



South-Eastern Europe

Operational highlights

- UNHCR assisted over 1,000 people to return to Croatia in 2007 under the Regional Refugee Return in Western Balkans project, which supports returns to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR focused on protection, legal assistance and social outreach both before and after refugees returned. In 2007, some 1,500 people benefited from sustainable-return grants.
- Repatriation activities continued in Serbia. Refugees were helped to return to Croatia (some 190 people), and Roma IDPs (some 70 people) were assisted to return voluntarily to their new homes in Roma Mahala, Kosovo. Refugees from Croatia (some 11,000 people) and IDPs from Kosovo (some 4,800 people) obtained free legal assistance, information and counselling on return-related activities.
- UNHCR and the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) authorities in Kosovo signed an agreement in January 2007 to begin a localization process aimed at building the capacity of municipal authorities to address return and reintegration issues. Joint teams in all 30 municipalities conducted protection and assistance assessments of spontaneous voluntary returnees. Eighty-one families from the Plementina IDP camp were provided housing, and the camp was closed.

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia

Montenegro

Serbia

the former Yugoslav Republic of
Macedonia



Working environment

At the end of 2007, this region hosted some 117,000 refugees and 377,000 IDPs. Internal political developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia were marked by parliamentary elections and the formation of new parliaments and governments. These events slowed the adoption of laws that would have a direct impact on durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and asylum-seekers. They also retarded progress in returns to the region within the framework of the Sarajevo Declaration, as the concerned countries could not find comprehensive solutions for tenancy rights holders and ensure the social rights of returnees in Croatia.

Negotiations on the legal status of Kosovo continued throughout the year; uncertainty about its final outcome prevented some 245,000 Kosovar IDPs from making decisions on return.

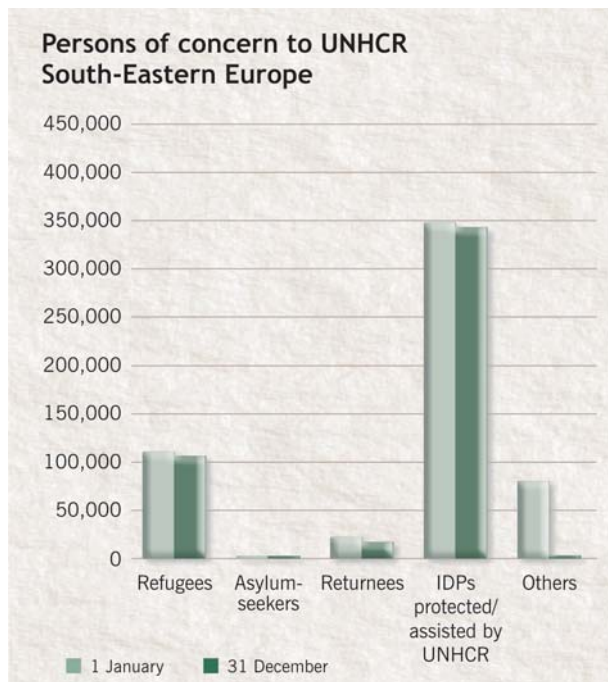
The protracted displacement of people of concern and limited livelihood opportunities, resulted in the deterioration of their living conditions.

Achievements and impact

The number of refugees and IDPs in the region continued to decrease, to approximately 494,000 at the

end of 2007, compared to some 504,000 in the previous year. In view of the small scale of repatriation, UNHCR reoriented its efforts towards other durable solutions, such as local integration and the naturalization of refugees unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin.

For refugees, local integration remained the preferred durable solution and was implemented in Serbia in accordance with the national strategy for local integration. By mobilizing financial contributions for



housing solutions, UNHCR revived the process of closing collective centres (CCs), which were primarily accommodating refugees with specific needs.

Resettlement to third countries was a solution for a small number of refugees. UNHCR has increased its resettlement efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where some 120 people, many of them Roma, departed for resettlement in 2007.

Due to the obstacles preventing return to Kosovo, there were few durable solutions for IDPs. UNHCR focused its attention on protection and assistance for IDPs – including advocacy to ensure their rights to citizenship, and the provision of free legal assistance and documentation to reduce statelessness. The Office directed its efforts primarily towards Roma and affiliated minority groups, which have been marginalized throughout the region.

In the second half of 2007, UNHCR submitted a regional proposal to address the problem of documentation for Roma. This large project will be implemented in 2008. Age, gender and diversity assessments were undertaken to identify the needs of women, children, the elderly and residents of CCs.

UNHCR's asylum-building activities were essential components of the country programmes. In Montenegro, the refugee status determination (RSD) process was transferred to the State as of January 2008. Serbia adopted an asylum law that will become effective in April 2008. Asylum centres were constructed in Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In general, asylum-seekers had access to these States' territories and protection. In 2007, there were no cases of *refoulement* registered by the Office.

Constraints

As in the previous year, regional and domestic political turmoil slowed the process of finding durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, especially those from Kosovo.



Roma refugees from Kosovo learning how to make felt out of wool, during a workshop organized by UNHCR and the Macedonian Artisan Trade Association in Skopje.

UNHCR/A. Gajić

Return to Croatia was impeded by the pending issues of tenancy and social rights. Despite improvements in Kosovo and in some areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, security remained an obstacle for return. Slow economic growth, high unemployment rates and limited livelihood opportunities hampered integration and reintegration and reduced the sustainability of returns. Some ethnic groups, such as Roma, were prevented from exercising their social and economic rights.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** as well as **Serbia** are described in separate chapters.

In **Albania**, the Office implemented capacity-building projects to improve protection and asylum systems. UNHCR advised the Government on durable solutions for refugees. In 2007, a task force comprising the Government, UNHCR and other relevant actors proposed amendments to asylum laws; asylum procedures have been improved and all asylum-seekers now have access to RSD and legal assistance. Ten asylum applications were filed in 2007.

The national reception centre for asylum-seekers in Babru accommodated some 30 asylum-seekers. Along with providing legal, medical and social assistance, the Office distributed basic relief items. UNHCR participated in the “Delivering as One” initiative, launched in May 2007, and cooperated with other UN agencies on gender and Roma minority issues, among others. The Office conducted a survey of the Roma community which indicated that some 1,700 unregistered children may be stateless.

In **Croatia**, the Office supported the adoption of a new asylum law in keeping with EU asylum laws and due to come into effect in January 2008. UNHCR and its partners provided legal and social services to some 60 people accommodated in an interim reception centre. The Office facilitated organized repatriation to Croatia by informing refugees about conditions in their places of return and providing transportation.

By the end of 2007, more than 130,500 Croatian Serb minority returnees were registered in Croatia. In the course of the year, UNHCR assisted the return of almost 700 refugees. Working with a partner, UNHCR deployed 19 mobile teams to help 13,000 returnees regain their citizenship and social rights. These teams supported the reintegration of people of concern with specific needs.

The development of **Montenegro's** legal framework progressed in 2007. The implementation of the country's Asylum Law began in January 2007 and the country's asylum adjudication bodies came into existence during the course of the year. UNHCR led the RSD process while working on capacity-building and training to facilitate the full handover of responsibilities as of January 2008.

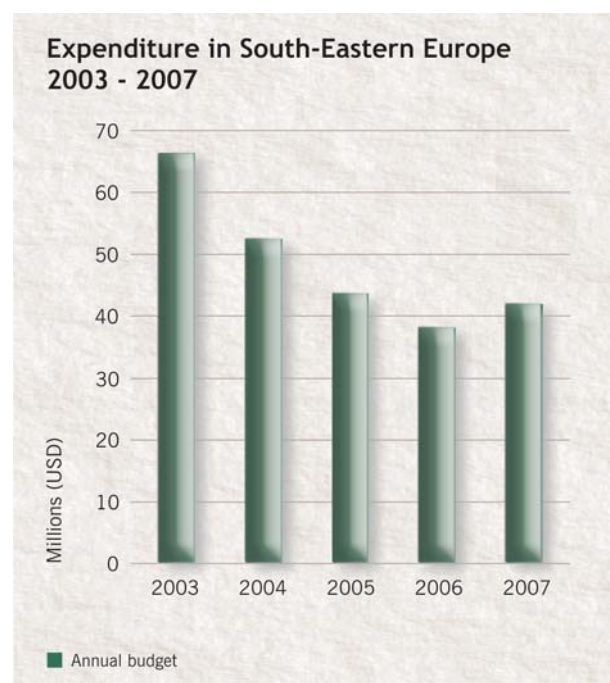
The Office also increased its work in the prevention of statelessness by intensifying legal-aid programmes aimed at obtaining documents for refugees and IDPs, particularly Roma. With UNHCR's assistance, some 2,600 refugees and IDPs benefited from free legal aid and some 50 refugees and 1,000 IDPs obtained documents. UNHCR provided matching funding for housing to over 100 refugee and IDP families, and income-generation support to more than 70 refugee and IDP families. An assistance programme for 2,500 refugees and IDPs provided medical care, psychosocial counselling and financial support. UNHCR's programmes allowed people of concern to enjoy their civil, social and economic rights and increase their opportunities for local integration. The Office also improved its preparedness by pre-positioning relief items for 4,000 people.

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** there were some 2,400 people of concern to UNHCR, mainly Romas. With the exception of 16 asylum-seekers and three vulnerable individuals, most of these people lived in private housing. The Government's national section for asylum registered these individuals, but with no reference to their specific needs. UNHCR has started a profiling exercise for the entire population of concern which will help to identify people with specific needs and serve as a basis for devising a local-integration strategy. Due to their lack of self-sufficiency and limited sustainable integration prospects, most of these individuals are dependent on assistance from UNHCR and its partners.

Individuals with specific needs were assisted with urgent medical care, domestic items, food, transportation and subsidies for accommodation. The Office also funded medical units and supported vocational training in welding for 33 young men and handicrafts courses for 15 girls and women. Moreover, UNHCR stockpiled relief items for 2,000 people.

Financial information

In 2007, the overall operational budget for the region decreased in comparison with 2006. The decrease was partly mitigated by bilateral fundraising at the country and regional level. However, the unfavourable exchange rate forced cuts in projects which targeted individuals with specific needs as well as programmes to sustain returns and local integration. Housing support, vocational training and income-generation schemes were also affected.



Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Annual budget	
	Final budget	Expenditure
Albania	887,428	875,129
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7,813,800	7,802,896
Croatia	3,709,963	3,499,104
Montenegro	2,543,640	2,519,759
Serbia	24,189,764	23,614,188
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,276,767	3,250,246
Total	42,421,362	41,561,322

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget
South-Eastern Europe	Sweden	4,221,252
	United States	6,800,000
	Sub-total	11,021,252
Bosnia and Herzegovina	European Commission	674,982
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Croatia	Belgium	316,757
	European Commission	323,041
	Sub-total	639,799
Montenegro	European Commission	196,029
	United States	305,832
	Sub-total	501,861
Serbia	Denmark	55,240
	European Commission	901,791
	Japan	500,000
	Russian Federation	820,246
	UNDP	27,900
	United Kingdom	136,060
	United States	2,665,371
	Sub-total	5,106,608
Total		17,944,502

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.