



IN BRIEF...

Return of refugees – integrated area programs

The civil war left Bosnia and Herzegovina with around 2,2 million persons forcibly expelled from their homes. The process of return has been gradually increasing, although until recently relatively low, and there are still around 500 000 displaced persons seeking to return home. The return of the refugees is of crucial importance for the normalisation of life and to regain ethnic balance. Sida supports the return process directly through so called Integrated Area Programs (IAP). They include providing building material for housing, minor infrastructure repairs, agricultural support and strengthening of local democracy. So far, around 60 000 people have been assisted to return through the Sida funded IAPs. The support is planned to continue during the present country strategy period.



Returnees are assisted to rebuild their houses in the Sida-financed integrated area programs.

The returnees receive assistance in form of construction material up to normal living standard. The self-help method of reconstruction has been introduced by Sida at an early stage of aid assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereby beneficiaries are expected to rebuild their homes on their own, except for social cases where building assistance can be provided. Some basic infrastructure such as school rehabilitation, water supply and minor electrification works may be provided. An important part of the support is provided in the form of agricultural components, which is aimed at assisting returnees to find sources of income and to enhance local economic development. This started as seed and live stock distribution for the returnees, but has grown into real market production. (See separate factsheet.)

The IAPs are covering approximately 50% of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly the north-western, north-eastern and central parts. Annually, approximately 1 500 houses are reconstructed, which enables the return and restart of lives for around 6 000 people.

Ongoing programs

Organisations currently involved in Sida funded IAPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the following:

- The Lutheran World Federation – support to minority return and agricultural support in north-western and north-eastern Bosnia

- People's Empowerment Programme (PEP) – support to minority return in Central Bosnia
- Caritas Sweden/Switzerland – support to minority return in Sarajevo canton and eastern Bosnia

Sida also supports the central and local government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the following ways:

- Support to the process of shifting the responsibilities for coordinating the return process from the International Society to local

institutions (Sida partly finances the establishment of Regional Centers for Return)

- Ensuring future financing for the returnee process with international credits through the Council of Europe Development Bank (Sida finances part of the membership fee in the Bank for Bosnia and Herzegovina during 2004).

Future plans

The role of the IAPs will slightly change during the coming years. The return process will increasingly

be subject to support through local institutions, which is a process that has already started on the state level and which is financially supported by Sida. The IAPs will concentrate more on supporting the local municipal level. While the focus is changing from returnees to the entire population, the objectives of the IAPs will be modified towards assisting the global community development. The IAPs will thus be broadened and used as an entry point to strengthen the local population as well as the returnees in the local communities.

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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