, UNICEF has supported various aspects of Medica's work, and has been especially involved in the organization's work in training communities to develop multi-disciplinary responses to violence against women and children.

In Medica, UNICEF found a partner that offered an innovative and professional approach to tackling this work, and one that reflected UNICEF's own position. As an organization, we have long recognized the need for professionals from a variety of disciplines – law enforcement, the health sector, judiciary and the NGO sector – to work together at community level to ensure that victims of violence receive a comprehensive package of assistance services designed to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into their communities, and to work together to ensure that as much as possible is done to prevent and recognize domestic violence at the earliest possible stage. Medica saw this need early on and has built on the experience and expertise of its staff to develop a training and development programme that has been successfully implemented in numerous locations throughout the country. This training has enhanced the capacities of hundreds of professionals to respond to women and children in a professional, coordinated manner.

Perhaps even more importantly, Medica has worked tirelessly to keep the issue of violence against women and children high on the political agenda, through research, publishing and awareness raising activities. Events such as this conference today are vital in ensuring that public and political attention remains focused on the issue of violence against women and children.

UNICEF is proud to have been actively supporting Medica for over 5 years, and that we have continued to do so because their programmes and activities have consistently been of high quality and successful impact, however, the best testimony to the effectiveness and importance of the work carried out by Medica lies in the testimony and experience of the professionals gathered here today. I am sure that their expertise and perspective will ensure that the conference produces valuable recommendations and plans and that, additionally, people will be able to appreciate how much the work of Medica has transformed the way so many communities are able to respond to the needs of women and children victims of violence in this country.