

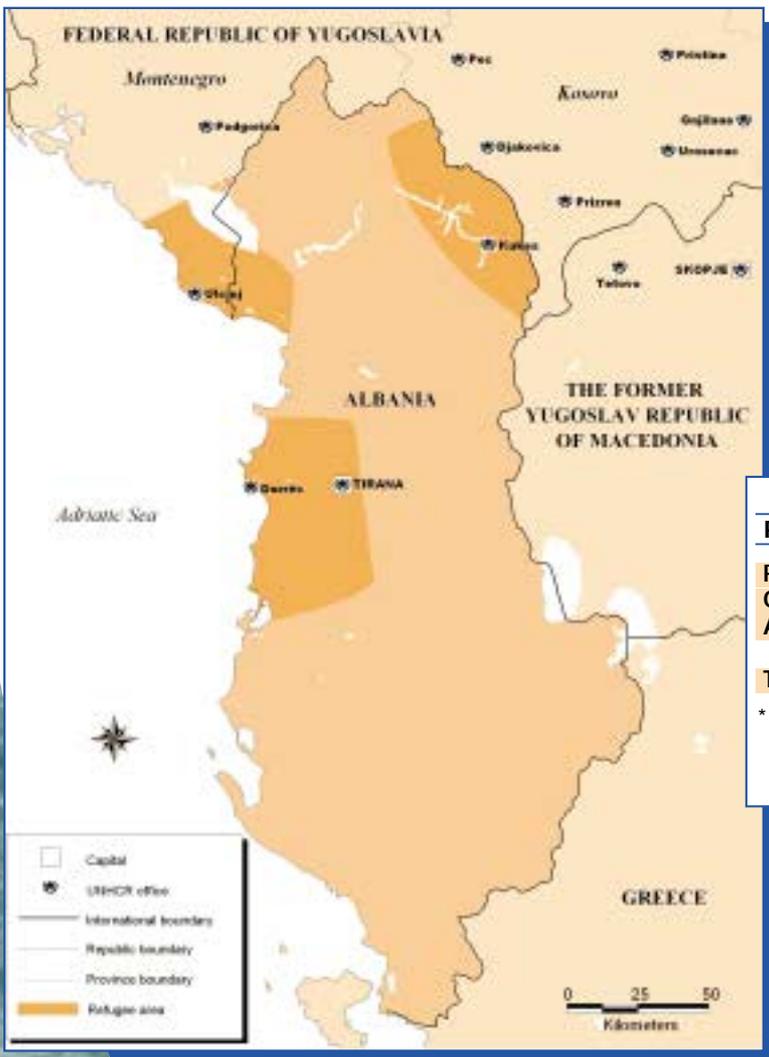
ALBANIA

IN SHORT



Main Objectives

- Provide protection for refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Assist the Government of Albania and non-governmental institutions to build the necessary capacity to implement the Albanian asylum law according to international standards.
- Provide assistance to the remaining Kosovar refugees, including a number of extremely vulnerable individuals.
- Seek durable solutions for Kosovar and other refugees through repatriation, local integration or resettlement.
- Facilitate the transition from post-emergency rehabilitation activities to development and governance by the rule of law.
- Monitor potential refugee movements in the region.



Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Refugees from Kosovo*	3,500	3,000
Other Refugees and Asylum-Seekers	1,500	6,000
Total	5,000	9,000

* Including 1,700 vulnerable individuals

Total Requirements
USD 12,046,446



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

Following the influx into Albania of nearly 500,000 refugees and their return to Kosovo within less than three months, one of UNHCR's priorities is the rehabilitation of the direct and indirect damage that the presence of so many refugees has had on the country's physical, environmental and social landscapes. To this effect, UNHCR has started a rehabilitation programme which consists of restoring land and buildings which have housed refugees, and the repair and upgrading of water and sanitation systems and other public facilities damaged by the refugees' presence. The rehabilitation and upgrading of schools and medical facilities will be a priority, together with the repair of environmental damage.

UNHCR has actively pursued the launch of a campaign by the Emergency Management Group (EMG) designed to mobilise donor support for such activities, bearing in mind that the rehabilitation stage will eventually give way to a broader development programme, expected to gain momentum in the year 2000. It is expected that the number of NGOs currently operating in Albania will gradually decrease. Although this should not alter the level of commitment of those remaining, UNHCR envisages a shift in their approach towards long-term, rather than emergency, assistance.

Constraints

Although the asylum law was adopted at the end of 1998, implementing structures are not yet in place. Procedures, by-laws and coordination mechanisms need to be developed further. A training programme on asylum matters for key border police officials, immigration officials, lawyers and others, is in the pipeline. Although the Office for Refugees (OFR) has already been established in the Ministry of Local Government, the National Commission for Refugees, which is the institution of appeal for rejected asylum applicants, must also be constituted and its expertise and resources built up before it can do its job properly.

The poor security situation in Albania restricts freedom of movement, especially in the northern districts and along the main routes used by refugees, returnees and international workers. The northern districts, notably the Tropoje and Bajram Curri areas, have been the scene of widespread banditry in recent months. This situation, com-

pounded by severe winters, hampers the monitoring of refugees in these areas and the implementation of rehabilitation activities and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs).

The details of a future development programme which would take over the rehabilitation activities started by UNHCR need to be defined. It is safe to assume that such a programme will start during 2000 in close cooperation with other relevant organisations.



STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Following the completion of a survey and re-verification exercise on the size of the residual Kosovar refugee population, some 1,700 persons out of a total of 3,600 have been identified as extremely vulnerable individuals. This information has been entered into the Registration of Individual Cases System database. These persons require special attention, including the identification of suitable durable solutions such as local integration, which is the preferred solution for those who cannot return to Kosovo, followed by resettlement, for a limited number of refugees, in third countries, particularly for the purposes of family reunification. Assistance continues to be provided to refugees willing to return to Kosovo.

Asylum-seekers will have free access to UNHCR and will be counselled on their rights and obligations. Early intervention might be necessary to prevent unlawful detention and refoulement of individual cases. In order to strengthen the Albanian asylum system and all its related institutions, UNHCR will work with the OFR and other government officials towards a better understanding of the asylum law. Coordination of all relevant authorities will improve, as will the capacity to provide protection to genuine asylum-seekers and refugees, as a result of training, lobbying and dissemination of relevant information at all levels.

UNHCR will strive to find durable solutions for some individual cases who have no chance of return to their country of origin. This could be achieved by a resettlement project and the promotion of income-generating activities to speed the integration process.

As the Government of Albania begins to deal with



non-ethnic Albanian asylum-seekers arriving in the country, efforts have been made to identify and bridge the existing gaps and problems in the law and its implementation. Moreover, it is foreseen that the European Union countries might soon begin to return to Albania a number of illegal migrants and asylum-seekers who have transited illegally through the country before reaching the EU (probably through readmission clauses or by declaring Albania a safe third country). So the Albanian asylum system may have to process a great many asylum cases in a relatively short period of time. The Albanian Government will require support from the international community to implement measures for the local integration of most of those granted refugee status. If, as seems likely, the country lacks the capacity to absorb them all, a number of cases will probably have to be resettled in third countries.

UNHCR will also continue its mass information campaign to discourage irregular movement by asylum-seekers and refugees, and to provide advice on how to minimise the risks when travelling along the Durres-Kukes-Morina highway.

Assistance

As part of its programme of assistance to refugees, UNHCR will provide basic and complementary food to around 3,500 refugees from Kosovo, located mainly in the prefectures of Tirana and Durres. It will assist and, if necessary, accommodate the residual refugee population in collective centres equipped for the winter. The management of these centres, including a centre for asylum-seekers, will be the responsibility of the OFR. Furthermore, UNHCR will provide special assistance to extremely vulnerable individuals, judging each case on its merits and placing people in specialist institutions if appropriate. The QIP Programme, launched in July 1999, will focus on areas such as health, education, community services, water and sanitation and result in the repair and rehabilitation of schools, health facilities, community centres and the environment in areas affected by the presence of refugees.

Desired Impact

UNHCR's activities are expected to result in the protection of the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees by minimising the risk of refoulement and unlawful detention and by safeguarding their physical safety, which will be closely monitored by UNHCR and its partners. Asylum-seekers should have access to refugee status determination pro-

cedures and, if eligible, be given refugee status within a reasonable period of time. It is also intended that all procedures should recognise vulnerabilities contingent upon gender, age, reduced mental capacity and health, as well as the special case of unaccompanied minors. As a consequence of UNHCR's presence and activities, governmental and non-governmental officials and civil society in general should have a better understanding of the asylum law, the obligations of the state and the rights and obligations of asylum-seekers and refugees. Furthermore, the implementation of the Albanian asylum system will bring Albania fully within the sphere of existing European legislation.

UNHCR's rehabilitation and assistance programmes will acknowledge the generosity of the Government and people of Albania. They will also help alleviate the instability caused by the sudden influx and departure of nearly 500,000 people in a small country emerging from almost five decades of tight totalitarian rule. UNHCR should moreover provide a smooth transition from the emergency and repatriation assistance phase to a meaningful development programme that will evolve in the course of the year 2000. Finally, UNHCR will strive to find durable solutions to some of the most immediate problems facing refugees and asylum-seekers.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

In the year 2000, the staffing structure of UNHCR in Albania will consist of 59 staff members (14 international and 45 national staff members) headed by a Representative. There will be Legal, Protection, Programme and Administrative Sections in Tirana as well as field offices, covering the areas of Kukes and Durres.

Coordination

On protection matters, UNHCR will continue to cooperate with various agencies including: ICRC (for family tracing); IOM (on matters relating to the organised return of Kosovar refugees who took part in the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme and on resettlement movements to third countries), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (for refugee or security-related information in prefectures where UNHCR



lacks a presence); the Council of Europe (on legal matters such as data protection); and national and international NGOs involved with the promotion of asylum law and training. UNHCR will collaborate closely with the OFR in the development of the Albanian asylum system.

UNHCR will maintain bilateral relations with various government ministries, and will participate in forums for the coordination of assistance and rehabilitation projects, in tandem with other UN agencies, NGOs and bilateral programmes. Such forums were established by the EMG and are typically organised around sectoral issues such as health, education, development etc. Furthermore, UNHCR Tirana will actively support the transformation of the EMG into a long-term national emergency response centre. UNHCR will also keep regular contact with UNDP and other UN agencies to align policies and practices for administrative, staffing and security issues.

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,570,699
Community Services	700,000
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	400,000
Education	500,000
Food	1,200,000
Forestry	500,000
Health/Nutrition	970,000
Income Generation	350,000
Legal Assistance	350,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	900,000
Sanitation	500,000
Transport/Logistics	700,000
Water (non-agricultural)	500,000
Total Operations	9,140,699
Programme Support	2,905,747
Total	12,046,446

Offices
Tirana Durrës Kukes
Partners
Government Agencies
Office for Refugees
NGOs
<i>Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement</i> Albanian Education Development Project CARE International <i>DE'IGNIS</i> Humanitarian Cargo Carriers International Catholic Migration Commission International Centre for Migration Policy Development International Medical Corps International Rescue Committee Italian Consortium of Solidarity Mercy International MERLIN Norwegian People's Aid
Other
International Federation of the Red Cross/ Albanian Red Cross

