

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Help the national authorities develop and implement an adequate system of asylum; consolidate durable solutions for current refugees; continue humanitarian assistance based on the needs of the remaining refugee population; rehabilitate and develop areas previously occupied by refugee camps.

Impact

- The Office provided comprehensive comments on the draft asylum law, which was submitted to Parliament in October 2000.
- Government asylum officials were trained in refugee protection, refugee law and refugee status determination procedures through five training workshops.
- UNHCR provided material assistance, know-how and funding to facilitate the establishment of a separate asylum office within the Government.
- UNHCR helped to establish a network of legal support through NGOs.
- A total of 1,316 refugee families received counselling and legal assistance from UNHCR through five NGOs.
- A repatriation package (cash and material assistance) was distributed to 446 returnees to Kosovo and Serbia.
- A total of 82 persons were resettled in third countries.



Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Refugees)	8,900	8,900	51	49

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
11,411,707	1,493,456	9,010,599	10,504,055	10,502,856

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia) is a newly independent country with various ethnic groups who maintain family links in neighbouring countries. The Government's position on refugee issues continues to be heavily influenced by political, economic and social factors that could have a serious impact on refugee protection in the country.

The economy of FYR Macedonia was adversely affected by the Kosovo emergency and the massive influx of refugees in 1999. The country hosted roughly 260,000 refugees from Kosovo during the crisis in 1999, many of them in camps. While most repatriated or returned spontaneously, some 9,000 remained in the country at the end of the year. The remaining refugees are predominantly from minorities, including Roma, Groan, Juba, Serbs and ethnic Albanians from southern Serbia. They reside with 1,200 host families and in six collective centres. Because of the diversity of ethnic backgrounds, in particular the minorities, their return to Kosovo is considered unlikely in the near future.

In addition to the ethnic divisions behind dangerous social tensions, widespread poverty in FYR Macedonia exacerbates the difficulties for the remaining refugees. About a fifth of the population in FYR Macedonia reportedly lives below the poverty line, and at least 40,000 families receive welfare benefits in order to subsist. One third of the labour force is estimated to be unemployed. The Kosovo crisis and regional instability have confounded the Government's medium term framework for reform and development and delayed a long awaited economic turnaround.

Constraints

The Government has been granting refugees Temporary Humanitarian Assisted Persons (THAP) status of three to six months' duration. The temporary nature of THAP status has constrained protection and solutions, as well as the assistance programme. It has led to anxiety among refugees unable to plan ahead, while for UNHCR it has precluded long-term or even medium-term planning, thus reducing efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Repatriation of ethnic minorities to Kosovo is closely linked to the security situation inside Kosovo. A few Roma refugees have applied for go-and-see visits and voluntary return, but UNHCR has not always been able to provide security clearance. A funding shortfall became acute with the phasing out of major bilateral donors to the operation.

Funding

The refugees are totally dependent on humanitarian assistance: at present they have no chance of finding employment. Restricted funding made it more difficult for UNHCR to meet their needs.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

Although FYR Macedonia is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the principles laid out in these instruments are neither fully reflected in national legislation nor implemented in practice. The Government still needs to enact a national law on asylum and implement a refugee status determination procedure. In 2000, UNHCR continued to work towards the adoption of national asylum legislation and the establishment of institutional machinery to implement it. Since early 1998, UNHCR has been advising the working group on the draft asylum law and prepared comprehensive comments on the draft in 2000. UNHCR has been providing appropriate technical support to back up its advocacy of the establishment of a specific body within the Department for Foreigners and Immigration Issues (Ministry of Internal Affairs) to deal exclusively with asylum-related issues. Since 1995, UNHCR has been assisting the working group of local experts charged with drafting amendments to the Nationality Act; UNHCR's principal function here has been to familiarise them with European practice and policy.

A non-governmental working group on refugees issues was set up under UNHCR and OSCE/ODIHR auspices. The group consists of seven non-governmental organisations and focuses mainly on the plight of Roma refugees. Two workshops were held on the international protection of refugees in the region.

While continued asylum monitoring and protection of refugees in FYR Macedonia remained a priority, UNHCR also sought viable durable solutions for the 9,000 remaining refugees. In 2000, the voluntary repatriation programme targeted these remaining refugees. House-to-house surveys were conducted to assess reasons hampering return, so that appropriate remedies might be introduced. The resettlement programme assisted a limited number of persons to find safety or life-saving medical assistance abroad or to reunite with close family members.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Community services activities targeted women, children and vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma community, with projects on reproductive health, education, vocational training, psycho-social support, recreational activities and the training of local partners. The outreach team served more than 5,000 Roma, including 1,800 Roma refugees. Of the 8,846 mainly Roma beneficiaries assisted throughout the year, nearly half were female and 47 per cent were below the age of 15. Approximately 1,000 refugee children and 500 from host families, took part in various pre-school, school and extra-curricular activities including computer training, foreign languages, handicraft and music.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Non-food items (blankets, firewood, hygiene kits and kitchen sets) were provided for refugees living in collective centres or with host families. The special needs of refugee women, children (including sanitary items and diapers) and the disabled were taken into due consideration. Over 12,000 blankets were distributed. Approximately 1,200 refugee families were given two cubic metres of firewood each. In collective centres, where wood was required for cooking and heating, refugees received firewood on a regular basis. Hygiene kits consisting of soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, toilet paper and washing powder were also distributed. All refugees in collective centres received clothing and shoes.

Food: Refugees received basic food from WFP and complementary food from NGOs. While nearly 1,600 refugees cooked their own food in Suto Orizari and Radusa collective centres, over 600 received cooked meals at other centres. A national NGO was responsible for the distribution of basic food supplies, plus some of the complementary food, to refugees in host families. To ensure the effectiveness, accountability, transparency and impartiality of food distribution, an international partner was tasked to help the NGO with distribution and to monitor overall food assistance to refugees across the country.

Health/Nutrition: UNHCR, working with the Government and other international agencies, ensured continued access for all refugees to national health care facilities. Refugees in collective centres received primary health care (including mother and child care) as well as hospital referrals when necessary. Due to the weak national health care system, especially the lack of medicines in local dispensaries, refugees could not always get prescribed medicines. Projects on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness were also launched in host communities, benefiting both refugees and the local

population. A survey on the nutritional status of women, children under five, the elderly and the disabled in collective centres was carried out by an international NGO in June 2000.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR established a legal network through NGOs to provide legal and practical advice and assistance to persons applying for Macedonian citizenship (424 cases approached these NGOs in 2000). In this context, the Centre for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies was consolidated within the Institute for Sociological, Political and Judicial Research. UNHCR remains concerned that some citizens of the former Yugoslavia are unable to regularise their citizenship due to the onerous requirements of the existing Citizenship Act and the Law on the Movement and Residence of Foreigners (Aliens Act). In June 2000, a workshop was conducted on new European trends on nationality, to familiarise national experts with European practice and policy. Capacity-building activities were focused on the establishment of a non-governmental protection network and to raise awareness within key institutions on protection issues.

Operational Support (to Agencies): In addition to the salaries and related operational costs of the implementing partners, UNHCR covered administrative expenditures incurred for the implementation of food distribution, logistics, shelter and health activities, training and capacity-building for local NGOs, and mass information and awareness campaigns through leaflets, radio messages and TV spots. UNHCR also provided administrative support to the Macedonian postal system to ensure the transfer of funds to support host families.

Sanitation: UNHCR continued the maintenance of the portable toilets in the Pretor collective centre.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: In the first half of the year a small-scale winterisation project ensured minor shelter repair and the provision of wood and stoves for the 253 most vulnerable host families. UNHCR directly implemented a limited cash-for-shelter programme for some 500 Roma host families. UNHCR endeavoured to consolidate collective centres throughout the year in order to deliver assistance more efficiently and thus improve the refugees' living conditions. At the beginning of the year, over 2,000 refugees lived in nine collective centres provided by the host Government and located throughout the country. In a joint effort with the Government, UNHCR assisted in the construction of the Suto Orizari collective centre, with capacity for 2,500 refugees. Quick Impact Projects were designed to mitigate the negative effects of the presence of large numbers of refugees on

refugee-hosting areas. A total of 112 projects were implemented in 33 municipalities, 47 per cent by local organisations, the rest by international organisations.

Transport/Logistics: These activities included warehousing, transport and the distribution of assistance, as well as support to UNHCR's offices in Kosovo and other countries. In consolidating warehousing after the operational transition from emergency to assistance, capacity was reduced from 8,200 square metres in January to 4,200 in December. UNHCR's logistics services regularly delivered non-food items to refugees in collective centres, supported the consolidation of three collective centres (Struga I, Pretor and Probistip) and organised voluntary repatriation to Kosovo. Logistic support to UNHCR's offices in Kosovo included the provision of some 100,000 litres of diesel and the transport of telecommunications equipment. UNHCR in FYR Macedonia also provided support to other emergency operations: 1,000 tents to Sudan, 240 tents to Eritrea, as well as 27,000 blankets and 3,600 mattresses to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Water: The water system at Ljubanci centre was overhauled and improved before the centre was opened to refugees. Nonetheless, water had to be delivered to 2,500 refugees at Ljubanci and Suto Orizari collective centres during the summer owing to a water shortage.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

UNHCR maintained a main office in Skopje, supported by two other offices in Kumanovo and Tetovo. At the beginning of the year, these offices were run by a total of 20 international and 48 national staff. There was a gradual downsizing of operations and staffing, so that by year's end there were 14 international and 44 national staff.

Working with Others

In 2000, UNHCR worked with six international and two national NGOs for the implementation of its programme. UNHCR also worked closely with WFP and IFRC in providing food assistance, with UNICEF in providing education and community services and with WHO in providing health care to refugees. In addition, the Office assumed the co-ordination role for completing the FYR Macedonia chapter of the UN Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal Process for South-Eastern Europe. UNHCR continued to foster linkages with regional European institutions, international organisa-

tions and government bodies on issues such as asylum procedures, repatriation issues, integration assistance, initiatives for Roma, and the expansion of relevant national academic research institutions.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

UNHCR's programme in FYR Macedonia has evolved from an emergency operation in 1999 to one of providing assistance to about 9,000 remaining refugees in 2000. Although the crisis is over, the situation in FYR Macedonia is far from stable. The number of remaining refugees is relatively low, but these refugees have specific protection and assistance needs which cannot be ignored.

Ties with inter-governmental institutions – the EU, OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe – have been an important part of the overall strategy regarding national legislation. UN and EU agencies benefit from collective political initiatives on several issues, including human rights, the protection of trafficked human beings, statelessness, implementation of the refugee law in line with the 1951 Convention, and burden-sharing (for hosting persecuted ethnic minorities in the region). UNHCR has and will continue to take an active role in these initiatives.

Offices

Skopje
Kumanovo
Tetovo

Partners

Government Agencies

Institute for Sociological, Political and Judicial Research
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Public Enterprise for Postal Services

NGOs

American Refugee Committee
Danish Refugee Council
International Rescue Committee
Italian Consortium of Solidarity
Macedonian Press Centre
Macedonian Red Cross
Mercy Corps International
OXFAM

Other

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
United Nations Volunteers

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,217,670		76,231	
Community Services	594,957		437,344	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	299,465		734,509	
Education	37		133,932	
Food	85,075		43,053	
Health / Nutrition	45,579		894,753	
Income Generation	0		57,594	
Legal Assistance	502,374		1,389,526	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	680,689		2,214,049	
Sanitation	449		980,817	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	3,526,011		4,928,258	
Transport / Logistics	668,145		1,605,900	
Water	8,851		12,698	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	547,001		(8,022,975)	
Transit Account	988		0	
Sub-total Operational	8,177,291		5,485,689	
Programme Support	1,860,987		560,370	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	10,038,278	(3)	6,046,059	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	464,578	(3)	0	
Total	10,502,856	(1) (3)	6,046,059	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	6,272,025		5,056,594	
Reporting Received	5,725,024		13,079,569	
Balance	547,001		(8,022,975)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		8,395,943	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		342,985	
Currency Adjustment	0		13,526	
Outstanding 31 December	547,001		43,509	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1 January	0		12,828,200	(6)
New Obligations	10,502,856	(1)	0	
Disbursements	10,038,278	(3)	6,046,059	(6)
Cancellations	0		6,782,141	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	464,578	(3)	0	

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6