

COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN
Country: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Planning Year 2003

PART I: Executive Committee Summary

Context and Beneficiary Population(s)

In 2001 and 2002, the process of normalisation, reform and reintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in international institutions that had been initiated by the post-Milosevic Government in late 2000 continued. In 2001 FRY rejoined a number of international financial institutions and received assistance from the World Bank and IMF. FRY is expected to join the Council of Europe in late 2002. FRY's chief foreign policy goals for the year ahead are to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

At a June 2001 Donors Conference chaired jointly by the European Union and the World Bank, donors pledged over 1.2 billion US dollars in aid to Yugoslavia. The disbursement of this aid has been slow however, with the government estimating that less than half had been received by early 2002. This has delayed the reform process and meant a growing burden has been placed on the country's already over-stretched social welfare system. Over a third of Yugoslavs are estimated to live below the poverty line.

On 14 March 2002 an agreement was signed in Belgrade between Serbian and Montenegrin leaders on the principle of a single constitutional arrangement for the two Republics. The agreement in effect freezes the status quo for a three-year period and cuts back the number of Federal institutions. The process for implementation of the plan was not agreed in detail and remains unclear.

During 2002 an inter-Ministerial Working Group prepared a "National Strategy for Refugees and IDPs", setting out a series of measures to promote repatriation and local integration. The Strategy, which was endorsed in April 2002, will allow the Government with HCR assistance to seek bi-lateral funding and loans for its implementation.

Political developments in neighbouring countries/provinces have allowed for a decrease in the number of refugees/IDPs assisted by UNHCR. Additionally the de-registration process aimed at identifying those registered both as refugees and returnees has further brought down the total number. In Kosovo, minority concerns have been the subject of increased focus. This is reflected in the 'Common Document' signed between FRY and UNMIK in late 2001. However, the opportunities for voluntary return to Kosovo remain few.

With regard to Bosnia, the implementation of the Property Legislation Implementation Plan has led to increased opportunity for return. There have also been positive developments in 2002 in this regard in Croatia. However, evictions and repossessions so far have had negligible effect in terms of increased return.

Recent developments have brought several UNHCR issues to the fore. The first relates to the level of assistance allocated for local integration that should be provided by UNHCR or others for IDPs. The Government policy on IDPs emphasises return. However, it is acknowledged by all, that some IDPs will not wish to return, in particular those from urban centres such as Pristina. Likewise, return of large numbers of IDPs is not likely to take place during 2003.

A second issue relates to assistance with local integration of refugees by development actors. Some of the major development actors have said that they are unwilling to undertake any activities targeted primarily at refugees but will incorporate refugees in their programmes aimed at helping all citizens. They argue that special programmes targeted at refugees, by giving them favourable status, undermine the objective of integration.

A third issue relates to resettlement. Consistent with UNHCR's resettlement policy, the improved security conditions in BiH and Croatia as well as increased local integration opportunities in FRY, allow for the resettlement programme to be substantially phased down. Recourse to this durable solution will continue to be available only for remaining vulnerable cases for whom local integration and return are difficult.

A fourth issue relates to Roma IDPs, which are often doubly disadvantaged as a minority group as well as refugees/IDPs. They are among those most in need of all beneficiary groups in FRY. UNHCR has a limited number of programmes targeted specifically at them. Because their situation is linked to broader socio-economic factors, UNHCR aims with limited resources to mobilise other agencies to develop a consistent approach to improve the Roma situation.

UNHCR actively promotes a regional approach to both refugee and IDP issues and the office works under the overall direction of the High Commissioner's Regional Co-ordinator for South-Eastern Europe. UNHCR co-ordinates with UNHCR offices in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the regional return programmes. Contacts between the three Governments concerned have increased during 2002, *inter alia* through activities within the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. It is hoped that these increased contacts will provide a further momentum in 2003 for voluntary repatriation programmes.

With regard to internally displaced persons, there is close linkage with the UNHCR operation in Kosovo. Based on the principle that all the internally displaced have the right to return to their homes, UNHCR offices in Serbia and Montenegro and in Kosovo are working closely towards fostering the conditions for return assisting in returns of small groups, and keeping IDPs informed of progress made in these efforts. Towards the end of 2001, these activities received a further impetus through the establishment of an Office for Return and Communities within UNMIK, and the establishment of a FRY/Serbian governmental Kosovo Co-ordination Centre. A plan outlining activities to be undertaken to foster returns was under preparation by UNMIK/UNHCR at the beginning of 2002, and it is expected that the activities identified in that plan will continue to determine UNHCR's line of action in 2003.

UNHCR's activities in FRY are mainly implemented through three government departments: The Serbian Commissioner for Refugees, the Serbian Ministry of Social Welfare and the Montenegrin Commissioner for Displaced Persons, and with 21 NGO partners. Among the implementing partners, six are local NGOs dealing with income generating activities, community services, skills training, psychological support and legal counselling. Additionally, a sizeable number of local NGOs are engaged under umbrella agencies implementing various assistance activities. The same working structure will continue in 2003 in both Serbia and Montenegro. In line with the "Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness", UNHCR has engaged the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) in supporting networking fora of NGOs in the country.

Efforts have also been made to co-ordinate project implementation with other humanitarian NGOs who operate with their own resources. In 2002, these agencies operate in FRY under the framework of Operational Partnership Agreements with UNHCR. In 2003, it is envisaged that the UNHCR programme will increasingly focus on capacity building of local institutions and local NGOs in order to prepare them to take over a number of activities as UNHCR refocuses its programme on longer-term protection issues.

Montenegro is experiencing a significant reduction in presence of international NGOs and direct bilateral funding for their activities. ECHO is scheduled to phase out in spring 2002 and has stopped funding refugee/IDP programmes (heating fuel and coal has been outsourced to ECHO since winter 2000 and is not planned for in the future). There are no NGO activities engaged in supplementary food distribution, non-food item distribution or shelter construction/rehabilitation. Bilateral and private funding for refugees/IDPs remains available only for repatriation and legal counselling activities. Mechanisms for inter-agency consultation and information sharing among UN and related agencies in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are well established. There are regular Agency-Heads meetings, humanitarian working group meeting, joint donor briefings, EU Presidency/UN Representatives meetings, security co-ordination meetings and sector-operations meetings. OCHA is now initiating an advisory group on IDPs and Roma. The Resident Co-ordinator is establishing a series of inter-agency theme groups. Within the WFP/UNHCR agreement in FRY, the Yugoslav Red Cross and the Montenegrin Red Cross are the main implementing agencies in the distribution of food and relief items to vulnerable refugees in private and collective accommodation. CARE International continues to distribute food to the refugees in collective accommodation. In late 2002, the ICRC, which distributes food to vulnerable IDPs in Serbia and non-food items to the same target group in Montenegro, has indicated that it will take over the distribution of food to IDPs in Montenegro after the WFP programme ceases.

UNHCR maintains regular contacts with institutions such as the European Agency for Reconstruction, USAID and the World Bank as well as other bi-lateral donors to encourage them to initiate programmes for refugees or incorporate refugees in existing ones. This has had some limited success in establishing refugee housing programmes and in employment generation programmes. The Italian and German Governments announced important bi-lateral initiatives in this respect in 2002.

Several goals of the Programme of Action of the Agenda for Protection are relevant for the Government and UNHCR in the FRY. Strengthening the Implementation of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol through the establishment of asylum procedures and the search for durable solutions for the refugees in FRY are at the forefront. Institution and capacity building in the area of asylum will be of increasing importance in 2003. In the context of the Migration and Asylum Initiative of the Stability Pact, UNHCR started to work with the Federal Government and the other partners on the establishment of a national asylum system. It is expected that a National Action Plan in this area will be ready in 2002. Substantial funding and sustained efforts will be required to implement the plan. UNHCR plans to conduct a series of training activities for/with the Government officials who will make the national asylum system operational. Meanwhile, UNHCR will have to continue its Mandate refugee status determination procedure.

Overview of beneficiary populations

As of July 2002, there are some 349,600 refugees in FRY (including 13,600 in Montenegro). In Serbia, a large majority of refugees are housed in private accommodation in the Vojvodina and Belgrade areas. In Montenegro, the major concentrations of refugees are in the municipalities of Bar, Herceg Novi, Niksic and Podgorica. Some 15,340 vulnerable refugees are accommodated in collective centres, specialised health care institutions and student dormitories. As indicated above, the Government's National Strategy, will facilitate the local integration in Serbia of those refugees unable or unwilling to repatriate. It is expected that during 2002 and 2003 steps will be taken to implement the plans formulated in the National Strategy. A similar plan of action is lacking in the Republic of Montenegro.

In Montenegro, refugees and IDPs are seldom confronted with particular protection problems. Issues such as illegal occupation of collective accommodation are adequately handled by the courts. Refugee and IDP identification cards ensure freedom of movement and access to limited services. Roma continue to experience discrimination and social marginalisation, but in general have full exercise of rights and services.

UNHCR, both directly and through NGO implementing partners, provides material, legal and social assistance to a large part of the refugee population. This task is executed in close co-ordination with the Serbian and Montenegrin Refugee Commissioners. UNHCR is the major provider of international assistance. ECHO and BPRM along with a sizeable number of NGOs are other important sources of assistance for refugees. The Government makes contributions of its own through the national budget, both in Serbia and Montenegro.

UNHCR is also implementing a modest project to facilitate local integration of refugees who do not wish to return to their countries of origin. This will be phased out in 2003. UNHCR's has assisted the Government in the development of a National Strategy and plays a crucial role – both through the Stability Pact and other contacts, to help gain donor support for Government sponsored local integration initiatives.

As of July 2002, some 204,100 internally displaced persons are residing in Serbia and 29,450 in Montenegro. In Serbia, a large majority of IDPs are concentrated in central and southern Serbia, while in Montenegro, Podgorica, Bar, and Berane are some of the municipalities in which the majority of IDPs are concentrated. Like refugees, most IDPs reside in private accommodation, while some 10,970 are accommodated in collective centres, specialised institutions and student dormitories. Although the situation in Kosovo is still such that the sustainable return of minorities is not possible, UNHCR undertakes Go and See visits to Kosovo, as well as Come and Inform visits from there. In a limited number of specific cases UNHCR also facilitates return. UNHCR will expand these activities in 2003. UNHCR is beginning a modest programme to improve self-reliance of internally displaced persons, due to a foreseeable protracted displacement for many.

Mandate Refugees

It is anticipated that a small but growing number of asylum seekers and refugees from other countries outside former Yugoslavia will approach UNHCR in FRY seeking legal and material assistance in 2003. Most of these refugees will be accommodated in Belgrade, while awaiting their durable solutions.

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| Name of Beneficiary Population: Refugees from the Republics of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina | |
| Main Goal(s): To promote repatriation of refugees to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote and facilitate voluntary repatriation ▪ Encourage and facilitate bi- and tri-lateral Government discussions on regional solutions/de-registration ▪ Address property issues – repossession of private property, ex –tenancy rights, reconstruction assistance. ▪ Promote access of refugees to non-commercial loans ▪ Finding durable solutions for refugee residents of some collective centres in connection with the planned closure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of the organised Return Procedure. ▪ Continued co-ordination of NGOs implementing return projects with non-UNHCR funding ▪ Establishing and subsequent implementation of procedures linking de-registration in FRY with the registration upon return in countries of origin. ▪ Establishing and subsequent implementation of repossession procedures, in cooperation with the Croatian government ▪ Interest bearing micro loans provided to refugees to set up and develop small businesses/ economic activities ▪ Selected collective centres converted into permanent housing and institutions for care of elderly ▪ Self-help housing packages offered as an incentive to able-bodied refugees for their relocation out of collective centres to leave CCs |

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| Name of Beneficiary Population: Internally displaced persons from Kosovo. | |
| Main Goal(s): • To provide basic assistance to vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs). | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide assistance to vulnerable IDP's, whether in collective centres or in private accommodation ▪ Provide assistance targeting IDP's with special needs through provision of non-food items and cash allowance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sub-agreements signed with implementing partners to provide non-food assistance ▪ Non-food items provided to only the most vulnerable IDPs and cash allowance given to the most needy cases identified by FOs ▪ Sub-agreements signed with implementing partners to carry out community services activities and health care targeting the most needy and vulnerable refugees |

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| Name of Beneficiary Population: IDPs from Kosho and Metohija | |
| Main Goal(s): To assist IDPs from Kosovo with income generation/vocational training to promote their self reliance. | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build capacity of the local vocational training facilities with the view to include IDPs ▪ Assist IDPs with self-help projects to equip them with additional skills and knowledge in preparation for their return. ▪ Promote state responsibility with the local authorities and local communities, to take over some assistance activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apprenticeship programme offered to IDPs through local businesses. ▪ Partnership with government agencies providing job placements established, thus enabling IDPs access to their training and eventual employment ▪ In-kind grants and Vocational Training programmes extended to cover IDPs. ▪ Necessary advice/assistance provided to state and local authorities to take over more responsibilities. |
| Name of Beneficiary Population Internally displaced persons from Kosovo | |
| Main Goal(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide inputs on the situation of the internally displaced, their aspirations and desires, to the UN Temporary Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) in their efforts to plan for the return of these displaced. | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide IDPs with information on UNMIK's activities in general, and in relation to return planning in particular • Provide IDPs with information on procedures and activities of the Kosovo Housing Directorate • Organise go-and-see visits for IDPs, to facilitate decision-making on return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BO contacts with IDP associations, international NGOs operating cross-border activities for IDPs, authorities in FRY and in Kosovo • BO support to activities by IDP associations and NGOs, possibly through implementing partner arrangements • BO direct contacts with IDPs and surveys |
| Name of Beneficiary Population Refugees from the Republics of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in FRY and refugees from other countries recognised under the UNHCR Mandate in FRY. | |
| Main Goal(s) To provide a durable solution through resettlement to a third country. | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify vulnerable refugees, or refugees with protection problems, or refugees who cannot otherwise integrate in FRY, from among the Croatian and Bosnian refugee population • Implement an efficient resettlement procedure on their behalf, ensuring the consistent application of resettlement criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access of eligible refugees to the resettlement procedure • Resettlement of eligible cases • Expedient processing of cases • Co-ordination with UNHCR Field Offices |

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| Name of Beneficiary Population Mandate refugees and asylum seekers from outside the former Yugoslavia region. | |
| <u>Main Goal(s)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that protection and assistance is provided to Mandate refugees from countries other than the former Yugoslavia; to operate an efficient RSD procedure; to begin the process of developing the asylum system; | |
| Principal Objectives | Related Outputs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a status determination procedure for third-country asylum seekers Ensure access to, or provision of, basic services to asylum seekers and Mandate refugees Work together with the FRY Government (and international actors) towards the creation of a national asylum system, by providing legal, technical, material and financial support for the establishment of fair and efficient asylum procedures. Assist the authorities in the drafting plans of action, legislative reform and procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylum seekers benefit from proper status determination procedures Basic needs of Mandate refugees and Asylum seekers are met A National Plan of Action for a establishing a national asylum system is drawn up and the National authorities begin implementation upon adoption of the plan. Training on refugee law principles is provided to a variety of audiences |