

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## Commitment to Long-term Housing Solutions for Returnees



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CASE STUDY 01

  
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Country:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Disaster:** Complex — IDPs (internally displaced persons), war, ethnic cleansing

**Disaster date:** Bosnian war, 1992-1995

**Project timescale:** 1993-present (in various forms)

**Houses damaged:** 40% of homes damaged countrywide

**Affected population:** In 1993, 2 million people displaced (over 50% of population); 100,000 people died

**Target population:** 3,200 households (over 10,000 people)

**Project Budget:** Over US\$ 50 million since 1996



# 40%

40% of homes  
damaged  
countrywide



## Long-Term Commitment to Rebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2007, CRS established a program to provide dignified, holistic housing solutions for families returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) after being displaced in the 1992-1995 war. Called the Durable Solutions for Collective Center Residents, or DSCCR, the program helped families to rebuild their lives one step at a time, recognizing not only the physical but psychological needs of returnees.

Piloted in 2007, DSCCR continues today. In 2013, the emphasis focused on intensifying housing policy in BiH, increasing usage of self-help methodology, establishing strong partnerships with local government and local NGOs, and providing support for these communities to become sustainable and responsive for the return of displaced families.



Many families lived in overcrowded communal accommodation prior to CRS' social housing project. Yania and her son each had a small room with a stove and mini-fridge. They used to share one bathroom with several other people. Yania moved into social housing project on Dec. 2001.

Photo credit: Laura Sheehan / CRS

## What did CRS do?

Emergency assistance for long-term rebuilding:

- 1993-1995: Provided emergency relief during the war with food, water, medicine and essential living and hygiene supplies.
- 1995: Assisted post-war reconstruction for returning families, with home repair and assistance to rebuild their livelihoods for economic recovery.
- 2001: Established the Durable Solutions for Collective Centre Residents (DSCCR).
- 2007: Established and built a number of nonprofit social housing projects in different locations to tackle the long-term needs of displaced persons and their communities as a whole.
- Supported approximately 10,000 people with repair to key infrastructure, such as electricity lines, water sources, roads, bridges and public buildings.
- 2010+: Supported advocacy work in Social Housing policy in BiH: CRS, together with the governments of two cantons, is working on the creation of local social housing policies and other legislation that protect the most vulnerable in society.
- Supported the return of 3,200 families to 84 municipalities across BiH. They received assistance to restore their livelihoods and financial stability, including in the form of business planning, skills training and other support.

Through the implementation of Social housing programs and DSCCR, a network of solid and respectable building companies has emerged that will be integral to the future development of BiH.

## Background

In 1992, Yugoslavia broke apart in a war that was characterized by intense inter-ethnic violence, atrocities and bloodshed. In Bosnia- Herzegovina, an estimated 250,000 people were killed, more than 200,000 wounded and 13,000 permanently disabled. By the time the war ended in 1995, more than half the population of 4.4 million had been displaced. Fifteen years after the war ended, for many of its Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim), Serb and Croat citizens, Bosnia remains a country divided. With high unemployment, divisive ethnic politics, ineffective government structures and more than 46,800 families still internally displaced from their pre-war homes and communities, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a nation still struggling to overcome the wounds of war.

War creates many lasting physical and psychological problems, and it takes many years to rebuild a country and the strength of its communities. Related factors such as poor health, lack of employment opportunities and a weak business climate have a strong impact on the ability of communities to rebuild. In places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there has been a large amount of displacement, it takes many years for returnees to re-establish a sense of home and community. Many families in unstable circumstances remained living in “collective centers” for up to one decade, far away from their homes. They could not return for reasons such as unresolved property issues, lack of infrastructure and the presence of landmines in their home town, problems that have kept these families in limbo for many years.

## Project Principles of DSCCR

CRS developed this project in response to the realization that many people were still living in sub-standard conditions in communal emergency shelters after the war. Along with government agencies and local NGOs, CRS works to help returning families reconstruct their homes and local infrastructure, as well as prepare for social and economic reintegration into society. DSCCR provides a framework for communities to rebuild their lives over the course of many years, addressing not only the physical needs (safe, suitable living conditions) but

the psychological needs of returning home after a war, and rebuilding livelihoods and relationships.

Nonprofit social housing program:

In 2007, CRS BiH established a long-term rebuilding program that provides more than “a roof over one’s head” for vulnerable families. CRS coordinates with ministries and institutions on the provision of services, and supports the government’s development of an inclusive BiH social housing strategy.

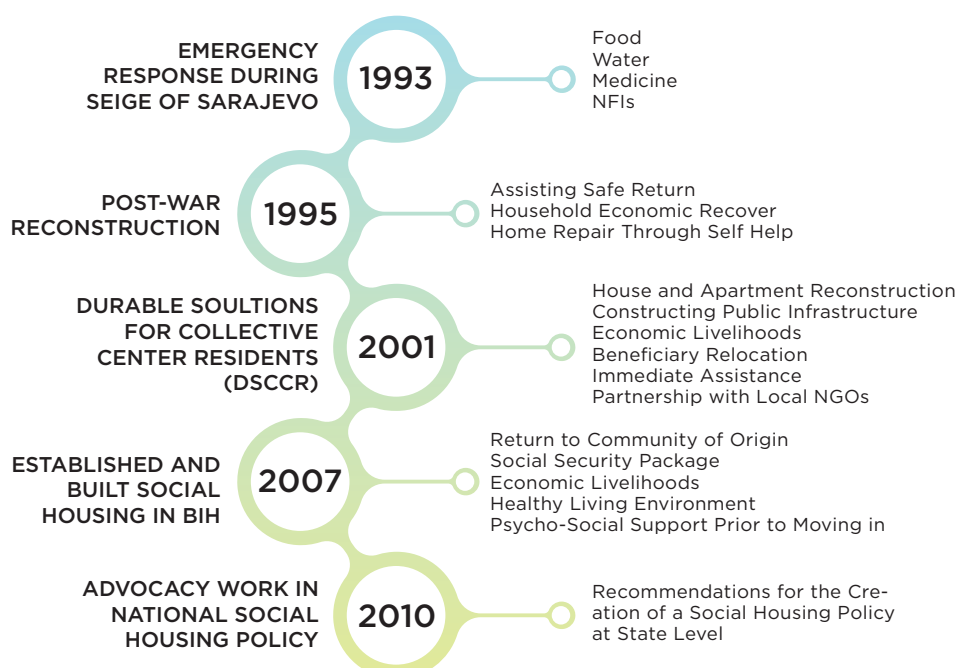
## A Complete Package - Shelter, Social and Economic Support

In each non-profit social housing project, returning families receive support in the form of a comfortable and safe apartment with long-term, affordable rent. Also provided are all necessary utilities such as power, heating and water. In addition, each apartment is designed to meet the needs of a specific community or vulnerable group, and features facilities to appropriately support them. This ranges from provision of small business units or allotment space to fully accessible apartments.

All residents are provided with a social security package composed of health and social protection and education for all children. Economic security is provided through income-generating opportunities and retraining programs. In total, this creates a healthy living environment and a good neighborhood, usually set within a pleasant natural environment.

## Effective Partening

CRS cooperated with a number of local NGOs organised in a social support network. Additionally the authorities of the state of BiH see CRS as an organization that shared its vision, strategy and goals, determined to achieve the dignified and sustainable return of former residents. In 2003, CRS became a partner with the BiH government: its government financial institutions financially invest in CRS projects up to 20% in value for each project.



Timeline of CRS's continuing commitment and changing programs in housing post-war BiH.

Credit: Livia Mikulec / CRS

## Six Social Housing Models

### DVAR - Divided Ownership



2009 - This urban model is owned by both the Canton and the Municipality providing accommodation for 40 families of returnees, IDPs, young families and skilled people. Rent rates will be reasonable. Infrastructure work has also been carried out.

### GORAZDE - Retrofitting



2011 - The reconstruction of 20 attic apartments in multiple buildings in Gorazde. CRS are making the buildings habitable and repairing infrastructure. Additionally, they are assisting with the reintegration of beneficiaries, and providing psychosocial assistance.

### POTOCARI - Urban Return



Two buildings containing 33 apartments and 7 business premises for self-employment of tenants. The tenants are displaced persons of Srebrenica and have skills necessary for the long-term development of the community.

### FOCA - Rural



2011 - Two buildings containing 4 apartments in a rural setting. Accommodation for physically disabled persons is available on the ground floor and 2 units are allocated for businesses/shops.

### FOJNICA - Return for Elders



2009 - A settlement specifically designed for the return and care of elderly persons who could not leave collective centres because of illness/age. Green areas are included within the site and medical and psychosocial support is on hand.

### JABLANCA - Displaced Persons



2010 - A centre to house the remaining residents of the Collective Centre of the municipality of Jablanca. These families did not have a property or the possibility of return to pre-war locations in the near future.

## Quality Assurance

1. Quality control related to the tender procedures for building contracts for the social housing schemes:

- CRS procurement policy.
- Transparent tender and awarding of construction services.
- Complete tender documentation including the tender analyses and final report about tender process.
- Building contract signed
- Monitoring and administration of the building contract.
- Report about technical acceptance of the works.
- Final certificate of the completion of the works and final payment.

2. Quality control related to the program participant selection process:

- CRS defined the book of the rules for program participant selection process.
- CRS provided decision criteria for program participant selection, as well as detailed reports, including the application process, site visit updates and interview information.
- All approved program participants signed Tripartite Agreement with CRS and municipality of return.
- Key handover to program participants/tenants.

## Program Participants

In DSCCR and social housing programs, the selection of program participants begins by a public invitation process, which is assisted by CRS field officers, municipality representatives and the NGO social support network. Potential program participants are assessed by the NGO network, whose members visit program participants to make sure they understand and fulfill the program criteria. A special effort is made to encourage families with young children to overcome their fears of returning.

## Challenges

- CRS remained committed to achieving a sustainable return process in a period when Social Support Network of local NGOs, International NGOs and local governments' representatives were convinced that the process was closed.
- We faced difficulties explaining to the government and potential project participants the following:
  1. The social housing stock should be run on a not-for-profit basis as rental stock for a vulnerable sector of a population, as the rents are used for future maintenance and management of the stock.
  2. Social housing does not mean only provision of a roof over ones' head. It includes the provision of a spectrum of supporting activities. For example, tenants are assisted with re-integrating into local communities.
- The operational environment in BiH is very complex—the government is operating through institutions at the state, entity, cantonal and municipal level. In order to implement programs, CRS must work with all of these levels.
- Another complexity was organizing different project activities and processes to be efficient, effective, transparent and implemented according to BiH policies, while also follow procurement procedures requested by donors.

**"I still remember the first day when I got the keys for my house. I shall never forget that."**

– Male program participant, Evaluation of the Project, 2006