

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Maintain and develop a significant field presence in order to build confidence between ethnic communities and facilitate the return of displaced persons.
- Assist returnees and war-affected populations, through the distribution of basic relief items. Provide emergency shelter materials to families with damaged homes, in order to ensure one warm, dry room.
- Develop quick impact projects that help to restore confidence and encourage return, with particular attention on mixed areas where both communities will benefit. Such projects might include minor repairs to schools, local water or electricity supplies.
- Monitor the implementation of the Framework Agreement endorsed by the Government to address problems faced by refugees lacking legal documentation who wish to re-enter The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia). At the same time, intensify efforts to assist the Government with its amendment of the current citizenship law so that the rights of all ethnic groups are guaranteed.
- Continue to provide protection and assistance to refugees, while actively seeking durable solutions. Provide specially targeted support for refugee women, children, adolescents, and elderly, and vulnerable individuals.
- Promote the adoption and implementation of a national asylum law that includes a proper refugee status determination procedure, and strengthen the national protection system.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

Significant progress has been made in restoring peace and stability within the country since the signing and continuing implementation of the Framework Agreement. Since the adoption of the Framework Agreement, more than 150,000 of the 170,000 persons displaced during the spring and summer of 2001, have returned home. As designated lead agency for the return of the displaced under the Framework Agreement, UNHCR has continued to co-ordinate returns, and has played a key information-sharing role with all partners.

As part of the overall returnee-monitoring framework, UNHCR field teams maintained a crucial presence in areas of return in order to monitor the protection aspects of returnee reintegration. By end June, UNHCR had entered all conflict-affected villages and in close co-operation with OSCE, the European Union Monitoring Mission, and NATO Task Force Fox, monitored developments related to security, freedom of movement, documentation and citizenship issues, amnesty, and inter-ethnic relations.

In 2001, UNHCR established with the Macedonian authorities a procedure for the return of undocumented citizens and residents from Kosovo. Some delays by the authorities in responding to requests for verification of identity and residence were experienced during the first half of 2002 and required additional efforts by UNHCR to ensure that they were addressed.

In view of the delays in restoring of public transport services in the former conflict areas, UNHCR operated shuttle bus services on 12 bus-lines with 18 buses comprising

about 45 trips per day at the peak of the operations in early 2002. These "freedom of movement" bus lines greatly assisted the displaced people to revisit their houses and to receive shelter materials channelled through implementing partners, as well as helping children to attend schools in several areas where public transport services were inadequate. The number of bus-lines was reduced to eight by June in view of the improved situation.

UNHCR has been providing initial assistance to returnees to help them reintegrate. Some 1,700 returnee packages of basic non-food items and hardware were supplied to returnee families by the end of June. In addition, some 11,000 m³ of firewood was supplied to the refugee and displaced population during the winter. UNHCR and its implementing partners continued to implement Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) aimed at confidence-building and meeting initial needs of returnees. Of some 80 QIPs approved, over 50 per cent were executed by June with the remainder to be completed by October.

The UNHCR-supported NGO Legal Network was expanded in 2002 by the placement of additional lawyers in field teams of Network members, the inclusion of an additional NGO focusing on citizenship/statelessness, as well as the establishment of a co-ordinating Network Secretariat. As a result, greater field legal assistance for returnees and long-term habitual residents without effective citizenship was provided.

UNHCR continued to provide shelter support in accordance with the strategy to facilitate the return and stabilisation process. In 2002, UNHCR completed work in 12 conflict-affected villages and on 607 houses between January and April. A second phase of work targeting some 700 - 800 houses in 32 villages started and is scheduled to be completed in August. An additional 1,400 houses in the three main conflict-affected areas, Tetovo, Kumanovo, and Skopje will

also be repaired, benefiting some 11,900 direct beneficiaries.

Refugees

The FYROM Government extended Temporary Humanitarian Assisted Person status to ethnic minorities from Kosovo until 28 September 2002 following the expiration of the beneficiaries' status and temporary protection cards on 28 March. After three years under temporary protection, this group still has no access to individual refugee status determination procedures and their rights remain limited. A Refugee Committee was established in 2002 with the aim of improving the presentation of refugees' concerns.

The number of voluntary repatriations decreased during the first half of 2002 in comparison to 2001 when the conflict in FYROM has caused many beneficiaries of temporary protection to return to Kosovo or relocate to Serbia. Factors continuing to impede voluntary repatriation include the precarious security and human rights situation in Kosovo for the Roma, Ashkalija and Egyptian minorities and the hope of resettlement to a third country.

UNHCR facilitated the development of a joint co-operative strategy between the Action for the Rights of Children, its network of NGOs in Serbia and the UNHCR Legal NGO Network aimed at helping refugees from Kosovo in FYROM to obtain documents from Serbia. Long-term residents of FYROM without effective citizenship who were born in Kosovo or Serbia also benefited from this programme.

UNHCR continued efforts to work with the Government to strengthen the national asylum system and procedures. The draft Law on Asylum remains pending and is not expected to be adopted until after the elections in September 2002. However, the Asylum Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs continued to review claims by new arrivals under the asylum provisions in the Law on the Movement and Residence of Aliens. UNHCR also continued to work with Stability Pact Migration and Asylum

Initiative (MAI) in this area, including participating in the Country Team meeting held in February, at which the Government agreed to begin drafting a National Action Plan for the improvement of the asylum procedure.

The adoption of amendments to the Citizenship Act elaborated during 2001 continued to be postponed. As part of UNHCR's strategy to raise awareness and strengthen linkages with other actors concerning the issue of long-term habitual residents without an effective citizenship, briefings were given to EU, OSCE, NATO, and the Council of Europe. UNHCR also supported the production and translation into five minority languages of government

brochures on national legislation and procedure for acquiring citizenship, personal identity documents, and registering births, marriages, domicile and deaths. Some 118 refugees from Kosovo of Goran ethnicity were granted FYROM citizenship on the basis of Article 11 in the Citizenship Act.

During 2001, UNHCR was pursuing resettlement as a solution for a limited number of beneficiaries of temporary protection in light of the poor security situation in FYROM. With the stable situation in 2002, coupled with the gradual improvement of the security and human rights situation in Kosovo, screening of cases for resettlement was drastically scaled back.

Progress as measured against indicators

| Impact/Performance Indicators | Actual Progress |
|--|--|
| Number of displaced and refugees that have returned to their original homes in a safe and sustainable manner. | The number of IDPs registered by the Macedonian Red Cross as of 4 June 2002, stands at 13,603. UNMIK has re-registered 4,085 FYROM refugees as temporarily protected persons in Kosovo. Thus, of the 170,000 displaced during the conflict, over 150,000 have returned, while some 17,600 persons remain displaced. Some 1,700 returnee packages were delivered. |
| Functioning fair and efficient national asylum/protection system. | Draft Law on Asylum submitted in May to Ministry of Finance. 54 individuals from Kosovo/FRY applied for asylum of whom one was recognised by the Asylum Section. Eight individual cases are pending, 11 individual cases withdrew their applications, while the remainder was rejected by the first instance and is under appeal. |
| Number of THAPs return to Kosovo/FRY, receiving assistance. | 85 individuals who voluntarily repatriated to Kosovo during the reporting period received repatriation grants, WFP food packages and IOM transport. 100 individuals voluntarily relocated to Serbia/FRY. 26 THAPs participated in a "go and see" visit to Uroševac in connection with a carnival organised by the local Roma and Ashkaelia population. |
| Strengthened capacity of civil society/NGO network and local institutions within the national protection framework. | 2,035 cases (4, 721 persons) of asylum-seekers, refugees and persons with unregulated citizenship received free legal and social assistance by NGO Network. |
| Refugees receive regular material assistance during the period of donors' phasing out and UNHCR's taking up of the responsibility. | 950 refugee families in host families received 3m ³ of firewood for heating funded by ECHO. 3,500 refugees received monthly basic and complementary food. WFP has phased out its operation. 3,500 refugees received hygiene parcels and some 200 children under 18 months received baby parcels from IFRC monthly. |
| Number of houses and facilities repaired in conflict-affected areas. Achievement of defined repair standards. | In 2002, over 1,400 units were repaired or are in the process of being so. Repair works are to International Management Group (IMG) standards and in accordance with the "Final Strategy for the repair and reconstruction of damaged buildings and roads in the crisis areas" drafted by the Ministry of Transport and Communication. |

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

The initial objectives remain unchanged. UNHCR's priority activities for the second half of 2002 are:

- Support safe and sustainable return of the remaining refugees and IDPs to areas where national protection has been effectively re-established.
- Assist effective implementation of the Framework Agreement and the re-establishment of national protection through maintaining a crucial field monitoring presence in order to build confidence between ethnic communities and to facilitate the return of displaced persons
- Ensure all returnees and war-affected populations have access to basic

assistance through UNHCR's distribution of basic relief items including emergency shelter materials.

- Assist residual Kosovo minority caseload under the Temporary Humanitarian Assisted Person (THAP) status continues to receive protection from the Government.
- Ensure refugee women, children, adolescents, elderly, and vulnerable individuals receive specially targeted support.
- Support the strengthening of the national protection system by advocating for the adoption of the draft Asylum Law and implementing by-laws, and providing legal and technical assistance within the MAI and the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Financial Data (USD)

| Annual Programme Budget | | | | Supplementary Programme Budget | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Initial Budget | Revised Budget | Total Funds Available | Obligation Level | Initial Budget | Revised Budget | Total Funds Available | Obligation Level |
| 4,662,957 | 4,663,737 | 2,850,468 | 2,257,741 | 8,244,325 | 8,223,162 | 5,919,811 | 3,632,879 |