

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Main objectives

- Continue to work towards the development of a functioning national asylum system.
- Provide protection and legal and material assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).
- Find durable solutions for displaced persons and refugees through enhancement of the capacity of the local authorities to adhere to the "4Rs" strategy.
- Enhance the capacity of the national network of Legal Aid Centres as a means to accelerate the removal of obstacles to sustainable return.
- Provide limited and flexible humanitarian assistance to the neediest returning refugees. Advocate the continuation of activities by other agencies, to ensure sustainability of returns.

- Develop partnerships and engage development actors in integrated planning, implementation, and mobilization of resources.

Planning figures

Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
IDPs	300,000	280,000
IDP returnees	25,000	20,000
Croatia (refugees)	17,000	12,000
Returnees	15,000	12,000
Serbia and Montenegro (refugees)	3,000	3,000
Others of concern	900	300
Asylum-seekers	750	600
Total	361,650	327,900

Total requirements: USD 11,224,393

Working environment

Recent developments

An estimated 314,000 persons remained displaced in BiH as of mid-2004 – and the number of returning refugees and IDPs is lower than expected. It is anticipated that 2005 will see a continuation of refugee and IDP returns, albeit on a reduced scale. During 2005, UNHCR will continue working towards the completion of its

obligations under Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The continuation of the re-registration exercise begun in 2004 will yield a clearer picture of the number of those still displaced who wish to return. Although the overall number of returns is likely to be modest in comparison with those of recent years, the undiminished attention of the humanitarian community will be required, as a number of those who do choose to return will be particularly vulnerable. Legal advice and basic assistance will be required by households headed by single females, people who have been languishing in sub-standard collective facilities (including the handicapped and elderly) and those traumatized by war. Indeed, UNHCR's active involvement in focusing attention on the vulnerable returnee population will be critical in 2005. Apart from providing assistance to the most needy among the returning population, UNHCR staff will be active in the field, monitoring the overall return and reintegration process and intervening in protection-related matters. To meet the demand for housing, additional sources of funding must be found.

In 2005, UNHCR will continue its efforts to build the capacity of the Government of BiH to manage all aspects of the asylum process, including implementation of the new asylum legislation. This cooperation will lead to a better strategic and technical understanding of EU standards and best practices in the field of asylum, and underpinning the development of a strategy that is consistent with internationally accepted technical standards, practices and principles.

Constraints

In making returns to BiH sustainable over the next two years and beyond, several complex issues will have to be tackled. These range from upholding respect for the rule of law, to assistance for the reconstruction of destroyed property, employment, health care, pensions, utilities and an egalitarian education system. Although some progress has been made in recent years on behalf of some 17,000 refugees from Croatia, much more needs to be done to enable them to return home and

repossess their properties. Voluntary repatriation of minorities from Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) will not be promoted until the situation there is deemed suitable for return.

Strategy

In conformity with its core mandate, UNHCR's strategic focus in BiH has turned increasingly towards ensuring that international protection standards are met. More attention will be paid to strengthening the capacity of State institutions in dealing with refugee and asylum issues. In 2005, these efforts will be linked explicitly to the need for a smooth transfer of responsibility for coordination of the return process from the international community to the BiH Government. The key elements of the strategy are: ensuring protection; capacity building of national institutions; providing targeted and flexible assistance; and identifying durable solutions.

Protection and solutions

UNHCR will continue to be extensively involved in the development of a national asylum system that should eventually be capable of functioning independently of external support. Meanwhile, the Office will actively support the process of legal, institutional and administrative reform already under way in the fields of asylum, migration and visa policies within the framework of the EC Regional CARDS Programme in the Western Balkans. With the support and guidance of UNHCR, *Vasa Prava* (Your Rights), the largest national NGO in the country and one of the largest of its type in the region, will continue to play a critical role in ensuring access to justice for returnees, displaced persons, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to the Office. UNHCR will also play an important role in this crucial phase of the return process, providing advice to the local authorities and facilitating durable solutions for returning refugees and vulnerable individuals.



UNHCR registered the one millionth returnee to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004. *UNHCR / B. Bizot*

Assistance

A multi-sectoral and flexible approach developed through the concept of Quick Support Funds (QSF) will remain the basis for targeted assistance for returnees through small-scale, community-based projects. In 2005, limited distribution of selected domestic items to the most vulnerable returnees will continue, as well as transportation of their personal belongings when they return. UNHCR will continue to support the implementation of projects providing durable solutions for persons accommodated in collective centres. This will include assistance for asylum-seekers and refugees in Reception Centres (RCs) maintained by the State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) and the State Ministry of Security. UNHCR's assistance addresses specific health, nutritional and educational needs of children and women in the RCs.

Desired impact

As UNHCR phases down from its involvement with the return process in BiH, local government will take on an increasingly important role in ownership of and responsibility for the eventual closure of the displacement issue in BiH. UNHCR's intensified involvement in capacity building will increase the Government's ability to assume responsibility for the overall implementation and monitoring of asylum matters as well as the management of the RCs.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

At the beginning of 2005, UNHCR's operation in BiH will comprise 14 international and 13 national

officers, and 57 national staff. Six JPOs and nine international UNVs will lend additional support to the Operation. UNHCR will continue to downsize in BiH, with overall staffing levels reduced by the end of 2005 to 84 (from 90). Four offices will be maintained.

Coordination

UNHCR's role as the lead humanitarian agency in BiH was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations and confirmed in Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement. The High Representative chairs a weekly Board of Principals meeting where UNHCR, OSCE, SFOR, UNDP, the EC, international financial institutions and the European Union Police Mission review issues affecting implementation of the Dayton Agreement. In the field of development aid, UNHCR participates on a regular basis with other UN Agencies in the Resident Coordinator's meetings. At the regional level, the UNHCR, OSCE and EC Heads of Missions from BiH, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro have begun to hold thematic meetings to discuss complementary approaches to regional refugee returns. UNHCR, OHR, OSCE, EC, UNDP, and MHRR enjoy observer status at the State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons, a useful and lively forum for discussion of all aspects of return.

Offices
Sarajevo
Banja Luka
Mostar
Tuzla

Partners
Government agencies
Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees
State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees
State Ministry of Security
The State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons
NGOs
American Refugee Committee
Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative
Bosnian Humanitarian Logistics Service
<i>Hilfswerk</i> (Austria)
International Rescue Committee (UK)
<i>Malteser Hilfsdienst</i> (Germany)
Mercy Corps Scotland
<i>Vasa Prava</i> Legal Aid Network

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,324,840
Community services	1,274,421
Domestic needs	599,951
Food	293,419
Health	29,698
Legal assistance	1,561,000
Operational support (to agencies)	547,700
Shelter/other infrastructure	1,020,987
Transport/logistics	327,824
Total operations	8,979,840
Programme support	2,244,553
Total	11,224,393