

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Build on positive political and social developments and continue to promote the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.
- Promote local integration of especially vulnerable displaced persons who cannot return to their pre-war homes.
- Monitor protection of returnees, through field presence in strategic locations.
- Provide legal assistance and advice through the national Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs) and strengthen the LAIC network.
- Work with other international actors to promote implementation of the property law.
- Press for speedy provision of housing for the returnees and closure of the collective centres.
- Assist in the development of a national asylum system, but continue in the interim to determine the status of asylum-seekers and seek durable solutions for refugees.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

The continuing increase in the number of minority returns indicated that great potential remains for further return movements, provided the necessary support to sustain the returns is maintained. Since January 1999, some 240,400 minority refugees and displaced persons have returned to their place of former habitual residence (40,000 in the first five months of 2002).

UNHCR's three main areas of activity have continued to focus on protection interventions through extensive field presence; assistance to specific groups in need and in seeking durable solutions.

Protection

UNHCR, together with its partners, has continued to be actively involved in the Property Law Implementation Plan which enables pre-war property holders to repossess their property and return to their homes. By end May 2002, 131,955 property claims had been successfully resolved.

The UNHCR Network of Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs) remains the only source of free legal assistance in the return, relocation, and reintegration process. In the last six months, the Network provided legal analysis and information relating to the sustainability of return in 20 return areas, on issues such as discriminatory practices against returnees in employment, education, utilities and health care, and the right to receive pensions upon return. The Network is also actively involved in cross-border related issues. Since January 2002, the Network has assisted 38,316 new beneficiaries out of 47,403 return related cases. During the first half of 2002, the legal staff undertook 65,945 legal actions in order to assist the sustainable return of persons of concern to UNHCR. The Office has developed a case management database, which facilitates management of LAICs as well as follow-up and co-operation on specific cases.

Inter-entity and cross-border bus lines

Three inter-entity bus lines considered crucial for the return of minorities were operational. During the first half of 2002 a total of 11,686 passengers used the bus service. Assessment visits to priority areas of return were organized when requested, and 13,257 passengers took advantage of this service till June 2002.

Domestic items

UNHCR continued to provide immediate assistance to facilitate the reintegration of

vulnerable groups and groups opening up new minority return areas. As at end June, the following quantities had been distributed: beds (4,143), blankets (8,642), stoves (1,660), mattresses (4,331) and plastic sheeting (17,180 sqm).

Quick Support Funds (QSF)

They have been designed to facilitate sustainable minority returns through the immediate support to extremely vulnerable individuals and/or groups in minority return areas, especially when other agencies operating in the area were not in a position to rapidly mobilise the needed resources. During 2002, this has included shelter material in new areas of minority return, minor repairs in repossessed property, basic low-cost infrastructure components to complement shelter (i.e. water/sewage, electricity, roads) and community projects. Sustainable Return Grants (SRGs) designed to foster socio-economic security for selected minority returnees included income-generating activities for individuals or groups in minority return areas, and improvement of livelihood and provision of food security for spontaneous minority returnees. Until end June 2002, 392 projects under the QSF were approved, covering some 12,900 beneficiaries.

The Bosnian Women's Initiative (BWI)

It aimed at empowering displaced and returning women, is in the process of acquiring a formal structure, with UNHCR providing operational costs for the Secretariat of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BHWI). The first project funding from the German Government provided for income generation and vocational training activities, and was distributed to 40 projects countrywide in early June.

Durable solutions for Collective Centre (CC) residents.

Some 4,258 residents of 53 CCs require targeted action to find humane solutions to their plight. In partnership with the

Government of Switzerland, UNHCR has, in the first six months of 2002, implemented 34 projects to provide lasting solutions for 108 residents. The planned closure of the CCs will regrettably be delayed due to diminishing donor support.

Croatian Serb Refugees

UNHCR continues to seek durable solutions for the approximately 23,000 Croatian Serbs currently residing in BiH. Voluntary repatriation to Croatia remains problematic, particularly for former habitual residents with an effective link with Croatia, but who are currently not considered citizens of Croatia and/or who are not registered with the Croatian Ministry of Interior (MoI), a necessary prerequisite for clearance for return under the UNHCR-Croatian Government procedure. Another obstacle to return is the difficulty faced in repossessing their property. The number of returns to Croatia has nonetheless increased during 2002.

In addition to voluntary repatriation, UNHCR is exploring possibilities for local integration of those unable to return. The majority of Croatian Serbs are currently eligible to apply for BiH citizenship under the laws enacted in 1998 and 1999. Some Croatian Serbs who wish to remain have not been granted citizenship of the Republika Srpska (RS) or BiH and reside in the RS with ID cards and temporary residence permits. UNHCR has been seeking to clarify the status of this group of individuals with the authorities.

In the first six-month of 2002, 2,183 Croatian Serbs repatriated with IOM transportation assistance. Since the adoption of the Return Programme in Croatia in 1998, some 4,394 persons have returned to Croatia from BiH in an organised way. Moreover 5,768 returnees have registered in Croatia, indicating significant numbers of spontaneous returns.

Refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)

As of end of June, UNHCR is assisting 1,452 refugees in five Reception Asylum Centres (RACs) through the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and Save the Children US, as implementing partners. Of these refugees, 972 are from Kosovo, 285 from Serbia, 76 from Montenegro, and 119 are asylum-seekers from other countries. Ethnically, the largest groups are Roma 53 per cent; Sandzak Muslims 14 per cent; Albanians from FRY 13 per cent; Kosovar (Muslims and Serbs) 15 per cent. Preliminary results from the recently completed re-registration of refugees from FRY indicate a total number of some 6,000 (including those privately accommodated).

In the first half of 2002, an estimated 180 new arrivals were registered in BiH. With the November 2001 decision on cessation of *prima facie* temporary admission of arrivals from FRY, all new arrivals are registered as asylum-seekers and are processed through the refugee status determination process carried out by UNHCR.

Durable solutions being pursued for FRY refugees include an assisted voluntary repatriation programme with IOM. Under this programme 500 persons are expected to return in 2002. A total of 51 persons were

assisted to voluntarily repatriate to FRY during the first six months of the year.

Development of the National Asylum System

UNHCR has continued to carry out refugee status determination (RSD) under its mandate on behalf of the BiH Government. As at June 2002, 119 asylum seekers were accommodated in RACs, where they received basic daily necessities, including food, community services, education, health, vocational training, etc.

UNHCR has also continued to be actively involved in assisting the government to establish a well functioning asylum system. During the reporting period, the Office provided substantive comments on a new draft Law on the Movement and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum.

Regular training seminars in basic refugee protection principles were held for the State Border Service, the International Police Task Force and for UN Human Rights officers. UNHCR continued its liaison with these actors to ensure the identification of asylum-seekers at various points of entry into BH and referral to RSD procedures. UNHCR contributed to the development of the National Action Plan under the Stability Pact Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI), although progress has remained slow in finalising the Plan.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
Improved freedom of movement, so that transport is no hindrance for return.	Regular cross-border (1) and inter-entity bus-lines (3); Increased number of assessment visits; Total number of passengers 33,665.
Vulnerable returnee population has essential household goods at the early stage of return.	Some 4,200 households received basic domestic items in the first six months of 2002, but due to the large returnee numbers and budget reductions not all in need will be included in the distribution.
Reliable protection partners in the local non-governmental sector are developed.	39 legal aid centres and 18 mobile teams consisting of local legal staff only; some 38,316 new beneficiaries have received assistance in 2002 and 65,945 legal actions were taken on their behalf.
Authorities implement already adopted property legislation.	Sustained increase in the implementation ratio of total number of property repossessions (from 41 per cent at the end of 2001 to 52 per cent at end May 2002).

Decrease in the number of refugees of Croatian Serb origin in the country (mainly Western BiH/Banja Luka area).	2,183 organised returns to Croatia in Jan-Jun 2002 (in comparison to the total of 1,397 Croatian Serbs repatriated in 2001 through UNHCR/IOM assistance).
Successful repatriation to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.	51 assisted voluntary repatriated individuals (current number of residents in reception centres is 1,452), while plans for organised repatriation of up to 500 persons under way.
Access of refugees to health care services in Bosnia and Herzegovina.	Legally secured, but actually implemented with difficulties (co-ordination between the State Ministry for Refugees and Human Rights and the Entity Ministries of Health).
Regular maintenance of the reception asylum centres.	Acceptable living conditions in five reception asylum centres.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

No specific changes are foreseen in the plan of action for the remaining period of the

year. UNHCR will continue to pursue the original objectives mentioned, unless funding for some of the main activities becomes a major problem.

Financial Data (USD)

Annual Programme Budget			
Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
22,352,926	22,627,231	12,902,199	10,731,862