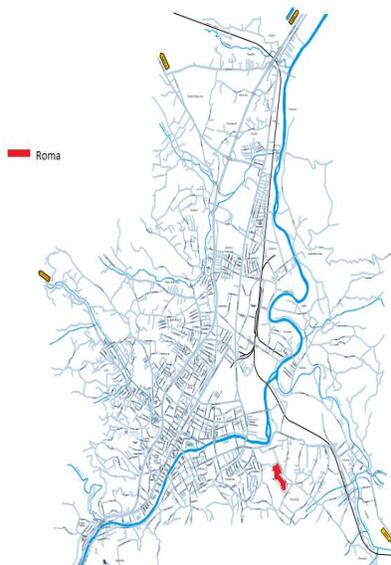


BANJA LUKA SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CITY NOTE

This note presents the results of a Social Sustainability Assessment carried out by the Institute for International Urban Development (www.i2ud.org), Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development (www.co-plan.org) and the US Alumni Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This assessment is part of the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Sustainable Cities Initiative and the WB-Austria Urban Partnership Program (UPP) for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe, funded by the UPP and managed by the ECA Social Development and ECA Urban Development departments and the World Bank Institute. A summary of findings of the desk and field research, which included Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews, as well as a Participatory Workshop are presented below. Further details are available in the Banja Luka City Synthesis Report. For more information, please refer to the ECA Sustainable Cities Website: <http://bit.ly/XWFMCG> and www.seecities.eu. The analysis, results, and views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not represent the position of the World Bank or any of its member countries.



CITY OF BANJA LUKA



BASIC INDICATORS

- 226,459 inhabitants¹
- Most prominent minority groups: Bosniacks, Croats, Roma (approximately 200 inhabitants located in the area called “Veseli brijeg”)
- Large number of refugees and internally displaced inhabitants²
- 23.4 % unemployment³
- No official figures on current levels of poverty and extreme poverty

VULNERABLE GROUPS⁴

1. Youth (15-25)
2. Persons with disability
3. The unemployed
4. Employed low-income
5. National minorities (including Roma)

CHALLENGES IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The increase of population in urban areas – due to significant internal migratory flows – has not been accompanied by adequate development of the city's infrastructure, leading to a decline in the quality of housing; a lack of employment opportunities; inadequate health and education facilities; increased demand for social assistance services; and discrepancies between the development of the city's urban, suburban and rural areas. The inability to provide effective and efficient basic service delivery to city residents stem from a combination of: the rate of urban growth; outdated, unsustainable infrastructure; multiple layers of responsibility in city governance; and inadequate financial resources. Furthermore,

¹ **Number of inhabitants is an estimate.** Source of information: Institute of Statistics of Republika Srpska, 2010. (Note: The City Administration's population estimate: 250,000 inhabitants. Source: city official website.)

² Based on local authorities' estimate; number in 2005: ~65,000. Source: Social Protection Development Plan in Banja Luka City (2005-2008).

³ Source of information: City of Banja Luka official website. Poverty levels in the city are highest among the population of unemployed person; unemployment particularly strikes youth, persons with disabilities, and Roma.

⁴ Dominant nature of vulnerability: socio-economic (poverty and unemployment).

these challenges are occurring within a broader post-conflict and transitional country context. Public service deficiencies have had a higher impact on marginalized groups on account of their social exclusion and high poverty levels. Challenges in service delivery were found to lie within the following areas:

- The lack of **employment opportunities** is one of the most pressing current problems. The job market is characterized by high levels of unemployment and a high share of informal employment. The number of unemployed persons in Banja Luka is constantly increasing, especially for highly qualified workers.
- The **heating distribution system** is outdated, unsustainable, and unevenly maintained throughout the city. Although heating must be used all year, the heat is expensive compared with other municipalities in BiH, especially impacting the communities of Starcevic and Paprikovac.
- The **road infrastructure** is of low quality: in rural areas roads are either not paved or wide enough, while in urban areas they are poorly maintained.
- **Public transportation** is expensive, of much lower quality in rural areas than in urban areas, and incompatible with the needs of people with physical disability. Hence, people with physical disability face limitations in mobility, given scarce alternative modes of transportation for them.
- Proper **sewerage disposal** is a challenge, including in certain rural and suburban areas such as Vrbanja, Dragocaj and Zaluzani. There are a high number of refugees and internally displaced persons living in areas with either inadequate or no appropriate sewerage disposal.
- An intermittent or unavailable **water supply** is a major concern for some rural residents.
- **Health services**, especially in rural areas, are marred by unequal access and poor quality.
- Rapid housing and infrastructural growth threaten the **environment** and quality of urban life.
- The local government's **communication** methods with citizens were perceived as problematic.



Focus Group Discussions

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

City of Banja Luka Development Strategy (2007 - 2015)

Strategy of Rural Development of the City of Banja Luka (2010 - 2015)

Plan of Improving the Life of Persons with Disability in the City of Banja Luka (2008 - 2013)

*Youth Policy of the City of Banja Luka (2007 - 2011)*⁵

Social inclusion and poverty reduction are among the operational goals of the main strategic development documents. The inclusion of vulnerable groups (i.e. persons in the condition of social need) in the social and economic life of the City through the creation of employment programs and the improvement of transportation and infrastructure is among the city's key concerns. Youth employment is stipulated as a priority sector. Similarly, the inclusion of the needs of persons with disabilities in policy planning and policy design at the local level is a priority concern; this is to be achieved through educational activities and information sharing, providing them with access to local infrastructure, and inclusion in education and employment. At the city level, infrastructural investments are among the city's priorities.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES TO BE CONSIDERED

- Bosnia and Herzegovina's political system provides for at least one representative of national minorities on city councils; the representation of other identified vulnerable groups is not stipulated.
- The local executive branch is a coalition between three different political parties with a history of successful power-sharing.
- Some issues relevant to vulnerable groups such as employment, education, and health, are dealt with at each administrative level.
- Corruption is believed to persist at all levels of BiH local government. Local governments are perceived as inadequately implementing free access to information.⁶

EXISTING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY THE CITY

- ✓ Legislative provisions⁷ guarantee citizen access to information and oblige government authorities and institutions to provide official responses to submitted complaints within 30 days.
 - The City Administration has established an organizational unit for distributing information (i.e. PR Section) and produced a guide (available via city website) on how to access information.
 - City authorities were described by Focus Group Participants as delaying responses to official requests for information or submitting incomplete responses.
- ✓ The decisions of the City Council and the Office of the Mayor, as well as other acts, are published in the City's Official Gazette and are available on the City's website.
- ✓ City Council sessions and meetings of other City Council working bodies should be open to the general public and media, in accordance with their spatial and technical capacity.
 - Interested parties must prove their legal interest in order to participate at the meetings and sessions: this condition has been described as restraining by Focus Group Participants, in that it inhibits active participation.
- ✓ City Council sessions were broadcasted via the local television station, up to 2012.
 - City officials stated that this practice will be suspended in 2013. No live stream or video view is currently available via the city website.
 - Focus Group Participants reported the practice of suspending City Council broadcasts when decisions regarding the election of certain commission members or funding are on agenda.

⁵ Note: Strategy of Youth Policy of the City of Banja Luka (2013-2017) - planned in the city budget for 2013.

⁶ Source: Transparency International BiH *National Integrity System 2007*; FGDs.

⁷ Freedom of Access to Information Act ("Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 20/01) and Law on Local Self-Governance ("Official Gazette of Republika Srpska", No. 101/04).

- ✓ Legislative provisions⁸ enable citizen participation: referendum, citizen assemblies, citizen initiatives, local communities (i.e. local administrative units), public hearings, citizen panels, proposal schemes and “citizen hours” in assemblies.
- ✓ Public hearings, lasting up to 30 days, are the mandatory form of public participation in the adoption of specific regulations.⁹
 - Focus Group Participants report that public hearings are a *pro forma* activity and cannot be regarded as efficient participatory mechanisms, given that information on public hearings is not made widely accessible to all interested parties and that citizens' proposals at hearings are not taken into account by the authorities.
- ✓ The City Administration established a Quality Management System, complying to ISO 9001:2008
- ✓ The annual city budget is published in the Official Gazette and available for download via the city website. Budget drafts are available on-line for commenting prior to adoption.
- ✓ Public utility service providers are obliged to inform users (through the media, for example) about expected interruptions in service provision at least three days prior to such service breaks.
 - Focus Group Participants reported this obligation is not followed in practice or that such information is unavailable to them. Information on *daily disruptions* in services can be found on the city website on the day of service disruption.
- ✓ City administration employees make guest appearances on the local radio station twice a week in order to inform citizens about current issues.
- ✓ A monthly informational newsletter, *BL-info* is distributed by the City Administration in printed and e-form (e-mail subscription and download are available via the city website).
- ✓ While the City Administration frequently posts information on the notice board in the main administrative building, notice board posting among local administrative units is deficient.
- ✓ Project-based (two year) activities have been conducted by the City in order to strengthen the work of local administrative units (the so-called *local councils*). Activities build capacity among the council members and individual interested citizens.
- ✓ Monitoring and performance measurement of service provision is not a regular practice; rather it happens on an *ad-hoc*, project-based basis. For the past couple of years, the City Administration’s Department of Public Utilities, Housing and Traffic has conducted an annual service satisfaction survey, in order to prioritize future work and to aid annual budget formulation.
- ✓ A new practice has been established: the monthly *Coffee with the Mayor*; citizens can meet with the Mayor and report their problems.
- ✓ The City’s website contains a participatory section to facilitate two-way engagement with citizens by enabling (1) Q/A section, (2) proposal suggestion, and (3) participation in polls.
 - Focus Group Participants were unaware of this mechanism or generally described it in negative terms (e.g. not up-to-date; censored; irrelevant; not inclusive).
 - Focus Group Participants describe the website’s interface as complicated and impractical.
- ✓ The City is planning to introduce free wi-fi spots in the city centre and build info points by 2015 as part of its strategic goal to develop Banja Luka into an ICT city.

⁸ Law on Local Self-Governance; Statute of the City of Banja Luka; and Rules of Procedure of the City Council.

⁹ Draft Statute of the City, Budget Draft, Development Plan, Draft of Urban and Regulatory Plans, and other acts that the city council refers to public hearing.

WHY PROMOTE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN BANJA LUKA?

The city administration is perceived as a distant and unresponsive centralized bureaucratic institution with officials unconcerned about citizens' needs and problems. Past unsuccessful attempts to promote social accountability are contributing to the feeling of apathy and disenfranchisement among citizens which, in turn, results in a lack of activity among the citizen base.

Citizens distrust local government due to bad experiences interacting with the city administration; neglect of official complaints, petitions and inputs filed with the City; and the presence of corruption. Similarly, citizens share the belief that public employees lack motivation for work and that instances of good professional behavior of public employees are not adequately recognized.

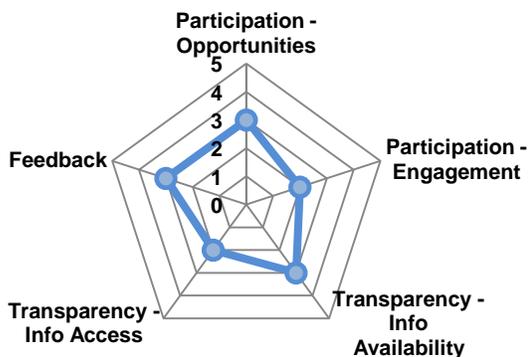
Citizens, in general, are dissatisfied with the quality of services provided; the shortage of collaborative processes and transparency in city administration decision-making; and non-inclusive city planning practices. However, citizens are willing to establish functional channels of communication with the city administration in order to nurture participatory processes.

Although Local Administrative Units are closest to citizens, they are unable to act efficiently in connecting them with the central City Administration. This is due to insufficient administrative and financial support; residential unfamiliarity or disinterest in their activities; lack of professional staff; and council member passivity. Vulnerable groups feel their interests are unrepresented in city decisions, while NGOs or CBOs that can voice the needs of vulnerable groups feel left out of local decision-making.

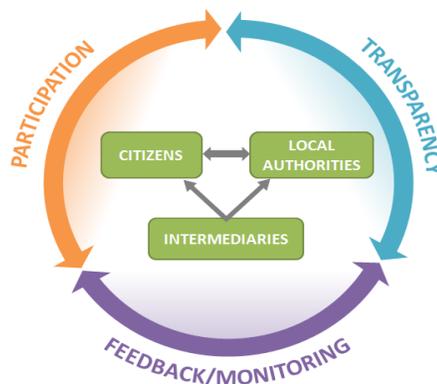
Public authorities acknowledge that the analytical approaches used to devise policies and prepare interventions (within the multiple jurisdictional competencies) could be strengthened to have positive benefits for vulnerable groups. Performance monitoring and evaluation could also improve, along with the accessibility of official documents to ordinary citizens by reducing technical terminology.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

In order to gauge existing levels of social accountability in each city in a comparable way, this Assessment developed a Social Accountability Index around 5 categories relating the framework of Participation, Transparency and Feedback/Monitoring. The index is a simplified measure of the effectiveness of existing practices and identifies areas that can benefit from improvement.



Index results for Banja Luka¹⁰



Social Accountability Framework

STAKEHOLDER OWNERSHIP

The workshops described below perceive the City of Banja Luka as the main actor responsible for implementing each scenario, albeit in collaboration with other stakeholders specifically mentioned for each action. Intermediaries (NGOs, CBOs, local administrative units, etc.) should actively participate in the entire process, keeping in mind the interest and positions of vulnerable groups. Throughout the process there is a need to maintain the inclusiveness and openness of the process.



Participatory Scenario Development Workshop

¹⁰ Please refer to the City Synthesis Report Annex for a full description of the index and its categories.

PROPOSAL #1: IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DELIVERY THROUGH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The research revealed that vulnerable groups in the city are locked in a circle of social exclusion that hinders their participation in social accountability processes. Given their lack of access to resources, they are highly dependent on specific public services (e.g. social assistance). Moreover, it was found that citizens do not have a functional channel to voice their concerns about public services and that service providers, in general, lack transparency and professionalism. Similarly, multiple vulnerable groups identified public bus transportation as an inaccessible service. There is a need to respond to citizens' demands for efficient public transportation, as well as to incorporate a Web-SMS platform that fosters participation, monitors performance and, ultimately, increases the inclusion of vulnerable groups, especially of persons with disabilities and elderly citizens.

Overall goal: High quality public transportation that meets the needs of vulnerable groups and enhances the participation of citizens through the evaluation and monitoring of services.

Vision

- ✓ Inclusion of citizens (especially from the city's peripheral rural areas) and vulnerable groups in participatory activities that will improve service delivery.
- ✓ The needs of vulnerable groups incorporated within the service delivery process.
- ✓ Efficient and effective communication channels between citizens and service providers, facilitated by the city administration.
- ✓ Strong partnerships between the local administration, service providers and citizens.

Specific Action

WHAT	A Web-SMS Platform that monitors public transportation services, together with City Supervisory Activities that catalyze change in service delivery. The resulting service standards would apply to companies that provide transportation services.
HOW	The City will consult with vulnerable groups and NGOs representing persons with disabilities and other groups. Furthermore, the City will introduce monitoring tools (such as ICTs) to public transportation service-providers. Service providers will be responsible for providing educational activities to their employees, facilitated by the City and NGOs. The City will provide promotional coverage.
WHO	City of Banja Luka, private service providers, NGOs, ICT experts, interested citizens.
WHEN	1-2 years
INDICATORS	The Web-SMS Platform; revised contracts between the City and service providers; the education of transportation employees; the installation of complaint boxes at bus stops; the number of complaints collected through multiple channels, etc.
HOW MUCH	Difficult to calculate the incorporation of this new supervisory instrument; cost of for web and mobile platforms, maintenance of web platform; telephone line fee; promotional costs; etc. Estimate: 15 - 20,000 USD.

PROPOSAL #2: INCREASE TRANSPARENCY – ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The FGDs and IDIs have revealed the gap between information availability and citizen information access. The lack of access of vulnerable groups to information channels; the inadequate utilization of existing information channels; and passive attitudes from vulnerable groups all contribute to diminish the effectiveness of the local government's existing efforts at transparency. Citizens have raised their concerns in regard to access to information on employment, particularly important as employment support is considered to be the most deficient City service. Local administrative units are perceived to have strong potential to advertise employment opportunities. Finding new avenues for information display (e.g. info-desks) and proper utilization of existing ones (e.g. notice boards) would provide an opportunity for increased transparency among service providers and the local government.

Overall goal: Timely information on employment, disseminated through effective and transparent institutional channels.

Vision

- ✓ Transparent institutional processes of information placement by the local government and a more prominent role of higher educational institutions in the dissemination of information.
- ✓ Opportunities in the job market of vulnerable groups (especially youth and the elderly)
- ✓ Increased communication practices in service and social accountability between local government, service providers, educational institutions and citizens.
- ✓ Increased access to information for vulnerable groups.

Specific Action

WHAT	Information Channels (Info desks and Notice boards) on employment opportunities for citizens (especially youth and the elderly).
HOW	First, the City will sign a memorandum of understanding with employment service providers in order to create a single, streamlined source of employment information. It will facilitate information exchange with universities that will run information desks on employment opportunities for students. Information channels will include mailing lists and/or a social network page (e.g. via Facebook) that enable access to employment information. Secondly, the City will utilize the local council notice boards to regularly post employment information for the area residents.
WHO	The City of Banja Luka, local administrative units, the University of Banja Luka, the Workers University, the Employment Bureau of Republika Srpska, private companies (employment mediator services), students, interested citizens.
WHEN	One year
INDICATORS	Number of info desks; person(s) working at info desks; memorandum of understanding; number of mailing list subscribers or number of social network users.
HOW MUCH	Difficult to calculate given that it is a comprehensive intervention involving multiple stakeholders. Given that this is partly an institutional process, the City could cover this action with own funds. Estimate: 15 - 20,000 USD.

PROPOSAL #3: STRENGTHEN MONITORING AND FEEDBACK THROUGH IMPROVED WEBSITE AND COUNCIL SUPERVISION

Poorly maintained and promoted feedback and monitoring mechanisms with low institutional responsiveness rates to citizen requests and complaints are among the key research findings. Bureaucratic procedures hold back effective two-way communication between citizens and local authorities or service providers. Similarly, the lack of responsiveness and third-party monitoring practices contribute to feelings of apathy and skepticism towards accountability initiatives among citizens. Additionally, current IT solutions that could promote participatory governance are not perceived as collaborative tools. Small alterations within the city's current e-governance mechanisms would enable improved engagement and monitoring, thus enhancing accountability practices.

Overall goal: Strong, direct engagement through two-way communication with enhanced monitoring practices and feedback.

Vision

- ✓ Two-way participatory online communications benefiting citizens and local government.
- ✓ Accountable local government through ICT-enabled citizen monitoring.
- ✓ Simplified, improved feedback processes that raise government responsiveness and accountability.

Specific Action

WHAT	1) An improved City Website as the medium for interaction between all stakeholders in line with Web 2.0 standards. 2) City council supervisory procedures for monitoring the functioning of queries/grievance response . (<i>Follow up / secondary action:</i> strengthening the role of local administrative units as intermediaries between the citizens and city government by providing IT literacy education activities to local council members and employees.) ¹¹
HOW	The website should include a visible Q&A section, employee performance monitoring, voting section, on-demand live stream and video coverage of city council sessions, with a forum or a link to social networking sites. The City should institutionalize a new IT system in order to reply to queries/grievances. 1) This system will incorporate an automatic reply message, containing a notice on obligatory deadlines for responses, and instructions on legal sanctions. 2) An analysis of responses to citizens' queries/grievances should become an obligatory item on city council hearings.
WHO	City, local administrative units, NGOs, IT experts, interested citizens.
WHEN	1 year
INDICATORS	Frequency of content updating; the number of users voting; the number of users live streaming council sessions; Q&A section data; number of local administrative units' council members attending IT courses, etc.
HOW MUCH	The cost of modifications to the website/technical interventions for adjustment; maintenance of the site; promotional costs. Given that this is an institutional process, the City could cover this action through its own funds. Estimate: up to 10,000 USD.

¹¹ Note: doubt in feasibility of secondary scenario was raised by workshop participants due to its presumably necessary high financial allocations (for educational activities). More information about the specific secondary scenario can be found in the Report on Banja Luka PSD Workshop.