

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Main Objectives

- Continue to support voluntary returns within and to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), with a view to completing returns by the end of 2004. Continue to closely monitor the implementation of property legislation and the exercise of associated civil rights.
- Provide limited and flexible humanitarian assistance to the most needy returning refugees and IDPs. Advocate the continuation of activities by other agencies, to ensure sustainability of returns.
- Continue legal assistance as well as the dissemination of information among returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) regarding their civil and legal rights. Identify ways and means to nationalise the existing network of Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs).
- Develop an effective asylum system in co-operation with other partners in the European Union structures and the Stability Pact (SP).
- Support the voluntary repatriation of Croatian-Serb refugees and other refugee groups to their countries of origin in the region.



Working environment

Recent Developments

In 2002 the political situation in BiH was comparatively stable. Further progress was achieved in harmonising State institutions and policies in the two constituent Entities. Co-operation with neighbouring countries is likewise improving. Consistent and stricter implementation of the property legislation in 2002 resulting in a dramatically accelerated pace of returns is another factor which indicates that these positive trends are irreversible, and allow hopes that the very high number of returns recorded during 2001

will be exceeded in 2002. It is further anticipated that, by the end of 2003, the great majority of those in situations of displacement who intend to return will have done so.

Considerable efforts have been made to create the conditions that will underpin sustainable return. UNHCR has closely followed and supported legislative developments and the implementation of

| Planning Figures | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Population | Jan. 2003 | Dec. 2003 |
| IDPs | 328,500 | 218,500 |
| Returnees | 5,000 | 35,000 |
| Refugees originating from Croatia | 21,000 | 18,000 |
| Asylum-seekers and refugees from FRY | 6,000 | 4,000 |
| Total | 360,500 | 275,500 |

Total Requirements: USD 17,134,897

laws with a direct impact on returnees' unfettered (non-discriminatory) access to education, health, pensions, employment, utilities, public documents and other services.

Constraints

The main threat to continuing large-scale returns and reintegration is unemployment. With international aid declining, the Bosnian economy is sluggish and could exacerbate social tensions. Many young Bosnians seek a livelihood elsewhere. Perhaps the hardest hit are returnees who cannot access sufficient funds to rebuild their homes.

In some areas of BiH security concerns remain, and incidents are occasionally reported. Minority returnees suffer discrimination in everyday life and in their relations with administrative bodies. In addition, the existence of mines throughout the country and particularly along the inter-entity boundary line, remains a deterrent to return, reconstruction and economic recovery in rural areas.

Strategy

As UNHCR approaches the completion of its responsibilities under the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), its strategic focus will increasingly be protection, in conformity with its core mandate. More attention will be paid to strengthening the capacity of State institutions in dealing with refugee and asylum issues. The key elements of the strategy comprise: 1) Protection and capacity-building of national institutions; 2) targeted and flexible assistance; and 3) Durable solutions.

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR will continue to intervene, negotiate, advise and provide information in facilitating the return of IDPs and refugees. The main aim of these initiatives will be to create and maintain a favourable climate for return and repatriation. Increasingly, emphasis will be placed on legal aspects, such as the implementation of the property



Here, a returnee girl living in Bukevu village where Serbian and Bosnian returnees live side by side. UNHCR / R. Chalasani

laws and dissemination of information to the targeted population through LAICs. Efforts will be strengthened to further develop the legal framework and the capacity of the Government of BiH to deal with refugee and asylum-seeker issues.

Assistance

A multi-sectoral and flexible approach will remain the basis for targeted assistance in 2003, which is crucial at the initial phase of returns. It is also instrumental in creating sustainable conditions for returnees, for which UNHCR has developed the concept of Quick Support Funds (QSF) which have a very positive impact on returns. The funds will be used for community-based, small-scale projects. Interventions will be limited to those situations where other actors are unable to provide adequate assistance to the most vulnerable of the returnees. A limited distribution of domestic items to vulnerable persons is envisaged as well as transportation of their personal belongings to their place of return. Having developed a harmonised regime of assistance to refugee returns, UNHCR will actively pursue durable solutions for those groups of refugees from Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) who wish to return. UNHCR will continue financing projects offering durable solutions for persons accommodated in collective centres. At the same time, UNHCR will continue to assist asylum-seekers and refugees from FRY at the Reception Asylum Centres (RACs) maintained by the State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees. UNHCR's assistance addresses the specific health, nutritional and educational needs of children and women in RACs.

Desired Impact

UNHCR's programme will be focused on voluntary returns to ensure that they take place in a secure environment and are sustainable. Pursuing strict implementation of the property laws will resolve housing issues and have a major impact on the return process. It will considerably reduce the number of IDPs and refugees still in need of a durable solution. Legal assistance and support to IDPs and remaining refugees from Croatia and FRY should allow many to return and exercise their basic human rights. Capacity-building and training

of government officials will expedite the creation of the legal framework for dealing with refugee and asylum-seeker issues.

Organisation and Implementation

Management Structure

In January 2003, UNHCR's operation in BiH will comprise 21 international and 127 national staff. Eight JPOs and 18 national professional officers will lend additional support. In line with UNHCR's general policy of downsizing its humanitarian operations in BiH, overall staffing will be reduced from 174 to 122 and the number of Field Offices will be reduced from 15 to 10 by the end of the year.

Co-ordination

UNHCR's role as the lead humanitarian agency in BiH was established under Annex 7 of the GFAP. The Office will continue to work closely with government agencies, international and national NGOs to implement its assistance programme in 2003. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), UNHCR, SFOR (the NATO stabilisation force), OSCE and the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) hold a weekly Cabinet meeting, chaired by the High Representative, to review and act upon issues affecting implementation of the GFAP. UNHCR is also a co-chair, with OHR, of the national, regional and local Return and Reconstruction Task Forces (RRTFs) where major return related issues are co-ordinated. In the field of development aid, UNHCR participates in the Resident Co-ordinator Group meetings with other UN Agencies. At these meetings UNHCR raises humanitarian concerns which need to be addressed. The State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons (comprising UNHCR, the State Ministry and the two Entity Ministries) provides an increasingly active forum where all aspects of return are discussed.

| Offices |
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| Office of the Chief of Mission, Sarajevo |
| Banja Luka |
| Bihac |
| Bijeljina |
| Jajce |
| Gorazde |
| Livno |
| Mostar |
| Orasje |
| Travnik |
| Trebinje |
| Tuzla |
| Visegrad |
| Zenica |
| Zvornik |

| Budget (USD) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Activities and Services | Annual Programme |
| Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination | 4,634,648 |
| Community Services | 3,300,000 |
| Domestic Needs | 787,034 |
| Food | 611,203 |
| Health | 56,530 |
| Legal Assistance | 2,000,000 |
| Operational Support (to Agencies) | 1,232,802 |
| Shelter / Other Infrastructure | 1,128,931 |
| Transport / Logistics | 680,000 |
| Total Operations | 14,431,148 |
| Programme Support | 2,703,749 |
| Total | 17,134,897 |

| Partners |
|--|
| Government Agencies |
| Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees |
| Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska |
| State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons |
| State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees |
| |
| NGOs |
| American Refugee Committee |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative |
| Bosnian Humanitarian Logistics Service |
| CEFA (European Committee for Training and Agriculture) |
| Helsinki Citizen's Assembly |
| <i>Hilfswerk</i> (Austria) |
| International Rescue Committee (UK/Spain) |
| <i>Iustitia</i> |
| <i>Malteser Hilfsdienst</i> (Germany) |
| Mercy Corps International/Scottish European Aid |
| |
| Others |
| Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit |