

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Main Objectives

- Build on positive political and social developments and continue to promote the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.
- Promote local integration of especially vulnerable displaced persons who cannot return to their pre-war homes.
- Monitor protection of returnees, through field presence in strategic locations.
- Provide legal assistance and advice through the national Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs) and strengthen the LAIC network.
- Work with other international actors to promote implementation of the property law.
- Press for speedy provision of housing for the returnees and closure of the collective centres.
- Assist in the development of a national asylum system, but continue in the interim to determine the status of asylum-seekers and seek durable solutions for refugees.



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

In November 2000, elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a sovereign State created by the Dayton agreement and consisting of two Entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the Republika Srpska (RS). Despite widespread and continuing support for the hardline nationalist parties, fragile coalition governments were formed in both Entities. At the State level and in the Federation, the Alliance for Change Coalition formed Governments excluding the nationalist parties. A BiH 'Council of Ministers' was only formed in February 2001, and is chaired by a moderate Bosnian Croat, Bozidar Matic. The exclusion of the Croat nationalist party HDZ from the Federation Coalition Government has made it more difficult for this party to influence policy-making in Sarajevo. A Croat National Congress, dominated by the HDZ, took the decision in March 2001 to withdraw from the constitutional structure. All joint Federation institutions have been disrupted by con-

PLANNING FIGURES		
Population	Jan. 2002	Dec. 2002
IDPs	458,000	403,000
Returnees from third countries	388,000	402,700
Refugees from Croatia	24,000	23,000
Refugees from FRY and asylum-seekers from third countries	9,500	9,100
<b>Total</b>	<b>879,500</b>	<b>837,800</b>

### TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 22,352,926

tinued uncertainty surrounding the future participation of Croat-dominated cantons within the Federation.

Developments in the RS are increasingly positive, with the government there agreeing to co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Minority returns to the RS from the Federation have increased in the last year

and this trend is expected to accelerate in 2002. Throughout the country, property laws are being implemented in a more comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. This has helped to resolve long-standing property disputes and enabled many former residents to return.

## Constraints

The shortage of housing and employment and generally poor living conditions continue to discourage return and hold back the process of reconciliation. In the Federation, the unemployment rate hovers around 40 per cent, while in the RS the rate is estimated to be even higher, despite a lack of reliable statistics. The decline in international aid has been felt by all population groups and has resulted in greater pressure on national authorities to improve the economic situation.

Minority returns (people returning to their pre-war homes in areas dominated by another ethnic group) face the added difficulties of reclaiming their property and coping with “ethnic bias” in everyday life (access to employment, education and public services). Although the security situation has improved significantly, incidents of harassment and damage to property still occur, particularly in the Republika Srpska and the Croat areas of the country. Landmines are a continuing problem. They impact negatively on return by rendering prime agricultural land unusable.

## STRATEGY

As overall social needs change from humanitarian assistance toward longer-term development assistance, UNHCR is reducing its humanitarian operations in the country. The strategic focus of the programme has shifted from large-scale reconstruction and rehabilitation assistance toward protection and advocacy efforts, as well as finding durable solutions. The remaining material assistance component is flexible and targeted to initial arrival assistance to returnees and to vulnerable groups.

### Protection and Solutions

Under Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement, UNHCR is responsible for ensuring the early, peaceful, orderly and phased return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes of origin. Although the overall security situation has improved, minority returnees sometimes face harassment and security problems, as well as different forms of discrimination. UNHCR will continue to monitor the security situation of returnees, maintaining a presence in sensitive locations, and will take preventive measures as appropriate in order to ensure the safety and dignity of return and reintegration.

Legal advocacy and advisory services will be continued, to ensure that the domestic legal framework addresses the needs

of internally displaced persons and returnees. UNHCR will administer a network of some 50 LAICs which have provided legal assistance to IDPs and returnees on issues such as restitution of property, countering discrimination, or securing pension payments. In 2002, UNHCR will attempt to achieve better co-ordination of the parties involved, aiming for common practice in line with European standards. UNHCR will promote co-funding with other donors.

One of the persistent problems preventing return, especially to urban areas, is the illegal occupation of privately-owned or communal property. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), UNHCR and local authorities work to ensure that expropriation claims are dealt with through the Property Law Implementation Programme (PLIP). Through the PLIP, UNHCR will also assist with the implementation of positive decisions on property repossession.

Despite the efforts undertaken by the international community to close the collective centres, a sizeable population will still be accommodated in these centres in 2002. Finding durable solutions for the remaining residents of collective centres will be the key challenge for UNHCR in its efforts to resolve population displacement in the country. As in 2001, responsibility for the centres remains with the Entity Ministries, and UNHCR assistance will not be administered. UNHCR will advocate a dignified return for the elderly population, particularly in rural areas.

UNHCR will continue working closely with the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) on the development of the legal framework and capacity to deal with asylum-related issues. UNHCR will train the staff of key national and international actors, such as UNMIBH and the State Border Service, and impart knowledge of basic refugee law principles. UNHCR will offer training and other capacity-building measures to government officials.

UNHCR has successfully established inter-entity bus services in the country for humanitarian purposes. Many of these services are now run on a commercial basis. In 2002, UNHCR's regular bus services will cover cross-border routes only. A service from BiH to Croatia will run once every week, passing through the areas in Croatia from which most of the refugees originate.

Most of the 24,000 refugees from Croatia who remain in the RS live with host families or in rented flats. Only a few live in the collective centres managed by the Entity Government. For these refugees, UNHCR provides legal advice through the LAICs. One of the solutions for this population is voluntary repatriation, and UNHCR actively pursues that possibility. The LAICs have provided extensive guidance to refugees from Croatia who wish to lodge a claim for property before the deadline (31 December 2001) and in 2002 will provide advice and assistance as these claims are followed up. UNHCR in BiH

works closely with UNHCR in Croatia in efforts to present the case of the refugees to the relevant Croatian authorities.

BiH continues to host some 9,600 refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The majority of these refugees are living in private accommodation in various parts of the country, but some are still accommodated in five refugee/asylum centres (RACs) administered by the Government. Asylum-seekers from third countries are also accommodated in the RACs. In total, some 1,700 people live in these centres. UNHCR provides them with monthly food parcels and small cash grants for everyday necessities. Children have access to primary education facilities. In collaboration with other agencies, UNHCR provides vocational training, counselling, and community services to RAC residents.

Most of the remaining refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are Roma from Kosovo and Muslim Slavs from the Sandak region. UNHCR is working toward voluntary repatriation for this refugee group, co-operating closely with the UNHCR office in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to facilitate and monitor return. Pending the implementation of the 1999 law on migration and asylum, UNHCR determines refugee status for asylum-seekers from third countries. When asylum-seekers from third countries are recognised as refugees, UNHCR examines the possibility of resettlement.

## Assistance

UNHCR's main intervention for returnees will focus on timely assistance during the initial phase of their return and reintegration. UNHCR's assistance consists of transportation and delivery of domestic items to the most vulnerable. UNHCR also uses its

Serb returnees in Pendjic, a culturally mixed village before the war.  
*UNHCR/R. Chalasani.*



Quick Support Fund as and when necessary to provide appropriate multi-sectoral and flexible assistance that directly impacts on the sustainability of returns or precipitates returns.

In 2000 and 2001, the Quick Support Fund programme had a very positive impact on returns, and its approach will likewise be the basis of targeted assistance in 2002. Limited, targeted and extremely flexible assistance during and immediately after return is a vital means of reducing the risk of returnees having to leave again. This will also be the first step to sustainability and could encourage internally displaced persons who are as yet undecided. The programme will be implemented country-wide through partners with extensive field experience. The nature of the support varies greatly according to individual needs. Examples of assistance are: the provision of self-help material for reconstruction; support for agricultural projects in rural areas; and communal infrastructure repairs. UNHCR will continue to provide domestic items to certain targeted vulnerable returnees and IDPs in the process of return, and will advocate that other donors do likewise. These domestic items will cover at most 20 per cent of the beneficiaries.

The Bosnian Woman's Initiative (BWI) project will receive substantially decreased support from UNHCR in 2002. The initiative will be handed over to a Steering Committee, including representatives of development-oriented organisations. UNHCR is also actively seeking alternative sources of funding for the initiative. UNHCR will continue to assist in the repatriation of unaccompanied minors to BiH. In general, these children are placed in institutions as their parents are deceased, missing or unable to care for them. These arrangements still require close co-operation with the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in third countries. Furthermore, UNHCR will continue to advocate the necessity of addressing issues specific to adolescents and also the problems of landmines in return areas.

## Desired Impact

UNHCR's operation will focus on return, local integration and special assistance for minority returnees to ensure sustainability of return. The Office will endeavour to find solutions for the remaining refugees and displaced persons in collective accommodation. By the end of the year, it is expected that the majority of centres will close. Resolving housing and property issues will have a major impact on the return process, reducing the number of refugees still in need of a solution significantly. Meanwhile, cross-border activities, information campaigns, and legal assistance support for remaining refugees from Croatia and the Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia, should allow the majority to return. It is hoped that UNHCR's efforts to train appropriate government and border officials on basic refugee law principles will increase local understanding of asylum.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management Structure

In 2002, UNHCR's operation in BiH will comprise 27 international and 192 national staff. Seven JPOs and 34 UNVs will also lend additional support to the Chief of Mission, who is based in Sarajevo. In line with UNHCR's general policy of downsizing its humanitarian operations in BiH, the field presence will be reduced over the course of the year. By the end of 2002, UNHCR field presence will be reduced from 21 offices (of which 13 will be located in the Federation and eight in the RS) to 15 offices (nine offices in the Federation and six in the RS).

### Co-ordination

UNHCR's role as the lead humanitarian agency in BiH was established under Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Office will continue to work closely with government agencies, and international and national NGOs to implement its country programme. OHR, UNHCR, SFOR (the NATO stabilisation force), OSCE and the UN Mission in BiH (UNMIBH) hold a weekly principals' meeting, chaired by the High Representative, to review and act upon all issues affecting implementation of the Dayton Agreement. At both regional and local level, the Return and Reconstruction Task Forces (RRTFs) provide valuable mechanisms for the co-ordination of international agencies. A typical local RRTF consists of UNHCR, OHR, SFOR, OSCE, NGOs and, in some cases, donors and local authorities. UNHCR and OHR co-chair the RRTFs.

The Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons (comprising UNHCR, the State Ministry and the two Entity Ministries) provides another forum for discussion of all aspects of return. In the Resident Co-ordinator's Group, consisting of UN development agencies, UNHCR seeks to ensure that issues concerning internally displaced persons and returnees are taken into consideration in the development activities of the other UN agencies. The group includes OHR, UNHCR, UNMIBH, UNHCHR, IOM as well as the competent Ministry. In 2002, the follow-up on the Government's implementation of the property law will remain one of the key activities for UNHCR, OHR, UNMIBH and OSCE, both at the central and field levels. Under the Property Law Implementation Plan (PLIP), the above organisations will collect and share information and monitor implementation by municipal authorities.

### OFFICES

Sarajevo	Banja Luka
Bihac	Brcko/Bijelina
Bugojno	Doboj
Drvar	Gorazde
Jajce	Konjic
Lukavica	Mostar
Orasje	Prijedor
Stolac	Travnik
Trebinje	Tuzla
Visegrad	Zenica
Zvornik	

### PARTNERS

<b>Government Agencies</b>
Federation Ministry for Social Affairs, Displaced Persons and Refugees
Republic Bosnia-Herzegovina Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees
Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska
<b>NGOs</b>
American Refugee Committee
Bosnian Humanitarian Logistic Service
Catholic Relief Service
European Committee for Training and Agriculture
Helsinki Citizen's Assembly
<i>Hilfswerk</i> (Austria)
International Council of Voluntary Agencies
International Rescue Committee
<i>Iustitia</i>
<i>Malteser Hilfsdienst</i>
Mercy Corps Scotland
Programme Implementation Unit
Save the Children Federation US
Tango

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	6,202,493
Community Services	3,387,413
Domestic Needs	734,041
Food	836,333
Health	135,621
Legal Assistance	2,667,221
Operational Support (to Agencies)	2,014,861
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	1,401,422
Transport/Logistics	1,568,688
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>18,948,093</b>
Programme Support	3,404,833
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,352,926</b>