

Survey of Kosovar Refugees Project
Survey of Refugees' Attitudes About Return
14 June 1999

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As NATO troops enter Kosovo, when and how the refugees will return has become an important issue. We believe that the refugees' perspective should be a central part of that debate, in addition to guiding assistance efforts on their behalf.

For several months, IPLS and AAAS have been conducting a study on the experiences of these Kosovar refugees, based on a combination of personal interviews and statistical sampling, so our project was uniquely qualified to address these questions in a systematic manner. (See *Program Summary* for details.) The SKR project has trained interview teams and collected camp registries sufficient to conduct rapid surveys based on probability samples. On June 11 and 13, we conducted 311 interviews in eight camps in Tirana, Korça, and Kukes. Our findings are presented below.

Findings

There are three fundamental findings from refugees in four camps in Tirana (Pool camp-tents; Greek camp-houses; Sports palace; Mullet), two camps in Korça (Pojska, Qatrom), and two camps in Kukes (Kukes I-Arcobaleno, United Arab Emirates Camp).

First, it is clear that all refugees *want* to return immediately. However, they have substantial concerns about the conditions required for them to return (see Graph 1 in Appendix 1, below).¹ The most common concern is security, with more than 78% of respondents indicating that they will not return until they believe they will be safe. When they were probed, they replied that they wanted NATO to guarantee their safety, or that they want to be safe from the Serbs.

The second, third, and fourth most common responses are logistical: food/water, transportation, and housing/shelter. Obviously refugees are concerned that they be able to meet basic needs when they return to Kosovo.

A number of refugees also expressed concern about the trip back to their homes. A few said they actually wanted to be escorted by NATO troops, and many were worried about road conditions. They also pointed out that although some have transportation, they do not have money for fuel.

¹ Note that we counted all the concerns each refugee reported. Since most refugees reported more than one concern, the percentages of refugees who had each concern sum to more than 100%.

We were surprised that some respondents reported to us that they will **not** return to areas in which there are Russian soldiers. We did not ask refugees anything about this, but they volunteered the information, often in quite vehement terms.

Second, although refugees in these four camps are eager to return to Kosovo, they report that they are willing to wait for some time if UNHCR recommends it. In Graph 2, we present the distribution of the times that refugees report that they are willing to wait before returning to Kosovo. More than half (56.7%) of the refugees report that they are willing to wait one month or more (including those who say they will wait until they are told it is safe). Even though 19% say that they want to leave immediately, regardless of the conditions, they all reported some concerns about the return.

Third, only 26% of people in these camps have some form of transportation with them. While there is regional variation (as camps get further from the border, the number of families with no transportation goes up, see Discussion section for more details), a large number of these refugees are depending on international agencies for transportation to Kosovo.

Discussion

Although 26% of people have some form of transportation, that level varies from only 2% of people in camps in Korca, to 22% of people in camps in Tirana, to 49% of the people in Kukes. The transportation problem is therefore acute for people who are staying at substantial distances from Tirana.

People in all regions are concerned about security first (see Figure 4, below). However, while food and transportation are the next most frequent categories of concern for refugees staying in Tirana and Kukes, housing preoccupies refugees in Korca camps. Given the nearly total lack of transportation for people in Korca, and the relative availability of transportation for people in Kukes, this might be surprising.

In Figure 6, we note that people from rural areas are nearly twice as likely to reply that they are uncertain when they will return to Kosovo. Public information is particularly important for them.

Refugees in Kukes are nearly unanimous in saying that they will not return to Kosovo until they believe that they will be safe there (see Figure 7). Given that security topped the list of concerns about return for every region, the fact that refugees say that security is not only a concern but that they will not return until they feel secure should be understood. Given that this response was so overwhelming from the people closest to the border, it may be particularly important.

Methodology

Because of the time-sensitive nature of this information, we could not interview refugees in all camps. The interviews were conducted in eight camps, chosen carefully to represent different regions and types of camps (an informal experimental design), rather than statistically sampled. While this does not produce broad generalizations about refugees in all Albanian camps, it allows comparisons among regions and different kinds of camps that otherwise might not be possible. Using a series of sensitivity tests, we

checked for differences between camps and regions. While camps within regions are strikingly similar, there are a few notable differences between regions (see *Discussion* for details). Within regions, refugee attitudes about return do not vary systematically by camp, suggesting that these findings may be interpreted as reasonable representations of attitudes among refugees in camps within these three regions of Albania.

Our teams conducted 311 interviews with families in four camps (see Appendix 2 for the numbers of interviews done, broken down by camp and region of Kosovo where people are from and non-response rates). There were 42 non-responses (people absent or moved out of the camps). We chose our samples from lists of all the families in these eight camps, and in our findings below, we have presented the margin of error associated with each estimate. Because the families to be interviewed within the camps were chosen statistically, with each family having an equal probability of being included in the sample, these findings may be interpreted as representative of refugees' opinion in these camps, within the stated margin of error.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The structure of our questionnaire allowed refugees to distinguish between when they want to go home – immediately – and when they realistically expect to go home. Refugees understand that arranging adequate transportation, establishing security in Kosovo, and organizing food and shelter in communities damaged in the conflict all will take time.

A few refugees reported that they are absolutely unwilling to return to areas under Russian soldiers' control. Although relatively few respondents made this point, we note that a) this point was not among our list of example probes, and was therefore entirely spontaneous, b) it was expressed to our interviewers with extraordinary vehemence and c) it was a more common response in camps where people from Prishtina were living. Relief agencies should be very sensitive to which governments control particular regions when they organize returns.

These results indicate that UNHCR, interested governments, and private relief agencies have some time to prepare for the return, perhaps as much as three months. However, high levels of uncertainty persist in refugees' assessments of when they expect to return. Therefore a substantial public information campaign will be very important, especially for refugees from rural areas and those in camps distant from Tirana. This campaign should be conducted with the maximum possible transparency, providing Kosovars with information and with mechanisms to enable them to participate in relief agencies' decision processes.

We caution that Kosovar refugees in countries other than Albania may have different attitudes than those reported here. In particular, it is likely that refugees in Macedonia and Montenegro face substantially different current conditions of housing, health care, and security, and therefore may be more insistent upon returning immediately. We have no empirical basis for analyzing these differences.

Appendix 1: survey questions

Sample number (code)

Where is your home in Kosovo? Is it rural

or urban?

Now that NATO soldiers are in Kosovo, when do you want to go home?

Do you have transportation back to your home? If so, what (tractor, car)?

What conditions do you require before you will be willing to go back into Kosovo? (examples are transportation to your home, security against attacks by remaining Serb forces, the availability of clean water and food, etc.)?

If UNHCR asks you to wait before you return to Kosovo, will you be willing to stay in Albania? For how long?

Appendix 2: descriptive statistics

Note that where appropriate estimates are shown with the margin of error.

Table 1: Number of interviews, by camp of interview and whether respondent was home

Camp name	Number of interviews	No response	Pct. NR
Tr - Palestra	12	1	7.7%
Tr - Pool-Tent	32	9	22.0%
Tr - Pool-Greek	42	5	10.6%
Tr - Mullet	22	2	8.3%
Kr - Pojska	25	4	13.8%
Kr - Qatrom	59	13	18.1%
Ku - Arcobaleno	50	8	13.8%
Ku - UAE	69	0	0.0%
Total	311	42	11.9%

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents, by camp of current residence and rural and urban region in Kosovo

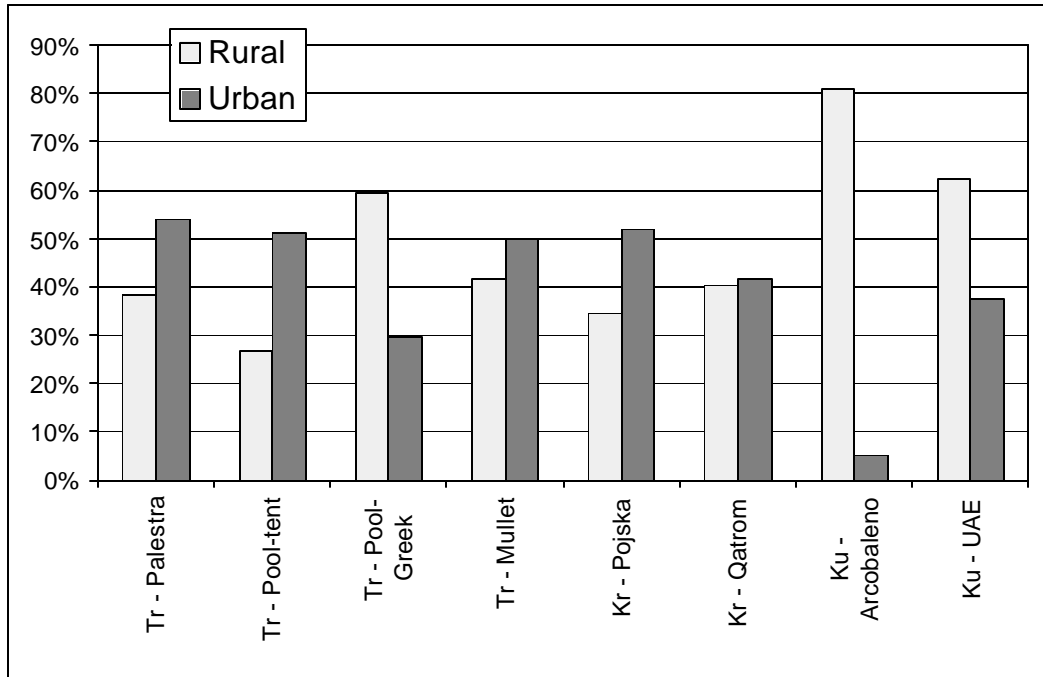


Table 2: Distribution of respondents, by camp and geographic region

	I Ferizaj	II Gjilane	III Pristina	IV Gjakove	V Prizren	VI Peja	VII Skendraj	VIII Mitrovic	NR No response	Total
Tr – Mullet			21%	21%	42%	8%			8%	100%
Tr – Palestra				15%	15%	38%		23%	8%	100%
Tr – Pool-Greek				28%	38%	21%		2%	11%	100%
Tr – Pool-Tent				12%	46%	20%			22%	100%
Kr – Pojska			83%					3%	14%	100%
Kr – Qatrom	4%	3%	49%	11%	1%	1%	3%	10%	18%	100%
Ku – UAE	1%	1%	6%	12%	78%	0%	0%	1%	0%	100%
Ku – Arcobaleno	0%	0%	12%	10%	59%	3%	0%	2%	14%	100%

Figure 2: Concerns of Kosovar refugees (in eight camps), by type of concern

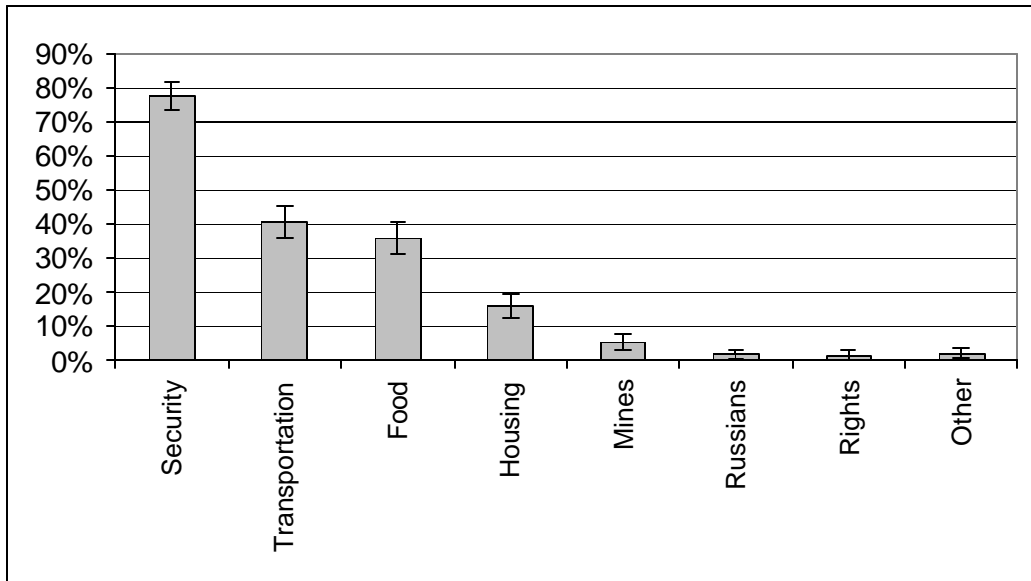


Figure 3: Concerns of Kosovar refugees (in eight camps), by type of concern and rural and urban region in Kosovo

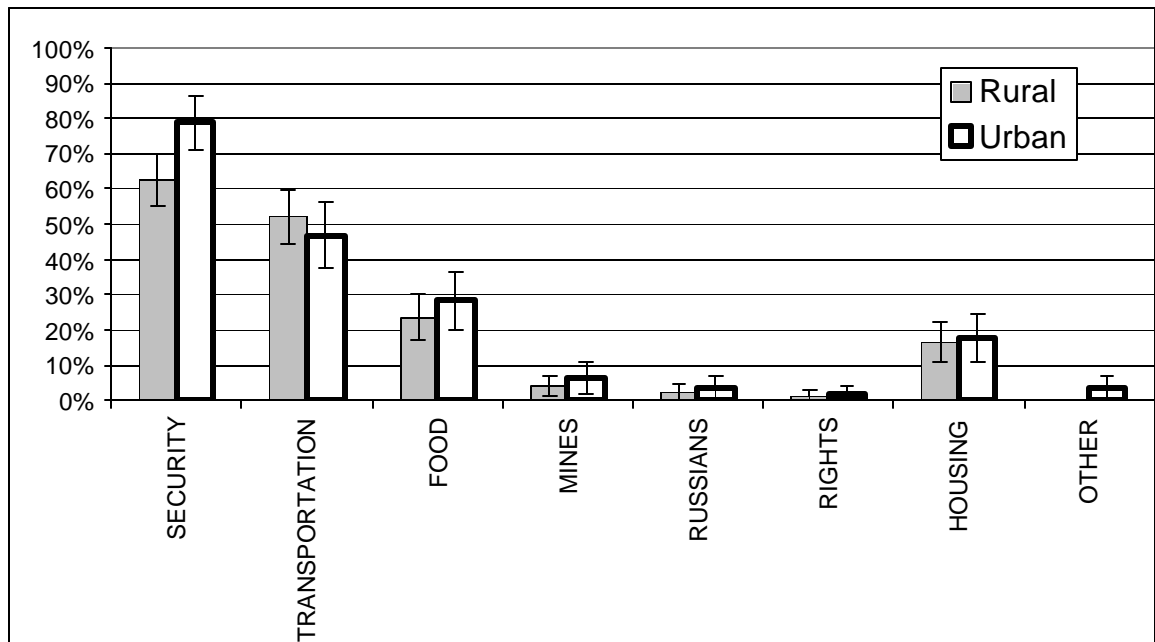


Figure 4: Concerns of Kosovar refugees (in eight camps), by type of concern and camp region

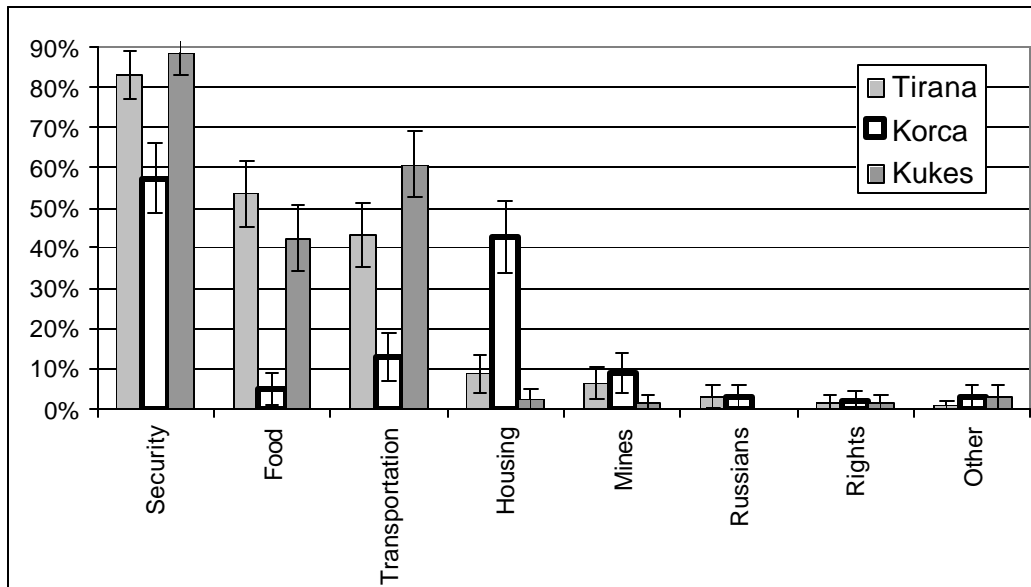


Figure 5: Willingness of Kosovar refugees (in eight camps) to wait for return

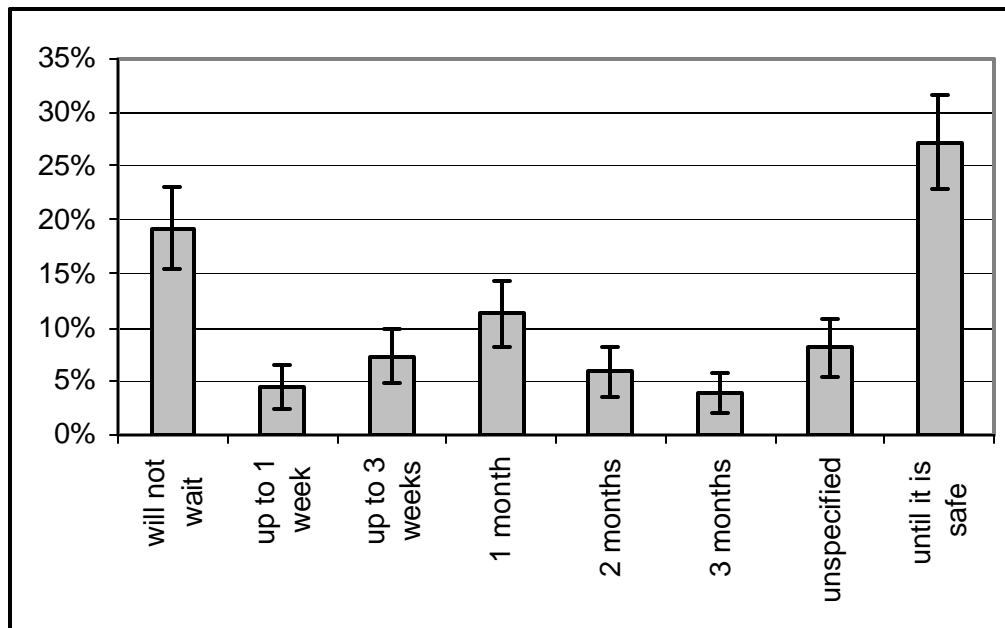


Figure 6: Willingness of Kosovar refugees (in eight camps) to wait for return, by rural and urban region in Kosovo

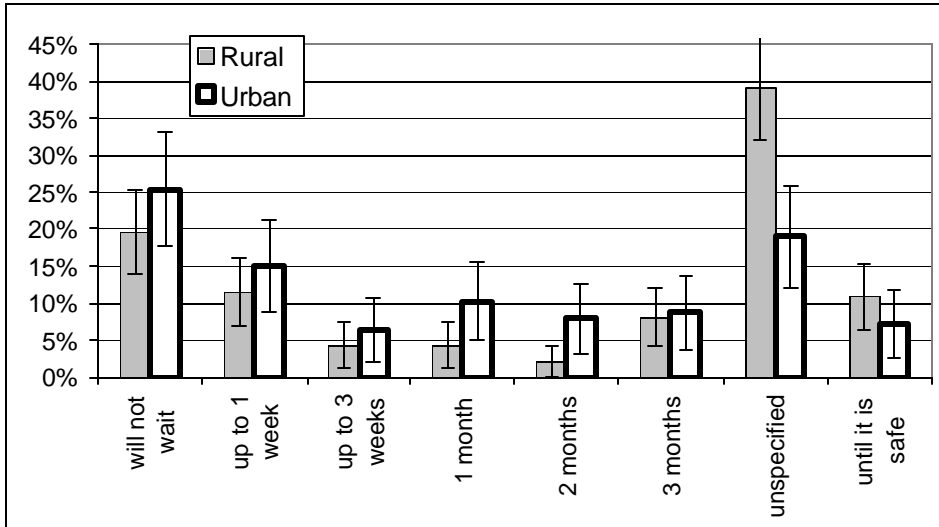
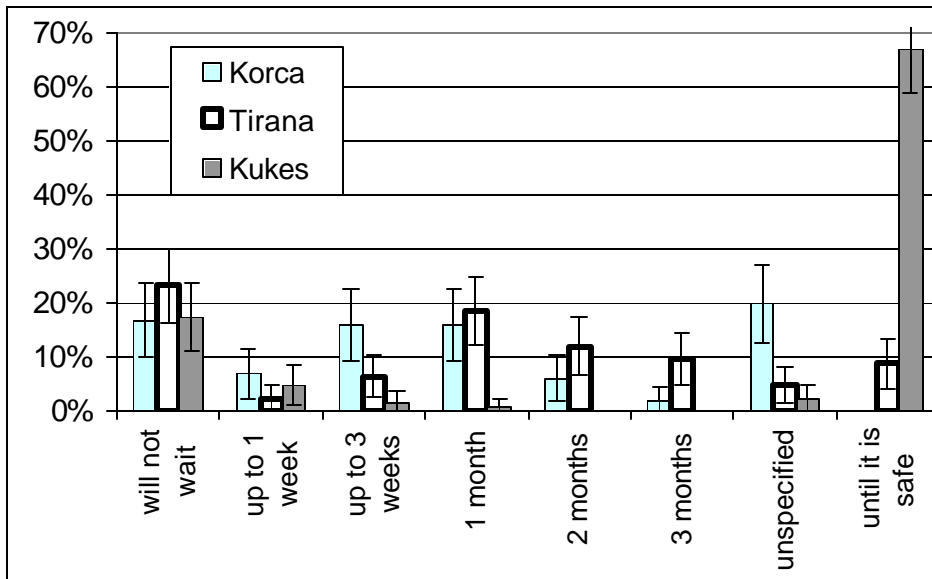


Figure 7: Willingness of Kosovar refugees to wait for return, by camp region



Appendix 3: Regional codes

REGION I.

1. Ferizaj
2. Kacaniku
3. Shtimje

REGION II.

1. Gjilane
2. Kamenice
3. Viti

REGION III.

1. Prishtine
2. Obilic
3. F.Kosove
4. Lipjane
5. Novoberde
6. Podujeve

REGION IV.

1. Gjakove
2. Rahovec
3. Malisheve

REGION V.

1. Prizren
2. Dragash
3. Suhareke
4. Shterpce

REGION VI.

1. Peja
2. Decani
3. Istog
4. Kline

REGION VII.

1. Skenderaj
2. Glllogoci

REGION VIII.

1. Mitrovice
2. Leposaviq
3. Zubin Potok
4. Vushtri

Acknowledgements

The Institute for Policy and Legal Studies (IPLS) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) acknowledge the generous support of the East/West Management Institute which made this project possible. Logistical assistance was provided by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Emergency Management Group of the Albanian Government. We would also like to thank the camp authorities for their past and continued cooperation.

Project Summary

The Institute for Policy and Legal Studies (IPLS) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) are organizing surveys and collecting other quantitative data about Kosovars in Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo. The project's primary objective is to determine the pattern and scope of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed in Kosovo since October 1, 1998.

During the course of the project, IPLS/AAAS will achieve the following objectives.

- (1) Collect, through the analysis of survey-based interviews of refugees and other quantitative measures, objective evidence of war crimes and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions by all parties to the conflict in Kosovo.
- (2) Provide the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) with information on the kinds and patterns of abuses being committed and the names of alleged perpetrators and their military and security units for further investigation.
- (3) Disseminate, both in print format and on the Internet, a report—in English, Albanian, and Serbian—on the project's general findings to UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the public-at-large.
- (4) Transfer the skills of survey-based human rights research to local NGOs.
- (5) Provide UN agencies and other relief organizations with information that will better enable them to attend to the long-term medical and psychosocial needs of Kosovar refugees in the region.
- (6) Provide information to guide post-conflict reconstruction efforts to those areas most severely affected by the destruction of goods, livestock, buildings, and personal and commercial property.

We publish occasional quantitative and analytical reports on topics of interest to UN and private relief agencies and to the public at large. This project is conducted in consultation with the Human Rights Center of the University of California, Berkeley and Human Rights Watch. Administrative and organizational support is provided by the East/West Management Institute in New York.

Project Staff

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