

REVIEW OF THE UNHCR HOUSING PROGRAMME IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Inspection and Evaluation Service
November 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
<u>OVERVIEW</u>	
<u>GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS</u>	
<u>OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</u>	
<u>BACKGROUND</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Operational Context ● UNHCR experience in the housing sector ● UNHCR Shelter in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the war years
<u>EVOLUTION OF UNHCR INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSING</u>	
<u>THE HOUSING PROGRAMME IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: ASSUMPTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Programme Assumptions ● Impact of the Housing Programme in 1996 ● Improvement of the programme in 1997 ● The 1996 and 1997 Housing Programme within the Return and Repatriation Plan
<u>RATES OF OCCUPANCY</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beneficiary- centred reasons for non-occupancy ● Management-centred reasons for non-occupancy ● Measures to ensure occupancy
<u>RELOCATION</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UNHCR housing policy towards relocatees in historical perspective ● Prevalence of relocation ● Transitory or Buffer accommodation
<u>Annex : UNHCR implementing agencies</u>	

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation examines the UNHCR Shelter Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the immediate post-war 1996-1997 period. It details programme assumptions, and assesses the impact of the programme against the background of an unusually complex political environment. The evaluation also attempts to place the UNHCR housing programme within the context of all other programmes in the sector.

In conducting the evaluation, numerous locations were visited in Bosnia and Herzegovina and extensive discussions were held with UNHCR staff and partners. In particular, housing rehabilitation was discussed with agencies specialising in the sector, the Government and donor officials. Discussions related to the issue were also conducted in Bonn and Geneva. Finally, all available documents were reviewed and analysed.

The evaluation was conducted by Walter Irvine, a UNHCR staff member temporarily assigned to the Inspection and Evaluation Service. Mr. Irvine has extensive UNHCR experience in South East Asia, Latin America and the Former Yugoslavia.

Overview

1. The UNHCR housing programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been implemented in an extraordinarily complex political environment resulting from the 1992-1995 war. One of the central objectives of the war was ethnic separation, and massive population displacement was the main means to achieve it. In the post-war period, Bosnian politics have continued to revolve around the issue of ethnic separation, opposing two models, ethnically-based partition and multi-ethnic unity, the latter strongly backed by international political and military presence.

2. Despite the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, the pattern of population distribution into mono-ethnic areas resulting from the fighting has been consolidated. However, the Repatriation and Return Plan has by international consensus focused on the return of individuals to their legally-owned homes in their area of origin. The Plan has therefore contributed to re-establishing the pre-war pattern of multi-ethnic population distribution, despite widespread localised determination to maintain partition.

3. It is in this difficult context that the UNHCR housing programme has sought to consolidate and even promote returns. The present evaluation examines the effectiveness of the programme, identifying its achievements and limitations as well as some of its unintended consequences.

Programme impact

4. Since the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement, UNHCR's housing programme has been at the centre of the agency's strategy for return. Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement gave UNHCR the lead role in co-ordinating efforts for return, which was accorded a key role in the re-establishment of a tolerant, multi-ethnic society functioning under democratic institutions. UNHCR's own strategy has privileged house rehabilitation throughout the reporting period, though it has been increasingly complemented by infrastructure reconstruction, social services, income-generating schemes and micro-credit.

5. House repair has undoubtedly been a support to return, to both refugees and the internally displaced. It has also often played an important role in their decision to go home, adding to the complex weighing of political, economic and psychological factors that precede return. Indeed, the evidence suggests that as social and economic conditions have improved in the wake of peace, the availability of a repaired home has played an increasingly important role. On the other hand, data on returns in the immediate post-war period indicate that large numbers of internally displaced persons who had been living in crowded conditions with relatives or friends, or in collective centres, decided to go back home regardless of conditions, even to war-devastated areas. Having made that decision, materials for house repair were, for them, welcome items of support.

6. Given the numerical superiority of internally displaced persons, compared to refugees, it does not come as a surprise that the vast majority of beneficiaries were displaced persons in 1996, while refugees represented only 30 per cent of beneficiaries in 1997.

7. In 1996, rapid establishment of the programme following the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement not only provided important support to returnees, but also had an important positive psychological impact in the immediate post-war environment. The widespread repair of houses was one way in which international resources gave tangible expression to the formal establishment of peace. The message of new beginnings expressed by the repeated image of houses being repaired was reinforced by another UNHCR shelter activity: the 1996 UNHCR Glazing Project. This ensured that in much of Sarajevo, war-torn UNHCR-logoed plastic sheeting could finally be removed and replaced by glass.

8. The housing programme has played a key role as an instrument of protection in certain "difficult" minority returns. An important distinction exists between two types of return: relatively easier returns to areas where returnees belong to the numerically dominant ethnic majority, and more difficult returns to areas where returnees are in the minority. In majority

return areas, going back home has mostly meant facing physical devastation and depressed economic prospects. In this case, housing rehabilitation helps correct the physical consequences of the war. By contrast, in areas of minority return, political obstruction has played a major role, as has serious harassment and physical assaults against returnees. The repaired house has in such cases operated as a doubly effective instrument of protection: physical, as shelter against attack or abuse; and symbolic, as tangible evidence to the local authorities and population of the international community's support.

9. House rehabilitation has also served as a lever in negotiations within the wider political-humanitarian framework of Dayton. Conditional use of the programme has helped maintain political acceptance of minority returns in areas where public protestations of openness have not corresponded to fact. The programme has further had a limited but positive impact on private sector development through contracting small companies for production and/or distribution of construction materials. In addition, the programme has contributed to raising domestic employment and household incomes. Within the implementing agencies, some 350 jobs were created per year, a majority of them for local staff. Also 15,000 temporary jobs were created by the programme in 1996, and 12,000 in 1997 in connection with the local production of shelter materials.

The limitations of the 1996 Programme

10. Between 1996 and 1997, some 24,680 houses were rehabilitated, with a total expenditure of some US\$ 102.8 million. However, the statistics do not show what standards were used, nor the quality of the repairs. In 1996, the programme concentrated on the procurement and distribution of construction materials, in line with standard emergency relief programmes which leave the use of the assistance to the beneficiaries. But the delivery of construction materials is only the beginning of a long process which eventually ends with a rehabilitated house. This requires close supervision, because the quality of the work depends on the skills and motivation of beneficiaries or contractors, the level of damage sustained by the house, the quality of the materials provided, and the willingness of beneficiaries to supplement materials with their own resources.

11. The model adopted, "the self-help model" was based on a number of assumptions which proved to be difficult to justify in practice. The first is that beneficiaries can repair their own homes: this can be the case, but will depend on whether repairs are minor or if beneficiaries happen to have specialised expertise. The second is that community solidarity can provide help when it is needed. This may sometimes be true, but can hardly serve as the justification for a project methodology.

12. The third assumption is that self-help is cost-effective. Several factors, however, can make self-help more costly than contracted labour: high costs of transport, distribution and warehousing of construction materials, plus the financial implications of supervising the repair of each house until completion.

13. The programme focused on individual, isolated house units without taking into account the importance of viable communities for successful reintegration. However, repair of single, isolated units can reduce the likelihood of owners moving back, since they may be unwilling to return to areas where surrounding houses have not been repaired or remain uninhabited, and the infrastructure is destroyed. In addition, costs of associated infrastructure repair for isolated dwellings are out of proportion and therefore economically unsound.

14. Resources allocated to each house unit were not always sufficient. Due to prevailing funding constraints, the programme budget initially allocated the following amounts to three categories of houses: US\$ 1,000 for houses with non-structural damage, US\$ 2,000 for houses with structural damage only, and US\$ 3,000 for houses with a combination of both. Given the size and fixtures of the standard Bosnian house, it was not always possible within these limits to make even part of the house inhabitable. However, during the course of the year, the decision was made to reduce the planned number of houses. Per unit allocations were thereby increased.

15. Excessive reliance seems to have been placed on the local authorities for key aspects of implementation, without sufficient control. These included beneficiary selection, confirmation of beneficiaries' property and occupancy rights, distribution of construction materials and identification of persons incapable of carrying out the repairs themselves. This major role was mainly a means of cutting costs. A similar model was used by UNHCR during the war for the distribution of food and non-food items, and had resulted in significant savings. Programme

implementation therefore depended more on the municipalities' goodwill than on uniform application of standards.

16. The programme channelled most of its budget through only two agencies, although a total of 17 agencies operated within the Shelter Programme, out of which seven focused on housing. In each of the two Entities, however, one agency implemented the bulk of the programme: in the Federation, some US\$ 30 million (or some 70 per cent of the total allocation) was channelled through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR); and in the Republika Srpska, US\$ 5 million (more than 60 per cent of the total allocation) was allocated to the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons. The controversial decision led to strong dissatisfaction among some donors, and resulted in the loss of at least some contributions.

17. The decision may otherwise have led to savings on overhead costs, reduced administrative procedures and reduced the extent of UNHCR monitoring, but at the cost of over-stretching and therefore seriously undermining the monitoring capacity of the agencies. This lack of control gave freer rein to the local authorities, not least in the Republika Srpska where the implementing agency was the Ministry. It also left the process of house rehabilitation largely to the initiative of the beneficiaries.

18. The limitations of monitoring arrangements, then, were partly related to the unrealistically large areas covered by the agencies and the OCM sub-office's staff, who were too few to monitor the projects properly. In that context, though a monitoring system was established, monitoring activities were not frequent enough. The conclusion is that, at least in some areas, the programme developed into a largely unmonitored system for construction material distribution. The agencies knew which local authorities had received the materials, they also knew that materials were reaching the beneficiaries, but they only had a limited sense of how far individual houses were being improved with the materials.

19. It is important to note that the two main implementing agencies had little recognised technical expertise in house rehabilitation programmes. Although UMCOR's past experience in collective centre maintenance may have been a factor in selection, this was not the case regarding the Ministry. With hindsight it would seem unfortunate that PTSS, or some other agency with technical expertise in housing, was not asked to screen the implementing agencies before they were selected, or to undertake technical assessment missions. This might have led to identification of other alternatives in the country or elsewhere.

20. In view of the inadequate technical expertise of the implementing agencies, it is unfortunate that such locally available monitoring capability, as that of the IMG (International Management Group) was not used for this purpose. This agency was created by UNHCR in 1993 with strong donor support, to serve as a framework for channelling technical and financial support to the infrastructure sectors. The IMG is also competent in the housing sector, as is attested by its subsequent chairing of the Housing Task Force, originally created by the World Bank. The emphasis initially given by the programme to the distribution of materials seems to explain why, unfortunately, IMG's participation was not sought. Systematic and regular technically-based monitoring of UNHCR's implementing agencies by IMG could have ensured a degree of uniformity in the quality of repairs and served to maintain the same standards country-wide.

21. Technical supervision could also have been provided from within UNHCR on a permanent basis. A technical co-ordinator post could have been created for the duration of the programme, rather than following the practice whereby a co-ordinator was provided in the initial stage only, and for a limited period.¹ The permanent co-ordinator post could have combined management skills, technical knowledge and familiarity with the local housing sector to monitor closely programme implementation. In addition to supervising the repair of houses, the co-ordinator could have followed-up on collective centre maintenance and management, thereby ensuring comprehensive, field-based, technically-grounded supervision of all shelter activities. This approach was successfully used during and after the war at the sub-office level in Croatia, through employment of a locally-recruited qualified architect.

Improvement of the programme in 1997

22. The housing programme which was developed for the more stable environment of 1997, led to some improvement in project implementation and in the quality of house-repair despite the continuing absence of technical expertise. The key changes included: (i) redefinition of agencies' areas of responsibility to make them more closely correspond to their

implementation capacity; (ii) emphasis on a community-oriented approach in projects, as opposed to the initial individual-unit approach; (iii) introduction of contractual labour to supplement or in some cases entirely replace beneficiary inputs; (iv) stricter application of criteria in beneficiary selection; (v) improved follow-up on the rehabilitation of each house-unit by UNHCR and its implementing agencies; (vi) efforts to integrate housing rehabilitation with social infrastructure rehabilitation carried out by the UNHCR shelter programme and other programmes.

Rates of occupancy

23. Despite these efforts, a large number of beneficiaries did not move into the rehabilitated houses. This is a problem which had plagued the UNHCR shelter programme and the programmes of most agencies since their inception in 1996. Figures on the occupancy rate for the 1996 programme are not available, but for the 1997 programme, 2,520 (33 per cent) out of a total of 7,565 repaired houses, remained empty at the end of June 1998.² A variety of factors explain this, including: widespread lack of employment opportunities; the trend of urbanisation and simultaneous depopulation of small rural communities; lack of infrastructure in the area or community of return; lack of security; dissatisfaction with the quality of repairs and with the requirement that beneficiaries carry out some or all of the rehabilitation themselves.

24. The high rate of non-occupancy has persisted despite systematic efforts by UNHCR and other agencies to reduce it by a number of means. These include: (i) tripartite agreements under which the agency and the municipality commit the house owner to occupy the repaired house within a given period of time following completion (usually three months); (ii) requesting municipalities to pressure house owners to leave temporary accommodation in their places of displacement; (iii) requesting municipalities to pressure house owners to complete the agreed-upon works; (iv) ensuring that at least one family member remains at the house-site for the duration of the repairs; (v) designing projects in which the beneficiary himself contributes to the repair in exchange for a nominal fee; (vi) providing small additional amounts of construction materials to ensure that the home becomes inhabitable; and (vii) recalling shelter materials if self-help construction does not start in a timely manner.

25. There is evidence that the continued application of these measures results in increasing the rate of occupancy. UNHCR should therefore ensure that they are applied country-wide. Special attention should be given to standards and quality of repair. Unfortunately, however, none of these measures, no matter how appropriate they may be, can counteract the effects of economic or other factors which may oblige people to relocate rather than return to their area of origin.

Relocation

26. Relocation refers to the settlement of returning refugees in places other than their areas of origin. The term can also be applied to displaced persons. There are at least three kinds of relocation: (i) "hostile relocation", where the powerless individual is told where to go; (ii) "passive relocation" where the person settles away from home because political obstruction prevents his or her return; (iii) "active relocation" where the individual who could go back home chooses to settle elsewhere.³

27. The UNHCR housing programme has in principle only benefited persons going back to their pre-war homes, while in 1998 the minorities returning to their places of origin have been the sole beneficiaries. Relocates, who according to the available data, constitute at least 40 per cent of the returnee population, have not had access to the housing programme. The reason is simple: in so far as relocation is a condition imposed on the individual, it results from ethnically-inspired actions which violate the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. To provide support to relocated people therefore implies giving in to the divisive politics which prevent them from going home, and serves to consolidate the mono-ethnic areas which have been established as a result of ethnic cleansing. Current UNHCR policy therefore denies housing rehabilitation assistance to relocates though they have access to UNHCR relief assistance, and other programmes such as income generation and credit schemes.

28. The combined effects of pressure from asylum countries for Bosnian refugees to leave, and localised political obstruction against their return to their original homes, have led to important concentrations of relocating refugees and displaced persons in some areas, particularly cities. In some cases, the problem is compounded by the inflow of persons looking

for new employment opportunities. The housing programme has attempted to alleviate such situations by providing "buffer" accommodation (134 family units countrywide). It is important to note that though accommodation labelled "buffer" is intended to be transitory, it tends to end up being permanent, thus operating as a support to permanent relocation.

29. As for the future, the combined effect of political obstruction to freedom of movement, together with the unresolved widespread phenomenon of double or multiple occupancy could continue to result in accommodation bottlenecks country-wide creating potentially explosive situations and blocking minority returns. If that happens, provision of additional buffer accommodation will have to be seriously considered, with the proviso that beneficiaries are bound to become permanent inhabitants of the rehabilitated structures.

Conclusion

30. While reiterating the key role of the Housing Programme in support of the Repatriation and Return Plan, two important limitations must be underscored: some 33 per cent of repaired houses remain unoccupied, while relocated persons, who represent at least 40 per cent of returnees, are ineligible for housing support. On the strength of three years' experience, and in the face of these two facts, it is worth considering various views expressed in 1996 about the role of housing in the context of the Bosnian repatriation and return.

31. At that time, PTSS emphasised the high cost of house rehabilitation in the European context, and noted that international funding was unlikely to cover more than a fraction of the needs. It advised that house rehabilitation be seen as a long-term process in which each family gradually rehabilitates the home with its own financial and physical efforts. It therefore recommended that UNHCR focus on preventing further deterioration of damaged buildings by extensive and carefully supervised use of protective materials. For PTSS, while housing was an important ingredient in reintegration, employment was the determining factor. It therefore stressed the need to focus on the process of reintegration rather than on return .

32. Three years later, the question can be asked whether channelling of most programme funds into housing rather than income-generating activities was the best use of international resources. A positive answer can be given: in the immediate post-war period, a new market economy was only just emerging from the shattered remains of the planned, federal-based economic system. In such a context, there were no economic activities which could have provided a basis for the self-sufficiency of large numbers of returning families. Massive programmes focused on the creation of individual businesses or agricultural projects would have been required, but it seems unlikely that sufficient resources would have been available, nor that the practical problems of implementing them could have been solved.

33. Inevitably, persons returning to a situation of general post-war devastation must face a period of economic hardship, which, in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, is aggravated by the climate. It would seem, therefore, that house rehabilitation programmes provide a necessary element in the initial stage of reintegration. This has been the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, though it must be admitted that a more technically grounded programme, and return-led rather than reconstruction-led implementation since the programme's inception, could have minimised shortcomings, including the relatively high number of unoccupied houses.

34. Beyond the immediate post-war period, on the other hand, it becomes possible to make different use of international resources. With the gradual establishment of the new economy around new poles of development, and as stability leads to confidence and private investment, international support for returnee groups can begin to focus on economic sustainability. The following approach could be explored: to develop integrated packages of economic support and technical training to address the needs of specific groups of refugees and displaced populations including those relocatees who have freely chosen to settle where jobs are available: the new areas of economic development.

35. The housing problem in such areas would be resolved through the market. Rented accommodation could be used until economic solvency enables purchase of property on credit, provided efficient market mechanisms are established by amending present regulations. A Property Fund to be managed by the Commission for Real Property Claims, as is called for in the Dayton Peace Agreement, would deal with the sale, lease and exchange of property, in cases where market mechanisms would not ensure fair treatment. Finally, supply of housing on a grant basis would be limited to a small number of needy cases who would be identified according to strict criteria.

36. At this turning point, and in the context of a probable reduction of the housing programme in 1998, UNHCR should define priority objectives for the immediate future. The following key areas of activity could be considered: (i) to continue rehabilitating houses when they both provide protection and facilitate reintegration in difficult cases of return; (ii) to ensure that the UNHCR Programme or other programmes make house rehabilitation available to vulnerable persons or family groups among displaced persons and returnees, including relocated people; (iii) to facilitate the linkage between displaced persons, returnees and agencies developing credit schemes in support of private house repair and small business creation; (iv) to ensure that a comprehensive review of unoccupied houses repaired in 1996 and 1997 is carried out by all sub-offices

37. As economic conditions allow increasing numbers of people to reach sustainable reintegration, UNHCR's knowledge of the displaced population should be made available to help development agencies define priority areas of action. Vulnerable groups among returnees and displaced persons should, however, continue to benefit from UNHCR programmes, including the housing programme, until sustainable alternatives, such as a State-supported social safety net can be found.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

38. During the last decade, UNHCR has increasingly become involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of individually or collectively owned houses. This has mainly occurred in refugee reintegration programmes, but also in programmes addressing the needs of internally displaced persons.

39. Up to now, the agency has tended to design and implement house rehabilitation programmes according to a model which is frequently associated with emergency relief. The model focuses on procurement and distribution of assistance among vulnerable individual beneficiaries. It emphasises rapidity of intervention and equates completion of assistance with delivery. Such a framework, however, cannot accommodate the distinctive features of house rehabilitation. This begins when construction materials are delivered, and is a long-term undertaking requiring close technical supervision. If carried out outside a technically-grounded, long-term, development-oriented framework, house rehabilitation can lead to substandard repairs, beneficiary dissatisfaction and low rates of occupancy. It can also bring about loss of credibility for the agency.

40. It must be recognised that a habitable house is only one among a number of inputs required to ensure beneficiary reinsertion into a given community. Economic sustainability and social integration are critical aspects which any house rehabilitation programme must take into account. Moreover, as an aspect of sustainable community and urban development, house repair must be incorporated into the strategies of the competent governmental bodies. These are not the ministries responsible for refugees, but rather those responsible for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

41. In order to maximise the efficient use of international resources destined to support the housing needs of refugees and displaced populations, UNHCR could effectively adopt different approaches. One approach would be to ensure that UNHCR staff specialising in shelter within PTSS are consulted every time a house-rehabilitation programme is launched. The design and implementation of house rehabilitation programmes would then be carried out within an appropriate framework, and according to UNHCR's technical capability. An alternative approach would be to call upon agencies with recognised expertise in the sector, and request their intervention, even if they are absent from the country of planned implementation. Within the UN system, the UNCHS (United Nations Centre for Human Settlement) is the obvious candidate.

42. By and large, there is an acceptance of UNHCR's leadership in refugee situations and in situations of massive displacement. As lead agency, however, it is not required that UNHCR be involved in the implementation of all programmes addressing the needs of displaced populations. It is enough for the agency to ensure that the necessary inputs are provided by the most capable agencies. UNHCR's role in identifying and co-ordinating competent agencies is particularly important in respect of activities which, like house repair, are close to the development end of the relief-to-development continuum.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Developing monitoring capability

Programme design should give critical importance to mechanisms which serve to check that relief items reach the targeted beneficiaries. However, as the UNHCR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has demonstrated, the larger the operation, the greater the monitoring difficulties. The evaluation noted that adequate staff-to-beneficiary ratios and effective management are necessary conditions for effective monitoring.

A major policy shift is required to accord monitoring the institutional importance it merits, and to ensure that budgets can fund the required number of competent staff. This would ensure that programmes are given the proper capacity to check on implementation. The multi-million UNHCR shelter project in BiH has provided key support to a repatriation being carried out in especially difficult conditions.

At the time of writing, the programme has been considerably down-sized. It is nevertheless recommended that for as long as the programme continues, proper weight should be given to monitoring as the only activity capable of confirming that programme objectives have been met.

Recommendation 2

Technical inputs in the design and implementation of house rehabilitation projects

Given that house rehabilitation is a technical activity requiring specialised expertise, technical inputs should be ensured in the design and implementation of projects. In particular :

1. PTSS assistance should be sought whenever such programmes are being established, and corresponding sub-agreements are being drafted.
2. Selection of implementing agencies should be carried out according to strict criteria. PTSS assistance should be sought to screen available agencies and propose qualified candidates.

Recommendation 3

Enforcement of key clauses in UNHCR sub-agreements

To ensure a degree of uniformity in the quality of house repair, and in order to maintain the same standards countrywide, UNHCR sub-agreements for house rehabilitation projects should (i) specify objectives in technical terms, (ii) make the implementing agency responsible for supervising the rehabilitation of every house unit until completion of the works, (iii) ensure that the agency has enough staff to carry out the required follow-up, (iv) require that all works conform to the standards of safety stipulated by the national housing authority, and that implementation should take place with the agreement of the same authority.

Management should ensure (1) that such clauses are always included in the sub-agreements and (2) that they are effectively implemented.

Recommendation 4

Ensuring that house rehabilitation is return-driven

The dynamics of return in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggest that provision of house rehabilitation is seldom a determining factor in the decision to go back home. It further shows that beneficiaries who have committed themselves officially to a housing programme, frequently change their minds, and do not occupy the repaired houses (33 per cent of cases in BiH at the time of writing). It follows that house rehabilitation programmes should be return-driven, and never reconstruction-driven: they should only be carried out once there is strong evidence of a willingness to return among beneficiaries.

UNHCR should ensure that sub-agreements spell out: (a) how implementing partners will determine that beneficiaries are in fact committed to return; and (b) how they will maximise the likelihood that beneficiaries will occupy the repaired houses.

RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Recommendation 5

Establishment of a technically-based project monitoring

The implementation of house rehabilitation projects should involve continual, systematic, and technically-based monitoring.

One approach would be for UNHCR Sarajevo to establish a country-wide agreement with IMG (the International Management Group). This agency could monitor the implementation of UNHCR's various sub-projects and provide technical guidance whenever required. Should IMG not have sufficient staff to respond to UNHCR's monitoring needs, UNHCR should provide the resources needed to recruit the required number of persons.

Though less likely to be implemented, given the current radical down-sizing of the programme, an alternative approach could be to create a shelter co-ordinator post at the sub-office level. Key requirements for the post would include demonstrated understanding of the governmental and private housing sector locally, and a good working knowledge of the technical issues involved in house rehabilitation.

Recommendation 6

Corrective measures for the housing rehabilitation programme

Differential, local-specific implementation of the housing rehabilitation programme have resulted in a wide variation in the quality of house repair. Sub-standard house repair partly explains why a very significant number of houses remain empty (33 per cent of houses repaired within the 1997 programme). Each unoccupied house should be closely inspected, and technical corrective action taken, including the allocation of additional materials.

Recommendation 7

Selective provision of housing for relocatees

UNHCR's programme in BiH has concentrated on return to people's own homes, while giving only marginal attention to relocatees. However, in the face of widespread political obstruction to minority returns, and given the practice of double or multiple occupancy, there may be an increasing number of situations where progress on the minority return front depends on providing housing for relocating families.

In certain cities, the influx of relocating refugees and displaced persons who cannot or will not go back home has resulted in filling available accommodation beyond capacity. In such cases, serious consideration should be given to supplying additional buffer accommodation and, whenever appropriate, permanent housing. Assisting relocatees to settle in town may be the only way of making them move out of the property they currently occupy, so that the property can be occupied by its legitimate owners.

Recommendation 8

Developing a relocatee database

Given the current lack of information about relocatees, UNHCR sub-offices and field-offices should systematically compile comprehensive information about them including the extent of economic and health-related vulnerability.

A UNHCR relocatee database would assist the development agencies in their efforts to find solutions for relocating refugees. The process of selecting them could help establish community-specific economic and training assistance packages, and would help identify those among the relocatees who might require special support.

Recommendation 9

Facilitating information about available credit schemes

Given that international funding is insufficient to cover all house rehabilitation needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while private resources remain untapped, UNHCR should ensure that information about available credit schemes in support of private house repair and business creation is given maximum circulation. Implementing agencies, information centres, local

authorities and other bodies could serve to disseminate the information and provide counselling.

BACKGROUND

Operational Context

43. Between 1992 and 1995, former Yugoslavia witnessed the worst armed conflict in Europe since World War II. As the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrated, and ideologies of ethnic and religious separatism developed, armed conflict raged in several of the former Yugoslav republics, while a fully-fledged war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war profoundly altered the demographic structure of the country. With 1.2 million refugees and 400,000 persons dead or missing, the population fell from 4.4 million to 2.8 million. Out of these, some 1.1 million were internally displaced.

44. Ethnic separation was a central objective of the war, and population displacement one central way of reaching that objective. As displacement progressed, the population was increasingly distributed within ethnically homogeneous areas, where an undetermined but large number among them entered and settled in the empty homes of another ethnic group, which had fled.

45. At the signature of the Dayton Peace Accords on 14 December 1995, the combined effects of population displacement, ethnically motivated political intransigence, large-scale physical destruction and radical changes in a shattered economy, did not bode well for the return home of the refugee and displaced population. Political arrangements confirmed ethnic separation. Though nominally under a single Government, the country was divided along ethnic lines into two "Entities", the Federation and the Republika Srpska, separated by a Zone of Separation. One of the Entities was further divided into two areas, each dominated by a different ethnic group, though in this case no border was established.

46. Post-war politics were dominated by the logic of ethnic separation and consolidated the new pattern of population distribution. Legal, administrative and security arrangements were used to prevent persons now in a minority from returning to their places of origin and occupying their own houses. On the other hand, local authorities gave support to incoming displaced persons from the same ethnic group, and authorised them to use empty houses. The process of return was further complicated by economic factors: the radical reduction of productive activity, the collapse of the system of economic interdependence among the constituent parts of former Yugoslavia, and the passage from a planned to a market economy.

47. Return met the further difficulty of widespread destruction of the environment, including the family houses on which the return and repatriation plan was focused. The war smashed and scarred the physical environment for damages estimated at US\$ 50 billion. Of these, some US\$ 4 billion represent the total damage to houses. An estimated 500,000 units were hit, with a concentration of affected buildings in the areas where the fighting was most intense, near the front lines, around the besieged cities and in certain parts of Central Bosnia. The statistics differentiate the extent of damage within the two Entities: 50 per cent damage and six per cent destruction in the Federation, and 24 per cent damage and five per cent destruction in the Republika Srpska. In addition to the effects of war, deterioration of all buildings resulted from lack of maintenance and exposure to extreme weather conditions.

48. By contrast, before the war broke out, the 4.4 million people of Bosnia and Herzegovina were on the whole well housed. With an estimated 1,295,000 units in the country, most households had their own unit. The housing stock was of relatively high quality, and about half of it was built after 1971. Ownership differed from most socialist countries, by privileging private property: the housing stock consisted of a majority of privately owned homes, with only a minority of publicly owned housing. Privately owned houses represented about 80 per cent of the sector and accounted for most of the living space in the rural areas, and for about half in the larger towns. Twenty per cent of the accommodation was in company- or government-owned multi-family blocks of rental flats. The public or "socially-owned housing" was a distinctive feature of the urban landscape, especially in the larger towns, where it could represent over half of the stock. Tenure of a flat was an employment-tied benefit, and ensured many of the advantages of full ownership, including the right to pass on its use through inheritance.

49. In post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, consensus has developed among the main actors of the international community that the country's sustainability depends upon re-establishing the pre-war multi-ethnic society. By 1997, reversing partition and re-establishing the pre-war pattern of population distribution had become priority objectives of political action within the Dayton framework. Annex VII of the Dayton GFAP gives UNHCR the responsibility to develop a Return and Repatriation Plan which gives equivalent importance to the two standard available options in UNHCR repatriations: "...early, peaceful, orderly and phased return to their homes" or "resettlement to a place of their choice in Bosnia and Herzegovina". But in the context of a country recently reorganised by war into ethnically homogeneous areas, and given the international community's mounting determination to reverse the demographic effects of the war, UNHCR has focused on return to the place of origin and to the legally owned home.

50. Home rehabilitation has therefore been at the centre of the UNHCR Repatriation and Return Plan in the post-war period. This is reflected in the shelter programme budget. During the war, between 1993 and 1995, the programme focused on maintenance of collective centres, provision of heating fuel and distribution of shelter kits. By contrast, following the Dayton Agreement, the bulk of shelter programme resources has gone to housing: US\$ 137 million, representing 81.5 per cent of total post-war UNHCR shelter expenditure. Relatively smaller amounts have gone into social infrastructure and demining.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1996-1998
Collective Centres and Minimal housing	20,828	10,503	3,369	4,077	2,400	968	7,445
Heating fuel	3,186	595	1,889	977	550	-	1,527
Shelter kits	n/a	283	2,739	3,317	-	-	3,317
Health and education buildings	194	2,077	634	7,205	1,900	5,000	14,105
Demining	-	-	-	-	2,113	-	2,113
Housing	-	-	-	53,752	49,100	34,230	137,082
TOTAL	24,208	13,458	8,631	69,328	56,063	40,198	165,589

Table 1 : Changing emphasis in UNHCR's Shelter Programme according to activity allocation in US\$million (1993-1998).

51. The importance of house rehabilitation in the UNHCR programme is further reflected in its relative financial weight within the UN Consolidated Appeal framework. UNHCR Shelter Programme requirements of US\$ 181 million for 1996-1998 represent 44 per cent of total UNHCR country programme requirements (US\$ 409 million) and 18 per cent of total UN requirements (US\$ 989 million) for the same period.⁴

52. The UNHCR Housing Programme also represents additional funds for the sector in respect of the Priority Reconstruction Programme presented in December 1995 by the World Bank and the European Union. Against an estimated US\$ 5 billion of war damage in the housing sector, funding commitments totalled US\$ 693 for the 1996 -1998 period.⁵ UNHCR allocations of US\$ 137,08 million for housing rehabilitation for that period represent a significant 19.7 per cent addition to the funds channelled through the Priority Reconstruction Programme for the sector.

UNHCR experience in the housing sector

53. Provision of temporary shelter is a standard input in UNHCR operations and is a necessary component of emergencies. The temporary accommodation provided by UNHCR is generally collective: it can respond to the need for short-term housing, as with transit centres, or it can provide more prolonged shelter, either in unused but structurally sound buildings adapted for collective use, or newly built structures handed over or dismantled when an operation ends. Parts of hotels may also be reserved in case of need by small groups or individuals. Whether scattered and easy to reach, or concentrated and guarded, as with refugee camps, such buildings are an essential part of care and maintenance. But they are also an instrument of protection when they give a sense of safety or shield beneficiaries from politically induced danger.

54. During the last decade, UNHCR has increasingly become involved with the repair, reconstruction and rehabilitation of individually or collectively owned housing, mainly in refugee reintegration programmes, but also for the settlement of uprooted internally displaced persons. Housing is in these cases part of a durable solution, beyond the emergency.

Typically it is seen as one key condition for the individual's or the family's gradual re-entry into stable community life. In the context of local settlement, resettlement or repatriation, this happens when beneficiaries as a group are no longer the objects of relief assistance, but become candidates for support to their social, economic and political reintegration within the framework of sustainable development.

55. Rwanda is one current example, with expenditures of some US\$ 20 million in the 1996-1997 period, for a programme which provides material for the construction of new houses for some 74,000 households in 173 settlement sites. In Tajikistan, some 225,000 cubic meters of timber, and 2,250,000 square metres of corrugated asbestos sheeting were procured to enable the roofing of some 15,000 houses. Other examples are provided in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, where small house-units for between 2000 and 3000 families have been provided for just under US\$2000 per unit. The houses purchased for resettled Laotian refugees in Argentina in the 1980s, are probably the most expensive and exceptional example of such programmes: an average US\$ 7000 per unit for some 400 families.

56. Cost is one main reason why UNHCR may hesitate to get involved in the housing sector. All housing programmes suffer from limited resources, particularly in the case of cold climate zones in Europe, where buildings are constructed according to relatively high standards. Worldwide, costs per square meter in new constructions range between US\$ 100 and 200 in developing countries, and between US\$ 2,000 and 3,000 in Western Europe.

57. Given the constraints on cost, UNHCR's approach is typically to provide building materials for partial rehabilitation of a housing unit. The objective is to ensure the habitability of part of the unit, the so-called "core house", of a standard 25 square metres. This represents the first stage of a long process which can take several years, and which eventually ends with the total reconstruction of the home. This is achieved with the individual's savings, which can sometimes be supplemented with international reconstruction funds.

58. The need for technical knowledge in programme design and implementation is another important factor in launching a shelter programme. A combination of management skills and some technical knowledge in construction material quality evaluation and works inspection is needed to establish effective control in the following activities: provision or production of material, warehousing and distribution, use of materials according to basic standards and selection of beneficiaries.

59. A number of agencies can be found who possess these requirements, though they may not be operating where a shelter programme is being envisaged. The use of NGOs who have shown their competence in assistance distribution, however, cannot be expected to fulfil most, if any, of the required expertise, particularly in regions with severe winters and consequently more complex building traditions.

60. Though skilled agencies may not always be immediately available on the spot, professionally competent and reliable implementing partners willing to serve for a particular programme can be identified by the specialised UNHCR staff working within PTSS. In addition, the service can provide guidance in the critical aspect of shelter programme and project design.

61. It must be recognised, however, that PTSS has tended to be under-utilised, even in the case of multi-million dollar programmes. It is further not clear why the UNCHS (United Nations Center for Human Settlement), the UN specialised agency in the field, has not been called upon to help develop technically sound criteria and terms of reference for key shelter programme supervising staff. The secondment formula could be resorted to in order to ensure UNCHS inputs as required.

UNHCR Shelter in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the war years

62. UNHCR inputs into shelter during the war responded to the massive population displacements and to the damage inflicted on the housing stock. One important priority was to enable people to continue living in their houses as much as possible. Given below-freezing temperatures in winter and abundant snow, one way of achieving this was by insulating houses to maintain heat.

63. An important PTSS input was to help develop a plastic-sheeting distribution programme to achieve this, different coloured plastic sheeting being used for different parts of the house: red

for roofs, blue and white for walls, and translucent sheeting for windows. The project covered as much of the country as military activity permitted, the UNHCR-logoed plastic sheeting becoming a distinguishing feature of the Bosnian war landscape, both in towns and in villages. Insulated in this manner, the damaged houses were able to maintain the heat generated by other project items: stoves, trucked in from Croatia, despite the obstacles raised by military action and the checkpoints, or the 100,000 specially warm, heat-maintaining sleeping bags, which the airlift transported to besieged Sarajevo.

64. Collective Centre maintenance was another key activity. For the hundreds of thousands of persons who left their homes and moved elsewhere, local authorities used all available public buildings to provide shelter. Schools, unused government facilities, sports halls and community centres all became collective centres. These centres solved the housing needs of the most destitute among the displaced population. On the whole, standards of repair appear to have been rudimentary and conditions basic since there was some reluctance to create optimal conditions which could make people stay longer than needed or attract other displaced persons. The limited repairs carried out by the UNHCR implementing partners, and their occasional influence on collective centre management, contributed at least to maintain basic standards.

65. Ensuring that medical services continued to function was another priority, one important input being the supply of heating fuel, which UNHCR provided to ensure the running of major hospitals. In the Zenica and Tuzla areas, where encroaching hostilities were kept at bay, funds were used to maintain and partly reconstruct hospital structures, orphanages and homes for the elderly.

66. UNHCR carried out projects through agencies such as Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Scottish European Aid (SEA), concentrating on the Tuzla and Zenica areas, where they responded to the influx of persons being displaced from Eastern Bosnia. Implementation started in 1993 and was completed in 1994. At that time, UNHCR interrupted its support to housing, but the same agencies were able to continue their programmes in 1995 with alternative funding. UNHCR-funded activities in house repair were therefore limited, and were carried out alongside other programmes by agencies such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) which repaired houses or provided pre-fabricated housing. Some projects were implemented in response to a specific UNHCR appeal, such as the high-standard housing provided through the Norwegian People's Aid and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in the Zenica and Tuzla areas with Norwegian, Danish and Swedish Government funding. The projects provided collective accommodation and individual housing units which were set up in clusters and constituted new communities.

67. The resulting accommodation was optimal, but too costly for the approach to be adopted as a model. Also, the creation of new communities away from their area of origin did not coincide with the consensus that international aid should go to the repair of damaged houses or collective centre maintenance. Nevertheless, the projects represented a useful new alternative to the problem of homelessness among the displaced.

EVOLUTION OF UNHCR INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSING

68. Towards the end of 1994, as improved security conditions in some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina created opportunities for displaced populations to return home, so did the need for house rehabilitation marginally increase. But UNHCR continued to focus on the relief aspects of shelter and avoided any increase in its limited involvement in housing. A variety of reasons led to that policy: difficulties in co-ordination among shelter agencies which lacked a clear definition of their geographical areas of intervention; implementation of projects as ad hoc responses to municipalities' or beneficiaries' requests; difficulties in getting locally produced materials in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality; difficulties in moving materials to the place of implementation in the war context; difficulties in getting labour support in a context of generalised draft; and the need to rely largely on international implementing partners with very high overhead costs.

69. But UNHCR's position regarding its involvement in housing changed as internationally promoted negotiations for peace in BiH progressed during the course of 1995 and focused national and international attention on post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction.

70. Discussions within UNHCR and among the various humanitarian and reconstruction players including the World Bank, emphasised the extensive damage on the housing stock and singled out house rehabilitation as a key element to the country's recovery. In the absence of any national capacity to address the problem, a consensus developed that all international agencies in the housing sector should act collectively to rapidly increase the stock of habitable houses countrywide. This was seen not only as a necessary input in the first stage of rehabilitation, but as a means of preparing the ground for a rapid repatriation and return movement, which all international actors regarded as central to the country's stabilisation and recovery.

71. The World Bank's evaluation of the costs of damage in the housing sector gave room for concern: an astronomical US\$ 5 billion. However, the World Bank's and the European Union's Priority Reconstruction Programme of December 1995 showed that donors accorded central importance to the sector: some US\$ 693 million were immediately committed for the 1996-1999 period. For 1996 alone, the Reconstruction Programme reserved US\$ 273 million: US\$170 million for emergency projects, US\$ 70 million for reconstruction, US\$ 3 million for Sarajevo and the remainder for contingency purposes.

72. While donors responded rapidly, they also conveyed the message in word and in the amounts given that international funding could only cover part of the extensive needs. The figures speak for themselves: US\$ 5.1 billion were granted as external fund contributions, while assessments of total damage pointed to some US\$ 50 billion. The argument applied equally to the housing sector, where a US\$ 693 million grant was a fraction of the total estimated US\$ 5 billion. The conclusion was that recovery would not depend essentially upon grants, but largely on the country's own efforts, with the support of international credit. Amounts provided therefore only addressed the funding needs to initiate rehabilitation.

73. Within the relief humanitarian framework, donors also developed the opinion that housing rehabilitation had a key role to play. Funds were mobilised among them, in part as a result of the pressure of agencies which had been involved in house rehabilitation during the war: the Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian People's Aid and SIDA among others.

74. The agencies considered different possible approaches to follow. Within UNHCR, discussions considered various repatriation packages and the possible role of housing in accelerating and facilitating return. PTSS emphasised funding constraints and recommended that UNHCR's housing programme limit itself to the prevention of further deterioration in the housing stock by extensive and carefully supervised use of protective materials. It further noted that though housing was an important factor in reintegration, it came second to the key element of employment. It advocated an approach in which housing was an important factor in reintegration, but one that was complementary to sustainable economic solvency.

75. Widespread interest in an early return, however, and the well-known problems of facilitating economic re-integration in post-war contexts, increasingly led other UNHCR players in Geneva and Sarajevo to focus attention away from the process of reintegration. Consensus about concentrating on return and on the house as an item capable of drawing returnees back home was a point of convergence for various interests: the interest of leading actors in the international community to find an early solution to the instability of the region and the immigration policy of asylum countries to reduce their Bosnian refugee caseload. UNHCR's responsibility in planning and implementing an early repatriation and return plan according to Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement coincided with these interests.

76. In the context of the sometimes heated discussions about approaches to follow, UNHCR Bosnia became increasingly concerned that the necessary housing inputs would not be in place for the expected immediate repatriation. Being uncertain whether the reconstruction agencies would respond despite the availability of resources, UNHCR decided to become active in the sector. By February 1996, sub-agreements had been signed for immediate implementation in Sarajevo, albeit without any further significant technical inputs from PTSS.

77. The immediate precedent of UNHCR's wide range of responsibilities as Lead Agency for Humanitarian Assistance during the war probably facilitated, if not encouraged the move. An institutional framework had been created in the war years for the implementation of large-scale programmes, which were now being scaled down. For instance, food distribution, which had been carried out single-handedly by UNHCR inside Bosnia during the war, was being handed over to WFP. But UNHCR's capacity to deliver remained, in the countrywide network of its field offices and vehicles, in the mind-set of some of its staff, and in the support of its donors. Having been the main distributor of food and non-food items in the context of

war, UNHCR had the institutional self-assurance to face the challenge of a massive shelter programme in time of peace.

78. In 1997, UNHCR maintained its presence in the sector within a very different context. By this time, supply of housing was not only an established item of returnee re-integration, but also an instrument of protection for returns to politically closed areas, and leverage to maintain relative political openness in areas of return. Since housing rehabilitation had become a key element of the repatriation and return policy, there was little room for the kind of hesitations which had preceded the launching of the housing programme in 1996. The maintenance of the programme, therefore, was not questioned.

79. Continued UNHCR involvement in 1997 is sometimes explained in terms of a lack of agencies operating in the sector, echoing explanations used in 1996. However, in the first semester of 1996, when only small-scale localised shelter projects were being set up by the agencies which had operated during the war, it made sense to rapidly set up a country-wide programme while other major agencies set up their comprehensive programmes in the sector. In 1997, on the other hand, the reconstruction players had initiated comprehensive programmes and could probably have covered the most urgent requirements in the sector themselves. However, the UNHCR programme was by then solidly in place and amply supported by the donors. The donors from countries with large numbers of Bosnian refugees were especially keen to provide UNHCR with the means to facilitate the reintegration of refugees, thereby accelerating their movement home. In the face of this fact, it is probable that the agencies in the sector both solicited and attracted less funds, leaving a major part of sector activities for the year to UNHCR.⁶

	1996	1997	1996-1997
UNHCR House Units	17,113	7,567	24,680
House Units of other agencies	15,056	15,852	30,908
Total House Units	32,169	23,419	55,588
UNHCR units as percentage of total	53%	32%	44%
Beneficiary total	128,676	93,676	222,352

Table 2 : Estimated total number of housing units repaired in BiH by all agencies and estimated total of beneficiaries.

80. As a result, the UNHCR housing programme rehabilitated 7,567 house units, representing 32.3 per cent of a total 15,852 house-units rehabilitated by all agencies in the sector. However, as could be expected, UNHCR's share had diminished, compared to 1996, with 17,113 house units, representing 53 per cent of a total 32,169 internationally rehabilitated house units. The statistical evidence, though impressive, does not indicate the standards used nor the quality of the effected repairs. That is the subject of the following section.

THE HOUSING PROGRAMME IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: ASSUMPTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

81. The programme established a system of country-wide distribution of construction materials; its objective was to repair slightly damaged houses legally owned by vulnerable refugees and displaced persons. The programme design seems to have been heavily influenced by programmes of assistance, procurement and distribution followed in most UNHCR operations. However, assumptions underlying such programmes may not be applicable to house repair projects.

Programme Assumptions

82. The project focused on the distribution of construction materials, but gave little attention to the process of repairing damaged houses and to the difficulties associated with it. The programme reminds us of standard emergency relief programmes which focus on efficient procurement and distribution, and leave use of the assistance to the beneficiaries. In food programmes, the programme's objective is met when the food, most of which is procured by WFP, reaches the warehouse or the home. It is then up to the beneficiary to eat the food unassisted.

83. By contrast, in the case of construction materials, delivery marks the beginning of a

process which requires close supervision. This is because house repair is not carried out in the same way by all beneficiaries or contractors. It varies with skills and motivation, with the level of damage sustained by the house, with the quality of the provided materials and with the willingness of beneficiaries to supplement the materials with their own resources.

84. The programme rested on the questionable assumption that beneficiaries can repair their own homes. This may only be true when the damage is minimal or when beneficiaries happen to have specialised expertise. A further difficult assumption was that community solidarity can provide help when needed, following local municipal intervention. This may be true sometimes, but might not be so true as to be the justification for a project methodology. Certainly in some cases where specific beneficiaries are identified and agreements are made, then it can be applied, but the assumption cannot be adopted country-wide.

85. The programme focused on the individual, isolated house unit considered outside the cluster of houses which form the basis of a community. Repair of single, isolated units can reduce the likelihood of owners moving back, however, since they might be unwilling to return to areas where all surrounding houses are not repaired or uninhabited and in which the infrastructure is destroyed. The associated infrastructure repair costs are also pushed so high as to be economically unsound. If, on the other hand, a cluster of houses were to be repaired, the cost per beneficiary would be dramatically reduced and funding of the project becomes possible. Rehabilitation of dispersed houses could turn out to be a waste of resources if, in the worst scenario, the failure to repair a sufficient number of units results in a part or total abandonment of a village. Concern with this issue is reflected in NGO discussions concerning the minimum number of houses which must be rehabilitated in an empty village to ensure the re-establishment of a sustainable community. Ten to 15 per cent of the expected number of inhabited houses was one proportion proposed, based on agencies' recent experience in BiH, but not on any systematic study.

86. The project adopted the self-help model on the assumption that it was the most cost-effective. But self-help is not necessarily cheaper than the contractual labour model. Several factors explain this:

- The high costs of distribution and ware-housing of construction materials;
- the use of contractual labour for the repair of houses belonging to;
- beneficiaries who cannot carry out the repair themselves is more expensive per house-unit than when used for a cluster of houses;
- the financial implications of intensive monitoring. Costs are high when adoption of the self-help model involves the NGO in the delivery of materials to each beneficiary, and in intensive follow-up to check on the quality and timeliness of each individual beneficiary's implementation. The model is most staff intensive, and therefore most expensive, when the delivery of materials is staggered, so that the beneficiary receives no more assistance until the first agreed phase of works is completed, this preventing the beneficiary from simply selling the materials to someone else.

87. In the UNHCR programme, the NGO purchased the materials and then delivered to the storage facilities controlled by the local authorities. These authorities then delivered the material to beneficiaries. In this least costly version of self-help, costs were lower because of municipal participation, but the control guaranteed by the direct involvement of the NGO in the delivery process was removed.

88. The programme assumed that implementing a programme with few agencies is cost effective, reduces administrative procedures and minimises UNHCR monitoring. A total of 17 agencies operated within the Shelter Programme. Out of these seven operated in housing: five in the Federation and two in the Republika Srpska. In each of these areas, one agency implemented a large proportion of the housing programme: the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in the Federation, with US\$ 28.8 million representing 73 per cent of total allocations; the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Republika Srpska, with US\$ 5 million, representing 52 per cent of total allocations for the Entity.

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Allocations in US\$</i>	<i>Agency allocation as % of total</i>	<i>House units planned</i>	<i>House units finished</i>	<i>Admin costs</i>
CDI	4.40	11.2%	1,300	1,176	-
DRC	2.60	6.5%	440	468	16.5%
NRC	0.92	2.3%	200	281	12.6%
THW	2.71	7%	900	907	11.75%
UMCOR	28.80	73%	15,000	10,204	10.6%
TOTALS	39.43	100%	17,840	13,036	-

Table 3 : UNHCR implementing partners in the housing sector (Federation) 1996.

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Allocations in US\$</i>	<i>Agency allocation as % of total</i>	<i>House units planned</i>	<i>House units finished</i>	<i>Admin costs</i>
MFR	5.00	62.4%	3,000	2,144	1%
SRSA	3.007	37.6%	1,500	1,095	4.4%
TOTALS	8.007	100%	4,500	3,239	-

Table 4 : UNHCR implementing partners in the housing sector (Republika Srpska

89. There were various reasons for agency reduction: cutting on overhead costs, reducing bureaucratic procedures, avoiding the difficulties of agency control which the UNHCR had encountered during the war, when its office for BiH operated from Zagreb, in Croatia. Another reason was the weakened capacity of the UNHCR BiH Programme Unit, which resulted from moving the UNHCR office for BiH from Zagreb to Sarajevo. As the full challenge of the post-war period faced all agencies, so a new UNHCR office was being established and new local staff recruited and trained. In this context, therefore, the fewer the implementing agencies the better.

90. Reduction in the number of NGOs may have permitted savings in overhead costs, but it secured these at the expense of overstressing the monitoring capacity of each, reinforcing the freedom of action of the local authorities and leaving the process of house rehabilitation to the initiative of the beneficiaries.

91. The project description correctly emphasised the key role of monitoring on all aspects of the programme: beneficiary selection, selection of damaged houses, construction material distribution and house repair. It even required the agency to monitor the delivery of items of assistance unrelated to housing, over and above follow-up of housing rehabilitation.

92. However, the size of the areas of responsibility given to the agencies was unrealistically large in the case of the two agencies through which most programme resources were channelled. In this context, though a monitoring system was established,⁷ monitoring activities were not frequent enough, so that at least in some areas, the programme can be said to have developed into a largely unmonitored system for construction material distribution. Agencies knew which local authorities had received the materials, and knew that materials were reaching the beneficiaries, but they only had a limited sense of how far individual houses were being improved with the materials.

93. The programme assumed that capacity building of local authorities should play a central role in programmes, both to reduce costs, and to ensure a smooth eventual hand-over. The relative advantage of relying on the local authorities and developing their capacities must always be considered against the political context in which a project is implemented. Balance is needed between that relative advantage and the paramount objective of maintaining control of international resources.

94. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, local authorities were given a key role in various aspects of implementation: in beneficiary selection, in confirmation of beneficiaries' property and occupancy rights, in the distribution of construction materials, in the identification of

support to persons incapable of carrying out the repairs themselves. The project envisaged that warehouses and storage yards to which materials were delivered could eventually come under local authority management. This expanded role was mainly a means of cutting costs. A similar model had been used by UNHCR during the war for the distribution of food and non-food items, and had resulted in significant savings.

95. However, the issue arises to what extent the provided assistance could be manipulated for political purposes. During the course of 1996, the elections were accompanied by various attempts to use international assistance in order to secure a political following. Another practice, which occurred outside the elections, was use of assistance as a means of rewarding those who had played a supportive role during the war. Attempts to include friends or political supporters were probably widespread, though it is not clear to what extent they were successful. UNHCR field staff quote figures of 12 to 14 per cent of politically favoured beneficiaries in a few municipalities as very rare examples of resource manipulation. Discovery of malpractice was always followed by official protests. UNHCR letters of protest were written, but the framework for malpractice had been set by a programme design and a style of implementation which gave excessive freedom of action to the authorities without sufficient independent control.

96. At this time, consolidation of ethnically homogeneous areas was widespread. This raised obstacles to the repatriation and return for which UNHCR was in part responsible. But the required counterbalance of close control was absent given the limited monitoring capacity of the implementing agencies, despite emphasis on its importance in the project description.

97. In one of the two entities, the principle of strengthening the authorities' capacity was expanded to encompass higher levels of authority. The model adopted was therefore full implementation of a multi-million programme by the newly established refugee authority. Though the construction materials reached selected beneficiaries as elsewhere, channelling of the resources to non-beneficiaries is reported to have reached very high levels in some municipalities. To this we may add unclear accounting practices related to the shelter programme funds, which were amply addressed by a United Nations Audit. The response among junior UNHCR staff was to inform UNHCR senior managers, who in turn addressed protests to the authorities. Some verbal assurance were given by them, but again, the framework for malpractice was in the project design.

98. The programme assumed that relief-style house rehabilitation can be incorporated into reconstruction projects. The project assumes continuity between relief and reconstruction activities, and accepts the idea that relief-style house repair in the emergency phase can be handed over to the reconstruction agencies which can incorporate them into their sustainable programmes.

99. The sub-agreements showed this in three ways:

- Unused construction materials were to be left in municipal warehouses or storage yards for subsequent use by the reconstruction agencies;
- small scale enterprises established or expanded in response to the programme could be incorporated into the local development plans in the development phase;
- repairs of houses undertaken within the UNHCR programme could be later expanded with private or reconstruction agency funds.

100. The linear model according to which emergency initiatives are handed over to development agencies which can incorporate them into the development process is rarely reflected in fact. Emergency programmes can fit into a mid-term development process only if the conditions of sustainability in the mid-term are incorporated into their design. Likewise, in the housing sector, whether a repaired house can be incorporated into a reconstruction program will depend on the quality of the initial repairs. A project based on widely varying self-help repairs cannot be the basis for such emergency-reconstruction complementarity.

101. The similarity between all housing programmes implemented in BiH precluded the relevance of the hand-over model. In the transition from relief to development, the distinction between reconstruction and relief agency activity was blurred. In 1996, the development agencies reserved some 70 per cent of their housing budget for emergency projects. Like those undertaken by the agencies funded by UNHCR, these projects began by concentrating on the rehabilitation of lightly damaged houses, i.e. less than 30 per cent damaged. As this category of buildings was repaired, so did projects of all agencies increasingly focus on

houses with more than 30 per cent of damage, these being categorised as requiring reconstruction. This means that there was therefore an important degree of overlap in the agencies' activities in 1996, and also in 1997. There was therefore no hand-over from emergency to reconstruction, but a good deal of simultaneous implementation of similar projects.

102. Given the similarity of the inputs of relief and reconstruction agencies into housing projects, their impact on the local economies have been similar. For instance, a recent report of the World Bank on its 1996 housing pilot project, describes its contribution to the local economy in terms similar to those contained in the UNHCR descriptions of achievement:

"Both large and small contractors have been able to supply labour and materials for projects. Although it is not clear how much the program has stimulated the re-establishment of local manufacturing capacity, there are signs of resumed production of roof tiles and cement".⁸

Impact Of The Housing Programme In 1996

A programme implemented in an extremely difficult political environment

103. In 1996, prevailing conditions did not facilitate implementation of the relief and rehabilitation programmes. On the political front, internationally supervised elections showed that the electoral process could not reverse the effects of ethnic cleansing. On the economic front, industrial production remained at between ten and 15 per cent of pre-war levels. Also, the combined effect of political obstruction, lack of job opportunities, and insufficient provision of utilities and housing, continued to hinder the return home of refugees and internally displaced persons, for which Annex 7 of the Agreement made UNHCR responsible.

104. In this context, the security of returnees was a major concern. One reason was the demobilisation of tens of thousands of soldiers with no house or job to return to. Another was the establishment of areas inhabited by single ethnic groups throughout the country, with the widespread concurrence of local authorities who supported the politics of ethnic division.

105. Thus, many constraints operated against smooth implementation of all housing projects, including those outside the UNHCR frame-work. A World Bank evaluation of the impact of international efforts in the sector notes the difficulties: delays caused by lack of freedom of movement (with occasional physical obstruction including stoning), lack of available or able contractors, slow provision of agreed upon labour by the local authorities, occasional default of contractors or suppliers, low reliability of municipal authorities in beneficiary identification and construction material distribution, attempts to use projects for political purposes prior to the September 1996 elections.

106. UNHCR's Programme activities were designed to help create the conditions for an "early, peaceful, orderly and phased return of displaced persons and refugees", as spelt out in Annex 7 of the GFAP. The housing project was introduced as the main component of the strategy, with the assumption that improvement of the material conditions of a maximum number of people after the establishment of peace would favour a commitment to peace, and create an environment which made return possible.

107. In order to maximise the impact of material assistance, UNHCR chose a self-help project. Its achievements were as follows:

The project met the objective of rapidly procuring and distributing shelter materials country-wide to give support to the early return of displaced persons and refugees in the semester following the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

108. Materials were produced and distributed for the repair of 17,113 house-units for some 68,452 beneficiaries in 91 municipalities. This represented 53 per cent of a total number of 32,169 house-units rehabilitated collectively by the international agencies operating in BiH. At an estimated four residents per unit this represented some 128,676 persons.

109. In the first semester of 1996, localised shelter projects were immediately started by some agencies which had been active in housing in the war years: the Danish Refugee Council, MAP, SIRS, the different national Caritas and USAID. However, because the projects were small scale and since it seemed clear to UNHCR that implementation of comprehensive housing programmes by other major agencies would not start for some time, while large-scale

returns were imminent, UNHCR launched a major house rehabilitation programme. This was referred to as "kick-starting the process of reconstruction"; however, a more accurate description is that the UNHCR project filled a gap in reconstruction while other major institutional players prepared for implementation.

The project had an important morale-boosting effect in the immediate post-war environment

110. The widespread repair of houses was one way in which international resources helped translate the formal establishment of peace into palpable fact. Most of the heads of household being demobilised soldiers or unemployed persons, the self-help project gave them something to do and to hope for.

111. The message of new beginnings expressed by the repairing of war-damaged houses was possibly never more strongly conveyed than in the UNHCR glazing project. This provided 400,000 sq.m of glass and ensured that in much of Sarajevo and Gorazde, war-torn UNHCR-logoed plastic sheeting could be removed and replaced by glass.

112. The project was implemented by the Sarajevo City Development Institute (CDI) with UNHCR funding in Sarajevo and Gorazde. It provided glass to recondition war-damaged windows in some 56,000 houses, at an average of 7 sq.m per household. The glass was internationally procured, but some 25 major glazing companies in Sarajevo were contracted to install it, while beneficiaries were encouraged to repair the damaged window-frames themselves with agency-provided wood, hinges, nails, screws and glue. Roving teams of some 50 joiners and 50 trainees were set up to assist elderly or single-parent families. Some 400 persons, many of them demobilised soldiers, were employed as glass cutters, installers and carpenters.

The project created a significant number of temporary jobs

113. It is estimated that through the local production, procurement and distribution of construction materials, some 15,000 temporary jobs were created.

The project reached its budgetary objectives

114. Expenditure reached 96 per cent of the total budgetary allocation for the shelter programme as a whole. Out of 17 implementing agencies, 13 spent over 90 per cent of their allocated budget, two over 80 per cent, and one over 75 per cent.

115. Implementation was short by 5935 of the planned figure of some 20900 house units. The reduced number is explained by the implementation performance of UMCOR which implemented 10,204 instead of 15,000 units, though the agency still spent 100 per cent of its US\$ 30 million budget. The reduction was mainly due to an increase in repair costs per housing unit in the second phase of the project.

Use of project materials prevented house deterioration but only increased habitable space in an estimated 60 per cent of house units

116. There were important limitations to the project. Resources allocated to each house unit were not always sufficient. The programme responded to funding constraints by allocating limited amounts to 3 categories of houses:

- category 1 : residences suffering non-structural damage only
 - window/door frames and sashes, water/sewage pipes,
 - toilets/sinks, faucets and/or electrical wire
 - : equivalent of US\$ 1,000.
- category 2 : residences suffering structural damage only
 - : roof tiles, bricks/blocks, cement, lime and/or structural timber
 - : equivalent of US\$ 2,000.
- category 3 : residences suffering from a combination of both
 - : a mix of the aforementioned materials
 - : equivalent of US\$ 3,000.⁹

117. Given the size and refurbishing of the standard Bosnian house, the programme could not always reach the objective of making even part of the house habitable. The programme did allow for flexibility in implementation, so that resources could be distributed according to need,

above or below the amounts stipulated in the programme. But this depended primarily on the municipalities and on their ability and interest. Some municipalities supplemented materials to ensure that houses became habitable. Others supplied materials to persons who could add their own resources. Others still believed that the amounts of materials provided were too low to make houses habitable, and used them to prevent deterioration instead, so that in many areas resources were used entirely to provide roofs for a maximum number of houses, without addressing interior damage.

118. Variation in the standards and quality of repairs was also due to the difference among implementing agencies in the average allocation per house unit: \$ 4,500 per house by the Norwegian Refugee Council, US\$ 3,000 by THW and US\$ 2,800 by UMCOR.

119. House rehabilitation should address the question of safety. There have fortunately been no reports of unsafe conditions caused by poor rehabilitation, but the concern is sometimes voiced among architects or engineers that houses which have been exposed to war-related explosions and extensive burning, and to

prolonged exposure to the extreme weather conditions existing in BiH, may not be safe and therefore unsuitable for house repair. Few NGOs dealing with housing have registered with the government authority responsible for maintaining minimal standards of safety. UNHCR may not be an exception to this practice, where links are mainly with authorities responsible for dealing with refugees rather than the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, whether at the central or cantonal level in the Federation, or at the central level in the Republika Srpska.

120. The factors mentioned in the above discussion tend to confirm the conclusion voiced by a number of informants, though not based on statistical fact, that houses repaired under the 1996 UNHCR Shelter Programme were made habitable in some 60 per cent of all cases, while the resources for the remaining 40 per cent were largely used to prevent further deterioration. A probably insignificant part of the materials is known to have been given alternative use, and were either sold or exchanged.

Improvement of the programme in 1997

121. A number of changes introduced in the housing programme in 1997 served to correct some of the limitations of the 1996 programme. Allowing for some variation among the various offices, the most significant changes are as follows:

- Definition of agencies' area of responsibility more in tune with their capacity of implementation. The unbalanced position whereby 73 per cent of resources were channelled through one agency in the Federation, and 62.4 per cent in the Republika Srpska, gave way to a more balanced division of labour: the programme was divided among eight agencies, four of which conducted projects for an average of some 1,500 house units and a further four agencies which repaired 50, 644, 484 and 300 houses respectively.
- Project emphasis on a community oriented approach as opposed to the initial individual unit approach
- Introduction of contractual labour to supplement or in some cases entirely replace beneficiary inputs
- Stricter application of criteria in beneficiary selection
- Introduction of regular and systematic UNHCR or joint UNHCR-agency follow-up on the rehabilitation of each house unit.

The 1996 and 1997 Housing Programme within the Return and Repatriation Plan

In 1996 and 1997 the project reflected the pattern of return, with most inputs in majority areas

122. The 1996 and 1997 Shelter Programme operated within the framework of the Return and Repatriation Plan. This identified two areas of activity: firstly, areas where majority returns were occurring, with a focus on locations within the 1996 Target Areas and 1997 Open Cities; secondly, areas where minority returns were possible, with concentration on the Zone of Separation.

123. The Target Areas have continued to serve as a framework for UNHCR and international resource allocation since they were established. UNHCR launched the Target Area initiative in

June 1996. The initiative designated specific localities where investments in housing and community infrastructure could be focused to help create conditions for the return. The localities were in cantons which had been badly hit by the war, and which had been designated by the Emergency Reconstruction Programme as priority areas for significant resource injection.¹⁰ With the key participation of the IMG, needed inputs were identified in different sectors in housing and other sectors: education, health, water supply, electricity and mine control.

124. In 1996, UNHCR's Shelter Programme channelled significant resources into the areas: out of a total 17,113 house-units, 8,772, representing 51 per cent were repaired within the Target Areas, while 48 per cent of all shelter resources were channelled there.

125. In 1997, the continued difficulties encountered in obtaining access for minorities, compounded with the security risks incurred by beneficiaries on return, resulted in giving absolute priority to majority returns, with the hope that time and international pressure would later make safe minority return possible, across and beyond the inter-entity boundary. 1997 was therefore declared "Year of Majority Return".

126. In accordance with this title, 84 per cent of refugees and 77 per cent of displaced persons went to majority areas, many of which corresponded to the 1996 Target Areas and to "Open Cities". These areas overlapped geographically with the Target Areas to a certain extent but differed in the concept. "Open City" was a designation granted by UNHCR to municipalities showing demonstrable openness to minority returns. Municipalities recognised as Open Cities could expect to benefit from international assistance, including that of UNHCR, in recognition of compliance. During 1997, the bulk of the 7,567 rehabilitated houses went to both designated areas: 6,203 to the Target Areas and 1,063 to the Open Cities.¹¹ In addition, out of 21 Public Health facilities rehabilitated country-wide, five were located in the Target Areas, nine in Priority Target Areas and one in a recognised Open City; out of 34 schools, five were located in the Target Areas, 11 in Priority Target Areas and five in a recognised Open City.¹²

127. During 1996, the joint effect of political and humanitarian inputs obtained some results in opening access to minority returns. The return of some 9,450 persons to the Zone of Separation (ZOS) and areas adjacent to it were one result which was limited numerically but significant in its implications for future population movement. The return was the culmination of numerous government level initiatives carried out jointly by the main Dayton players¹³ and UNHCR : the introduction of 11 UNHCR-sponsored inter-entity bus-lines, the endorsement by the parties of visits by displaced persons to their places of origin, the establishment of procedures to facilitate orderly minority return to the ZOS, and the creation of ten Housing Commissions along key points of the inter-entity boundary. The UNHCR housing rehabilitation programme served to consolidate some of the more difficult returns, with a significant 1,095 house-units repaired by the Swedish governmental agency SRSA in the Zone of Separation area.

128. In 1997, there was some progress on the minority return front, as is indicated by the return of 33,837 persons, representing 18 per cent of the returned refugee and DP population, compared to 11,666 persons in 1996, representing only five per cent of total numbers. Thus, in 1997 the shelter programme gave support to some 15 per cent of minority returns for the year: out of a total 7,567 house units rehabilitated in the year, 567 units, benefiting 2,268 persons, were in support of minority returns in the Zone of Separation, and 716, benefiting 2,864 persons, were in support of the same group elsewhere.

In 1996 and 1997, the housing programme contributed to support the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees to their place of origin.

129. The data for 1996 do not indicate how far the estimated 88,000 refugees who returned to BiH benefited from the programme. The only available statistical information concerns the UMCOR project in which seven per cent of rehabilitated houses were in support of returnees from abroad. If the same percentage is applied to the entire refugee population, 5,250 refugees benefited.

130. In 1997, UNHCR was confronted with European asylum country pressure to accelerate the departure of refugees hosted by them. The lifting of the temporary protection regime by the Federal Republic of Germany on 1 October, 1996, was a forewarning of the tendency and a cause for alarm, given that Germany was host to the largest number of Bosnian refugees among all asylum countries: 315,000 out of a total 815,740, or 38.6 per cent.¹⁴ In this context,

UNHCR programmes prioritised refugee returns. Up to 200,000 returnees were expected, compared to 88,000 in the previous year. The housing programme established a proportional distribution pattern for house-repair selection among all implementing partners: 50 per cent refugees, 40 per cent Dps and 10 per cent war-affected population.

131. The process of return initiated on the basis of pressure among some donors was problematic, particularly in the case of Bosnian refugees in Germany, since it was not limited to families returning to majority areas, or to minority areas to which entry was politically possible.

132. UNHCR took official steps to counter the policy and alerted public opinion in Germany against the negative consequences of unregulated returns. Also IOM and UNHCR carried out a survey to identify voluntary candidates for return and prepare adequate conditions for them in BiH. Evaluation of their family houses for eventual repair was to be a key aspect of the preparations.

133. The survey had a double function: recording the attitudes to return among potential returnees, and compiling a list of applicants for repatriation. The survey showed that out of a total of 14,582 respondents, only 27 per cent were majority cases, the rest being minority returns and other difficult cases such as mixed marriages.

134. Use of the survey as a framework for preparing return came against serious practical obstacles which seem to be partly related to work-overload among the UNHCR offices so that out of only 5,088 applications forwarded to UNHCR BiH, only about half were assessed. Out of these only 458 were approved, a large number of cases being rejected on the grounds that house-owners could not provide adequate proof of ownership or because their properties had sustained damage too serious to fit house rehabilitation criteria. As a result, shelter statistics for 1997 show an inclusion rate of only 395 families, representing five per cent of survey applicants in the total number of beneficiary families. However, 1,267 returnee families who went back to BiH spontaneously were included in the programme by contacting the UNHCR implementing partners locally.

135. Out of a total 7,567 house-units rehabilitated in 1997, therefore, 395 houses (five per cent) went to returnees from the IOM/UNHCR lists, 1,267 units (17 per cent) went to spontaneous returnees, 624 units (eight per cent) went to non-EU returnees and a majority of 5,281 units (70 per cent) went to internally displaced persons and war-affected persons. As in 1996, therefore, the internally displaced population benefited relatively more from the housing programme.

The housing programme gave support to re-integration and provided instruments of protection for difficult returns.

136. In majority return areas, beneficiary reinsertion was mainly a matter of setting up house within partly functional communities against a background of physical destruction of the environment and depressed economic prospects. Though there could be resistance to return by the authorities, and episodes of harassment by the stable population did occur, there were on the whole no serious politically related obstruction or security threats. Here therefore, housing inputs were one initial key input for sustainable reintegration within the community, within a relief and rehabilitation framework.

137. By contrast, in areas of minority return, beneficiaries could come against serious obstruction and harassment. In such cases, shelter inputs become effective instruments of protection, the repaired house protecting in the physical sense, but also as a visible statement to the local authorities and population of the backing being extended to the returnee by the international community.

138. The extent to which shelter was used in this protection sense varied among the areas of responsibility under different UNHCR offices. For instance, in the Sub-Office for Northern BiH, it was related to the presence of eight out of ten Zone of Separation specific International Housing Commissions and the consequent fact that more cross-entity boundary returns occurred there than elsewhere.

139. In 1998, the support envisaged by the same office to "deep returns", that is, returns to the central municipalities inside the RS, will require continued access to shelter resources to protect returnees entering difficult areas and provide them with one basis for their re-establishment into a sustainable community. It is therefore recommended that shelter

resources be maintained in 1998 to permit responses to difficult minority returns. A stock of construction materials for use at short notice could also be maintained in addition to house rehabilitation projects.

140. A further use of shelter has been as leverage in negotiations within the wider political-humanitarian framework of Dayton. Within this framework generally, political pressure and negotiation by the international actors implementing Dayton have been combined since 1996 with the promise of assistance or the threat to withdraw it. Conditionality, whether positive or negative, as a means of opening areas for returns has not always been successful or cost-effective. Politically closed areas respond to political negotiation and international pressure and only marginally to the promise of assistance. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that conditionality has proved useful in maintaining political openness to minority returns in areas where public protestations of openness does not correspond to fact. For instance, implementation of housing rehabilitation has been successfully used as a tactic to change municipal obstruction into compliance. However, the successful localised uses of assistance should not override the fact that when there are instances of political obstruction to return, UNHCR should use the weight of its internationally based authority to lend support to the interventions of the politically mandated actors of Dayton.

The 1996 and 1997 programme had a limited but positive impact on private sector development

141. This was achieved through contracting of small-scale companies for production and/or distribution of construction materials. The programme relied on locally produced materials as far as these reached minimal standards of quality. In 1997, the value of locally produced shelter materials was US\$ 16,161,507 million, representing 64 per cent of total procured items, while the value of imported materials was US\$ 9,090,847. Inter-entity trading was also stimulated, with a value of US\$ 2,525,235 and a relative increase from one per cent in 1996 to ten per cent in 1997.

In 1996 and 1997 the programme contributed to raising domestic employment and household incomes

142. The programme generated temporary jobs of construction labour. In 1996, for instance, the programme generated employment within the implementing agencies for some 352 persons of whom a majority of local staff. In 1997, 12,000 temporary jobs were created in the country as a whole. In Northern Bosnia alone, the implementing agencies reported the following figures in person-months: GTZ: 940 jobs, SEA : 5,007 jobs and UMCOR: 2,009 jobs.

RATES OF OCCUPANCY

143. Many factors serve to explain one fact which has continued to plague most shelter programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996 and up to the time of writing: in a significant number of cases, beneficiaries do not move into the rehabilitated houses.¹⁵ In 1996, relatively low rates of occupancy were widespread enough for the World Bank to recommend analysis of the nature and determinants of demand for housing among refugees and displaced persons, in order to establish proper incentives and ensure that beneficiaries of the repair programmes made use of the house units. In 1997, the prevalence of low occupancy rates is statistically documented.

144. In 1997, out of a total of 7,565 houses repaired within the shelter programme, 2,520 houses remain empty. This means that out of a total of 30,260 persons in 7,565 households included in the programme, 10,120 persons in 2,520 households have given up on an initial commitment to reoccupy their repaired home. In 33 per cent of cases therefore, the two main interconnected objectives of the shelter programme have not been met: (i) getting people back to their place of origin and to their own homes (ii) while emptying the houses temporarily used by them, so that these may in turn be occupied by their legitimate owners.

	<i>West BiH</i>	<i>East BiH</i>	<i>North BiH</i>	<i>South BiH</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Completed Houses	2,189	1,315	2,494	1,567	7,565
Non occupied houses	1,024	420	612	474	2,530
% of non occupied houses	47%	32%	25%	30%	33%

Table 5 : Rates of non-occupancy in the 1997 UNHCR Housing Programme, at March 1998.

145. The rate of occupancy of the same population constantly evolves, it reflects the process where beneficiaries gradually decide to go back home. Immediate return to a rehabilitated home cannot be enforced. Programmes can maximise the chance that beneficiaries return by various methods. But beneficiaries can always change their minds. The refugee and displaced population is not neatly divided into those who have decided to return and live in their house, and those who have not. Many families who have been included in the programme may have no doubts about having their home rehabilitated, but may hesitate to return to their community of origin and move into the family home.

146. The decision to return to the repaired home can be accepted in principle and can be subsequently discarded, or postponed. Return is a process which can begin with a period of indecision during which the house remains empty. But this can be followed by the return of some family members and eventually by the return of all members. Phased return can reflect the will to return cautiously to a place of perceived potential danger. It is not uncommon among minority returns and majority returns to isolated village communities, to witness return being initiated by elderly family members. The security of the area having been tested by them, younger family members follow.

147. Processes other than cautious returns explain simultaneous use of two housing units by a single family. It is not uncommon that families whose house has been repaired, deliberately maintain some of their members in the house of displacement, while only a part of the family unit goes back home. Non-occupancy is thus closely linked to two other key problems of the housing sector which entail one family making use of two or more houses: so-called double or multiple occupancy.

148. Each of these respond to the same factors as non-occupancy, but reflect different levels of consensus in the family. Consensus of opinion in a family about where to live may result in full non-occupancy. But the wish among the older generation to go back home to the village, while the younger members prefer staying in town, may result in double occupancy. Multiple occupancy may reflect further disagreement. In all cases, calculated retention of several housing units, beyond legitimate need, may play a role. However, double and multiple occupancy does not necessarily involve non-occupancy of a repaired, legally owned, family home. A family's use of several houses can take place entirely in other people's property, with the support of the local authority, as one tactic to maintain the numerical dominance of a given ethnic group.

149. The dynamic aspect of return and consequent change in the rate of non-occupancy can be statistically illustrated. Among 39 municipalities covered by the Housing Programme in Northern BiH, significant changes in the occupancy rate were noted between March and May 1998: the rate of occupancy increased in 17 municipalities, remained stable in 20 and fell in 2 municipalities.

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Occupancy rate as at 31.03.98</i>	<i>Occupancy rate as at 15.05.98</i>	<i>Change in occupancy rate</i>
Brcko	75.54%	93.33%	17.81%
Gradacac	79.89%	79.75%	8.86%
Milici	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%
Odljak	73.60%	85.24%	11.64%
Orasje	55.74%	68.85%	13.11%
Tuzla	86.21%	100.00%	13.79%
Lukavac	97.78%	93.33%	-4.44%
Srebrenik	90.91%	86.36%	-4.55%
Change in all 39 municipalities	76.14%	84.13%	-8.00%

Table 6 Change in the rate of occupancy in 8 out of 39 municipalities covered by the UNHCR Sub-Office for Northern BiH (1998)

Beneficiary-centred reasons for non-occupancy

150. At the most general level, relatively low rates of occupancy may reflect a weakening of attachment to the home. Attachment to the family home began being eroded before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Where strong attachment persisted, it was related to the closeness of most of the population to its peasant roots in the village environment, where the house is one key indicator of a family's standing, and the physical condition for its insertion into the exclusive and protective village community. Also, in the pre-war socialist environment, the privately-owned house asserted private independence vis-à-vis state encroachment.

151. The links to the home have continued to be weakened among some categories of the population due to the impact of the war and to conditions prevailing in the post-war environment. The combined effect of a variety of factors explain this: prolonged displacement away from the home environment in or outside BiH, the disappearance of the protective pre-war village society, conditions of economic uncertainty, lack of basic services, the ubiquity of politically driven obstacles to return within an environment which continues to be dominated by the forces of ethnic separation.

152. More specifically, the rate of occupancy reflects beneficiaries' perceptions of a variety of factors among which some are determinant: the parameters of the UNHCR housing programme and prevailing social, political and economic conditions. These perceptions may lead to the decision not to return to the repaired family home.

- Dissatisfaction with project parameters
- Dissatisfaction with various aspects of the community of origin
- Lack of opportunities for employment. Preference to remain in the urban environment as opposed to the village, or to remain abroad
- Concern with security

Dissatisfaction with project parameters

153. Beneficiaries of the housing programme who do not move into their repaired home, often object to project parameters including the project objective to provide only minimal living space within the damaged house unit, and the requirement that beneficiaries carry out all or part of the rehabilitation themselves.

154. Reluctance to participate in rehabilitation is widespread among non-occupants. A sample of 127 non-occupied houses in Northern Bosnia shows this. In 27 cases, no repairs had been carried out and none of the materials had been used; in five cases, only some repairs had been carried out; in eight cases the internal works had not been done; in four cases house-owners used the materials to expand the original house but did not complete the work for lack of materials; in 12 cases where contracted labour had been provided the houses had been weather-proofed by the contractors, but the beneficiaries had failed to complete the interior works, though they were paid.¹⁶

Dissatisfaction with various aspects of the community

155. Lack of infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity, primary health care, and schools are common reasons for postponing return. In the present context, ethnicity complicates the issue in respect of health and education. Families will postpone return until children have completed the school year in the place of displacement and ensured the availability of school and teacher in the area of origin. But as different curricula are being followed by the different ethnic groups, a condition for return is the presence of the right teacher teaching the right curriculum, over and above the availability of a school building. As for health, avoidance of facilities managed by another ethnic group being not uncommon, absence of a facility manned according to ethnic preference may be yet another reason for postponing return home.

156. Returns are occurring everywhere in the country, including to isolated and uninhabited or almost deserted villages. In this case the sense of isolation and related sense of insecurity may cause prolonged hesitation to move back. This may affect different family members to a different extent: one pattern, which is common in many repatriations, is for a group of husbands to move into the village, and prepare the ground for the wives and children to return when several conditions are in place : the home, the utilities, the school, the health centre and the neighbours, and if possible, a source of income.

Lack of opportunities for employment. Preference to stay in the town or to remain abroad to maintain a source of income

157. The widespread lack of economic opportunities has had a major impact on people's convictions to return home. The lack is not likely to be resolved in the immediate future. Radical changes in the economy are taking place which are primarily connected with two processes: firstly, the passage from a planned to a market economy; secondly, the establishment of an independent BiH economy to replace the pre-war system in which BiH was integrated into the Yugoslav economy.

158. One consequence of the economic changes is especially relevant to the prospects of rural displaced populations. This is the disappearance of the pre-war socialist system of heavy subsidies to certain geographical areas for reasons of political expediency rather than economic rationality. The system ensured the viability of even the most isolated villages, by establishing heavy industries in distant areas and by sustaining the social infrastructure and services despite high costs. Prospects for revitalising the isolated villages are slim: agricultural activities, which were a factor of economic complementarity in the pre-war economy would have to be expanded to sustain the population; remittances from Bosniaks living abroad are an important source of income, but amounts will diminish as refugees come home; national or international agencies may prove increasingly reluctant to channel resources into the more isolated smaller communities which used to be subsidised before the war.

159. Current levels of industrial and commercial activity in the towns, however low, have resulted in strengthening the trend of urbanisation and simultaneous depopulation of small rural communities already evident before the war. For instance, there are some employment opportunities in the few industries which are

operating at part-capacity in some of the smaller towns such as Konjic and Zenica, or in urban centres expected to become poles of economic growth: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Bihac and Mostar.

160. The pulls of the village and those exerted by the towns are having different effects on different families and within families. Elderly persons tend to return to the rural areas while the young look for economic opportunities in the towns. This is reflected in the not uncommon pattern of dispersed family house occupancy where the elderly re-occupy the home in the village while the young stay in town.

161. Non-occupancy and part-occupancy tend to be high in houses located in villages near to towns. During the war, the towns were places of refuge to rural populations fleeing hostilities, but in peace-time the urban environment has become a preferred place of residence. Municipal support permitting, closeness to the village creates the ideal situation where the "temporary" urban home in the place of displacement becomes the permanent residence, while the newly repaired house can be used as a week-end house, or a place of habitation for part of the family. Or it can remain empty as an investment for the future.

The frequent scenario is illustrated by the complex of nine villages in the Podvelezje Area, near Mostar. Important investment in the villages, coupled with vigorous pressures by the municipality, reinforced by the visits from the International Police Task Force (IPTF), have resulted in the gradual return of families. But it is not clear to the implementing agencies to what extent the families will stay in the villages. Already the pattern is evident where some family members are living with relatives or friends in Mostar where they have been able to find a job, typically in one of the numerous city cafes or as shop attendants or as beauty parlour attendants.

More than 95 per cent of the pre-war population of Podvelezje was Bosniak. The main occupation of the population was agriculture and cattle-breeding. When the war started, the population was expelled and the area was occupied. The house-stock was badly damaged: from 60 to 100 per cent.

Most of the people who fled the area presently live in Mostar East, aggravating the shortage of living space there by occupying homes belonging to the previous inhabitants of the town. The complex of villages has become a pole of attraction for international aid, raising

standards above those obtaining before the war there and elsewhere in the surrounding area. The list of donors and implementing agencies is long¹⁷ and the contributions and inputs are impressive: 476 houses, two schools, one primary health care centre, installation of electricity for some DM 19.07 million. Some 34 house units were rehabilitated under the UNHCR programme there in 1996.

Another example is provided in Bihac: a number of houses have been repaired in villages which stand in the immediate vicinity of Bihac Town: Golubic village with 162 houses, Ripac village with 39 houses, Skocaj village with 53 houses and Zavalje village with 36 houses. Despite these considerable inputs, most house-owners have preferred to remain in town, leave the repaired family home empty and use the village house as a second residence.

162. The option of remaining abroad is open to returnees or displaced persons in search of economic opportunities. In view of prevailing economic conditions, refugees who have registered in the programme may decide to return abroad and postpone re-entry into the house indefinitely. This may account for some 12 per cent of non-occupancy in the Tuzla Area.

Concern with security

163. In certain localities with special political conditions, shelter programme inputs contribute to joint international efforts to create a balance in the ethnic make up of the community. Houses are repaired in order to encourage the return of a numerically smaller ethnic group. Continued perceived insecurity leads to postponement of individual return, until a more protective group return is organised. The prime example of this is Brcko, where the 25 per cent non-occupancy rate at the end of March is explained by the deferred return of one ethnic group in the face of a concentration of persons of different ethnicity. In May, however, following the decision to maintain international arbitration, returns accelerated, with the rate of non-occupancy falling to seven per cent.

164. Non-occupancy can result from two reinforcing factors: UNHCR's decision to carry out house repairs to open an area for minority returns, and a misjudgement by the implementing agency about what can be achieved with limited resources to repair very damaged houses. This is illustrated in Zlatina village, in Prozor Municipality . The village is located close to the old front line, where its houses were badly damaged. But its location close to the Zone of Separation gave it a key importance for opening the area for minority returns. The decision was therefore taken to repair 30 houses for Bosniaks and 15 for Croats. The houses were repaired, but insufficient funds per unit resulted in work of very inferior quality. As the beneficiaries do not consider the house fit for habitation, 38 houses remain empty. This is a strong reminder to UNHCR that projects should be return-driven.

Management-centred reasons for non-occupancy

165. UNHCR sometimes resorts to the tactic of pressuring the authorities by postponing the implementation of a desired project in order to obtain official support to minority returns. In that case, house repair may start late in the year and be completed in the following year, though the house unit is recorded in the previous year as a non-occupied unit.

166. Odzak Town provides an example. The authorities of Odzak municipality had agreed to accommodate minority Bosniak returns in exchange from benefiting from the shelter programme. During the summer, Odzak was failing to meet the established quotas for minority returns. UNHCR suspended its shelter assistance activities for one and a half months until these issues of non-compliance were resolved. As a result, many beneficiaries in Odzak received construction materials late in the year, making it difficult to complete the rehabilitation works by the end of 1997. The occupancy rate reflects this, but will change when the beneficiaries have finished the repairs in 1998.

167. The housing projects implemented by different agencies under the UNHCR Housing Programme show different non-occupancy rates.

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Completed House Units</i>	<i>Non-occupied house units</i>	<i>Non-occupied units as % of total</i>	<i>Report as at</i>
THW	1,280	452	35%	31/03/98
SRSA	1,499	554	37%	28/02/98
UNMCOR	1,727	536	31%	10/03/98
MC/SEA	1,581	569	36%	31/01/98
GTZ	300	43	14%	31/01/98
PIU	484	70	14%	31/03/98
WVB	644	275	43%	16/04/98
CRS	50	31	62%	31/01/98
Total	7,565	2,520	33%	

Table 7 Non-occupancy rate among UNHCR implementing partners in the Housing Programme (1997)

168. The discrepancy in non-occupancy rates among the agencies reflects a variety of factors which are unrelated to agency-specific modes of implementation. Such factors include the above-mentioned beneficiary perceptions and locally specific conditions.

169. However, the particular style of implementation adopted by each agency and the extent of follow-up seem determinant. For instance, GTZ has a paid labour component in all house rehabilitation, and thereby eliminates the difficulties encountered in ensuring that beneficiaries carry out the required repairs while their area of intervention is relatively accessible.

170. Efforts have been made to motivate beneficiaries by adopting a part-contractual, part self-help approach where the beneficiary is paid for his input. The approach is meant to ensure the active involvement of beneficiary and increase the likelihood of his moving in, while ensuring that minimal standards of quality are reached by the use of contracted labour. For instance, the approach is followed by SEA: beneficiaries are paid 10 DM per day for inside work, while roof construction and wiring are left to the contractors. But the evidence shows that contracted labour finishes according to schedule while the beneficiaries do not perform.

Measures to ensure occupancy

Beneficiary-focused measures to improve the occupancy rate

171. The prevalence of non-occupancy has persisted despite systematic efforts by UNHCR and other agencies to reduce it by several means focused on the beneficiary:

- Recourse of tripartite agreements, whereby the agency and the municipality commit the house owner to occupy the repaired house within a given period of time following completion (usually three months);
- requesting municipalities to pressure house-owners to leave their temporary accommodations in their places of displacement;
- requesting municipalities to pressure house-owners to complete the agreed upon works;
- ensuring that at least one family member remains at the house site for the duration of the repairs;
- establishing models of implementation where the beneficiary himself contributes to the repair in exchange of a nominal fee
- injecting small additional amounts of construction materials to ensure that the home becomes habitable
- recalling shelter materials if self-help construction does not start in a timely manner.

Management-focused measures to improve the occupancy rate

172. Other attempts to influence the rate of occupancy focus on project management. One method has been to establish tight monitoring and follow-up procedures. The UNHCR Sub-Office for Northern BiH has established a very effective system to monitor the results of implementation for the 1997 programme. Each house is visited by a team made up of NGO staff and a two UNHCR staff. The team checks the progress of works, provides technical

guidance and assesses the need for additional materials as required. Due to the large number of houses in the 1997 programme, the monitoring occurs in cycles each of which takes from two to three months to complete. As a result of these efforts, detailed and reliable data are now available for the total number of 2,502 houses in the project. Combined support to beneficiaries, and pressure on the local authorities will continue to be used to raise occupancy rates as much as possible.

173. Another method has been to improve co-ordination at the field level. National-level meetings of various co-ordinating bodies have some impact on standards of implementation, but changes mostly come from the field-level meetings. Bodies such as the Housing Task Force, chaired by IMG, and the Working Group of the Task Force fulfil useful information sharing functions, but the agency co-ordinating meetings held in each area of responsibility seem to be most useful.

Implementation-focused measures to improve the rate of occupancy

174. Focusing the housing programme on clusters of houses is now an agreed preferred strategy by all agencies operating in the sector. However, several factors militate against concentration of all house rehabilitation efforts on houses of clusters rather than on individual, isolated houses. The determination of some beneficiaries to return to their isolated home is one factor. Also, degree of clustering is determined by cultural patterns of settlement. Bosnian communities are concentrated and therefore permit clustering, while Serb communities, which are scattered, do not (e.g. Ribnik village, where 142 houses have been repaired in a scattered pattern due to the traditional distribution of houses).

175. Clustering of houses may increase the likelihood that houses are occupied more quickly by providing a safer environment. Some areas where the housing programme has focused on house clusters provide some evidence for this: Olovo, Gradacac, Banovici, Kalesija, Doboï East, with rates of occupancy of 100 per cent, 79 per cent, 81 per cent, and 85 per cent respectively.

176. Efforts to concentrate house repair on clusters have been coupled with the rehabilitation of social infrastructure. In 1997, out of 21 Public Health facilities rehabilitated country-wide, five are located in the Target Areas, nine in Priority Target Areas and one in a recognised Open City. Again, out of 34 schools, five are located in the Target Areas, 11 in the Priority Target Areas and five in a recognised Open City.¹⁸ In addition, income-generation projects have also been implemented in the same areas.

177. In view of relatively low occupancy rates in some areas, and given that low-quality repairs seem to be relatively widespread, particularly in the houses rehabilitated in 1996, it is recommended that UNHCR sub-offices set up joint monitoring teams with their implementing partners to review house conditions and provide additional materials whenever necessary.

178. Given the consensus now reached about the importance of clustering and focus on the community, it is recommended that particular emphasis be given to isolated units or to small numbers of units rehabilitated in distant areas. Rehabilitation of dispersed houses could turn out to be a waste of resources if, in the worst scenario, the failure to repair a sufficient number of units resulted in a part or total abandonment of a village. No examples exist so far of such an occurrence. But as a preventive measure, villages at risk should be identified and there, should more returnees wish to return, additional houses should be repaired. An example of a village where additional houses have been identified for repair, is Belvije village, Mrkonic Grad, where the present community of some ten houses repaired by UMCOR will be strengthened by the repair of another ten by IRC, and a further possible 20 by another NGO.

179. Mutual aid activities should be promoted in an attempt to reinforce the community. Community leaders should be encouraged to participate in the development of a strategy of community revival, with a combination of international aid, municipal support and private resources. This may require vigorous action. There is evidence that community solidarity has been seriously eroded by the effects of war (e.g. Podvelije, where formal agreements were necessary to ensure common use of water between a mother and a son in one case, and between two brothers in another case).

180. Isolated and small villages should be seriously considered for inclusion in schemes such as the US\$10 million UNHCR income generation/micro-credit scheme programme. This will ensure the viability of communities in which houses have been repaired.

181. However, the above discussion has indicated that concentration of inputs including high levels of clustering is no guarantee of relatively high occupancy rates, as the provision of buildings for social facilities does not ensure that they will be used. As a community gets started, community services can be an important source of support, but dynamic use of the facilities may require other inputs: furniture, refurbishing and support in the organisation of activities. But none of this can be made to function unless a sufficient number of people have decided to return, and are determined to be part of the re-emerging community. The conclusion is that housing support should be limited to those who have already returned or are in the process of doing so.

182. In view of the increasing awareness of the limitations of housing programmes, the opinion has developed among some of the international actors of the need to improve on how international resources are being spent. For instance the European Commission, taking into account the 35 per cent rate of non-occupancy in its own housing programmes, is currently conducting a survey to identify alternative uses for its resources in support of returning refugees and returnees. The survey takes into account the relatively long, expected time-lag before the market economy is established and generates sufficient sources of employment. It operates on the assumption that viable solutions must be found in the transition period. The ultimate objective of the exercise is to identify areas where integrated packages of economic and technical support can be provided to address the specific needs of specific populations in terms of sustainable development. This requires reliable information about current patterns of population displacement, together with detailed profiles of the in-flowing and the stable populations. For instance, in areas with a relatively young population, programs will need to include a combination of training modules and economic inputs different from those appropriate in areas with an older dominant age-group.

RELOCATION

183. Relocation refers to the settlement of returning refugees and displaced persons in locations other than their areas of origin. There are at least three kinds of relocations: relocation which is forced on the powerless individual, relocation which is entered into for lack of better alternatives, and relocation which results from the individual's free choice.

UNHCR housing policy towards relocatees in historical perspective

184. All shelter sub-agreements developed in 1996 targeted displaced persons and "returning/relocating refugees". At the level of implementation, however, increasing emphasis was on giving support to "returning refugees", that is, refugees returning to their place of origin. A turning point in this process was the UNHCR housing policy response to the exodus of the Serb population of Sarajevo in the same year. In order to ensure that the same population returned to Sarajevo, UNHCR tightened its anti-relocation policy and requested its implementing agencies in the Republika Srpska not to provide any housing support to the newly displaced group, and, more specifically to avoid allocating abandoned Bosnian houses to them. This occurred in the context of the increasing determination by the leading implementing agents of Dayton to reverse the effects of ethnic cleansing and establish the pre-war pattern of population distribution.

185. Three key criteria determined house selection in the sub-agreements: the house has sustained slight damage, the house is owned by a vulnerable person, the vulnerable person possesses documentary proof of ownership. The third criterion should have ensured that all house rehabilitation was in support of family-home centred returns. In fact, evidence provided by the two main UNHCR implementing partners in 1996 show that housing did go to relocatees to a certain extent. In the Federation, out of 10,411 house-units rehabilitated by UMCOR, some 1,249 units (12.6 per cent) benefited relocatees. In the Republika Srpska, out of 2,513 house-units rehabilitated by the Ministry for refugees, some 351 houses (14 per cent) supported the local integration of the same group.

186. However, during 1997, stricter application of the criterion that selected beneficiaries should have documentary evidence of house ownership, and improved monitoring, probably ensured that very little housing support went to relocatees. But whatever the numbers, the policy was further tightened, and, since then, UNHCR's policy has been not to provide housing to relocatees. However, UNHCR assists vulnerable relocatees with other programme components. They are entitled to micro-credit support, community services, food (if they live in collective centres) and protection (by UNHCR protection staff, through UNHCR Legal Aid

Centres).

187. The reasons for the policy not to provide housing to relocatees are clear: in so far as relocation is a condition imposed on the individual, to support it implies giving in to the divisive politics which prevent individuals from going back home, and to consolidate the mono-ethnic areas which have been established as a result of ethnic cleansing.

188. In the Bosnian context therefore, UNHCR considers relocation for what it frequently is, that is, the result of actions inflicted on individuals by powers outside their control: forced or induced repatriation by the asylum countries; pressure to move by nationalist politicians who use populations to consolidate their power in recently conquered territories; obstruction by nationalist politicians to prevent people from going home; opposition to return by the local population; illegal occupation of property by others, who having no home themselves, prevent legal owners from going back home; illegal occupation of property by those who have a habitable home.

189. However, the negative aspects of relocation must not obscure one fact: an as yet unknown, but probably significant number among the relocatees has freely and voluntarily chosen a new place of residence. The main reasons would appear to be the search for new employment opportunities and better living conditions. Choosing a new place of residence for such reasons is the Bosnian instance of how population movements occur in any society.

Prevalence of relocation

190. Various surveys of refugee attitudes to return show a strong trend of preference for relocation. In the data base of the CRPC (Commission for Real Property Claims), with claims from nearly 50,000 persons, 49 per cent of claimants have chosen to return, while the remaining 51 per cent have indicated other choices. A further CRPC survey of 862 displaced persons in both entities and 683 persons in Croatia and Yugoslavia, showed that 64.5 per cent chose to return, 18 per cent did not and 17.5 per cent were undecided. The CRPC survey further noted that all groups expressed the fear of losing the rights to their property altogether, and assumes that this fear probably explains why up to 70 per cent of all groups were prepared to consider selling or exchanging their property.

191. A survey carried out by the Swiss government found that 47 per cent of returnees had chosen voluntarily to relocate. A survey carried out by the Danish Refugee Council showed that 47 per cent among 850 Bosnian refugees repatriating between 1994 and 1997 had relocated.¹⁹

192. UNHCR data is consistent with the findings. The UNHCR western border monitoring programme which records the declared destination of spontaneous returnees found that up to 50 per cent were relocating to areas other than their original homes. In UNHCR's compilation of cantonal registrations of refugees and DPs, it appears that out of 71,587 refugees registered by the Cantonal Authorities, 28,523 (40 per cent) are relocatees. Out of 68,216 registered DPs, 27,198 (40 per cent) are persons who do not originate from the area where they now live. The data show that the trend is most marked in particular cantons of the Federation, though the total proportion of relocating refugees, 81 per cent, is very high in the Republika Srpska.

<i>Canton</i>	<i>Returning refugees</i>	<i>Relocating refugees</i>	<i>relocating refugees as % of total refugees</i>	<i>returning DPs</i>	<i>Relocating DPs</i>	<i>Relocating DPs as % of total DPs</i>	<i>Total</i>
Una Sana	5,463	7,601	58%	287	372	56%	13,723
Tuzla	3,783	5,724	60%	8,621	2,302	21%	20,430
Zenica	1,545	1,343	47%	588	1,173	67%	4,649
Neretva	3,064	2,620	46%	2,723	307	10%	8,714
Sarajevo	9,995	3,825	28%	18,522	16,229	47%	48,571
Tomislavgrad	595	1,115	65%	548	822	60%	3,080
Republika Srpska	980	4,482	82%	3,294	4,959	60%	13,715
Total	43,064	28,523	40%	41,018	27,198	40%	139,803

Table 8 : Registered refugees, relocating refugees, displaced persons and relocating displaced persons (1997).[20](#)

193. There are indications that 40 per cent of relocatees in the returnee population may be a conservative estimate. Significantly, UNHCR noted that an estimated 70 per cent of repatriations occurring in the second half of 1997 could be characterised as relocation.[21](#)

194. No in-depth analysis of this population has been carried out. There is, therefore, no available data about the economic viability of relocatees' settlement choices, nor of the extent of vulnerability among them. However, we do know that the cost of accommodation is a considerable burden to relocatees. The above-mentioned Danish Refugee Council survey of 850 persons indicated that housing was the single largest item of expenditure among the programme's beneficiaries: half of the returnees spent their repatriation grant within a period of three months, and only 15 per cent were able to economise the grant for more than six months. Expenditures regarding reconstruction, minor repairs and resettling in their homes consumed a major part of the grant, hence the relatively fast use of it. The survey further notes that most relocatees spent a large part of their repatriation grants on repairing temporary homes.

195. In view of the lack of reliable information about the group, UNHCR should develop a relocatee data base to develop a policy of housing assistance for the vulnerable among them. A comprehensive data base would have to include their number, age, educational and gender profile, the extent of economic and health-related vulnerability, their movements, the rate of success of the solutions they have sought independently, the extent to which real property transactions are occurring, and how far such transactions are the basis for sustainable settlement.

196. There is another reason for establishing a better understanding of the relocating population. There is some evidence that a significant minority among the returning refugees and the displaced population is moving away from its place of origin in the search for employment opportunities or urban living. In view of this fact, some donors have been looking at the possibility of channelling assistance to programmes other than those focused on the village of origin, e.g. by establishing community-specific economic and training assistance packages in locations where populations are concentrating, on account of economic and employment opportunities. UNHCR could contribute to such efforts to identify new channels for international resources by establishing (or by co-ordinating the establishment of) a comprehensive relocatee data base.[22](#)

Transitory or buffer accommodation

197. The total number of buffer accommodations has remained insignificant : 134 units, combining a majority of flats and some pre-fabricated houses, mainly in Gorazde, but also in Odjak and Konjic. Mostar is about to start a new buffer accommodation project.

198. It has been argued that given the coverage of house repair programmes carried out to date by the international community, coupled with the reduction of the population by death and displacement, the number of habitable houses is now sufficient to satisfy demand, the challenge in housing being essentially that of managing the distribution of the housing stock. The argument would be valid only if the considerable political obstacles confronting persons seeking to reclaim their property did not exist, and if there could be an easy solution to the fact that many properties are occupied by persons who do not own them, while legitimate owners are determined to get their property back.

199. However, as things stand, and to resolve problems where accommodation shortage is greatest, the shelter programme has resorted to the device of providing buffer accommodation. In an effort to avoid giving support to relocation, the buffer accommodation is intended to be transitory, is usually collective and in the control of municipal authorities. Its prime example is the "Balkan" building in Gorazde, a former collective centre which has been transformed into a block of flats. It provides

improved living conditions, but this is combined with a strong sense of transience.

200. It should be recognised that buffer accommodation in the sense of "transitory accommodation" has essentially operated as a euphemism for "permanent accommodation for re-locatees". It is indeed unlikely that Bosnjak villages in Eastern Bosnia, which were razed to the ground during the war, will ever be reconstructed. The return home of those living in the buffer accommodation of Gorazde will probably never happen.

201. As for the future, the combined effect of political obstruction to freedom of movement, together with widespread double or multiple occupancy (a phenomenon which is often supported by the authorities) will continue to result in accommodation bottlenecks countrywide. The reasons for the concentrations may differ, but the result is likely to be identical: situations of population concentration which can become explosive.

The situation developing in Sanski Most is one example. Located by the front-line during the war, the town was emptied of almost all of its population of some 58,000 people consisting of some 28,000 Bosnians, 25,000 Serbs and 5,000 Croats. Only about one hundred elderly people remained. Despite its closeness to military action, most of the housing stock was spared. This fact, and the invitation by the local authorities for people to settle there transformed the town into a pole of attraction for refugees and displaced persons in search of a place to live.

In the course of 1997, Sanski Most was repopulated over its pre-war population to some 60,000 persons, most of them Bosnians. Among these, some 20,000 are refugees who are originally from there. A further 40,000 persons are a mix of internally displaced and relocating refugees, many of them recently arrived from Germany, most of them originally from neighbouring municipalities now inside the Republika Srpska. The available habitable space initially provided comfortable living conditions for the incoming population. But with a constant flow of new arrivals (some 200 in March 1998), the initial pattern whereby a single family occupied one house has given way to one in which a family lives in a single room. Rental payment for the accommodation by new arrivals to those previously settled is now standard practice.

A majority of the relocating refugees and displaced persons are Bosniaks from neighbouring municipalities in Republika Srpska. UNHCR reports that most of them wish to return home. On the other hand, some among the 25,000 Serbs from Sanski Most are giving signs of wanting to come back. With the continued in-flow of relocatees, the situation is bound to become explosive.

202. In such cases, the question arises as to how the accommodation needs of increasing numbers of people can be satisfied. The present expectation is that access to areas which are now closed to minority return will clear the bottleneck. If however, obstruction continues to block significant minority returns, provision of additional "buffer" "transitory" accommodation will have to be seriously considered, with the understanding that it is likely to become permanent.

203. However, as long as UNHCR and the international community remain committed to the Dayton Agreement, provision of additional housing for relocatees will continue to be carried out only if it ultimately favours the return of minorities. But it must be recognised that even if return of the minorities is the goal, much flexibility may be required to approve a "relocation project". This is evident in the following specific situation in Doboj municipality for which the provision of additional accommodation for relocatees has been considered: return to a village by a minority is blocked by DPs who live nearby, who belong to a different ethnic group and who themselves have slim prospects of returning home. Return of the minority could be ensured on the basis of a deal whereby housing is provided to the small obstructing group (e.g. 40

families) which then agrees to allow the return of the much larger minority group (e.g. 500 families). In the absence of a change of policy each relocation project requires careful consideration.

204. Reference should be made in conclusion to the overall importance of funds. In the absence of the massive funding required to cover the costs of housing among returnees and relocatees, funds channelled towards relocating persons will have to remain small, within or outside the rehabilitation framework. Most individual relocation solutions, including those of persons moving voluntarily into towns to find employment opportunities, will have to be implemented by the people themselves. This can be carried out in several ways: (a) by obtaining a loan to buy new property as is possible within the KfW scheme; (b) by selling or exchanging property, as will become increasingly possible as legal conditions improve; (c) by gradual purchase of a flat in a building constructed by municipalities through international credit, as is being envisaged by several municipal authorities, including, most forcibly, Tuzla.

205. At a time when the shelter budget for UNHCR is being drastically cut, the organisation could have an important role in helping prioritise locations where international money and credit schemes should concentrate.

UNHCR IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

CDI	City Development Institute
COR	Office of the Commissioner for Refugees and Humanitarian Assistance (Republika Srpska)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit
MFR	Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons (Republika Srpska)
MPDL	Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PIU	Project Implementation Unit (Federation)
SEA	Scottish European Aid
SRSA	Swedish Rescue Services Agency
THW	Technisches Hilfwerk
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
WVB	World Vision Bosnia

Other organisations quoted

OHR	Office of the High Representative
IPTF	International Police Task Force
CRPC	Commission for Real Property Claims

NOTES

1. A shelter co-ordinator was seconded to UNHCR by the US Government for a few months during the second half of 1996.

2. The rate of occupancy reflects the process of return to the home, and therefore constantly evolves. It has changed since January 1998, but some 30 per cent of houses remain unoccupied.

3. See "Return, Relocation and Property Rights" (Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees, 1997, p.23)

4. Source: Office of the Special Envoy. Sarajevo May 1998.

5. Source: World Bank Priority Reconstruction Programme Report. 1996

6. A meeting was convened by UNHCR Sarajevo in late 1996 with key shelter actors such as USAID, the World Bank and the EC, to determine what their participation would be in the sector in 1997: USAID announced that it would no longer participate in shelter; the World Bank said they would only carry out a programme with the carry over of unspent 1996 funds to cover the cost of repairing the external and communal parts of buildings; the EC said it would maintain some involvement in shelter and counted on UNHCR to channel their funding.

7. Shelter materials were released by the local staff of implementing partners on the basis of affidavits which (1) stated the category to which the beneficiary belonged and the materials to which he/she was entitled (2) recorded the type and quantity of materials released. The information was countersigned by the beneficiary when picking-up the materials or when receiving them. Thus, the implementing partners could check the balance between the amount of materials they had delivered to the arehouse against the sum of deliveries from the warehouse. The materials delivered form the warehouse could be further checked by the implementing partner and UNHCR by visiting the beneficiaries. Such monitoring was mostly carried out on a spot check-basis.

8. World Bank Report 1998

9. The categories could have been reduced to 2, since it is probably rare that "structural damage" (Category 2) can occur without "non-structural damage" (Category 1).

10. Out of the total US\$ 1 billion allocated for BiH, US\$ 525 million had been apportioned fro cantonal use. US\$ 157 million were channelled to Sarajevo and Gorazde; US\$ 99 million to the Neretve Canton with focus on Mostar; US\$ 90 million for the Tuzla region.

11. Source: Final report of the 1997 Shelter Programme in Bosnia. Annex 3/A. The figures add to a figure over and above the total because of the overlap between Target Areas and Open Cities.

12. Source: 1997 UNHCR Shelter Programme in BiH Final Report

13. OHR, IPTF, SFOR and the EC.

14. Source: Repatriation and Return Operation 1997, UNHCR.

15. For instance, a recent survey by the European Commission showas a 35 per cent rate of non-occupancy in the shelter programmes implemented during 1997 by a number of agencies: ECHO and four of its sixteen implementing partners: World Vision, SRSA, DRC and Dorkas.

16. Source: UNHCR Sub-Office for Northern BiH.

17. The Dutch Government, the Italian Government, the Saudi Fund Development Agency, the Islamic Bank, ECHO and UNHCR. The implementing agencies are DRC, MOLISV, PIU, THW and UMCOR who provided materials to rehabilitate some 34 house units with UNHCR funding.

18. Source: 1997 UNHCR Shelter Programme in BiH Final Report

19. Coming Home. Danish Refugee Council 1997.

20. Source: UNHCR, Summary of Registered Returnees by Canton from 01/01/97 to 31/12/97. The table does not contain data for all Cantons. The data, therefore, do not add up to the totals.

21. Source: UNHCR "Repatriation and Return Operation, 1998"

22. The European Commission, taking into account the 35 per cent rate of non-occupancy in its own housing programmes, is currently conducting a survey to identify alternative uses for its own resources in support of returning populations. The survey takes into account the relatively long time-lag before the market economy is established and generates sufficient sources of employment. It operates on the

assumption that viable solutions must be found in the transition period. The objective is to identify locations where integrated packages of economic and technical support can be provided to specific groups in order to ensure a sustainable solution for them. This requires reliable information about current patterns of population displacement, together with detailed profiles of the in-flowing and the stable populations. For instance, in areas with a relatively young population, programs will need to include a combination of training modules and economic inputs different from those appropriate in areas with an older population.