

# Russian Federation

## Main Objectives

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



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### Recent Developments

During 2001 some positive developments occurred in the asylum procedures: the Ministry for Federal Affairs issued refugee ID documents and the Ministry of Migration and Nationalities registered asylum-seekers and issued official documentation certifying their status. While there were some problems with the renewal of these documents, the new procedures provided some asylum-seekers with a degree of much needed protection. The modalities to implement temporary asylum, provided for under the refugee law, were finally adopted in April 2001 and over 100 cases have already been granted it. This is a long-awaited development that is expected to benefit large numbers of Afghan asylum-seekers. A few dozen stateless persons in Moscow (Armenians ex-Azerbaijan) and in Krasnodar (Meskhetians) acquired citizenship through the courts. In October 2001, the Ministry charged with migration and asylum policy was abolished by presidential decree and these functions passed to the Ministry of Interior. It is unclear as yet how staff and policies will change and how UNHCR will develop relations with this main counterpart.

### PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2002	Dec. 2002
Refugees <sup>1</sup>	22,300	18,000
Asylum-seekers (Moscow) <sup>2</sup>	6,000	4,000
IDPs from the Northern Caucasus <sup>3</sup>	350,000	350,000
De facto stateless persons (Meskhetians) <sup>4</sup>	11,000	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>389,300</b>	<b>372,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes 19,000 Georgian refugees of Osset origin in North Ossetia and 574 non-CIS refugees. These figures are steadily decreasing as recognised refugees (97% from CIS and Baltic countries) acquire Russian citizenship.

<sup>2</sup> Only in Moscow does UNHCR systematically screen and register asylum-seekers. Official statistics from the regions are incomplete. The projection does not include the possibility that Afghans could arrive from Central Asia if there are large outflows from Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated number in various republics. A major political breakthrough could result in many IDPs returning to homes in Chechnya.

<sup>4</sup> In the Krasnodar Region.

### TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 15,545,509

The summer of 2001 saw no significant return of IDPs to Chechnya. While some went to and fro between Ingushetia and Chechnya, the lack of security, infrastructure and basic living conditions in Chechnya remained major impediments to return. The preservation of a safe haven outside Chechnya must still be a priority. Some 150,000 IDPs face a third winter in very difficult conditions in Ingushetia, and a further 160,000 IDPs face even worse conditions in Chechnya.

## Constraints

UNHCR's implementation and monitoring capacity in all 89 provinces of the Federation is by definition limited, and the Office is forced to concentrate on areas where its resources can be best used. Public support for the cause of refugees and IDPs is lacking; the events of 11 September in the USA and its aftermath are likely to have an adverse effect for both asylum-seekers from Afghanistan and outside the CIS, as well as for IDPs from Chechnya. Thus, combined with poor economic conditions and unemployment in many of the regions of the Russian Federation, is hampering local integration. Several thousand Georgian refugees in North Ossetia remain vulnerable and far from integrated, ten years after they were displaced. The dissolution of UNHCR's main counterpart on asylum issues, for the third time in so many years, is a setback to developing close co-operation and stable relations. In the northern Caucasus, poor security continues to have a significant impact on the working conditions and the efficiency of UNHCR and its partners.

# STRATEGY

## Protection and Solutions

The main problems encountered by asylum-seekers and non-CIS asylum-seekers in particular are: access to the refugee status determination procedure; lack of proper documentation during the pre-registration phase in Moscow (where the majority of asylum-seekers are concentrated); and a high rejection rate on formal grounds as well as on the merits of the asylum claim. Difficulties in obtaining the obligatory residence registration (formerly 'propiska') prevent asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and IDPs from accessing social services and employment, making self-reliance and integration problematic. IDPs are being strongly encouraged to return to Chechnya but many still feel that security conditions, particularly for men, are too poor. The solutions pursued by UNHCR and its partners will continue advocating for: proper documentation and, more generally, proper implementation of refugee legislation and related rights of refugees and asylum-seekers; better protection and self-reliance for asylum-seekers pending status determination; integration for recognised refugees in the main cities of Moscow and St Petersburg and selected regions of the Russian Federation (mainly in North Ossetia for Georgian refugees); acquisition of citizenship and integration for de facto stateless persons (mainly Meskhetians in the Krasnodar Region but also Armenians ex-Azerbaijan in Moscow); resettlement for vulnerable refugees who are unlikely to be recognised by the Russian authorities as refugees and who have few prospects for local integration; voluntary repatriation for others; preservation of a safe haven for IDPs in Ingushetia and other northern Caucasus republics; basic assistance for those returning voluntarily to Chechnya; and strengthening of the rule of law within Chechnya.

## Assistance

### *Asylum-seekers, Refugees*

Screening and legal counselling of asylum-seekers is provided by the Refugee Reception Centre in Moscow and, on a smaller scale, by the Refugee Counselling Centre in St Petersburg. All groups of concern to UNHCR can benefit from legal and social counselling through the Memorial network and other counselling centres supported by the Office in the regions. The assistance programme for urban asylum-seekers and refugees (Moscow and St Petersburg) will continue but material assistance for individual cases will be re-oriented to the pursuit of appropriate durable solutions, emphasising, to the extent possible, self-reliance. Increased access to local education and medical services will be pursued through advocacy and provision of appropriate support to local institutions. Public information activities in various regions of Russia will further promote the positive image of refugees and other displaced persons. Support for the integration of Georgian refugees in North Ossetia will be consolidated, mainly through the provision of shelter, legal counselling and some income-generation and community services. At the institutional level, technical support, legal advice and training of governmental bodies will have to be re-oriented to the Ministry of Interior and its regional organs responsible for the determination of refugee status.

### *Stateless Persons*

UNHCR participated actively in the drafting of a new citizenship law, which has passed a first hearing. Once adopted, UNHCR will carry out consultations with the authorities and with the Council of Europe on drafting the implementation regulations to the law. A public awareness campaign on the expiry in 2005 of the former USSR passports and the avoidance of statelessness will be supported. Legal advice will be provided to de facto stateless persons, mainly Meskhetians in the Krasnodar Region and Armenians from Baku (Azerbaijan) in Moscow, on acquiring citizenship. Small-scale activities to promote tolerance and knowledge of the Russian language will aim at facilitating the cohabitation of different groups. Efforts will continue to promote accession by the Russian Federation to international instruments on statelessness.

### *IDPs in the Northern Caucasus*

UNHCR will continue to monitor the overall humanitarian and protection situation of IDPs in Ingushetia and elsewhere outside Chechnya. Interventions are made with the authorities when necessary. Legal and psycho-social counselling are provided through a network of counselling centres in the northern Caucasus republics. The Office will continue to advocate that appropriate documentation and status be given to IDPs, with an emphasis on considering possibilities for temporary integration in Ingushetia or elsewhere in the Russian Federation for

those who do not wish to return to Chechnya. The main protection objective is to maintain a safe haven outside Chechnya for as long as IDPs feel the need for it. The key element in preserving this safe haven is the availability of adequate shelter. UNHCR is the co-ordinating agency for the shelter sector. In parallel, water and sanitation must be maintained to ensure acceptable basic living conditions. The Office will continue to support various community services activities and, on a small scale, some education activities complementing those of UNICEF. UNHCR helps government agencies to increase technical capacities to provide protection and assistance, and will seek to provide appropriate support to the Ingush authorities for the integration of some 30,000 (mainly ethnic Ingush) IDPs intending to remain more permanently in the republic.

In Chechnya, UNHCR cannot monitor the protection situation of IDPs and returnees as it does not have a presence there. However, it will seek to assist and anchor voluntary returnees, through the distribution of relief items and the provision of basic shelter materials to the most vulnerable families returning home. This will allow these families to live in interim accommodation (the 'one warm dry room per family' concept but also providing tents where appropriate), while repairing their houses. Non-food items will be provided to selected hospitals and schools. UNHCR supports legal counselling through two centres operated by the NGO Memorial. With various part-

ners such as the OSCE Assistance Group, Council of Europe, and the Office of the Special Representative of the President for Human Rights in Chechnya, UNHCR will make targeted capacity-building interventions to strengthen the rule of law in Chechnya, mainly through training of the judiciary.

While most measures to protect and assist women and children are integrated in UNHCR's overall assistance measures, reproductive health and vocational training aim to reach women directly, while various activities will address the psychological and educational needs of IDP children and adolescents. Handicapped IDPs and others with special needs, such as mine victims, are assisted with physical and psychological rehabilitation.

### Desired Impact

New government counterpart for asylum and migration matters will be sensitised and constructive co-operation, including training, will be established; all asylum-seekers will be properly documented and the pre-registration period reduced; asylum-seekers in the major cities will be able to maintain basic living conditions and become more self-reliant; legislation on temporary asylum will be implemented; legal and administrative barriers to local integration for various groups of concern to UNHCR will be reduced; vulnerable refugees in North Ossetia will be better integrated; the human rights of IDPs in the

Asylum-seekers from Afghanistan in a reception centre in Moscow. *UNHCR/T. Bølstad.*



northern Caucasus will respected, including the provision of appropriate legal status and documentation, and basic living conditions outside Chechnya will be assured; those not wishing to return to Chechnya in the short to medium term will be able to integrate temporarily or more permanently; those returning to Chechnya will be able to anchor themselves and to seek legal redress to their protection problems; local and national NGOs maintain a protection and assistance role beyond UNHCR's presence.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management Structure

In 2002, UNHCR in the Russian Federation will function with 60 staff (11 international and 49 national), three JPOs, four international and 12 national UNVs. This is a reduction of 30 UNHCR staff compared with the situation before the Action 2 review in 2001 and could strain the Office's capacity to implement activities. Consolidation of functions in the offices in Vladikavkaz and Nazran will be needed for the effective continuation of activities in the northern Caucasus, with some local staff likely to be transferred from Stavropol.

### Co-ordination

Besides its leading role in protection, UNHCR is the focal point for the sectors of shelter, water and sanitation in Ingushetia. The Office provides complementary support to other UN agencies in other sectors. UNHCR's Regional Representative is also the Humanitarian Co-ordinator. UNHCR provides extensive support to the security arrangements of UNSECOORD and logistical support to several other UN agencies in Vladikavkaz. UNHCR will continue to strengthen co-operation with more development-oriented agencies, and will build on new partnerships with national human rights structures such as the Ombudsman and its regional affiliates (UNHCR and the Ombudsman signed a co-operation agreement in October 2001). A recent partnership agreement with the Moscow City Government should also be supportive of UNHCR's activities in Moscow and pave the way for better co-operation with other government structures.

### OFFICES

Moscow
Nazran
Stavropol
Vladikavkaz

### PARTNERS

<b>Government Agencies</b>
Ministry of Interior
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Emergencies
Government of North Ossetia-Alania
State University of Management
<b>NGOs</b>
Association of Media Managers/ARS Press
Caucasus Refugee Council
Children's Funds of Stavropol and North Ossetia
Civic Assistance
Co-ordinating Council for Assistance to Refugees and Forced Migrants/Forum
Danish Refugee Council
<i>Dobroye Delo</i> Counselling Service
Equilibre-Solidarity
Faith, Hope, Love
Gratis
Guild of Russian Film Makers
International Rescue Committee
Magee Women Care International
Memorial Human Rights Centre
Moscow Helsinki Group
Partner Foundation
Peace to the Caucasus
PINF
<i>Pomosch</i>
Russian Committee of Lawyer
St Petersburg Red Cross
<i>Vesta</i>
Voice of the Mountains
<i>Vozrozhdeniye</i>
<b>Others</b>
IOM
UNVs

### BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,869,108
Community Services	1,106,264
Domestic Needs	1,170,000
Education	1,041,000
Health	250,000
Income Generation	600,000
Legal Assistance	3,356,505
Operational Support (to Agencies)	589,231
Sanitation	250,000
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	1,362,200
Transport/Logistics	1,400,000
Water	500,000
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>13,494,308</b>
Programme Support	2,051,201
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,545,509</b>