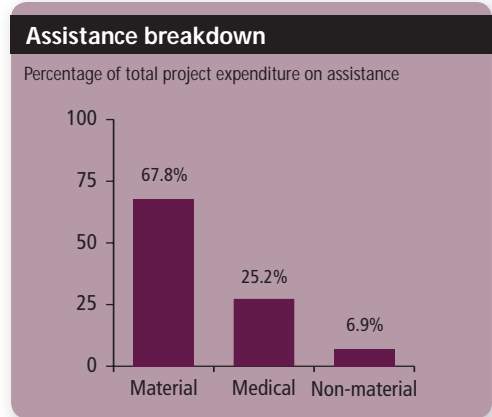




# Jehovah's Witness Survivors

**T**hroughout three years of HSP project implementation, the **Jehovah's Witness Holocaust Era Survivors Fund (JWHESF)** assisted 1,876 survivors in Croatia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Projects and beneficiaries assisted	
Total beneficiaries	1,876
Men	32%
Women	68%
Service providers	1
Projects implemented*	1
Implementation period	Mar 2002-Jul 2005
Average project length*	39 months
*Initial project and extensions count as one.	



Jehovah's Witness beneficiaries assisted	
Country	No. of beneficiaries
Croatia	3
Hungary	12
Moldova	186
Poland	109
Romania	243
Russian Federation	23
Ukraine	1,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,876</b>

## Outreach

The JWHESF was the only organization identified with the capacity to locate and assist eligible members of this victim group. The JWHESF declined the additional task of identifying and assisting survivors who may have been Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi occupation but were no longer members of this community.

## Beneficiaries

HSP assistance reached needy Jehovah's Witness survivors in seven Central and Eastern European countries. The JWHSF identified priority needs, including medical and dental assistance (in the form of prescription medicines, hospital treatment, dentures and eyeglasses), winter assistance (fuel and heating bills) and food. Clothing, home care and emergency financial support (mainly for minor home repairs) were also provided to Jehovah's Witness beneficiaries.

Survivors in Romania spoke of being targeted by Nazi-era persecution for "public instigation" or "neutrality" (i.e. refusing military service), resulting in internment, forced labour or flight. In the occupied north of Moldova, elderly Jehovah's Witnesses described beatings, forced labour and executions. Ukrainian survivors recounted their parents' arrests and remembered how, as children, they were persecuted for their family's affiliation with the congregation. A majority of beneficiaries interviewed by IOM spoke of continued persecution after the end of the war on account of religious practices.

### Beneficiary account

Constantin lived in Edinet, once located in Soviet Moldova. He told IOM how, during the war, adult Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and sentenced for "neutrality" on account of their faith. Some were deported, never to return.

Older children were left to care for the family, or were sent with younger siblings to orphanages in Romania, only to return after the war to the burnt ruins of their former homes.

In a country with an inadequate national health scheme, monthly pensions of around US\$ 4-15, and rural poor subsisting on bread and porridge, survivors gladly accepted medical, food and home heating assistance.



## Projects

The JWHSF relied on its network of local *bethels* (church centres) and volunteers for the implementation of two consecutive projects over a three-year period. Projects were administered by JWHSF headquarters in the United States of America, which was responsible for collecting and compiling beneficiary and financial records, tracking project resources and reporting to IOM. The delivery of assistance to this survivor group was monitored by IOM staff from Geneva and in relevant field offices.

The JWHSF worked in cooperation with Watch Tower Society branch offices. These had extensive networks of community-based volunteers in each of the countries of operation. JWHSF procedures for aid delivery and monitoring allowed the transfer of funds to beneficiaries who then purchased the needed assistance. Receipts were collected by local community leaders. Individual beneficiary records were regularly updated by project staff and volunteers.

Project overhead costs were kept low and assistance streamlined by using local volunteers, who assisted beneficiaries with medical



### Assistance breakdown and beneficiaries assisted

Type of assistance	% of beneficiaries receiving assistance	% of total project expenditure on assistance
<b>Material</b>		
Food (except food packages)	76.6	20.6
Food packages	0.0	0.0
Clothing	33.1	6.6
Winter assistance	79.0	27.4
Emergency financial support	12.5	3.6
Hygienic supplies	0.0	9.6
<b>Medical</b>		
Medical and/or dental assistance	79.7	25.2
<b>Non-material</b>		
Homecare	34.6	7.0
Legal assistance	0.0	0.0
Social assistance	0.0	0.0



appointments, safe and proper use of aid items and banking arrangements. All JWHSF personnel and volunteers associated with this programme were required to keep detailed records and to account to JWHSF headquarters for the handling of funds.

Project implementation relied on the beneficiaries' timely submission of receipts for the purchase of assistance. Delays in receipt collection and reporting on expenditures resulted in IOM's withholding contracted payments until satisfactory documentation had been provided.

Ukraine had the largest number of Jehovah's Witness beneficiaries. Project implementation was hindered by the Ukrainian Committee on Humanitarian Aid's prolonged delay in approving a tax exemption for project funds intended to benefit its country's survivors.

*A majority of beneficiaries interviewed by IOM spoke of continued persecution after the end of the war on account of religious practices.*

*Overhead costs were kept low thanks to local volunteers.*

Each eligible survivor received a description of possible assistance and selected the items most needed. JWHEF reported that urban beneficiaries most often requested food and hygienic supplies as well as medical assistance. Those living in apartments with basic utilities did not often seek winter relief. In contrast, this was a priority for beneficiaries in the countryside who needed coal or firewood to heat their homes. Jehovah's Witness survivors also benefited from medical assistance, including medications, eyeglasses, prostheses and other items that facilitated mobility or otherwise improved the quality of their lives.

## Conclusion

As with other beneficiary groups, HSP assistance to Jehovah's Witness victims addressed often overwhelming needs for humanitarian aid. The service provider encountered relatively few difficulties in delivering individualized assistance thanks to each local elder's intimate knowledge of their communities. Survivors expressed gratitude for HSP assistance, which supplemented their modest pensions, allowed them to address urgent health and nutritional concerns and provided them with heating and house repairs.



## Project overview

HSP project*	Beneficiaries	Coverage	Assistance types	Start	End
Jehovah's Witness Holocaust Era Survivors Fund	3	Croatia	Food (except for food packages), clothing, winter assistance, homecare, emergency financial support, medical and dental assistance	Mar 02	Mar 04
	12	Hungary			
	186	Moldova			
	109	Poland			
	243	Romania			
	23	Russian Federation			
	1,034	Ukraine			
Jehovah's Witness Holocaust Era Survivors Fund (1 <sup>st</sup> revision)	3	Croatia	Food (except for food packages), clothing, winter assistance, homecare, emergency financial support, medical and dental assistance	Apr 04	Jul 05
	9	Hungary			
	186	Moldova			
	103	Poland			
	219	Romania			
	23	Russian Federation			
	1,300	Ukraine			
<b>Jehovah's Witness, total**</b>	<b>1,876</b>				

\* Initial projects and project extensions are listed separately.

\*\* Beneficiaries assisted under more than one project or extension are counted only once.

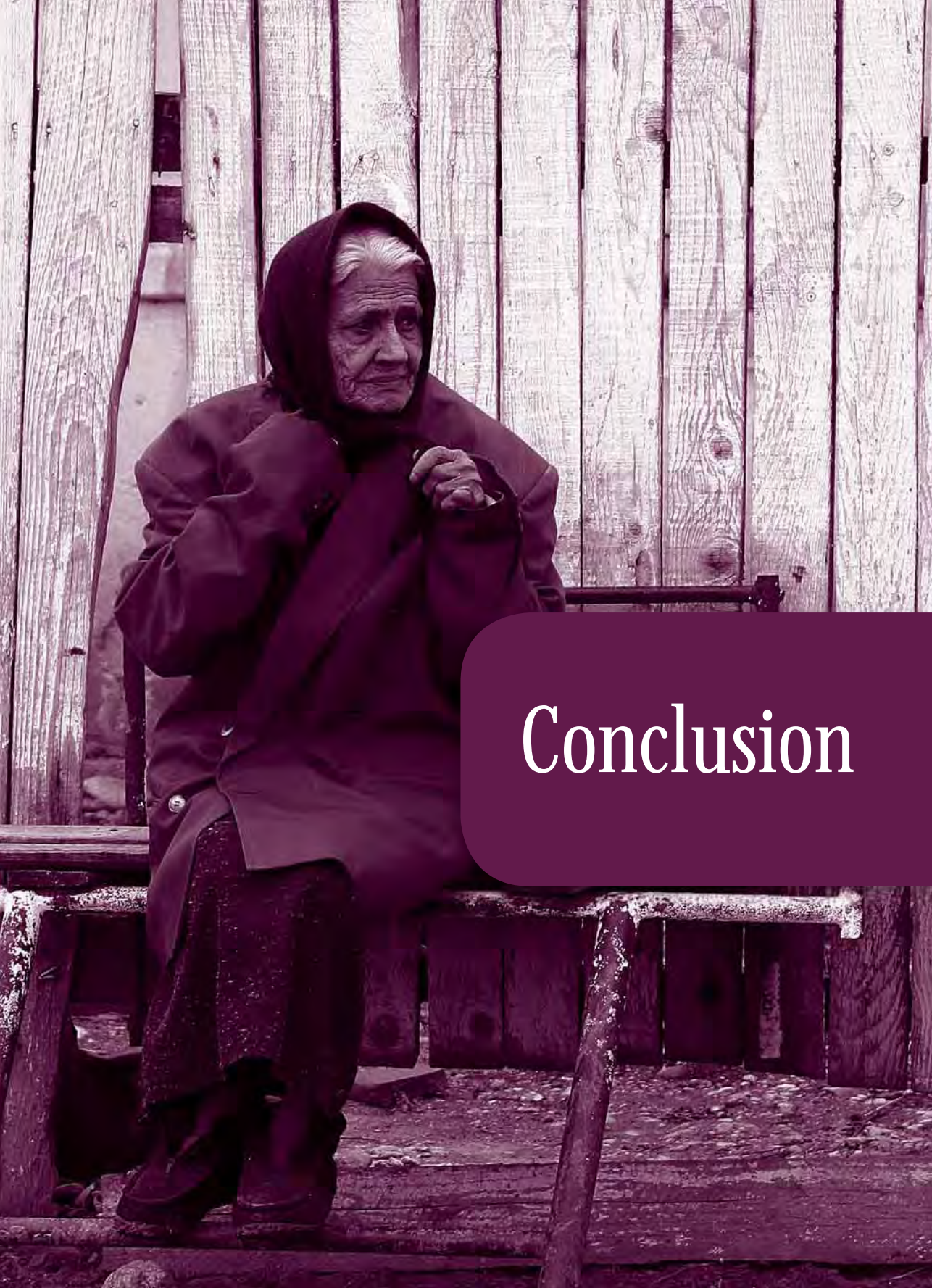
Note on project names: "Revision" denotes extension of an existing project.

# Working with Jehovah's Witness survivors

## Some lessons learned

1. IOM respected the organization and principles of the Jehovah's Witness world community in order to reach survivors. The sometimes uneven level of responsiveness and limited experience of community members in humanitarian assistance was compensated by the excellent access these provided to survivors still affiliated with the group.
2. IOM did not involve its field offices in initial project development. This was handled directly between Geneva and IOM's partner in New York according to the latter's wishes. As a result, IOM field staff found it especially challenging to monitor the project effectively due to the lack of established local relationships or regular contact with institutional counterparts at the country level.
3. The programme benefited from substantial input by Jehovah's Witness community members that was not charged to the programme. The efforts of these "volunteers" helped keep administrative project costs among the lowest in HSP. Nevertheless, the lack of administrative funds allocated by IOM's partner to its country teams also contributed to making the regularity of their work, reporting and follow-up with beneficiaries problematic.





# Conclusion

## Impact, analysis and lessons learned

IOM's Humanitarian and Social Programmes (HSP) achieved results that would have been unimaginable over five years ago, when the US Court and the German Foundation first turned to the Organization. IOM collaborated with more than 60 external service providers to deliver HSP assistance worth over US\$ 32 million to needy elderly Roma, Jehovah's Witness and disabled survivors. In locations where the identification of suitable partner organizations was unsuccessful, IOM implemented projects directly, including the delivery of assistance to homosexual survivors.



IOM found many more survivors than expected. The Organization had to periodically modify programme and project parameters in order to deliver appropriate kinds and quantities of aid. Field realities required that both IOM and service providers remain flexible and permit adjustments in project schedules and budgets, allowing HSP assistance to reach a constantly increasing number of beneficiaries. HSP projects in nearly all countries of implementation were extended and expanded to include additional survivors and to match programme capacities with victims' needs. Nevertheless, many project partners found eligible persons who could not be assisted due to time and resource limitations.

Food packages, followed by winter assistance (predominantly home-heating fuel) and hygienic supplies (soap, disinfectants, towels) were the kind of available aid most requested by beneficiaries. All were considered essential for daily survival. These three categories accounted for nearly 72 per cent of all HSP assistance delivered. They formed the backbone of a programme in which, to the initial objectives of recognition and comfort for needy victims, IOM had no choice but to add that of life-sustaining aid.

Partners with the capacity to deliver and account for individualized and complex assistance provided more sustainable, non-material aid. Generally less expensive than material forms, social, legal and medical assistance at first generated limited interest among beneficiary communities. This was despite the fact that non-material aid, if it could be provided, could mean higher pensions, free healthcare and better housing.

Beneficiaries, local service providers and IOM found that HSP assistance dramatically improved the quality of life and outlook of thousands of marginalized and often forgotten survivors of Nazi persecution. IOM only located and assisted a portion of those who might have fulfilled eligibility criteria. Assistance provided no more than a “lifeline” in communities where needs were wide-ranging and dire. While HSP may have brought long-awaited recognition of past suffering and a temporary relief from overwhelming hardships, it also exposed a variety of survivor and community needs, many of which are likely to remain unaddressed for years to come.

*Many project partners found eligible persons who could not be assisted due to time and resource limitations.*





*Wide-ranging needs remain unaddressed both for many survivors and their broader communities.*

International humanitarian and social assistance for non-Jewish Holocaust victims is a new and particularly challenging undertaking. Survivors gradually overcame their initial fear and distrust of outsiders. Many broke into tears when receiving aid, in most cases the first, albeit meagre, recognition of their suffering in nearly 60 years. Others, while still grateful, often begged IOM to help younger family members instead, as they were “old and help would no longer make a difference”. Many told IOM that HSP had made the difference between freezing or starving and another season of “getting by”. Already in sad confirmation of this, IOM heard during the winter of 2005-2006, as the programme was winding down, of former beneficiaries dying from hypothermia.

By engaging several partners in each country, IOM contributed to the emergence of a network of NGOs able to observe rigorous

implementation, accounting and reporting standards. Some of IOM's most successful partners were, in fact, ethno-cultural, commercial and political entities. When given the opportunity to access donor resources in order to help their own people, they proved themselves capable of taking on humanitarian and social assistance tasks. Many young Roma leaders with whom IOM collaborated demonstrated practical insights, flexibility and enthusiasm.

IOM confirmed that capacity building for NGOs, inevitable in the course of results-driven activities, works better as a programme “by-product” than a direct output. HSP project development, implementation and monitoring requirements, together with regular and close cooperation, assured successful partners of substantial improvements in certain competencies.

In the case of the Roma, HSP contributed indirectly, yet significantly, to the emergence of a stronger, more representative civil society sector, better equipped to administer future assistance for vulnerable communities. It is IOM's hope that HSP also fostered and leaves behind increased mutual trust between Roma and outsiders, as well as new information on community needs and how to meet them.

## A job still undone

IOM reached approximately half of the eligible survivors in Central and Eastern Europe. The unexpectedly high number of victims identified proved that Holocaust survivors were both originally more numerous and have lived longer than was previously thought.

In January 2004, IOM responded to a request for proposals from the US Court with a request for additional resources for HSP. The proposal seeks between US\$ 59 and 214 million, depending on the amount of possible unclaimed residual funds that may be available for additional humanitarian assistance to members of the Swiss Banks “Looted Assets” class. Should additional settlement funds be made available in the future, IOM is positive that many eligible survivors could still be identified and assisted, especially Roma, Sinti and the disabled.



It estimates that there will still be almost 100,000 non-Jewish class members living in poverty in Central and Eastern Europe in the year 2013.

Assistance funded from the German Foundation's original contribution to HSP ended in June 2005. US Court projects continued through January 2006.

In December 2005, thanks to a donation by Dr. Friedrich Christian Flick, the German Foundation granted IOM additional resources of some EUR 415,000 for assistance to Sinti and Roma former forced and slave labourers. These funds were managed separately from original donor contributions and made it possible for IOM to extend HSP projects in two countries on a reduced scale, for two more months. In case further German Foundation resources become available in the near future, notably funds left over from unpaid slave and forced labour claims, IOM would plan to utilize them in a similar manner.



Basic assistance to IOM's four victim groups, especially Roma and disabled, essentially comes to an end with HSP. International aid to vulnerable communities in Central and Eastern Europe generally targets younger members through projects aimed at creating education and employment opportunities, or community leaders through training, capacity building and political participation projects. While considerable resources are expended, few benefits trickle down to the most needy, at least in the short or medium term. IOM's temporary support to survivors, while providing long-awaited recognition of past persecution and suffering, largely failed to generate long-term improvements in beneficiary or community living conditions. Ironically, IOM came to realize that the very recognition of their suffering, however late, may have contributed to renewed trauma and feelings of abandonment and despair once assistance was, in the perception of many inexplicably, terminated.

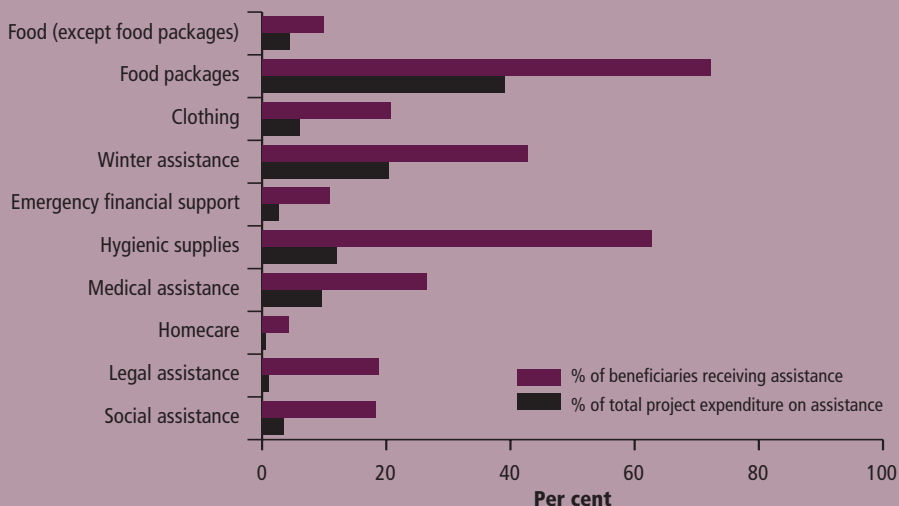
Anticipating these and other consequences for beneficiaries of programme termination, IOM has sought, without success, to expand HSP's donor base. International donors understandably prefer sustainable assistance as less costly and more likely to leave behind something of "lasting value". While individual states generally accept that it is their responsibility to care for citizens unable to look after themselves, the number of persons in need in Central and Eastern Europe far exceeds that of HSP-eligible beneficiaries or the current means of the emerging economies to help their own.

As may have been expected, survivors helped by IOM under HSP often said they hoped assistance could continue for the rest of their lives. In spite of this, many of the victims identified by IOM in the course of the programme will die in conditions worse than any they experienced since 1945.

In case significant additional resources are made available for survivor projects in the coming years, activities must account for evolving requirements. A progressively older victim population will best be served through flexible and responsive modes of assistance. Throughout the earlier phases of the programme, IOM received requests for assistance that fell outside approved criteria, including housing for the elderly,



## Assistance breakdown and beneficiaries assisted (all beneficiary groups)



*While strategic initiatives are needed to address the root causes of Roma poverty, without basic survival assistance access to communities may be problematic.*

full-time homecare, contributions to community sanitation projects and funeral expenses. In any case, IOM anticipates that medical and homecare will soon be as important to them as food and winter assistance.

While much may still be unfinished, a lot has been accomplished. Even if HSP is not someday revived, donors may be satisfied that in just a few years they have helped many more persons than was originally expected. IOM laid the groundwork for future interventions and will maintain links with key partners through other activities, thereby ensuring that it is positioned to resume survivor assistance when and as needed.

## After HSP...

Wide-ranging needs remain unaddressed both for many survivors and their broader communities. These include basic humanitarian assistance and housing, more complex healthcare, social and legal counselling, as well as employment and educational opportunities



for younger Roma currently unable to support themselves and their families. International donors and national governments have spent much in past decades on Roma education, cultural preservation and leadership capacity-building. Recent international initiatives aiming at changing the lives of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe focus mainly on education, employment, health and housing, areas where progress may accelerate social inclusion and the improvement of the economic and social status of Roma across the region.

While strategic initiatives are needed to address the root causes of Roma poverty, without basic survival assistance access to communities may be problematic.



*“To elevate dramatically the level of service in the short term, building expectations among needy survivors, only to remove the funding and thus the assistance, would be a great disservice to those who may grow to depend upon their food packages, medical aid and home visits.”*

– Special Master’s Plan,  
p. 135

IOM field offices continue to work with former HSP partners to develop and implement more sustainable projects for community members of all ages in the areas of health, employment creation, education and community stabilization. Without their continued engagement in support of vulnerable groups, the network of NGOs that HSP has fostered is likely to fragment, thus depriving Roma communities of what had become life-saving support. Conversely, IOM believes that further cooperation with the international community will reinforce grassroots representative capacity and strengthen the foundations of an increasingly competent Roma civil society sector. IOM will look for the best use of its international structure and service area synergies in support of projects benefiting Roma. The Organization will seek to build upon its existing expertise and network of partners, as well as to foster and improve relationships with community-level representatives and NGOs, international agencies and other stakeholders active in the field of Roma assistance. As it did in HSP, IOM will involve beneficiaries, local NGOs and community representatives in project development, delivery enhancement and review.

Through its ongoing work with communities whose members were victims of the Nazi Holocaust, IOM will continue to honour the persons we have had the privilege to assist under HSP.









“Thank you for the coal  
and for remembering us.”

Polish survivor

