

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Main objectives

- Develop the capacity of the local authorities to protect and assist asylum-seekers and refugees through implementation of the new asylum legislation;
- Support the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Croatia and of other refugee groups to their countries of origin;
- Continue to provide legal assistance and information for returnees, refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern to UNHCR, and create a sustainable national network of Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs);
- Continue to support voluntary returns within and to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and monitor the safety of returnees and respect for their rights;
- Provide limited and flexible humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable among the returning refugees; and
- Advocate the continuation of activities by other agencies, to ensure sustainability of returns.



## Working environment

### Recent developments

UNHCR's responsibilities under Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement should be completed in the course of 2004. Remaining refugees and displaced will decide whether to return to their places of origin or locally integrate (if the latter option exists). Contrary to expectations, there has been a decline in the number of returns through 2003. With the anticipated completion of the property repossession process in 2003, it is expected that the returns of the displaced will continue throughout 2004 at a similar pace to that of 2003. This forecast is based on ongoing efforts to strengthen recently created State institutions in BiH, as well as steady progress achieved in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Recent figures for minority returns indicate an encouraging trend, but beneficiaries will in future be affected by the severely reduced availability of international resources to assist with their reintegration. UNHCR has closely followed and influenced legislative developments and the implementation of laws to ensure non-discriminatory access for re-

turnees to education, health, pensions, employment, utilities, public documents and other services.

Despite the best efforts over recent years of UNHCR and other actors, the BiH asylum system is still at a nascent stage. The Government will require considerable support before it is able to assume full responsibility for refugee management or the future development of a functioning national asylum system.

### Constraints

If return is to be sustainable, returnees must enjoy access to reconstruction assistance, employment, health care and an unbiased education system. Problems remain in

Planning figures		
Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
IDPs	326,500	286,500
Returnee IDPs	41,000	40,000
Croatia (refugees)	20,900	12,000
Returnee refugees	15,000	25,000
Serbia and Montenegro (refugees)	3,500	3,000
Asylum-seekers	550	550
<b>Total</b>	<b>407,450</b>	<b>367,050</b>

**Total requirements: 11,944,867**



BiH: Returnees started a new life after the war. UNHCR / R. Chalasani

all these areas. The number of security incidents affecting returnees continued to increase in 2003.

## Strategy

UNHCR's strategic focus in BiH will now turn increasingly to the provision of international protection (in conformity with its core mandate). More attention will be paid to strengthening the capacity of State institutions to deal with refugee and asylum issues. The key elements of the strategy are: protection, alongside capacity-building of national institutions; targeted and flexible assistance; and durable solutions.

### Protection and solutions

In 2004, efforts will be redoubled to keep implementing the newly adopted legislation on asylum and immigration and to further develop the capacity of the

Government of BiH to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers. Particular attention will be paid to the regional dimension of asylum and the sharing of experiences with other European countries in the context of the Stability Pact (SP) and the EC Regional Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme. UNHCR will play an important role in the return process, providing advice to local authorities and helping to find durable solutions for returning refugees and vulnerable individuals of concern. UNHCR will maximise its efforts to build the capacity of national NGOs which provide free legal aid to the targeted population.

### Assistance

A multi-sectoral and flexible approach will remain the basis for targeted assistance in 2004, through Quick Support Funds, 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. In BiH, UNHCR will actively pursue durable solutions for remaining groups of refugees from Croatia and Kosovo and will continue to support projects offering durable solutions for persons accommodated in collective centres. UNHCR will continue to assist asylum-seekers and refugees at the Reception Centres (RCs) maintained by the State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees. UNHCR's assistance addresses specific health, nutritional and educational needs of children and women in RCs.

## Desired impact

Legal assistance and targeted support to displaced persons and returnees should allow those wishing to return to exercise their rights. UNHCR's involvement in capacity-building and training of government officials will increase the skills and capacity of the Government of BiH in the areas of asylum and the co-ordination of return-related issues.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management structure

At the beginning of 2004, UNHCR's operation in BiH will comprise 14 international, 14 national officers and 86 national staff. Seven JPOs and 13 UNVs will lend additional support to the operation. In line with UNHCR's general phase-down policy, field presence will be further reduced. By the end of 2004, overall staffing levels will be reduced from 121 to 88 and the number of offices will be reduced from 10 to 4.

### Co-ordination

UNHCR's role as the lead humanitarian agency in BiH was established under Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement. In 2004, UNHCR will continue to work with government agencies, international and national NGOs. The Office of the High Representative, UNHCR, SFOR (the NATO stabilisation force), OSCE and the European Union Police Mission hold weekly Board of Principals' meetings, chaired by the High Representative, to review and act upon issues affecting implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. UNHCR also participates in the Resident Co-ordinator Group meetings with other United Nations agencies. 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

#### Sarajevo

Banja Luka

Mostar

Tuzla

(During the course of the year UNHCR will close its field offices in Bihac, Gorazde, Orasje, Travnik, Trebinje, and Zvornik.)

### Partners

#### Government agencies

Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees

Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska

State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees

The State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons

#### NGOs

American Refugee Committee

Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BiHWI)

Bosnian Humanitarian Logistics Service

CEFA (European Committee for Training and Agriculture)

Hilfswerk (Austria)

International Rescue Committee (UK)

Malteser Hilfsdienst (Germany)

Mercy Corps Scotland

Vasa Prava

#### Others

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit

### Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	3,429,326
Community services	1,783,677
Domestic needs	324,808
Food	440,000
Health	28,330
Legal assistance	1,572,243
Operational support (to agencies)	794,112
Shelter / other infrastructure	936,961
Transport / logistics	419,869
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>9,729,326</b>
Programme support	2,215,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,944,867</b>