



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Duration:** July 2007 to June 2010

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNESCO; UNHCR

**Other Implementing Partners:** National and local government; NGOs

**Budget:** \$2,349,579.83

**Key Words:** Post-conflict reconciliation; de-mining; income generation; eco-tourism

## BACKGROUND

Despite major strides in peace consolidation since the end of civil war in the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to be affected by high levels of unemployment, poverty and persistent inter-ethnic tensions, all of which contributed to high levels of human insecurity among multi-ethnic communities in Southeastern Herzegovina. Subsequently, 20 per cent of the population was living under the poverty line and unemployment rates hovered at around 40 per cent, spiking to 90 per cent in some of the most impoverished post-conflict areas. Limited job opportunities forced many people to work illegally. Moreover, mines and cluster munitions restricted

people's movement and limited their access to housing and farmland. To alleviate current tensions and to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict, it had become important to re-establish inter-community relations through a comprehensive economic recovery programme that addressed issues of poverty, displacement and minority rights in an integrated manner. Furthermore, activities to address poverty and unemployment could also help promote post-conflict reconciliation among different ethnic groups. In post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, such efforts were crucial for sustainable development and the promotion of human security.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Working closely with local authorities in the Mostar-Blagaj region and the Stolac and greater Trebinje municipalities where ethnic Bosniacs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs lived, the project sought to promote community reconciliation in Southeastern Herzegovina through a multi-dimensional approach to poverty reduction. More specifically, the project aimed to achieve the following objectives: (i) to promote economic recovery and job creation by

removing mines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs) from areas with high potential for eco-tourism and agricultural activity; (ii) to improve local capacities for waste management and strengthen health and hygiene standards; (iii) to increase inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation through the promotion of eco-tourism; and (iv) to reinstate pride in the region's common heritage by restoring cultural and historical heritage sites.

### BENEFICIARIES

The direct beneficiaries of this project were residents of the municipalities of Stolac and Trebinje, and the city of Mostar. The project also sought to reach out to

vulnerable groups, namely the remaining refugees and IDPs.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) As a result of the interest and cooperation of a variety of actors, the project successfully cleared mines and UXOs from an area four times greater than originally planned. In addition, the project ensured the restoration of approximately 180,000 square metres of land deemed to be significant for tourism, income generation and community reconciliation.

(ii) Through a three-pronged approach, the project provided the appropriate equipment for waste collection; organized training on financial and strategic planning for personnel at utility companies; and implemented a comprehensive waste management campaign. As a result, local knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to waste disposal and management improved significantly and were complimented by improved waste collection and clearance by local authorities

(iii) Activities on the promotion of the tourism industry not only helped raise the incomes of the local communities, they also raised awareness among residents on the unique characteristics and the comparative advantages of the region vis-à-vis eco-tourism. This led to the establishment of the first tourism cooperative in the area. The project also made sure that at least 30 per cent of the accompanying eight income generation sub-projects were implemented by vulnerable groups.

(iv) In each community, monuments were restored, promoting the cultural heritage of the region and contributing to a growing interest in Southeastern Herzegovina as a possible eco-tourist destination.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the importance of promoting protection and empowerment strategies that build on existing local capacities and result in collaborative efforts that lead to mutually-shared benefits and greater cohesion within communities. Specifically, by recognizing the potential for eco-tourism in the target territories, the project identified eco-friendly activities that could further bolster the development of an eco-

tourist industry in the region and provided the necessary institutional support to prepare the territories for economic development in this area. Moreover, the project drew attention to the region's common cultural heritage and underscored the importance of shared histories to the promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue, collaboration and reconciliation in post-conflict multi-ethnic communities.