



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**  
**AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA**



The Fund for Aid to Refugees,  
Expelled and Displaced Persons

# FUND







**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA - AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF VOJVODINA**

The Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons

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# FUND

## BASIC INFORMATION

The Republic of Serbia is a country with the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Europe. The number of refugees in the Republic of Serbia decreased by over 80% between 1996 and 2008. 538,000 refugees and 72,000 people affected by war were censused in 1996, there were 346,000 of them in 2001 and 104,246 at the census of refugees in 2004/2005.

The decrease in the number of refugees is mainly due to their integration in the Republic of Serbia. Over 200,000 people have become citizens of the Republic of Serbia. The programmes of refugee return, conducted with various success in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (31% refugees returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina and 18% refugees returned to the Republic of Croatia) lowered the number of refugees by 149,000. It is also estimated that another 49,000 refugees have found refuge in other countries.

According to the data from the census of refugees commissioned by the government of the Republic of Serbia in 2008, there were 47,382 refugees residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, i.e. 48.6% of the total number of refugees residing on the territory of the Republic of Serbia (97,354 people). 75% of all refugees come from the Republic of Croatia. According to the record of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, there are 13,331 people currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

In addition to the refugees registered in the census of 2004, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is also a home to a large number of people who fled during the wars on the territory of former SFRY, but who had gained Serbian citizenship before the census. According to the census of refugees in Serbia held in 1996, there were 229,811 people with this status on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina at that time. The fact that some of them have gained Serbian citizenship does not necessarily imply that their social and economic status has been significantly improved. They still face existential problems, typical of refugees, primarily concerning unsolved housing problems.

The Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons was established pursuant to the Decision on Establishing the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons ("Official Gazette" of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, number 19/2006), no. 025-7/2006, passed by the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina at the session held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

Pursuant to the Decision on Establishing the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons (hereinafter: the Decision), the Fund, guided by the principles of freedom and equal importance of return and local integration of refugees in the matters related to solving problems of persons with a legal status of refugees, expelled or displaced persons currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (hereinafter: the Beneficiaries), is determined to take the following actions:

1. Provide aid for accommodating the beneficiaries currently residing at collective centres or as tenants,
2. Provide aid for sustainable return of the beneficiaries to their original homes,
3. Pass motions to authorities in charge regarding permanent and sustainable integration and return of the beneficiaries,
4. Design and support realisation of programmes aimed at providing jobs for the beneficiaries,
5. Initiate and support activities and steps towards providing aid to particularly endangered beneficiaries (physically challenged persons, persons living in poverty, etc.),
6. Initiate and support activities aimed at informing the beneficiaries about return, integration and exercising their rights,
7. Initiate and support scientific, cultural and educational cooperation in places of origin of the beneficiaries.

The Fund also provides some form of aid to persons who enjoyed the status of refugees and expelled persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina prior to the date when the Decision on Establishing was passed, but who have returned to their countries of origin.

The Fund is a legal person, enjoying rights, obligations and responsibilities determined by the applicable law, the Decision and the Statute of the Fund. The headquarters of the Fund is in Novi Sad, Bulevar Mihajla Pupina 25.

The Fund's activities are financed using the funds from the budget of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

The Fund's operations and activities can be financed using the following:

- Funds allocated for this purpose in the budget of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina,
- Funds raised through donations and contributions from domestic and foreign natural and/or legal persons, and
- Other funds, in accordance with the applicable law.

The funds can be utilised solely in accordance with the applicable law, the Decision, the Statute, the Programme of Activities of the Fund and the Financial Plan of the Fund.

## **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PROVISION OF AID FOR ACCOMMODATING THE BENEFICIARIES CURRENTLY RESIDING AT COLLECTIVE CENTRES OR AS TENANTS**

Pursuant to the Decision on Establishment and other documents of the Fund, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons, dedicated to proving aid in matters related to permanent solution of problems of beneficiaries currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina who wish to remain in Vojvodina and integrate into local communities, has initiated some activities aimed at providing the basic conditions for beneficiaries' permanent integration.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007, the Fund invited tenders for purchase of village houses in certain communities within 18 municipalities on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina:

1. Zrenjanin (Banatski Despotovac, Botoš, Elemir, Klek, Knićanin, Lazarevo, Lukićevo, Melenci, Orlovat, Stajićevo, Taraš, Tomaševac, Farkaždin and Čenta),
2. Vršac (Zagajica, Pavliš, Parta, Potporanj and Uljma)
3. Kovin (Bavanište, Dubovac, Malo Bavanište and Pločica),
4. Odžaci (Bački Brestovac, Bački Gračac, Karavukovo, Ratkovo and Srpski Miletić),
5. Sombor (Kljajićevo, Rastina and Stapar),
6. Bačka Palanka (Vizić, Gajdobra, Mladenovo, Nova Gajdobra and Obrovac),
7. Novi Sad (Bukovac, Kać, Kovilj, Ledinci, Stepanovićevo and Futog),
8. Inđija (Jarkovci, Krčedin, Ljukovo, Novi Karlovci and Čortanovci),
9. Irig (Velika Remeta, Grgeteg, Jazak, Krušedolski Prnjavor, Krušedol Selo, Mala Remeta and Neradin),
10. Ruma (Buđanovci, Vitojevci, Grabovci, Dobrinci, Donji Petrovci, Žarkovac, Kraljevci, Pavlovci, Putinci and Stojanovci),
11. Sremska Mitrovica (Bešenovački Prnjavor, Bešenovo, Veliki Radinci, Grgurevci, Divoš, Zasavica, Jarak, Kuzmin, Lačarak, Ležimir, Mandelos, Martinci, Mačvanska Mitrovica, Noćaj, Ravnje, Radenković, Salaš Noćajski, Sremska Rača, Čalma, Šašinci, Šišatovac and Šuljam),
12. Stara Pazova (Belegiš, Vojka, Krnješevci, Nova Pazova, Stari Banovci and Surduk),
13. Šid (Adaševci, Višnjicevo, Ilinci, Kukujevci, Molovin and Privina Glava),
14. Temerin (Sirig),
15. Apatin (Prigrevica),
16. Bačka Topola (Bački Sokolac),
17. Srbobran (Turija),
18. Kula (Lipar).

The public call was aimed at persons who enjoyed the legal status of refugees, expelled and displaced persons, residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of

Vojvodina on the day when the Decision on Establishment of the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons became effective (21<sup>st</sup> December 2006), residing in collective centres or as tenants and who wished to remain and live in the local community they were residing in and deal with agriculture.

The maximum amount to be granted for purchase of village houses was EUR 6,000 (in dinars) per beneficiary, 50% of which should not be repaid, while the remaining 50% shall be paid back to the Fund not later than 10 years after the aid is granted. At the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Managing Board of the Fund, held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007, this body decided to continue processing all bids throughout 2008.

Based on the preliminary lists of applications from 2007 and the decisions made by the grant allocation committee which followed visits and inspections of the houses and families that applied for the grants, the grant allocation committee made final recommendations and the Managing Board decided, at the sessions held on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008, to allocate funds for purchase of 110 houses for the same number of refugee families in the following municipalities:

- ✓ 17 in the municipality of Sremska Mitrovica,
- ✓ 15 in the municipality of Bačka Palanka,
- ✓ 13 in the municipality of Odžaci,
- ✓ 11 in the municipality of Zrenjanin,
- ✓ 11 in the municipality of Apatin,
- ✓ 10 in the municipality of Šid,
- ✓ 9 in the municipality of Sombor,
- ✓ 8 in the municipality of Ruma
- ✓ 4 in the municipality of Kula,
- ✓ 3 in the municipality of Srbobran,
- ✓ 2 in the municipality of Irig,
- ✓ 2 in the municipality of Novi Sad,
- ✓ 1 in the municipality of Inđija,
- ✓ 1 in the municipality of Temerin,
- ✓ 1 in the municipality of Bačka Topola,
- ✓ 1 in the municipality of Kovin, and
- ✓ 1 in the municipality of Stara Pazova.

On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2008, in Elemir, the municipality of Zrenjanin, Bojan Pajtić, PhD, the Chairman of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, presented 30 refugee families, who had signed a contract with the Fund, with keys to their new homes, while on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009 in Gadobra, the municipality of Bačka Palanka, Mr Patić presented another 44 refugee families with keys to their new homes.

Marking 20<sup>th</sup> June – the World Refugee Day, the director of the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons, Mr Dejan Pavlović, signed a contract on cooperation with Mr Lenart Kocalainen, the head of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Serbia, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009. The ceremony was also attended by the Chairman of the Executive Council of Vojvodina, Bojan Pajtić, PhD.

The project worth RSD 20,000,000 became feasible due to the funds of the US government that were transferred to the Fund by UNHCR. The funds are to be used for purchase of 25 village houses worth up to RSD 600,000, respectively, while additional RSD 100,000 per house would be used for refurbishing, purchase of cattle or agricultural machinery for the families.

This was the first time that UNHCR made a direct donation to a provincial institution for such purposes, which was seen as both recognition and support to the provincial government in its endeavours and actions aimed at finding permanent solutions for the problems of refugees and displaced persons.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007, the Fund invited tenders for provision of construction material to assist the construction works on houses owned by the refugees, expelled and displaced persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The bids were accepted from 11 municipalities:

Indija, Kula, Novi Sad, Pećinci, Ruma, Srbobran, Sremska Mitrovica, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova, Temerin and Vršac.

The maximum amount granted per beneficiary was EUR 5,000 (in dinars), 50% of which should not be repaid, while the remaining 50% shall be paid back to the Fund not later than 8. Eligible applicants included those enjoy the status of refugees, expelled or displaced persons, residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina on the day when the decision to establish the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons became effective. At the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Managing Board, held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007, this body decided to continue processing the submitted applications throughout 2008.

Based on the preliminary lists of applications from 2007 and the decisions made by the grant allocation committee which followed visits and inspections of the houses and families that applied for the grants, the grant allocation committee made final recommendations and the Managing Board decided, at the sessions held on 24<sup>th</sup> June and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008, to allocate 97 packages of construction material for the purpose of construction works on houses owned by 97 refugee families in the following municipalities:

1. Novi Sad - 48
2. Stara Pazova - 11
3. Ruma - 10
4. Sremska Mitrovica - 7
5. Inđija - 5
6. Kula - 4
7. Temerin – 4
8. Pećinci – 3
9. Sremski Karlovci - 3
10. Vršac – 2

On 4<sup>th</sup> July 2007, the Fund invited tenders for improving the living conditions in houses owned by the refugees, expelled and displaced persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The bids were accepted from the following 22 municipalities:

Apatin, Bačka Topola, Beočin, Inđija, Irig, Kula, Novi Sad, Odžaci, Pećinci, Ruma, Šid, Sombor, Srbobran, Sremska Mitrovica, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova, Temerin, Titel, Žabalj, Vrbas, Vršac and Žitište.

The maximum individual non-refundable donation for the purpose of refurbishing was EUR 1,500 (in dinars), granted in construction material. This invitation was valid until the end of 2007 or until the funds had been used up. Eligible applicants were all those enjoying the status of refugees, expelled or displaced persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina on the day when the decision to establish the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons became effective. At the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Managing Board, held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007, this body decided to continue processing the submitted applications throughout 2008.

Based on the preliminary lists of applications from 2007 and the decisions made by the grant allocation committee which followed visits and inspections of the houses and families that applied for the grants, the grant allocation committee made final recommendations and the Managing Board decided, at the sessions held on 24<sup>th</sup> June and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008 to allocate packages of construction material for the purpose of refurbishing the houses owned by 148 refugee families in the following municipalities:

1. Apatin - 10
2. Bačka Topola - 4
3. Beočin - 2
4. Inđija - 5
5. Irig - 5

6. Kula - 8
7. Novi Sad - 29
8. Odžaci - 11
9. Ruma - 3
10. Šid - 7
11. Sombor - 21
12. Srbobran - 7
13. Sremska Mitrovica - 8
14. Sremski Karlovci - 1
15. Stara Pazova - 3
16. Temerin - 1
17. Titel - 3
18. Žabalj - 5
19. Vrbas - 5
20. Vršac – 8
21. Pećinci - 1

On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 in the Entrance Hall of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Bojan Pajtić, PhD, Chairman of the Executive Council, signed contracts on assistance by providing construction material for construction works of the houses owned by refugees, expelled and displaced persons (62 contracts) and for refurbishing of houses (83 contracts) with 145 families-beneficiaries.

### **FUND'S SUPPORT TO SUSTAINABLE RETURN OF BENEFICIARIES TO THEIR PLACES OF ORIGIN**

Providing assistance to sustainable return of the beneficiaries who have decided to return to their places of origin in the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija is one of two most important activities of the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons, conducted in order to provide permanent solution to the problems which the beneficiaries face.

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008, the Fund invited tenders for provision of packages for returnees to the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija, currently residing on the territory of the AP Vojvodina, containing the most needed agricultural tools and household items. The call was valid throughout 2008 and the eligible applicants were all those who enjoyed the status of refugees, expelled or displaced persons and resided on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina at collective centres or renting homes on the day when the decision regarding the establishing of the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons became effective and who had decided to return to their previous place of residence.

Prospective beneficiaries opted for one of the following three packages:

Package I

1. Washing machine
2. Electric or wood stove
3. Fridge with a freezer

Package II

1. Cultivator

Package III

1. Chainsaw
2. Water-pump
3. Corn grinder
4. Tools – drill, jigsaw and grinder

Since the call was published, 272 families of refugees, expelled and displaced persons who expressed their wish to return to the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija applied before the end of 2008 for one of the three types of packages, worth EUR 1,500 (in dinars).

The selection committee made final recommendations and the decision was made by the Managing Board at its sessions on 24<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2008 to grant 69 packages for a total of 208 returnees to the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija. The families opted for the packages as follows:

Package I: 24 beneficiaries

Package II: 30 beneficiaries

Package III: 15 beneficiaries

57 families-beneficiaries returned to the Republic of Croatia, 10 to Bosnia and Herzegovina and 2 to Kosovo and Metohija.

Based on the equal importance of integration and return to original places of residence, in 2007 the Fund announced Public Invitations for Provision of Aid through Purchase of Agricultural Mechanisation for cooperatives whose founders, or at least more than a half of them, are expelled persons or refugees who have returned to the Republic of Croatia from the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The notion of agricultural mechanisation in this particular context encompasses tractors, accessories, cultivators and other agricultural machines, except combines. The maximum amount of the non-refundable grant per one beneficiary RSD 1,000,000.00. The transport expenses and other expenses related to the delivery of the agricultural mechanisation were paid by the Fund.

Eligible cooperatives also included those who would, if granted the aid, create conditions for the return of refugees and expelled persons from the Republic of Croatia, currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which would mean that the end-users could be the returnees from the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, as well as those non-governmental organisations and associations dealing with providing assistance to the returnees in the Republic of Croatia, where such organisations had been registered for at least five years, participated in realisation of at least one project owned by the EU, international organisations or the government of the Republic of Croatia, provided that the end-users of the granted agricultural mechanisation were the cooperatives of returnees. Eligible candidates were cooperatives and organisations with headquarters in the Republic of Croatia. 21 cooperatives from the Republic of Croatia applied.

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> session, held on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2007, the Managing Board decided to continue processing the applications throughout 2008.

The selection committee and the representatives of the Fund visited the applicants and made the final recommendations, while the Managing Board made the final decisions at its sessions held on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 24<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008, respectively, thus granting assistance to the following 17 agricultural cooperatives of returnees to the Republic of Croatia:

1. Agricultural cooperative "Golubić", Golubić, Knin
2. Agricultural cooperative "Vrbnik", Vrbnik, Biskupija
3. Agricultural cooperative "Kum", Žagrović, Knin
4. Agricultural cooperative "Marinković", Plavno, Donji Lapac
5. Agricultural cooperative "Lika", Donji Lapac
6. Agricultural cooperative "Bjele Vode", Glina
7. Agricultural cooperative "Agro – Una", Dvor
8. Agricultural cooperative "Žegar", Obrovac
9. Agricultural cooperative "Ovčara i Kozara", Velebit, Obrovac
10. Agricultural cooperative "Markovac", Markovac, Knin
11. Agricultural cooperative "Klas", Golubić, Obrovac
12. Agricultural cooperative "Smilčić-Vigurica", Benkovac
13. Agricultural cooperative "Karin donji", Karin
14. Agricultural cooperative "Petrinjka-2006", Petrinja
15. Agricultural cooperative "Ekorazvoj", Petrinja
16. Agricultural cooperative "Majur", Majur
17. Agricultural cooperative "Eko-med", Hrvatska Kostajnica

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008, the Chairman of the Executive Council of AP Vojvodina, Bojan Pajtić, PhD, presented the representatives of nine agricultural cooperatives from six municipalities in Croatia (Donji Lapac, Glina, Knin, Obrovac, Dvor and Biskupija) with the resolutions on granting agricultural mechanisation.

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons announced Public Invitations for Provision of Aid through Purchase of Agricultural Mechanisation for cooperatives whose founders, or at least more than a half of them, were the expelled persons or refugees who had returned to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Republic of Serbia or the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The notion of agricultural mechanisation in this particular context encompassed tractors, accessories, cultivators and other agricultural machines, except combines. The maximum amount of the non-refundable grant per one beneficiary was RSD 1,000,000.00. The transport expenses and other expenses related to the delivery of the agricultural mechanisation were paid by the Fund.

Eligible cooperatives also included those who would, if granted the aid, create conditions for the return of refugees and expelled persons from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which would mean that the end-users could be the returnees from the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, as well as those non-governmental organisations and associations dealing with providing assistance to the returnees in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where such organisations had been registered for at least five years, participated in realisation of at least one project owned by the EU, international organisations or the government of the Republic of Croatia, provided that the end-users of the granted agricultural mechanisation were cooperatives of returnees. Eligible candidates included cooperatives and organisations with headquarters in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008 the representatives of the Fund visited the southwest municipalities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where most of the returnees from Vojvodina are currently residing. The delegation visited 6 agricultural cooperatives (Bosanski Petrovac, Drvar, Kupres, Glamoč) who had applied for the aid. The representatives of the Fund talked to the officials from the municipalities of Bosanski Petrovac, Drvar and Glamoč and the representatives of "Izbeglički servis za povratak" (*Return of the Refugees Council*). The officials emphasised it was the first official visit from the Republic of Serbia, i.e. the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. On 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November, a delegation of the Fund for the Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons and representatives of the "Izbeglički servis za povratak" from Drvar visited the agricultural cooperatives "Agrofour" from Bosanska Krupa, "Vrtoče" from Bosanski Petrovac and the association of fruit-growers "Drina" from Goražde.

After these visits, the selection committee made final recommendations regarding the allocation of the aid, while the decision was made by the Managing Board of the Fund at its sessions held on 24<sup>th</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008. The aid was granted to 8 agricultural and general cooperatives and associations of returnees to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The list of beneficiaries included the following:

1. Association of farmers "Otik", Kovačevci, Glamoč
2. Association of farmers "Medena Selišta", Glavice, Glamoč
3. Agricultural cooperative "Drvar", Drvar
4. Cooperative "Bravsko", Bravsko, Bosanski Petrovac
5. Association of fruit-growers "Drina", Goražde
6. Agricultural cooperative "Pro Korde", Drvar
7. Cooperative "Vrtoče", Vrtoče, Bosanski Petrovac
8. Agricultural cooperative "Agrofour", Bosanska Krupa

On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons invited the returnees' cooperatives in the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohijapa to apply for donations of agricultural mechanisation and equipment. Eligible candidates were cooperatives from the Republic of Croatia, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija with at least 50% of refugees, expelled and displaced persons as founders, i.e. those who had returned from the Republic of Serbia or the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Other eligible candidates included cooperatives which did not meet the aforementioned criteria, but which would use the donation to create conditions for the return of refugees and expelled persons, as well as non-governmental organisations and associations dealing with the provision of aid to returnees, which had been registered for at least 5 (five) years and participated in at least one project under the auspices of the EU, international organisations or the governments of the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all other cooperatives and organisations with headquarters in the Republic of Croatia, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija.

## **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BENEFICIARIES**

On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, the Fund, in cooperation with the Provincial Secretariat of Labour, Employment and Gender Equality and the National Employment Service, invited refugees, expelled and displaced persons to apply for subsidies for self-employment. The subsidies for self-employment were aimed at the refugees, expelled and displaced persons registered by the National Employment Service who can work individually or in a form of partnership to establish companies, workshops, agencies or other types of businesses.

The subsidies for self-employment were to be used to provide equipment for work and create suitable conditions, as follows: purchase of raw material, reproduction material, machines, equipment and spare parts necessary for the implementation of the programme and/or adapting the business premises. The subsidies totalled RSD 130,000.00 per an unemployed person. 13 unemployed refugees, expelled and displaced persons applied for the subsidies.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009, the Provincial Secretariat of Labour, Employment and Gender Equality announced the following competitions: for financing the employment

of trainees over a limited period of time, for subsidising the employment of the unemployed persons residing on the territory of the AP Vojvodina, for subsidising the establishment of agricultural farms by the unemployed persons residing on the territory of the AP Vojvodina, as well the call for proposals related to public work projects. The competitions remain open until the funds have been used up or by the end of 2009, and they all treat refugees, expelled and displaced persons as particularly endangered groups eligible for additional subsidies when being employed.

### **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CREATING AND SUPPORTING INITIATIVES, ACTIVITIES AND MEASURES DEALING WITH PROVIDING AID TO PARTICULARLY ENDANGERED GROUPS OF BENEFICIARIES (DISABLED PERSONS, SOCIALLY ENDANGERED PERSONS, ETC.)**

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a public call was announced for registering secondary school students on the territory of AP Vojvodina, who came from refugee and displaced families and who were interested in a non-refundable financial aid. The call was aimed at those who enjoyed the status of refugees, expelled or displaced persons on the day when the decision to establish the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons became effective (21<sup>st</sup> December 2006), and who had a child attending a secondary school on the territory of AP Vojvodina. The aid can be granted only to one child in the family and the basic criteria were the social-economic status and the results at school.

The selection committee made the final recommendations and the Managing Board, at its session on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008, made a decision to provide financial aid of RSD 40,000.00 to 100 secondary school students, respectively, from the most endangered families of refugees, expelled and displaced persons residing in Vojvodina.

### **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PROPOSAL OF MEASURES TO ASSIST PERMANENT AND SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION AND RETURN OF BENEFICIARIES**

In line with the decision to establish the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons, this institution has contacted the Refugee Commissioner of the Republic of Serbia with questions and suggestions regarding the existing, yet still vacant, apartments in order to assist solving the housing problem of the refugees, expelled and displaced persons on the territory of AP Vojvodina.

The Fund suggested various activities to the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia and assisted in the implementation of the project of providing homes to refugees, expelled and displaced persons on the territory of Vojvodina, which is being implemented in Serbia by the Commissariat, using the funds of the Development Bank of the Council of Europe.

The Fund is also active in the process of solving the problems regarding the rights of occupancy of the refugees in the Republic of Croatia, through its contacts with the UNHCR offices in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia.

On 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008, the Provincial Council for Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons, in cooperation with the Fund and the Association of Pensioners from Croatia, organised a round-table discussion at the Executive Council of AP Vojvodina on the problems and the position of pensioners from the Republic of Croatia. The participants talked about the payment of late and unpaid pensions, verification of the length of service and exercising the rights of the pensioners from the Republic of Croatia. The participants agreed that the Republic of Croatia disputed the payments of pensions to the pensioners who have been living in Serbia as refugees since 1991. Since pensions are treated as personal property, their payment should not be disputable, so the participants agreed to appeal to the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute (HZMIO) and ask them not to alter the evidence of income and the length of service. It was also concluded that there was no political will in Croatia and Serbia to solve the disputable matters and that the problems related to pensions and the verification of the length of service and the rights of occupancy were not encompassed by the coalition agreement between SDSS and the government of the Republic of Croatia. The participants agreed that the Association of Pensioners from Croatia should ask the Republic of Croatia to execute payment of all unpaid pensions to those who have been deprived of their rights since 1991.

On 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008, a delegation of the Fund attended a meeting at the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Croatia, where they presented the activities of the Fund and the Executive Council of Vojvodina related to finding a permanent solution to the problems of refugees, expelled and displaced persons. The delegation was informed about the ministry's plans regarding the reconstruction works and the housing problems of returnees to the areas of the country's special interest.

### **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT TO THE ACTIVITIES AIMED AT INFORMING THE BENEFICIARIES ABOUT THE MATTERS RELATED TO THEIR RETURN, INTEGRATION AND EXERCISING THEIR STATUS RIGHTS**

Pursuant to the Programme of Activities of the Fund and the Decision to establish the Fund, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons publishes calls and invites tenders in public media ("Dnevnik" and "Građanski list"), while its activities related to the matters of return, integration and exercising the status rights of its beneficiaries are covered in special editions of electronic and print media (TV talk-shows on RTS 2, RTV 1 and RTV2, Panonija, etc., press releases for daily and weekly newspapers and radio stations).

In order to provide information to the refugees, expelled and displaced persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the Fund has designed a

News Bulletin, covering the general information about the Fund's activities, a brochure which lists all programmes dealing with permanent integration, and a brochure which provides information about the Fund's activities related to sustainable return. The official web-site of the Fund, [www.fondajnfors.rs](http://www.fondajnfors.rs), is regularly updated.

In the second half of 2008, the Fund was having extensive negotiations with the UNHCR office in Serbia regarding a possibility to produce a TV show for refugees, expelled and displaced persons, financed by UNHCR. Following the success of the negotiations, a 30-minute TV show started being produced, with an aim to provide appropriate and prompt information to the refugees and expelled persons residing on the territory of AP Vojvodina and Serbia, related to the opportunities for their local integration or sustainable return to the original places of their residence. The first show was broadcast on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and subsequent shows have been broadcast on Fridays at 19.00 on RTV 1.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons of AP Vojvodina published a call for free bus transport of the refugees and expelled persons from the Republic of Croatia, currently residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The project "Go and See" provides the refugees and expelled persons from the Republic of Croatia who cannot afford to pay to travel to their original places of residence with an opportunity to obtain personal documentation, submit requests for reconstruction or exercise other rights.

In 2008, there were free bus tours organised once a month, following the route: Ruma – Nova Pazova – Indija - Novi Sad – Bačka Palanka - Ilok - Vukovar - Vinkovci - Županja - Popovača - Sisak - Petrinja - Glina - Vojnić - Slunj - Korenica - Udbina - Gračac - Knin – Obrova and back to Ruma. There were 12 tours organised.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a public call was published for provision of assistance to refugees, expelled and displaced persons in matters related to providing access to information regarding their rights and opportunities for integration in the local communities and places of their original residence. Eligible candidates were citizens' organisations with headquarters on the territory of AP Vojvodina whose members are refugees, expelled and displaced persons and the non-governmental organisations dealing with the protection of the rights of the refugees, expelled and displaced persons currently residing on the territory of AP Vojvodina or those organisations conducting their activities on the territory of AP Vojvodina. The maximum amount granted did not exceed RSD 200,000.00 per organisation. The selection committee made final recommendations, while the Managing Board at the session held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008 made a decision to grant aid to the following 14 organisations:

1. Alliance of the Associations of IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija "Opstanak", Novi Sad

2. "Udruženje penzionera iz Hrvatske", Belgrade
3. "Humanitarni centar za integraciju i toleranciju", Novi Sad
4. Association "Alka", Belgrade
5. "Regionalni odbor za izbeglice Vojvodine", Novi Sad
6. "Novosadski humanitarni centar", Novi Sad
7. "Srpski demokratski forum", Belgrade
8. "Udruženje prekodrinskih Srba", Indija
9. Centre for Information Support "Naš odgovor", Belgrade
10. "Edukativni centar Roma", Subotica
11. "Komitet za pomoć i zaštitu", Belgrade
12. Association of Refugees and Expelled Persons "Božur", Vršac
13. Association of Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina "Istina", Šid
14. "Koalicija udruženja izbeglica u Srbiji", Belgrade

### **ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SUGGESTING AND SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC, CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ZONES OF REFUGEE RETURN**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2008, the Institute of Fruit and Grape Growing, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture of the University of Novi Sad, in cooperation with the Fund, donated 8,328 seedlings (pears, apples, peaches, hazel, walnut and quince) to the returnees in Ličko-senjska and Karlovačka counties and to the returnees in Hrvatska Kostajnica and Daruvar.

The aim of the donation was to conduct a micro-experiment and educate the producers to grow certain types of fruit in the zones of refugee return. Since fruit-growing is one of the most lucrative branches of agriculture, this donation could make a significant impact on the development of the developing municipalities in that area.

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 2008, the Commodity Reserve Bureau and the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons donated a truckload of aid to the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Diocese of Dalmatia and the Krka monastery in Šibenik. The aid, worth RSD 630,000.00, contained food and toiletries (flour, beans, spam, liver pate, canned tuna, washing powder and dish soap). The donation was given to the Holy Three Hierarchs Seminary of the Krka monastery, founded in 1615. The Seminary has been almost constantly in operation for almost 400 years and there are currently around 50 students who are also living in the boarding school.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, following a request from various cooperatives from the Republic of Croatia, the Fund and the Field and Vegetable Crops Institute donated 8,350 kg of corn seeds. This donation helped the returnees in Lika, Dalmacija, Banija and West Slavonia plant over 500 ha of until then uncultivated land. The corn seeds were distributed through agricultural cooperatives in Pakrac, Petrinja, Hrvatska Kostajnic, Dvor, Glina, Vojnić, Krstinja, Krnjak, Srb, Knin, Golubić and Žegar.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008, the Managing Board of the Fund decided to finance a project of education of cooperative members in the Republic of Croatia called "Enhancing Cooperative Production Using New Technologies". The education was conducted by a team of experts from the Field and Vegetable Crops Institute from Novi Sad, in cooperation with the Serbian Democratic Forum, and it related to the donation of 8,350 kg of corn seeds to the returnees' agricultural cooperatives in the Republic of Croatia.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a donation was presented to Petar Samardžija, president of the subcommittee of the Serbian Cultural Society "Prosvjeta" from Hrvatska Kostajnica, consisting of 20 traditional costumes from the region of Banija, worth RSD 270,000.00. Petar Samardžija thanked the Executive Council of AP Vojvodina and the Fund and emphasised that "Prosvjeta" had existed for 60 years and managed to survive even in the most difficult circumstances. He also pointed out that a varied cultural and entertainment programme was being prepared in the municipality of Hrvatska Kostajnica and that the costumes would be worn by the members of the Serbian Cultural Society "Prosvjeta" for Easter.

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008, a donation of national costumes was made to a primary school in Drvar. It comprised ten sets of men and women costumes, respectively, from the region of Podgrmeč. The donation was worth RSD 375,000.00. The same school also got a computer worth RSD 43,448.00 and 200 school readings in 2008.

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the Managing Board of the Fund decided to grant 50 sets of three-volume edition "Biographies – Serbs West of the Drina River", worth RSD 450,000.00, to various dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008, the Managing Board of the Fund decided to grant aid to the local community in Bravsko in the municipality of Bosanski Petrovac, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising a video-projector, a TV and a DVD player, worth RSD 100,000.00.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008, the Managing Board of the Fund decided to support the "Resursni centar Drvar" from Drvar, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with equipment for establishing a TV correspondence network, which would cover the events in the life of returnees to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The equipment was worth EUR 3,855.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008, the Managing Board of the Fund decided to sponsor the purchase of equipment for a library in the town of Vukovar, for 4,000 students who attend the classes in the Serbian language and use the Cyrillic alphabet in the region of Slavonia, Baranja and west Srem. The aid granted through the "Joint Council of Municipalities – Vukovar" was worth RSD 500,000.00.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009, in front of the Faculty of Agriculture in Novi Sad, the Chairman of the Executive Council of Vojvodina, Bojan Pajtić, PhD, saw off the aid aimed at the returnees to the Republic of Croatia and their agricultural cooperatives in seventeen municipalities. Families of returnees in Lika, Dalmatia, west Slavonia, Banija and Kordun received corn seeds and grapevine seedlings worth over 4.3. million dinars, donated through the provincial Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons by the Executive Council of Vojvodina, the Field and Vegetable Crops Institute from Novi Sad and the department of Fruit- and Wine-growing, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi Sad.

Apart from the corn seed and grapevine seedlings, the cooperatives will be provided with expert advice and education in the field of modern technologies in fruit growing. The year 2009 is the second year of the project of education related to technologies used in fruit and wine growing, conducted under the auspices of the project "Education of Producers and Micro-experiment in Growing Various Types of Fruit in Ličko-senjska and Karlovačka Counties in the Republic of Croatia". The professional assistance also encompasses the growing of several types of grapevine produced at the department of Fruit- and Wine-growing, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture.

## **SUMMARY**

The Fund has conducted all its activities bearing in mind the reasons for its establishment: the existing number of refugees, expelled and displaced persons on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the complexity and specific nature of their problems, the length of their refugee status and the need to act in order to provide permanent solutions to the problems of refugees, expelled and displaced persons residing on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

In 2008 the Fund announced 6 public calls, accepted 1,933 and processed 2,513 applications (including those submitted in 2007). The selection committees held 107 sessions, while the Managing Board met 22 times. In the same period, the Fund managed to provide homes to 355 families of refugees with 2,014 members, provided 69 packages to 208 returnees and organised transport of 469 beneficiaries to the Republic of Croatia. Non-refundable financial aid was donated to secondary school students from 100 most endangered families of refugees, expelled and displaced persons with 423 members. 25 cooperatives and associations from the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina received donations in agricultural mechanisation. Including the aid the Fund allocated through its partners and various associations of citizens the total number of beneficiaries who received aid in 2008 is over 4,000.

Depending on the funds available, the Fund for Aid to Refugees, Expelled and Displaced Persons of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is determined to proceed with assisting the refugees, expelled and displaced persons who have decided to remain in Vojvodina, as well as those who have returned to the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija, in their endeavours to solve their problems.



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

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