

# Georgia

## Main objectives

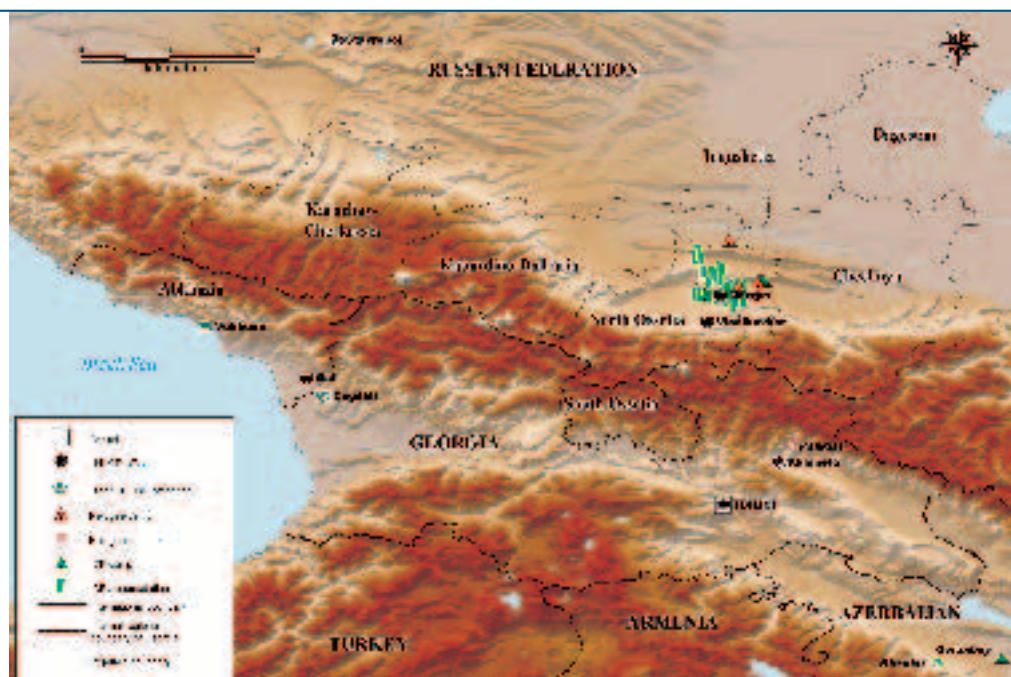
Protect and assist Chechen refugees and support the Government in implementing the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol; support the conflict resolution process sponsored by the OSCE in Georgia/South Ossetia and facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons from South Ossetia and Georgia proper; support the conflict resolution process sponsored by the UN in Georgia/Abkhazia; draw upon the Georgian Self-Reliance Fund

to seek durable solutions for IDPs by promoting integration into society where they currently live; monitor spontaneous return to Gali District and provide limited material assistance; seek improvements to the refugee law and asylum procedures, and help the Government and NGO structures build up sufficient resources and expertise to respond to involuntary displacement; promote accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

## Impact

### Chechen refugees and asylum-seekers

In 2002, for the third successive year, UNHCR continued to provide life-sustaining assistance and protection to the refugees from Chechnya in the Pankisi valley of north-eastern Georgia. The political uncertainty and insecurity in Chechnya precluded the return of refugees. Concerns remained regarding the level of protection that can be offered to the refugees, and UNHCR initiated a dialogue with the Government of Georgia in order to enhance the protection of the refugees. In April, the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation carried out a re-registration exercise, with UNHCR's financial and



technical assistance. The number of *prima facie* registered refugees was reduced from about 8,000 to some 4,000, mainly because of previous double and triple registration of refugees, as well as the erroneous registration of local people.

### Returnees and IDPs (Georgian-Osset conflict)

UNHCR remained engaged in the OSCE-sponsored conflict resolution process through the mechanism of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and was able to advocate the right to return, and the protection of returnees in their place of origin in South Ossetia and Georgia proper. Regular protection monitoring in returnee villages was carried out, particularly in minority villages. However, as there was no political solution to the conflict, and very few people returned in 2002. UNHCR assisted some 50 returning refugee or IDP families (188 individuals) with shelter.

### Returnees and IDPs (Georgian-Abkhaz conflict)

Political discussions on the status of Abkhazia have reached no conclusion and IDPs were still not able to exercise their right to return to Gali and other places of origin. In support of the UN-led process, and in an attempt to contribute to a stabilisation of the population which had spontaneously returned, UNHCR supported the rehabilitation of communal

infrastructure. Limited income generation assistance in the Samegrelo region of Georgia contributed to increased food security and improvements in the living conditions of the vulnerable IDPs and local population. In Sukhumi, basic humanitarian assistance was offered to vulnerable people, including those affected by the war, and the elderly.

## Working environment

### The context

The refugee caseload in the Pankisi valley has proven to be a politically sensitive issue. There were frequent security incidents during the year, the most important being the bombing and shelling of areas close to the refugee settlements by an unidentified aircraft in August. For protracted periods, the international staff of UNHCR and partners were prevented from visiting the Pankisi valley for security reasons. In August 2002, Georgian law enforcement units were deployed in the valley but the security situation remained very difficult and dangerous. UNHCR staff and implementing partners required the presence of armed guards, in order to deliver food and other assistance to the refugees and host community.

The late start (September 2002) of the repatriation exercise from North Ossetia accounts for the slight reduction of returnee numbers (50 families in 2002, as compared to 61 families in 2001). UNHCR staff travelled to Tskhinvali regularly to provide counsel-

ling for returnees. At the end of July 2002, UNHCR funded a joint mission to North Ossetia for South Ossetian and Georgian authorities. UNHCR provided roofing material for the newly-created Secretariat in Tskhinvali of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) mechanism, through which the South Ossetian and Georgian parties meet with the Russian Federation, the OSCE and the European Union.

UNHCR continued to systematically advocate the right of IDPs to return to their homes in Abkhazia. UNHCR also supported the efforts by the Secretary General's Special Representative for Georgia to ensure security for those who have spontaneously returned to Gali, particularly through the mechanism of Working Group II on IDPs of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, which is chaired by UNHCR. Working Group II met for the first time since 1998, when the Coordinating Committee was created.

### Constraints

Security problems within the Pankisi Valley continued to hamper the humanitarian community's work on behalf of refugees. In January 2002, a demonstration against criminal activity in the Pankisi Valley was held in Akhmeta, with the result that the road was blocked for UNHCR and partners, preventing the provision of assistance to beneficiaries in the valley. From February until May, activists in the refugee community staged demonstrations against UNHCR in Akhmeta, issued

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin / Type of Population	Total In Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
IDPs	261,600	-	55	-
Russian Federation (Refugees)	4,180	4,170	49	52

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
5,143,047	1,462,221	3,001,680	4,463,901	4,454,363

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted to the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



IDPs from Abkhazia. UNHCR renovated a room in the Communal “Academy of Science”, a hostel for women and children.  
UNHCR / A. Hollmann

threats against international and national staff and brought about a series of suspensions of UNHCR assistance delivery. Protests resumed in December and continued until the end of the year.

Weather and funding remained the two primary constraints to the successful implementation of activities on behalf of returnees to South Ossetia. The route for repatriation convoys was blocked by snow for approximately six months. Funding limited both the number of returnees that UNHCR assisted as well as the level of assistance, which consisted of basic shelter packages to those who agreed to return to their places of former residence.

Insecurity continued to hamper UNHCR’s operation in Abkhazia, causing frequent suspensions of field activities during the year. In view of the absence of a breakthrough in the peace process, the unresolved status of Abkhazia and the volatile security situation in the area, UNHCR was unable to promote the return of IDPs in 2002.

Periodic blockades of the Inguri River Bridge resulted in suspensions of the transport to Abkhazia of supplies for the implementation of the school rehabilitation project. UNHCR’s funding shortfall in the second half of the year also caused delays in the implementation of this project.

## Funding

Due to the global funding constraints, only 80 per cent of the ExCom approved budget was finally allocated. This led to the cancellation of UNHCR’s rehabilitation of health facilities in IDP-affected areas, training/workshops for capacity-building of NGOs and the authorities, and the contribution to Georgia Self Reliance Fund for Work to enhance the self-reliance of IDPs. Other activities for Chechen refugees, such as community services, income generation activities, procurement of household goods for refugees, operational support to implementing partners and training activities for school teachers had to be reduced. Shelter assistance to

IDP returnees in South Ossetia had to slow down, and eligibility criteria were tightened to ensure the available funds could cover the return of the most deserving cases. Similarly, the evaluation of the micro-finance scheme and the rehabilitation of eight schools in Abkhazia were deferred to 2003.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

Protection of the Chechen refugees in the Pankisi Valley was hampered by the limited access to the refugees due to the unresolved political and security issues surrounding the situation in the valley. In view of an unexplained increase noted in the number of Chechen refugees in the Valley, particularly since August 2001, UNHCR persuaded the Government to organise a new registration exercise. This exercise took place in April 2002 with the technical support of UNHCR, and as a result the official number of Chechen refugees in the Valley dropped by almost 50 per cent. Identity cards with photos and signatures remain an important element of protection for the refugees.

To avoid a major deterioration of the protection situation of the Chechen refugees in Georgia, UNHCR proposed a new strategy at the end of 2002, which is protection- and solutions-oriented. One of the main components of this strategy is the profiling of individual cases, to tailor solutions to individual circumstances. UNHCR advocated refugee rights, particularly for women and children, through the funding and the supervision of the drafting of a legal manual on human rights in Georgia, and the hosting of a regional Action for the Rights of Children workshop on training of trainers on refugee children's rights. The training of border guards remains an ongoing activity.

A new birth registration procedure was established for babies born to Chechen refugees.

In 2002, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 18 refugee families (65 persons) from North Ossetia and of 32 IDP families (123 persons) to South Ossetia and to Georgia proper. However, UNHCR has proposed to the Georgian and the de facto South Ossetian authorities a joint information campaign

aimed at targeting those Ossetians who are not in the process of becoming Russian citizens and who are living in a very difficult situation (in particular in the collective centres).

Due to the absence of progress in the conflict resolution process, no additional return has taken place in Gali district, over and above the regularly mentioned number of 40,000-60,000 spontaneous returnee IDPs. Despite the submission by the SRSG of the "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Sukhumi and Tbilisi", which had the full support of the Group of Friends (Germany, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, USA), the peace process has not taken off. As a consequence, there has been no return of IDPs.

### Activities and assistance

**Community services:** In 2002, UNHCR continued to work with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in the implementation of activities in the community centre in the Pankisi Valley. The community centre library was regularly stocked with periodicals, and television was available during centre hours. Approximately 60 persons visited the library daily. At times of regional political tension, the library was open late in order to ensure that refugees could conveniently access information.

Through a local partner, UNHCR implemented a project aimed at supporting youth development and leadership initiative, increasing participatory development opportunities for IDPs, and helping communities attain self-reliance by developing social and professional skills amongst young IDPs and vulnerable host community adolescents. *White Crane*, a monthly magazine for peace-building and reconciliation amongst children throughout Georgia, was printed in co-operation with UNV and distributed to 11,500 children (IDPs, refugees and locals) on a monthly basis throughout Georgia.

**Domestic needs/household support:** UNHCR distributed essential non-food items to Chechen refugees in the Pankisi valley including sanitary materials, detergent, toothpaste/toothbrushes and soap. Winter clothing (coats and boots) were also procured for refugee children in Pankisi Valley.

On behalf of war-scarred older people in Abkhazia, a local implementing partner procured and distributed various essential items including blankets/quilts, pillows, mattresses, towels and curtains. Improvements were made to the shelter where the most vulnerable elderly reside, including improvements to plumbing and electrical wiring.

**Education:** In 2002, UNHCR continued to assist schools in the Pankisi Valley through its working relationship with NRC, supplying classroom materials and student supplies for the use of 627 refugee students and 1,025 local students. In addition, UNHCR continued with the next stage of the teacher-training programme, continuing to focus in the classroom, on peace building and resolving class conflict. 88 teachers participated in the training. UNHCR also supported the kindergarten programme in Pankisi, managed by a local implementing partner.

In 2002, UNHCR supported the rehabilitation of 50 school buildings (nine in the Gali district as defined by its pre-conflict administrative boundary, and 41 in other regions of Abkhazia). Two of these schools in the Gali district deserve special attention, as they have been returned to educational use after having accommodated military units for years. By mobilising the local communities, UNHCR had only to supply construction materials for self-help rehabilitation, and over 10,300 school children benefited from the project. At UNHCR's request, UNICEF provided 22 "school in a box" kits for distribution by UNHCR to schools in the districts worst affected by the conflict, i.e. Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli. 4,700 children benefited from this intervention.

**Food:** While WFP was providing basic food to the entire refugee population in Pankisi Valley, UNHCR procured complementary food for the refugees and some food items for a one-off distribution to 2,000 host families.

**Forestry:** UNHCR supported a forestry-planting and ecological education programme for a second year. In conjunction with the forestry-planting programme, an ecological awareness class was also implemented for refugee children and local children in Pankisi.

**Health/nutrition:** Through an implementing partner, UNHCR covered all the basic health care needs

of refugees residing in the Pankisi Valley. Some 197 refugees were referred for emergency treatment in various hospitals in Tbilisi and 929 patients were treated in the Akhmeta regional hospital. UNHCR also distributed medicines to the clinics and regional hospitals in 2002.

**Income generation:** UNHCR initiated an income generation project targeted at refugees and the host community. A total of 80 refugee families living with host families received three sheep and fodder, on condition that the host and refugee families share responsibility for the care of the livestock and any profits made on the sale of animal products. Host families contributed the use of their land for tending the animals, and refugee families took charge of the animals. Some 20 additional refugee families living in collective centres received professional kits for hairdressing, welding, carpentry and shoe repair.

In partnership with, and co-funded by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, UNHCR implemented an income generation project aimed at providing vulnerable IDPs and the local population in the rural areas of the Samegrelo region with improved living conditions as well as increased food security and self-sufficiency.

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR worked with four partners on protection and legal issues. United Nations Association – Georgia (UNAG) worked with UNHCR on a training course for government counterparts and media representatives who deal with or report on issues related to refugee/asylum-seeker protection. A total of 35 persons participated in this two-day course. Four editions of *Refugees* magazine were distributed to approximately 1,000 recipients. UNAG also handled all publicity and organisational work for the World Refugee Day celebration. In addition, UNAG prepared and compiled country of origin information on Georgia and developed its website dedicated to refugee/asylum issues.

A local implementing partner worked with UNHCR throughout Georgia on behalf of IDPs seeking legal counselling. In five different counselling centres, approximately 514 persons sought legal advice over the course of the year. Among the key issues raised were property restitution, unpaid allowances, and return to places of former residence. Two radio and three television programmes on IDP legislation were

broadcast and the bimonthly legal journal *Law* was published: it serves as a forum for debate on a variety of legal topics pertaining to IDP issues.

Another local implementing partner worked with UNHCR to broadcast 34 radio programmes in 2002. These covered such topics as human rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Legal counselling was introduced in the community centre in the Pankisi Valley in 2002 and 564 persons sought the advice of the counsellors. The main concerns raised by the visitors included: access to education, refugee ID cards, grounds for loss of refugee status, receipt of Russian passports, Georgian citizenship, resettlement, and the registration of newborn babies.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR provided administrative support including salaries, office maintenance and logistics related costs to all implementing partners. In addition, four international and two national UNVs were employed.

**Sanitation:** UNHCR contributed to the general improvement of sanitation throughout the Valley by creating 11 garbage points around collective centres in Pankisi.

**Shelter/infrastructure:** On behalf of returnees to South Ossetia, UNHCR offered shelter assistance to 50 returnee families.

**Transport/logistics:** To facilitate assistance to Chechen refugees, UNHCR maintained two warehouses administered through a local implementing partner; UNHCR likewise maintained two trucks and bore the loading and unloading costs relating to the regular distributions of food and non-food items. UNHCR directly managed a warehouse in Gori and covered the transport component including loading/unloading of construction materials. UNHCR also fully funded the implementation of the school rehabilitation activities in Abkhazia.

**Water:** Through two implementing partners, UNHCR assisted in improving the water quality and its distribution network in several villages in the Pankisi Valley. Basic repairs were made to extend the community's access to potable drinking water.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management

UNHCR Operations in Georgia were carried out through the branch office in Tbilisi, and four field offices (Akhmeta, Gali, Sukhumi and Zugdidi). After closure of UNHCR's field office in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia and Gori (Georgia proper) at the end of 2001, two posts from the Tskhinvali field office were redeployed to the branch office in Tbilisi, from where operations in South Ossetia were supervised. Under the supervision of the Representative in the branch office, there were ten international and 20 local staff members.

In Akhmeta, there is one international, eight national staff and one UNV. In Gali, there is one international staff member – covering offices in Zugdidi and Sukhumi and five national staff. There are four national staff in Sukhumi as well as in Zugdidi.

### Working with others

UNHCR worked closely with IOM and OSCE on protection issues and UNDP, the World Bank, OCHA, USAID, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Government of Georgia on the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund. The co-ordination of activities with other humanitarian and development agencies was ensured through the forum of the monthly co-ordination meetings hosted by OCHA on IDP issues and by UNHCR on the refugee caseload. UNHCR also received active co-operation from UNICEF and WFP with regard to educational and food assistance respectively. Monthly co-ordinating meetings chaired by UNHCR were held in Akhmeta throughout the year.

### Overall assessment

UNHCR met basic protection and assistance goals for the caseload of Chechen refugees in the Pankisi Valley, despite continuing regional political problems and associated local security problems. UNHCR had planned to address the issue of host family fatigue through an infusion of assistance to the local community, but unfortunately the global funding shortfall meant that could not happen on the scale originally planned.

The modest protection and assistance programme for returnees to South Ossetia is simply a reflection of the rate of return. UNHCR does not anticipate a mass return until the OSCE-led conflict resolution process begins to bear fruit and economic conditions in the region improve to the extent that returnees can expect tolerable living conditions.

In the absence of a political solution to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in 2002, UNHCR considers its goals to have been valid – durable solutions for IDPs, and support to the UN-led peace process providing assistance to returnee IDPs in Abkhazia – and their attainment to have been satisfactory.

## Offices

Tbilisi
Akhmeta
Gali
Sukhumi
Zugdidi

## Partners

### Government Agencies

Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation
South Ossetian Committee on Migration and Nationalities

### NGOs

<i>Acción Contra el Hambre</i>
Agency for Community Mobilisation and Social Development
Charity Humanitarian Center (Abkhazeti)
Georgian Lawyers Union
International Refugee Committee
Norwegian Refugee Council
Peace and Accord
Post Factum
<i>Samani</i>
Technical Assistance in Georgia
Two-Sided Co-ordinating Commission
United Nations Association of Georgia

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual Programme Budget	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,068,742		70,083	
Community Services	54,560		32,405	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	89,735		75,695	
Education	184,599		26,409	
Food	97,200		0	
Forestry	22,700		21,871	
Health / Nutrition	115,370		15,080	
Income Generation	211,584		136,570	
Legal Assistance	116,598		62,221	
Livestock	0		11,373	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	587,848		84,276	
Sanitation	16,818		23,737	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	27,313		20,604	
Transport / Logistics	120,519		13,128	
Water	45,444		454	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	312,443		(397,479)	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>3,071,473</b>		<b>196,426</b>	
Programme Support	1,209,478		2,521	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>4,280,951</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>198,947</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	173,412	<b>(3)</b>	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,454,363</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>198,947</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	1,453,068		182,340	
Reporting Received	1,140,625		579,820	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>312,443</b>		<b>(397,479)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		412,124	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		14,644	
Currency Adjustment	0		0	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>312,443</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1st January	0		246,349	<b>(5)</b>
New Obligations	4,454,363	<b>(1)</b>	0	
Disbursements	4,280,951	<b>(3)</b>	198,947	<b>(5)</b>
Cancellations	0		47,401	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>173,412</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	

Figures which cross-reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5