

# Albania

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Provide protection for refugees and asylum-seekers; assist the Government of Albania and non-governmental institutions to build the necessary capacity to implement the Albanian asylum law according to international standards; provide assistance to the remaining refugees from Kosovo, including a number of extremely vulnerable individuals; seek durable solutions for Kosovar and other refugees through repatriation, local integration or resettlement; facilitate the transition from post-emergency rehabilitation activities to development and governance by the rule of law; monitor potential refugee movements in the region.

### Impact

- A total of 3,407 Kosovar refugees found durable solutions mainly in the form of voluntary repatriation. UNHCR directly assisted 91 to voluntarily repatriate and 143 to resettle in third countries.
- The basic needs of refugees were met, especially the most vulnerable, as a result of effective co-operation between UNHCR, the authorities and the humanitarian community.
- Local communities were compensated for their participation through the rehabilitation of public infrastructure that had been affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees. Some 64,600 Albanians benefited from the programme, in particular school children.



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Refugees)	510	510	56	41

Revised Budget	Income and Expenditure (USD)			
	Annual Programme Budget			
	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
7,884,842	1,657,675	4,919,892	6,577,567	6,570,648

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



- Forty-two Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) were implemented: 25 were concerned with the rehabilitation of physical structures, the remainder with capacity-building.
- In close collaboration with the Government, progress was made towards the implementation of the asylum law. A decision in principle was taken to form a special Task Force for the Implementation of the Asylum System but implementation remained pending.
- UNHCR contributed substantially to reports for the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, and actively participated in the European Union High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration and the Friends of Albania forum. The Office played a pivotal role, helping to co-ordinate strategies and action plans at the local as well as international levels.

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

Having faced an unprecedented refugee crisis in the spring of 1999, Albania enjoyed relative calm after the sudden mass departure of the Kosovar refugees later in the same year. The few who remained were largely absorbed into local communities. By the end of the year, only 155 refugees remained in collective centres, or sheltered accommodation (for vulnerable people needing special protection and care).

UNHCR re-oriented its attention to longer-term capacity-building in the area of asylum. Like several countries in South-Eastern Europe, Albania is both a

source of irregular migrants and a country of transit for others originating elsewhere. In its work, UNHCR must show flexibility, and a degree of circumspection, in view of the mixed character of irregular movements, comprising economic migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and persons trafficked against their will. UNHCR recognises that without addressing the related issues of migration and trafficking of human beings, it cannot reach its objective of effectively ensuring refugee protection.

### Constraints

Progress in the implementation of the asylum system was disappointingly slow. It was difficult to secure the active collaboration of the Government on several outstanding matters, principally the constitution of the Task Force for the Implementation of the Asylum System. This jeopardised funding through the Stability Pact and the European Union High Level Working Group. UNHCR gave its full support to the Government in terms of legal as well as operational objectives and an operational working group was set up jointly with the Government's Office for Refugees to solve problems as and when they arose. However, local partners still required close monitoring to achieve results and accountability.

### Funding

The budget for Albania was revised downwards twice, by 25 per cent in April and then by another 20 per cent in September. The second reduction posed considerable strain on the operation and on UNHCR's credibility with implementing partners, as the activities were already underway.

# ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

## Protection and Solutions

An analysis of lacunae in the asylum law led to the decision to form a special Task Force for the Implementation of the Asylum System headed by the Minister for Local Government. While the formation of this Task Force was delayed, the Secretariat of the Task Force, funded by UNHCR, began its work in July 2000. The Secretariat was instrumental in drafting and preparing relevant documentation, particularly the draft national Action Plan for the implementation of the asylum system. The Plan identifies priority areas of intervention, objectives and timeframes. Furthermore, a national Commission for Refugees was set up to serve as a kind of court of final appeal within the refugee status determination procedure.

UNHCR investigated cross-border legislation, procedures and practice. It was found that border police were unaware of pertinent national legislation regarding foreigners and asylum-seekers and did not have the physical infrastructure with which to deal with new arrivals. UNHCR and IOM submitted to the Minister of Public Order a proposal for the pre-screening of asylum-seekers and persons trafficked against their will.

## Activities and Assistance

**Community Services:** Some 1,600 refugees received social counselling services aimed at resolving their immediate problems as well as finding durable solutions, especially repatriation or local integration. Another 124 extremely vulnerable refugees (56 men, 26 women and 42 children) were sheltered in seven "safe houses" in Tirana. Five small-scale QIPs were implemented for the refurbishment of public social infrastructure.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** UNHCR distributed a winter package (clothes, bedding and a hygiene kit with sanitary items) to 205 refugees (including 56 children) living in private accommodation. The 200 refugees living in collective shelter received non-food items, throughout the year, upon need.

**Education:** The learning environment for 7,400 Albanian children was improved by the rehabilitation of 14 primary schools that had hosted refugees. The programme included the replacement of old school furniture, the provision of teaching resources, teacher training, instruction on school maintenance, and the facilitation of social activities around the school in collaboration with the parent-teacher associations.

UNHCR monitored access to local schools for Kosovar children, and gave them clothes and stationery.

**Food:** A monthly food parcel was distributed to 2,297 refugees in collaboration with a local NGO. Instead of food assistance (phased out in September), cash grants of USD 20 per month were given to 168 people, according to individual needs.

**Health/Nutrition:** Free health care for 1,070 refugees included medicines, medical tests, and referral for hospital or specialist care. Two maternity units were rehabilitated in the north of the country, benefiting refugees as well as the local population. Medical training and life saving equipment were given to the Shkodra Polyclinic Accident and Emergency Department.

**Legal Assistance:** The office in Tirana received 1,500 refugee visits for legal counselling. Most of these visits dealt with questions of family reunification and resettlement as well as the re-validation of legal documents. UNHCR conducted training for its governmental counterpart on protection (above all, on refugee status determination procedures) and conveyed detailed country of origin information. Two Albanian judges participated in a refugee status determination conference in Bern. More than 60 border police at eight border crossings received basic training from UNHCR. All UNHCR staff profited from a three-day basic protection training course. One staff member attended a refugee law course in Berlin. UNHCR also organised a three-day People Oriented Planning (POP) and gender-protection workshop for its staff, implementing partners and other humanitarian agencies. Through a QIP, start-up funding was provided for the establishment of a Centre for Refugee and Migration Studies, which has promoted regional and international exchanges on refugee law and practice, and ensured collaboration with Albanian academics.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** UNHCR funded capacity-building activities as part of its phase-out strategy. Each international NGO partner was encouraged to help establish and develop one national NGO, to which activities will be handed over in 2001-2002. UNHCR provided funding for emergency management training for the government's civil protection body and local NGOs and authorities. UNHCR also contributed to the operational support costs of its implementing partners.

**Sanitation:** Under a QIP, the sanitation facilities of the Morini border crossing in Kukes were upgraded through the installation of a water pump, repair of the existing well, and repair of toilets. The Morini border crossing was the main point of entry and exit for an estimated 420,000 from Kosovo within a four-month



period. The QIP also included small repairs to the customs and border police building.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** All the collective centres were consolidated into one, run by an international NGO with assistance from UNHCR. At the end of the year, 91 refugees were hosted there. UNHCR financed the refurbishment of two hostels belonging to the labour union, which had hosted hundreds of refugees free of charge during the crisis in 1999. Several international NGOs conducted emergency preparedness training in Kukes, Shkodra and Elbasan for local authorities and institutions.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR redeployed large amounts of urgently needed equipment, vehicles and non-food items to other operations in Kosovo, Croatia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Zambia. It was thus possible to reduce warehouse space from 15,000 to 3,000 square metres, while maintaining a contingency stock for 15,000 persons.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

In 2000, UNHCR closed its two offices in Durres and Kukes. Operations are now conducted from one country office in Tirana. A mobile border monitoring team was created. At the end of the year, there were 11 international and 41 national staff working in Albania.

### Working with Others

UNHCR implemented programmes in partnership with one government agency and eight NGOs, of which was a local NGO. There was close collaboration with the Red Cross Movement in relief distribution, as well as family tracing. UNHCR participated in inter-agency working groups on children and gender facilitated by UNICEF and catalysed the formation of networks addressing the plight of trafficked women and children. UNHCR closely collaborated with OSCE in the Friends of Albania forum and chaired the local Working Group on asylum and migration.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Following a major refugee emergency in 1999, the year 2000 was one of consolidation. Its main features were: managing the post-emergency phase; returning to the core mandate; making the transition from emergency humanitarian assistance to development; maintaining preparedness in the event of population displacement; and raising awareness of refugee issues.

One of the main activities in 2000 was to take stock of, and then redeploy, the very considerable volume of material that had been required for the massive relief operation in 1999. Some items were transferred to appropriate government agencies within the context of capacity-building for local counterparts responsible for humanitarian relief.

The 1999 crisis ultimately served as a window of opportunity for further development of the asylum system. In 2000, progress was made in rectifying shortcomings identified in 1999. Unfortunately, the Office for Refugees remained an erratic institution, despite regular working meetings which provided a welcome new forum for discussion. Although the National Commission for Refugees was established, the Task Force for the Implementation of the Asylum System did not become functional. The Minister of Public Order took appropriate action to improve access to potential asylum-seekers.

Having closed all remaining field offices, UNHCR remained in contact with other organisations engaged in relevant activities or with a presence in other parts of the country. UNHCR became a member of Friends of Albania created in June 2000, and chaired the Stability Pact Working Group on Asylum and Migration.

In close collaboration with government agencies and NGOs, UNHCR drew up a contingency plan to respond to possible population displacements. To maintain an accurate local and regional picture, a roving field monitoring team was set up to observe the pre-screening of irregular movers at border posts. The commemoration of UNHCR's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reinforced moves to raise awareness of refugee issues.

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### Offices

#### Tirana

Durres (closed in 2000)

Kukes (closed in 2000)

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### Partners

#### Government Agencies

Office for Refugees

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#### NGOs

Albanian Red Cross

CARE International

Comunità Internazionale Capodarco

Humanitarian Cargo Carriers

International Catholic Migration Commission

International Christian Association

International Medical Corps

International Rescue Committee

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#### Other

United Nations Volunteers

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Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,391,934		94,966	
Community Services	461,898		407,904	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	11,775		4,073,266	
Education	435,953		2,085,155	
Food	15,425		425,817	
Health / Nutrition	182,305		410,910	
Legal Assistance	302,383		1,359,921	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	554,587		1,276,653	
Sanitation	18,102		185,398	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	95,918		1,147,569	
Transport / Logistics	588,484		2,673,583	
Water	0		429,441	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	581,560		(12,437,956)	
Transit Account	19,651		0	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>4,659,975</b>		<b>2,132,627</b>	
Programme Support	1,556,179		387,653	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>6,216,154</b>	(3)	<b>2,520,280</b>	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	354,494	(3)	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,570,648</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>2,520,280</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	3,247,039		2,486,693	
Reporting Received	2,665,479		14,924,649	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>581,560</b>		<b>(12,437,956)</b>	
Outstanding 1 January	0		13,986,944	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		325,007	
Currency Adjustment				
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>581,560</b>		<b>1,223,981</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1 January	0		4,101,261	(6)
New Obligations	6,570,648	(1)	0	
Disbursements	6,216,154	(3)	2,520,280	(6)
Cancellations	0		1,580,981	(6)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>354,494</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6