

## **Assistance to Refugees leaving Collective Centres – Grant Projects**

### ***Ex post evaluation Abstract***

In 2003, the CEB and a UN Agency agreed that the former would provide 3 m€ to implement grant projects of the latter over the subsequent five years in order to improve the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the CEB's Member States. According to this agreement, individual projects would be approved separately by the Administrative Council (AC) of the CEB. The present report covers the evaluation of two grant projects that ensued, within this framework agreement, in 2004 and 2005, and that were implemented through said UN Agency in the Balkan sub-region, for 704 000 US\$ and 500 000 US\$, respectively.

The grant projects were implemented according to selection criteria, for the potential final beneficiaries, that had been established, prior to disbursement of the first grant, by the institutions locally involved in the support initiative by the UN Agency, involving experts from the latter's country office, an international NGO and the National Refugee Agency (NRA). Both grants expected funding from the CEB (and complementary resources) for two main types of support for refugees as final beneficiaries:

“Partial Self Help (PSH)” was intended to allow ca. 100 (year 2004) and 80 (year 2005) final beneficiaries to complete the construction of houses they had started to build with own funds and in line with local regulations (including ownership documentation and construction permits), provided they renounced their refugee status and opted for local citizenship. The NGO identified eligible beneficiaries, assessed the need for construction materials (within eligibility limits), and accompanied the construction progress on-site to avoid misuse of materials. No cash was transferred to final beneficiaries. The support was to result in durable solutions mostly for Collective Centre (CC) residents.

“Pilot in-kind assistance project (PIKAP)” offered support to beneficiaries who were not eligible for the previous component, but who required support in order to allow them to leave the collective centres and establish themselves in private accommodation. The support was to consist primarily of household equipment and furniture, but also allowed for cash support, since beneficiaries had to be able to make initial rent payments in order to move from CCs into rented private accommodation. The total support per individual beneficiary was limited, while the CEB contribution was to be used only for in-kind assistance. It was expected that 400-500 beneficiaries would be reached in 2004 and ca. 250 in 2005. The PIKAP component was not necessarily expected to provide a lasting solution, but was expected to contribute to the stated objective of achieving closure of CCs and initiating self-reliant development of refugees.

Both projects successfully supported vulnerable beneficiaries, who overwhelmingly moved into the new accommodation at the end of each project year, thanks to the on-going support process by the local implementing partner. The number of beneficiaries exceeded expectations in both years, owing to additional contributions from non-CEB funds, especially in 2004. The final beneficiaries were all selected based on the preparatory support of the NGO (i.e. establishing eligibility and the willingness of beneficiaries to accept the conditions of receipt of funds) and final decisions were made by a commission comprising the UN Agency, the NRA and the NGO. The projects are both evaluated as successful and received a positive rating.

It should be noted, however, that in the course of the projects' implementation, the eligibility criteria were broadened to include IDPs who were not initially residing in the CCs in 2005; such changes became possible on account of the local authorities' acceptance to extend support to IDPs beyond CC residents. The abovementioned positive rating rests on the premise that even though no formal modification requests were addressed to the CEB, the end result nonetheless remains consistent with the CEB's overall objectives and stated priorities for strengthening social integration through aid to refugees and displaced persons. A major weakness of both grant projects concerns the financial and technical reporting to the CEB and the related communication shortcomings between the latter and the UN Agency.

The recommendations resulting from the evaluation are the following:

- The CEB should establish only such reporting intervals and requirements which it is comfortable to monitor and follow up on. This should include agreement on reasonable periods for CEB feedback on reports received. The CEB should be able to approve final completion reports on time.
- Grant project agreements could allow for the funding of all locally planned and implemented support activities by UN partner agencies for the final beneficiaries (in the present case, cash support – the CEB may have to approve exceptions for such cases). This would provide sufficient flexibility to implementing partners and remove the constraints and difficulties of matching, on a one-to-one basis, activities covered and specific funding sources.
- The CEB should aim for a clearer agreement on visibility expectations by defining, within the Contribution Agreement or, at the latest, at the launch of activities, a realistic means of achieving and reporting on them. Local implementation partners should be consulted.