

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Working environment

The context

The general elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in October 2006 propelled the country into a new era of self-governance. In the lead up to the elections, the enactment of laws aimed at concluding a stabilization and association agreement with the European Union slowed down markedly.

The Office of the High Representative, established to oversee the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace ("Dayton Agreement") in BiH, will close in June 2007. An Office of the European Union Special Representative will open in its place and take over some of its functions.

The verification of the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is expected to result in a significant reduction in the number of those considered IDPs in the country. As for repatriation, some 778 refugees returned to Croatia with UNHCR's support in the first nine months of 2006.

UNHCR, together with government ministries and the country's Parliamentary Commission is reviewing durable solutions for refugees and stateless persons. The most important discussions revolve around the possibility of refugees and stateless persons applying for citizenship after four years of lawful residence in the country.

The needs

A participatory assessment conducted in 2006 confirmed that those refugees who have moved out of reception centres have been much more successful at integrating locally and becoming self-reliant in recent months. However, the difficult economic situation renders subsistence allowances necessary in order to make local integration sustainable. For refugees from Kosovo, shelter assistance was reiterated as the primary need as they have no social ties in BiH and, therefore, lack informal support networks.



The documented needs of the displaced population, who are compelled to remain in collective accommodation, far exceed what UNHCR can accomplish within its limited mandate and resources. In terms of shelter alone, more than 120,000 people have applied for assistance to rebuild a total of approximately 40,000 damaged or destroyed homes. In light of the overwhelming needs of IDPs, the concerns of asylum-seekers, refugees and temporary admission card holders are not given the same priority by the Government.

Total requirements: USD 6,702,164

Main objectives

UNHCR's programme in BiH consists of two components: fostering durable solutions in the post-Dayton situation and strengthening the country's asylum system.

Overall objectives

- Support the national authorities as they develop an asylum system to meet international standards.
- Collaborate with governments, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Commission to bring the “3x3 Initiative”, fostering conditions conducive to return, to a successful close.
- Assist asylum-seekers and refugees with protection and support.
- Find viable durable solutions for refugees and temporary admission card holders.
- Support returnees and the local integration of IDPs through shelter assistance and small-scale economic projects.
- Encourage national authorities and development actors to tackle the challenges of post-war recovery, including political and economic transition issues, and rehabilitate infrastructure.

Key targets for 2007

- 1,200 Croatian refugees return home and receive repatriation grants prior to their departure.
- All IDPs, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees have access to legal advice.
- 30 vulnerable asylum-seeker and refugee families receive living allowances and move out of reception centres.
- 35 vulnerable IDP families move back into their homes following their reconstruction.
- 30 communities benefit from infrastructure and small-scale economic support that improves the sustainability of IDP and refugee returns.
- Construction of an asylum centre by the authorities is started and set to be completed in 2008.
- The number of IDP families living in collective centres and alternative accommodation decreases by 1,100.

Strategy and activities

Joint initiatives and partnerships with other organizations and the Government are crucial to ensure effective protection and assistance for the large number of persons of concern to UNHCR in BiH. These partnerships will continue to play an increasingly important role in 2007.

The European Commission supports BiH through its Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme, with UNHCR as an implementing partner. The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees leads the “3x3 Initiative” (whereby regional governments committed themselves to finding durable solutions for the displaced by the end of 2006) for the BiH side and supports sustainable returns that are complemented by bilateral projects. UNHCR will participate in these initiatives and involve other actors in finding durable solutions for all persons of concern.

As part of its phase-down strategy in BiH, the Office will hand over responsibilities to its various national partners. UNHCR will provide technical expertise and training to the Government and other partners in order to build their capacity to take over some of its work. After almost 15 years, UNHCR’s offices in Banja Luka, Tuzla and Mostar will close at the end of June 2007.

UNHCR will, however, continue to attend to the material needs of especially vulnerable people. Those in need of medical assistance will be steered to the national health system.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

The majority of refugees in BiH are ethnic Serbs from Croatia and ethnic minorities from other countries of the former Yugoslavia. While half of these refugees are expected to settle in BiH, returns to Croatia will continue

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2007		Dec 2007	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Croatia	5,000	2,000	3,800	1,500
	Montenegro and Serbia	2,200	750	1,700	600
	Various	20	10	10	10
Asylum-seekers	Montenegro and Serbia	100	100	100	100
	Various	50	50	50	50
Returnees (refugees)		1,200	250	1,200	100
IDPs		150,000	20,000	80,000	17,000
Returnees (IDPs)		5,000	3,000	4,000	2,500
Total		163,570	26,160	90,860	21,860



Many people of Roma ethnicity have returned to their homes in Bosnia. Now they must face the challenge of reintegration. S. Sánchez Merlo

in 2007. UNHCR anticipates that only a small number of refugees will be resettled.

Refugees and displaced people returning to and within BiH

The Office anticipates that following the validation of their IDP status, some 80,000 people will remain registered as internally displaced in the country. Specific areas of the country with a high number of IDPs will be selected for interventions in 2007. Those still living in collective accommodation will be provided with free legal aid and support in finding durable solutions.

Constraints

The complex regional political context will continue to affect BiH. Negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement with the European Union will not begin until key obstacles are overcome. Slow economic growth is likely to prevent the Government from allocating sufficient resources to the national health and social services to meet the needs of vulnerable refugees and IDPs.

High unemployment impedes both local integration and returns to or within BiH. The successful conclusion of the “3x3 Initiative” will require a concerted effort by the parties involved. Other regional issues, particularly the final status talks on Kosovo, will also affect BiH.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence

Number of offices	4
Total staff	60
International	7
National	47
JPOs	1
UNVs	5

Coordination

UNHCR will work closely with the authorities at all levels. The Office is a member of the Board of Principals chaired by the High Representative, the UN Country Team and the "3x3 Initiative". UNHCR will also work with the OSCE, the European Commission, donor embassies in Sarajevo and multilateral and bilateral bodies.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, Ministry of Security.

NGOs: Bosnia and Herzegovina Humanitarian Logistics Service, Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative, Catholic Relief Service, *Hilfswerk* Austria, *Vasa Prava*.

Operational partners

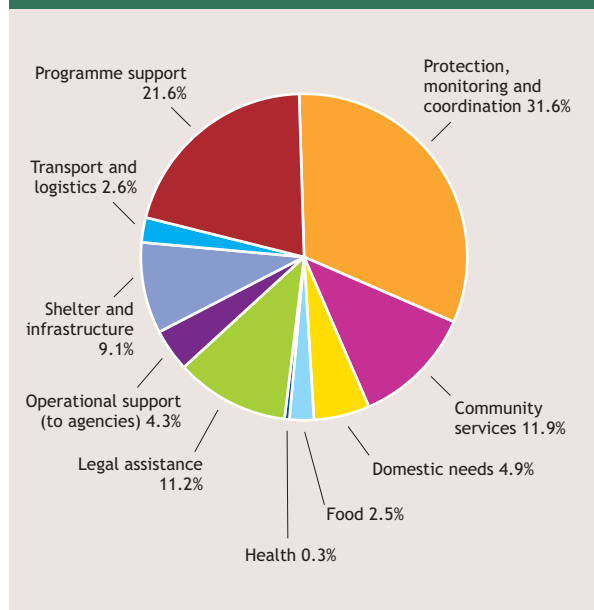
NGOs: Mercy Corps (Scotland).

Others: Council of Europe Development Bank, European Commission, Swiss Development Corporation, World Bank.

Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget	
	2006	2007
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,382,680	1,423,093
Community services	1,276,162	634,784
Domestic needs	524,126	467,069
Food	270,168	173,561
Health	28,368	42,406
Legal assistance	1,195,374	621,085
Operational support (to agencies)	458,788	183,412
Shelter and infrastructure	972,794	1,219,468
Transport and logistics	274,221	338,216
Total operations	8,382,680	5,103,093
Programme support	2,305,577	1,599,071
Total	10,688,257	6,702,164

2006 Annual Programme Budget by sector



2007 Annual Programme Budget by sector

