

**SIRP – Settlement and Integration of Refugees Programme in  
Serbia**

**TRI-PARTITE EVALUATION MISSION**

**Evaluation Report**

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FINAL REPORT

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### SIRP – Settlement and Integration of Refugees Programme in Serbia

#### TRI-PARTITE EVALUATION MISSION<sup>1</sup>

##### Justification

###### *Programme objectives*

The Settlement and Integration of Refugees Programme in Serbia has two overall objectives:

- to develop sustainable settlement and integration solutions for low-income refugees and other vulnerable households
- to build capacities at Municipal and central levels for replication and up-scaling in the framework of enhanced development planning process, decentralised capacities and partnerships in selected Municipalities/Cities.

SIRP was launched on the 9th of March 2005 and is being implemented over a period of three years in seven Municipalities/Cities: Municipality of Cacak, City of Kragujevac, Municipality of Kraljevo, City of Niš Municipality of Pancevo, Municipality of Stara Pazova and Municipality of Valjevo.

The Programme has three components to be implemented in an integrated framework:

- a. Housing - settlement of refugees and other vulnerable groups and support to policy and institutional development;
- b. Municipal strengthening - capacity development of local self governments with tools for local development planning and development of municipal information systems;
- c. Socio-economic and civic integration - social and economic integration of refugees with support for facilitating integration of vulnerable population in local labour markets, improving civic behaviour and developing appropriate social schemes.

By March 2008 SIRP is expected to achieve the following 4 results:

1. Delivery of 670 housing solutions to low-income refugees and other vulnerable household- equally divided between the 7 Municipalities (ER 1)
2. Formulation of National and Municipal/City Housing Strategies with development of appropriate tools and capacities for implementation (ER 2)
3. Support to 6 Municipalities to develop information tools and implementation bodies to produce integrated strategic plans for the development of their territories and to implement sector strategies and action plans (ER 3)
4. Implementation of Pilot Initiatives for social, economic and civic integration of refugees and vulnerable households through a decentralised management system (ER 4).

###### *Evaluation purpose*

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation team wishes to acknowledge the full support received by SIRP staff members throughout the evaluation mission.

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As for the mission Terms of Reference, the purpose of the Programme evaluation is to assess the extent to which the Programme's Expected Results are being achieved, covering the implementation period March 2005 - July 2007. In fact, the mission extended the evaluation period to December 2007.

The objectives of the evaluation, as defined by the Terms of Reference are<sup>2</sup>:

- a) to assess the Programme's outputs and degree to which progress has been made towards the achievement of the Expected Results;
- b) to examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, stakeholders ownership, internalization and sustainability as well as the impact of the Programme's methods and strategy and to identify challenges as well as opportunities;
- c) to propose priorities for further deepening the final impact of the Project and for widening the range of capacity building approaches and packages developed by the Programme;
- d) to identify the lessons learned and to propose some recommendations for a possible second phase of SIRP.

Finally, the findings and recommendations resulting from the evaluation are expected to be used in future activities the Government of Serbia, the Government of Italy, UN-HABITAT and other SIRP stakeholders may implement.

### *Evaluation methodology*

The evaluation mission took place from November 2007 to January 2008, with two field missions (November 19-23, January 13–17). For this reason, on one side the period of the evaluation has been extended to cover the activities carried out by the Programme up to the end of 2007, on the other the evaluation can only partially contribute to deepen the final impact and to widen the range of activities developed by the Programme, due to be completed by the end of March 2008.

The evaluation was based on the examination of documents produced prior to and during the Programme implementation and provided by UN-Habitat SIRP Office. The analysis was carried out by the evaluation team during the two missions to Belgrade and through desk work. The list of documents examined is provided in Annex 1.

Interviews were realized with relevant partner representatives in all selected Municipalities.

All new housing projects were visited by the evaluation team. In Valjevo the settlement of alternative housing solutions was also visited.

An Inception Report was prepared by each member of the Evaluation Team prior to the first field mission. During the second field mission to Belgrade a Draft Evaluation Report was discussed with each of the three parties involved in the Programme: Mr. Miodrag Ralević, Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Infrastructure, representative of the Government of Serbia, Arch. Anna Zambrano, Head of the Local Technical Unit in Belgrade, representative of the Government of Italy, Ms. Ligia Ramirez, Head of UN-Habitat Office in Belgrade and Mr. Jean-Yves Barcelo, UN-Habitat Inter-regional Advisor.

The Evaluation Team needs to highlight that the ToRs for the mission were accompanied by the *Project Implementation Document* of 9 March 2005 containing several noteworthy differences with respect to the Project Document dated 7 May

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2 for Terms of Reference containing Errata Corrige of 21 November 2008.

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2004 that represents the Programme's official document<sup>3</sup>. Discussions held with members of the project management have confirmed that there has been some confusion as to the legally binding document guiding the implementation of the SIRP Programme, referred to as Project in various documents. This has had an immediate impact on its Objectives, Outputs/Results and Activities to be pursued and consequently on Work Plans as well as Monitoring and Evaluation exercises.

This is particularly notable in the formulation of the Expected Results which, depending on the document considered, may differ considerably. However, since the *Project Implementation Document* appears to have been used as the reference document for the Programme, the evaluation will refer primarily to it while stating deviations from the *Project Document*, where applicable.

The reasons for such differences and modifications in the various Programme documents are not always appropriately clarified, nor their impacts on the Programme execution. In fact, following an observation raised by the evaluators during the first mission in Belgrade, the Terms of Reference were amended in order to take into account the wording of the Project Document.

The Evaluation Team feels the need to highlight how the Programme effectiveness would have benefited from a precise identification of the legally binding documents and reference to them throughout its implementation. Similarly, any addition and modification should have been justified and maintained throughout the execution of the Programme. This not being the case, the changes introduced in the course of the Programme may impact negatively on the evaluation effectiveness.

The Report presents the evaluation for each Expected Result, followed by a number of lessons that were learnt through the Programme. A number of Recommendations for possible future actions are highlighted in the concluding paragraph.

### 1. Expected Result 1

#### **Delivery of 670 housing solutions to low-income refugees and other vulnerable groups**

##### *A. Relevance*

Since its beginning in March 2005 the Programme has operated in an environment of political change that had an impact on its institutional setting. The May 21, 2006, referendum and the subsequent declaration of independence of the Republic of Montenegro in June of that year, the adoption of a new constitution of the Republic of Serbia in October 2006 and parliamentary elections on January 21, 2007, leading to the formation of a new Government, resulted in a frequent change of key decision makers at ministerial level and to a restructuring of the Ministry of Urban Planning and Construction, then Ministry for Capital Investment, now Ministry of Infrastructure. Parallel to this, several changes of political representations at municipal level were also recorded.

These developments were evidently not particularly conducive to a smooth implementation of a Programme component that relies heavily on continuous and stable support from national and local authorities. It should be noted however that overall the Programme managed to stay clear from any major set-backs.

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<sup>3</sup> On its first day of mission, the Evaluation Team received the approved documents related to the Implementation Phase of SIRP, purpose of the Evaluation Mission, i.e. the three Work Plans for 2005, 2006 and 2007 and the two Interim Progress Reports with their Technical Annexes.

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At the time of the Programme initial formulation (2003) as well as of the formulation of the Programme Document (2004), housing was certainly a priority issue throughout Serbia, including the Municipalities targeted by SIRP, though with significant differences among them. Kraljevo recorded the most problematic conditions, with refugees and IDPs representing 17% of the city population mostly in sub-standard units and Collective Centres; the displaced population in Stara Pazova and Pancevo was composed mainly of refugees while in Kragujevac, Nis and Kraljevo was represented largely by IDPs.

The delivery of new housing represents approximately 48% of all Programme funds. Once the Alternative housing solution component is added, ER 1 adds to 55% of the Programme total estimated expenses, reflecting the priority given by SIRP to providing adequate housing to low-income refugee households and other vulnerable households.

A second critical issue the Programme addressed has been the (re)introduction of the notion of social housing, together with that of cost recovery, in a society moving rapidly from a State controlled to a market oriented economy. The rationale for providing adequate housing solutions to the low-income refugee households and other vulnerable groups appears to have been socially appropriate, especially where they represented the larger share of the population affected by the conflict. On the other hand, construction of the new dwelling units provided for by the Programme is highly subsidized. The seven Municipalities included in the Programme all opted for the higher subsidy level admitted by SIRP (70% of housing construction costs) with the objective of lowering the rent levels. In fact, though average salaries almost doubled between 2003 and 2007, from € 180 to € 350, giving potential room of manoeuvre for lowering the subsidy level, the rent levels for the housing provided by the Programme could not be modified.

The assumption on which such a low level of cost recovery stands can be accepted in view of establishing a strongly needed social housing policy in the country, as well as the administrative and financial difficulty of adopting a “housing allowance” system. Yet, given the limited public resources available, SIRP approach to the issue cannot be looked at as the most feasible direction to address on a larger scale the issue of housing demand from the low-income households.

Nevertheless, since 2002, when the MoU between the Government of Italy and UN-Habitat was first signed, the situation appears to have evolved since a share of the refugees have been able to find a dwelling, reducing the number of those still in need of a housing solution: as a result, in Kraljevo the applications to the Programme amounted to 108, out of approximately 1,300 total refugees, in Cacak total applications were 249, of which 162 from refugee households.

SIRP has undoubtedly responded to the urgent need of adapting Serbian institutions and procedures to the new political and economic context. Though housing does not stand up as a priority in the current political context, the Programme contributed significantly to introduce an innovative approach to housing at the local level, to help mobilizing local resources, to connect the views of professionals and citizens as well as to (re)introduce the issue of social housing policy at the national level providing the basis for a new social housing legislative framework.

In particular, the Programme was instrumental in:

- supporting and in many cases setting up the Municipal/City Housing Agencies entrusted with the planning and management of the urban social housing stock
- introducing an innovative system for housing delivery based on the full involvement of local partners with appropriate capacity-building support, fostering transparency and open competition

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- raising the awareness on the need to establish a social sector in housing supply and not leaving it solely to the market
- introducing the notion that at least part of the costs must be recovered from the beneficiaries raising transparency in different delivery mechanisms, from the selection of beneficiaries and the related creation of databases to open competition in architectural design and building contracts awarding.

By providing housing solutions the Programme addressed a basic need for the direct beneficiaries, i.e. low-income refugees and other vulnerable households. It is also contributing to implement the 2003 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, thus benefiting both national and local governments.

The Government of Serbia considers SIRP as one of the most important programme the country is implementing and the selected Municipalities have all recognized the crucial role SIRP played in establishing and supporting MHAs/CHAs and in formulating the MHS/CHS. In addition, the decision adopted in the course of the Programme to deliver the new housing units on a rental base with the objective of making the housing solutions more affordable to lower income groups provided MHAs/CHA with a stock of units or added to the stock the Agencies already manage. It should be noted that such decision on one side strengthened the Agencies role as housing providers for the low-income groups, on the other hand it handed over a housing stock largely subsidized that may represent an important financial burden if the Agencies are not provided with adequate resources and rents will not match the likely increasing management and maintenance costs.

Nevertheless, preventing access to ownership discouraged potential beneficiaries from applying, as pointed out in Kraljevo and Kragujevac. On the other hand, the non-eligibility of IDPs was perceived as a discriminating measure against what in most cities is the largest share of low-income households.

### *B. Effectiveness*

Since the new housing units have only recently started being delivered to the beneficiaries, the actual contribution of the Programme to the overall living conditions of the target population cannot be assessed.

On the other hand, there is a wide consensus on the critical role played by SIRP in the formulation of the 'Social Housing Law' presently under discussion in Parliament. The Social Housing Law represents a crucial component of any future National Social Housing Strategy as well as of any National Housing Strategy, should the Government decide to establish it.

A similar consensus exists among all Municipalities about the importance of SIRP on the creation of MHAs/CHAs and the formulation of the Municipal or City Housing Strategies. Kraljevo being the first city in Serbia to formulate such a document, the instrumental role played by SIRP is evident.

The notion of 'social housing' being new in the Serbian context, the application and selection procedures met with some difficulties, complaints and lack of adequate information. In fact, one of the main difficulties the Programme housing component encountered concerned the selection of beneficiaries: in Čačak and Niš two selection rounds were carried out, while in Kragujevaç the Municipal selection procedures and criteria proved to be too rigid and were adapted to the local context.

A major factor that has affected the delivery of new housing units has been the devaluation of the US dollar. Meeting the cost of infrastructure and services, as required by the Programme has produced serious financial problems to some

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Municipal governments, particularly so since they have opted for contributing also to the building costs to raise the standard of the dwellings.

### C. Efficiency

New housing has been completed in all seven cities, except in Valjevo where the scarcity of public land obliged the Municipality to select three different sites, in one of which the building site has just started. A slight delay may be envisaged in Kraljevo and Niš. Some problems with infrastructure were met in Kragujevac, where the MHA has only recently signed an agreement with the utility companies, as well as in Valjevo where one of the buildings is not yet connected to power supply due to right of passage problems.

However, the delays recorded do not impact significantly on the Programme time schedule.

Nevertheless, the Programme objectives (overall and specific) set forth in the Project Implementation Document would benefit from a more precise formulation. The document refers to the “provision of direct social housing schemes for refugees and vulnerable groups completed with key capacity building elements to ensure sustainable integration, replication and scaling up at municipalities and national levels” as the overall “project concept”. In addition the project is expected to “facilitate the formulation of local development strategies and strengthen locals social services” in the framework of a “wider exercise of planning for local development”.

A more precise formulation of objectives, results/outputs and activities would facilitate a more effective evaluation of the Programme. On one hand the housing solutions that were to be delivered are almost completed; on the other hand, by making reference to refugees *and* vulnerable groups as direct beneficiaries, the objective of the Programme is ambiguous, especially in view of the fact that in the selected cities the number of refugees and other vulnerable groups (including IDPs) differs widely.

Should the Programme be evaluated according to the OVI stated in the *Project Document* and replicated in the *Project Implementation Document*, its efficiency would appear rather disputable. The majority of the verifiable indicators do not apply to what the Programme has achieved so far and most of them will not meet the Programme Results by the end of it.

The Programme would have largely benefited from the two monitoring activities referred to in the *Project Document* but never carried out. The same holds true for the mid-term evaluation that was not realized, though it would have certainly contributed to reconsider the Programme purpose and, most of all, the indicators to be used. It should be highlighted that though envisaged in the narrative of the Project Document, the evaluation activities are not budgeted, contrary to normal procedure for such large programmes.

The *Project Document* foresaw results that were clearly outside the reach of the Programme, as the different nation-level verifiable indicators highlight, or rather unpredictable due to their dependence on the development of Serbia institutional framework, as the indicators related to the municipal level similarly show.

The Programme met with some initial problems due to the interruption that followed the preparation phase and some unexpected difficulties in the office building management. Nevertheless the Central office and the 5 Field Coordinators appear to have carried out the Programme activities effectively, as highlighted by the fact that the delivery of the 530 new housing units, the main and certainly more complex Programme component, is recording only minor delays.

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MoUs were signed with 6 out of 7 Municipalities at the launching Conference (March 2005), the MoU with Pancevo being signed in June. Agreements of Cooperation were signed in due time with MHAs/CHAs for the construction of housing units, the formulation of Municipal/City Housing Strategies and the development of alternative housing solutions, as well as for the pilot projects and the delivery of support packages to the beneficiaries.

As mentioned, the 530 (in fact 531) new housing solutions the Programme intended to provide are almost complete or under completion, including in Kraljevo where the agreement with NHA was signed only in January 2007. In fact in Kragujevac SIRP methodology was adopted for the delivery of 20 more units funded by the Government of Japan.

Alternative housing solutions were also promoted in the selected cities, through different approaches. In Kragujevac, Nis, Pancevo and Stara Pazova the funds were allocated to provide favourable loans and subsidy for building materials to private owners willing to transform their unfinished houses into low-income rental units; in Kraljevo one Roma and in Valjevo one substandard settlements were upgraded and regularized; in Cacak some housing units in the Center for Social Work where very low-income families live were improved.

During the second field mission the evaluation team has been provided with an updated implementation schedule for the components ER1 and ER2. The indications of the former document as well as visits to the field indicate that all works will be completed at the end of the first quarter 2008. The respective contribution of funds required is being provided to the 7 Cities and Municipalities through the UN-HABITAT Office Belgrade in line with stipulations of the pre-established disbursement schedule

### *D. Results and impact*

SIRP rightly addressed several major challenges the Government of Serbia was facing, namely:

- to respond to the housing needs of low-income refugee households and other vulnerable groups who, in some of the selected cities, represent a large share of the population
- to strengthen the legitimacy of government intervention to reduce social inequality in a liberalizing economy (Social Housing)
- to support the decentralization process currently implemented in Serbia by providing local governments with adequate capacity to manage local development issues.

At the time of the Evaluation, the Programme impact on the direct beneficiaries can only be assessed with reference to the involvement in, and the perception of, the selection process by the low-income refugee households and other vulnerable groups.

In Serbia, selections based on applications following clearly defined, verifiable and transparent parameters are a relatively innovative procedure, for which information is crucial. As a result, in some of the selected cities the number of applicants was lower than expected, or even insufficient on a first round.

Some of the reasons for the low number of applicants have to do with the eligibility criteria and the clauses established for the units allotment:

- due to their condition, refugees may not be able to present the original documents required by the procedure
- in some of the selected cities, among others Kragujevac, despite the fact that

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married and unmarried couples have an equal social status, the 'married couple' criteria established by the Programme excluded several potential beneficiaries. Furthermore, many couples cannot get married due to the impossibility of obtaining the necessary documents from the places of origin.

- the three-year rental contract initially established, raises concerns about its possible expiration.

The notion of rental housing was not well received by many potential beneficiaries, who looked at the Programme as an opportunity to become home-owners at subsidized prices.

However, the Programme weaknesses in targeting and selecting the beneficiaries have been essentially resolved and they should be looked at not as a failure, rather as a 'learning' mechanism from both the Programme and the beneficiaries

Representatives from Serbian Central government, the Municipal/City Governments as well as from NGOs and the University all agree on the positive impact SIRP had on their activities. On one hand, the Programme has represented an essential support to the drafting of the Social Housing Law, currently in Parliament for approval, and the ongoing formulation of the National Housing Strategy, expected to be ready by the end of March 2008; on the other hand, as stated by the Secretary of State of the Ministry for Infrastructure, it has mobilized political and professional resources helping local authorities and MHAs/CHAs to explore innovative solutions to cope with the housing issue.

At the same time, the dynamism SIRP has helped setting in motion is confronted with the limited capacity available at the local level in terms of policy and tools design and maintenance. Though looking very positively at the introduction of territorial information systems (TIS) all municipalities pointed to some difficulties they meet in making them a tool for their daily activities and the cost of updating the software. Similarly, though procurement and works supervision were full responsibility of CHAs/MHAs, UN-HABITAT provided funding and permanent technical assistance, including the design of standardized administrative and tendering procedures, coaching and supervision.

### *E. Institutional Arrangements*

Memorandum of Understanding were signed with all Municipalities, based on which Programme activities were developed at local level. Cooperation agreements were signed between the newly established MHAs/CHAs and UN-HABITAT for new housing construction and alternative housing solutions.

### *F. Sustainability ownership, internalization*

While previous refugees housing projects have been implemented from a humanitarian perspective, SIRP is designed "to ensure sustainability to the delivered schemes" through "maintenance of subsidised public rental housing schemes". With the exclusion of land and infrastructure cost, that are borne by the Municipality, 30 percent of new housing cost is recovered from the beneficiaries through a three-year renewable lease extending over thirty-years

Unless a National Housing Strategy (NHS) catering to the needs of the low-income population through social housing schemes is put in place, in view of the current financial conditions of local governments in Serbia, sustainability represents a major challenge for the Programme, questioning its replicability and scaling up. Though in the past NHS has not really been a government priority, the current government seems geared to adopt a national housing policy.

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In this view SIRP is acknowledged as a quite important experience, providing several insights on the type of issues at stake and possible ways to deal with them. Scaling up the provision of subsidized housing to low-income households, refugees as well as other vulnerable groups, can only be achieved through the adoption of a national policy based on appropriate financial and institutional tools, some of which the Programme has paved the way for.

The Programme was instrumental in establishing a dialogue between the central and local governments. Though at the local level there were some remarks on the support received by the national level, according to the Secretary of State of the Ministry for Infrastructure “SIRP was implemented jointly between central and local government in spite of the fact that the Cities/Municipalities selected were governed by different political coalitions”.

In addition, exchange of experience and information has taken place among the Cities/Municipalities involved in the Programme, as between Cacak and Kraljevo as well as all MHA/CHA through periodic workshops, while information and experiences are being shared with Belgrade and Novi Sad.

The Programme has actually introduced new methods, tools and perspectives on the different issues it has addressed in housing, capacity building and through the Pilot initiatives. There is a wide consensus among the different stakeholders on the crucial role SIRP has played in building new capacities at the local level.

### *G. Responsiveness to Opportunity*

SIRP has actually helped reinstate the need for public policies addressing the needs of the vulnerable population, refugees as well as low-income households at large. Such views may not correspond to the current prevailing orientations in Serbia, but they are critical to help establishing the preconditions with regard the housing sector for the integration of the country in the European Union.

At the Municipal level the Programme has clearly strengthened the capacity and the self-confidence of local governments as well as the civil society, fostering the dialogue between government and society.

## **2. Expected Result 2**

### **Formulation of National and Municipal/City Housing Strategies with development of appropriate tools and capacities for implementation**

#### *A. Relevance*

The Programme aimed to formulate National and Municipal/City Housing Strategies with the development of appropriate tools and capacities for implementation, such as Municipal Housing Agencies. In addition it was designed to provide support to the Ministry of Infrastructure to establish capacities for policy formulation and monitoring, in the ongoing process of formulation of the National Housing Policy and National Strategy and Action Plan for Social Housing.

The objectives of the Programme at its inception were, and still are of significance for planning practice in Serbia, where no documents concerning planning policies and strategies are available. Though a National Housing Strategy has not yet been prepared due to the frequent changes experienced by the relevant Ministry, City/Municipal Housing Strategies are being adopted in all the selected cities and will

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be used as input for the design of a National Strategy, as stressed by the deputy Minister of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

From the point of view of Municipal Assemblies – the indirect beneficiaries of the Habitat Social Housing Programme but the direct beneficiaries of Municipal Housing Strategies, the much needed cooperation with national level is crucial for further work. Furthermore developing City Housing Strategies is the prerequisite for the realization of effective future public housing programmes.

### *B. Effectiveness*

The support given by the Programme to the development of Municipal/City Housing Strategies and Action Plans as well as detailed guidelines for municipal housing strategies and action planning is acknowledged by all Municipalities involved as crucial for the formulation of the methodological framework for the National Housing Strategy currently being developed.

The actual achievement of objectives was that all the Municipal/City Strategies addressed the issue of social housing, through the establishment of Action Plans. However, the Action Plans require resources that can only partially be accounted for by the Municipal budgets and need to be raised through other sources, such as international aid.

### *C. Efficiency*

The design of Municipal housing strategies is envisaged as a participative process of strategic planning that implies formulating the strategy, defining priority goals as well as developing midterm action plans.

In the spring of 2006, a 'Municipal housing strategy' was adopted in Kraljevo, Niš and Kragujevac that significantly contributed to the process of setting up a National Housing Policy, in view of which the national Conference 'Towards new National Housing Policy in Serbia' was organized in July 2006 with SIRP support.

Some more Cities/Municipalities are in the process of adopting their Municipal Housing Profile. The Programme has clearly been crucial in supporting the formulation of tools for housing policy design that had never been produced so far, including the more analytical Profiles. It is expected that by the end of the Programme all Municipalities will have adopted their housing strategies.

From the methodological point of view all the steps taken were well coordinated. The guidelines were prepared by UN-HABITAT with the participation of all stakeholders and were endorsed by the Ministry of Capital Investments (later on Ministry of Infrastructure). The first examples of a 'Housing Profiles' were presented by the cities of Niš and Kragujevac as good practices at the Conference 'Towards new National Housing Policy in Serbia'.

In addition, the documents produced through the Programme will be used for the National Housing Policy and Social Housing Legislation. In co-operation with UN-HABITAT, the Ministry of Infrastructure has prepared two more documents "Four Strategic Themes for the Housing policy in Serbia" and "Starting points for formulation of new housing policy in the Republic of Serbia" that, though not a direct outcome of the Programme, received considerable inputs from it.

### *D. Results and impact*

The transition period Serbia has experienced in the last decade has raised numerous problems in the housing sector related primarily to the abandonment of public

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housing provision policies and the inflow of refugees.

SIRP contributed to the introduction of the notion of Housing Strategy at the local level with particular reference to Social Housing, supporting the establishment of a legal, institutional and financial framework and building new capacities within the Municipalities.

Municipality Housing Strategies designed by the Municipal Housing Agencies will benefit not only low-income refugee households but vulnerable families at large, due to the special attention paid to social housing issues.

All cities participating to the Programme acknowledge the benefits accruing from the creation of Municipality Housing Agencies. At the same time, the Municipal Housing Agencies interviewed by the evaluation team have all shown high expectations and great dynamism as far as their future role can be in developing and implementing local housing strategies.

SIRP also contributed significantly to forming working groups of professionals and their further training for understanding new approaches and developing innovative actions.

### *E. Institutional Arrangements*

The Programme was critical in facilitating the dialogue between the Central Government on one side, primarily the Ministry for Infrastructure, and the local level on the other. It also supported the mobilization of other institutional actors, such as the University. It should be stressed that criticism has been raised by the Municipalities about the limited support offered by the Government, particularly so with respect to the lack of a sufficiently well established normative framework.

Based on MoU signed with the municipalities, Agreement of Cooperation were also signed with all Municipal/City Housing Agencies, providing technical assistance for the formulation of Municipal Housing Strategies.

### *F. Sustainability ownership, internalization*

In some of the selected cities the sustainability of the activities initiated by and through the Programme is not fully guaranteed. Though the Social Housing Law has provision for channeling Government resources to non-profit housing organizations, until the National Housing Agency is created it is not evident how the work of the MHAs will continue, given the limited Municipal budgets on which the Agencies should rely on, at least for their initial operations. Greater potential may exist for those Municipal Housing Agencies that have adopted the status of Public Enterprises, such as in Cacak (OSA Cacak). Such Agencies are supposed to operate in a market oriented perspective, so as to be able get their resources by building commercial dwellings and housing as well as social housing.

Some cities are also envisaging to address international donors for sustaining their housing activities.

Professionals as well as decision-makers put great emphasis on the value of Municipal Housing Agencies as important tools to support local development in general.

Professional trainings and Conferences organized within the Programme have been places for exchanging knowledge. The Training Cycle offered between May 2006 and April 2007 in six Municipalities helped build new capacities and provide the local context with new skills.

### *G. Responsiveness to Opportunity*

By establishing Municipal Housing Agencies as the managing bodies for the implementation of municipal housing policies, as well as for establishing and managing the public rental stock, the Programme stimulated collaboration between different stakeholders - Public Institutions, Municipalities or Cities, as well as the private sector.

### **3. Expected Result 3**

**Support to 6 Municipalities to develop information tools and implementation bodies to produce integrated strategic plans for the development of their territories and to implement sector strategies and action plans**

#### *A. Relevance*

Since the inception of the Programme the introduction of the participatory approach in strategic planning for development at municipal level has been a major mark of its activities. By design and orientation it constitutes a remarkable breach with the past, where municipal planning consisted mainly in the allocation of spatial functions within municipal boundaries, without noticeable consultation with local stakeholders and in particular the population concerned.

The new approach has been supported by a remarkably broad range of training activities such as training for trainers, workshops, seminars, study tours and on-the-job training for officers from municipalities and other beneficiaries, aimed at ensuring sustainability of knowledge transfer beyond the programme's duration.

At the beginning of the Programme a mapping of international projects on Municipal capacity building and the improvement of local socio-economic conditions was conducted in the selected municipalities to learn from other experiences and identify possible areas of synergy. An assessment of projects and programmes by agencies such as USAID, SDC and GTZ operating in the urban sector would have provided an even better insights on the comparative advantages SIRP could offer.

Institutional and partner priorities have been thoroughly identified during the preparation of Programme activities and in particular during the numerous preparatory contacts that lead to the establishment and signatures of MoUs with the municipalities concerned. The close working contacts established between SIRP and the many institutional bodies at local level e.g. Local Steering Committees, Selection Committees of Beneficiaries, Local Project Review Committees, ensure that partner priorities have been considered and - where necessary - clarified and refined.

Nevertheless, the various training activities as well as the number of respective beneficiaries have been identified in the course of the Programme (Annex 1, 2007 Technical Report). The ex-post evaluations of workshops, seminars, conferences and study tours show that the level of acceptance by beneficiaries is very high and beneficiary needs and expectations have been met. This fact reflects the efforts undertaken by the Programme to identify the right target groups and to tailor the training accordingly.

#### *B. Effectiveness*

As mentioned, the set-up and content of the Work Plans have been modified over time. The Project Document as well as the Project Implementation Document refer to "Training, Upgrading info system, First applications of info-sys for strategic planning

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and Support to local institutions”. However, in the First Annual Work Plan 2005 the descriptions of activities ER3.A 1 to ER3.A 4 were changed into “Supporting the establishment of training facilities, Training stakeholders from six municipalities, Upgrading info systems, Enabling six municipalities to draft sectoral development strategies, support to local institutions”. As a result, the various activities associated to the headings have been changed to an extent that makes any follow-up very difficult.

On the other hand, the introduction of Activity Cards was very positive. Activity Cards constitute an exemplary approach and a valuable complement to the usual bar sheet presentation, allowing a much more detailed overview of the activities undertaken and outputs produced.

Though, for the reasons mentioned above, it is not always straightforward to define the specific progress made, it appears that some activities related to the Expected Results are being carried out and that the related objectives will be achieved by the end of March 2008.

Despite the serious depreciation of the US \$ since the start of the Programme, the activities appear to have been implemented without any significant problems, delays or changes.

### *C. Efficiency*

The Project Implementation Document envisaged a number of activities and outputs at the level of National Institutions, such as the ones related to the “development of capacities, information tools and implementation bodies to produce comprehensive strategic plans for local/ territorial development and to implement subsequent sector strategies and action plans” that entailed tasks surpassing the effective means available to the Programme.

Though outputs and consequently activities can and should be modified if changes in the course of a programme make them unlikely to be achieved, all modifications and the reasons for them should be clearly explicated in the Programme documents.

After the presentation of the preliminary report, the evaluation team was informed by the Executing Agency that the time schedule of most activities had to be modified due to the its delayed launching. As a result, though many activities and results were seriously delayed with respect the initial schedule, it can be expected that the all activities will be completed by the end of the Programme.

The use of national and international consultants foreseen by the Programme lead to beneficial synergies between national and international expertise. It has advantageously been increased by study tours on such as those to the Province of Prato and the city of Modena on “territorial information systems”, as well as those to the International Conference “Security, Democracy and Cities” in Zaragoza that have had a very positive impact on the way the participants place their local tasks and concerns within a broader international setting. A further very visible element of the Programme has been the organization of “Cities in Dialogue”, a cycle of conferences financed by the Italian Government dealing with topics such as integrated development, housing reforms in Serbia, urban safety, TIS and others. This cycle of conferences has been instrumental in promoting coordination, exchange of information and integration between local stakeholders.

Despite the absence of an updated Implementation Schedule for this component, it can be assumed that outputs will be achieved by the end of the Programme or during the already foreseen three months extension.

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The “Support to Municipalities and Development Strategies” component represents only 4 to 8% of the overall budget (costs for strictly ER3 related activities plus costs for information and dissemination, info-kits for municipalities, specialized consultants etc.). Nevertheless, it has had a significant impact on the visibility of the Programme in the country and beyond and will have an even greater long term impact in terms of people trained and authorities strengthened.

The provisions made in the budget for the recruitment of international Strategic Planning and Training Consultants have been fully used. Furthermore foreseen recruitments of international Municipal Consultants have been undertaken. Similarly recruitments for related national professionals have been undertaken, though to a lower cost than initially budgeted due to the use of in-house expertise from Municipalities concerned.

Design, material inputs and finishing of training materials and conference reports are of exemplary quality.

### *D. Results and Impact*

All institutions and individuals interviewed during the evaluation mission who have participated at the various training activities acknowledged the appropriateness of support received, corroborating the idea that the Programme design and implementation are well in line with initial priorities, needs and demands.

At the level of local authorities the impact of the Programme is indeed very positive. There is overall satisfaction with the assistance provided by SIRP, be it in the area of training, in the support to the formulation of strategies and policies or in the provision of related computer hard and software.

The introduction by SIRP of MoUs coupled with Cooperation Agreements at municipal level is a breakthrough, in the sense that it reorients the decision-making process from central to municipal level and consequently reinforces the current decentralization process.

This transfer of power from central to municipal level will occasionally create some unease among the parties involved – as witnessed during the mission – and will therefore require a strong political will combined with some flexibility on both sides.

A positive impact perceived by all those consulted is the direct access to the many training programs organized and/or supported by SIRP, as in the City of Niš where the Programme was instrumental in training a specific professional team to develop the City Development Strategy.

A still unpredictable impact resides in the fact that SIRP trained professionals may use their higher skill and knowledge levels to apply for national posts outside the reach of the Programme. In case this happens it should not be considered as a negative event as in the contrary it would prove the quality of the training delivered, improve most likely the individual living conditions of those concerned and directly contribute to the development of the country.

### *E. Institutional Arrangements*

Cooperation activities through the Programme with the Faculties of Architecture, Geography and Economics of the University of Belgrade, the Province of Prato and the Municipality of Modena in Italy. Such cooperation activities have proved effective in providing assistance to setting up the TIS and support to various Pilot Projects, thus sustaining the modernization measures enhanced by local authorities. In this framework the City of Nis prepared a Development Strategy and several cities

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developed the necessary institutional framework.

All key national players in the sector are very visibly represented within the Programme Steering Committee. Nevertheless, since the Committee met only once a year it could not provide regular support to the running of the Programme and its different components. The national and international programme management however has been able to bridge this gap by keeping a relatively close working contact with its members who themselves as well as a large number of their staff contributed to and participated at the different training activities provided.

A crucial support for the design and implementation of the Programme capacity building and training component has been the cooperation with formal national institutions such as the University of Belgrade (e.g, in the ToT component and the spreading of TIS among several Municipalities) and the set-up of Local Implementation Units in different Municipalities. It is these latter that have been instrumental in the identification of local needs in the subcomponent considered and its translation into training actions on the ground.

### *F. Sustainability, Ownership, Internalization*

The meetings organized during the evaluation missions with direct and indirect beneficiaries have highlighted the new level of awareness resulting from the Programme activities characterized by a high responsiveness to training, workshops and study tours. The professional linkages established with external partners contribute further to an environment, where continuous updating and supplementary provision of information and insights will take place.

A further very positive impact is the number of cooperation agreements with foreign, in particular Italian counterpart institutions, among them the IB project – Italian-Balkan Municipal Partnership and the Municipalities of Kraljevo, City of Nis and City of Kragujevac, the supporting cooperation initiatives between Italian Municipalities (Modena) and Provinces (Prato) for TIS with all municipalities

The systematic upgrading of info-communication technologies and systems at the level of Municipalities and Municipal Housing Agencies has greatly contributed to a continuous exchange of information between them and outside users. SIRP Website and SIRP Intranet are very useful tools for the exchange of information and experiences.

The very visible formulation and publication of the City of Nis Development Strategy can be considered as a breakthrough of the new participatory planning approach which has incited other cities and municipalities to engage in similar exercises. The sustainability of these undertakings will soon be tested when their respective follow-up projects – presently described through project sheets - will have to be translated into bankable project proposals and consequently real activities on the ground.

The ToT component of the programme shows positive results. In addition, the dissemination of particularly successful operations at municipal level such as Valjevo “TIS for management of municipal land”, is producing interesting multiplier effects, with other Municipalities considering similar undertakings.

### *G. Responsiveness to Opportunity*

The presence of SIRP field office coordinators combined with their precise knowledge of local conditions appears to have highly facilitated the identification of main areas of interest, specific problem areas and needs in the selected Cities and Municipalities.

### 4. Expected Result 4

#### **Implementation of Pilot Initiatives for social, economic and civic integration of refugees and vulnerable households through a decentralised management system**

##### *A. Relevance*

The chances of returning to the areas of origin being almost nil for the refugees, fostering their integration within the host communities is a priority, particularly for the low-income households. In this view, financial resources are very important, but promoting an integrated approach to the problem of social, economic and civic integration of vulnerable groups is also a major issue. In this framework, Pilot Initiatives complementing the housing delivery component are a valuable support to the social, economic and civic integration issue.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy emphasizes the need to involve local stakeholders in assessing needs and priorities, translating it into project proposals and mobilizing local resources for project implementation. In a transitional country like Serbia, such participatory method is very positive to promote a bottom-up approach to local development.

Though the size of the target population declined significantly in the course of the Programme due to the refugees own capacity to integrate, as highlighted in several Municipalities, the objective of establishing and strengthening a decentralized management system for improving the conditions of vulnerable groups is still important and represents a priority for the Serbian government.

Besides the provision of 335 support packages to facilitate the integration of direct housing beneficiaries, the Project Document and the Project Implementation Document envisaged at least 24 Pilot Initiatives with a maximum of 30.000 Euros per Initiative, representing 4.8% of Programme budget. Following a study carried out by an international consultant in September 2006, it was decided to reduce the number of initiatives to be funded in order to foster their impact. As a result 7 projects were selected, 2 of them in Valjevo, ranging from a minimum of \$60,000 to \$120,000. The change is referred to in the Second Interim Progress Report (31 March 2007), but the Logical Framework Objective Verifiable Indicators have remained the same (“at least 24 projects”).

Improving income generation capacity is an obvious priority for the economic as well as social and civic integration of vulnerable groups. Some Pilot initiatives (Kraiovoz and Valjevo) actually address the needs of the direct beneficiaries (Roma families). However, the benefits accruing to the integration of other vulnerable groups from the mobilization of local stakeholders through the Pilot Initiatives activated by the project is less evident.

##### *C. Effectiveness*

At the time of the evaluation some delay was recorded for several Pilot Initiatives, namely the waste management project in Valjevo, due to the intricacy of the issue; the micro-fund project in Pancevo, also due to its late start, and the Centre for Inclusive Pre-School Education in Kragujevac, where the Centre was established but activities were encountering some difficulties. Though it is expected that the Initiatives will overcome the existing obstacles, their effectiveness cannot be assessed.

The remaining Pilot Initiatives are being implemented according to the time schedule and essentially achieving their objectives. Kraljevo Pilot Initiative “Protection,

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promotion and development of Tourism potentials of the natural park Golija” has been selected as a rural development ‘Good Practice Example’.

Following consultations with all relevant actors all support packages have been allocated, with the noteworthy exception of the City of Nič, where applications were fewer than the available packages.

Pilot initiatives were conceived as proposals to improve the conditions of vulnerable groups but also as learning experiences for the local stakeholders, including Municipalities. The initiatives aimed to enhancing their capacity to design and implement projects for reducing local poverty. However, due to time constraints the bidding process for the Initiatives was managed directly by the Programme, somewhat reducing the capacity building aspect of the component.

### *C. Efficiency*

The implementation of four initiatives started in February 2007, the remaining three being launched soon after. The objectives of most Pilot initiatives seem to match the executing capacity existing at the local level, with the exception of Valjevo where a second Call for Proposal had to be launched since no proposal had been submitted in response to the first one. The financial support provided by SIRP appears to be adequate to ensure their completion of the proposed activities within the timeframe of the Programme.

### *D. Results and impact*

The integration of vulnerable groups, including refugees, was a clear priority for both local and central government, while the Poverty Reduction Strategy emphasised the need for mobilizing local communities resources and know-how through new and innovative tools. By adopting the “Call for Proposals” method, SIRP introduced a significant innovation in the way of selecting resources allocation alternatives and promoted the involvement of local society through public-private partnerships. Though some Projects met with some difficulties, the method adopted make the initiatives selected in each City/Municipality respond to local priorities. At the same time they helped highlight the space of manoeuvre local society can have in mobilizing its own resources for addressing locally defined needs and contributed to strengthen the role and the skills of professionals involved in the initiatives design and implementation.

### *E. Institutional Arrangements*

Being a prerequisite for the launching of the initiative, the public/private partnerships set up through the Pilot initiatives are appropriate by definition, though they inevitably recorded different degrees of success.

### *F. Sustainability ownership, internalization*

Pilot Initiatives were launched with the aim to strengthen the integration process of the refugee households, beyond the delivery of appropriate housing. In this view the Initiatives represent a valuable tool to encourage the mobilisation of local stakeholders around the issue of the urban inclusion of refugees as well as vulnerable groups.

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On the other hand, it should be stressed that since all Pilot initiatives rest on external financial support, their sustainability beyond the Programme is not always guaranteed. Where they represent an addition to activities already in place, such as Cacak Safer Town and Niš Employment Mediation Agency, the project sustainability seems to be warranted. On the other hand, as pointed out to the Evaluation Team by the interviewees met in the relevant cities, the sustainability of Pancevo Micro Development Fund seems problematic and partially so Kragujevac Centre for Inclusive Pre-School Education. The recent recognition of Kraljevo Golija Natural Park as a Good Practice may increase its sustainability, while the waste collection initiative in Valjevo, though quite innovative, has to attain the actual collaboration of the Roma population involved.

Pilot initiatives address a rather wide range of concerns, so that the exchange of experience among the Programme Cities/Municipalities can only be limited. Nevertheless, Cacak and Pancevo and, more recently, Valjevo had significant exchanges on the issue of urban security through their Safer City projects. In addition, a National Workshop is scheduled in February or March 2008 with the objective of disseminating the results achieved.

### *G. Responsiveness to Opportunity*

The Call for Proposal was instrumental to explicitly linking up with the demand arising from the local context and in most municipalities the response from local actors (NGOs) was quite positive, highlighting the latent mobilization potential existing at the local level, though in most cases the Pilot Initiatives resulted from previous experiences and projects. In fact, the Programme contribution was critical as a financial support, less effective with regards **to** the objective of instigating new initiatives.

## **5. Lessons learned**

- All partners and stakeholders involved at central and local levels confirmed the crucial contribution the Programme provided to raising nationwide awareness on urban development and housing. Although the housing units provided by the Programme met to a very limited extent the demand for low-cost housing, SIRP housing delivery component has been crucial in setting the ground for a reassessment of Government policies on housing in general and on social housing in particular. The conference “Towards a New National Housing Policy for Serbia” organized by the Programme in July 2006, and the first “Cities in Dialogue” conference recorded a large participation of civil servants, private sector professionals and representatives from the NGO community ensuring the spreading of experiences and knowledge. The subsequent publication and dissemination of their results has greatly reinforced their respective impacts.
- The awareness raised by the Programme was key to the formulation of the Social Housing Law, presently in Parliament for final approval, that will define the roles and responsibilities of central and municipal governments in the provision of social housing and will establish the necessary financial mechanisms. In this view, the decision to reserve the entire new stock for rental housing only was a largely agreed upon option since it usefully reintroduced the notion of subsidized housing and the idea that housing allocation cannot be left exclusively to market forces.
- Though the recent political development in Serbia has resulted in different

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politically oriented local governments, the interviews held at municipal and central levels show that SIRP has had a positive impact on the confidence-building process underway allowing leaders of varying political affiliations to constructively work together. The participation of different stakeholders in identifying local development options, including relevant Municipal Institutions, representatives from the private sector and Associations of Citizens, a good example being the formulation of Nis Development Strategy, has set the frame for an increased participatory decision making process that is likely to remain.

- Strengthening the local level helped setting off more open and effective links between local and central government. It has to be noted however, that the Programme activities had different impacts, the central level being inevitably less prompt to respond to the introduction of innovative policies.
- The Programme Steering Committee, composed of the major Programme partners, had a general advisory and supportive role and approved key matters. The composition of the Steering Committee reflects well the key institutions that embody the political and technical environment within which the Programme has been implemented. However, the Committee appears to have received a less than adequate technical support to supervise in detail the complex steps the Programme had to go through, resulting in some weaknesses with regard to monitoring the Programme implementation.
- The Programme focus on new housing was linked to the need of responding to the housing demand arising from low-income refugee households and other vulnerable groups. At the same time, less visible activities such as institution-strengthening, support to the formulation of policies, urban development and housing strategies and capacity building activities had a major impact as well.
- In the Republic of Serbia the demand for low-income housing is still very high and likely to remain so in the coming years. This certainly requires the construction of new dwellings, but it also demands that other approaches be taken to effectively address the issue. The Programme was based essentially on the delivery of new housing, giving only limited attention to possibly more cost-effective alternative ways of providing appropriate dwellings to the low-income population. In this perspective, the creation of the Municipal Housing Agencies will help local governments to adopt a more diversified way to approach the housing issue in order to provide accessible housing for all categories of population.
- The preparation of different housing documents such as Municipal/City Housing strategies, Housing Profiles, guidelines for municipal housing strategies and action plans contributed to the establishment of a new methodological approach for the development of a National Housing Strategy, defining clear goals for local development and a more efficient utilization of resources.
- Sustainability of the different actions taken by the Programme is a major concern, since new housing, alternative housing solutions as well as training and capacity building and pilot initiatives have been largely subsidized by SIRP. Though the present low level of housing cost recovery can be accepted temporarily in view of establishing a strongly needed social housing policy in the country, it does not represent a feasible direction in the long-term to address on a larger scale the issue of low-income housing demand. After the end of the Programme it will become sustainable only through an increased financial support by national and municipal authorities concerned.
- Cost-recovery for social housing is not seen with favour by part of the beneficiaries. However Municipalities are strongly in favour of it for obvious financial reasons but also as a means to strengthen social responsibility at the

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local level.

- Adopting common procedures for selecting the beneficiaries in all cities has inhibited greater flexibility in their application that would have been beneficial to the achievement of the Programme objectives, given the diversity of conditions to be found in the different cities. Similarly, though setting a firm share for the allocation of new housing to low-income refugee and local vulnerable households makes the selection of beneficiaries more transparent, it looks that adopting the same share for all localities has been too constraining.
- Information on the Programme objectives and activities has generally been adequate. However, the three-years renewable lease clause has raised concerns among potential beneficiaries, resulting in a lower than possible number of applications. Some Pilot Initiatives also recorded an insufficient number of applications from potential beneficiaries due to a less than optimal dissemination of information.
- The lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation activities in the framework of the Programme stands in surprising contrast to its overall remarkable achievements. The Progress Reports and Work Plans consist essentially of statements on activities to be undertaken and results to be achieved, but do not provide adequate information on problems and delays encountered, ways and means to overcome them nor make clear why certain activities/results were introduced or abandoned.
- The mix of theoretical inputs provided by international and national experts/consultants and the implementation of concrete actions in the field was instrumental for the positive impact of the Programme.
- The introduction of competition mechanisms in different initiatives implemented through the Programme, such as new housing architectural design, housing construction or Pilot Initiatives, has helped mobilizing different actors and contributed to making the decision process more transparent. Similarly, the support to the adoption of Territorial Information Systems has widened the access to information, thus representing an instrument of good governance and democratization, encouraging local governments to work in a more efficient and transparent way.
- Pilot Initiatives have been only partially effective. In some cases the short time available for the presentation of the proposal did not allow for the formulation and selection of high quality proposals. In other words, the question of how beneficial the selected Initiatives will be for vulnerable groups can not be answered straightforwardly.
- The Programme suffered a consistent reference to legally binding documents throughout its implementation. Additions and modifications, necessary as they might have been, were not always clearly justified and maintained throughout the execution of the Programme. Some of the indicators presented in the Logical Framework were not reconsidered and adjusted, while there was clear evidence of them being overly ambitious.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Housing is certainly a priority in the current context of the Republic of Serbia. The Programme aim to ensure the integration of refugees and vulnerable groups through

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the provision of a number of social housing units is clearly in line with it. In addition, the Programme was correctly conceived to enhance the capacity at municipal and central government levels to promote the integration process. Supporting the formulation of housing strategies with the development of appropriate tools and capacities for implementation is a valuable contribution to integration.

Though going through several political changes at central level as well as in some of the selected cities, so far the Programme has had a significant impact on the direct (selected low-income refugees and other vulnerable households) and indirect beneficiaries (Central and Municipal government levels, professionals, NGOs and the private sector). All stakeholders who have been interviewed by the Evaluation Team recognized the Programme as a driving force in helping the local context to address the integration issue through innovative and more participatory approaches. It helped building new confidence allowing leaders of different political affiliations to constructively work together in the current complex transition phase the Republic of Serbia is experiencing, while the participatory decision making process it contributed to establish is likely to remain.

Despite some management weaknesses already highlighted, the Programme has faced no major problem in being implemented and the likely three-month delay is to be looked at as an absolutely minor setback, particularly when considering the aforementioned changing political scenario it went through and the limited experience existing in the selected Municipalities/Cities in dealing with an integrated approach.

On the basis of its findings, the Evaluation Team considers the following to be the main Recommendations for the future:

- Since the actual impact of the new units delivered by the Programme on the low-income refugees and other vulnerable groups housing demand has been limited, the housing component for any future programme should be reconsidered. Housing related activities of any future programme should focus not only on the construction of new dwellings, but also on a range of options, including the rehabilitation and improvement of the existing housing stock as well as the regularization and upgrading of irregular settlements.
- A wider range of housing options for the low-income population, including refugees households, requires that issues such as land tenure and credit facilities be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated housing policy framework.
- Municipalities should be supported in the process of verifying the feasibility of priorities indicated in their City Development Strategies and/or Action Plans and their respective translation into concrete implementation proposals/bankable project proposals.
- Municipal Housing Agencies should be created/strengthened providing them with financial viability. This can be achieved through diversification of their activities towards land and infrastructure development, regularization of informal settlements, squatter/slum upgrading, acquisition and rehabilitation of abandoned houses and set-up and management of housing loan mechanisms.
- Successful experiences should be widely disseminated through national institutions such as the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and Regional institutions to enhance the exchange of information and experiences as well as to enhance the capacity and skills available at the local level (e.g. TIS municipal property mapping Valjevo, Nis Development Strategy).
- Given the intricate administrative situation existing in the Republic of Serbia, greater flexibility in the beneficiaries selection criteria, such as the outright recognition of their refugee status for families living in Collective Centres, would facilitate the access to opportunities such as offered by SIRP and extend the

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Programme impact to a wider range of beneficiaries.

- In line with the central government policies on poverty alleviation the strengthening of the local economic base is an important field of action donors may look at. This would have to include the social and economic integration of refugees. However, to be effective, related activities should have a clear sectoral focus and fall within a comprehensive strategic development perspective. The Programme Pilot Initiatives component should be replicated only provided it is conceived in a more sectorally established perspective.
- The Steering Committee should be backed by a technical support adequate to the complexity of the multi-sectoral objectives of the Programme.
- A programme of this magnitude should make sure that proper evaluation and monitoring activities are actually implemented, including budgetary development, tendering of construction works and staff performance.
- Given the positive results achieved by the Programme, it could be used for the formulation of a follow-up Programme on a multi-national scale.

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### **Annex 1 - Documents Consulted**

SIRP Draft Project Document 2003

SIRP Draft Project Document 2003, Annexes

SIRP - PProject Document, 2004

SIRP - Project Implementation Document, March 2005

First Annual Work Plan, 2005

Annex 1 Technical Report on Implementation of Detailed Activities,2005

2005 Interim Progress Report - 2005

Interim Financial Statement, 2005

Steering Committtee, Implementation Phase 2005-2007, 2005

Project Implementation Document, 2006

Second Annual Work Plan, 2006

Steering Committtee, Implementation Phase 2005-2007, 2006

Budget Revision/Project Revision, 2006

Second Interim Progress Report, 2007

Annex 1 Technical Report on Implementation of Detailed Activities,2007

Third Annual Work Plan, 2007-2008

Steering Committtee, Implementation Phase 2005-2007, 2007

Text for Competition for each Town: Open Cometition for Architectural Concept Design of Social Housing in ...town

Information about Basic Trainings Cycle

Information about TIS

Information about Urban Safety Strategies

Agreement of cooperation between UN Human Settlements Programme and the Municipal of town /6/ for The Pilot Initiative /PA/

Finacial Reporting /each town PA/

Narrative Reporting /each town PA/

#### **Support packages:**

Annex B - Project Description

Annex B MDF- Implementation

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Annex C - Budget

Annex C - Payment schedule

Agreement of cooperation between UN Human Settlements Programme and the public company "Municipal housing Agency" of town ..../with each town/ for Miniciapal

Housing Profile - Stara Pazova

Municipal Housing profile - Cacak

Municipal Housing profile - Pancevo

Housing Strategy City of Niš

City of Niš Development Strategy

Municipal Housing Strategy - Kraljevo

City Housing Strategy – Kragujevac

Housing Strategy - Municipality of Valjevo

Detailed Guidelines for Municipal Housing Strategies and Action Planning, 2007

Four Strategic Themes for the Housing Policy in Serbia”, 2006 /prepared by the Ministry of Infrastructure/

Starting points for formulation of New Housing Policy in the Republic of Serbia, 2006 /prepared by the Ministry of Infrastructure/

**Annex 2**

- Terms of Reference of the Evaluation Mission
- Errata Corrige of 21 November 2008