Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Overview
“Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, is a three-year programme developed by the UN Women Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The programme aims to strengthen the institutional and social response mechanisms to violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence in BiH by contributing to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Furthermore, the proposed activities of the programme build upon the initiatives identified in the entity strategies on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The programme presents a comprehensive, transformative approach towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

2. Background
Violence against women and girls continues to be a widespread social problem in BiH, and a serious violation of fundamental human rights. This type of violence is still tolerated and considered socially acceptable behaviour, and is justified by traditional and patriarchal conceptions of the role and status of women in BiH society.

The entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in August 2014 has marked an important milestone in the BiH efforts to curb violence against women and girls, in addition to new legislation on protection from family violence that was adopted in 2012 in both of BiH’s entities. However, there is still a need to harmonize these laws at all levels and implement their necessary provisions to ensure legal protection, equal treatment and respecting the rights of women and children, who are recognized as the most frequent victims of gender-based violence.

3. Programme Description
The programme builds on the previous work of UN Women and other UN agencies in BiH at the policy level as well as the support provided to improve services for survivors and to prevent violence against women and girls since 2008.

The programme has two main components that are focusing on protection of survivors and prevention of violence against women and domestic violence.
Component 1. Improvement of the availability, accessibility and quality of services to survivors of violence against women and domestic violence.

Under this component, UN Women will work for:

a) Entity institutions to have the capacity to develop and implement policies for the provision of services, based on international standards and obligations; and

b) Communities involved in the programme to be able to provide quality, coordinated services to survivors and perpetrators in line with international standards.

The work under this component aims to enhance availability, access and quality of services utilizing a multi-sectorial approach to address violence against women and domestic violence in BiH. This will be realised by support to state based and non-governmental institutional service provision in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, as well as by deploying direct support to capacity development of relevant service providers in selected communities.

The work under this component will be implemented in close collaboration with the USAID Project on ending violence against women that is managed by the Agency of Gender Equality in BiH.

Component 2. Promotion of favourable social attitudes and behaviours towards ending violence against women and domestic violence among men, women and young people.

Under this component, UN Women will work for:

a) Engaging men, women and young people in promoting gender equality, eliminating gender stereotypes, facilitating community-based discussion, and supporting action groups to end violence against women. This will include enlisting men’s active participation in preventing violence and promoting positive role models (with a special focus on high-school and university students, young fathers, and men in media, not excluding other target groups); and

b) Engaging media, encouraging the responsible reporting of such violence and raising awareness of the criminal nature and extent of gender-based violence, including the criminality of such violence, and promoting the responsiveness and use of services.

Under this component UN Women will have a strong focus on working with men and boys to address and understand gender roles through awareness campaigning and educational activities. In addition, key media actors and outlets will be engaged in advocacy, research and capacity building towards improving gender sensitive reporting and preventing violence against women and girls.

The project was launched in April 2016 and after a few months inception phase activities will scale up during summer 2016.