

COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN
Kosovo 2003
Part 1: Executive Committee Summary

Context and Beneficiary Population(s)

Political context

Kosovo has been under international administration in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 since June 1999. This resolution entrusted UNMIK with “promoting the establishment, pending a final settlement, of substantial and autonomous self government in Kosovo” and “Assuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo”. KFOR, the international security presence, is responsible for establishing a “secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return home in safety and dignity”. According to Annex 2 of the Resolution, this return should be “under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”.

Substantial progress was made in 2001 in the establishment of Provisional Institutions of Self-government (PISG). After the municipal elections in October 2000, the granting of powers to local structures gained significant momentum with the promulgation of the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-government in Kosovo on 15 May 2001. These developments have produced fundamental change in the institutional environment that are of significant importance for UNHCR’s operations and the achievement of its objectives in the years to come. The transfer of substantial legislative and executive powers to PISG is taking place in 2002, but the full impact will be felt in 2003. Elections to the Kosovo Assembly on 17 November 2001, led to the establishment of the Kosovo Assembly, the election of a President and of the Prime Minister, and the formation of Ministries in early 2002.

Under the Constitutional Framework, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) oversees the PISG and retains reserved powers particularly with regard to protection of minority communities, security, fiscal policies, border, and international relations. At the same time, the Constitutional Framework reiterates the human rights of all refugees and IDPs to return to their homes and obliges the PISG ‘to take all measures necessary to facilitate the safe return’ and ‘to co-operate fully with all efforts’ by UNHCR and other international agencies and NGOs to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons’.

The establishment of democratically elected governments in FRY has also produced changes to the environment in which UNHCR operations take place leading already in 2001 to increased interaction between UNMIK/KFOR and the FRY Government. On 5 November 2001, a Common Document was signed between UNMIK and the Co-ordination Centre for Kosovo of both FRY and Serbia in which the situation of the minority communities in Kosovo and the return of the displaced received particular attention.

UNMIK has established the Office of Return and Communities (ORC), within the Office of the SRSG, and an interagency Advisory Board on Communities (ABC) with the aim of adopting a co-ordinated response to the precarious situation of ethnic minorities in Kosovo, as well as the continued displacement of over 230,000 persons in the neighbouring territories and in Kosovo itself.

While the lack of clarity about the final status of Kosovo may to some extent impact negatively on the inter-ethnic relations of the majority and minority communities, the establishment of the PISG structures offers a promising potential for improvement of the inter-ethnic relations and the integration of minority communities. The institutional and political changes taking place in 2002 are therefore, expected to modify further the operational environment for UNHCR in 2003. The anticipated changes will affect responses to the causes of displacement, the situation of minorities in Kosovo and the sustainability of the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes. It is to be expected that the full impact of the changes and the potential for major progress in the area of return will materialise in 2003 and 2004. Further improvement of inter-ethnic relations, the re-integration of minority communities and the

establishment of the rule of law as a pre-condition for increased and sustainable return of displaced persons should take place before the reduction of KFOR troops.

The increasingly stabilised situation in southern Serbia and the substantial progress that is being made in FYROM will allow most displaced and refugees to return in 2002, leaving small residual caseloads for 2003.

Security situation

Security for the majority population is relatively good despite widespread criminality. While gradual progress in the observance of law is expected to improve, the minorities continue to suffer from a very tenuous security situation. Relations between ethnic communities need to improve through confidence building policies and measures.

Protection issues

The continued displacement of a large number of persons (230,000) from Kosovo in Serbia proper and Montenegro presents a major concern to the office. Some 32,500 are in a minority situation within Kosovo and as many as 30,000 as refugees in asylum countries outside the region. Overall, the current precarious situation of persons in a locally numeric minority situation is not conducive to return. In fact, new displacements have not ceased. Consistent with its mandate and responsibilities under UNSC Resolution 1244, UNHCR will continue to play a key role in working with all those involved at the field level (local communities, intentional organisations, NGOs, etc.) to set the conditions for return. It will also play a role in co-ordinating adequate responses from the international community, to improve general and specific conditions for return.

Residual caseloads of refugees and IDPs from neighbouring territories who are in a refugee-like situation in Kosovo will continue to require UNHCR support to ensure the protection of their basic rights. UNHCR will be focusing on the identification of the best durable solutions for those groups.

UNHCR's role

While efforts to improve conditions that would enable the return of minority populations to Kosovo have not yet lead to large-scale returns, UNHCR played a catalytic role in fostering more effective inter-agency co-ordination, planning and implementation, including the development of a group of interested NGOs. UNMIK has also enhanced its institutional and political response to minority issues at large and minority returns in particular. UNHCR will continue to play a similar catalytic role vis-à-vis the international and local players. UNHCR will facilitate the link between the displaced populations and their community of origin in preparation of return. In addition UNHCR will focus its efforts on the monitoring and assessment of the situation of the ethnic minorities and returnees, their humanitarian needs as well as developments on inter-ethnic dialogue. The involvement and presence of UNHCR in a regional context is important in achieving durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons of concern.

Through its Field Offices and its implementing partners, UNHCR will provide an extensive network of field staff on the ground to work and monitor conditions of minorities and the prospects for return. This network has proved critical in the past, particularly for the early identification and solution to crucial problems in specific communities, either directly or through referrals to the competent Kosovar and international organs. UNHCR's comparative advantage is in its extensive field presence with direct access to the highest policy-making bodies. UNHCR will continue to play a similar role in 2003 and will enhance contacts with central and local PISG structures throughout Kosovo. It will complement this monitoring and advocacy role with interventions for targeted assistance to persons with no access to other assistance programmes.

Beneficiary populations

The populations of concern to UNHCR in Kosovo will be as follows:

- Minority returnees (5-10,000).
- Croatian Serb refugees displaced from Croatia in 1995 and stranded in Kosovo at the end of the 1999 war (450).
- Displaced from FYROM as a result of previous conflict (1,500).
- IDPs from southern Serbia displaced as a result of the conflict in or near to the former so-called Ground Safety Zone (1,000).
- Local Residents at risk. These are defined as a group of persons belonging to a certain ethnic/national group who form a minority in a particular location (usually municipality or village), regardless of their majority or minority status elsewhere in the province (85,000).
- Those who are displaced within Kosovo and at a location where they are in a minority (32,500).
- Kosovo women struggling for their own empowerment
- Those, particularly amongst the minorities who are in need of legal advice and aid
- The possible continuation of instability in the territories surrounding Kosovo results in the need to maintain an active capacity to respond to a movement of up to 30,000 individuals into Kosovo.

Policy issues

The major policy issues being currently addressed by UNHCR are the nature and conditions under which the return of minorities will be possible in Kosovo, and the possibilities for voluntary return for those arriving in Kosovo as a result of conflicts in surrounding areas. UNHCR is also advising on the continuing protection needs for persons from Kosovo in asylum countries, particularly for those who would find themselves in a minority situation were they to return. UNHCR expects that conditions will permit it to facilitate voluntary minority return from countries outside the region.

Women/gender equality: In Kosovo, the programme that most clearly implements UNHCR's policy priorities on women is the Kosovo Women's Initiative, (KWI) a programme aiming to enhance the role of women in their society. Under this programme, the Local Women's Councils continue to operate as regional fora in which women discuss projects, which their agencies then implement. Emphasis is given to the support required by especially vulnerable women and their children. In addition, consistent with UNHCR's guidelines, all returnee and refugee women will be provided with sanitary napkins.

Children and adolescents: UNHCR will work towards ensuring that refugee and IDP children have full access to schools and health structures in Kosovo, just as local children. UNHCR will advocate and work so that returnee and minority children have access to the nearest schools, problems such as transport or supplies are resolved to increase minority children's attendance, and effective primary education structures are established in returnee areas (including schools, teachers, educational supplies etc). UNHCR will advocate and play a catalytic role to ensure that minority adolescents and youth are included.

Environmental concerns: The relatively small number and the geographical distribution of minority communities and refugees / IDPs, that live almost exclusively in rural areas, limit their impact on the environment. However, UNHCR minimises the need to illegally cut down local forests by providing all refugees and the most vulnerable minority families with firewood for heating in the winter months. The procured firewood is certified by the competent authorities in the country of purchase, to ensure that it complies with international and national conservation standards.

Persons with special needs: UNHCR's monitoring activities aim at identifying the most vulnerable persons among minority communities, refugees and IDPs, and then referring them to existing programmes. It is encouraging that more and more agencies are prepared to extend their activities to minorities, thus relieving the pressure on UNHCR's resources. At the same time, UNHCR has developed flexible protection and assistance programmes that offer the possibility of responding to specific needs of persons in a vulnerable situation. When required, UNHCR will intervene with the local structures on behalf of its beneficiaries to ensure they are included in their programmes.

Linkages to other UNHCR Programmes

Croatia	Residual caseload of Croatian Serbs in Kosovo
FYROM	Those displaced by the conflict into Kosovo and refugees belonging to minority groups from Kosovo currently in FYROM
European Countries	Kosovar refugees in continued need of protection.
Serbia & Montenegro	Serbs and other minorities who left Kosovo since 1999 and the return of ethnic Albanians currently in Kosovo.

Capacity and presence of implementing partners

Most of UNHCR's partners in Kosovo are experienced in their fields and have developed a good understanding of the Kosovar context. The present eleven partners have been selected through a screening process that reduced the number of implementing partners from almost 50 in 1999 and nearly 30 in 2001. The emphasis of UNHCR's programmes in 2002 and 2003 is on protection and assistance monitoring and reporting for a wider audience, as well as playing a critical role in the return process. UNHCR has undertaken training activities with some of these agencies. Their capacity has improved and is expected to continue to do so into 2003. Through training, UNHCR will continue to promote the development of local NGOs in Kosovo, including the recently established Consortium of Inter-ethnic Development (CID) and the local partners of the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI). Particular attention will be given to those partners that support a pluralistic and tolerant society. UNHCR will work closely with the Humanitarian Community Information Centre in Pristina and will provide it with some financial support. The Centre was established by UNHCR and is presently under UNDP aegis.

Presence and roles of other UN agencies and international organisations

UNHCR co-ordinates its activities through a variety of different fora, at the central, regional and local levels. The most significant are:

The UNMIK Executive Committee, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary General. The Executive Committee is attended by the Heads of Pillar and by UNHCR's COM. Major policy decisions for Kosovo are discussed and agreed upon in this forum. Other co-ordination meetings take place under the auspices of various UNMIK offices/ PISG Ministries. Regarding the programme for return, there are multiple levels of co-ordination. Co-operation takes place with UNMIK and other UN agencies, as well as the political representation of PISG.

The UN Development Group, of which UNHCR is a member in Kosovo, aims to align priorities and projects of common interest to the UN agencies. By 2003, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) should be finalised and should provide a focus for UN activities and their donors in Kosovo. By contrast, it is expected that the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) will phase out at the end of 2002, unless unforeseen forced population displacement in the region prompts the UN agencies to continue with the CAP for another year.

Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population:</i> Minority communities and minority returnees	
Main Goals:	
1. Work with others to contribute towards the creation of conditions to prevent further displacement from Kosovo and allow for the return and sustainable integration of minority IDPs in their home communities.	
2. Monitor the prospects for return and sustainable reintegration of ethnic minorities in Kosovo in safety and dignity, to allow concerned IDPs make an informed decision on their right to return to their homes.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovars enjoy increasing levels of freedom of movement regardless of their ethnic background. Returnees and IDPs have accurate and timely information, to make an informed and free choice on return to their homes. Returnees and minorities enjoy increasing levels of access to income generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and report on levels of violence against minorities and freedom of movement Initiate and support confidence-building measures in minority areas. Participate in the formulation / implementation of the policy framework on returns. Support UNMIK and other actors to develop effective channels of information to IDPs.

<p>opportunities and become economically more self-sustainable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returnees, minorities, and IDPs have free and equal access to all facets of public life, including participation in social fora and political representative bodies at all levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy support and guidance to efforts to reinvigorate minority economies • Ensure that return projects by NGOs have a solid self-sustainability component. • Monitor/report on and advocate access of IDPs, returnees and other members of minority communities to public services and life.
<p>Name of Beneficiary Population: Refugees from Croatia/ Bosnia Herzegovina, IDPs from southern Serbia and persons of concern from FYROM.</p>	
<p>Main Goal: Identify and facilitate the attainment of the most appropriate durable solutions for the residual caseload of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and FYROM.</p>	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees from FYROM, Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina and IDPs from Southern Serbia have their basic needs met and are not exposed to circumstances that threaten the ability to stay in Kosovo in safety and dignity, pending return to their homes. • Refugees from FYROM, Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina and IDPs from Southern Serbia receive accurate and timely information, to make an informed and free choice on return to their homes, be locally integrated or be resettled (only for refugees from Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide basic humanitarian aid of cash grants to host families, domestic items and food to most vulnerable refugee families without other managing mechanisms. • Undertake information campaign targeting refugees and IDPs, which expressed interest in returning, including Go-and-See Visits, Go-and-Inform Visits, meeting with village representatives.
<p>Name of Theme: Continuous strengthening of women in society</p>	
<p>Main Goal: The Local Women's Councils, local NGOs and Kosovar women at large feel increasingly able to take independent decisions in their lives and in securing their equal position in all spheres of life, while contributing to the stability of remaining and returning minorities in Kosovo.</p>	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local women's groups / NGOs are participating in the facilitation of the reconciliation and return process • Local Women's Councils are functioning as a multiethnic and sustainable body to fundraise and network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority women's groups increasingly participating in civil society • UNHCR provides technical assistance to the Local Women's Councils to access various sources of funding