



Annual Report

2024

During 2024, Akcija Zdruzenska provided continuous financial and mentoring support to local women's civil society organizations on the ground, which enabled a significant expansion of their support environment, especially among women in rural areas. Thanks to the support of Akcija Zdruzenska, a total of 8 organizations carried out activities in 18 municipalities and 57 rural communities, reaching a total of 6,383 women.

An increase was recorded in the number of women who actively engaged in the work of the supported organizations, identifying with their mission and contributing to more effective and visible advocacy for the interests of the local community. Additionally, horizontal connections were strengthened through mutual cooperation among organizations and women at the local level.

The inclusion of women in programming and budgeting processes - areas usually dominated by men - resulted in a large number of proposals being accepted by local self-government institutions. As a result, the decisions of communities and local authorities increasingly reflect the needs of women, becoming more inclusive and more accountable to marginalized groups. The increased visibility and negotiating power achieved through the support of Akcija Zdruzenska enabled women in the community to challenge existing power relations and reduce their isolation.

Successful advocacy by women brought positive changes not only to their daily lives but also to the communities as a whole: Improved mobility through subsidized public transportation; Reduced household burden through the establishment of childcare services and provision of

clean water; Improved safety through the installation of street lighting, speed bumps, and the construction of pedestrian zones, especially around schools; Improved environment and infrastructure through organized waste collection, construction of sewage systems and clearing of illegal dumpsites, and upgrading public spaces, including children's playgrounds, renovated schools, and schoolyards.

The most significant result of the Akcija Združenska Fund is that the increased capacities and unique connection with women's communities developed by the supported organizations were recognized by national civil society organizations and the international community. This increased the relevance and influential potential of local women's organizations as part of the women's movement.

For the first time, the supported local women's organizations, especially the community women leaders were invited and given the opportunity to directly present and discuss their challenges, field experiences, advocacy strategies, and recommendations during various national and cross-border exchange visits, panel discussions, and conferences.

Communication with new international networks and feminist funds has expanded, and the field methodology for reaching women was shared and recognized by international peer organizations.

The organization successfully underwent an external assessment and review of internal governance, particularly its grant-management policies and practices, and carried out an external evaluation of the institutional support program. A participatory strategic planning process was conducted, resulting in the Strategic Plan of Akcija Združenska for the 2025-2027 period. Additionally, the data management system was improved.

Local Women's Action Support Fund

Within the Local Women's Action Support Fund, Akcija Združenska issued four targeted calls and one open call for grant awards this year. Eight local women's organizations were supported with a total financial allocation of 92.881 EUR through the following types of grants:

1. Institutional Grants

6 institutional grants for a period of 14 months (January 2024 - February 2025)

- **Total amount:** 83.228 EUR

2. Action Grants

5 advocacy grants for a period of 15 months (July 2024 - August 2025)

- **Total amount:** 44.980 EUR

3. Philanthropic Actions

4 initial (seed) grants for philanthropic initiatives of Women's Circles for mobilizing funds and resources from the local community (May 2024 – January 2025)

- **Total amount:** 5.541 EUR

**LIST OF GRANTEES SUPPORTED BY
LOCAL WOMEN'S ACTION SUPPORT FUND**

Grantee Name	Project Name	Annual Total Transfer (MKD)	Overall Project Goal
Women's Organization – Strumica	Institutional Support 3	13.329 EUR	Strengthening and sustaining the active women's community for greater influence on local policies and programs to advance gender equality at the local level
Humanitarian Association "Mother" – Kumanovo	Institutional Support 3	13.415 EUR	Improving the lives of women, especially rural women, through the integration of a gender perspective in local policymaking and budgeting processes in Kumanovo Municipality
Radika DE – Debar	Institutional Support 3	11.814 EUR	Contributing to the economic empowerment of socially marginalized rural women in Debar and Centar Zupa municipalities through enhanced civic advocacy focused on measures and policies addressing their needs
Civic Initiative of Women – GIZ Sveti Nikole	Institutional Support 3	10.162 EUR	Strengthened women and created opportunities for their participation in the preparation of annual programs and budgets in Sveti Nikole and Lozovo municipalities; empowered women to utilize active employment measures
Association for the Advancement of Women's Status in Macedonia – Women's Action, Radovis	Institutional Support 3	9.300 EUR	Greater influence of women on policies, programs, and budgets in Radovis and Konce municipalities through increased participation and greater efficiency in preventing and

			protecting against gender-based violence
WO "Women's Lobby" – Demir Kapija	Institutional Support 1	12.607 EUR	Strengthening and expanding the field network and women's participation in local policymaking
WO "Women's Lobby" – Demir Kapija	Support for Field Initiatives	4.872 EUR	Strengthening and expanding field support networks
Civic Initiative of Women - GIZ Sveti Nikole	Support for Field Initiatives	4.269 EUR	Strengthening and expanding field support networks
Radika De - Debar	Support for Field Initiatives	4.027 EUR	Strengthening and expanding field support networks
Women's Forum – Tetovo	Support for Field Initiatives	3.971 EUR	Strengthening and expanding field support networks
Civic Initiative of Women "Klea" – Bitola	Support for Field Initiatives	1.973 EUR	Strengthening and expanding field support networks
Women's Circle Przdevo (Women's Lobby)	Philanthropic Initiative for Park Construction and Urban Equipment Installation	647 EUR	Mobilization of community resources
Women's Circle Tabanovce (HA "Mother" – Kumanovo)	Public Space Renovation in Tabanovce Village Center	647 EUR	Mobilization of community resources
Women's Circle Centar Zupa (Radika De – Debar)	Equipment for Women's Center Assigned to Women's Circle Centar Zupa, Centar Zupa Municipality	924 EUR	Mobilization of community resources
Women's Circle Lubnica (Women's Action – Radovis)	Equipment for Women's Space Assigned to Women's Circle Lubnica, Konce Municipality	924 EUR	Mobilization of community resources
Total:		92.881 EUR	

Table 1: List of Grantees

RESULTS OF THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO THE GRANTEES

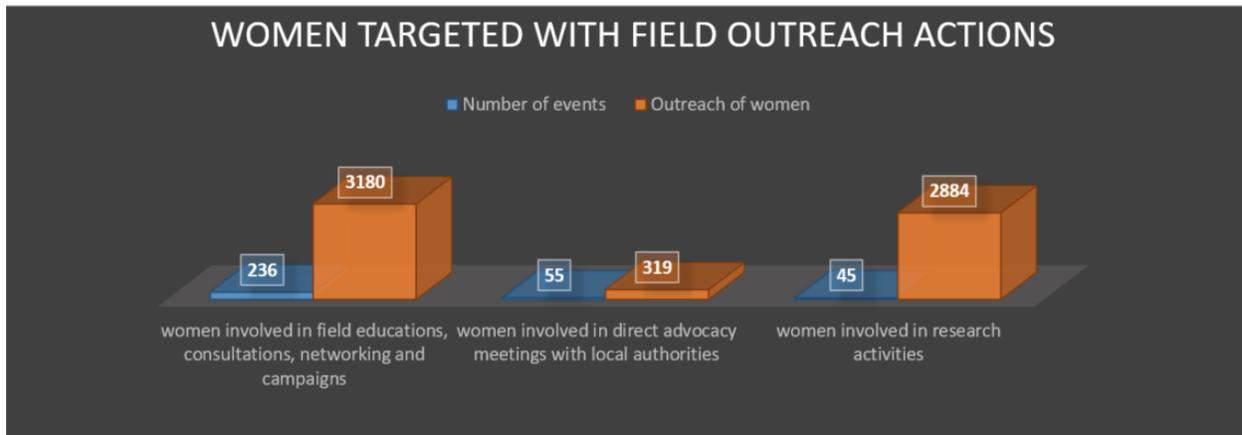


Figure 1. Overview of Field Outreach to Women



Figure 2. Overview of Direct Advocacy

OVERVIEW OF MOBILIZED RESOURCES FROM PHILANTHROPIC ACTIONS

Number of individual supporters	50
Number of local public institutions	7
Number of businesses	17
Value of mobilized resources	3.982 EUR

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND MENTORSHIP

The educational and mentoring process led by Akcija Združenska focused on developing the capacities of the supported organizations through:

- Trainings and mentorship on program and financial management
- Field support in joint advocacy activities

The Women's Organization "Women's Lobby" from Demir Kapija received an institutional grant for the first time and became part of the group of six organizations supported with institutional grants, receiving internal organizational education that strengthened their management capacities by developing procedures for financial and administrative operations.

At a joint introductory workshop, under the mentorship of Akcija Združenska, 13 representatives of the project teams from 5 partner organizations planning to expand their field support networks enhanced their knowledge and exchanged good practices and lessons learned in applying field strategies for women's empowerment.

Through five two-day workshops, 105 newly engaged women from 10 new locations were trained as potential animators. They increased their knowledge about the importance and benefits of women's participation in local decision-making, the mandates, competencies, and

budgets of their local self-government units, and acquired skills for community mapping and surveying. Based on the prepared maps and following the questionnaire and field research guidelines provided by Akcija Združenska, 20 of them successfully conducted field surveys with a total of 703 women across all 10 locations.

In parallel, the capacities of local women's circles in Strumica, Bosilovo, Sveti Nikole, Lozovo, Kumanovo, Centar Zhupa, Debar, Radovish, Konche, Demir Kapija, Gradsko, and Rosoman were strengthened for planning initiatives to mobilize local resources. These efforts resulted in the successful implementation of four joint initiatives supporting two women's community centers, a children's playground, and a public space adapted for women. The value of local resources mobilized, both financial and non-financial is estimated at a total of 244,683 MKD.

At the same time, the four local initiatives were supported by more than 50 individual community members and diaspora contributors, who provided financial and non-financial contributions (materials, labor, and basic resources). The initiatives also involved various community stakeholders, including 7 local public institutions (schools, municipalities, and other establishments), 17 businesses, and one civil society organization.

NETWORKING

At the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Women's Circle Network, a record number of 68 representatives from local organizations and women activists from 44 rural communities participated. The event facilitated the exchange of good practices, discussion of common challenges, identification of models for local advocacy, and reflection on feminist strategies to counter patriarchal societal values. The activists engaged in a self-reflection process regarding their position in various areas of discrimination and laid the foundations for mutual support and the expansion of advocacy beyond immediate existential concerns.

Networking contributed to increased solidarity, a better understanding of the discrimination and limited opportunities faced by women in different contexts, as well as strategic planning based on the assessment of contextual challenges and changes, sharing advocacy approaches, and lessons learned. Additionally, it strengthened mutual support, coordination, and partnership among the supported organizations independently of Akcija Združenska, thereby enhancing solidarity and capacities for joint action.

ADVOCACY

In 2024, Akcija Združenska's advocacy efforts were primarily focused on addressing the resistance generated by the anti-gender movement, which opposed the development and adoption of the new Gender Equality Law. In response, Akcija Združenska implemented a harm-reduction strategy, which included coordinated advocacy meetings with the relevant ministry and members of parliament, as well as public reactions initiated by members of the Gender Equality Platform, participation in debates, and public statements for national television, online media, and social networks.

Advocacy was also directed toward the international community, particularly Sweden and the EU Delegation, through meetings emphasizing the need for meaningful coordination among international actors and highlighting public support for gender equality, noting that the issue should be addressed within the context of democracy and good governance. However, the organization's multi-year efforts and direct contribution to the advocacy process were undermined by the successful resistance of the anti-gender movement, which secured public support from religious leaders and political parties. This led to the blocking of the new Gender Equality Law, with no immediate prospects for its re-initiation.

Despite these challenges, Akcija Združenska made significant contributions to national policy discussions on gender equality by advocating for gender-sensitive reforms in governance,

actively participating in local and national consultations and public debates, and preparing and sharing evidence-based policy recommendations in three priority areas:

1. Improving gender equality legislation and institutional policies and practices;
2. Strengthening women's leadership and civic participation;
3. Supporting the development and inclusion of women's groups in government policy-making processes.

VISIBILITY

Akcija Združenska's efforts to increase the visibility of women's civic participation - a topic that still receives insufficient attention in the public sphere, despite being a prerequisite for advancing democratic processes and institutional accountability were intensified through regular content posting on social media (Facebook and Instagram), reaching over 30,000 views.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Akcija Združenska continued its collaboration with numerous national and international stakeholders through active participation of its representatives in key events and strategic dialogues organized by regional alliances from the Western Balkans, global donor networks, and UN-sponsored events.

Akcija Združenska made significant contributions in:

- Connecting civic activism
- Advancing cooperation among feminist movements
- Developing strategies against anti-gender narratives

- Exchanging methodological approaches for working with marginalized and hard-to-reach communities

The organization also actively increased the visibility of issues relevant to public debate by providing content for public reactions and participating in public campaigns as part of joint efforts with the Gender Equality Platform, which received substantial media coverage. Akcija Združenska actively contributed to around ten public reactions addressing institutional failures in protecting women's human rights, femicides, podcasts promoting sexism and chauvinism, resistance to gender equality laws, and similar issues.

Additionally, Akcija Združenska played a key role in conceptualizing and creating key messages and participated in the traditional annual March 8th protest in 2024 under the slogan: "Red Line: Women's Rights Are Non-Negotiable!", mobilizing hundreds of participants to protest inequalities and injustices against women and girls and raising awareness of the need to improve women's health, education, labor, cultural, political, and economic rights.

The organization maintained established cooperation with the most relevant institutions with a mandate to promote women's rights and gender equality: the Parliament through the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Women's Parliamentary Club; the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Coordination was also enabled with leading civil society organizations in various fields, increasing the visibility of the needs for development of local women's organizations and other issues relevant to civil sector participation in decision-making processes.

Through a proactive approach, meetings were initiated to present the organization and secure resources to begin preparations for a strategy to diversify funding sources, as well as to obtain support and exchange with women's funds and more experienced organizations to ensure continuity of grant allocation, capacity building, and advocacy strategies. Akcija Združenska, through strengthened cooperation with the Women's Fund "Reconstruction" from Serbia, the Women's Ecumenical Initiative from Croatia, and the International Network of Women's Funds "Prospera," began the process of applying for membership in this network as a strategically

important step to achieve greater regional and international visibility, build connections with international peer organizations, and support the development and transformation of Akcija Združenska into a sustainable domestic women's fund.

Furthermore, Akcija Združenska was invited to participate in international events, sharing the effects and experiences of community work with recommendations for effective support in building women's civic activism and advocating for women's rights and gender equality. At the invitation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), the Executive Director of Akcija Združenska contributed as a panelist to the "Promoting Financing for Gender Equality" panel within the Regional Beijing +30 Review in Geneva, Switzerland. As part of the Shift the Power movement, a representative of Akcija Združenska contributed to the online panel "Is Power in Diversity? Connecting the Dots Between Community, Women's, and Feminist Philanthropy." Akcija Združenska also participated in the international initiative *On the Right Track* during the international meeting "Still on the Right Track" in Belgrade, Serbia, where two representatives exchanged experiences with over 100 representatives of feminist funds and civil society organizations from Latin America and Europe, demonstrating their commitment to jointly defend human rights and democracy.

Akcija Združenska established cooperation with faculty from the Institute for Gender Studies at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University (UKIM) to leverage advanced technological solutions to combat disinformation, misinformation, and malignant information (MDM) in the context of gender equality and anti-gender mobilization. This collaboration resulted in the development of an AI-based platform to combat disinformation and protect gender equality, strengthening informational integrity and supporting gender equality. The online portal created, <http://genderai.org>, serves as a central platform providing access to three tools:

1. Chatbot for information on gender equality
2. Chatbot for source credibility verification
3. Chatbot for AI literacy training

During testing and evaluation, 450 students from the Faculty of Computer Science and Engineering (FINKI), the Faculty of Philosophy, and other academic institutions participated, ensuring practical application, user experience testing, and effectiveness analysis.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

Financially, Akcija Združenska successfully secured its planned budget for 2024, including dedicated funds from the Local women's action support fund. Total revenue amounted to 278.894 EUR, while total expenditures were 180.135 EUR.

For the first time, through participation in the Donor Circle, the organization secured funding from private donors totaling over 5.000 EUR, promoting a philanthropic approach to supporting women's movements.

Additionally, Akcija Združenska:

- Conducted an external evaluation of the *“Active Women Accountable Governments 3”*
- Implemented external audits and improvements in the grant management system
- Finalized the strategic planning process
- Expanded its team with a Program Assistant and Communications Coordinator
- Began reconstruction of the website
- Developed a new organizational strategy for 2025–2028 with an action plan
- Strengthened the team's knowledge in anti-corruption practices

FINANCIAL REPORT

- **FIGURE 3.** Overview of expenses by source and cost structure

