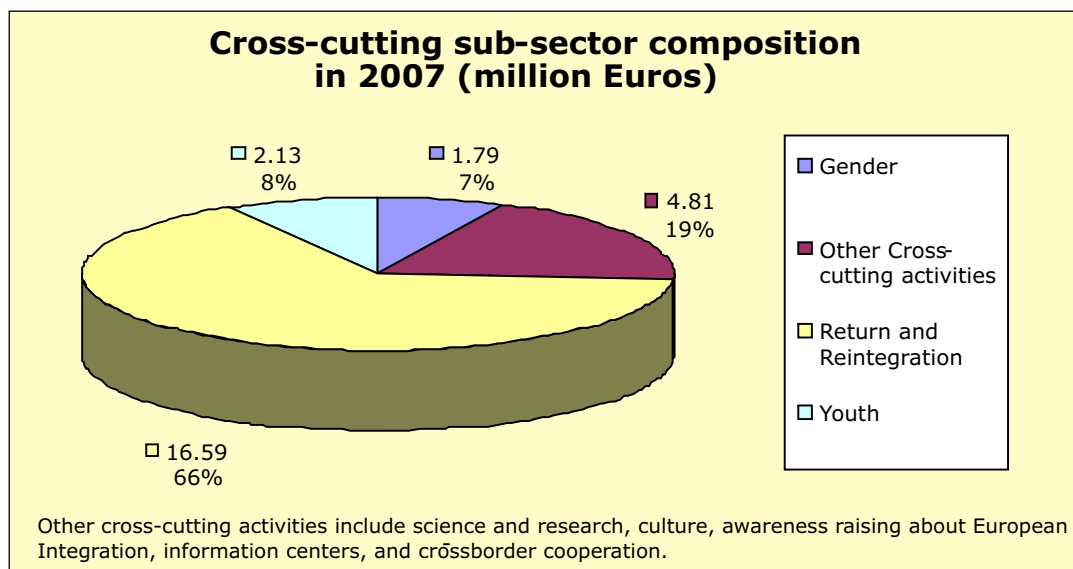


CROSS-CUTTING SECTORS

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Gender, Youth and the Return and Reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are three of the most important cross-cutting sectors and thus merit separate discussion. It is necessary to focus on each of them as they highlight characteristics that are oftentimes crucial for the individual's life-chances in BiH. Moreover, the furtherance of social inclusion in BiH is to a large extent contingent upon reforms in these sub-sectors. No social inclusion policy can be drafted and successfully implemented without taking into account the problems women, young people and returnees face in BiH.

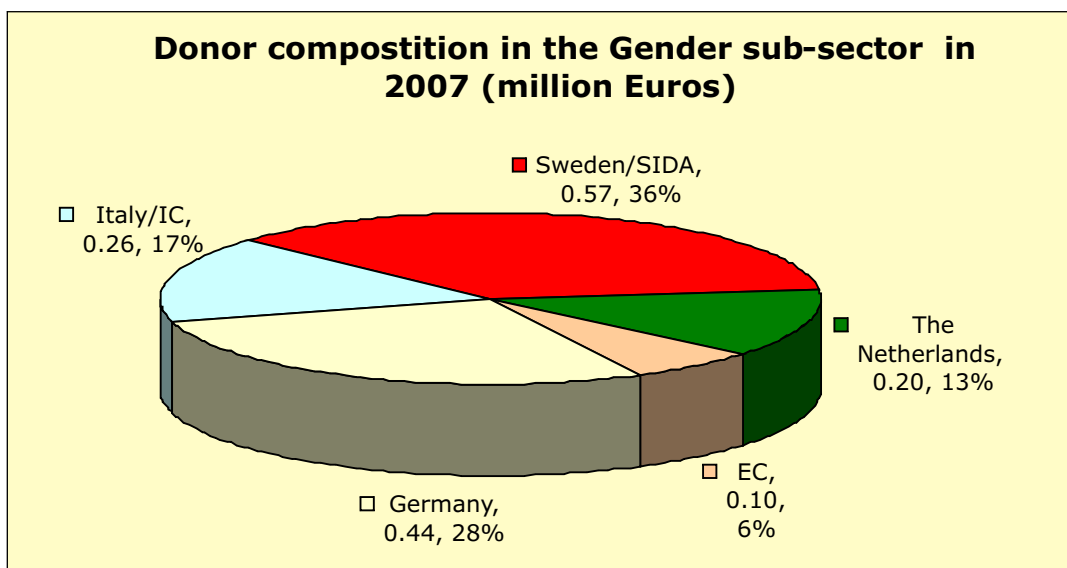


When asked about the main strengths of BiH, 39% of respondents identified young people as the country's major asset.⁸² This answer is indicative of the heart-felt conviction many citizens share: it is worthwhile to support young people because the future lies in their hands. In spite of this awareness, youth constitute not only one of the most valuable, but also one of the vulnerable groups in society.

Women make up another group that can be justifiably called vulnerable. However, in BiH just like in most countries in the world, there is little awareness of the fact that women are at a disadvantage when compared to men belonging to the same social class and age group. For this reason it is very important not to discuss gender as a self-explanatory category. Conversely, one needs to demonstrate its potential to account for social injustices on the basis of other characteristics that are considered more "objective," like social class, vocation, place of residence, or education.

Internal and external displacement afflicted some 2.2 million of BiH residents during and after the war in the 1990s. Over 125,000 persons have still not returned to their pre-war homes. The scope of war-related displacement of individuals, families, and communities is so wide that only area-based efforts combined with individual initiatives can help people find durable solutions and reintegrate during the lifetime of the generation most affected by the war. To a large extent, this last condition refers to the other two cross-cutting categories discussed above. In the case of Youth and Gender, the involvement of the potential beneficiaries of reforms has to go hand in hand with the introduction of legal measures to address the problems impacting minors and women.

⁸²UNDP-commissioned survey conducted by Oxford Research Institute, *The Silent Majority Speaks* (Sarajevo: UNDP, 2007), 37.



(EVS) component.⁸⁵ UNDP/UNV is the major implementation partner for EVS in BiH. By agreeing to volunteer, young people from BiH receive accommodations, free health insurance, and a living allowance. Minors from vulnerable or marginalized groups are especially encouraged to apply to the EVS. Clearly, the volunteering opportunity provided by the EVS is a unique chance for young people in BiH not only to enhance their skills, but also to travel and work abroad. Over the coming years, youth issues are expected to become a priority for the EC.

UNDP/UNV likewise assists youth volunteerism and empowerment. The emphasis the EC and UNV place on volunteering as an opportunity accessible to young people, as a means of gaining work experience and honing one's skills is most needed and commendable. The idea of volunteering has been largely disparaged in former communist countries. Studies show the practice is still not popular among BiH youth. Keeping in mind the above-mentioned prevalence of young people among the unemployed, youth have extremely limited opportunities to gain the work experience required by most employers. Hence volunteering in civil society organizations as well as in other sectors including for example national institutions, international organizations and the private sector is a good start for them as they can benefit from a number of non-material rewards it offers.

In addition to the EC and UNV, there are several bilateral donors that have programmes exclusively supporting youth issues. **France** assists youth through creating education programmes as well as by financing projects of civil society organizations dealing with youth in BiH. As far as these activities are concerned, France focuses on using education (e.g. French language classes) to engage and connect young people of all ethnicities. France also supports students by financing research visits to France, and assists student associations and other NGOs involved with youth issues.

In 2007, **Sweden/SIDA**, through Forum Syd, assisted youth NGOs in BiH. Forum Syd endeavored to bridge ethnic groups and foster reconciliation by supporting youth education and youth clubs, working closely with 20 such clubs in BiH.

Italy/IC also helps youth NGOs in BiH, but its major focus is on the employment of young people. In 2006, Italy/IC conducted a *Study on Youth Employment in BiH*.⁸⁶ Italy/IC opened a credit line (€ 0.4 million) to support young entrepreneurs. Additionally, Italy/IC is continuing the implementation of a project that Germany/GTZ started. Namely, Germany/GTZ trained local government civil servants (i.e. Youth Officers) from 20 municipalities to provide support to young people as well as to develop a youth strategy or curriculum.

In general, **Germany/GTZ** puts emphasis on strengthening state-, entity-, and local-level governments' capacities to cope with youth's problems. Germany/GTZ works in more than 25 municipalities throughout BiH and is supporting youth NGOs as well as local governments as they address issues in this sector. It has facilitated the creation of seven youth centres, of which some now generate their own income. Towards the end of 2007, GTZ, together with Green

⁸⁵ The *Youth in Action* programme can only be accessed through the cooperation of at least two countries. Its scope can be expanded by creating international partnerships and exchanges.

⁸⁶ For more information, see www.mladi.gov.ba/index.php?id=21&option=com_content&task=view&lang=en.

Youth

Sector definition	In this report, youth refers to individuals up to the age of 30. The Youth sub-sector deals with activities that impact young people's lives. DAC codes: 43010, 998.
Key DCF donors	Austria/ADA, France, Germany/GTZ, Italy/IC, the Netherlands, Sweden/SIDA, the EC, and UNDP/United Nations Volunteers (UNV).
Other key international organizations (IOs)	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF
Key government partners	The Youth Department at the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA), Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues, the RS Ministry of Youth and Family, and the Youth Centre at the FBiH Ministry of Sports and Culture.
Total donor allocation to the sector in 2007	€ 2.13 million.
Sector strategies	There is no state-level youth strategy. The RS has a Youth Policy 2006-2010, but the FBiH does not have similar structures advocating youth-related activities.
Donor coordination	No formal coordination involving all donors active in the sub-sector. Regular bilateral meetings between GTZ and several other donors.

Overview

Youth is a cross-cutting issue which is also relevant to the following sectors: Human Rights, Civil Society, Education, Health, Gender as well as Economic and Social Development. Nonetheless, its separate discussion is merited, as young people in BiH are concomitantly one of the most vulnerable groups and the future of this country. Studies conducted over the past several years registered a steady percentage of young people declaring they would like to emigrate.⁸³ The low employment rate among youth, their low assessment of the education system, the perceived lack of perspective and the unstable political situation represent the most important factors in minors' reluctance to live in BiH. These realities are indicative not only of young people's state of anxiety, but also of their acute awareness that their life-chances are to a very limited extent contingent upon their individual effort to mold their future.⁸⁴

Therefore national and international institutions alike have to address young people's problems as a high priority. This need has been recognized, for example, by several donors who support the sub-sector via different youth-related projects.

Donor activities in 2007

As mentioned above, certain aspects of the cross-cutting Youth sub-sector have been indirectly addressed by donors assisting reforms in other related sectors. Nonetheless, some agencies also have programmes and projects explicitly focusing on young people. The donors in the Youth sub-sector are Austria/ADA, France, Germany/GTZ, Italy/IC, the Netherlands, Sweden/SIDA, the EC, UNDP/United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and UNICEF. Of these donors, Germany/GTZ, Italy/IC, the Netherlands, Sweden/SIDA, the EC, and UNDP/UNV contributed € 2.13 million to ongoing activities during 2007. Others remained involved in the sector through continuing projects or by providing policy advice.

The 2007-2013 youth portfolio at the **EC**, called *Youth in Action*, is aimed at young people aged 15-28 (or 13-30 in some cases). The current youth portfolio's major goal is to instill the virtues of active citizenship, solidarity, and tolerance among young Europeans as well as to involve them in molding the Union's future. At present, BiH is eligible only for the European Voluntary Service

⁸³ For example, according to the 2005 *Independent evaluation of the national youth policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina* by the Youth Information Agency (*Omladinska informativna agencija*), 77% of young people want to leave BiH, and a quarter of them declared they would not return if they succeeded in their plans. The 2007 *Silent Majority Speaks*, published by UNDP, uncovered that 39% of all people from BiH would emigrate if given the chance and the highest percentage of potential emigrants were to be found among the 18-29 years old (62.6%). Indeed, there is no reliable data regarding the percentage of young people actually leaving BiH. Nonetheless, one could intuitively argue that youth's financial situation and the formal requirements demanded of BiH citizens wanting to leave the country severely limit young people's chances to move away.

⁸⁴ All the more worrying is the fact that over the past few years, the situation of youth in BiH hasn't improved significantly. See *The Conditions of Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina and United Nations Joint Programming* (2007).

Visions and selected youth NGOs and municipalities, began a small-scale project to develop youth tourism in BiH.

At the end of 2005, Germany/GTZ and a consortium of Italian NGOs together with the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) supported the establishment of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues (CCYI). This national-level structure brings together 18 representatives from state and entity institutions, the Brčko District, civil society youth organizations, etc. The CCYI is an advisory body with direct responsibility to the Council of Ministers (CoM). Its main goal is to develop a cross-sectoral youth policy. Towards this end an *Analysis on the Youth Sector and Youth Issues* in BiH is being conducted by the consulting research company Prism Research and financed by Germany/GTZ. The first meeting of the CCYI, Germany/GTZ, and Prism Research took place in October 2007. In addition, GTZ works directly with young people by organizing courses to cultivate and empower future youth leaders.

The Netherlands supported the establishment of a Youth Information Centre in the Municipality of Srebrenica. Finally, **Austria/ADA** has been aiding efforts to reduce youth unemployment in BiH by improving the employability of new entrants into the labour market and unemployed youth. Austria/ADA has also collaborated with private sector labour market service providers and initiated dialogues about policy concerning youth. Austria/ADA did not report any allocations to the sector in 2007.

Sector strategies

To date there is no state-level youth strategy in spite of the two years' existence of the CCYI. The former Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) only envisioned measures to increase youth employment. In May 2007, the CCYI began the process of developing Youth Policy in BiH. This national guiding document is expected to be completed by the end of 2008. In addition, more than 40 local youth policies should be ready by mid-2008. They will include action plans created with the support of the GTZ and the consortium of Italian NGOs.⁸⁷

The Republika Srpska (RS) has a Youth Policy 2006-2010, which is considered fairly comprehensive by some donors, and is implemented by the RS Ministry of Youth and Family. The Ministry's staff is however insufficient in number and the body as a whole needs to build its capacity. The Federation of BiH (FBiH) does not have similar structures advocating youth activities. With the assistance of GTZ, the FBiH should have a Youth Policy draft ready by the summer of 2008. This document is currently being finalized.

Positive developments and challenges in the sector in 2007

Although the procedures for recruiting CCYI members as well as the Commission's effectiveness are considered wanting, donors are satisfied that MoCA has recently allocated more resources to support it. This is interpreted as a positive sign and an indication of CCYI's increasing political importance. The Commission is expected to come up with a national strategy soon. The GTZ actively aids its work towards this end. It has been pointed out, however, that the Commission needs permanent staff in order to effectively carry out its duties. Currently CCYI membership consists of appointed full-time employees from entity and state governmental institutions as well as elected representatives from the civil society sector. CCYI members meet on a monthly basis. Hence the CCYI clearly needs an executive body of professionals employed for the purposes of devising a national youth strategy as well as implementing action plans once these are finalized.

Although international agencies generally commend the very existence of an RS Youth Law, they believe it needs to be revised in order to clearly delineate what the RS Government's responsibilities are for youth. Also, donors call for the organization of trainings for the RS Ministry of Youth and Family's employees.

As far as the FBiH is concerned, there is a Youth Centre in the FBiH Ministry of Sports and Culture. However, the Centre has no official recognition of its mandate. Thus, the FBiH draft Youth Law has been pending for over a year.

⁸⁷ From April 2008, GTZ with the Association of Civil Servants for Youth (USM) will be supporting local-level governments to create local youth strategies and action plans.

The existence of 14 Local Youth Strategies with budgets from the local municipalities approved by the municipality councils is a step in the right direction. Also, the recommendation to establish a Youth Referent in each municipality is considered a positive development in the sector. The Youth Referent is meant to serve as a mediator between the Youth Association and the municipality, assisting the latter as it defines youth policy and earmarks funds for it in the budget. This ensures that the resulting projects are tailored to local needs. However, the qualifications of some of the people fulfilling this function are sometimes questioned. So far the basic training for Youth Referents, developed by the GTZ, is not obligatory, nor fully recognized by the government.

An example of fruitful cooperation in 2007 between a domestic professional organization and local governments is in the work of the Association of Civil Servants for Youth (USM, or *Udrazenje Sluzbenika za Mlade*). USM has been assisting local municipalities in drafting and developing their local youth strategies. The municipalities are able to pay for this service and are therefore a source of income for USM.

Another positive development that merits attention is the successful nationalization of the UNV regional programme for youth exchange *RiverSee* in the Western Balkans.

Generally speaking, donors were only able to identify minor achievements in the Youth sub-sector in 2007. Donors also raised the issue that youth in BiH have to become more proactive about articulating their needs both to international agencies and BiH authorities. In fact, NGOs like the Youth Network for Changes (*Mreža mladih za promjene*) which represents some 25 youth NGOs do try to exert some influence on decision-making related to youth issues. They limit their attempts to publicly announcing declarations and generally appealing to authorities to introduce reforms that would benefit younger and older generations alike. It is in the power of authorities themselves to invite such youth NGOs to take part in ongoing reform processes. Such common undertakings do bear fruit as demonstrated, for example, by the involvement of students in drafting the Higher Education Framework Law.

Coordination and ownership

In January 2007, UNV initiated a working group, inviting all donors that support youth activities for an informal information exchange to streamline projects. To the donors' regret, this coordination meeting was not repeated. However, international agencies have diverging ideas regarding the possible coordination of their activities. Some argue that coordination of efforts would be justified if donors had a common vision regarding the Youth sub-sector. Other international agencies are not worried about the diversity of approaches implemented to address youth-related issues. Still others believe that formal coordination is not needed as donors working with youth issues know each other personally and therefore they could exchange information on the spot if such a need arises. Those who support the idea of having formal gatherings cannot reach a decision as to whether such events should be chaired by an international agency or the CCYI. However, donors do agree that coordination meetings have to be result-oriented. Also, they insist that future gatherings should involve a smaller number of participants than were present at previous events.

As far as ownership of the Youth sector is concerned, donors noted that governmental bodies on the municipal and cantonal levels currently boast better ownership of the process than the state-level government. Yet, as international agencies underlined, there is room for optimism because, in general, ownership has been increasing for the last few years. Currently, youth councils are established in each municipality in the RS. The FBiH does not have similar structures to advocate for youth-related activities. However, the respective Ministries in both Entities are said to lack clear programmes or finances for youth issues. Most pressing, however, seems to be the situation at the state level. Namely, the Youth Department at MoCA currently employs less than three people. This fact, coupled with the lack of full-time staff working on substantive issues at the CCYI, delays the progress of state-level reform in the Youth sub-sector.

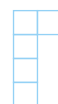
Future activities

International agencies working with state-level institutions urgently call for the establishment of relevant bodies with whom they can cooperate. Thus, in order to access EU funds, BiH needs to have institutions in place that deal with youth issues. Conversely, donor agencies focusing on the most pressing problems facing young people in BiH today identify cross-cutting areas of concern. These include the following: combating youth unemployment, strengthening NGOs' youth programming, and training and supporting youth specialists, youth workers as well as youth leaders.

Donors are aware that young people are not a uniform group. For this reason international agencies identify the need to introduce programmes specifically aimed at supporting rural youth as well as minors with disabilities. The particularly disadvantaged position of Roma girls is an area of concern that needs to be addressed by both international agencies and domestic authorities.

Donors argue that the promotion of intercultural dialogue has to be high on the agenda in the Youth sub-sector, too. They believe that exchange across ethnic groups is best established via small initiatives focusing on issues of common interest for all parties involved.

Last but not least, international agencies appeal to young people themselves to consider joining or founding initiatives that could strive for systemic solutions to youth problems in BiH rather than just resort to individual exit strategies. Nonetheless, in order to make youth believe that it pays off to be proactive, authorities at all levels need to support young people by creating the conditions necessary for enhancing minors' involvement in public life. The first step has already been initiated by several municipalities to develop local youth strategies and action plans by involving all the local stakeholders and young people.



Sector definition	Based on DAC definitions, the Gender sub-sector entails support for institutions and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) working for gender equality and women's empowerment. DAC codes: 15164, 43010.
Key DCF donors	Austria/ADA, Canada/CIDA, France, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, UK/DFID, and UNDP.
Other key international organizations (IOs)	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNICEF, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
Key government partners	The BiH Agency for Gender Equality at MHRR, the BiH Parliamentary Commission for Gender Equality, the Entity Commissions for Gender Equality, the Entity Gender Centres, the Entity Parliamentary Commissions for Gender Issues, and the Statistical Bureau.
Total donor allocation to the sector in 2007	€ 1.79 million.
Sector strategies	Gender Action Plan ⁸⁸
Donor coordination	There are bilateral, project-related meetings. The United Nations Gender Group (UNGG) has been meeting regularly.

Overview

In common parlance “sex” and “gender” are frequently used interchangeably. However, unlike the term “sex,” which describes the biological differences between men and women, “gender” refers to the social and cultural roles attributed to and oftentimes internalized by men and women. Keeping in mind that in the public and private spheres alike it is usually women who are underprivileged, the concept of gender has been overwhelmingly utilized to highlight the inequalities between men and women that result from differently valued notions of masculinity and femininity. Thus, by speaking about gender equity and gender mainstreaming, it is inferred that women should be guaranteed the same rights and opportunities for personal development as men have in the respective society.

When compared to men, women are underprivileged as a group in all human societies. In the former communist bloc, it was instilled in the hearts and minds of these countries' citizens that unlike women in the “capitalist West,” women in communist countries enjoyed equal rights with men. In the post-communist period, since the first democratic elections in former Yugoslavia, gender inequalities have increased. There are two key factors that contributed to this change: the closure of state enterprises and the resulting layoffs (which saw women more likely to lose their jobs than men), growing competition for employment and economic insecurity; and the increased popularity of nationalism, which emphasizes traditional gender roles, in particular the importance of motherhood in the 'production' of the nation. These last developments took place after the end of the war in 1995. In this sense, the post-conflict period has shown a rise in gender inequalities, while the socialist period has contributed to a common perception that gender issues have already largely been dealt with and do not deserve particular attention.

Being a post-conflict and transition country, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) needs to concurrently address many problem areas. As it happens in such cases, gender issues are neither identified as a weakness nor pointed out as a policy priority by BiH citizens.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the emphasis placed on the three major ethnicities in BiH eclipses other types of differences shared by the whole population. Nonetheless, the fact that gender discrimination breeds further inequalities⁹⁰ has been recognized by some donors and BiH authorities alike.⁹¹ Both have addressed the Gender sub-sector with due attention and some of the tangible results of their work will be presented in what follows.

⁸⁸ For more information see www.arsbih.gov.ba/?PID=7&RID=296.

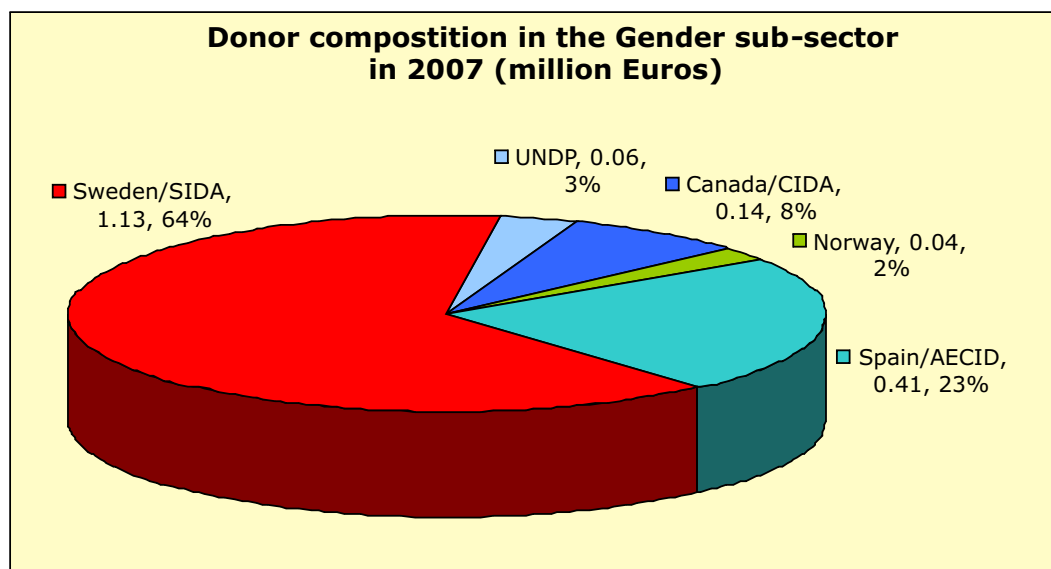
⁸⁹ According to the 2007 *Silent Majority Speaks* report published by UNDP, the perceived top five main weakness of BiH are unemployment, corruption, politicians, politics, and the economy. The top policy priorities in this report likewise reflect neither an awareness of gender inequality nor a perceived need to tackle it with urgency.

⁹⁰ A few examples illustrate this point: unequal access to education translates into unequal chances in the labour market; shorter involvement in paid labour (due to unpaid maternity leaves), earlier retirement age for women, and lower salaries for the same type of job translate into lower pensions or no social security at all, etc.

⁹¹ Initially the need for gender mainstreaming was identified primarily by international donor agencies and domestic NGOs.

Donor activities in 2007

The donors explicitly supporting gender issues in BiH are Austria/ADA, Canada/CIDA, France, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, UK/DFID and UNDP. Of these donors, Canada/CIDA, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, and UNDP contributed € 1.79 million to ongoing activities during 2007. Austria/ADA, France, and UK/DFID remained involved in the sub-sector through continuing projects and providing policy advice.



Since the adoption of the Gender Law in 2003, **UNDP** has been supporting its implementation, partly by assisting local governments and civil society organizations working in gender mainstreaming. Together with other donors, UNDP also took part in several additional initiatives in 2007. For example, UNDP and **Canada/CIDA** assisted the *Sub-Regional Gender Programme* including Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and BiH. Also, together with the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNDP has been working on gender legislation regarding employment and access to economic resources. In 2007, UNDP together with gender mechanisms and civil society organizations developed a Gender Action Plan (Gender AP) implementation project. UNDP also continuously works on introducing gender mainstreaming in all its programmes, projects, and operations.

UNDP, Norway, Austria/ADA and **Sweden/SIDA** jointly supported the establishment of the Gender Studies master's degree programme at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies at the University of Sarajevo.

In 2007, BiH Gender Agency, assisted by Sweden/SIDA, developed two projects: one to support the capacity building of the BiH Gender Agency, and another to aid the Fund for the Implementation of the Gender AP. Sweden/SIDA is also the main funder of *Kvinna Till Kvinna*,⁹² an organization which supports BiH NGOs working to strengthen women's psychological and physical health, enhance their self-esteem, and empower them to actively participate in the building of an equitable and democratic society.

France assists women NGOs from different parts of BiH. France focuses on cross-cultural issues that transcend ethnic divides, like trafficking of women, women's rights at the workplace, sexual harassment, etc. They also financed a study visit to France for the director of the BiH Gender Equality Agency. **Spain/AECID** is currently supporting an initiative aimed at the social and labour reintegration of women victims of gender violence. They are also strengthening the capacities of the local NGO *La Strada*, which fights human trafficking. **UK/DFID** does not contribute financially to this sub-sector, but is an active member of the donor group meetings on Gender which are currently led by Sweden/SIDA. UK/DFID also promoted better understanding of Gender mainstreaming issues amongst the donor community by initiating locally-held, joint training courses.

⁹² *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Woman to Woman), a Swedish organization supporting women in war and conflict zones, is active in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.

Sector strategies

The Gender AP, developed by the BiH Gender Equality Agency, was passed in 2006. It is rooted in other relevant documents, both national and international. The Gender AP consists of a global component, 15 chapters and concrete actions.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA GENDER ACTION PLAN	
Chapter I	European integration in the light of gender equality
Chapter II	Cooperation and capacity-strengthening
Chapter III	Macroeconomic and development strategies
Chapter IV	Gender sensitive budgets
Chapter V	Political life and decision-making
Chapter VI	Employment and labour market
Chapter VII	Social inclusion
Chapter VIII	Gender sensitive media
Chapter IX	Lifelong education
Chapter X	Health, prevention and protection
Chapter XI	Domestic violence, violence on the grounds of sex, harassment, sexual harassment and trafficking in human beings
Chapter XII	The role of men
Chapter XIII	Reconciliation of professional and family life
Chapter XIV	Gender and sustainable environment
Chapter XV	Information and communication technologies

In addition to the state strategy, an EC Roadmap exists for achieving equality between men and women. EU equal opportunity directives and policies have informed the development of the Gender AP. The Gender AP is also in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it refers to all eight MDGs, setting three in particular as priorities for BiH. The Beijing Platform for Action has been important for the elaboration of the Gender AP. Donors consider the Gender AP a good strategic document that as of yet remains to be implemented.

As far as the institutional gender mechanisms in BiH are concerned, there is one state Gender Equality Agency and two entity Centres - Gender Centres of the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS) - responsible for the implementation of the Gender AP. The Gender Centres of the FBiH and the RS operate as expert bodies of entity governments. The directors of the BiH Gender Equality Agency and the entity Gender Centres are members of the Gender Coordination Board. However, to date there is no gender mainstreaming within state- and entity-level line ministries.

There is a need for experts to work together with local governments and relevant ministries to develop and enact local plans. In addition to technical assistance, domestic authorities need additional financial support to implement the Gender AP. Generally speaking, donors are of the opinion that, with the tangible outputs achieved notwithstanding, a shift from outputs to outcomes is now needed in order to put into practice the existing legal and institutional framework of the Gender sub-sector.

Positive developments and challenges in the sector in 2007

Donors praise the work of the Gender Coordination Board, as it constitutes a very good example of cooperation between state- and entity-level institutions. However, international agencies recognized the need to strengthen the capacity of these institutions by increasing their staff. Importantly, donors gave positive assessments of not only the commitment of the gender-related state institutions, but also the tangible impact of civil society organizations working on women's issues.

The Fund for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan was planned by Sweden/SIDA, UK/DFID, the EC and Norway. This Fund is supposed to be managed by the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Council of Ministers and the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees. It is expected to become operational at the beginning of 2009.

The Council of Europe (CoE) announced 2007 as the year of fighting violence against women. This fact illustrates the worldwide awareness of this acute problem. Within the United Nations Gender Group (UNGG), three agencies are focusing on fighting violence against women: UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNICEF. UNDP has assisted this initiative through direct support of BiH gender mechanisms and civil society organizations in their efforts to work on BiH Gender Law implementation.

UNDP introduced the gender perspective during a series of human rights trainings for journalists provided by Italy/IC. In addition to that, UNDP organized the training of judges, prosecutors, and relevant ministries' staff on gender issues. UNDP considers all these initiatives as successes achieved in 2007. At the same time it has been recognized that the introduction of gender-sensitive language in laws has been and still is very difficult to achieve. The reason for this is the low awareness not only among the population at large, but also among legislators that gender mainstreaming is about introducing the gender perspective into all relevant spheres of life. At best gender issues are equated with human rights. Therefore the challenge is not only to spread gender awareness, but also to highlight the fact that it encompasses more than human rights issues.

Coordination and ownership

In the past there were efforts to coordinate donor activities through regular meetings chaired by the Director of the BiH Gender Equality Agency. At present there are only bilateral, ad hoc, project-based meetings between the Agency and each sponsoring institution. In order to avoid overlap and synchronize their activities, donors agree there is a need for better coordination, especially regarding the establishment of investment priorities.

The UNGG, established in 2002 and currently including 11 United Nations agencies, constitutes an example of regular coordination of activities. The UNGG developed a joint annual working plan to support the Gender Law as well as the implementation of the Gender AP and the international conventions and treaties of which BiH is a signatory.

The establishment of the Gender AP is a result of successful cooperation among donors as well as a sign of increasing national ownership.

Future activities

In spite of their explicit satisfaction with the existing gender-related legal framework and institutional infrastructure in BiH, international agencies are of the opinion that a lot remains to be done in the area of gender mainstreaming. Importantly, some of the donors admitted they themselves need to improve their gender-promotion mechanisms in order to successfully champion the introduction of gender mainstreaming in BiH. In concrete terms, donors call for incorporating a gendered approach into *all* their projects. This recommendation is valid for BiH institutions, too. In other words, the key priority for the near future is to increase awareness about Gender as a cross-cutting topic. Thus, it is necessary to establish procedures and communication lines in order to integrate cross-cutting issues like Gender into all relevant documents and activities.

To illustrate this last point, one can look at social inclusion statistics broken down by gender. Although the term "feminization of poverty" has become a commonplace statement in social studies of poverty, to date there are no conclusive statistics regarding this issue in BiH. Nonetheless, existing data confirms that elderly women and single women appear to be among the most vulnerable groups as far as long-term poverty is concerned. Education is another area where gender-based differences can be observed. UNICEF and the BiH Gender Agency carried out a gender assessment of primary school textbooks that confirmed a considerable number of gender stereotypes. As mentioned in the Youth sub-chapter in this report, 27% of girls drop out of

school after finishing primary-level education. Also, while 6% of male BiH citizens do not have any school education, the percentage among women is almost three times higher, at 17%.⁹³ Gender-based discrimination in the workplace and in the private sphere has been documented as well.

The co-existence of several variables, like gender, age, ethnicity, education and place of residence - for example, an elderly, Roma female living in a village when compared to a white, university - educated, city-dwelling man - is known to put those individuals at a significant disadvantage. Most often gender is one of the independent variables conditioning the life-chances of the individual. The awareness of this simple fact could facilitate the successful implementation of reforms that only seem to appear to have nothing to do with gender.

Being a universal value, gender equality has to be incorporated into all relevant spheres of life. Gender-sensitive amendments of legislation have to be coupled with positive active measures to enforce laws and spread gender-awareness. Donors and BiH citizens alike need to understand that no effective, long-term solutions to the most-pressing problems BiH society faces nowadays can be introduced without taking into account cross-cutting variables such as Gender.

⁹³ *Social Inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (NHDR UNDP, 2007), 43.

Return and Reintegration

Sector definition	<p>Based on DAC definition, the Return and Reintegration sub-sector is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter, water, sanitation and health services, supply of medicines and other non-food relief items; • Assistance in the repatriation of refugees to country of origin; • Return of refugees and internally displaced people. In BiH, return and reintegration projects additionally comprise: • Housing policy and administrative management; • Population policy and administrative management; • Reconstruction relief; • Rural development; • Urban development and management; • Promotion and technical assistance to enhance returnees' and IDPs access to rights. <p>DAC codes: 13010, 16030, 16050, 430, 730.</p>
Key DCF donors	Germany/GTZ, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, Switzerland/SDC/SECO, the EC, and UNDP.
Other key international organizations (IOs)	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).
Key government partners	The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the FBiH Ministry of Refugees and Displaced Persons, and the RS Ministry of Displaced Persons and Refugees.
Total donor allocation to the sector in 2007	€ 16.59 million.
Sector strategies	A state-level strategy for the implementation of the Annex VII of Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) is being revised at the moment.
Donor coordination	State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons (SCRDP).

Overview

During the war in the 1990s it is estimated that almost half of Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) 4.35 million inhabitants fled or forcibly left their homes.⁹⁴ The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), which ended the war in BiH, is explicit about the right of return in Annex VII, the need to find durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons, and compensation.⁹⁵ In the direct aftermath of the conflict, large amounts of resources were allocated to meet the provisions of the DPA. These funds were mainly channeled through international agencies, but have, over time, decreased as donors have begun to shift their attention from humanitarian assistance to long-term development, with projects like creating employment opportunities for returnees.

The first four years of peace saw large-scale return by both refugees and IDPs to areas where their own ethnic group made up a numerical majority. Yet, for those whose group was a numerical minority in any particular area, ethnic agendas and entrenched power structures of nationalist parties kept minority returns to a minimum. By 2000, however, minority returns increased. This trend has continued, as people seek to return to their pre-war homes in ever-larger numbers.⁹⁶ Overall, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around 1 million people have exercised their right to return to their homes since the ending of hostilities.

The challenges of the Return and Reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), thirteen years after the war's conclusion, remain: 1) ensuring equality and non-discrimination, in particular for minority returnees, to access public services and their rights in all sectors, including health, social protection, employment and education; 2) re-establishing livelihoods; 3) connecting with the institutions that will protect returnee rights; and 4) regaining access to productive assets, such as land and property and shelter support for those returnees (especially those whose pre-war housing was in socially-owned apartments) who have been unable to benefit from the programmes focused on reconstruction of houses.⁹⁷ It is important to

⁹⁴ EC Functional Review (2005), 9

⁹⁵ The Dayton Peace Accords, Annex VII, 1.

⁹⁶ The Continuing Challenge of Refugee Return in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe Report N°137 (International Crisis Group, December 13, 2002), 1.

⁹⁷ No Refugee: The Challenge of Internal Displacement (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2003), 97.

note that there are both economic and social aspects to sustainability within a return area. Returnees must have the ability to make a living for their families beyond the brief transitional period when external assistance may be provided and they must have equal access to social protection entitlements. As a result, donors to this sub-sector have increasingly begun to work on economic sustainability, social inclusion, and local capacity building.

Acknowledging that the issue of Return and Reintegration is cross-cutting and therefore conditional upon various factors, including respect for human rights, social inclusion, economic development as well as capacity building this chapter will emphasize donor activities in all of these areas.

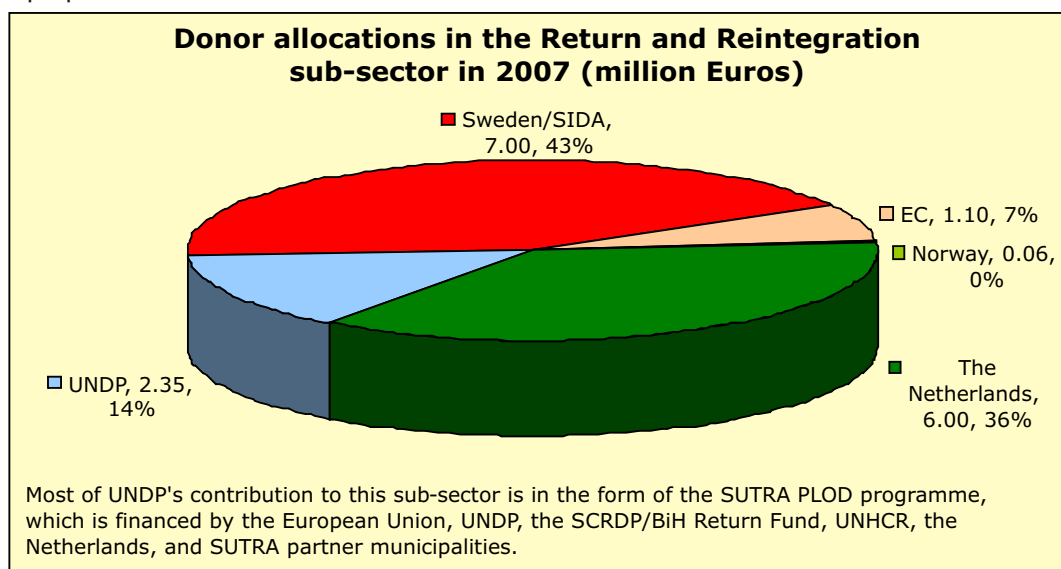
Donor activities in 2007

The donors to this sub-sector are Germany/GTZ, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain/AECID, Sweden/SIDA, Switzerland/SDC/SECO, the EC, and UNDP. Of these donors, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden/SIDA, the EC and UNDP contributed € 16.59 million during 2007. Others, such as Spain/AECID, remained involved in the sector through continuing activities or by providing policy advice. UNHCR, since 1992, is the designated lead United Nations agency for the international response to displacement in BiH. UNHCR also has specific responsibilities under the DPA to facilitate return and durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. Non-DCF donors working in Return and Reintegration include the Croatian government and the Council of Europe Development Bank (in the form of loans for collective homes). These donors focus on the realization of the Implementation Strategy of DPA Annex VII, social inclusion, and local capacity building.

The **EC** has been assisting a wide range of return-related activities, such as the provision of free legal aid and access to legal care, protection of human and minority rights of returnees, reintegration, income generation, education, health services, and agricultural activities, to name but a few. In the near future, however, the EC will reduce its support for this sub-sector and instead focus on Social Inclusion.

The Netherlands' strategy in the Return and Reintegration sub-sector is based on the priorities set by the recipients of its aid and the Dutch's own best-practice experience. The Netherlands has a four-year plan that focuses on the following: returnees (providing housing, infrastructure, and income generation activities), local governance, economic development, and infrastructure. The Embassy looks to implement a nationally and regionally accepted solution for the remaining refugees and IDPs, including an integration of policies in support of sustainable return into the more general socio-economic recovery programmes. Dutch funding to BiH will cease by 2011. Yet because of its special needs, Srebrenica will be singled out and will continue to receive funding.

For many years, Sweden/SIDA had a programme in support of reconstructing houses for returnees. During 2007, which was the last year of support, a total of € 6.9 million was spent for this purpose.



UNDP's Support in Results-based Approach - Partnership for Local Development project (SUTRA-PL0D), which is in its third phase, aims to provide local communities in BiH with the tools to implement return and reintegration projects in a joint effort between local governing bodies, civil society organizations, and businesses. The goal is to lay the foundation for broader development activities in the future. UNDP's SUTRA also assists state-level institutions in creating a coherent policy and administrative framework that will allow return and reintegration projects to unlock the potentials of stakeholders at the local level. Municipal governments are supported in improving the delivery of vital services to those who need them most, above all returning refugees and IDPs. UNDP's SUTRA has been developed as stakeholder-driven in response to the growing need to gradually shift away from pure return and reintegration projects. Thus, its focus is on local and rural development as well as social inclusion, targeting the most vulnerable returnee population clusters, and in turn, creating holistic programming for entire communities in need. UNDP's SUTRA's programme is funded by the EC, UNDP, the SCRDP/BiH Return Fund, the Netherlands, and SUTRA partner municipalities. The SUTRA programme is carried out in coordination with, and with support from, UNHCR.

In order to foster local ownership and build capacity, UNDP's SUTRA focuses on three groups (or "pillars") on the local level: local government, civil society, and the business sector. Representatives from these three "pillars" form Local Action Groups (LAGs) in all 23 participating municipalities. The LAGs are geared to genuinely grow into inter-municipal LAGs that fit the European model of such groups and to contribute to the inter-municipal cooperation predominantly in the sector of rural development. Until now, three regional LAGs have been registered with the BiH Court.

Over the last six years, **Spain/AECID** has been implementing its regional *Programme of Support and Consolidation of the Return and Stabilization in the Balkans*. This project provides free legal aid and access to the judiciary and administrative system for refugees, returnees, and IDPs. It is complemented by a social initiative that helps the most vulnerable beneficiaries of the legal project. The Programme has covered BiH, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, including Kosovo, thus making possible the efficient accomplishment of transnational legal cases.⁹⁸

In 2007, **UNHCR** activities in Return and Reintegration supported free legal assistance to IDPs and returnees, transitional livelihoods and sustainability assistance to returnees, reconstruction of homes and social inclusion of returning collective centres' residents, legal reform and policy development advocacy, and technical assistance to enhance refugees' and IDPs' access to rights. UNHCR monitored the situation of minority returnees and supported the State Commission on Refugees and Displaced Persons.

In 2008, **Germany/GTZ** will finance a project in Foča that aims to reconstruct houses for refugees. **Switzerland/SDC/SECO**, through the Union of Associations of Refugees and Displaced Persons in BiH, will be assisting an initiative to provide the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and other governmental institutions with an independent monitoring and evaluation of the process and actions taken by the government in supporting return.

Additionally, they will provide an overview of the concrete developments in the field and suggestions for corrections in the implementation of the BiH Strategy for Implementation of the Annex VII of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP). Revision of the BiH Strategy for Implementation of the Annex VII of the GFAP has also been financially supported by Switzerland/SDC/SECO. Finally, they have also sponsored the implementation of a housing and return reintegration project in the Upper-Drina Region.

Sector strategies

A state-level Strategy on the Implementation of Annex VII of the DPA has been in place since 2002. The Strategy predicted that the process of return would be completed by the end of 2006, but this has not happened due to political and protection issues, as well as insufficient funding to the sector. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), in partnership with UNHCR, initiated the revision of the Strategy in 2007. This multi-sectoral, consultative process created ten working groups, bringing all interested stakeholders, from all levels of government, civil society, and international actors together. These working groups cover the following efforts:

⁹⁸ From 2008, this programme will be continued by a new one, which will focus on strengthening social and economical rights in the region, more specifically workers' rights and social dialogue.

reconstruction, closure of collective centres and social housing; property repossession, compensations, labour and employment, infrastructure, electrification, social protection, health, education, and security, including demining. The Strategy will especially have to focus on the most vulnerable IDPs who cannot return, because this issue has not yet been properly addressed.

The State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons (SCRDP) is in charge of coordinating relevant issues for return in BiH. For the financial aspect of this sub-sector, the Return Fund was created in 2003 as part of the Law on Refugees and Displaced Persons at the recommendation of the OHR, UNHCR, the EC, UNDP and the MHRR. The Fund's objective was to build a permanent body and structures to collect aid for return-related issues. The Fund was meant to manage all national and international donations for Return; due to initial management problems and a lack of capacity, however, international contributions are managed outside the Fund itself, while the Commission administers national aid dedicated to the Return sector. However, the funds provided as a loan by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) were channeled through the Return Fund mechanisms. All finances are allocated through the SCRDP, which makes policy guidelines for the investment of return funds.⁹⁹

Positive developments and challenges in the sector in 2007

As previously mentioned, in late 2007, the State initiated a multi-stakeholder consultative process for the revision of the Implementation Strategy of Annex VII of the DPA. The revised strategy will be completed in 2008. Moreover, BAM 38.8 million was allocated within the state budget for the Return Fund, which is an unprecedented amount for BiH. These developments provide an indicator of the priority placed by the CoM on completing the work of Annex VII to ensure durable solutions for displaced persons. This partially has to do with that fact that the EC's Functional Review has recommended that the MHRR be transformed into a ministry with a mandate for social protection.¹⁰⁰ Domestic actors are aware that the issues of return must be solved before signing the EU Accession Agreement.

After ten years of operation, the activities in this sector have become more results-oriented. In 2007, UNDP's SUTRA branched out into apartment building construction. The initiative, co-financed by the government, municipalities, and donors, was able to meet the goal of 400 homes in UNDP's SUTRA third phase, of which more than 50 are

A successful example of ensuring economic sustainability can be found in UNDP's SUTRA's work. SUTRA's activities aim at long-term returnee self-sustainability. Key to this is finding returnees employment in the municipality of return. To this end, SUTRA compensates employers for hiring returnees. Data indicates that this innovative idea has been very successful in employing returnees and has been well accepted by both employers and employees.

allocated in apartment buildings. UNDP's SUTRA's work in this sector was hampered by the fact that in 2007 the cost of construction materials went up steeply, causing implementing agencies to revise standard practices and to increase the amount of funds required for each housing unit. An additional problem has been garnering tenders for housing construction. Because returnee houses are "no frills," there is little incentive for contractors to bid for contracts, and in several municipalities the programme has not been able to find contractors. UNDP's SUTRA initiative was on many occasions recognized as valuable for continuing after the project had ended. This clearly indicates that the work in the Return sub-sector is not done, though, as will be seen further on, there is reason for optimism. Due to its success in BiH, UNDP's SUTRA initiatives are being replicated in Kosovo.

Another, more general, achievement in 2007 was the introduction of IT processes. Within the MHRR, a central database was created which records all previous construction as well as public claims of return so that there can be no duplication of aid recipients. The system can be enhanced, as it is based on the expression of peoples' wish to return, without any cross-checking by government institutions as to whether people applying are actually eligible for aid. As it is, the data can only be used as an indicator. UNDP's SUTRA assisted MHRR in providing trainings on using this database, and now there is a person in every municipality capable of using it.

⁹⁹ All donors, the two Entities and the Brčko District participate in the Project Steering Committee, but only the members that give money to the project have voting power. In this area the two Entities are cooperating well.

¹⁰⁰ *Bosnia and Herzegovina Progress Report* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 11 June, 2007), 38.

Coordination and ownership

Donor coordination is especially important to this sub-sector as international agencies are slowly withdrawing from return work. Thus, it is important to effectively utilize the ever-shrinking funds available. The SCRDP was set up as the main coordinating body for all activities. Members of SCRDP represent the line Ministries and other relevant actors, in keeping with the BiH Constitution.

In the Return sector, coordination among donors is quite good. This may have to do with the fact that there are fewer international agencies at work in this field. Donors also have well-functioning relations with local authorities, mainly on the municipal level. Due to limited funds, the State focuses on housing reconstruction while other donors concentrate on additional issues, especially social inclusion and capacity building.

In 2007, donors cooperated in different ways. The Netherlands' main partner for coordination, for example, is UNDP, although it also works with other implementing agencies as well. Donors that want to sign partnership agreements with the Netherlands must synchronize their proposals with existing initiatives in advance, in order to ensure there is no overlap. The Netherlands' goal is to support the state budget directly, but as of now, the authorities are not yet prepared to implement it. Similarly, the Embassy would like to hand over all the work it currently does to the domestic authorities, but needs to build capacity to this end. Likewise, Sweden/SIDA would like to transfer funds directly to the state budget by 2009 rather than go through intermediary NGOs as it does at the moment.

As has been mentioned, donors place great importance in local capacity building. A good example of how the international community helps municipalities take a leading role and become owners of the process of return is in the work of Municipal Committees. Once the central government has picked the municipalities to be financed, within each local administration there is a Commission to select returnee beneficiaries. These Commissions are written into the bylaws of the MHRR and provide clear guidelines as to their work on the municipal level. The Commission is multi-sectoral and comprised of local government leaders, donors, return organizations, returnees themselves, and the respective entity ministry of refugees. This work empowers actors on all levels of government and civil society to make their own decisions and to begin taking over the processes of return and reintegration from donors. A very positive outcome of these Municipal Committees is that they work at both the central and municipal government levels. In doing so, they strengthen the vertical links and ensure coordination among the different levels.

Future activities

The main priority in this sector is to continue the transition from humanitarian assistance to development interventions which support durable solutions to displacement, including the sustainable return of refugees and IDPs. Aid initially focused on reconstructing houses and the necessary infrastructure. There are currently attempts both by donors and the government to broaden support for return beyond shelter reconstruction, and to include the facilitation of employment opportunities, access to social services, and local participation in decision-making processes. These types of connections are now being fully integrated into projects. The major challenge in the coming years will be to bridge this gap and create income-generating activities to encourage the sustainability of return communities. Regional economic disparities and related high regional unemployment rates, as well as limited access to finance for returnees are some of the main barriers hindering the sustainable return process. Thus, initiatives within this sector have to become more and more multi-dimensional, taking into account the local socio-economic context of the return process and integrating other sectoral components into project interventions.

According to donors, there is a need to reinforce communication and standardize the reporting structures between the different levels of ministries to avoid irregularities. More awareness is needed concerning what steps should be taken once plans and strategies are made. Important in strengthening the MHRR will be the current revision of the Implementation Strategy to Annex VII. Currently all relevant government and civil society stakeholders involved in the Return and Reintegration sub-sector are working on the revision of the Strategy in an attempt to complete

the work of Annex VII. Donors will continue to support the MHRR in the drafting of the revised Strategy and its eventual implementation.

There are still numerous dwellings to reconstruct and a great number of people registered as wishing to return who not have yet done so. The rebuilding of houses has to be connected with repairing infrastructure (e.g. roads, lighting, and water sanitation). The Strategy should also recognize that returnees are not a homogenous group and therefore appropriate solutions should be foreseen for different populations, such as the elderly, people without property, and others, including displaced persons who opt not to or cannot return, as well as extremely vulnerable individuals.

There are 50,000 households that have registered as willing to return and as many that have not registered for return at all. Both those willing and those not willing to return need to be compensated.¹⁰¹ According to the first draft of the revised strategy, 2010 should be the last date for return and 2015 should be the deadline for compensations. The problem in reaching these goals will be funding. It is estimated that approximately KM 800 million is needed to complete the processes of return, reintegration, and compensation only for those now registered for return.¹⁰² The Strategy, currently under revision, will address issues of compensation and also should address the situation of DPs who cannot return; this is a significant development from the old strategy. Donor and government budgets will account for the continued funding to this sector. The EC will follow an integrated funding approach and will focus on rural development, social housing, and positive discrimination, all areas that impact refugees and returnees. The EC will also use the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to address this sector.

Another challenge to this sub-sector is the sensitive nature and the continuing politicization of the question of return. An example of this trend is the ongoing postponement of conducting a nationwide census since 1991. A new census would provide up-to-date data on the current population structure in BiH and would give both the government and donors a more effective way of planning further projects.

The sustainability of return and reintegration depends on moving as quickly as possible from emergency relief to reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, as well as on ensuring that the provisions of aid do not weaken local capacities.¹⁰³

It is also necessary to support durable solutions other than return, as in the cases of extremely vulnerable people who cannot return.

UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF, in line with the UNDAF goals and MDGs (1, 2, and 3), have jointly submitted a three-year funding proposal to the MDG-Fund under the Conflict Prevention and Peace Building “window”. The programme intends to tackle the problem of displaced persons in BiH, who 13 years after the end of the war have still not found durable solutions. Opportunity for innovative solutions is given by the current initiative of the Government and international community to revise the strategy for implementing Annex VII of the DPA, opening the way to solidifying peace and long-term stability. Interventions will focus on: supporting sustainable return through economic development and social protection measures; and improving living conditions of extremely vulnerable IDPs who cannot return. Using a participatory rights-based approach focused on the most vulnerable, interventions pioneered at the municipal level will support national policy and capacity development for resolving this protracted displacement situation.

¹⁰¹ Compensation is a secondary option, when repossession of property and assets is not possible.

¹⁰² This estimate does not take into account those not willing to return or those that have not registered as potential returnees.

¹⁰³ *No Refugee: The Challenge of Internal Displacement*, 111.

Conclusion

One of the common features characterizing the three cross-cutting sub-sectors presented above is that *none* of them comprises a homogenous group. It could be precisely this singularity that makes solving the problems each of these groups faces so difficult. On the other hand, though, this argument can be successfully exploited by decision-makers who do not identify the need to introduce reforms in these sectors as high priority. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the legal framework and resources for implementing reforms. Moreover, it is of vital importance to sensitize both politicians and ordinary citizens so that none of the so-called “major problems”¹⁰⁴ BiH society faces nowadays can be tackled without supporting vulnerable groups too.

As obvious as this last statement may appear, it has to be remembered that young people, women and, to a lesser extent, returnees are not generally regarded to be vulnerable segments of society. This refers especially to women. In a society divided along ethnic lines, it is particularly difficult to bring public attention to the rights of additional categories of people. However, this defect can be turned into a virtue. Namely, it can be successfully used as an argument to enhance the life-chances of minors, women, and returnees precisely because by doing so none of the constitutive ethnicities will be privileged at the expense of the other two.

Introducing positive action is just one of the steps to be taken to assist youth, women, and returnees. Local authorities, with the support of international agencies, need to introduce long-term solutions to the problems of these groups. Even more importantly, minors, women, and returnees themselves should be encouraged and supported to organize themselves to effectively further their group interests, but also as a means to utilize the mutual-help mechanism of civil society organizations. In other words, all resources have to be mobilized in order to guarantee sustainable solutions to the most pressing problems young people, women, and returnees now face. Such approaches would benefit not only these three groups, but even more importantly, they would counteract social exclusion in BiH.

¹⁰⁴ The top five weaknesses identified by BiH citizens are unemployment, corruption, politicians, politics, and the economy, according to *The Silent Majority Speaks* (UNDP, 2007), 38.