

# Executive Summary

The war in former Yugoslavia came to Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1992. Up until December 1995, when the Peace Agreement was signed at Dayton, approximately half of the pre-war population of 4.2 million people had fled from their homes. About 400 000 houses were destroyed and almost 200 000 people killed. The humanitarian crisis was urgent, and the situation for the displaced persons particularly pressing.

The Dayton Agreement dealt with the issue of the displaced Bosnians in Annex 7. In order to mitigate the effects of the ethnic cleansing during the war the first paragraph in the annex stated that, 'all refugee and displaced persons have a right freely to return to their home of origin'. In addition it was claimed that, 'the early return of refugees and displaced persons is an important objective of the settlement of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. Return was thus placed high on the international agenda and many countries and organisations moved in to support the displaced Bosnians. One of the greatest and most challenging social experiments of all times thus began. Former enemies of war were to live as neighbours again.

Sweden, through Sida, has been one of the major contributors to the return processes. Between 1995 and 2005 SEK 1.2 billion has been disbursed to so called Integrated Area Programmes, which aimed to establish sustainable returns for displaced persons. During these ten years Sida and its implementing partners have contributed to the reconstruction of 14 806 private dwellings, and the return of at least 50 000 people. When the programme ends in December 2007 an additional 2 000 houses will have been reconstructed and another 7 000 people assisted. Almost all the houses are built through an assisted self help approach, where the returnees are provided with construction materials and technical assistance to rebuild their own houses. The programmes have also targeted the repair of schools and healthcare facilities, local infrastructure, electricity lines and water distribution networks as well as mine clearing, all depending on local needs in the respective areas and on the assistance given by other actors. Generally, food security components such as seed, fertilisers, hand tools, livestock and sometimes machinery have also been provided to the returnees.

Over the years Sida has both developed the Integrated Area Programmes and supplemented them with interventions aimed at income generation and job creation through micro credit schemes and support to agriculture projects. These projects have sometimes been considered under the umbrella concept of the Integrated Area Programmes, but according to a strict definition of

the programmes it is questionable if these projects should be included. The reason is that they have included both returnees and others and that they have not been implemented in all programme areas. However, they do complement the Integrated Area Programmes as part of the general Sida programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This aims at achieving European integration by the development of a democratic and sustainable society through economic development, institution building, promotion of the rule of law, and local administration development.

In 2003 the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) at Sida started an evaluation of the Integrated Area Programmes. The main intent of the evaluation was to explore what actually happened, socially and economically, when people returned. Several questions were addressed: Did the displaced persons, for example, want to return in the first place? Did the return form a starting point for social integration or reconciliation or did social tensions increase? Do returnees feel at home now that they have returned? Have they been able to survive economically? Do they intend to stay in their rebuilt homes?

The evaluation team put together by UTV, tried to answer these questions, which can be categorised under the evaluation criteria of impact, sustainability and relevance. The methods used were:

1. A case study analysing the reconstruction of the village Grapska, carried out by Hans Skotte, architect and researcher at the Department of Urban Design and Planning at NTNU in Trondheim, Norway.
2. An anthropological study, made by the social anthropologist Melita Čukur of the Centre for Multiethnic Research at Uppsala University, consisting of two case studies – one in a village which is given the fictitious name Selo and the other in a suburb to Sarajevo.
3. A survey of 2 000 families who received support to rebuild their houses and 1 000 families in a control group. The survey was designed and analysed by the sociologist and specialist on the Balkans Kjell Magnusson of the Centre for Multiethnic Research at Uppsala University, and was carried out by the Croatian opinion poll institute PULS.

In addition, data has been gathered through documents and at workshops and seminars with programme stakeholders in Sarajevo. During the course of the evaluation the team has also been able to gather substantial information about the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes. Thus conclusions take account of all five evaluation criteria.

As regards effectiveness it can be concluded that the Integrated Area Programmes have been successful. The major reason behind the success is the way the programmes were implemented: assisted self help in combination with the transfer of agency to village committees – in particular their role in the selection of programme ‘beneficiaries’. The implementing strategy,

which in many ways bears the characteristics of a rights-based approach to programming, strengthened social trust, collective confidence as well as self-esteem. It involved the returnees as actors, rather than passive recipients of aid and resulted in trusting and good relationships between implementing partners and returnees. Besides this, the approach cut construction costs for the financier, which meant that more people could be helped for the same amount of money. Thus the programmes can also be considered as highly cost-efficient.

Another important success factor of the programmes has been their flexibility. Sida formulated the overall strategies and goals, while they trusted the NGOs to operationalise these strategies through flexible and contextualised decisions on the ground. What has happened is that stakeholders have developed different perceptions and strategies over the life of the programmes. These developments are obviously relevant and natural adjustments to take account of a constantly changing context, but a problem has been that they have not been adequately processed: i.e. overall goals and strategies of the programmes have not been reformulated, stipulated and documented. An effect of this has been a fragmentation or 'projectification' of assistance: the 'P' in the Integrated Area Programmes has thus been at least blurred. In addition, it is difficult to evaluate effectiveness of interventions when the goals are amended over time.

It is quite clear that Sida and its partners did things the right way. But did they, as well as all the other donors of the return process, do the right thing? The evaluation concludes that the programmes have been highly relevant not only in relation to country needs, global priorities and donors' policies, but also in relation to the requirements of the returnees. The returnees believe that it was right to assist displaced persons to return to their homes. Generally they wanted to return home, and as they have returned they feel secure and at home. Now most of them want to stay put. The return had important ethical dimensions: for many the return was a symbolic act, an unambiguous shout of '*We're back!*'.

What does this mean for social relations, for the re-integration of communities and possible reconciliation? The evaluation shows that neither the returnees, nor people who stayed in the areas during the war, interact much across ethnic lines. This is true both in rural areas and in towns. Since interaction is so rare one could hardly speak of social reintegration, or of reconciliation. People are not living together, but rather side by side. Thus this evaluation, together with findings from other studies in other parts of the world, defies the popular assumption that living closely together leads to interaction and subsequent integration. In other words, resettling refugees does not imply reconciliation. This is an important conclusion of this evaluation but it should be noted that the return of the refugees has enabled possibilities for future interaction, and perhaps even reconciliation, at local level. It can be regarded as a first crucial step in a long and challenging journey.

Moving on to the economic impact of the programmes it is obvious that financing the reconstruction of houses and infrastructure replenished a significant amount of fixed capital. Furthermore it has contributed to the economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina by mainly using locally produced materials. But even if the programmes evidently have had an important economic impact in this sense, they have not had any significant long term effects regarding the economy at local level in the target areas. Clearly it is very difficult for many returnees to survive in their former homes particularly in isolated rural areas.

So, the Integrated Area Programmes has assisted 50 000 people to regain their homes and property, and the implementation strategy has contributed to building social and human capital in their communities. However, there are still major challenges to overcome if the returnees, and in particular the children, shall stay and prosper in these homes. Lack of work and job opportunities, lack of trust in other people, in politicians and the international community, has lead to a sense of hopelessness and thus a lack of meaningful action and fruitful initiative. Thus, it must be acknowledged that the Integrated Area Programmes alone cannot ensure the sustainability of these societies.