

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN SHORT



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Main Objectives

- Promote the sustainable return of minorities and seek the removal of obstacles hindering the voluntary return of Bosnian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their places of origin.
- Identify the local integration needs of refugees and IDPs who repatriate, or who decide to settle in other locations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Assist Croatian Serb refugees in the Republika Srpska who choose to voluntarily return to Croatia.
- Support the voluntary repatriation of refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and continue to provide assistance as well as protection for those who cannot return in the foreseeable future.
- Support capacity-building of local authorities, seek to establish a Bosnia and Herzegovina Refugee Council and pursue legal reforms.



Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Returnees/IDPs in the Federation*	487,000	467,000
Returnees/IDPs in the Republika Srpska*	343,000	323,000
Refugees from Croatia**	40,000	39,000
Refugees from FRY	18,000	13,000
Total	883,000	842,000

* In each entity (Federation and Republika Srpska), UNHCR will assist 50,000 residents in collective centres and minority returnees at the beginning of 2000 and 30,000 at the end of 2000.
 ** UNHCR will assist about 5,000 refugees from Croatia in 2000.

Total Requirements
USD 43,852,300



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

In response to the UN Secretary General's request, UNHCR became actively involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement at the end of 1995, UNHCR was requested to take the humanitarian lead role for the return and coordination of relief for refugees and internally displaced persons. By mid-1999, some 330,000 refugees had returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, many were unable to return to their areas of origin and became part of the displaced population in the country. From 1997, UNHCR and the international community decided to focus their attention on the return of minorities. This will continue in the year 2000. At the same time, protection and legal assistance will be provided for returnees and IDPs who, at the beginning of 2000, will still number 830,000. Direct assistance will focus on specifically identified groups such as returned minority families and people living in collective centres.

Constraints

The implementation of return is unfortunately influenced by the political agendas of the representatives of the three ethnic groups. In addition, a lack of constructive cooperation or even a clear distribution of responsibilities between the State, the two entities (the Federation and Republika Srpska) and the highly decentralised constitutional regime, will have a significant impact on the return of minority groups to their homes in the year 2000.

There are continued threats to the personal safety of returnees in a number of areas. These include: the lack of an effective human rights protection regime; continued denial of registration of residence and issuance of ID cards; denied or restricted access to public services, including health care, education, social services, pension rights, and access to public documents; and discrimination in employment.

In addition, a sizeable number of voluntary repatriations of Croatian Serbs to Croatia will only become a reality if the Croatian authorities accelerate the implementation of the Return Programme.

Unless the situation of minorities in Kosovo improves, there are serious obstacles to the voluntary repatriation to Kosovo of members of eth-

nic minorities, in particular Serbs and Roma. For the "Sandzak" Muslims and ethnic Serbs, the lack of an amnesty law in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will mean that draft evaders or deserters will not dare return.



STRATEGY

Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

UNHCR estimates that at the beginning of 1999, over 324,000 Bosnian refugees living abroad were still in need of durable solutions, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina a total of 830,000 people remained displaced (487,000 in the Federation and 343,000 in Republika Srpska). Returnees and IDPs are dispersed throughout the country, but most of them are still concentrated in areas where they are ethnically the majority.

In early 1999, the Reconstruction and Return Task Force (RRTF) co-chaired by UNHCR and the Office of the High Representative developed a Plan of Action, identifying the main return axes, and prioritising support for the reintegration of displaced persons within Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as for the return of Bosnian refugees. As a result of the Government's efforts and with the support of the international community, so far 14,000 ethnic minority refugees and displaced persons are recorded as having returned.

The objective for 2000 is to reduce large-scale material assistance in favour of protection, capacity-building and advocacy for sustainable solutions, including a continued emphasis on the return of minorities, particularly from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia. Success will depend on the continuation of a RRTF mechanism until the end of 2000. UNHCR, as the lead UN humanitarian agency, will advise and guide the RRTF in the field of protection, and play an advocacy role to facilitate the effective mobilisation of resources. UNHCR will provide material assistance to specific groups such as minority returnees, collective centre residents and families headed by widows and single women. UNHCR will not consider as beneficiaries those who choose not to return or who opt for local integration.

The Legal Aid and Information Centres will be strengthened to provide timely and accurate legal assistance. Other activities will be pursued, including inter-entity bus services along return axes,



income-generation, vocational training, community development and reconciliation activities in minority return areas. At the central level, UNHCR will seek to prepare the establishment of a Bosnia and Herzegovina Refugee Council. The Office will also work for legal reforms and monitor the removal of administrative obstacles to minority return and the implementation of legislation (particularly that dealing with internally displaced persons and returnees, citizenship, property and pensions). Finally, UNHCR will approach development agencies, state and entity ministries, as well as local and international NGOs to request their participation in activities requiring long term intervention.

The Bosnian Women's Initiative will continue to work at the grassroots level and target impoverished and vulnerable women in their communities, with the aim of helping them to rebuild their family lives. In all community activities, programme design will be undertaken in a gender-balanced way.

Croatian Serb Refugees

Croatian Serb refugees are located in the western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some 30,000 of them arrived prior to the events in 1999. Due to the recent Kosovo crisis, their number increased by 10,000 and the most vulnerable receive assistance from UNHCR. Out of 1,300 return applications since the adoption of the Croatian Return Programme in June 1998, only 240 have returned. For those who expressed their desire to return, UNHCR will accelerate the process and assist their repatriation to Croatia. They will receive a repatriation package and bus services between the two countries will be put at their disposal. The success of this operation will also depend on the identification of lasting solutions for them as well as on the possibility of handing over some of the longer-term development activities to other agencies. In cases where voluntary repatriation is not an option, UNHCR will advocate local integration. Another estimated 3,000 to 4,000 persons have received the necessary documentation from Croatian consular representations in Bosnia and Herzegovina to enable them to return if they so wish.

Refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

In March 1999, the number of new arrivals from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, primarily Kosovars, Sandzaks and Serbs, increased from 10,000 in 1998 to 75,000 by June 1999.

The sudden influx resulted in a major shift in the operation to assist the new arrivals and prepare for a possible massive influx from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Repatriation began in the wake of the peace settlement in Kosovo. As a result, some 38,000 refugees had returned by the end of September 1999. However, asylum-seekers and refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, mostly Kosovo Roma, continue to arrive. While a small group of refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are living in collective accommodation, the majority live in private accommodation and are difficult to locate. Most of the Sandzaks are living in and around Sarajevo where they maintain close ties with the local population. By the end of 1999, camps equipped for the winter will be established to shelter refugees not hosted in private accommodation. As a result of the peace process following the Kosovo crisis, it is expected that half of the refugees will have repatriated by the end of 1999.

In 2000, UNHCR will provide assistance for the remaining refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and organise the repatriation of those who express a wish to return home. Transport assistance will be provided through IOM to an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 applicants for voluntary repatriation. It is anticipated that the residual refugee group, mainly consisting of draft evaders and deserters, will remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina unless an amnesty law is adopted in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Multi-sectoral assistance will be provided to refugees still living in camps. For refugees staying in private accommodation, UNHCR will request that the Government and the international community extend their support to host families. Vigorous efforts will be made to settle locally those refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who are unable to return home. Regional stability will remain the only underpinning for durable solutions for this group.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office is headed by the Chief of Mission in Sarajevo, who is assisted by 59 internationals, including seven Junior Professional Officers and 217 nationals.



Coordination

Standing Committees (for sectoral coordination) have been established under the auspices of one of the participating UN agencies. In 1997, the Office of the High Representative and UNHCR set up the RRTF, which provides an effective forum for deciding regional priorities and matching needs to interested donors. A UN inter-agency meeting is convened fortnightly by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to exchange information and coordinate activities. Ad hoc consultation and coordination meetings are convened by any of the UN agencies around a particular issue or sectoral problem.

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	9,366,254
Community Services	2,100,000
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	950,000
Education	870,000
Food	1,400,000
Health/Nutrition	210,000
Income Generation	5,700,000
Legal Assistance	3,430,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	5,840,000
Sanitation	70,000
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	3,500,000
Transport/Logistics	3,700,000
Water (non-agricultural)	100,000
Total Operations	37,236,254
Programme Support	6,616,046
Total	43,852,300

Offices

Sarajevo	Gorazde	Tuzla
Banja Luka	Mostar	Visegrad
Bihac	Orasje	Zenica
Brcko	Sanski Most	Zvornik
Doboj	Travnik	
Drvar	Trebinje	

Partners

Government Agencies

Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees
 Ministry for Civilian Affairs and Communication
 Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska
 Programme Implementation Unit

NGOs

Action contre la faim
 Adventist Development and Relief Agency
 American Refugee Committee
 Bosnian Humanitarian Logistic Services
 BOSPO
 Catholic Relief Services
 Danish Refugee Council
 Helsinki Citizens' Assembly
 International Council of Voluntary Agencies
 International Management Group
 International Rescue Committee
Iustitia
 Japan Emergency NGOs
 Malteser Hilfsdienst
 Mercy Corps/Scottish European Aid
 National Support Unit
 New Bosnia Fund
 Norwegian Refugee Council
Patria
 Save the Children - USA
 Swiss Disaster Relief
Tango
Terra
 United Methodist Committee of Relief
 World Vision Bosnia

Other

International Organisation for Migration

