

SERBIA

Operational highlights

Serbia

- Some 774 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in collective centres moved into their own dwellings, allowing for the closure of 12 collective centres.
- In Serbia, 275 persons applied for asylum, a five-fold increase from 2008. UNHCR organized training for border police and law enforcement authorities.
- Some 5,500 refugees were provided with free legal aid and counselling to facilitate their local integration. Approximately 735 refugees were assisted to obtain documents necessary for naturalization or accessing social rights in Serbia.
- UNHCR conducted an awareness-raising campaign aimed at reducing and preventing statelessness, mainly among Roma groups. 1,700 civil documents were obtained for more than 1,000 persons at risk of statelessness.
- UNHCR adopted a new strategy to give a fresh impetus to voluntary returns to Kosovo. In 2009, the Office assisted 220 persons to return to Kosovo.

Kosovo

- UNHCR continued to build the capacity of the relevant authorities and civil society entities active in reintegration and return. The Office established and provided support to Kosovo's Return Support and Coordination Unit (RSCU) which works to reinforce the coordination between central and local structures involved in return issues.
- UNHCR's new return strategy for Kosovo and revised assistance package increased returns by 70 per cent over 2008. The Office's organized-return efforts offered durable solutions opportunities to some 1,150 returnees to Kosovo and provided a solid basis for their sustainable reintegration.
- UNHCR supported the authorities in the drafting of the Asylum Law. The Office also reinforced its activities aimed at preventing statelessness. Nearly 2,400 members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities were assisted with civil status registration.



- UNHCR strengthened its support for minority IDP returns. More than 600 returnees received relief items and food packages, some 60 families benefited from housing repairs and housing reconstruction, and 36 community development projects were implemented.

Working environment

Serbia

In 2009, Serbia's political and economic course was firmly set on the path of European integration. Reflecting the country's progress, European Union (EU) Member States within the Schengen zone lifted the visa regime for Serbian citizens as of December 2009. Serbia also made appreciable efforts to improve relations with its neighbours, opening up new opportunities for solving outstanding issues of displacement in the entire subregion.

The Government and UNHCR set as a priority the need to find solutions for the most vulnerable people living in collective centres, and underlined the need to improve the situation as regards the return of IDPs to Kosovo. Though a comprehensive solutions strategy for the IDP population from Kosovo could not be initiated, the Government invested in assistance projects targeting the most vulnerable displaced groups.

Kosovo

Progress was made in strengthening stability and security, although sporadic incidents involving ethnic minorities were still reported, in particular in northern Kosovo. However, an atmosphere of inter-ethnic trust is gradually being created. The November 2009 municipal elections in Kosovo saw the participation of some local Serb communities. These elections contributed to the establishment of new municipalities promoting self-governance.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1244 remained in force as the UN mission presence in Kosovo (UNMIK) was reconfigured. The transfer of responsibilities from the United Nations to the European Union was delayed, but EULEX and the International Civilian Office (ICO) missions were steadily becoming operational.

Following UNMIK's downsizing, UNHCR acquired a more prominent role in the return of refugees and IDPs from and within Kosovo. To facilitate returns, and more specifically, minority returns, the Office reinforced its interaction with both central and local authorities. The Ministry of Communities and Return launched a new multi-year strategy which strengthens the coordination of efforts linked to reintegration.

Despite some progress, the overall economic situation in Kosovo remained bleak, with an unemployment rate of over 40 per cent. A dearth of housing, a large number of pending property claims and difficulties in accessing education and health services and exercising civil rights were the main impediments to return and sustainable integration.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

Serbia

- Help the Government of Serbia to find solutions for IDPs from Kosovo and for refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Assist refugees with specific needs, IDPs and other marginalized groups.
- Work with the Government to build an asylum system in line with international standards.
- Eliminate current and potential situations of statelessness.

Kosovo

- Strengthen the authorities' capacities both at central and local levels to develop and implement protection systems in line with international standards.
- Seek solutions for displaced person returning to and within Kosovo and seek durable solutions for refugees through local integration.
- Improve coordination mechanisms with key partners, develop new strategies to improve return conditions and provide for the protection needs of all groups.
- Maintain adequate contingency plans to respond promptly and effectively to possible population movements.

Protection and solutions

Serbia

Refugees in Serbia are the largest refugee group in a protracted situation within Europe. Most are from Croatia, and a needs assessment carried out in 2008 by the Government with UNHCR's assistance showed that the majority would prefer local integration and naturalization, although finding housing and becoming self-reliant was difficult for them.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Croatia	62,100	62,100	5	9
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	24,200	24,200	54	10
	Various	50	50	42	52
Asylum-seekers	Various	30	30	3	3
IDPs	Serbia	224,900	224,900	50	20
Stateless*	Mostly unregistered or undocumented Roma minorities	16,700	16,700	50	76
Returned ex-IDPs including returned IDP-like	Serbia	900	-	47	-
Others of concern	Various	390	320	35	-
Returnees (refugees)**	Austria	900	20	24	-
	Various	1,800	380	24	-
Total		331,970	328,700		

* The majority of this population are people who are yet to have their Serbian nationality formally recognized.

** Demographic breakdown of returnees refers to all returnees.



PRAXIS, a non-governmental organization provides free legal aid, information and counselling to displaced returnees.

UNHCR / M. JANKOVIC

groups at risk of statelessness. Both IDPs and other Roma face obstacles in accessing their rights due to their lack of civil documentation. UNHCR addressed this need through advocacy and the regional Social Inclusion Project to assist the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) community. More than 1,700 civil documents were obtained for some 1,000 people.

UNHCR also supported the Government's efforts to build a stronger asylum system and participated in a joint national project to combat human trafficking, as more people entering Serbia irregularly on the way to Western Europe risk becoming victims of trafficking.

UNHCR developed and implemented solutions for local integration focusing on vulnerable groups, especially from collective centres, mainly in the areas of housing, self-reliance and legal support. Repatriation to Croatia remained at a low level as it was dependent on further expansion of the Housing Care Programme and on the resolution of outstanding issues linked to occupancy and tenancy rights.

Renewed bilateral relations between Serbia and Croatia and regional dialogues opened a new opportunity for the resolution of outstanding issues. In 2009, UNHCR assisted 160 vulnerable people to return to Croatia.

The voluntary return of IDPs to Kosovo virtually stopped in 2008 due to complicated political circumstances linked to the status of Kosovo, problems in repossessing property in Kosovo, difficulties in accessing basic social services and a lack of economic opportunities. Despite these constraints, UNHCR's new returns strategy produced modest results in Serbia in 2009, with some 300 people approaching the Office requesting assistance to return. The Government's IDP policy, which is return-oriented, affected vulnerable groups who could not or did not plan to return, making their living conditions difficult. UNHCR enhanced its advocacy to protect vulnerable IDP groups. This population was included in various self-reliance and housing schemes that created a basis for their subsequent local integration. UNHCR assisted more than 550 vulnerable refugee and IDP families to find appropriate housing. Some 350 families improved their economic situation through income-generating projects.

Complicated administrative procedures and costs associated with the collection of civil documentation sometimes prevent displaced persons from regularizing their civil status. UNHCR supported legal assistance projects facilitating the integration of refugees. Free legal assistance to IDPs served as an important instrument for property restitution, access to rights and the search for solutions.

Serbia has no mechanisms for identifying and protecting stateless persons. The Roma, the most marginalized and vulnerable segment of the IDP population, also constitute

Kosovo

UNHCR in Kosovo provided protection, facilitated return and supported the re-integration or local integration of a small number of refugees within Kosovo, IDP returnees from Serbia, returning refugees from their countries of asylum as well as IDPs in Kosovo. The Office focused its protection activities on the needs of minority returnees and of vulnerable groups. It also monitored voluntary and forced returns from European countries.

To ensure effective protection and durable solutions, UNHCR helped build the capacity of the relevant authorities. It also assisted in the development of legislation in conformity with international standards. UNHCR assisted the Government in drafting the asylum law and developing the capacity of the Department of Border, Asylum and Migration to reach appropriate standards.

In Kosovo, UNHCR cooperated with the Ministry for Communities and Returns on the latest revision of the *Manual for Sustainable Return*, which recognizes the right of IDPs to make a free and informed choice with respect to return. The manual also recognizes IDPs' rights to assistance in returning to their homes, or to a place other than home, and to seek local integration in their place of displacement if they so wish. At the municipal level, UNHCR helped local authorities to develop their capacity to deal with returns.

In 2009, the improved internal situation in Kosovo, as well as UNHCR's interventions, sped up voluntary returns compared to the year before. UNHCR organized returns for more than 1,150 people to Kosovo. Under the Social Inclusion Project for the RAE community, some 2,400 people obtained civil-status registration and 263 people were registered as Kosovo habitual residents. The Office supported vulnerable returnees, IDPs and refugees during return and integration through housing repair and construction. Some 58 community-development projects helped to improve livelihoods and provide for self-reliance and facilitated reintegration.

Despite some progress, significant protection problems remained, including discrimination against minority groups

in access to public services; an increase in the number of people at risk of statelessness following the promulgation of the citizenship law; child labour (particularly within the RAE communities); and lack of adequate legal and judicial services to settle outstanding disputes relating to property and housing.

● *Activities and assistance*

Serbia

Community services: UNHCR supported the Government's local action plans targeting refugee integration in 12 municipalities, where some 140 families obtained local integration assistance to improve housing and livelihoods. Mobile teams assisted some 18,000 vulnerable individuals and nearly 120 IDP and refugee children attended workshops and playgroups to solidify their social integration.

Domestic needs and household support: The Office provided in-kind and cash grants to collective centre residents who needed help to vacate the centres. Some 213 vulnerable individuals received assistance and moved from sub-standard collective centre accommodation after having found better housing.

Health and nutrition: All asylum-seekers and refugees had access to basic medical care. The Office helped some 630 IDPs and refugees with medical services, and referred some 1,290 refugees and IDPs to local health institutions.

Income generation: Refugees and IDPs improved their socio-economic situation through UNHCR-supported livelihood projects. Some 214 displaced families received agricultural and other customized assistance for income generation, and some 140 families received business training and start-up grants.

Legal assistance: The Office worked to remove impediments to accessing social and other rights by IDPs and refugees. Some 5,500 refugees and 4,300 IDPs received free legal aid and counselling. A joint UNHCR/Border Police monitoring system was established and four seminars on asylum issues were organized for 500 border guards. In addition, a seminar on the European Convention on Human Rights and refugee protection was conducted jointly with the OSCE for 40 judges.

UNHCR also sought to address the risk of statelessness, in particular for the Roma community. The Office submitted some 1,300 requests for civil registration and issued some 1,000 documents. Some 75 Roma obtained identity cards. A conference which promoted the importance of civil registration for Roma was organized for relevant state employees and Roma representatives.

All reported cases of gender-based violence were addressed, with 43 victims receiving immediate protection and legal assistance. Five regional seminars trained over 130 participants from municipalities on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR continued to provide information allowing IDPs to make informed and free decision on durable solutions options.

Shelter and other infrastructure: 167 displaced families received building materials and 118 families moved from collective centres to village houses and received dependency-reduction grants.

Transport and logistics: The Office assisted 160 vulnerable refugees repatriating to Croatia and 220 IDPs going to Kosovo. UNHCR organized "go and see/inform" visits to Kosovo for almost 800 people. Two implementing partners were provided with nearly 56,000 litres of diesel to support their programme implementation and monitoring activities.

Kosovo

Community services: UNHCR implemented 36 community development projects in ethnically mixed return areas. The Office also supported capacity development among NGOs, civil society organizations, self-help groups and IDP associations engaged in the return process. As a result, an IDP association established cooperative ties with the Kosovo municipal authorities. Twenty-two sustainable return projects were implemented to assist IDPs to integrate more fully and improve their livelihoods.

Domestic needs and household support: The Office distributed home appliances and furniture to 80 minority returnee families. It also distributed relief packages to cover basic needs and reduce vulnerability among more than 600 minority returnees as well as 50 extremely vulnerable Kosovo IDPs.

Food and nutrition: The Office delivered basic food rations to more than 600 minority returnees, while Kosovo IDPs received a one-month food ration. No cases of malnutrition were reported.

Income generation: Income-generation projects were tailored to establish or re-start sustainable livelihood activities. Sixteen projects benefiting needy refugees were carried out, and 75 per cent of the implemented projects increased beneficiaries' incomes by more than 33 per cent.

Legal assistance: To enable informed and voluntary decisions on return, UNHCR was involved in some 69 "go and see visits" within Kosovo and 32 "go and inform" visits to neighbouring countries, in which a total of 1,700 displaced persons participated.

Free legal assistance and counselling helped 3,500 people to avail themselves of their rights. UNHCR continued to monitor forced returns from European countries and recorded nearly 3,000 forcibly returned individuals, many of whom were in need of reintegration assistance. Some 1,500 RAE community members benefited from UNHCR's legal assistance, and 11 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were followed up.

The Office supported its national counterparts in the development of a database to record returnees and displaced persons interested in return. Regional protection training sessions were organized on outreach activities, human rights, RAE rights and forced returns. UNHCR translated protection-related documents into local languages.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR provided support and capacity-building assistance to all implementing partners.

Shelter and other infrastructure: UNHCR conducted surveys to assess housing needs. Twenty-nine Kosovo IDP families benefited from emergency shelter repairs or from full housing reconstruction. With UNHCR's assistance, 55 returnee families repaired their houses and six returnee families benefited from full housing reconstruction. UNHCR helped to install seven shelters as temporary accommodation for 28 minority returnees.

Transport and logistics: In 2009, UNHCR had 98 vehicles, including trucks and forklifts, to ensure the smooth transport and delivery of relief items as well as their proper storage in the warehouse.

○ Constraints

Serbia

The renewed regional dialogue did not bring concrete results in 2009, limiting the international community's support. Some planned activities had to be postponed. The actual numbers of IDPs remained uncertain as no progress was made with regards to registration. Roma IDPs remained vulnerable and in need of assistance.

Kosovo

Absence of meaningful dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade continued to have an adverse impact on UNHCR's operations. The administrative and political division persisted and was a hindrance in achieving durable solutions. The reluctance of some local authorities to address return issues and adequately fund return activities slowed the process in parts of Kosovo. High unemployment and unfavourable economic conditions in Kosovo also adversely affected the sustainability of returns.

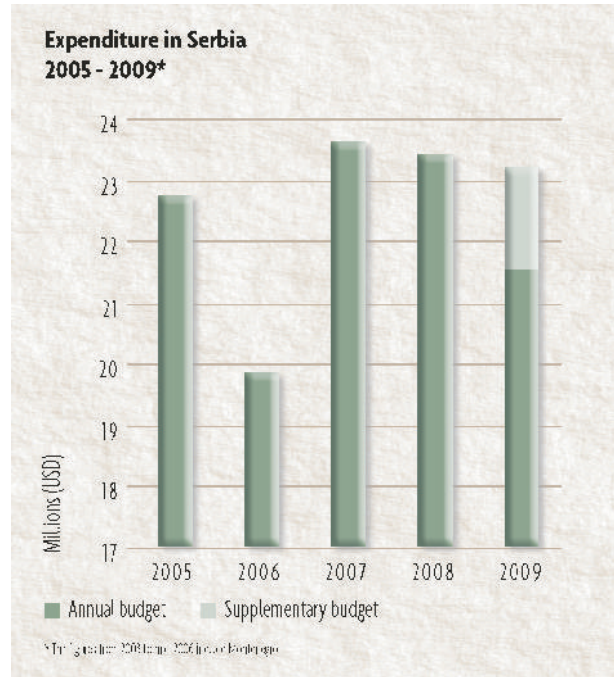
| Financial information |

Serbia

In 2009, the operation in Serbia needed a substantial boost of funding in order to improve conditions for vulnerable displaced groups accommodated in collective centres, although actual funding did not meet expectations. UNHCR's annual budget remained stable, although exchange-rate losses had to be partially offset.

Kosovo

Funding in 2009 proved to be adequate. Costs related to an increase in returns and associated interventions were in some ways offset by reductions in administrative expenditures and the re-prioritization of operational activities.



| Organization and implementation |

Serbia

UNHCR operations in Serbia (excluding Kosovo) were managed by the country office in Belgrade and the field office in Kraljevo. UNHCR's staff included five international and 42 national staff. UNHCR's management and programme delivery were reinforced by the deployment of three UNVs and six UNOPS staff.

Kosovo

The Office of the Chief of Mission in Pristina was supported by four field offices and one field unit. The overall staffing comprised ten international and 58 national staff. UNHCR's coordinating and monitoring role necessitated the deployment of 12 UNVs and one SURGE deployee. The office in Kosovo provided telecommunications, IT and security support to other offices in the subregion.

| Working with others |

Serbia

UNHCR's programme was implemented through 14 implementing partners which included national and international NGOs as well as state entities. The cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, municipal authorities, trustees and local centres for social welfare ensured the smooth implementation of UNHCR's projects. UNHCR participated in UN Theme Groups on gender, HIV and AIDS, disability and youth, and chaired the Roma Theme Group which was especially active in supporting Serbia's presidency of the Roma Decade.

UNHCR partnered with UNDP, IOM, UN-HABITAT and UNICEF in promoting peace building and conflict resolution through a focus on local integration of IDPs in 13 municipalities in southern Serbia. UNHCR maintained fruitful cooperation with the European Commission and the European Union in general, BPRM, the Council of Europe Development Bank as well as private organizations (Humanitarian Organization Divac) and international companies (Nike Sports Company) interested in the operation.

Kosovo

In 2009, UNHCR carried out its programme in Kosovo through six implementing partners, which included two international NGOs. The Office reinforced its cooperation with the local authorities. In late 2009, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the authorities on the provision of housing reconstruction to returnees and Kosovo IDPs.

UNHCR remained actively involved in the UN Kosovo Team's activities. It continued to guide and support UNDP's regional project to strengthen the structure of a central IDP representational association. UNHCR maintained its good working relationship with the reconfigured UNMIK as well as with KFOR. At the central and field levels, OSCE and UNHCR maintained effective contacts and continued their interaction in human rights monitoring and return issues.

Overall assessment

Serbia

In 2009, the Office made progress in finding durable solutions for most vulnerable displaced people. UNHCR's collaboration with the Government led to durable solutions for people in collective centres. UNHCR needs to reinvent its advocacy efforts in order to translate State interventions and projects in favour of IDP groups into a clearly formulated IDP strategy which opens up all sustainable durable solutions options, including local integration. Furthermore, the Office needs to continue its work with the Government to review refugee and IDP statistics in order to ensure updated displacement data and a more accurate assessment of the displaced population's needs.

Kosovo

Despite a complex political and socio-economic context, the Office achieved notable progress in improving collaboration with local and international actors in Kosovo. Roles and

responsibilities of all actors involved in return were more clearly defined and are better understood at both central and municipal levels. UNHCR succeeded in strengthening its sub-regional coordination, leading to a revived interest in return and translating into more efficient provision of return assistance, especially at its initial stage.

In view of the complexity of the political scene in Kosovo and further reconfiguration of UNMIK, UNHCR will need to expand its collaboration with such actors as ICO and EULEX.

The Office will have to continue its technical support and capacity building of the competent central authorities in the sphere of asylum and statelessness, as well as at the municipal level where return and reintegration issues find their practical application. Also, UNHCR will have to review and, if necessary, redesign some of its livelihood and income-generation projects to ensure the sustainability of return and reintegration.

Partners	
Serbia	
Implementing partners	
Government:	Commissioner for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia, Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons
NGOs:	Danish Refugee Council, Red Cross of Serbia, Union of IDP Associations (UNIIA), Association for Protection and Promotion of Mental Health of Children and Youth, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance, Micro Development Fund, InterSOS, MicroFins, Housing Centre, <i>Praxis</i> , <i>Vizija</i> , Amity
Others:	UNV, UNOPS
Serbia	
Operational partners	
Government:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Infrastructure and Capital Investment, Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, People's Office of the President of the Republic of Serbia
Others:	UN Country Team, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UN HABITAT, WHO, European Commission Delegation, BPRM, Council of Europe Development Bank, OSCE Mission to Serbia, Humanitarian Organization Divac
Kosovo	
Implementing partners	
NGOs:	Danish Refugee Council, Mercy Corps, Developing Together, Advocacy Training and Resource Centre, Civil Rights Programme –Kosovo, Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development
Kosovo	
Operational partners	
Government:	Ministry of Local government and Administration, Ministry of Communities and Returns, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Others:	UNMIK, ICO, EUSR, EULEX, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCHR, IOM, UNFPA, WHO, OSCE, CRS, CARE International

Budget, income and expenditure in Serbia (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	24,228,908	3,084,663	19,240,330	22,324,993	21,528,848
Protracted refugee situation in Serbia SB	6,860,900	1,040,161	627,726	1,667,887	1,667,887
Total	31,089,808	4,124,824	19,868,056	23,992,880	23,196,735

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.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Serbia (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,308,170	0	4,308,170	0
Community services	658,376	378,488	1,036,864	231,405
Domestic needs and household support	761,075	0	761,075	256,922
Education	80,697	0	80,697	150,764
Food	104,624	0	104,624	0
Health and nutrition	87,858	0	87,858	45,988
Income generation	746,500	127,219	873,719	37,757
Legal assistance	1,518,825	0	1,518,825	458,506
Operational support (to agencies)	1,173,142	16,204	1,189,346	36,456
Shelter and infrastructure	3,284,146	210,234	3,494,380	729,887
Transport and logistics	1,270,404	0	1,270,404	224,551
Instalments to implementing partners	3,289,056	935,741	4,224,797	(2,172,234)
Subtotal operational activities	17,282,871	1,667,887	18,950,758	0
Programme support	4,245,978	0	4,245,978	0
Total expenditure	21,528,848	1,667,887	23,196,735	0

Cancellation on previous years' expenditure

(1,121)

Instalments with implementing partners

Payments made	10,235,065	1,657,608	11,892,673	
Reporting received	(6,946,010)	(721,866)	(7,667,876)	
Balance	3,289,056	935,741	4,224,797	

Previous year's report

Instalments with implementing partners:

Outstanding 1st January				2,309,881
Reporting received				(2,172,234)
Refunded to UNHCR				(98,168)
Currency adjustment				2,256
Outstanding 31st December				41,734