



Research of the situation, needs and opportunities for improvement of the position of the rural woman

May, 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

The key actor on whom survival and revival of the village and rural development in general are dependent is a woman and this is the reason why a woman should have a central place in the affirmation of the village and quality of life in rural areas.

Numerous legislation, conventions and charters treating this problem and especially the Article 14 of the UN CEDAW Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women are concerned with improvement of the position of the rural women. BiH as a state party to this Convention is obliged to work on advancement of the socio-economic situation of rural women, their access to resources, the market and information, as well as access to infrastructure and public services.

The Association VESTA from Tuzla presents the research on the situation, needs and possibilities for improvement of the status of rural women, carried out in the framework of the project 'Rural women- for socio-economic strengthening and equal participation in the local development plans'.

This project is one in the series of program interventions by the Association Vesta aimed at strengthening the role of civil society in promotion of the human rights and democratic reforms in BiH, in the segment of gender equality and empowerment of women in society. The project is being implemented with support of the US Government's Special Fund intended for women empowerment, received from the American Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Over a number of years, VESTA has channeled its activities towards women, with focus in the forthcoming period being shifted towards the rural woman.

The research conducted within the framework of this project is an appeal to the local and regional governments to systematically approach elimination of limitations and stereotypes which are the basis for unequal role, status and position of the rural women in the political, socio-economic and cultural sense, but also all other development stakeholders, to channel their action towards the rural communities, especially focusing on the instruments of support for the rural women.

The research results presented here are based on the conducted interviews and workshops with a total of 450 women from 37 local communities in 17 municipalities of the Federation of BiH. The interviews and workshops in the targeted areas were carried out in close cooperation with the representatives of the civil society organizations, working on/within the programmes aimed at strengthening socio-economic status of women. The research has been structured in to parts, one of which based on interview questionnaires filled in by 450 respondents from the rural areas targeted by the research and workshops carried out by the facilitators using the accepted participatory methodological approach, based on identification of key social and economic factors which represent a problem for the rural woman and suggestions and actions summarized on the basis of 15 individual workshops/ focus groups carried out in the rural communities.

2. EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY

2.1. The Age of the Respondents

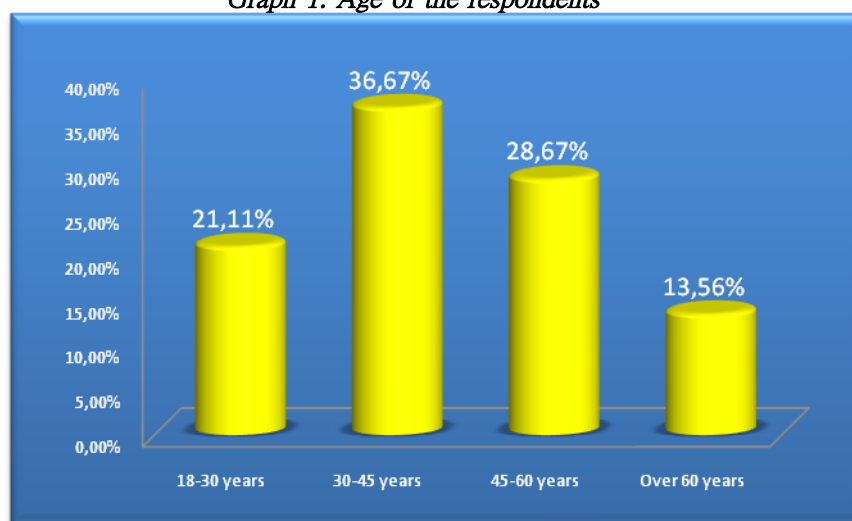
The research results related to the age of the respondents (Table 1) show that, out of the total number of the interviewed women, 95 (21,11%) are in the age group of 18 - 30 years old. 165 (36,67%) respondents are in the age between 30 - 45, 128 (28,67%) in the age of 45 -60, while 61 (13,56%) are over 60.

Tabela 1. Age of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-30 years	95	21,11%
30-45 years	165	36,67%

45-60 years	129	28,67%
Over 60 years	61	13,56%
TOTAL	450	100%

Graph 1. Age of the respondents



Based on the obtained results in relation to the age of the respondents, it can be observed that as much as 57,78% of the total number of the respondents are the women on the age between 18 and 45, which is certainly one of the significant markers of attitudes in this research.

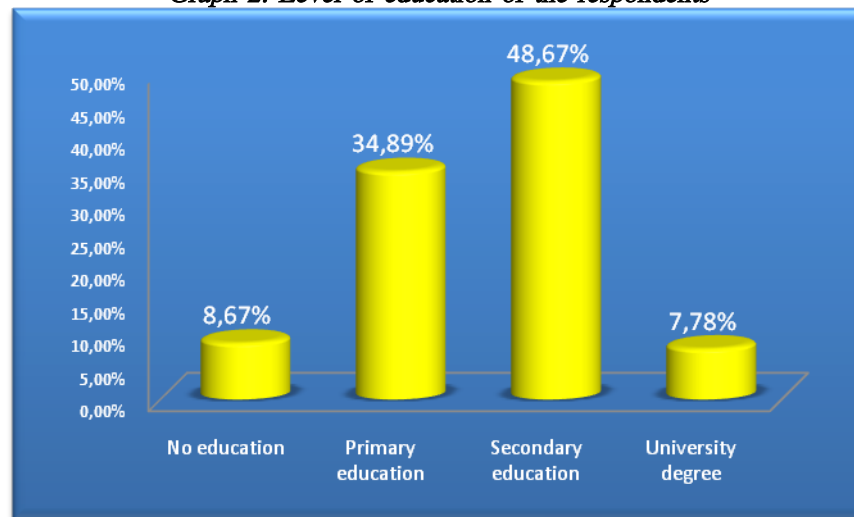
2.2 Level of education of the respondents

The research results related to the educational background of the respondents (Table 2) show that the respondents without formal education make up 8,67% (39) of the total number of interviewees. The respondents with primary education only, make up to 34,89% (157) of the total sample. 48,67% (219) of the respondents have secondary school completed, while 7,78% (35) of them have a university degree.

Table 2: Level of education of the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No education	39	8,67%
Primary education	157	34,89%
Secondary education	219	48,67%
University degree	35	7,78%
TOTAL	450	100%

Graph 2: Level of education of the respondents



Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the biggest number of the respondents who showed interest to take part in the research, specifically 48,67% of them, have a secondary education.

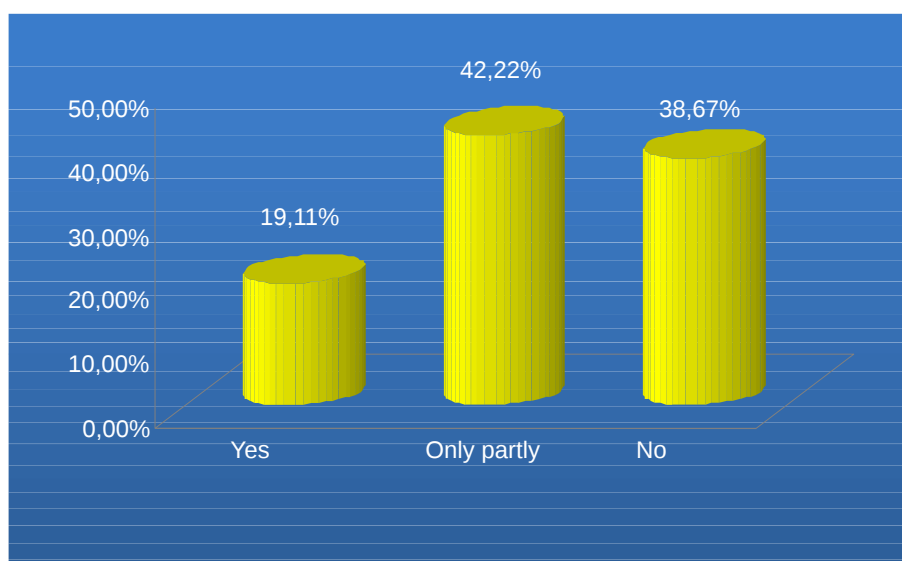
2.3. Perceived level of appreciation of the role of a rural woman

The research results related to the respondents' perception of the level to which the role of a rural woman is appreciated and valued (Table 3) show that only 19,11% (86) of the respondents gave positive responses. The 'only partially' response have been chosen by 42,22% (140) respondents, while 38,67% (174) women responded 'no' to this question.

Table 3. The appreciation of the role of a rural women

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	86	19,11%
Only partly	190	42,22%
No	174	38,67%
TOTAL	450	100%

Graph 3. The appreciation of the role of a rural women



The obtained results show that the interviewed rural women have expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with the level of appreciation of their role, with as much as 80,89% of interviewees responding with no or only partially to this question. Given that it is, undoubtedly, the very rural woman on whom the rural development is largely dependent, she should be ensured a more deserving role in the society and her work should be more adequately valued and supported.

2.4. The access to health care institutions, educational institutions, social welfare centers, banks/microcredit organizations, local markets, etc. By the rural women

The level of the respondents' satisfaction with the access that a rural woman has to healthcare institutions, educational institutions, centers for social welfare, banks/microcredit organizations, local markets, etc.. is shown in the Table 4. Out of the total of 450 respondents, 3,33% (15) has assessed the access as excellent, 30% (135) assessed it as good, while as much as 45,78% (206) of the respondents said that it was not satisfactory and 20,89% (94) thought it was bad.

Table 4. Access to institutions/services of support

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	15	3,33%
Good	135	30,00%
Not satisfactory	206	45,78%
Bad	94	20,89%
TOTAL	450	100%

Graph 5. Access to institutions/ services of support



The graph demonstrates that 66.67% of the respondents assessed the access to services and institutions of support as bad or not satisfactory, while just 3,33/ assessed it as excellent, showing a worryingly difficult situation of the rural woman in terms of access to institutions and support services. According to the respondents, amongst the limitation factors are also lack of information, as well as knowledge about opportunities offered by the institutions of support, ranging from social to financial ones.

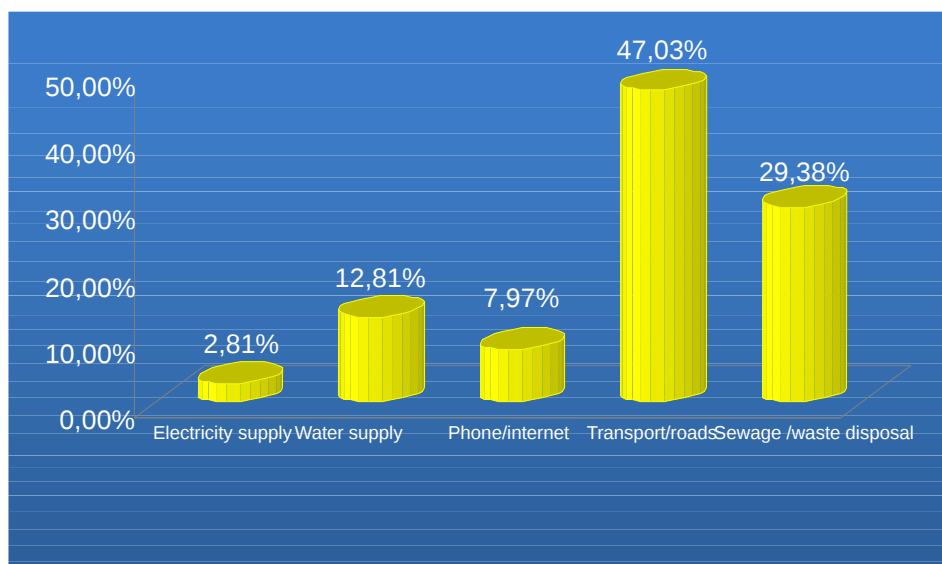
2.5. The quality of infrastructure and stances of the respondents on the biggest infrastructure problems (respondents could mark maximum two of the offered options which they find most relevant for their local communities)

Looking at the responses of the interviewees about the problems they, as women, face in terms of infrastructure, with a given possibility to mark two biggest infrastructural problems (Table 5), we observe that 2,81% (18) of the total number of marked answers related to electricity supply, 12,81% (82) water supply, 7,97% (51) telephone and internet communications, while 47,03% (301) of responses related to transport and road communications and 29,38% (188) stated sewage and waste disposal as the biggest problem.

Table 5. Local infrastructure

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Electricity supply	18	2,81%
Water supply	82	12,81%
Telephone connections/internet	51	7,97%
Transport and road communications	301	47,03%
Sewage and waste disposal	188	29,38%
Total	640	100%

Graph 5. Local infrastructure



The obtained results show that 301 respondents find the transport and road communications as the biggest infrastructure problem, while 188 of them underlined the problem of sewage and waste disposal is rather.

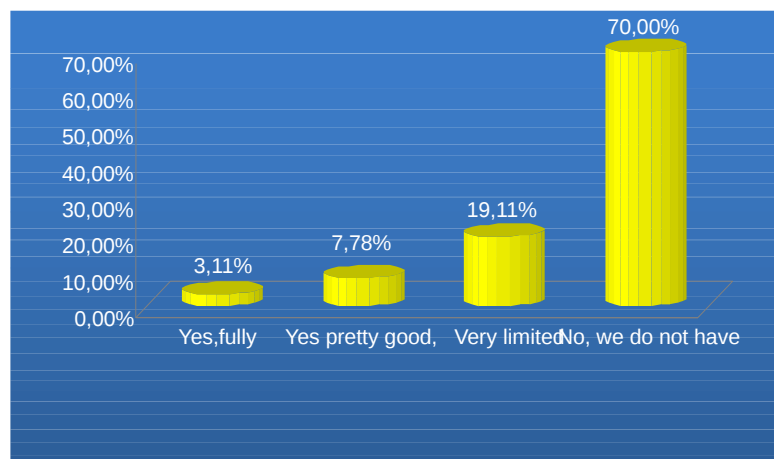
2.6. Rural women's participation and representation in the governing structures of the local communities

The research results related to the participation of women in the governing structures of the local communities and the level of their satisfaction with the representation of their needs and interests are very disheartening (Table 6.). Only 3.11%(14) of the respondents gave positive opinion, 7,78% (35) believes that participation of women and representation of their interests is pretty good, 19,11% (86) find it very limited, while as many as 70% (315) is of the opinion that it is non-existent, whatsoever.

Table 6. Women's participation in the governing structures of the local communities

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, fully	14	3,11%
Yes, pretty good	35	7,78%
Very limited	86	19,11%
No, we do not have	315	70,00%
Total	450	100%

Graph 6. Women participation in the governing structures of the local communities



The analysis demonstrates a very high level of consensus between the respondents in their assessment of the level of women's participation on the governing structures and decision-making processes and representation of their needs and interests. The fact that as many as 89,11% (who responded with 'no' or 'very limited') recognizes the lack of women in the governing structures of the local communities and believes that their interests and needs are not adequately represented in

the work plans/ programmes of the governing structures, points to a very negative situation, but also evident space for action towards improvement of the existing situation.

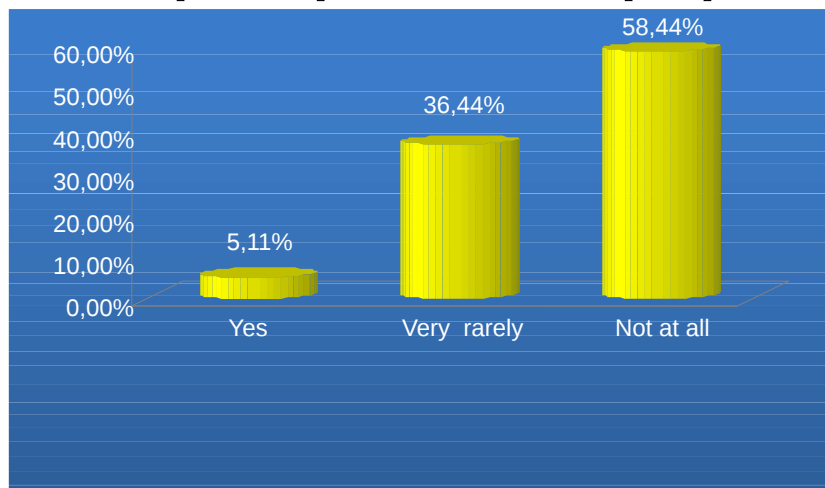
2.7. Participation of women in creation of the local economic and agricultural plans and development policies

Participation of women in creation of the local development plans and policies is, according to the research results (Table 7.), assessed as very negative. Out of the total number of respondents, only 5,11% (23) gave positive responses, 36,44% thought that women very rarely participate in the creation of development plans at the local level, while 58.44% argued that a rural woman does not at all participate in development of local plans and policies.

Table 7. Participation of women in development policies

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, and our opinion and recommendations are respected	23	5,11%
Very rarely	164	36,44%
Not at all	263	58,44%
Total	450	100%

Graph 7. Participation of women in development policies



The connection between this and the earlier question (Q7) is evident. Political exclusion of women is negatively reflected on their participation in the consultations and processes aimed at local economic development, development of agricultural plans and other development policies. The fact that, out of the total number, 94.88% of respondents believe that women participate very rarely or do not participate at all in the processes of creation of economic and agricultural plans

and policies speaks volumes about the marginalised position of the rural women in the programming processes.

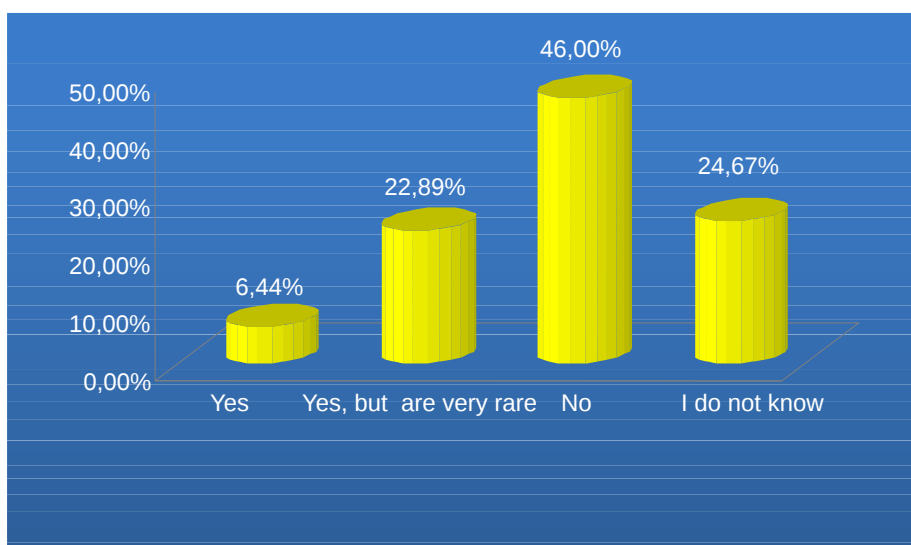
2.8. Specific programmes of support targeting women in local community

The research has shown that, when asked about existence of specific programmes of support targeting rural women in their local communities, 6,44% (29) of them stated that such programmes do exist, 22,89% (103) stated that they exist, but are rare, while 46% stated that they do not exist and 24,67% do not know of their existence.

Table 8. Support programmes targeting women in local community

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	29	6,44%
Yes, but are very rare	103	22,89%
No	207	46,00%
I do not know	111	24,67%
Total	450	100%

Graph 8. Support programmes targeting women in local community



Even though, amongst the interviewed women, there is a very high percentage of responses negating or having no knowledge of their existence, encourages the fact that 29.33% of the respondents recognizes that such program do exist, though are rarely implemented. This statement is based on the existence of women's associations operating in some of the target locations, where the research has been conducted.

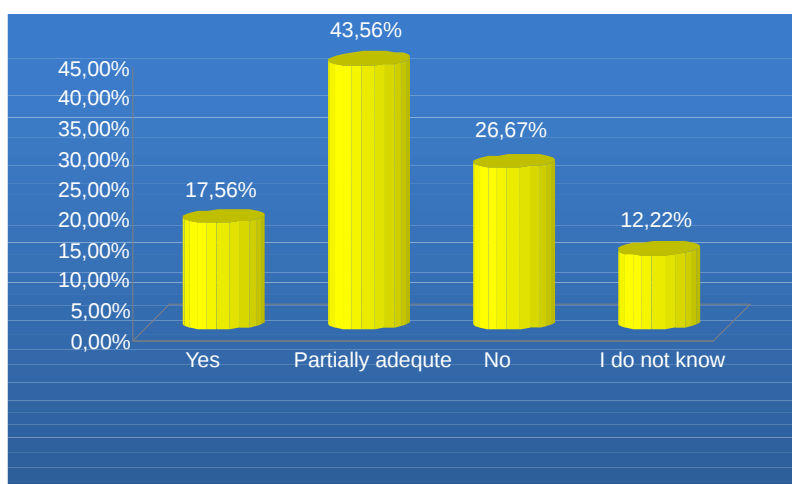
2.9. Perceived adequacy of the economic status of the rural woman in relation to the contribution she gives to household and agricultural activities shared with a man

The analysis (Table 9) clearly demonstrates that 17,56% (79) of the respondents found that the economic status of women in relation to the contribution they give to household management and participation in agricultural activities shared with men is adequate, while 43,56% (196) assessed it as partially adequate. Out of the total number of respondents, 26,67% thinks that their economic status is inadequate compared to the contribution they give. Also significant is the percentage of the respondents 12,22% (55) who do not know the answer to this question.

Table 9. Adequate economic status

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	79	17,56%
Partially adequate	196	43,56%
No	120	26,67%
I do not know	55	12,22%
Total	450	100%

Graph 9. Adequate economic status



The percentage of 43,56% respondents who believe that their economic status is partially adequate is significant and can point towards a generally better position of a rural woman relating to her multifold contribution.

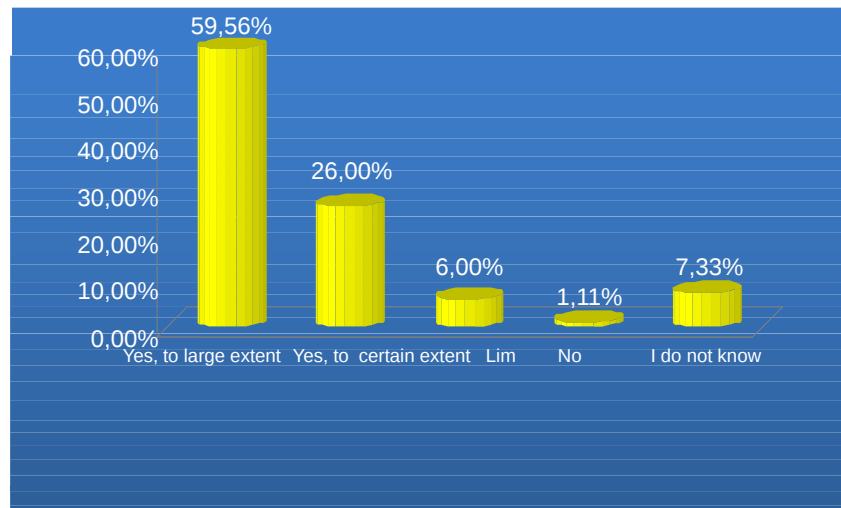
2.10. Respondents' perception of the possibilities for improvement of the position of rural women through programmes of support in initiation of small businesses (*production of healthy food, medicinal plants, flowers, village tourism, greenhouse production, hairdressing services, handicrafts,..*)

Looking at the results of the analysis (Table 10), it can be observed that 59,56% (268) of the respondents confirmed that initiation of small business initiatives (healthy food production, medicinal plants/ spices, village tourism, greenhouse production, flowers growing, handicrafts, etc) can contribute to better economic status of the rural women. In that, significant is the percentage of respondents 26,00% (117) who believe that this is possible only to certain extent. Contrary to these responses 6% (27) of respondents, think that this is possible only to very limited extent, while 1.11% (5) argue that this is not possible and 7,33% (33) do not know the answer to this question.

Table 10: Small business initiatives contributing to the economic empowerment of women

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, to large extent	268	59,56%
Yes, to certain extent	117	26,00%
In a limited manner	27	6,00%
No	5	1,11%
I do not know	33	7,33%
Total	450	100%

Graph 10: Small business initiatives contributing to the economic empowerment of women



As it can be seen from the above graph, a significant percentage of the respondents (85,56%) confirmed that starting small business initiatives can, to a large or satisfactory extent, contribute to better economic status of rural woman, demonstrating high level of awareness amongst rural women about entrepreneurship as opportunity(ies) for their economic empowerment.

2.11. Respondents' perception in relation to the quality of life of rural women

The research results related to the quality of life of rural women (Table 11), show that 6,22% (28) of the respondents assess the quality of life of a rural woman as excellent, 11,33% (51) assess it as very good, 42,44% (191) think it is good, 28,44% (128) bordering bad, while 11,56% (52) of the respondents assessed is as bad.

Table 11. The quality of life of rural women

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	28	6,22%
Very good	51	11,33%
Good	191	42,44%
Bordering bad	128	28,44%
Bad	52	11,56%
Total	450	100%

Graph 11. The quality of life of rural women



The graph points to the fact that a significant number of respondents, as many as 40% of them, assess the quality of life of rural women as either bad or bordering bad, which points towards the need for channeling far more attention of the relevant actors in identifying solutions towards improvement of the quality of life of rural women.

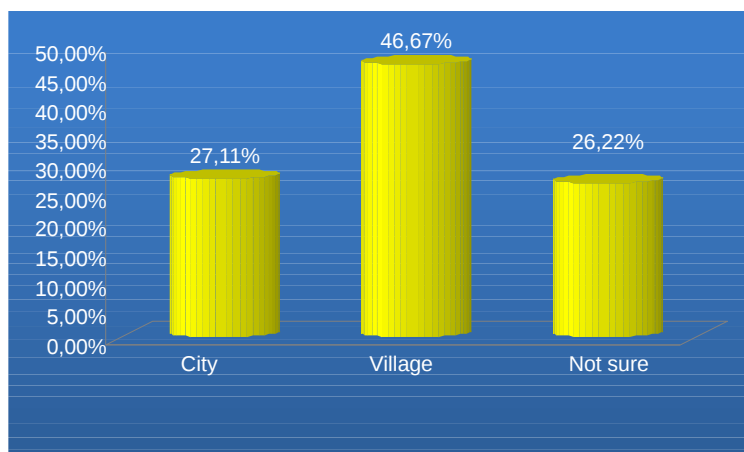
2.12. Possibilities of choice between life in the village and life in the city - respondents' perceptions of their preferred choice if given opportunity to chose

Analysis has shown that, when asked about a possibility of choice between life in the city and life in the village, 27% (122) of the respondents would chose to live in the city, 46,67% (210) chose the village, while as many as 26,22% (118) of the respondents were not sure what choice to make.

Table 12: If you could choose life in the village and life in the city, what would be your choice

Response	Frequency	Percentage
City	122	27,11%
Village	210	46,67%
Not sure	118	26,22%
Total	450	100%

Graph 12: If you could choose life in the village and life in the city, what would be your choice



The analysis points to the fact that, out of the total number of interviewees, as many as 53,33% responded that, if they were given a choice, they would either chose to live in the city or were not sure of their choice. Having in mind that 57,78% of our respondents are between 18 - 45 years of age, the presented result confirms the level of dissatisfaction with life in the village in the age group which is prevalent in this research sample, which is also the category women in most productive age of life.

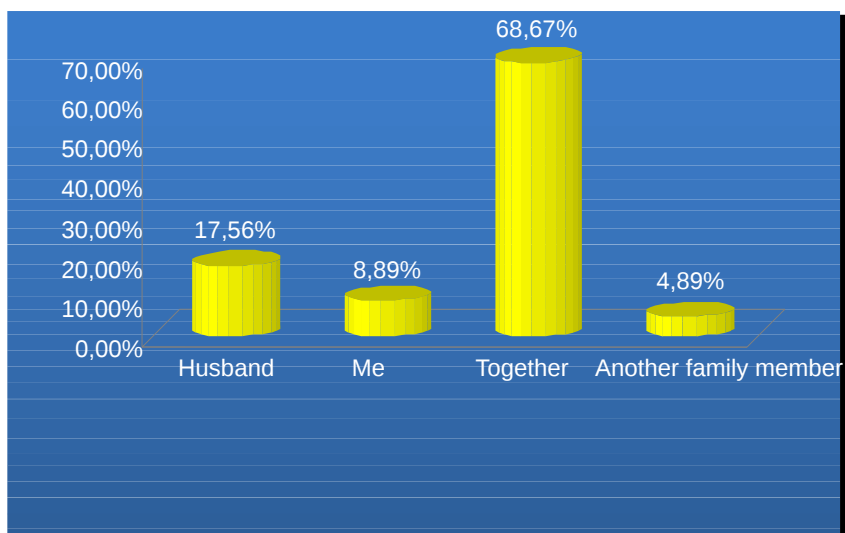
2.13 . Respondents' perceptions of the key decision maker in household

When asked about the key decision maker in the family, 17,56% (79) of women stated their husband, while 8,89% (40) said that it was them who make key decisions in the household. 68,67% (309) said that decision-making is shared responsibility of both spouses, while remaining 4,89% declared that key decisions are made by other family member (i.e. father-in-law).

Table 13. Key decision maker in the household

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	79	17,56%
Me	40	8,89%
Together	309	68,67%
Another member of the family (father in law, for example)	22	4,89%
Total	450	100%

Graph 13. Key decision maker in the household



The graph demonstrates that as many as 68,67% of the respondents participates jointly with their husbands in decision-making process. This data reflects the evident changes that are taking place in our rural areas, where the role of a woman in the decision-making of the family is increasingly important. Even though the patriarchal mentality is still traditionally present in the village, the tendency of positive changes is evident in the respondents' statements.

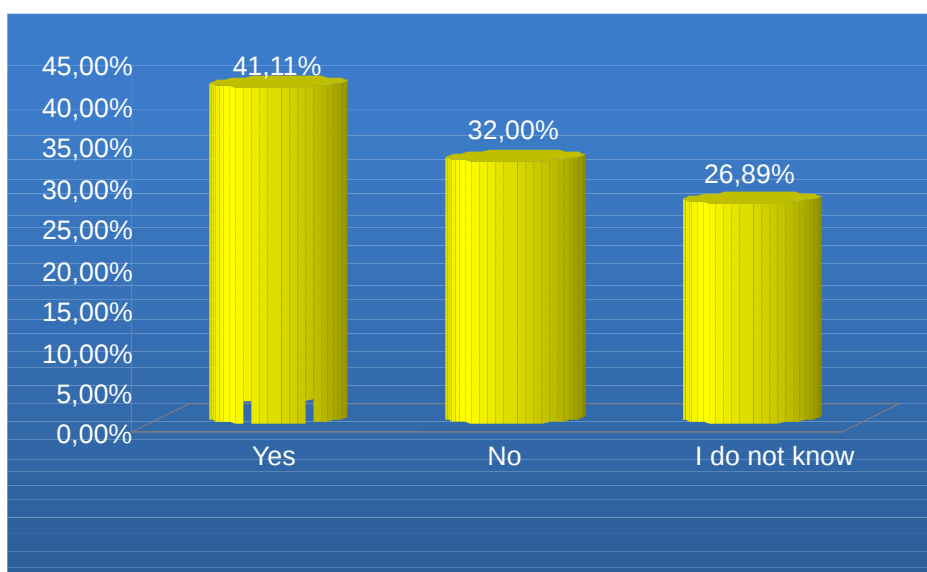
2.14 . Assessment of whether women in rural communities have sufficient knowledge on care for their own health, in particular reproductive health and family planning

The research results show that, when asked about whether women in the village have sufficient knowledge about care for their own health and, in particular, reproductive health and family planning, 41,11% (185) of the respondents answered positively, 32,00% (144) gave negative response, while 26,89% (121) of the interviewed women responded that they do not know.

Table 14. Knowledge on healthcare and family planning

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	185	41,11%
No	144	32,00%
I do not know	121	26,89%
Total	450	100%

Graph14. Knowledge on healthcare and family planning



Based on the results of the analysis, but also conversations with interviewees, it is observed that the situation in this area has improved and that the rural woman is devotes more time and care to her own health. This improvement can be linked with the reform of the primary health care and introduction of the family medicine which has resulted in a developed network of local ambulates covering some local rural communities too, contributing to better primary health care of women in the rural communities.

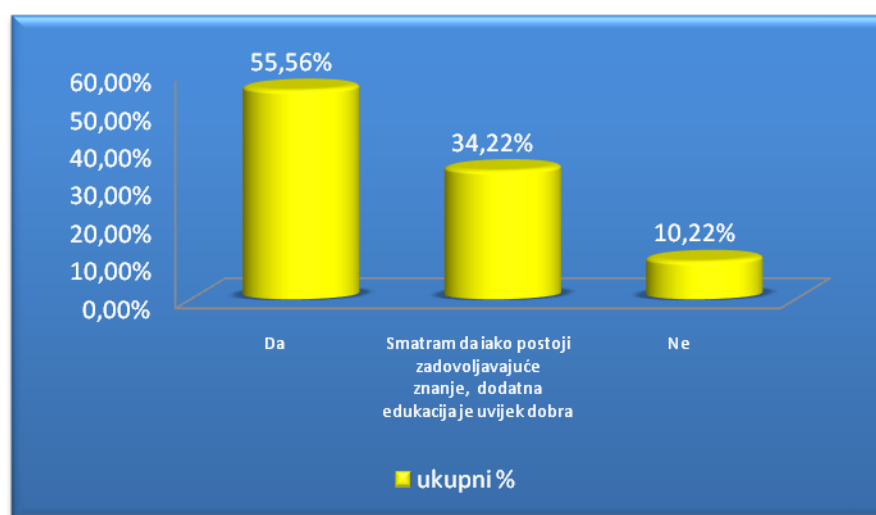
2.15. Respondents' views on the rural women's need for additional information and education in reproductive health and family planning

In the response to the question whether women in rural communities need additional information and organised education in the area of reproductive health and family planning, 55,56% (250) of the respondents answered affirmatively, 34,22% (154) stated that they possess certain level of knowledge in this area, but would welcome additional education, while 10,22% (46) of the interviewees regarded additional education unnecessary.

Table 15. The need for additional information and organised education in family planning

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	250	55,56%
Even though certain knowledge exist, additional education is always welcome	154	34,22%
No	46	10,22%
Total	450	100%

Graph 15. The need for additional information and organised education in family planning



From the shown graph it can be seen that as many as 89,78% of the respondents regarded additional education about reproductive health and family planning as needed and important. This data is very indicative of the still present traditional limitations in this area where any organised education and/or targeted information support in rural communities directly, would very significantly benefit rural women.

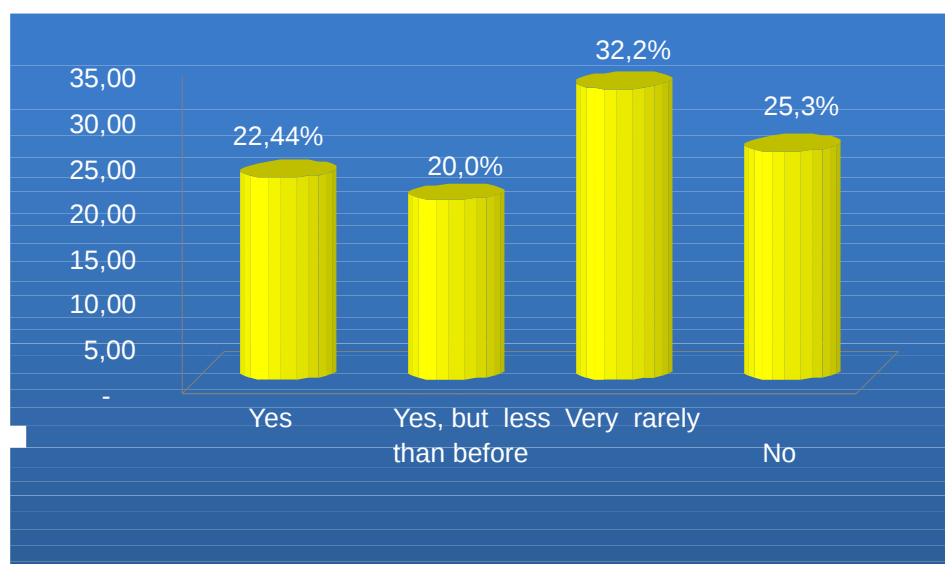
2.16 . Women's perceptions of the prevalence of violence against women in their local community

The analyzed perception of the respondents in relation to domestic violence against women show that 22,44% (101) of them thinks that domestic violence against women does exist in their local communities, 20% (90) is of the opinion that it exists, but is far less prevalent than before, 32, 2% (145) of interviewed women consider this type of violence a very rare occurrence, while 25,3 (114) of them believes that there is no violence against women in their community.

Table 16. Perception of domestic violence against women in local communities

Yes	101	22,44
Yes, but less than before	90	20,0
Very rarely	145	32,2
No	114	25,3
Total	450	100,0

Graph 16. Perception of domestic violence against women in local communities



The above graph shows that only 25,3% of the respondents believed that there is no domestic violence against women in their local communities, while the rest of the sample (the remaining three categories) recognized the existence of the problem, in lesser or larger degree. Considering that we are talking about a very complex problem for a society as a whole, the problem gains additional weight in rural areas with traditional family dynamics/ upbringing, social stigma attached to victims, lack of opportunities for women and minimal or no instruments/

services of support and no organisations and institutions available and accessible to victims of violence in the family.

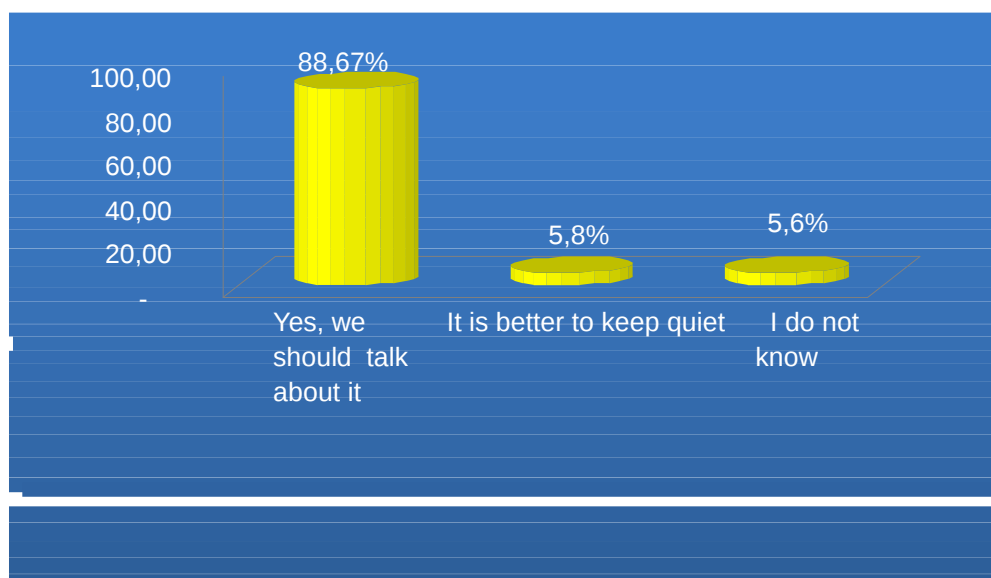
2.17. Domestic violence and the respondents' views on whether this problem should be talked about or not

The analysis of women's perception of whether the problem of domestic violence against women should be talked about or not and leave the family to resolve its 'own' problem, showed that 88,67%(399) of the respondents is of the opinion that domestic violence should be talked about and ways to support victims sought, 5,8%(26) believes that it is better to keep quiet about it and leave the family to resolve its own problem while 5,6% (25) of women answered with 'I do not know' to this question.

Table 17. Perceptions - should violence against women be talked about or not

Yes, we should talk about it and seek ways to support the victims of violence	399	88,67
It is better to keep quiet about it and hope that the family would resolve the problem	26	5,8
I do not know	25	5,6
Total	450	100,0

Graph 17. Perceptions - should violence against women be talked about or not



The research results clearly demonstrate that as many as 88,67% of the respondents showed very high level of awareness of the need for this problem to be publically talked about,

solutions and support mechanisms for the victims of violence sought. Such indicative percentage points to an important fact about the rural woman seeing her future role as a proactive one and herself as an actor in the processes affecting her status in the family and society at large.

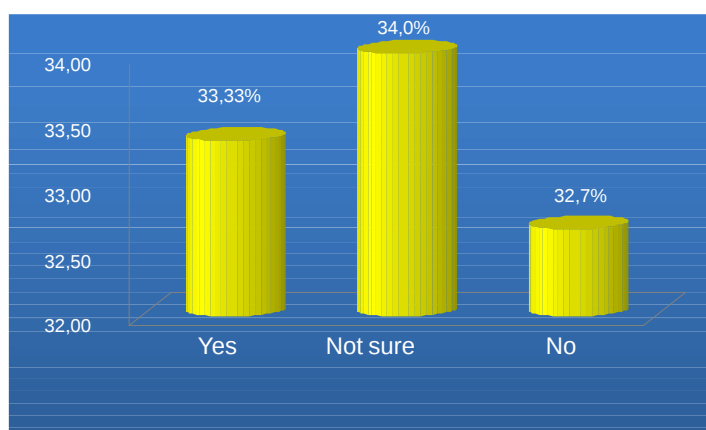
2.18. Awareness of the existence of associations such as cooperatives, agricultural producers' associations, non-governmental organisations or any other forms of organised groups of women in the local communities

The research results related to the question of existence of various forms of associations, such as cooperatives, agricultural producers' associations, non-governmental organisations or any other forms of organised association gathering women in the local community demonstrated that: 33,33% (150) of the respondents confirmed the existence of organised gatherings of women in their communities, 34%(153) stated that such groups do not exist, while 34,0% (147) of interviewed women said that they do not know of any form of organised action/ activities by women in their local communities.

Table 18. Organised action of women in the local communities

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	33,33%
Not sure	153	34,0%
No	147	32,7%
Total	450	100,0%

Graph 18. Organised action of women in the local communities



The statements by 66,7% of the respondents denying or not knowing of existence of any form of organised action by women in their local communities, point to their social exclusion caused by, on one hand, by their numerous responsibilities/tasks in the household and the field and, on the other hand, by the evident lack of initiative by the women in rural communities, needed for an organized, proactive action. Given the fact that a significant number of the respondents in this research are members of women's associations (Gračanica crocheting, Women's Association Agro-Vra^ŽiĆi, Women's Association Prud), the affirmative responses to this question are mostly linked to this group of our interviewees.

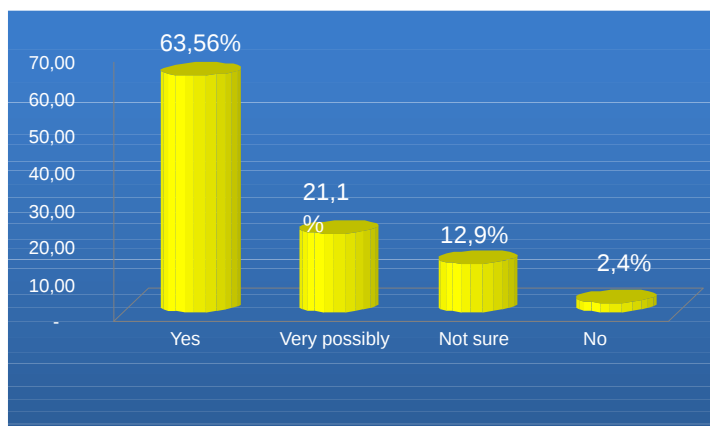
2.19 . Willingness of rural women to join women's associations, solidarity groups or similar forms of organizations aimed at better representation of women's needs and interests

The analysis of the research results related to the willingness of the respondents to join associations of women, formation of solidarity groups or any similar forms of organized activities aimed at better representation of the women's interests and needs, showed positive attitudes of women towards such kind of action. Out of the total number of respondents 63,56% (286) responded affirmatively to this question, 21,1% demonstrated high level of preparedness to take part in such organizations/ groups, 12,9% were not sure of their choice and just 2,4%(11) of the respondents did not express positive attitude to organized action by women.

Table 19. Women's interest to participate in organized action

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	286	63,56
Very possibly	95	21,1
Not sure	58	12,9
No	11	2,4
Total	450	100,0

Graph 19. Women's interest to participate in organised action



The above graph shows that a total of 84.66% of the respondents confirmed their interest and willingness to join women's associations, solidarity groups and similar forms of organized action aimed at better representation of the women's needs and interests. Based on the feedback from the respondents, projects supporting organized action by women are welcome, for the communities where rural women would self-organize without 'external initiation' are very rare.

2.20 . Readiness of the respondents to, in case of organized education, take part in any of the offered topics relevant for economic empowerment and advancing overall status of rural women (respondents could mark one, two, three or all four offered answers)

When asked whether they would take part in the educational seminars aimed at economic empowerment and strengthening the overall status of women, with offered option to select one, two, three or all four given answers, the majority of the respondents showed interest in all types of offered education.

Out of 450 of the respondents, 304 stated interest in the education in small business start-ups, 297 respondents were also interested in the application of the new technologies in agricultural production, 185 women confirmed their interest in informational/ educational support in preparing applications for agricultural grants and micro-credits, while 235 of them showed high level of interest in education in the area of participation and influence of rural women on decision-makers in the local development planning processes.

Table 20. respondents' interest in offered education topic

Response	Frequency of positive answers
Small business start-ups	304
How to improve agricultural production - know how and application of new technologies	297
Information and education - how to prepare applications for loans and grant incentives for support from financial institutions and related ministries	185
How women can influence local and other decision makers in the process of improvement of quality of life in rural ares and take part in preparation of local development plans.	235
Total	1021

The analysis has clearly confirmed that there exists the need for incentives towards improvement of the socio-economic status of women and ensuring their better access to resources. Successful examples from the world and the region show that positive developments warrant formal and informal social action, as well as initiation and opening possibilities for gathering and networking of the rural women, their exchange of opinions and experiences and development of initiatives addressing their needs and interests. Given the evidently weak voice of the rural women in both, social and political sphere of life, as well as their participation in decision making processes, it was encouraging to see the interest expressed by the interviewed women in relation to influencing decision makers in the processes of creation of the local development plans and policies.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOPS WITH RURAL WOMEN

3.1. The summary of results of the informative workshops and discussions on the problems of and actions for improvement of the status of the rural women.

During 15 workshops realised in the framework of the project 'Socio-economic empowerment of the position of the rural woman through active participation of the local development plans', carried out in rural communities in the municipalities targeted by the project, with VESTA's support by the representatives of civil society and/or independent experts, the following aspects of the key problems were highlighted in communication with the workshop facilitators.

In the overview brought hereafter, we are representing summaries of the identified problems identified and discussed by the workshops participants.

3.2. Economic aspects of the problem

- The government initiatives providing financial incentives are either not or are very rarely available. When available, the complicated application procedures are discouraging women from claiming / using support.
- Insufficient education and lack of courage for starting small businesses through the project of greenhouses, floristry, sweet and sour programme, bakery, milk production and handicrafts, etc.
- Lack of organised buy up and marketing of the agricultural produce, market surplus lost, disloyal competition.
- Lack of capital for independent entrepreneurship, weak incentives for agricultural production, misuse of incentives.
- Women stressed that problems are in the negligence of the local, but also higher level authorities towards the village in general and women too. In return villages, dissatisfaction is caused by the coming donations due to both, their irregular distribution, but also dependency mentality they are creating amongst the villagers, who are inclined to expect assistance rather than being self-reliant.
- The tradition is stifling women from seeking and achieving progress and taking responsibility for leading business.
- Very small number of members in associations of women agricultural. Arable land is owned by male members of the household, husband, father-in-law, and sometimes, even those who are deceased.
- Women are rarely in possession of financial resources needed for investments. They do not have positive credit rating and majority cannot afford the risk of obtaining a loan from microcredit organisations.
- General unemployment, with no resolution in view in the near future.
- Difficult material-financial situation of the families where only a husband/ father or no family members employed.
- Women are mostly excluded from the labour market and are frequently faced with the problem of insufficient knowledge and skills.
- Promotion and sale of the final agricultural produce are mainly done by men, while the income generated by women through the sale in the household or at the nearby markets rather low, and a very small number of women generating income in this way.

3.3. Social aspects of the problem

- Lack of space (premises) for social networking and organised work, but also initiatives for joint action.

- Traditional limitations and barriers in achieving higher participation of women in the public and political life.
- Inadequate awareness of rural women about health and healthcare.
- Population in the age of 20 to 30, completing education is seeking employment in the cities and thinking of leaving the village. The highest percentage of women in rural communities has completed primary education only, which limits their opportunities for employment outside the household and own agricultural farm.
- Assistance by the local community is most often declarative, very rarely concrete.
- Distant public institutions and centres through which the assistance programmes and information can be accessed.
- Many parents are not in position to support their children's education, hence the certain number of young girls who remain with primary education only and some of them who finish their education after completion of the secondary school, the situation fostered by the traditional barriers and attitudes that woman's place is in the household. Educated young women seek their 'better tomorrow' in the cities, meaning that the skilled young personnel which could take on the initiative towards strengthening the socio-economic position of rural women, are leaving the village and are losing interest in active search for solutions in the said problems. Furthermore, many women who are staying in the villages do not have sufficient incentive for such engagement and a very small number of them are prepared to take the initiative and mobilise other women for this kind of action.
- According to women who participated in the workshops, one problem leads to another, with lack of interest leading to lack of information and resulting in growing difficulties in achieving improvement in the position of the rural women in BiH. The main cause of their disorganisation lays in the fact that women rarely show motivation for associations/ networking, believing that it leads nowhere.
- As significant problem, women identify the problems with communal infrastructure, such as the water supply, roads, connections and frequency of the bus lines to urban centres, waste disposal, and illegal rubbish dumps.
- Significant problems they perceive, women link to the government institutions which neglect rural communities and the needs of citizens in these areas. Healthcare is of a lower standard than that in the urban centres, for the rural communities with own local ambulant are still rare.
- High percentage of uneducated women and their social exclusion.
- Low level of interest amongst the rural women in forming associations which would represent and advocate for their interests and would most certainly be a step forward in this issue.
- Women from rural areas are not included into the processes of designing the local development plans or any similar development processes.
- Isolation of rural women is one of the main problems.
- Women from rural areas marry very young and a significant number of rural women want to leave the village due to harsh living conditions.
- Even in the case of education offered by nongovernmental organisations in the domain of women's human rights, the response and participation of women is not satisfactory and explained by either lack of understanding of the importance of the offered education or women's inability to participate due to their duties in the household/farm.

- Women are not in position to afford longer absence from their households, so that the education sessions for rural women are difficult to organise, especially if they require longer periods of involvement and unless they are organised directly on their locality/ mainly agricultural projects.

3.4. Suggestions for action

Based on discussion held in view of obtaining recommendations, numerous suggestions were systematised into the following recommended actions which could, according to women, contribute to improvement of the position and socio-economic empowerment of rural women:

- Carry out information/advice-oriented support targeting rural women in the domain of women's (their) rights protection.
- Organise education in different areas: agriculture, vegetable production, production of flowers, mushrooms, etc., in order to ensure that women gain skills to better manage their household/ farm and have the produce surpluses marketed to generate their own income.
- Support development of small businesses in rural areas (i.e. greenhouse production, organic food, services - village tourism and adequate offer of handicrafts, traditional dishes/cuisine etc...).
- Support and initiate organised action of women in villages / establishment of women's associations, delegation of women's representatives who would promote and push forward their interests in relevant governance bodies, lead the actions for common interest and represent the interests of their community
- Involve women in the work of the local communities with support to more active role of educated, younger women who could represent the interests and advocate for the needs of rural women, as well as influence the local authorities in the process of advancing the conditions of life in rural communities.
- Support rural women and their organised action through linking them to projects realised by international organisations in BiH, nongovernmental organisations and associations.
- Higher interest of the representatives of local authorities to (not only during the pre-elections) get familiarised with the problems and, together with the local communities, allocate resources and projects aimed towards improvement of the quality of life in the villages, especially for rural women, whose life in village is, without doubt, the most difficult. Women highlighted the need for organisation of meetings/ gatherings at which the municipal representatives would be obliged to present the development plans and ways in which rural women can be included.
- Through incentives for production and grants, interest-free loans and educational support from the relevant departments, ensure best possible yields and results in agricultural production. Educational sessions should be organised directly on the locality (the village) or local community in view of ensuring highest possible participation of women.
- In carrying out projects aimed at empowerment of rural women, ensure awareness raising and education of men too, in order to facilitate easier removal of traditional barriers and create more realistic preconditions for socially active rural woman.
- Support establishment of agricultural cooperatives, buy up stations through which sale and marketing of the produce could be ensured.
- Ensure support to involvement and participation of women at the agricultural fairs, tourism fairs and other similar manifestations.
- Create opportunities for rural women to apply their knowledge and resources and put them in the function of their economic empowerment.

- Influence the consciousness of the women in politics to work more on promotion of the rights of the women from rural areas.
- Secure support of the local community in establishment of Associations (premises, education,...).
- Oblige the representatives of the public institutions and centres, to timely inform rural women about their rights (round tables, leaflets, etc.).

4. CONCLUSION

The organised workshops resulted in the conclusion that a rural woman is still largely isolated and discriminated against in claiming and accessing her rights. Despite the evident, small positive steps ahead, there still prevail traditional conceptions and stereotypes, both in urban, but even more so in rural communities, which prevent a woman to fully claim the role she deserves in the society. During the research and the workshops, the participants expressed hope that, through this research, their voice will be heard and that, at least a smaller portion of the problem and suggestions for improvement would be accepted by the decision makers and policy creators. It is totally clear that there can be no serious improvements in strengthening position of rural women, without recognition of the problem by all relevant stakeholders and comprehensive support which will ensure more equal participation of rural women in all socio-economic processes.

ANNEX 1.

LIST OF LOCATIONS WHERE THE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

17 municipalities (37 rural communities)

Zenica (RiČice, Pehare)
Tešanj (Kreševo, Kaloševići)
Travnik (Bijelo Buće, Han Bila)
Vitez (Krušćica, Lupac)
Goražde (Bogušići, BeriČ, Posestra)
Goražde (Orahovice, IlovaČa, Rešetnica)
GradaČac (VuČkovci, Lukavac, Srnice Gornje)
Odžak (Vojskova, Vrbovac, PotoČani)
Orašje (Ugljara, Prud/Odžak)
Ilijaš (PopoviĆi, LjubinoviĆi, Podlugovi)
Bosanska Krupa (Otoka)
Mostar and PoČitelj (Dubrave, Bivolje Brdo, Humi)
Široki brijeg and Čitluk (KoČerin, Blizanci, SlipČići)
GraČanica (Škahovica, Soko)
ČeliĆ (Vražići, Palanka)

The research, based on the methodology developed by the Vesta Association, was carried out by the educated representatives of the partner organisations from the 'Centre for legal aid for Women' Zenica, Foundation 'Cure' Sarajevo, 'Glas Źene' BihaĆ, 'Goraždanke' Goražde, 'Association of the agricultural producers, engineers and technicians' GraČanica, 'LDA' Mostar, independent experts and CSO activists from GradaČac.













