

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



- In September 2008, the Office began to implement a field-based initiative, the Urgent Intervention Fund, which targets the most vulnerable people of concern. It provides one-time urgent assistance ranging from the provision of livestock and food parcels to construction materials. In the last quarter of the year 21 families were directly assisted by this fund.
- UNHCR resettled 166 people from BiH in 2008. The majority were Roma who had applied for asylum. Resettlement remained a viable durable solution in 2008 for former Temporary Admission status holders from Kosovo. At the same time, UNHCR sought durable solutions for refugees from Croatia with specific needs and facilitated the return of 427 people.
- In December 2008, a project to support the most vulnerable Roma groups in BiH was begun. As the first comprehensive effort in BiH to assist Roma in obtaining registration, the project will allow a greater number of people from this minority to attain full legal recognition.

## Operational highlights

- In 2008, UNHCR assisted the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to develop a revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII of the General Framework Agreement on Peace (Dayton/Paris Peace Agreements), which is contributing to the conclusion of the displacement chapter in BiH. The revised strategy recognizes the importance of sustaining returns and facilitating the local integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with specific needs.
- UNHCR worked with the BiH authorities to formulate the new Law on the Movement and Stay of Aliens and Asylum, which came into force in May 2008. The law clarifies the rights and entitlements of refugees, including to health care, education, work and social security under the same conditions as BiH citizens.

## Working environment

In 2008 the internal political situation of the country was marked by continued disputes and negative political rhetoric. The Peace Implementation Council, which oversees international policy in BiH and guides the High Representative and his office (OHR), extended the mandate of the OHR at the end of February. Political representatives reached an agreement on police reform in April, which was a precondition for BiH to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union (EU). The SAA is an important milestone on BiH's road to eventual EU membership, obliging the country to harmonize its legal and economic systems with the EU norms.

The positive upturn in political developments was halted by increasing ethno-nationalist rhetoric in

advance of municipal elections in October. These events caused the international community to pay closer attention to the country. In November 2008, the EU adopted a new strategy calling for increased EU leadership and engagement in BiH. Following a decision by EU foreign ministers to keep a military force in BiH, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1845 in November, by which it extended for another year the EU armed forces' mission (EUFOR).

BiH remains endowed with a complex administrative and political structure. The country has 13 constitutions, 14 legal systems, 13 Prime Ministers and some 140 different ministries. Ethno-national affiliations still define the character of politics in the country. Unemployment is a chronic problem, and economic development is often hindered by political disputes and inefficient governance.

Insufficient economic progress accounts for high unemployment, a lack of reconstruction projects and a chronically underdeveloped infrastructure. These factors continue to affect returns. Moreover, minority groups face discriminatory employment practices and difficulties in accessing health services, social protection schemes and education. The Roma continue to be most exposed to discrimination. Their problems are aggravated by the lack of personal documentation which increases the risk of *de facto* statelessness.

## Achievements and impact

### Main objectives

- Ensure the access of all persons of concern to protection, social and economic rights and services, and care and maintenance assistance whenever required.
- Enhance the capacity of the BiH authorities to develop a functional legal asylum system compatible with international and European standards.
- Seek durable solutions for the extremely vulnerable group of collective centre residents through cooperation with the Government and more advocacy among international agencies and donor governments.
- Reduce sexual and gender-based violence, as well as human trafficking among populations of concern through expanded awareness programmes.

### Protection and solutions

In 2008, UNHCR protected approximately 7,000 registered refugees from Croatia who are in need of durable solutions and face obstacles to return. These obstacles relate to the regulation of status, issues of documentation and repossession, and reconstruction of housing. Nevertheless, UNHCR organized some voluntary repatriation to Croatia, providing transportation assistance and repatriation grants to those who opted for return.

At the same time, the Office provided free legal counselling to refugees from Croatia seeking local integration in BiH. The implementation of the Sarajevo Declaration of January 2005 and the ensuing process involving international actors (OSCE, EC and UNHCR) and the Governments of BiH, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia to find durable solutions for the remaining refugees in the region is stalled and has not yet achieved its goals.

At the end of 2008, the High Commissioner launched the Dialogue on Protracted Refugee Situations. It offered a fresh chance to resolve outstanding issues, including the completion of voluntary refugee returns to Croatia.

Among UNHCR's key objectives in BiH are strengthening the asylum system and providing refugee protection. At the end of 2008, BiH had 187 recognized refugees, mainly from Serbia and Kosovo, plus 480 asylum-seekers. Recognized refugees face a number of obstacles in accessing their rights and in locally integrating. In 2008, UNHCR worked to improve their access to basic rights in BiH.

UNHCR supported the improvement of BiH's laws with a bearing on populations of concern. The new Law on the Movement and Stay of Aliens and Asylum came into force in May and provides refugees with conditions equal to those for BiH citizens in accessing rights and entitlements. Furthermore, UNHCR has advocated for the facilitated naturalization of refugees. A draft amendment to the Citizenship Law has prescribed facilitated naturalization for recognized refugees who have resided in the territory of BiH for eight years.

The Office helped the Government to address the basic needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. The latter had limited opportunities for local integration. UNHCR continued to assess individual claims for asylum and found resettlement the only durable solution for the most vulnerable 166 individuals in this group. It continued to

## Persons of concern

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Croatia	7,100	1,300	50	13
	Various	190	190	54	47
Asylum-seekers	Serbia	460	460	46	49
	Various	20	20	16	0
Returnees (refugees)	Various	1,000	10	-	-
IDPs		124,500	45,400	52	19
Returnees (IDPs)		700	150	52	-
Stateless	Stateless	10,000	500	52	-
Others of concern	Former IDPs of concern	46,000	-	51	-
	Former Bosnian refugees of concern	4,500	-	51	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>194,470</b>	<b>48,030</b>		



UNHCR, together with the Government and international partners in Bosnia & Herzegovina, seek durable solutions for extremely vulnerable groups of Collective Centre residents

UNHCR

enhance the capacity of the BiH authorities through training of border police and the officials that review rejected asylum claims. UNHCR also provided advice to the ministries drafting and updating legislation pertaining to the asylum system.

At the end of 2008, 13 years after the war, BiH still recorded some 124,000 IDPs. UNHCR continued to work towards ending internal displacement in the country as mandated in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Despite continued progress in returns, a substantial number of IDPs and returnees remained in a fragile situation, lacking dignified conditions and requiring support to obtain a durable solution.

In 2008, in order to bring displacement in BiH to an end, UNHCR helped the authorities to develop a revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII of the Peace Agreement. The revised plan includes new elements, such as recognition of the importance of the sustainability of return, the need for facilitated local integration for vulnerable IDPs who cannot return, as well as compensation for destroyed property. It represents a crucial benchmark towards successful implementation of Annex VII and provides the basis for a programme to identify and facilitate durable solutions for all displaced people.

#### ● *Activities and assistance*

**Community services:** UNHCR provided services targeting refugees and asylum-seekers in two reception centres. Some 96 per cent of children successfully completed their school year. Nine people received medical care, 11 women completed vocational training, and 17 women attended a workshop on job-seeking that enhanced their employment chances. Forty-six people under 18 years of age and 15 adults

participated in workshops on human trafficking which increased their awareness of the issue. The Office supported the sustainability of returns for some 500 families through income-generation projects, including agricultural activities and the production of cheese, milk and processed fruits.

**Domestic needs and household support:** The Office distributed hygiene items and sanitary materials to the residents of reception centres on a monthly basis, contributing to improved public health. A monthly allowance for procurement of fresh vegetables and fruits improved the well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR supported 27 vulnerable families in the return process with domestic items and firewood to cover needs for seven months during the initial period of settlement.

**Education:** UNHCR assisted 44 female victims of domestic violence with their education. As a result, 17 women returned to high school and two have attended on-the-job training and found employment.

**Food:** UNHCR ensured the regular provision of monthly basic and complementary food parcels for 380 residents in reception centres, also providing their food security and ensuring a normal calorie intake.

**Health and nutrition:** The Office enabled persons of concern to gain access to health services through contracts signed with municipal health care centres. The services of a doctor and a nurse were provided in the Salakovac reception centre. An outbreak of hepatitis B in the reception centre was quickly brought under control and eliminated.

**Income generation:** UNHCR supported the economic empowerment of 55 women victims of war and human trafficking. This support improved the beneficiaries' livelihoods in both rural and urban environments through projects ranging from animal husbandry to pottery.

**Legal assistance:** The Office extended free legal aid services to a total of some 17,000 IDPs, refugees, asylum-seekers and some local vulnerable individuals. The assistance included legal advice as well as representation before administrative and judicial bodies.

Moreover, within the framework of the EU-funded regional project of *Social Inclusion of and Access to Human Rights for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Western Balkans*, the Office assisted 514 individuals in obtaining birth certificates, national ID cards and other civil documents. The assistance was crucial in reducing the risk of statelessness that these people were exposed to.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR continued its public information and awareness-raising activities to change attitudes towards groups of concern to UNHCR. It organized the independent auditing of implementing partners, which confirmed that projects were efficiently managed according to set objectives and in keeping with rules and practices.

**Shelter and other infrastructure:** UNHCR helped maintain a reception centre in Salakovac which is under the responsibility of the BiH authorities. The centre underwent repairs and living conditions for the residents were improved. The Office also provided for the maintenance of safe-houses for victims of domestic violence in Sarajevo and Bihac. It assisted vulnerable people in the process of return through housing reconstruction and income-generation activities that benefited 87 individuals in 11 municipalities, facilitating their re-integration and rendering it more sustainable.

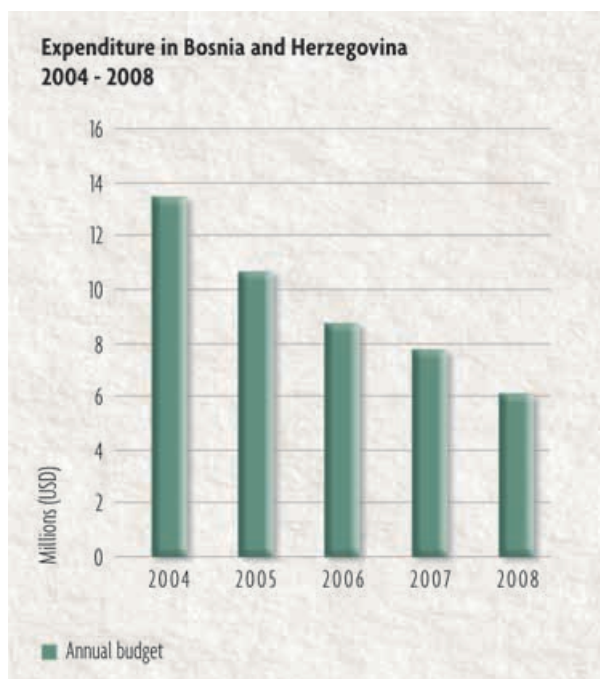
**Transport and logistics:** UNHCR facilitated the return of some 420 refugees to Croatia in 2008. The returnees received transport services and cash grants which are essential for initial reintegration on return. The Office also used warehousing services to store relief items and other commodities.

### ● Constraints

BiH's internal political environment remained volatile and affected IDPs and refugees' decisions on durable solutions. The failure to resolve the outstanding issues within the Sarajevo Declaration process further reduced the pace of repatriation to Croatia. At the same time, an unfavourable socio-economic environment in BiH, coupled with insufficiently developed legislation pertaining to refugees and asylum-seekers, constrained the possibilities of sustainable local integration for refugees and IDPs in the country.

## | Financial information |

In the first half of 2008, the fall in the value of the US dollar was of major concern. By the end of June, exchange rate losses amounted to 17 per cent. Prices rose at the same time.



However, with careful planning and implementation as well as additional resources made available during the year, programmes were delivered as planned.

## | Organization and implementation |

The UNHCR operation is managed by the Representation Office in Sarajevo, a field unit in Banja Luka and a national UNV presence in Gorazde. The number of staff was 33 at the end of 2008, including three international and 25 national employees, one JPO, one secondee and three UNVs.

## | Working with others |

UNHCR worked closely with its main counterparts within the BiH Government and the State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons. In 2008, the Office renewed its partnership with bilateral development actors, and maintained its relations with the OSCE, EUPM, EUFOR, the UN Resident Coordinator, NATO, the IMF and the World Bank. UNHCR participated in the UN Country Team and in the working groups for the preparation of BiH's 2010-2014 UNDAF, which is to be adopted by the Government in 2009.

## | Overall assessment |

UNHCR assisted in improving legislation related to asylum and refugee issues. The Office supported several refugee and vulnerable IDP groups in finding durable solutions. It also successfully brought public attention to the problems faced by IDPs in the country, and succeeded in protecting and reducing the risk of statelessness of the Roma population. UNHCR's fund-raising efforts at the country level brought additional support for key activities in BiH.

With the help of both national and international organizations, UNHCR supported those leaving collective centres and local integration programmes. To complete the work pertaining to durable solutions, UNHCR needs to continue its engagement in BiH. Access to rights for

minority returnees in particular must be enhanced further through advocacy and legislative developments. Renewed efforts will be required to put in place effective social protection policies and mechanisms, including for social housing, psychosocial support for highly traumatized individuals and geriatric care to address the needs of vulnerable IDPs and returnees.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government:** Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Ministry of Security  
**NGOs:** *Hilfswerk Austria*, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, *Bosanski Humanitarni Logisticki Servis*, *Vasa Prava*, Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative, *Fondacija Lokalne Demokratije*

### Operational partners

**Government:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federation Ministry for Displaced Persons and Refugees, Republika Srpska Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons

**Others:** Office of the High Representative, European Commission, OSCE, UN Country Team, UNDP, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

## Budget, income and expenditure in Bosnia & Herzegovina (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available <sup>1</sup>	Total expenditure
Annual budget	6,202,741	878,951	5,250,910	6,129,860	6,129,860

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level and do not include seven per cent support costs for NAM contributions. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

<sup>1</sup> Total funds available include currency adjustments.

## Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	702,070	0
Community services	942,501	113,126
Domestic needs and household support	395,697	7,269
Education	47,975	(453)
Food	155,267	5,738
Health and nutrition	25,578	2,035
Income generation	104,672	1,670
Legal assistance	646,270	9,207
Operational support (to agencies)	145,224	17,967
Shelter and infrastructure	1,084,073	86,346
Transport and logistics	304,545	(4,255)
Instalments to implementing partners	169,892	(238,650)
<b>Subtotal operational activities</b>	<b>4,723,764</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,406,096	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>6,129,860</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cancellation on previous years' expenditure</b>		<b>(7,595)</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Payments made	3,649,962	
Reporting received	(3,480,070)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>169,892</b>	
Outstanding 1st January		277,201
Reporting received		(238,650)
Refunded to UNHCR		(39,941)
Currency adjustment		1,390
<b>Outstanding 31st December</b>		<b>0</b>