

*Questions and answers*

## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

*Leaving our village, kissing the door of the house  
and not knowing when and if I would see our home again  
was the worst moment of my life.*

M. Krstic, an IDP, Serbia  
ICRC, the photo-book *Displaced Lives*, November 2002

### **Who are IDPs in Serbia and Montenegro?**

The most frequently used interpretation of the term *internally displaced persons* is the one given by **Francis Deng**, the United Nations Secretary-General's Representative on IDPs, in a 1998 document entitled *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and it runs as follows:

**- Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised border.**

As regards Serbia and Montenegro, all citizens of this country whose homes were in Kosovo, regardless of their nationality or religious affiliation, are considered to be IDPs.

### **How many Kosovo IDPs live in Serbia and Montenegro today?**

According to the assessments and figures by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), about 215,000 IDPs live in Serbia at this point, while some 29,000 IDPs live in Montenegro. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office is about to start the registration of IDPs, so that we can expect more accurate figures in a few months.

### **Where do IDPs live?**

According to the ICRC figures, the majority of IDPs are staying with their relatives in private accommodation, while nearly 4 per cent i.e. about 10,000 of them are in collective centres.

From the geographical point of view, IDPs live throughout the country. The municipality with the highest number of IDPs compared to the number of its residents is Kraljevo where the ICRC puts the number of IDPs at about 20,000.



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**What activities does the International Committee of the Red Cross conduct to help the IDPs in Serbia and Montenegro?**

Since June 1999 the ICRC has been providing **aid in food** and **hygiene** to all IDPs in Yugoslavia amounting to about 230,000 at the time. In agreement with the relevant ministries and international humanitarian organisations and taking into account the vulnerability level, the figure has been gradually reduced and, consequently, the ICRC now provides relief together with the Red Cross of Serbia and the Red Cross of Montenegro to some 59,000 IDPs, of whom 50,000 live in Serbia and 9,000 in Montenegro.

The currently applied criteria for the distribution of aid, which you will find attached, have not been altered since April 2002.

In an attempt to offer something more than a food parcel, the ICRC launched **income-generating projects and vocational training and micro-credit programmes** in 2001, with a view to improving the IDPs' life quality on the basis of their efforts, ability and initiative.

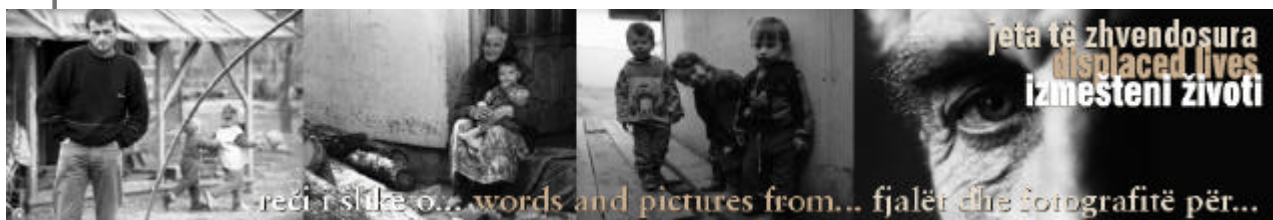
Last year, nearly 750 different projects, covering some 5,000 people, were implemented. This year, the plan is to carry out nearly 1,500 projects.

Early last year, the ICRC launched also **the community-based projects** aimed at encouraging the coexistence and integration of IDPs into the local community. Through these programmes, the young have been given the opportunity to take part in different creative workshops and sports together with their peers in the places where they live, while traditional activities including weaving, knitting and sewing workshops have been organised for adults.

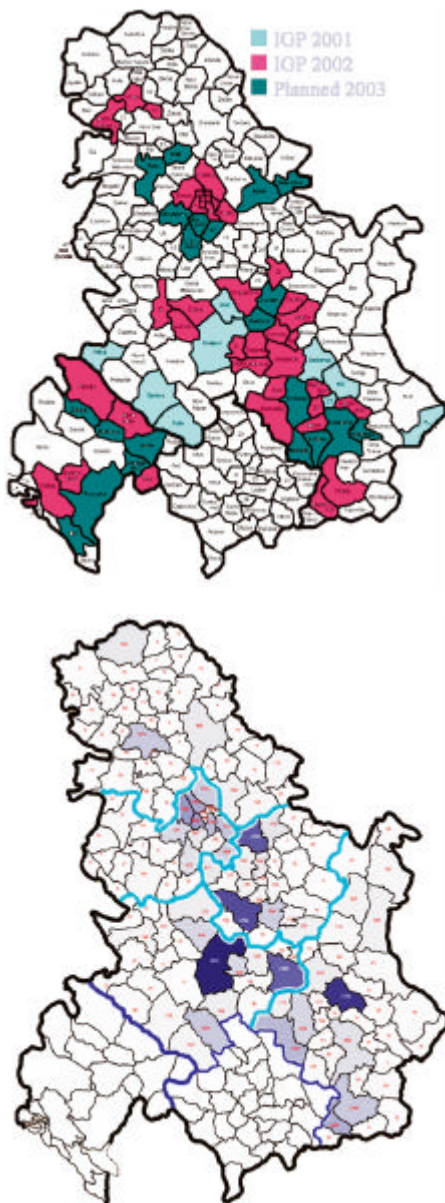
Last year, over 2,000 people took part in 70 community-based programmes, while this year 80 different activities are planned.

In view of the fact that the Kraljevo municipality has the highest number of IDPs compared to the number of its residents as well as of the general state of Serbia's health system, the ICRC launched a comprehensive programme of **assistance and reconstruction of the primary health care system** in August 2001. Consequently, 90 per cent of outpatient departments in the Kraljevo municipality have been renovated and equipped with computers since the beginning of this year, while the registration of patients is already underway.

The ICRC will continue to provide food parcels to IDPs until October 2003. After that, this form of assistance will end. In view of the fact that ICRC representatives are already in contact with relevant authorities and international factors, we hope that an adequate solution to the issue of permanent provision of assistance to IDPs will be found by that time.



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*IDPs from Serbia and Montenegro*

**Facts and figures**

As a part of an ongoing Needs Assessment Mission, an economic assessment of the IDP households showed the following:

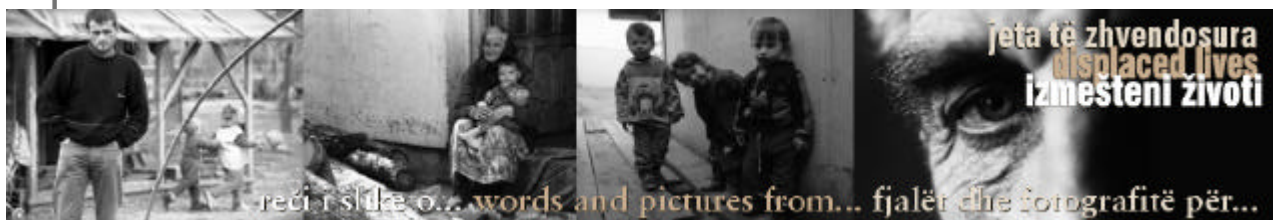
Only one third of the IDP households can rely on a pension and/or a salary

For half of the IDPs daily labour is the most important source of income

Two thirds of their income is spent on food and utilities

Only 10% of the IDP households live above the Serbian poverty line

In order to reach the poverty line, an average IDP household would need every month an extra 40 € per person



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