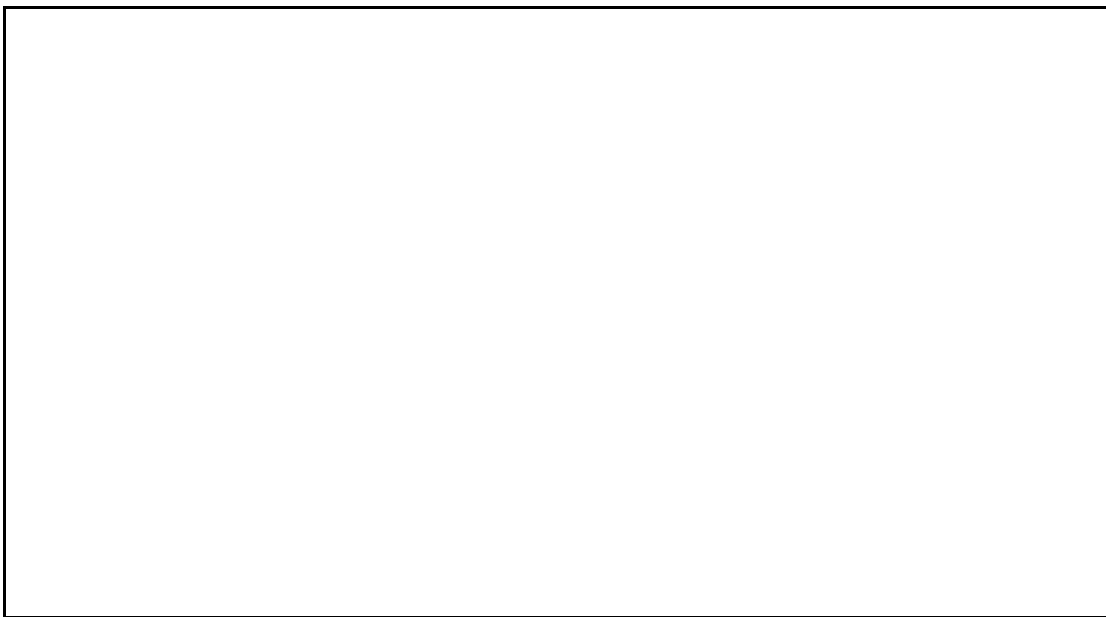


The logo for Sussex, featuring a stylized black arrow pointing downwards and to the right, ending in a small square.

Sussex



Translation: It's time to go home
 You have the right to free and secure return!
 Your police serve you
 (Repeated in Latin and Cyrillic scripts)

Logo: UNMiBH (United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Summary

This paper presents an analysis of minority return in Srpsko Goražde, in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, based upon a series of key informant interviews with returnees conducted in situ in June and July 2002. This primary research is located in a broader analysis of primary and secondary written material. The study aims to fill a gap in research on return in Bosnia which is generally focused on the act of physical return. Instead it attempts to understand both the motivations for return and conditions and aspirations post

List of Acronyms

DP	Displaced Person
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
EU	European Union
EVI	Especially Vulnerable Individual
EWS	Early Warning Systems (UNDP Report)
GARP	Government-Assisted Repatriation Programme
GFAP	General Framework Agreement for Peace (Dayton Agreement)
GOAL	Irish NGO
IC	International Community
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former-Yugoslavia
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEBL	Inter-entity Boundary Line
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPTF	International Police Task Force
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JEN	Japanese Emergency NGOs
KM	Konvertible Mark (Bosnian currency)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OMI	Municipal Office for Return (English translation) in RS
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PLIP	Property Legislation Implementation Plan
RRTF	Return and Reconstruction Task Force
RS	Republika Srpska
SFOR	NATO-led Stabilisation Force
SORS	Self-Organised Return Settlements
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
VARP	Voluntary Assisted Return Programme

List of Abbreviations

Bosnia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dayton Agreement	General Framework Agreement for Peace
Federation	Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina (Muslim-Croat Federation)

Note on pronunciation

Place names in this paper are given in the original Serbo-Croat (or Bosnian) spelling. The following table shows the pronunciation of the place names in the original Serbo-Croat (or Bosnian) spelling.

Note on terminology

The term Bosniac, or *Bošnjak*, which dates back to the Middle Ages, was revived during the war by the Bosnian Muslims, in order to differentiate themselves from Serbs or Croats. For a fuller description of the nuances and implications of the term see Bringa (1995:34-36).

Preface

The purpose of this study is to explore the conditions facing ethnic minority returnees to south-eastern Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to one municipality in particular, Srpsko Goražde. It traces a caseload of interviewees' experience of forced migration, displacement and return, with particular emphasis on their conditions of life post-return.

The study is based upon a series of key informant interviews conducted in June and July 2002 for an MA dissertation, comprising both returnee heads of household, and other key stakeholders in the return process, representing both international and Bosnian organisations. Upon the prior recommendation of my MA supervisor, all interviews were conducted in confidence, primarily to protect the security of the returnees themselves. As a result, no list of interviewees has been appended to this document, although the methods used to select interviews is presented in chapter 3, and the broad profile of the caseload is described in various ways in chapters 4 and 5.

In addition to the interviews, this study makes use of primary documents produced by agencies working in the field of return in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the growing secondary literature on the conflict and its aftermath in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally the paper also draws on a range of studies of other return contexts.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Richard Black, for his support, advice and helpful comments on the design and development of the project. The study was greatly facilitated by the generosity of staff in UNHCR Goražde and Sarajevo, OHR Sokolac, IRC Goražde and GOAL Goražde who gave of their time and insights. My thanks also go to Desmond Maurer of UNDP, for valuable insights into life in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. My deepest sense of gratitude is reserved for the returnees themselves, who welcomed me into their homes and shared their personal and often painful experiences.

Introduction

Return, and in particular minority return¹ has been a defining characteristic of the post-war horizon in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia). The 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and its aftermath resulted in the death of 300,000 and the forced migration of 2.5 million people, both to locations within Bosnia and abroad. The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) initialled at Dayton, Ohio in November 1995 and ratified in Paris in December 1995, which ended the war prioritised the return of those displaced as an integral part of the peace-building process, by the inclusion of Annex VII, of which Article 1 states:

All refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origin. They shall have the right to have restored to them property of which they were deprived in the course of hostilities since 1991 and to be compensated for any property that cannot be restored to them. The early return of refugees and displaced persons is an important objective of the settlement of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This component of the Dayton agreement has proved in many ways to be the main focus of attention in the post-war environment. The international community's self-stated aim of *reversing* ethnic cleansing (UNHCR 1997: 170; Cox 1999: 204) has dominated the agenda of not only internal politics within Bosnia, but has also been a major component of foreign policy of the European Union (EU) and the United States, with the result that massive financial investment has been made towards the post-war rehabilitation and transformation of Bosnia, a major proportion of which has been to fund programmes for reconstruction and return.

If return is the 'great unwritten chapter' within the field of migration research (King 2000), then Bosnia provides only a partial exception. While a considerable quantity of written material has been generated by international agencies engaged in supporting return, most of this takes the form either of policy pieces concerned with solving practical problems in achieving return to pre-war properties, or quantitative measurements of the physical act of return.² The biggest challenge

within the framework for return remains the return of minorities to their pre-war homes. Such returns have generally proved easier to the Muslim-Croat Federation (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hereafter Federation) than to Republika Srpska (RS) (UNHCR 1997: 170), with the dominant 'hard-line' political stance in eastern RS making this a particularly difficult area. Despite, indeed perhaps because of the massive investment in re42.5daeTcion o2.7a108 e7TD 0.14 Tccl.3d4

¹ 'Minority return' is defined as 'the return of an individual to a pre-war home which is located in an area now under the control of another ethnic group, whatever the ethnic distribution in the area prior to the war' (Cox 1999:202).

² While not an analysis of return *per se*, a notable and relatively recent exception to this trend is the UNDP's Early Warning System (EWS) survey of attitudes

interviews in two chapters. Chapter 4 covers the interviewees' experience of forced migration, displacement and the process of physical movement back to their pre-war properties, while chapter 5 outlines the main issues post-return and in so doing, examines questions of success and

Prior to the war the major towns, most famously Sarajevo but also Tuzla, Banja Luka, Mostar and others, had a multi-ethnic population. Most rural areas were populated by villages of mono-ethnic groups which together made up an ethnic patchwork throughout the country. The war had taken approximately 300,000 lives, and thousands had fled to the relative safety of territory held by their own ethnic group. In addition, many rural areas had been abandoned as people moved to urban centres. Thus, in the immediate post-war period, the population of Bosnia was therefore concentrated in largely ethnically homogenous urban areas. In total more than 50% of the total population had left their homes of origin. Together with the transfers of population during early 1996, only 42% of the total population remained in their homes of origin (Cox 1998:623).

Population group	Number
Internally displaced within Bosnia	1,300,000
Refugees in neighbouring countries	500,000
Refugees in Western Europe	*700,000
Total	2,500,000

Source: UNHCR 2000:219

As noted above, Annex VII of the Dayton agreement both enshrined the right of '[a]ll refugees and displaced persons ... freely to return to their places of origin or to the places to which they had been displaced before the conflict'.¹⁰ The Dayton Agreement also provided that the 'right of return' was to be implemented in accordance with the principles of the 1948 UNHCR Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.¹¹ The Dayton Agreement also provided that the 'right of return' was to be implemented in accordance with the principles of the 1948 UNHCR Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.¹²

founded upon territorialized notions of identity, it is thus unsurprising that the peace framework is grounded in similar concepts of identity and place. As Kibreab argues, '[t]here can be no deterritorialized identity in a territorialized space' (1999:387). The language of Dayton and post-Dayton implementation was and is infused by a territorialised notion of identity, albeit employing a different basis for (re)establishing claims to territory, namely legal rather than ethnic 'rights'.

Nevertheless, there is some utility in these critiques of more traditional, territorialised assumptions in that they suggest the need to treat concepts of 'return', 'returnee' and 'home' with some caution. While acknowledging their value-laden content, this paper continues to make use of these concepts, for the simple reason that these are the terms utilised by the key informants interviewed for this study. Several nuances are, however, highlighted in the use of these concepts and presented in the latter sections of this paper.

1.3 Strategies and phases of return

The strategies adopted by the international community to assist return in Bosnia have been phased and subject to change since the first returns during 1996, for a variety of reasons, including increased security over time, policies to deal with obstruction on the part of governmental and local officials, co-ordination between international agencies inside Bosnia, and dependence on the agendas and funding of donor countries.

The initial strategy for returns, which took place throughout 1996, was almost exclusively focused on 'majority' return.⁷ Large-scale funding from donor governments was channelled through UNHCR to NGO implementing partners for the reconstruction of dwellings to enable people to move back to their properties and in so doing alleviate some of the problems of severe overcrowding, particularly in urban areas. However, many people who had moved from rural to urban areas were reluctant to return to the countryside, and, in the absence of any legislation to force people to return to their homes once they had been reconstructed, such people continued to occupy other people's property in the towns.

In August 1996 the German government announced the end of temporary protection for the majority of Bosnians, on the basis that 'Bosnians who fled Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia were safe from persecution in Bosnian

government-controlled areas' (Frelick 2001:46). In line with this decision, approximately 255,000 Bosnians repatriated from Germany between 1996 and 2000, leaving only 23,000 in Germany with temporary *Duldung* ('tolerated' from deportation) status. Although ostensibly this repatriation was undertaken 'voluntarily' there have been criticisms levelled at Germany for their interpretation of 'voluntary'. Many Bosnians received threats of deportation and/or had their benefits suspended or reduced. Together with the highly publicised deportation of approximately 1,000 Bosnians from Germany, many more were induced to return (Cox 1998:618) through Germany's government-Co2c bariatis repatriati apgram so(GARP:46 Oogeth00 couieian deansibSer zerla, analBrom(lePrdurn):Tj 0 T4 0.698

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⁷ 'Majority' return denotes return to a pre-war property located in an area now in which the returnee would form part of the majority ethnic group, irrespective of the pre-war ethnic distribution in that area.

legislation in both entities, resulting in a clear procedure for pre-war owners to reclaim their property. Until the introduction of this legislation the legal system had provided no further recourse to those reclaiming their property who met with non-compliance (Cox 1998:613). In addition, the RRTF developed the Property Legislation Implementation Plan (PLIP), in order to ensure that the new 'return-friendly' legislation was backed up by a firm emphasis on the 'rule of law'. For each municipality a Focal Point was appointed from either UNHCR or OSCE to work with and monitor the local authority responsible, and Property Commissions were established as working groups in problem municipalities. Th

settlement on the inter-entity boundary line (IEBL) between Goražde and Srpsko Goražde (see below), then inspired 'spontaneous' or 'self-organised' groups of DPs to return to their villages and set up camp. These 'self-organised return settlements' (SORS) were the result of collective decisions taken within the DP Associations, and appeared in several parts of Bosnia, most notably in eastern RS municipalities such as Foca/Srbinje, Višegrad, Rogatica (Žepa) and Srpsko Goražde (ICG 2000:4). Some assistance was provided by organisations such as UNHCR (Fischel 2001:325), and many of them subsequently received reconstruction assistance under NGO programmes. Indeed, due to the need to identify only people who 'really want to return' for reconstruction programmes in order to get maximum returns from rapidly-dwindling resources, it is the case now that beneficiaries are almost exclusively those people who have been living in SORS.¹⁰

Towns pose a tougher challenge in which to achieve minority return for various reasons. Firstly they have a much higher population density both as a result of less destruction and also because they were the centres towards which people fled from the villages. They are of both political and territorial importance as they are seats of local and national power and they control local resources over a wide area. Therefore the local and national authorities tend to be more obstructive concerning the restitution of urban property as they have more to lose, and the post-war population are less likely to accept returnees as they may be further displaced themselves.

Return to urban areas in many cases involves the vacating of property of DPs before the pre-war occupant is able to return. Due to the lack of political will which manifests itself in obstruction, coupled with a desperate lack of alternative accommodation, progress has been slow. However, the PLIP campaign is proving successful in most areas of Bosnia, with the numbers of minorities being able to return to their property in urban areas increasing since 2000. The most

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for reconstruction projects, vandalism of reconstructed property and incidents of violence to returnees.¹³ Much interest has been generated within the international community both in Bosnia and elsewhere, as well as amongst the local population and media in the surrounding municipalities during the coordinated and concerted effort to achieve minority return to the municipality. This focus on Srpsko Goražde essentially served to polarise the issues surrounding minority return and created the perception that the municipality is the 'litmus test' (RRTF 2002:2) for minority return in eastern RS generally.

By late 1999, despite continuous pressure on the authorities in Srpsko Goražde to relent on their hard-line stance, there was still no substantial minority return.¹⁴ During October, after reaching a level of unbearable frustration at the lack of progress, the DPs organised themselves into a working party to travel from Goražde to Kopaci and prepare their land for planting winter wheat. The convoy of tractors had been sufficiently well organised for news of it to be heard in Kopaci and the DPs were met at the IEBL with a protest by the Serb DPs in Kopaci which prevented it from reaching its destination. There was wide suspicion at the time that the protest had been incited by the municipal authorities in Srpsko Goražde although this was not proved. On the other hand, it is clear with hindsight that the 'camp' set up at the IEBL as the result of the blocked convoy had also been the fall-back plan of the DPs in Goražde. This camp turned into a tent settlement at the IEBL with representatives of most families displaced from Srpsko Goražde (not just Kopaci) spending at least some of the time there. It received both moral and material support from other Bosniac DP groups and the domicile population of Goražde, as well as substantial media attention, both national and international (for example, Wright 2000b). During November 1999, in a parallel attempt to break the stalemate, the High Representative removed the Mayor and the head of the OMI in Srpsko Goražde, as well as the Mayor of Goražde, from office, as part of a sweeping round of removals of

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community responsible for the Goražde area. In addition the author was invited to attend a monthly meeting of the local RRTF, which provided an opportunity to obtain an overview of the activities of the international community generally in the area as well as the major current issues concerning return.

It was decided to split the interviews with returnees between those whom had repossessed their property and those whose houses had been reconstructed. This decision was taken in part to assess if the experience of return is markedly different between the two groups, and also to ensure a spread of return locations. Specifically, a typical location selected for reconstruction may be a settlement in which most of the housing units were destroyed along with the local infrastructure (e.g. electricity and water supply). Many of these locations are rural or semi-rural and were largely ethnically homogenous before the war. By providing reconstruction assistance on this basis it enables people to return in groups (thereby reducing security concerns) and at the same time keeps the repair costs of infrastructure to a minimum. With reference to the repossession of occupied properties, the eviction of DPs occupying properties is carried out (in the case of Srpsko Goražde) in the order of the date of application for repossession, without regard for the location of the property. This means that the property could effectively be anywhere in the municipality. In the case of Srpsko Goražde, as the majority of habitable housing units are in a fairly concentrated area, it thus follows that most returns due to repossession are to an area still (for the first returnees at least) largely occupied by DPs, thereby forming an ethnically mixed community.

To select reconstruction cases a list was obtained from both IRC and GOAL (as the two main NGOs undertaking reconstruction in the municipality) of their beneficiaries. IRC reconstructed houses under an EC-funded project between 1999-2001 and GOAL through two projects, both ECHO-funded, of 1999 and 2000. Return of the beneficiaries took place between late 1999 and Spring 2002. The lists were amalgamated and arranged in alphabetical order and every eighth case was selected for interview to generate 10 interviews from this category. For repossession cases a list of all repossessions to the end of June 2002 was acquired and the same method used to yield a further 10 cases. The dates of return of repossession cases selected was between May 2000 and April 2002. Of those selected and interviewed, 2 cases had yet to physically return: at the time of interview each had so far only repossessed a portion of the property and were

carrying out repairs to it whilst waiting for the rest of the property to be vacated. 90% of all cases selected for interview were in the settlements of Ustipiraca and Kopaci. Of the 20 cases initially selected, 4 were not interviewed on the basis of advice received from others: one family had left the area to work abroad, one householder had recently been widowed, one couple had divorced and were both living elsewhere, and one was suffering from serious illness. The total number of interviewees selected in this manner was therefore 16, comprising 9 reconstruction and 7 repossession cases.

The interviews with returnees were semi-structured, with the author completing a questionnaire of both open and closed questions. This allowed for the gathering of personal data as well as giving the interviewee the chance to give an opinion on a certain issue and to describe in their own words their experiences. Interviews were tape-recorded (with the permission of the interviewee) which enabled the author to draw out nuances on subsequent hearings which may not have been apparent at the actual interview. All interviews with returnees took place at their homes with the aid of an interpreter. Four different interpreters were used, in order to minimise the possible association in the minds of interviewees of the interpreter with any particular organisation and so to minimise bias. In most cases the head of household was interviewed. If the head of household was not present the spouse was interviewed, and in some cases both the head of household and spouse together answered questions: this type of interview was in fact the most informative.

During the interviewing process several issues came to light regarding current problems being experienced by returnees. In order to examine these problems in more depth, and after meeting with community representatives and discussing these and other issues, a further 3 interviewees were selected on the basis that they were in a category likely to experience the same problems. This was undertaken in order to cross-reference certain initial interview results to determine whether those results were particular to the household interviewed, or whether they had wider resonance with the experience of other returnee households. For example, initial results were corroborated in this way in the case of returnee households with children: since there were only 6 such cases in the initial sample of interviewees, 2 additional returnee households with children were identified and interviewed. In this example, these additional households were identified through unplanned encounters on visits to the return sites.

In presenting and analysing these results, the initial, randomly selected interviewee households are used as the basic caseload for generating core statistics. Reference to additional interviewee households and use of the results of these secondary interviews will be noted in the text or in footnotes. This has been done to preserve the original, deliberately random quality of the sample, and to minimise the potential for skewing the results towards problems perceived by the interviewer, interpreter or initial interviewees.

The total number of returnee interviews was therefore 19. Further interviews and observations were then undertaken within the local population in Goražde municipality to augment the overall research and to place interviews undertaken in Srpsko Goražde in a related context. Some of the major issues and initial findings were then discussed with various key actors within the international agencies working on return in Srpsko Goražde and the surrounding area to compare and further contextualise the information.

4. The cycle of displacement and return

4.1 Caseload profile

The core caseload interviewed consisted of 16 households. The heads of household were predominantly males of working age, with 1 female-headed household, and 5 headed by pensioners. The average mean family size at the time of interview was 3.625, with a range from 2 to 7 family members. There were 9 families with adult children, 3 with school-age children and 2 with pre-school age children. In 4 cases, there were also extended family members living with the interviewee household. Of the total interview caseload (including the 3 additional interviews), the bulk of the 19 househ

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rapid Serb offensive which took territory from Ustipraca up to the suburbs of Goražde town. Almost all of those interviewed from Kopaci left on April 16th 1994 when it fell to the Serbs. The front-line moved so quickly during these periods that some families were separated from each other. For example, one man from Ustipraca who was employed as a driver left for work in Sarajevo on the day Ustipraca fell and did not see his family for two years as he became trapped in Sarajevo while his family were displaced to, and trapped in Goražde. During those two years before he was able to reach Goražde they had no news about each other, until he heard on the 'ham' radio that his family were alive and in Goražde. His wife said that if he had waited only another ten minutes then he would not have been able to go to Sarajevo at all. Similarly, one family who lived in Sarajevo were staying with parents in Ustipraca and were forced along with them to leave: they remained in Goražde for two years before they could return to their home in Sarajevo. Amongst the interviewees from Kopaci, 2 had family members killed during the offensive.

All the people interviewed were displaced within Bosnia for the duration of the war,¹⁸ and spent most of the period of their displacement in the part of Goražde municipality controlled by government forces, although some of them had not gone directly there. One family had gone first to the village of Žužalo across the river, but finding no safety there after a short time had walked through the forest to Goražde. Another family from Ustipraca had gone first to stay with relatives in Kopaci but then when the front-line came nearer they also fled further until they arrived in Goražde. In general, most people were able to re-establish contact with at least some of their neighbours within 3 to 4 days after arriving in Goražde. This provided the displaced community with a network of information, which was important not least because some people had been separated from close family members during the exodus. These networks would become more formalised over the period of displacement and form the basis of the DP Associations, which function all over Bosnia as both social and political organisations. DP Associations are effectively communities in exile and as such provide a relatively safe base for individual DPs where they know they will be with their 'own people'. On this level they can be compared with the 'neighbourhoods' formed amongst the displaced Tigrayans in the Sudan studied by Laura Hammond (1999:238). More than this however, they have also functioned as local governments in

exile with, in some cases, people who held official posts in local government before the war still being referred to by the same title within the association and taking on the tasks of organising the DPs politically. Due to the current election

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¹⁸ 2 interviewees left for other countries after the war but returned during 2001.

not enough properties to cope with the influx so public buildings and factories were also used to provide collective accommodation. One family that recently returned to Kopaci had been housed in the '1st September' textile factory for four years between 1994 and 1998. After initial shelter was provided the local authorities moved people to more suitable accommodation where possible, and at the same time allocated alternative accommodation to those occupying property to which the owners had returned. Some DPs bypassed the system altogether by simply breaking into empty properties, and some of these were later given permits to stay temporarily in these properties, whilst others were moved into other accommodation. The overall outcome was massive confusion and overcrowding which resulted in the creation of the 'Expert Team for Housing Issues' which was tasked to sort out the confusion. This however was not achieved and due to the failure of the latter office the Housing Department once again took over the task of the allocation of housing from 1999. The Housing Department now works with the international community on PLIP issues and is responsible for organising evictions of both illegal occupants and those people who continue to occupy property after having repossessed their own pre-war properties.

Most of the interviewees had left behind not only their homes but also their jobs when they fled to Goražde. Most of the industry in Goražde was unable to function during the war and this, coupled with the fact that most military-age men were drafted to the front-line, meant that most people were unemployed and therefore had no income. Virtually the whole population survived on humanitarian assistance, and this was by no means regularly delivered to the enclave: Goražde effectively suffered an humanitarian aid blockage until air-drops in March 1993 (Sacco 2000:144). Between 1992 and the summer of 1993 the only way into Goražde was over the mountains to government-controlled Grebak (near Trnovo), the closest point to Goražde that humanitarian aid could be delivered.²³ This 'mule train' of soldiers and civilians effectively kept the people of Goražde alive (Silber & Little 1995:360), with both men and women carrying sacks of flour and barrels of oil, as well as small ammunition, for over 40km on a route through Serb-held territory: sometimes the journey took days as people had to hide in trees or bushes until the Serbs had moved on. For those people who could not go to Grebak the food situation was dire: one interviewee said that in the three months after his

accommodation for authorities unwilling to carry out evictions.

4.5 Desire and decision to return

The most common response to the question 'Why did you want to return?' was a simple 'because it's my home'. Many people (especially the elderly) said they 'need' to be back on their own land. This echoes Laura Hammond's study of Tigrayans returning to Ethiopia from Sudan, in whose case study most elderly people would prefer to 'die "close to the place where your umbilical cord is buried"' (Hammond 1999:237). In the case of the Bosnians at least, it seems that this feeling is in part due to their close connection with the agricultural cycle: for many elderly people who have yet to return they seem to experience a tangible sense of exasperation at certain times of the year, most notably at planting times, as if they can not fulfil their purpose whilst they are

persons, fear for their own security – are so

events already described, specifically the removal of the Mayor and head of the OMI in November 1999, the tent settlement on the IEBL in late 1999, initial 'breakthrough' minority returns to neighbouring municipalities,²⁵ the gradual weakening of the political regime in Srpsko Goražde and a shift in the attitude of the Serb DPs in Srpsko Goražde, this last due in part to the advent of evictions.²⁶

There is no doubt that the tent settlement and its outcome, that of the first group of minority returnees in Kopaci in two houses, had a significant effect on return per se to Srpsko Goražde municipality. The Lessons Learned project of the EU and the ESI identifies as a key lesson from Bosnia that 'return itself is the key instrument for improving the security environment' (ESI 2002:1). That this is apparent can clearly be seen by the fact that, although there were several minor security-related incidents during the first weeks of the repossession of the first two houses in Kopaci,²⁷ all bar two of the interviewees reported that they had not experienced any attacks on them or their property since their return.²⁸ This serves to illustrate that the residents of Srpsko Goražde have generally accepted minority return to the municipality as a reality, despite the fact that certain barriers against further return, such as funding gaps and delays in repossession, remain.

More than half of the interviewees were involved in the tent settlement on the IEBL, regardless of where their homes are in the municipality of Srpsko Goražde. One male returnee in Ustipraca explained that by supporting the IEBL camp they

minority return to be successful: space, security and sustainability (RRTF 2000:1). 'Sustainable return' to the RRTF means 'making it possible for

had been the 'right choice' and that overall life had become easier since their return. The following sections detail the interviewees' main concerns post-return, and in so doing highlight many themes which pertain to the sustainability of return.

5.3 Security

Of the interviewees who had returned within the last year none of them said that security had been an issue since their return. Of those who had returned earlier, during 2000, there were two cases which had suffered threats and damage to their property. One elderly man who had been one of the first reconstruction beneficiaries in Kopaci during 2000 reported that during the reconstruction process the works had been wrecked three times, but once completed he had not experienced problems of security. Another who had repossessed one floor of his property in Kopaci and returned to it with his wife said that local Serbs had broken the windows by throwing stones and made threats concerning his safety during the first few weeks of his return, but that thereafter the situation had calmed down. There were however several comments concerning the willingness of the local police to act effectively in cases of criminal damage, such as looting (see below). This serves to undermine the confidence of returnees in the local police and judiciary system, which may fuel an atmosphere of mistrust.

5.4 Discrimination

Although there were few direct claims made regarding targeted instances of individual discrimination from the returnees interviewed, there were several incidents mentioned of general discriminatory practices against Bosniacs. For instance, the house of one of the first returnees is next-door to a property rented (by its Bosniac owner) to the Srpsko Goražde authorities which, until earlier this year, used it as the headquarters of the local radio station, 'Radio Srpsko Goražde'. This radio station is known for its anti-Muslim sentiment and has been used as a vehicle for disseminating propaganda against the return of Bosniacs to the municipality. Allegedly there were regular instances of its broadcasting propaganda and nationalist songs, made possible by the fact that loudspeakers were installed on the outside walls of the house. This made life extremely difficult for the returnees next-door, particularly as the elderly woman had recently undergone surgery for a brain tumour: she felt unable to even be outside the house because of the noise and harassment. After the radio station left the premises the property was then used as a place

to hold public occasions, such as weddings and funerals, and also going-away parties for young men leaving to do their national service. These last are traditional in both entities, and can be a source of some pride for the families concerned. However, fuelled by alcohol and sentiment, they also have the right ingredients to create an opportunity for nationalist sentiment to be expressed without restraint, and can appear threatening to outsiders, in this case minority returnees.

An interesting claim of discrimination was made with regard to the RS electricity company 'Elektro distribucija'.³¹ In both entities, electricity meters must be bought from an approved company: needless to say, in the RS this company is a company based in the RS and in the Federation it is a Federation company. Although it is common practice for returnees to be charged high fees for reconnection to the electricity supply (RRTF 2002:2), there is also a specific claim regarding the installation of electricity meters.

Allegedly the engineers of Elektro distribucija burn out the clock which regulates peak and off-peak electricity. The result is that the meter runs on the more expensive tariff. Although it can be fixed it involves taking the meter to a private company in Lukavica (an RS suburb of Sarajevo) which, for the majority of returnees, is both costly and inconvenient. There is no proof of this being done, but similar claims have allegedly been made by approximately 10 minority returnees to Srpsko Goražde.

Some interviewees felt that they were discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity with regard to employment. Of 33 interviewee family members available for work only 13 are employed and of these none are working in Srpsko Goražde, but in Goražde. None of them held out much hope that they would find employment in Srpsko Goražde in the current climate. This is due primarily to the desperate shortage of jobs anyway, but they commented that any jobs which do become vacant are always given to Serbs rather than Bosniacs, with a group of men interviewed saying that some local companies transport Serb DPs from Višegrad (approximately

fact that they feel they are could make it a self-fulfilling prophecy, in the sense that it may discourage both returnees and local residents from further integration. As with the claims regarding electricity connections, in some ways it is irrelevant whether the claim is justified or not, as it is indicative of a general sense of mistrust being experienced by returnees.

5.5 Repossession of property

Of the seven 'core' interviewees, plus two of the supplementary interviewees, who had returned by repossessing their property, eight had only regained a portion of it (generally one floor) while the rest of it continued to be occupied by a displaced family. This has come about because many properties in Srpsko Goražde were occupied by more than one family: each of these families constitutes a separate case to be solved either through eviction or by the reconstruction of their pre-war home. This has led to the rather bizarre situation of the returnee Bosniac family sharing their property with one or more displaced Serb families. Experiences amongst interviewees are varied: 3 seemed not to have any particular problem on a daily basis whilst the other 5 had experienced or were experiencing considerable difficulties.

One family who returned to Kopaci are sharing the house with an elderly Serb man whose own house in a neighbouring village was destroyed. The returnee owner accepts that the occupant has nowhere else to go and they seem to have a fairly amicable relationship, with the returnee family living on the first floor of the house and the elderly DP occupying the ground floor. However in a similar case, a young family who

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evictions when the looting is taking place they allegedly can do little or nothing about it without some kind of proof of ownership certificate of the owner.³⁶ Amongst returnees interviewed all of them had experienced some looting, and 2 of them said that the international community should have some kind of compensation programme for returnees to deal with the problem. One family who returned to Kopaci in August 2001 to one floor of their house found that their floor had been completely emptied of everything, including electric sockets: his opinion on the subject is that it is partly due to the lethargy of the local police, who he thinks would be forced to react if there was a more 'equal balance of power' in the municipality. By this he was referring to an increased presence of Bosniac returnees, both as ordinary citizens and in positions of authority. This was a sentiment echoed by several other returnees.

In other cases, what may appear initially to be looting may actually be a result of attempts at repair by occupants and owners alike. One elderly returnee to Kopaci explained, with some laughter, how he had recently visited his neighbour only to find his own floorboards in place in the neighbour's living room: they had presumably been put there by the family which had been occupying the house. Similarly he and another neighbour present at the time of the interview pointed out that the house opposite now has the windows of another house in the immediate vicinity. This came about both during and after the war as houses were damaged by shells or destroyed: there was no possibility of buying new materials to repair the damage so people did the best they could, which was salvaging what they needed from other houses in which no-one was living. This practice was certainly not limited to Srpsko Goražde and a personal account of it is described as happening in Goražde by Joe Sacco (2000:91).

Table 3. Unresolved issues highlighted by core interview caseload

Unresolved issues	Number of interviewees citing a particular concern
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fragmented. Before the war the hospital in Goražde town served the majority of the population in the area, with a regional hospital in Foca (now Foca/Srbinje) for more specialised care. In addition each sizeable community also had a local health clinic (*ambulanta*). Aside from the fact that the *ambulanta* in Ustiprača has not yet re-opened, the fact that separate systems of health insurance function in each entity mean that health care is only provided for those possessing an entity ID card. In reality, as many Bosniac returnees have yet to register in RS most of them have to travel to Goražde municipality to receive health care. Similarly for citizens of Srpsko Goražde (and neighbouring RS municipalities), although there is an *ambulanta* in Kopaci, cases which require a hospital must travel to Foca-Srbinje: this entails them virtually driving past the hospital in Goražde.

This issue is not only one of bureaucracy, as many Bosniac returnees stressed their general mistrust of the health system in RS. One interviewee in Kopaci said that he had enquired at the *ambulanta* in Kopaci to see if they could treat his wife but they did not have the correct medication. In Cajnice the situation was further complicated by the fact that the long-standing Mayor of Cajnice was also until very recently the Director of the hospital: although he has not been officially indicted by the ICTY in the Hague he is widely thought of by many Bosniacs as a war criminal.

5.9 Livelihoods

Within the 16 core families interviewed, there were 41 adults of working age before the war. Of this number, 16 were employed in industry in Goražde municipality, representing the main income for 10 of the 16 families. Post-war, the number of people employed in industry has been reduced to two, from two households, and one of these has taken a reduction in remuneration. Neither of these are employed in Srpsko Goražde, but in what is now Federation Goražde. The total number in formal employment has fallen from 26 in 1992 to 13 in 2002, and eight people described themselves as 'unemployed' compared to zero before the war. At the same time, the number of adults of working age has reduced from 41 to 33, due to an increase in those drawing pensions as well as the fact that eight people from five households that were previously employed have not returned.

This

that there is no financial incentive to start a business.

Before the war most people in rural or semi-rural areas supplemented their salary by growing at least a portion of their own food, and in addition to a substantial piece of land may also have had a cow or a goat, and a few chickens. During the war this form of supplementary income became, and remains, a major coping mechanism, for both returnee and domicile populations. All interviewees are surviving largely on food they produce themselves. In the face of a lack of other alternatives, some returnees are now hoping to expand their knowledge of such small-scale farming: one middle-aged lady in Ustipraca said she knows nothing about keeping sheep (she was a textile worker in a factory before the war), but now has applied for some sheep as she feels she has no other option for income, and will train herself.

It is clear that domestic level farming is currently the only area of 'sustainable' employment available to minority returnees in Srpsko Goražde, and throughout most of Bosnia. For this reason the international community are supporting agriculture and animal husbandry at the domestic and community level. In the Goražde area UNHCR funds an Italian NGO to implement agricultural initiatives such as the provision of seeds and technology and the donation of tractors to returnee communities. Similarly they fund IRC to supply and distribute livestock and the Japanese NGO JEN to build cowsheds.⁴⁴ Most of these projects work on the 'payback' system, whereby the primary beneficiary, who receives a pregnant cow, gives the calf to a secondary beneficiary family. For seeds a typical arrangement would be that a certain quantity of the produce is donated to a local school or an EVI beneficiary. Of the returnees interviewed six had been included in seed distribution programmes, none had yet received livestock although five had applied for some, and one family in Ustipraca had received a tractor for which in return he was expected to plough the land of other returnees in the area.

One possibility to further develop the potential for agriculture is the formation of co-operatives: the returnees to Kopaci have developed a formal proposal for an agricultural co-operative which would supply fruit for both the local market and possibly for export.⁴⁵ This proposal is being endorsed by RRTF, the representatives of which are assisting in trying to attract funding for the

project,⁴⁶ in line with their strategy to promote small-medium initiatives (RRTF 2000:4).

5.10 Longer-term sustainability

A number of households explicitly mentioned transport and the need for other people to return as constraining factors in the development of their post-return situation. Furthermore, these themes relate to most of the problems described above.

⁴⁴ Interview with UNHCR official 6th June 2002.

⁴⁵ Interview with representative of Regional Board Srpsko Goražde 30th June 2002.

socially and economically sustainable. This is not to endorse the returnees' own proposals for improvements to their situation as being

Sacco, J. (2000): Safe Area Goražde: The War in