

Serbia

Operational highlights

Serbia

- As a result of Montenegro's independence in June 2006, UNHCR established separate operations in Serbia and Montenegro.
- Initial negotiations (between Belgrade and Pristina) on the future status of the province of Kosovo (Kosovo) prompted UNHCR to increase its level of preparedness.
- The number of refugees in Serbia continued to decrease from approximately 138,900 at the end of 2005 to some 98,300 at the end of 2006. The decrease is due partially to voluntary repatriation and, to a greater extent, to local integration in Serbia.
- Twenty-two collective centres, hosting approximately 1,000 refugees and more than 550 internally displaced persons (IDPs), were closed and the residents received housing and self-reliance assistance.

Kosovo

- In early 2005, UNHCR was invited to chair the Direct Dialogue Working Group on Returns (DDWG-R) to Kosovo, one of four working groups under the Belgrade–Pristina Direct Dialogue process. After long negotiations, mediated by UNHCR, a protocol on voluntary and sustainable return to Kosovo was signed on 6 June 2006.
- Some 1,620 displaced persons, mostly from Kosovo's ethnic minorities returned voluntarily to the province. Considering the volatile situation at the start of the status talks, this was a sign of continued interest in returns.
- As the future status of Kosovo may give rise to the problems of statelessness among displaced minority communities, preventive action had been taken through a civil registration campaign, which will be extended into 2007-09.



independence and was admitted to the United Nations on 28 June as the 192nd Member State. The end of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and the confederation that succeeded the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did not cause any additional population movements. On 28 October 2006, the overwhelming majority of voters (95 per cent of the 53 per cent who voted) approved the new Serbian constitution, which reaffirmed the country's path to democracy and eventual accession to the European Union, but which also reiterated that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia. The process talks on the province's future status heavily affected Serbian politics throughout the year.

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Following the release of the "Eide Report" on the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan and the appointment of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Kosovo, the political and operational environment in Kosovo was dominated by the initial status talks. Sixteen rounds of direct talks held between Belgrade and Pristina,

Working environment

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On 3 June 2006, following the outcome of a referendum, the Montenegrin Parliament declared

achieved some progress on decentralization, notably the re-drawing of the boundaries and autonomy for municipalities with an ethnic Serb majority. However, the gap between the two parties on the fundamental status issue remained wide.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

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- Support the Government of Serbia in achieving durable solutions for refugees according to the framework provided by the Sarajevo Declaration and the “3x3 Initiative”.
- Promote and support the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the local integration of refugees who are unable or unwilling to return.
- Provide protection and basic humanitarian assistance to refugee groups with specific needs and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Promote the rights of IDPs.
- Facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs to Kosovo.
- Assist the Government in building its asylum system and conduct refugee status determination in the interim period.

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- Contribute to creating conditions conducive to the return of refugees and IDPs, in conjunction with other international actors.
- Monitor and report on the situation of returnees and IDPs.
- Support the reintegration of spontaneous returnees through targeted assistance.
- Exercise an enhanced facilitating and monitoring supervisory and advisory role in the process of returns.

- Strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity.
- Respond to the protection needs of groups of concern, with special attention given to women and children and the elderly.
- Provide protection and durable solutions for some 800 refugees from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as mandate refugees originating from outside the former Yugoslavia.
- Contribute to the development of a legal framework on asylum (in line with the 1951 Convention and subsequent refugee-related legal instruments).

Protection and solutions

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The Serbian authorities released the results of the refugee re-registration exercise completed in 2005, which calculated the refugee population in Serbia at more than 104,000. However, UNHCR readjusted this figure to 98,300 because some had found a durable solution in the meantime.

The age, gender and diversity mainstreaming process was launched in Serbia in May 2006. A multi-functional team consisting of UNHCR staff, implementing partners and key Government counterparts was established. All UNHCR staff in Serbia were trained in the participatory assessment methodology. The first all-staff participatory assessment was undertaken in June and a database was created. Close to 400 refugees and 900 IDPs, both in private accommodation and collective centres, were interviewed during three such assessments. The key protection concerns of both groups, irrespective of age or gender were: access to adequate housing; access to employment and income generation; health risks; education; and access to documentation. A key achievement obtained for this group as a result of collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and local authorities, was a

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Croatia	71,100	71,100	50	12
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	27,400	27,400	54	13
Returnees (refugees)	From Germany	2,800	2,800	-	-
	From various	2,700	2,700	-	-
	From Switzerland	600	600	-	-
IDPs		227,600	227,600	50	24
Returnees (IDPs)		1,400	1,400	49	34
Others of concern	Local residents at risk (Kosovo)	85,000	-	-	-
Total		418,600	333,600		

70 per cent reduction in administrative fees for the issuance of personal documents.

Although a reception centre for asylum-seekers was completed in 2006, the centre did not become operational because the asylum law had not been adopted and staff could not be appointed. Furthermore, television programmes informing refugees and IDPs on the situation in return areas were broadcast, with an average weekly viewer rate of 500,000 persons. These programmes allowed people to make an informed decision on whether to return or not.

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In June 2006 UNHCR issued an update of its position paper on the "Continued International Protection Needs of Individuals from Kosovo". This paper is based on an in-depth assessment of the situation of minorities, carried out by UNHCR and complemented by a review of numerous reports from other agencies and organizations present in Kosovo. The report concluded that while the overall security situation of minorities and freedom of movement had improved to a certain extent, members of ethnic minorities continued to suffer from ethnically motivated security incidents, such as physical and verbal assaults or threats, arson and harassment. There were also several more serious violent incidents recorded, such as shootings and murders.

UNHCR's position is that specific ethnic minorities should continue to benefit from international protection, or at least complementary forms of protection. In view of this, the Office has maintained its policy of facilitating returns and repatriation to Kosovo on a strictly voluntary basis only and of creating conditions conducive to return.

UNHCR continued its active engagement in seeking a solution to the problem of more than 100 minority IDP families (close to 450 individuals) who were living in lead-contaminated camps in northern Mitrovicë/a and Zvečan, and assisted their temporary relocation to an environmentally safe location. UNHCR helped improve the conditions for the return of Roma to Mahala on the south bank of the river Ibar, by promoting the formalization of property titles, allocation of apartments owned by the municipality, permanent policing arrangements, civil registration, legal aid, information and counselling activities for displaced persons who might want to return.



Players at a UNHCR-run soccer tournament in Belgrade organised on World Refugee Day, with one of the balls donated by Nike for the launch of the ninemillion.org campaign.

Activities and assistance

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Community services: Fifty-four mobile teams were operational and provided counselling and support to more than 29,800 IDPs and refugees in collective centres and private accommodation. UNHCR covered 30 per cent of the cost of accommodation, specialized care and meals for more than 1,100 refugees and IDPs in specialized institutions. Twenty-nine victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) received legal, psychological and material support.

Domestic needs and household support: More than 750 cash grants were given to extremely vulnerable refugees and IDPs, while household items (stoves, beds, mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and tarpaulins) were distributed to approximately 3,200 persons of concern. Two thousand women received sanitary towels. In addition, more than 300 refugees were provided with accommodation prior to their repatriation. Thirty-nine refugee families (73 individuals) and 11 IDP families (66 individuals) received financial and in-kind assistance to support them in their move from collective centres to settle in private accommodation. Essential relief items were stockpiled to meet the needs of 10,000 people, as an emergency preparedness measure.

Education: School fees, books and school supplies were provided to 12 children of asylum-seekers or mandate refugees. Two hundred Roma IDP children (many of whom do not speak Serbian) attended preparatory school classes and another 100 children attended complementary courses. A further 95 children participated in compensatory programmes to support school performance. More than 500 refugees and IDPs

attended vocational training classes, of whom 60 per cent found employment and 19 per cent became self-employed.

Food: Canned food was pre-positioned late in the year for 5,000 potential beneficiaries for one week. More than 400 refugees who repatriated to Croatia received lunch packs during their journey.

Health and nutrition: Almost 600 refugees and IDPs from the former Yugoslavia and more than 50 asylum-seekers and mandate refugees were provided with health-care assistance. Some 1,100 refugees and IDPs were assisted with medical referrals to access national health institutions. Some 260 refugees were given medical examinations prior to their repatriation.

Legal assistance: UNHCR interviewed and assessed a total of 44 asylum-seekers to determine their refugee status under its mandate. The Office trained 200 newly recruited border guards and established a legal clinic in the Belgrade University law faculty. More than 8,700 refugees were naturalized and de-registered in Serbia, while a database allowing for the de-registration of naturalized or repatriated refugees was established. As a result of a decrease in administrative fees in issuing personal documents, UNHCR's legal partners could provide free legal assistance to more than 2,550 IDPs. More than 900 Croatian refugees were assisted in applying for the housing reconstruction programme and more than 30 refugees for the alternative housing care programme in Croatia. Twenty court representation cases for property repossession were initiated, with 12 successfully resolved by the end of the year.

Operational support (to agencies): In 2006, UNHCR employed one international and 18 national United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), and also supported its international NGO partners.

Shelter and infrastructure: UNHCR contributed towards the running costs of 45 collective centres in Serbia by covering a total of 2,450 overnight stays for refugees and 4,490 overnight stays for IDPs. The rest was covered by the Government. To support local integration of refugees and IDPs, UNHCR provided material assistance to almost 80 families who completed their houses under the "Partial Self Help" programme and assisted more than 120 families with small loans for housing.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR maintained a warehouse with 600 square metres of storage space where basic relief items were kept. During the year UNHCR rented an additional warehouse with 500 square metres of storage space for relief. A total of 260 refugees were transported to Croatia under the organized return procedure and 146 refugees received assistance to transport tractors and/or household belongings. In addition, more than 270 IDPs participated in 31

"go-and-see" visits to their places of former habitual residence in Kosovo.

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Community services: UNHCR supported 35 community development projects which provided economic opportunities for more than 8,000 minority returnees and their receiving communities. A total of 42 meetings involving minority returnees and central and local authorities were held to promote inter-ethnic dialogue.

Domestic needs and household support: A total of 44 self-reliance projects benefiting 171 returnees were implemented throughout Kosovo and non-food items were distributed to more than 3,300 extremely vulnerable returnees and IDPs.

Food: More than 440 IDPs living in the Plementina collective centre received basic food assistance. In addition, more than 700 spontaneous minority returnees received a three-month food package consisting of wheat flour, beans, sugar, oil and canned meat. Some additional food was pre-positioned as a contingency reserve.

Income generation: Income-generating projects were implemented to assist minority returnees to establish, restart or expand sustainable economic activities.

Legal assistance: All minority returnees were visited by the network of NGOs to assess the return environment, identify protection issues and security concerns and conduct comprehensive assessments to determine specific family needs. More than 5,100 persons of concern received legal assistance, of whom approximately 2,500 were assisted in obtaining documentation (e.g. birth, marriage, death, pension, property). A total of 2,100 leaflets and 1,000 posters on the SGBV referral system in Kosovo were distributed throughout the province with a special focus on rural areas with minority communities. Furthermore, UNHCR's airport monitoring team recorded a total of 3,544 forced returns from European countries, of which 65 cases were identified as deported. These cases are under close supervision by the Office and were referred to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for follow-up with the Governments that deported them. UNHCR continued to carry out refugee status determination under its mandate for asylum-seekers arriving in Kosovo and, in addition, trained local authorities and police officers on asylum law and standard operating procedures regarding the reception of asylum-seekers.

Operational support (to agencies): Operational support was provided to fund nine UNVs to strengthen UNHCR's monitoring and response capacity, to audit implementing partners' sub-projects and to produce and disseminate brochures, magazines and pamphlets providing basic information to refugees and IDPs.

Shelter and infrastructure: A total of 109 families (more than 450 people) who returned spontaneously benefited from emergency shelter repairs. In addition, 11 families in return communities also benefited from small-scale shelter repairs, which helped foster inter-ethnic reconciliation. Close to 450 IDPs were accommodated in the Plementina collective centre in the period from January to May 2006. Between June and December 2006 the number of IDPs decreased to just over 200 as many found alternative housing with UNHCR's support.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR maintained a fleet of 12 trucks to deliver humanitarian assistance. A mechanical workshop was operational where UNHCR maintained its trucks and vehicles.

Constraints

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The Sarajevo Declaration renewed the impetus to find durable solutions, but the unresolved issues of occupancy or tenancy rights (long-term social housing) and the validation of pension rights continue to obstruct a comprehensive solution for refugees who fled the war in Croatia in the mid 1990s.

The Kosovo status issue which remained unresolved by the end of 2006 hampered UNHCR's ability to identify durable solutions for IDPs and refugees from Kosovo. The political situation in Serbia following the dissolution of the State Union and the beginning of status talks has meant that the asylum law has not yet been adopted.

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The overriding constraint was the lack of a solution to the status issue, which left Kosovo in an uncertain situation and had a negative impact on the rate of voluntary returns. Another factor inhibiting minority returns was the persistence of incidents against minorities despite some improvement in the security situation and with regard to freedom of movement. An unfavorable economic situation and widespread unemployment also affected the rate of refugee returns.

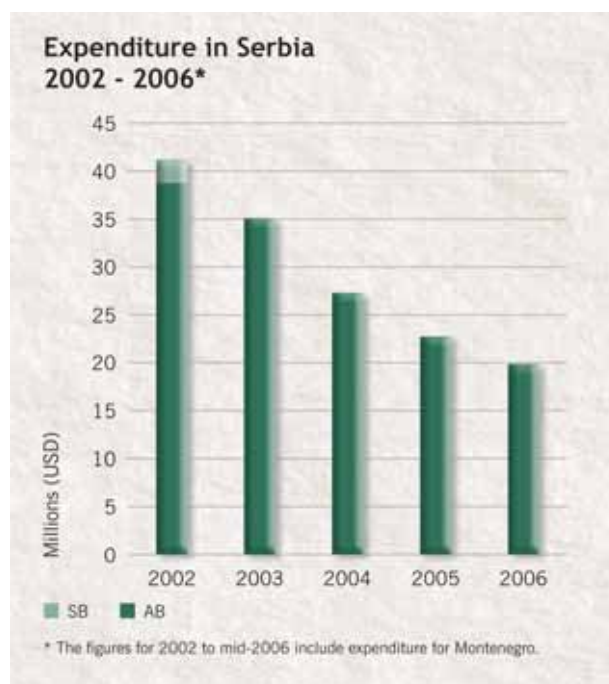
Financial information

The cap on UNHCR's operational budgets at the beginning of 2006 resulted in the postponement of converting one of the existing collective centres to be for

the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs. Also the number of NGO staff engaged in community social work and field monitoring had to be reduced by six. In addition, the training planned for some 150 teachers involved in educational programmes for ethnic Roma children in six municipalities in Serbia was suspended, together with vocational training for approximately 30 Roma adolescents. Legal assistance to refugees attempting to restore their property rights in Croatia had to be reduced at the end of August.

The budget reduction has had an impact on UNHCR's ability to effectively pursue its two-pronged approach in Kosovo: supervising the return process and contributing to the creation of conditions conducive to return. The budget reduction also affected the flexibility of UNHCR to effectively and promptly respond to the changing protection and assistance needs of refugees and IDPs. In concrete terms, this resulted in the discontinuation of food assistance for some 3,200 persons; a 50 per cent decrease in self-reliance activities, affecting 60 per cent of community development and 64 per cent of income-generating projects; a decrease in the provision of basic humanitarian assistance items (firewood, stoves, hygienic kits) for some 500 needy families; a 63 per cent decrease in emergency shelter repair; and fewer staff providing legal aid.

UNHCR expenditures in Serbia over the last five years have decreased in line with the Office's strategy of a responsible phase-down but also due to an overall decrease in the number of persons of concern in Serbia, as in the South-Eastern Europe subregion.



Organization and implementation

Management

Serbia

Until Montenegro's independence, operations in Serbia and Montenegro were managed from the UNHCR Representation in Belgrade and the sub-offices in Podgorica and Kraljevo. At the end of the year, the Office signed a "host country agreement" with the Government of Montenegro and the office in Podgorica became a fully-fledged representation. UNHCR's staff in Serbia included seven international staff members, 50 local staff members, one international UNV, and 18 national UNVs.

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UNHCR's staff in Kosovo consisted of 16 international staff members, 63 local staff members, one Junior Professional Officer and nine UNVs based in the office of the Chief of Mission in Pristina and five field offices including Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/a, Pristina, Peja/Pec, and Prizren.

Working with others

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Partnerships with the Government, NGOs, UN agencies and donors were strengthened resulting in continued good donor support and UNHCR leadership in emergency preparedness and durable solutions programmes. The Office also strengthened its partnerships with the European Commission, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the United States Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration in order to find durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. Furthermore, extensive consultations were held with other UN agencies on emergency preparedness and strong cooperation was developed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners to undertake a socio-economic survey of IDPs in Serbia.

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UNHCR worked very closely with its other offices in neighbouring countries on return issues, but also in emergency preparedness. In this respect, UNHCR also cooperated very closely with other UN agencies in Kosovo. Furthermore, as the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) continued its phase-down, UNHCR strengthened its working relations

with the Provisional Institutions of Self Government, particularly in terms of capacity building.

Overall assessment

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In general the strategy of supporting repatriation and local integration for refugees from former Yugoslavia has continued to have a positive impact on the decrease in the number of refugees. However, for IDPs, the pace of progress in finding durable solutions will continue to depend on the evolution of the status issue, the final political framework and the actual situation on the ground. This situation has also slowed down the closure of collective centres hosting both refugees and IDPs. The objective of assisting the Government of Serbia to have an asylum law and a fully functioning reception centre could not be met because of the political situation.

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In view of the political and operational environment, UNHCR had to continue pursuing a flexible strategy. This included the facilitation of returns on a voluntary basis and the creation of conditions conducive to return through capacity building, inter-ethnic dialogue and community development on the one hand, and emergency preparedness and planning on the other. As a result, while there has not been any substantial increase in minority returns, UNHCR's presence contributed to the sustainability of the ones that did take place.

Partners: Serbia

Implementing partners

Government: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, Serbian Commissioner for Refugees.

NGOs: Amity, Danish Refugee Council, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance, Intersos, Italian Consortium of Solidarity, Micro Development Fund, Microfins, Praxis, Serbian Democratic Forum, Unija.

Others: UNV.

Operational partners

NGOs: American Refugee Committee, Better Way, CARE International, Covekoljublje, HELP, the International Council of Volunteer Agencies, the International Orthodox Christiana Charities, Norwegian People's Aid, Save the Children (UK), SOIR, Swedish Organization for Individual Relief.

Others: Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank, FAO, the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, UNDP.

Partners: Kosovo

Implementing partners

NGOs: Advocacy Training and Resource Centre, American Refugee Council, Civil Rights Program - Kosovo, Danish Refugee Council, Developing Together, International Catholic Migration Commission, Malteser Hilfsdienst, Mercy Corps Scotland, Mother Teresa Society, Norwegian Church Aid.

Operational partners

Government: Kosovo Force (KFOR), Kosovo Police Service, Kosovo Property Agency, Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance, United Nations Mission in Kosovo/Office of Returns and Communities and Office of Community Affairs, UNMIK Civilian Police.

Others: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Council of Europe, International Organization for Migration, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, UNDP, UNHCHR, UNV.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure ³
22,645,599	4,111,366	16,713,830	20,825,196	19,835,518

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

³ Includes activities in Montenegro for USD 1,177,410.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	AB ¹	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,485,720	0
Community services	908,524	687,106
Domestic needs and household support	995,923	231,784
Education	287,761	90,076
Food	99,354	16,892
Health and nutrition	130,346	30,614
Income generation	22,032	12,102
Legal assistance	1,739,394	420,317
Operational support (to agencies)	1,279,959	37,049
Sanitation	4,282	1,230
Shelter and infrastructure	1,791,811	797,876
Transport and logistics	1,471,088	178,668
Instalments with implementing partners	2,440,265	(2,503,714)
Sub-total operational activities	15,656,460	0
Programme support	4,179,058	0
Total expenditure	19,835,518	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(188,158)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	8,314,980	
Reporting received	(5,874,715)	
Balance	2,440,265	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		2,680,896
Reporting received		(2,503,714)
Refunded to UNHCR		(137,140)
Adjustments		(2,256)
Balance		37,786

¹ Includes activities in Montenegro for USD 1,177,410.