

## **MODULE 5** BENEFICIARY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### **PART 7** Case Study 6

In this part of module 5, we will explore the **sixth case study concerning the Bosnia and Serbia conflict.**

Between 1992 and 1995, approximately 100,000 people were killed during the Bosnian war and over 2.2 million were displaced. Between 12,000 and 50,000 women experienced sexual abuse and violence, and other war crimes such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, and more were inflicted.

The humanitarian aid effort in response to the war stimulated widespread critical literature about the effectiveness of such aid activities and the values upon which humanitarian practices are based.

For this module specifically, this case study illustrates many **good practices** and examples of humanitarian parties' engagement with beneficiaries and communities in response to the conflict. Overall, *the international relief programme agenda was driven by a strong social welfare approach where there were regular talks held with beneficiaries regarding their needs and what aid would be most suitable for their situations.*

These discussions provided the following interesting insights:

1. Affected populations stated that the aid relief distribution timetables were taking place at the same time as UNHCR's women's livelihood projects.
2. This meant that the delivery of aid by various NGOs and INGOs was overlapping and aid was being duplicated.
3. To avoid this, several agencies conducted more regular coordination and adapted the types of assistance they delivered and the delivery timings.

4. With the UNHCR women's livelihood project specifically, there was a lot of discussion with women in regard to the contents of the Mother and Child kits. The content was changed based on feedback from beneficiaries to be more suitable for their needs
5. There was also very interesting feedback regarding the stigma that the beneficiaries experienced when visiting soup kitchens, carrying relief supplies in bags with NGO agency names on them, and carrying other items with aid agency logos
6. In response, it was agreed there would be no branding surrounding soup kitchens and no labels on the bags for relief goods. This was very important in improving the dignity of the beneficiaries receiving assistance
7. There was also a very strong focus *on psychosocial support* for the families of those people who had been internally displaced as a result of the conflict. Approximately 180,000 refugees left Croatia and moved across northern Bosnia to Serbia. Around 18,000 elderly people remained behind. The aid community engaged with these people and discovered that they were not in great need of relief supplies; what they wanted was to know how they could contact the family members that had left. Subsequently, the relief program evolved into a tracing program. Again, this demonstrates the importance of *talking to beneficiaries and adjusting the assistance programmes accordingly.*