

In this issue:

- **Sarajevo hosts the second Bosnian Women's Initiative Fair**
- **UNHCR Banja Luka marks the International Year of Volunteers**
- **UNHCR trains State Border Service officials on basic protection principles**
- **A returnee's succesful greenhouse project in the village of Celjevo**
- **Back home, back to school and an academic term to remember!**
- **Facilitating the implementation of the Property Laws in Mostar and Stolic**
- **Headlines in November and December 2001**

Sarajevo hosts the second Bosnian Women's Initiative Fair

For the second year running, the Bosnian Women's Initiative (BWI) Fair to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the programme was held in Sarajevo from 15-18 November 2001. Around 53 local NGOs, women's groups and associations exhibited their goods ranging from knitwear, embroidery and artefacts, to woven carpets, ceramics and toys, which were also on sale to the public.

The BWI Fair also heralded a new phase of the programme and will henceforth be known as the *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

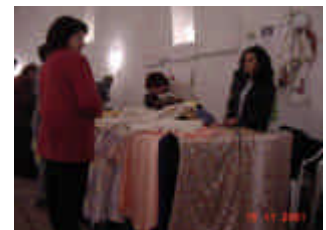


UNHCR announces the *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative (BiHWI). With the transfer to local ownership, a steering board of eight women from different NGOs from across BiH will oversee the running of the BiHWI. UNHCR plans to assist the BiHWI during 2002 to establish a management structure

through a small secretariat in Sarajevo to help sustain the programme in the long term.

A similar fair in which 15 local NGOs and women's associations participated was hosted by UNHCR Mostar between 7-9 December 2001. ◇



Handmade goods on sale to the public

UNHCR Banja Luka marks the International Year of Volunteers

As part of a year long series of celebrations to mark the International Year of Volunteers, UNHCR Banja Luka and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-hosted a high-profile event in the city on 17 November 2001. The evening incorporated a concert and a dinner-dance. The objective of

the celebration was to increase awareness of the concept of volunteerism in BiH as well as to raise funds for the Centre for Social Work in Gradiska.

In addition to representatives from international organizations, Embassies and NGOs, officials from the RS Government attended the event, notably Mladen Ivanic, the RS Prime Minister.

Henrik Kolstrup, Resident Representative of UNDP in BiH and Kyaw Zin Hla, Head of UNHCR's Sub-Office in Banja Luka, addressed the audience and paid tribute to the voluntary work being done in BiH and around the world.

Mr Kolstrup also took the opportunity of highlighting the issue of *conscientious objection*, or the entitlement of every young man to choose civil, rather than military, service. He urged the BiH Government to support this initiative and to incorporate it into national legislation.

The proceeds from the event will be used by to the Centre for Social Work to renovate the building and to purchase computers in February 2002. The Centre was founded in 1975 and was chosen by UNHCR Banja Luka on the grounds of its protection work with unaccompanied minors. ◇



Head of UNHCR Banja Luka addresses the guests

UNHCR trains State Border Service officials on basic protection principles

According to international human rights law, all vulnerable individuals have the right to seek asylum and protection from persecution. BiH is party to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol which enshrines specific rights and obligations for refugees. Asylum seekers may be refugees, and therefore must be treated as such until their status has been determined in a refugee status determination procedure. In BiH, the Law on Immigration and Asylum sets out the rights and procedures for refugees and asylum seekers. Until a fully equipped and effective national asylum system can be established, UNHCR is undertaking refugee status determination on behalf of the BiH government as part of its overall mandate.

The State Border Service (SBS) has an important role in ensuring that foreign nationals who may be seeking protection from persecution are not refused entry or otherwise returned to countries or territories where they may be exposed to serious harm either directly or indirectly. Further, the SBS is responsible for referring vulnerable foreign nationals to the asylum authority. This is a crucial function as BiH has witnessed an increasing number of persons seeking asylum at its borders and within its territory over recent months.

To facilitate this task, UNHCR in co-operation with the SBS, has engaged in an extensive training programme on basic refugee protection principles targeting officers and decision-makers of the SBS. UNHCR is con-

ducting regular briefing sessions on basic refugee protection principles for officers undergoing the SBS transitional training programme. In addition, UNHCR conducted a series of six additional extensive seminars for decision-



SBS officers at a training session at the Centre in Suhodol

makers of the SBS in 2001. The sessions consisted of interactive presentations and discussions on issues of refugee law, both at the national and international level. Officers were specifically briefed on ways to identify asylum seekers and to secure the latter's access to

the asylum procedure. Additional seminars may take place in 2002.

As at December 2001, 348 officers have been briefed as part of the transitional training programme at Suhodol and 180 officers have participated in seminars.

UNHCR is pleased with the co-operation that has been established with the SBS and believes that the authorities can make a significant contribution to an effective asylum system in BiH. ♦



UNHCR briefing SBS Officers on protection principles

A returnee's successful greenhouse project in the village of Celjevo

Rasim Mesic and his family returned to their pre-war abode in the village of Celjevo, Capljina Municipality, in 1999. They discovered that their property was devastated and were obliged to stay in collective accommodation facilities for about a year.

He and five other returnees sought agricultural assistance from Malteser Hilfsdienst (MHD), UNHCR's implementing partner in southern BiH. UNHCR and MHD jointly manage a scheme called the *Income Generation Plan for Sustainable Return*. Although Mr Mesic and his wife are qualified as a mechanic and social

worker respectively, limited available employment opportunities led them to consider repairing their greenhouse in order to grow cash crops to provide a basic source of income. In truth, this had



Mr Mesic proudly displays his produce

been a traditional means of subsistence for many local residents prior to the conflict. MHD approved the Mesics' application to-

gether with those of five other persons as part of a co-operative scheme for returnees. By pooling their resources, they built the greenhouses on a self-help basis.

At the present time, Mr Mesic has planted spinach, onions, tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. In keeping with the conditions of MHD's income generation schemes, he has donated 20% of the value of the project as a payback to the community. To this end, he gave some of his crop to old peoples' homes, orphanages and public kitchens and is even willing to contribute a proportion of his future

revenue. With the money he has earned so far, Mr Mesic has built another greenhouse and has been able to reconstruct his property.

Mr Mesic's success story encouraged a second group of returnees to submit a similar project proposal to UNHCR/MHD that was approved at the end



Mr Mesic working in his greenhouse



Back home, back to school and an academic term to remember!

Bosniac children who returned with their families to Krizevici, Kamenica and Kula Grad communities in Zvornik Municipality began school on 15 October 2001. For some of them, this was their first day ever at school, which, coupled with the joy of living in their own home after years of displacement, made it a term to remember.

A total of 90 returnee children are now enrolled in schools in Zvornik Municipality. In Krizevici, the school building was reconstructed by Islamic Relief and has 39 registered students to date. The school in Kamenica with 34 registered Bosniac students was rebuilt by GTZ, a German development agency. Given that Kamenica is a

multi-ethnic community, it is hoped that the number of students will increase in the second term, with Bosnian Serb children joining their fellow student returnees. The school in Kula Grad was also renovated by Islamic Relief and now has 17 registered students; in the community of Sjenokos where the building was reconstructed by the German NGO, Cap Anamur, 15 children were attending classes as at December 2001.

All four schools have one Bosniac teacher working alongside one Bosnian Serb teacher, except in Sjenokos where a Bosniac returnee is the only instructor at the present time. Teachers follow the Republika Srpska's cur-



Pupils at Kamenica School

riculum for primary schools with the exceptions of history and language lessons, which are adapted to Serb, Bosniac and Croat curricular requirements as taught in the Federation. Aida Sejdjenovic, a teacher at Kula Grad primary school told UNHCR Tuzla: *"The curriculum is a land mine issue, we really need to talk about it to find a solution, a compromise that works for the teachers and the*

students". Needless to say, the issue needs to be resolved at the national level.

For the time being, however, the young pupils in Zvornik urgently need school supplies and materials. Clearly, the value of education cannot be over emphasized. It is a priceless asset that, in war-torn countries such as BiH, can nurture the younger generation to rebuild their country and to cultivate a culture of peace. The acceptance of minority returnees in schools in Zvornik Municipality is a small step in the right direction to what will hopefully one day be a BiH-wide multi-ethnic education system. ◊

Facilitating the implementation of the Property Laws in Mostar and Stolac

Until recently, houses that had been completely destroyed were excluded from reconstruction programmes due to the high cost of clearing rubble. The removal of debris poses a major hindrance to the Property Law Implementation Plan (PLIP) since DPs whose property has been devastated are forced to occupy other people's dwellings.



A typically destroyed house in Stolac

For these reasons, UNHCR Mostar undertook a campaign to tackle the

issue in Mostar and Stolac - where the need was greatest - in co-operation with the RS and Federation Civil Protection Unit teams. The project lasted three months and concluded in mid November 2001.

In all, 28 houses were cleared of debris thereby allowing agencies to consider these sites in the

next reconstruction cycle due to commence in spring 2002. ◊



The Civil Protection Unit team in action

'Globalization has not brought an end to violence, persecution and failing states. This is illustrated by the fact that today there are over 22 million people of concern to UNHCR. In responding to the needs of these people, we have to ensure effective partnerships between political actors, humanitarian organizations, development agencies, human rights groups and many others. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges today is to ensure adequate coordination of this multiplicity of actors.'

The 50th anniversary of the Convention provides us with an important opportunity to reflect on the structures currently in place to protect refugees and to find solutions to their plight. Obviously protection alone, narrowly defined, is not adequate: refugees need both protection and solutions.'

(Statement by High Commissioner Lubbers to the Ministerial Meeting of States Parties to the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees held in Geneva on 12 December 2001)



Headlines in November and December 2001

- As at end November 2001, the agencies involved in the Property Legislation Implementation Plan (PLIP) announced that 48 % of claims had been solved in the Federation; 29% in the RS; and 36% in the Brcko District.
- 80,993 minority returns were recorded in BiH from January to November 2001. 42,669 returnees were registered in the Federation of BiH, 36,010 in Republika Srpska and 2,314 in the Brcko District.
- Werner Blatter, UNHCR's Regional Co-ordinator for South-East Europe and Chief of Mission in BiH, visited Bugojno and Dobretici on 1 November 2001 where he visited Serb returnees in Cipuljic in Bugojno Municipality and the newly reconstructed community centre. In Dobretici, Mr Blatter attended the opening ceremony of the recently renovated school where UNHCR provided classroom furniture. Around 75 pupils are expected to attend the school in 2002.
- In the first week of November, The Council of Europe Committee for Legal Issues and Human Rights recommended to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly to admit BiH as a permanent member of the institution. The Committee also stated that national institutions still needed to be strengthened.
- Representatives from the associations of the constituent peoples of BiH, together with the Chairman of the House of Peoples' Constitutional Legal Commission, Ibrahim Spahic, met on 13 November 2001 to discuss the law on the rights of minorities in BiH.
- On 13 November 2001 officials revealed that forensic experts had discovered a new mass grave in the village of Liplje where they exhumed 100 bodies believed to be those of Bosniacs killed in the massacre in Srebrenica in 1995. It is the fifth such burial ground to be found in the area this year.
- Dr Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the International Mediator appointed by the Peace Implementation Council, visited Bijeljina, Teslic, Zenica-Doboj Canton and Vogosca from 19-22 November 2001. Dr Schwarz-Schilling met with the municipal authorities, citizens' associations as well as with the International Community.
- Martin Treffers, a consultant to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, visited Banja Luka on 23 November 2001 where he met with the RS Minister for Refugees and DPs, Mico Micic, and the RS Minister for Urbanism, Nedjo Djuric. The purpose of the visit was to identify problems concerning the housing situation in the RS, both for refugees and DPs as well as the local population, and to explore new funding possibilities for reconstruction efforts in BiH.
- The first regular working session of the newly established Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje Interim Municipal Council was held on 27 November 2001. The council's mandate will continue until the next municipal elections scheduled for 2004.
- The Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board convened in Brussels on 5 and 6 December 2001 where the issue of institutional streamlining was debated. The communiqué issued at the end of the conference outlined the approach advocated by Office of the High Representative (OHR). The PIC Steering Board also endorsed the Monk Report together with its recommendations, which makes the case for a robust follow-on mission after the departure of UNMiBH and IPTF in December 2002 'combining crisis management and capacity building.'
- The preparations for the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka commenced on 10 December 2001. UNMiBH had requested 24-hour police presence following protests by Serb nationalists at the foundation ceremony in May 2001. The starting date for the construction works has yet to be confirmed.
- On 11 December 2001, Werner Blatter, Chief of Mission in BiH, and General Francois de Geosbriand, Deputy Commander of SFOR, visited Zvornik Municipality where they met with the Mayor and the Head of the Municipal Housing Office (OMI). Mr Blatter stressed the need for the municipality to improve its PLIP performance as it currently has one of the lowest PLIP rates in the RS at only 15%.
- On 11 December 2001, the former President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, declined to plead to charges of genocide at the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague for crimes committed during the three year war in BiH. The court's presiding judge, Richard May, entered a plea of 'not guilty' on behalf of Mr Milosevic to 29 counts of genocide, complicity in genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes by Serb forces in BiH.
- The inaugural session of the Inter-State Council for Co-operation between BiH and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) took place on 18 December 2001 in Sarajevo. After the session, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries signed an agreement on customs co-operation and on improving and safeguarding investments between BiH and FRY. ♦

