

Russian Federation

Main objectives

- Support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards;
- Promote accession to the convention on statelessness and the naturalisation of stateless persons; and assist in their effective integration;
- Identify appropriate durable solutions for refugees and facilitate their integration;
- Help meet the need for assistance and protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North Caucasus.



Working environment

Recent developments

Since January 2003, all asylum-seeker children aged 6-12 have had access to local schools. This reflects an emphasis on education which is much appreciated by the refugee community. The programme of individual assistance piloted in 2002 continued and has had a positive impact. Assistance is spread more evenly among refugees due to the application of “open” criteria. As a consequence of which refugees are more open towards UNHCR and its implementing partners, since there is less of an incentive to “fit” specific criteria of vulnerability. In 2003, UNHCR dedicated protection staff efforts to reaching out more systematically to the regions of the Federation beyond Moscow. In North Ossetia, the integration of refugees from South Ossetia/Georgia is progressing, with increased Government participation.

In April 2003, the legislature of the Russian Federation adopted the regulations needed for the implementation of the 2002 Law on Citizenship. However, new proposals to amend the law have already been announced and are expected to be submitted to the State Duma in the autumn of 2003. The validity of USSR passports will expire on 31 December 2003. To the extent that citizenship does not depend on the validity of these identification papers, this

Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Asylum-seekers (Moscow)	5,340	4,940
De facto stateless (Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai)	11,000	11,000
IDPs in the North Caucasus	290,000	200,000
Others of concern	390,000	280,000
Refugees	10,480	7,545
Returnee IDPs	60,000	60,000
Temporary asylum	1,580	2,100
Total	768,400	565,585

Total requirements: USD 11,683,228

is not expected to create new situations of genuine statelessness. Nevertheless, it may create difficult situations for citizens of the Russian Federation whose USSR passports expire before they are issued with a new Russian Federation passport. Furthermore, it will make it more difficult for those persons who are already stateless, who hold Soviet documents to fulfil the conditions necessary to acquire citizenship of the Russian Federation.

In the North Caucasus, the Government has steadily increased the pressure on IDPs, particularly those in tented camps in Ingushetia, to return to Chechnya. No formal complaints of forced return have been received by UNHCR’s monitors. In July, the governmental decree on compensation to IDPs for lost housing and property was approved, but the implementation modalities and time-frame remain somewhat unclear. The authorities have repeatedly stated their intention to relocate IDPs from tented camps in Ingushetia to better shelter, and Camp B

(Camp "Bella") was closed by the end of September. Presidential and parliamentary elections in Chechnya have been scheduled for October and December 2003 respectively.

Constraints

Despite the transfer of responsibility for migration management to the Ministry of the Interior, implementation of the refugee law continues to be patchy. Migration control clearly remains the primary focus of the Russian Federation authorities. The introduction of the new law on foreigners, and the issuance of migration cards at the borders, have led to more vigorous and more frequent document checks by law enforcement agents seeking to combat illegal migration. Although not specifically targeted, asylum-seekers and refugees increasingly fall foul of punitive administrative measures. In the first six months of 2003, only nine cases (23 persons) from outside the CIS were recognized as refugees. Temporary asylum (in the Russian Federation, a form of subsidiary protection for persons falling outside the definition of a refugee but accepted on humanitarian grounds) was granted to far fewer people in the first half of 2003 than in the first six months of the previous year. This decrease seriously weakens the situation of persons in need of international protection. The high rejection rate and restrictions on admissibility to the asylum procedure remain the main problem of the national asylum system. In 2003, no asylum-seekers were granted access to the procedure upon arrival at Moscow international airport (Sheremetyevo-2).

The situation of asylum-seekers in Moscow (where the majority of asylum-seekers in the Russian Federation reside) remains precarious. The asylum procedure is very time-consuming. In Moscow city, it now takes more than two years to even obtain formal recognition of admission to the procedure. During this period, asylum-seekers remain without proof of their status and are considered and treated as illegal aliens by law enforcement agencies. There is little public interest in the cause of refugees and xenophobic reactions are not uncommon. Refugees from South Ossetia/Georgia in North Ossetia are subject to evictions from temporary accommodation where they may have been staying for over ten years. The Government has announced its intention to close all collective centres in the near future. The new laws on citizenship and on foreigners have further complicated the acquisition of citizenship for Meskhetians in Krasnodar. In Ingushetia, the lack of alternative shelter would call into question the voluntariness of return to Chechnya if tented camps and/or temporary settlements were closed. The situation in Chechnya still precludes unhindered and regular access to UNHCR, and recent incidents in Ingushetia have raised concerns about a possible deterioration of the security situation in this neighbouring republic as well.

Strategy

Protection, solutions and assistance

Given the size of the country and the limited resources available, UNHCR continues to concentrate its efforts on the regions with the highest concentration of beneficiaries, i.e. Moscow area, St. Petersburg area, the North Caucasus and Krasnodar Krai. At the same time, the protection outreach team will continue to selectively target other areas, particularly the eastern and southern borders.

Asylum-seekers and refugees

UNHCR and its partners will continue to advocate proper implementation of the refugee legislation; better protection and self-reliance for asylum-seekers pending status determination; local integration of recognised refugees; access to local medical facilities; resettlement for vulnerable refugees who are unlikely to be recognised by the Russian Federation's authorities as refugees and who have very few prospects of local integration; as well as voluntary repatriation for others. UNHCR will provide individual protection assistance and legal counselling, challenge illegal practices in the courts (regarding access to the RSD procedure) and assist asylum-seekers with court appeals. The focus will remain on the training of officials in charge of RSD and on strengthening the networks of legal counselling centres with a view to the eventual establishment of an efficient asylum management system in the Russian Federation. In North Ossetia, the focus will remain on protection and shelter, with some small-scale community support activities to complement these efforts. UNHCR will intensify its efforts to involve private donors and other interested organisations in funding its core mandate activities.

Stateless persons

UNHCR will actively follow up the amendments to the citizenship law, in consultation with the Council of Europe. De facto stateless persons (Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai and Armenians from Azerbaijan in Moscow) will receive legal assistance to mount judicial or administrative appeals in their quest for Russian citizenship.

Internally displaced persons in the North Caucasus

Working with the United Nations Country Team and within the Consolidated Appeal Process, UNHCR will maintain its lead role in the protection sector and its coordination role in the shelter sector. Assistance has been streamlined and the number of implementing partners will decrease (with the retention primarily of those working in the field of protection). UNHCR will continue to monitor the overall humanitarian and protection situation of IDPs in Ingushetia and Chechnya. Protection activities will aim

to ensure that any returns to Chechnya are voluntary and that those IDPs not ready to return continue to benefit from a safe haven in Ingushetia or elsewhere in the Russian Federation. Issuance of appropriate documentation, and compensation for lost housing and property, will be closely monitored.

Desired impact

Three durable solutions will be available to appropriate classes of beneficiaries respectively (voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement). Channels for constructive co-operation with governmental counterparts will be in place and the national asylum system will start functioning properly (including an effective status determination procedure). In addition, asylum-seekers will be able to maintain basic living conditions and

become more self-reliant, and legal and administrative barriers to various beneficiary groups will be reduced. In North Ossetia, vulnerable refugees will be better integrated. UNHCR will also support efforts to recognise the human rights of IDPs in the Northern Caucasus, including the provision of appropriate legal status and documentation. Durable solutions will increasingly be found in North Caucasus, as IDPs will return to Chechnya on a voluntary basis and those not willing to return will have alternatives outside Chechnya. Moreover, stateless persons will acquire Russian citizenship and will be able to integrate in the Russian Federation. It is expected that local and national NGOs will maintain a protection and assistance role beyond UNHCR's presence and that donors will more actively support UNHCR's core mandate activities on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers throughout the Russian Federation.



Chechen IDP children receiving school materials. UNHCR / T. Makeeva

Organisation and implementation

Management structure

In 2004, UNHCR in the Russian Federation will function with 78 staff: nine international and 51 national, three JPOs, and 15 UNVs (three international and 12 national).

Offices
Moscow
Nazran
Vladikavkaz

Partners
Governmental agencies
Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Interior of North Ossetia-Alania
Federal Migration Service of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation
Government of North Ossetia-Alania
Institute of Migration Processes Management of the State University of Management
Moscow City Education Department
NGOs
Association of Media Managers
Caucasian Refugee Council
Chechnya Justice Initiative
Children's Fund
Civic Assistance
Danish Refugee Council
<i>Dobroye Delo</i>
Ethnosphera Centre
Faith, Hope and Love
Gratis Psychological Support Centre
Guild of Russian Filmmakers
Legal System
Magee Woman Care International
Memorial Human Rights Legal Centre
Moscow School of Human Rights
<i>Nizam</i>
<i>Opora</i>
Peace to the Caucasus
<i>Pomostch</i>
Rakhmilov and Partners
St. Petersburg Centre for International Co-operation of the Red Cross
St. Petersburg Red Cross
<i>Vesta</i>
Others
IOM
UNV

Co-ordination

UNHCR works closely with other United Nations agencies and relevant inter-governmental organisations in the Russian Federation. Close liaison is maintained with OCHA, UNSECOORD, ICRC and other agencies engaged in humanitarian operations in the North Caucasus.

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	2,394,850
Community services	766,075
Domestic needs	791,425
Education	585,250
Health	812,374
Income generation	54,850
Legal assistance	2,954,673
Operational support (to agencies)	561,361
Shelter / other infrastructure	1,308,703
Transport / logistics	99,689
Total Operations	10,329,250
Programme support	1,353,978
Total	11,683,228