

America's Development Foundation

Final Program Report for Cooperative Agreement PRM 01068

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ANNEX

Financial Final Report for Cooperative Agreement PRM 01068

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the authority of the Migration and Refugees Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, the United States Department of State through the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), signed a Cooperative Agreement (PRM 01068) with America's Development Foundation (ADF) effective June 1, 2000 through May 30, 2000. Under this Cooperative Agreement (CA) ADF became the implementing partner for the Return and Reintegration of Refugees from Serbia to Croatia Project (RRP). The original 12-month CA was extended by six months, ending on September 30, 2001.

The purpose of the RRP is to encourage and facilitate the sustainable return of Croatian Serb refugees from Serbia to Croatia. More specifically, its objectives are:

- i) To increase access to information and legal assistance for Croatian Serb refugees currently in Serbia; and
- ii) To develop and expand a network of sustainable local NGOs in Serbia providing legal assistance services for the return and reintegration of refugees to Croatia.

This final report summarizes achievements and results accomplished over the 18-month Cooperative Agreement (PRM 01068).

2. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

ADF designed the Return and Reintegration of Refugees from Serbia to Croatia Project (referred to as the Return of Refugees Project, or RRP) to respond to the needs of refugee minority populations that wish to return to their homes of origin. The Serbia-based project built upon ADF's successful five-year experience with the return and reintegration of refugees in Croatia. ADF's approach under the RPP was to build a network of local NGOs in Serbia, assist them to expand and improve return and reintegration services to refugees, link these NGOs with their Croatian counterparts to assist the resolution of issues across borders, and build the institutional capacity and sustainability of the NGO network

The RRP successfully promoted and facilitated the dissemination of a wide range of information and other services that made it possible for refugees to resolve issues related to their return and reintegration back in Croatia. This was accomplished in large part, through the creation of an effective NGO network whereby local organizations have worked collaboratively to assist over 58,000 individual refugee cases in Serbia.

By providing a combination of training, technical assistance, and sub-grant support, ADF has enabled Serbian NGOs to undertake activities that facilitate the return of refugees to their homes of origin in Croatia and increase the probability that they will remain. Throughout the Cooperative Agreement, ADF strengthened the capacity of its partner Serbian NGOs to play an increasingly constructive role in refugee return.

The following is a detailed breakdown of the results and respective performance indicators achieved by the Project.

Result 1: *Croatian Serbs will receive sufficient information to make informed decisions about returning to Croatia through increased access to legal assistance related to their return.*

Indicator	Target	Actual
Number of persons who received reliable information related to return and their communities in Croatia	40,000 families (120,000 people)	57,676 families (est. 173,000 people) ¹
Number of persons who received legal / administrative assistance related to return	16,000 families (48,000 people)	17,786 families (est. 53,000 people)
Number of municipalities with legal services available	19	19
Number of cities with legal services available	4	4
Number of towns with legal services available	6	18
Number of villages with legal services available	81	84
Number of collective centers with legal services available	0	201

Legal assistance was provided for the following key issues:

- Citizenship and passport documentation: 6,782 persons
- Travel and visa documentation: 5,273 persons
- Ownership rights to private houses: 2,035 cases
- Tenancy rights in apartments: 2,230 cases
- Reconstruction requests: 1,727 cases
- Pension requests: 2,314 persons
- Social and health insurance issues: 727 cases
- Employment issues: 759 persons
- Military status: 292 persons
- Issues related to law suits and legal proceedings: 1,255 cases
- Other: 2,794 cases

¹ ADF used a conservative estimate of three persons per family in calculating the estimated number of beneficiaries

Result 2: *A network of sustainable local Serbian NGO legal assistance offices will be developed and expanded.*

Indicator	Target	Actual
NGOs in Serbia exhibit increased skills in program planning, project development and fundraising.	3 NGOs	3 NGOs exhibited these skills, developing proposals that were submitted, approved and financed by international donors
Financial management practices of NGOs are improved and more consistent with internationally recognized standards	3 NGOs are 100% in compliance	3 NGOs, including 14 field offices, submitted monthly narrative and financial reports that were evaluated as being consistent with international recognized standards
Programs are regularly monitored and improved in terms of implementation, impact and client satisfaction	All subgrants	Project services were monitored by NGOs and ADF staff on a monthly basis. Recommended improvements in implementation that resulted in increased project impact were achieved
Increase in collaboration and cooperation between NGOs in Croatia and Serbia	Increase	An effective flow of information was established between Croatian and Serbian NGOs as evidenced by regular coordination meetings that were rotated between locations in Serbia and Croatia
Increase in the number of legal assistance offices and providers in Serbia	Increase	14 field offices were established in Serbia with outreach services in 84 villages and 201 collective centers

3. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 PROJECT START-UP

During the initial phases of RRP, the Project was introduced to the Political Officer and the Mission Director of the American Embassy, the Senior Democracy and Government Advisor of USAID, and the Assistant Foreign Minister of the Government of Croatia (GOC). NGO representatives from Croatia and Serbia were also present. The Project Director additionally met with PRM's Regional Refugee Affairs Specialist to review ADF's plan of action for the RRP and outline how ADF's offices in Serbia and Croatia would effectively manage the Project.

ADF held initial meetings with several organizations engaged in cross-border activities. Additional meetings were arranged by ADF with the Serbian Democratic Forum (SDF), Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (HC) on Project implementation. During these initial orientation meetings, ADF reviewed the objectives of the RRP to support the expansion of NGO activities in Serbia.

In addition to these initial activities, ADF participated in a meeting held in Croatia in October, 2000 facilitated by PRM and UNHCR entitled "FRY-Croatia NGO/IO Cross-Border Working Meeting." The aim of this meeting was to further dialogue among agencies and implementing partners regarding all aspects of the cross-border refugee return and reintegration process. Delegates from 25 international organizations and local NGOs participated in this meeting. The

participants discussed a range of topics related to the return of Croatian Serb refugees including the political and economic atmosphere in Croatia and in FRY, resettlement and local integration.

3.2 SUMMARY OF SUBGRANT ACTIVITIES: PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Subgrants were awarded to three local NGOs working on cross-border refugee issues and based in Serbia: The Serbian Democratic Forum; the Humanitarian Law Center; and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. These subgrants and the work that resulted from them represent ADF's core strategy to achieving and sustaining project results by developing the capacity of these NGOs to offer better and expanded services to refugees. Each NGO was required to maintain statistics of client matters per subject area and to report on the status of cases.

ADF additionally provided technical assistance and training to sub-grantees whereby institutional capacities to develop long-term prospects for sustainable program management were strengthened and reinforced. ADF invested significant time and resources to improve local NGO skills in financial management, computerization, electronic communication, public relations, government policy, report writing, and coalition building. These core competencies in turn increased the effectiveness of RRP implementation and success. Technical assistance and training are addressed in more detail under section 3.3 of this report.

Each subgrant had the similar purpose of providing adequate information and legal assistance and counsel to Croatian Serb refugees wishing to return to their original homes. In light of the changes in government in both Croatia and Yugoslavia, it was important to inform refugees about the regulations and procedures in effect related to the return of refugees as well as changes in relevant legislation in both countries. Moreover, assistance was also needed to pursue claims related to specific issues such as the return of property, citizenship documents, health care and social benefits. Many of these rights were relevant even if the refugee ultimately decided not to return to his or her original home in Croatia because of economic or security reasons. The three subgrantees worked in locations with high concentration of refugees in Serbia and their work is summarized below.

3.2.1 Serbian Democratic Forum

Subgrant Period: July 1, 2000 – May 31, 2001

Funding Support: \$237,289

Locations of Assistance: Belgrade, Subotica, Sabac, Čačak, Niš and Šid

Number of Clients Assisted: 19,840 refugees and their families

With support from the ADF subgrant, SDF was able to establish six offices including a headquarters office in Belgrade that also provided direct services to refugees. Other SDF field offices were located in Subotica, Sabac, Čačak, Niš and Šid. The subgrant between ADF and SDF effectively supported project objectives by increasing the number of ethnic Serbs from Croatia living in Serbia with access to legal assistance related to their return through the building of a network of legal assistance offices in Serbia. Although SDF did not receive funding from the RRP during the final 4 months covered by this report -- due to budget revisions made in the

Project -- each of these offices presently continue to assist refugees in resolving a range of legal problems with the support of other international donors.

SDF legal services offices offer pro-bono legal assistance and information services to refugee clients. A total of 21 legal and administrative professionals were employed to implement the RRP/SDF subgrant. SDF was highly successful in fulfilling its responsibilities toward meeting the objectives of the Project. Detailed monthly reports from each of the Field Offices were provided to ADF with statistical analysis and descriptive commentary on many of the cases that were undertaken. SDF was also highly responsive in providing timely, complete monthly financial reports to ADF. The overall performance of SDF under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement to implement and report results of its activities complied to, and were consistent with, internationally recognized standards.

In addition to directly serving refugees in Serbia, SDF distributed a substantial amount of information to refugees on services available in Croatia by members of the Legal Services Coalition (LSC) (a network of six Croatian NGOs). Moreover, SDF effectively coordinated its activities with international and local authorities as well as with the Croatian Consulate in Belgrade. This is evidenced by the UNHCR Information Manual for Returnees that outlines services provided by SDF both in Croatia, as well as in Serbia.

SDF served almost 20,000 refugee families over the 11-month period of the ADF subgrant, providing legal assistance and support for 10,840 individuals and information or general support to an additional 9,000 people. A summary of services related to return to Croatia provided by SDF includes:

Table 1: Services provided by Serbian Democratic Forum

Number of interviews conducted by 6 field offices:	10,209
Number of phone requests received at 6 field offices:	9,835
Citizenship documents processed:	2,856
Travel documents issued:	5,273
Property claims submitted to Croatian Authorities:	2,019
Reconstruction applications submitted to Croatian Authorities:	266
Pension requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	1,188
Insurance requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	537
Employment requests:	104
Military status requests:	100
Legal proceedings undertaken:	514
Other issues processed:	1,334

3.2.2 Humanitarian Law Center

Subgrant Period: November 1, 2000 – September 30, 2001

Funding Support: \$57,820

Locations of Assistance: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Vojvodina, and major refugee camps in Southern and Central Serbia

Number of Clients Assisted: 5,900 refugees and their families

The Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) was established in 1994 for purposes of regularly and systematically investigating human rights violations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It promotes freedom of thought and expression, the right to physical integrity, equal treatment and equal protection before the law as well as other values of civil society. It publishes its findings and gives recommendations through its publications including books, bulletins and reports. The head office of HLC is in Belgrade. In addition it has an office in Novi Sad, four offices in Kosovo and an office in Podgorica, Montenegro.

The purpose of the subgrant was to provide adequate legal assistance and counsel to Croatian Serb refugees wishing to return to their original homes. A separate but related objective was to provide refugees with legal counsel in order to help them pursue claims related to specific issues such as the return of property, citizenship documents, health care and social benefits. HLC services were also provided to those refugees who are either undecided about return, or may choose to integrate into the host society, as well as those who may have actually returned.

The HLC offices in Belgrade and Novi Sad were staffed by 3 legal professionals and 1 support staff member. These legal professionals visited refugees in the field and provided them with legal counseling as well as information about the activities of other NGOs engaged in similar activities. The fieldwork that was carried out was directed at areas where there were concentrations of refugees from Croatia, i.e., Vojvodina, the outskirts of Belgrade, and major refugee camps in southern and central Serbia. HLC was also responsive in providing monthly narrative and financial reports from each of the field offices. The overall performance of HLC under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement were also consistent with internationally recognized standards.

HLC provided legal assistance services to 3,400 refugees and information services to 2,500 more – mainly those in refugee camps. A summary of services related to return to Croatia provided by HLC includes:

Table 2: Services provided by Humanitarian Law Center

Number of interviews conducted by 6 field offices:	4,534
Number of phone requests received at 6 field offices:	1,411
Citizenship documents processed:	414
Property claims submitted to Croatian Authorities:	723
Reconstruction applications submitted to Croatian Authorities:	862
Pension requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	271
Insurance requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	104
Employment requests:	210
Military status requests:	74
Legal proceedings undertaken:	581
Other issues processed:	169

3.2.3 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Hoću Kući Project

Subgrant Period: November 1, 2000 – September 30, 2001

Funding Support: \$92,215

Locations of Assistance: Prior to June 2001: Belgrade, Kragujevac and Kraljevo. As of June 2001: Novi Sad, Subotica, and Zrenjanin. A mobile team was also included in the initial phase of the Project.

Number of Clients Assisted: 31,936 refugees and their families

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HC) in Serbia was established in 1994 for purposes of monitoring human rights violations in the Republic of Serbia. The objectives of the Helsinki Committee include identifying cases of individual human rights violations and undertaking various activities aimed at protecting these rights, daily work with refugees especially those from Croatia, monitoring the situation in Croatia and preparing refugees for return, monitoring the media situation and the position of national and ethnic minorities, and initiating activities for their preservation and protection, as well as writing reports directed at informing the general public and relevant international organizations and bodies. The Helsinki Committee's goals include interceding with relevant state and judicial bodies and exerting pressure on them to harmonize their policies and legal measures with internationally accepted standards and obligations, and proposing measures for improving the general situation of human rights in Serbia.

The Hoću Kući Project began in February 1998 without funding from any sources because of the needs of 40 to 60 refugees who daily presented themselves at the Helsinki Committee office in Belgrade. Hoću Kući works in conjunction with the International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide transportation for returning refugees. Since a majority of refugees in Serbia are from former Sector South, Hoću Kući opened a strategic office in Knin to coordinate the return and reintegration of Croatian Serb refugees in this important region.

The objectives of the ADF subgrant to the HC in Serbia were to ensure that Croatian Serbs in Serbia will be able to make more informed decisions about returning to their homes of origin in Croatia, and to have increased access to legal assistance related to this return. Similarly to the other 2 NGOs, a primary objective was to facilitate the work of a network of sustainable local Serbian NGO legal offices in Serbia.

With the assistance of the ADF subgrant, HC was able to establish six offices throughout Serbia including a busy headquarters in Belgrade that also provided direct services to refugees. Three offices were initially established in Belgrade, Kragujevac, and Kraljevo. A mobile team was also included in the initial phase of the Project. In June 2001, these field offices were shifted to Novi Sad, Subotica, and Zrenjanin at the request of PRM. The Helsinki Committee equipped, furnished and staffed these offices with 8 lawyers and field assistants.

Legal assistance and information were offered to clients in these offices at no charge. The field assistants visited and provided information to Croatian refugees who were in private accommodations and collective centers. The Helsinki Committee coordinated its activities with local authorities as well as with the Croatian Consulate in Belgrade and in Subotica. With ADF assistance, the Committee developed and distributed high quality information to Croatian Serb refugees regarding services provided by the NGO legal assistance network in Croatia.

The Helsinki Committee management and project staff actively participated in training and technical assistance activities made available by ADF. This enhanced the capabilities of the Helsinki Committee and other NGOs in Serbia in capacity building, improved management and sustainability of legal assistance services, information services, human rights monitoring, NGO advocacy, and NGO cross-border collaboration and cooperation. HC also provided monthly narrative and financial reports from each of the field offices as per attachment C. The overall performance of HC under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement were consistent with internationally recognized standards. HC provided legal assistance services to 11,936 refugees and information services to 20,000 more. A summary of services related to return to Croatia provided by HC includes:

Table 3: Services provided by Hoću Kući Project

Number of interviews conducted by 6 field offices:	11,287
Number of phone requests received at 6 field offices:	21,120
Citizenship documents processed:	3,512
Travel documents issued:	3,351
Property claims submitted to Croatian Authorities:	1,523
Reconstruction applications submitted to Croatian Authorities:	599
Pension requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	855
Insurance requests submitted to Croatian Authorities:	82
Employment requests:	445
Military status requests:	118
Legal proceedings undertaken:	160
Other issues processed:	1,291

3.3 TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

ADF developed the capacities of the three implementing partners through operational support and extensive training and technical assistance in order to improve their performance up to internationally recognized standards and to establish a core of sustainable local NGOs providing services and assistance related to cross-border refugee return and reintegration. Training and technical assistance were provided on-site and tailored to the needs of each NGO.

At the beginning of the Project, ADF provided extensive technical assistance to each implementing partner in obtaining and installing computer and printers and other office equipment in new field offices throughout Serbia. To ensure that the equipment was used to its full potential, ADF coordinated a series of training sessions to develop basic computer skills including word-processing, database systems, and email systems. These training sessions were highly effective in assisting staff members to provide regular and consistent information to ADF staff during the life of the Project.

Training and technical assistance was also provided to increase the capacity of the three NGOs in program planning, project development, and fundraising. The three NGOs exhibited these skills by developing project proposals that were submitted, approved and financed by various international donors that included the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Rescue Committee, International Orthodox Christian Charities, Catholic Relief Service, Danish Relief Council, Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute and NOVID Holland.

Furthermore, the three NGOs learned how to monitor the provision of services in terms of implementation, impact, and client satisfaction through ADF's overall management support.

In the area of improving NGO financial management systems, ADF's Finance Manager provided technical assistance to accounting staff for each of the three implementing partners. The training provided to accounting personnel on basic computer processing of financial records resulted in the capacity to adapt to a specialized multi-currency accounting program. In addition, ADF assisted its partners to prepare accurate accounting information on computerized spreadsheets that helped to establish cross-border cash flow arrangements between field offices Croatia and main office in Belgrade. The three NGOs including 14 field offices, submitted monthly narrative and financial reports that were evaluated as being consistent with internationally recognized standards.

3.4 CROSS-BORDER INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE SERVICES

A major problem that was identified during the majority of joint meetings was the need to exchange and share information between and among NGOs from Serbia and Croatia. It was apparent that the Serbia-based NGOs were unaware of the important, ongoing work of the Croatia-based NGOs who were working toward meeting similar objectives.

The Legal Services Coalition (LSC), which is composed of six Croatian NGOs with several offices in the war-affected areas of Croatia and established with support from ADF under its

Reintegration of Populations Project in Croatia, was seen as the most likely institution to focus on the collection and distribution of information related to refugee return. ADF worked to strengthen the relationship of Serbian NGOs to the LSC through the establishment of the Center for Information on Refugee Return (CIRR), which operates as a joint effort between the LSC and ADF.

CIRR serves many organizations to be better informed about regional developments and activities related to the multi-faceted effort to assist refugees to return to their homes of origin by bridging the information and cooperation gaps. CIRR maintains regular contact with all the organizations working on refugee return to gather relevant information and distribute that information to the network of organizations in working on refugee return and reintegration issues between Croatia and Serbia. The CIRR initiated a highly successful effort to organize cross-border seminars that brought together lawyers concerned with refugee return from both countries. Regular meetings between these officials continue to be facilitated by the CIRR and LSC.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After almost a decade, an increasing number of ethnic Serbs from Croatia are deciding to return home. Although reliable documentation on sustainable returns from Serbia to Croatia is neither precise nor verifiable for a number of reasons, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that 17,483 returns from abroad occurred in Croatia during year 2000, with another 10,740 successful returns taking place during the first 9 months of the current reporting year. There is no question that the services provided by ADF and its local partner agencies played a significant role in increasing the possibility for families to return to Croatia, and that the Project provided critically needed services in Serbia as well as in Croatia.

Furthermore, the conditions contributing to sustainable return of refugees from Serbia to Croatia improved significantly in the last months of the RRP program. On the one hand, the deteriorating economic conditions in Serbia have reduced the attractiveness of staying in that country. On the other hand, support of the Croatian administration for the resolution of legal and administrative hurdles to return has improved. There is ample evidence both in Serbia and Croatia that improved conditions for successful return to Croatia will continue to improve over the next year. Continued support for refugee return from Serbia to Croatia is important, and ADF is fully prepared to ensure that potential returnees receive maximum support during this critical period.

A primary issue very frequently addressed by the RRP NGO network was related to the process of application for reconstruction assistance for destroyed property in Croatia. Although every owner of a war-destroyed property has the legal right to receive reconstruction assistance from the Government of Croatia, the formal process is complicated and time consuming. Conditions for receiving a positive answer for reconstruction must be fully met and is dependent upon submission of documents that are often very difficult to obtain. The NGO network assisted in processing nearly 6,000 requests that were in some way related to reconstruction of owned property. The follow-on project that was awarded to ADF by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, effective October 2001, will focus as much attention and resources on this issue as possible. This will be accomplished by linking identified families still residing in

collective centers to various reconstruction programs, including the European Union Program for Reconstruction and Return (EUPOP) implemented by Arbeiter- Samariter-Bund (ASB) in municipalities throughout Croatia. For example, ADF consulted ASB concerning the reconstruction of a returnee house in Knin Municipality that has now been given priority status for repair works to be carried in the very near future.

Another primary task of the NGO network concerned assisting refugees to obtain Croatian citizenship. Although citizenship is not required to qualify for reconstruction assistance, one must show proof of citizenship to regain many other rights such as pensions, insurance, medical treatment, travel, and employment. Nearly 7,000 claims for citizenship were submitted by the three partner NGOs over the life of the Project. ADF's follow-on Project will also concentrate NGO activity in this area and place primary emphasis upon resolving as many citizenship claims as possible.

In addition to legal assistance, economic assistance through small grants is required by refugees to enable them to return and begin to rebuild their lives. ADF will additionally concentrate additional time and resources in this area in order to link services that may be provided by agencies operational in Croatia such as small grants and agricultural programs implemented by Catholic Relief Services, American Refugee Committee and International Rescue Committee.