

# RUSSIAN FEDERATION

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Promote lasting solutions for refugees and create conditions for their integration; encourage the voluntary repatriation of Georgian refugees; hasten the integration of involuntarily relocating persons (IRPs) and internally displaced persons (IDPs) through self-reliance projects; promote access to citizenship for stateless persons, including the Meskhetian Turks; improve access and procedures for refugee status determination by strengthening the capacity of the relevant authorities, lobbying for the passage of appropriate national laws and supporting their implementation by local authorities and NGOs in accordance with international standards; provide basic protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and ensure protection of those falling outside the Russian refugee law through temporary protection arrangements; ensure resettlement for refugees at risk of refoulement; and promote the accession of the Russian Federation to international conventions on statelessness.



### Impact

- Refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from improved access to status determination procedures, health and educational services, as well as social and legal counselling.
- Resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers began, and voluntary repatriation of asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries was encouraged, resulting in the return of 89 non-CIS refugees and 239 Georgians to their home.
  - The integration of IDPs and IRPs was more vigorously promoted and some obtained gainful employment.
  - There was greater awareness and co-operation among local authorities and NGOs regarding the need for long-term solutions for people of concern to UNHCR.

### Persons of Concern

MAIN REFUGEE ORIGIN/TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Refugees from CIS/Baltic countries	51,400	-	-	-
Refugees from non-CIS countries	680	140	-	-
Asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries	16,070	-	-	-
Refugees from Georgia	28,000	-	-	-
Persons of Concern	100,000	-	-	-
FDPs*, mainly Meskhetians	21,200	13,600	-	-
IRPs**	724,000	-	-	-
IDPs***	498,000	-	-	-

\* The term "Formerly Deported Peoples" refers to the populations deported by the Soviet authorities.

\*\* According to the CIS Conference, the term "involuntarily relocating person" denotes a citizen from CIS country who has been forced to move to his/her country of citizenship.

\*\*\* Includes 100,000 displaced persons within Chechnya itself (according to UNHCR estimates).

### Income and Expenditure - SP Activities (USD)

WORKING BUDGET	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS*	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
5,641,036	353,912	5,151,422	5,505,334	5,281,673

\* Includes contributions earmarked for the Special Programme in the CIS.

\*\* Includes opening balance and adjustments. The above figures not include costs at Headquarters.

## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, political, economic and social problems caused huge population movements to, from and within the Russian Federation. Between three and five million people migrated, either as refugees, IRPs, IDPs or FDPs. At the end of 1999, more than one million people were registered by the Federal Migration Service (FMS), of whom 80,080 were refugees, 724,000 were IRPs and 498,000 IDPs.

The refugees mainly originate from CIS countries (Ossets fleeing the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict, Azeris, Kazakhs, Tajiks, and Uzbeks) and smaller numbers are from non-CIS countries (Africa and Asia). The IRPs (the majority of them ethnic Russians) are from Kazakhstan, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or Azerbaijan and live in the southern part of the Russian Federation (Stavropol, Krasnodar, Rostov and Ingushetia). This group includes 30,000 formerly deported Meskhetians living in the Krasnodar region (who are considered stateless), as well as Meskhetians in central and southern areas of the Russian Federation (whose status is legal). The IDPs mainly originate from Ossetia, Chechnya and Dagestan and are located throughout the Russian Federation. In addition, one to three million people have settled independently without registering with the FMS and of these, an estimated one million people have no legal status. The latter group includes some 150,000 non-registered IDPs from Chechnya.

UNHCR worked in a context of economic crisis (following the financial crash of August 1998), political uncertainty and deteriorating security. Military action in Dagestan and later in Chechnya resulted in a massive influx of IDPs into the neighbouring Republics of Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Dagestan.

### Constraints

The devaluation of the ruble and high inflation limited government budgets and constrained its ability to fulfil obligations enshrined in refugee and migration legislation. Changes of personnel at all levels frequently disabled the relevant ministries and further dulled the will to show initiative or assume responsibility. These difficulties rendered the integration of IDPs and IRPs in central and the far eastern regions of the Russian Federation a special challenge, particularly in light of the limited employment opportunities.

Conflict between federal and regional legislation continues to cause friction and requires UNHCR to build partnership with many counterparts. As distances within the Russian Federation are enormous and regional needs diverse, the Office had to adopt a decentralised approach by trying to increase its field presence and carrying out missions to field locations. In the northern Caucasus, there was a very real threat of kidnapping or other acts of violence against expatriate staff, so the Office had to rely on national staff for its operations there.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

Although the Russian Federation has acceded to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and began to enact corresponding national law in 1993, the Government's ability to implement these laws remained limited. In general, the Office was concerned about the quality of first-instance decisions on refugee status, which were predominantly negative. As a result of a very restrictive interpretation of the term "persecution", the authorities rejected asylum applications submitted by individuals clearly in need of international protection. A wide application of the concept of "safe third country" also resulted in the rejection of asylum-applications.

Asylum-seekers from non-CIS and non-Baltic States remain in a particularly precarious situation. The Federal Migration Service started conducting status determination in 1997 and access to eligibility procedures improved. However, asylum-seekers were subjected to increased police harassment, illegal detention and deportation threats. Moreover, a large number of regional authorities imposed various restrictions preventing persons of concern to UNHCR from settling on their territories. UNHCR tried to ensure that asylum-seekers received basic protection and assistance pending refugee status determination and intervened where necessary on behalf of individuals. The Office succeeded in securing access to the transit zone at Moscow international airport and the main detention centre for illegal aliens, with positive results regarding access to refugee status determination, release from detention and emergency resettlement. UNHCR ensured that persons of concern were informed about their rights and obligations and assisted with administrative procedures and their search for legal employment through counselling services. Legal provisions for recognised refugees were improved, but implementa-

tion remains unclear. Refugees and asylum-seekers still lack proper documents such as refugee identity cards, refugee travel documents and temporary certificates of asylum.

UNHCR reduced its work on the repatriation of refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia to a minimum, partly due to its own security concerns but also because conditions in South Ossetia were less encouraging. Over time, local integration became a more viable solution. Only 239 persons repatriated with UNHCR assistance (compared to the 600 originally anticipated). The status of Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai remained unresolved, with obstacles to their proper integration there and problems of harassment.

In response to these problems, UNHCR carried out intensive lobbying and advocacy with federal and regional authorities to improve the status of and access to procedures for asylum-seekers and to find durable solutions, such as integration, for refugees. UNHCR provided expertise and training on human rights, refugee law and citizenship issues and some material assistance for staff of the regional migration services, as well as lawyers, judges, and NGOs. Public information and awareness-building activities were also undertaken, enhancing understanding and increasing support for the protection of persons of concern.

UNHCR promoted accession to the statelessness conventions and provided legal expertise on citizenship legislation. The Office joined the OSCE and the Council of Europe in supporting a review of residence systems, which often block access to refugee status determination and to acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons and tried to encourage local authorities and communities to improve the status of the Meskhetians, through advocacy and assistance designed to encourage tolerance and co-operation.

### Activities and Assistance

For information on UNHCR's response to the crisis in Chechnya, please see the separate section.

**Community Services:** Three community centres were established in the Moscow district in locations with a high concentration of refugees and asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries. In North Ossetia, over 400 refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder had access to psychological counselling. Support was also given to children lagging behind in school because of their

poor knowledge of Russian. Group counselling was organised for some 17,000 adults in collective centres. A collective centre was rehabilitated for the accommodation of 75 vulnerable people. Refugees from Georgia and IDPs had access to vocational training (hairdressing, accounting, sewing and cooking) leading to further employment opportunities. In the Rostov and Altai regions, office equipment, school supplies, and clothing and footwear were provided to temporary accommodation centres and social institutions. Twenty children from Moscow and Stavropol participated in pilot summer camps. In the south, 22 NGOs received grants to carry out social programmes and surveys, to organise carpentry workshops and to buy office equipment. UNHCR supported a radio programme for IDPs. In Stavropol, the training centre evaluated project proposals and gave advice on business planning, accounting and taxation matters. A survey of the Meskhetian population living in the Stavropol region was conducted in co-operation with Stavropol State University. Eight hundred and fifty children participated in a children's forum on peaceful co-existence. The best work by these children was published in a book (5,000 copies) distributed to schools and libraries in the northern Caucasus and South Ossetia. In St. Petersburg, UNHCR financed a survey on the educational and psychological needs of refugee children. Over 200 refugee and IRP women were trained in sewing and hairdressing. St. Petersburg's medical social geriatric centre gave supplementary food to 75 elderly patients, the majority of whom were IRPs. Toiletries and bed linen were distributed to the elderly IRPs. In the Novgorod region, 628 IRPs had access to legal advice and 373 received psychological counselling. Ten seminars about IRP rights, conflict resolution, NGO management, fund-raising and accounting were organised.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** During 1999, a total of 2,200 vulnerable asylum-seekers received a monthly allowance. In North Ossetia, UNHCR distributed winter clothes and school supplies to some 1,370 vulnerable Georgian refugee children, including those in specialised institutions. In addition, food, clothing, footwear, swaddling material, and detergent were distributed to children's homes, and local families who adopted orphans. About 25 persons received emergency assistance. Vulnerable Ingush IDPs also received non-food relief items. Clothing, footwear and bedding were procured and stockpiled in Stavropol for some 12,000 persons and later distributed to IDPs in temporary accommodation centres. In Stavropol,

4,089 vulnerable IDP children and their families received domestic items.

**Education:** A pilot group of 12 adolescent asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries, who participated in an education programme, successfully completed their lower secondary education and were given full access to local polytechnic institutes. In North Ossetia, vulnerable Georgian refugees and IDPs received 615 school sets at the beginning of the academic year. Educational games, sports equipment and encyclopaedias for children were bought for five boarding schools and four children's homes in North Ossetia. Educational premises were rehabilitated and equipped in a number of regions of the Russian Federation in order to improve access to education for 6,000 students (IRPs, IDPs and Meskhetians). With a view to facilitating their entry into the labour market, training in computer, accounting and secretarial skills was organised for 121 IDP students in the south. In the north-west, 52 non-CIS refugees attended Russian courses and 65 children learned their native tongue and English. Four schools with a high concentration of IDPs were rehabilitated in the Pskov region.

**Food:** Food packages were distributed to an average of 112 refugees and asylum-seekers per month. Priority was given to individuals with emergency needs, in particular large families, the sick, the elderly and single-parent families. In the Stavropol region, a contingency stock of food items was prepared in order to respond to the needs of 12,000 refugees, IDPs and IRPs.

**Health/Nutrition:** Basic health care was provided to asylum-seekers who did not enjoy full access to local medical institutions. Owing to increased efficiency of the health programme, the number of vulnerable persons receiving basic medical care increased by 15 per cent. One of the children's hospitals in Moscow agreed to provide care for the children of non-CIS refugees and asylum-seekers free of charge for three years. In Vladikavkaz, special medical equipment was purchased for an emergency aid hospital, a boarding school for deaf and dumb children and a children's hospital. Communications equipment was also provided to the tuberculosis hospital. A total of 200 persons of concern with TB in the infectious stage received a comprehensive treatment. In addition, 1,017 people were given medical advice and assistance in Vladikavkaz and over 800 individuals benefited from the family planning project. Refugee and IDP women had access to maternity clinics and a gynaecologist. In the

Krasnodar and Rostov regions, vulnerable refugees, IRPs and IDPs received medical assistance. Five medical institutions were rehabilitated for the benefit of 14,000 IRPs, IDPs and Meskhetians. In Moscow and Orenburg, three medical institutions received equipment. In ten regional health centres of the Stavropol region UNHCR's partner conducted a reproductive health programme for 200 women. UNHCR provided medical equipment and ambulances, rehabilitated facilities at local hospitals and polyclinics, and supported the Ministries of Health of the Stavropol and Karachaevo-Cherkessia districts. The Office arranged for the procurement and distribution of five WHO TB kits to selected health care institutions in districts with a high concentration of IDPs. The Office also gave financial support to WHO for a one-week workshop for medical staff in Moscow. In the St. Petersburg region, some 2,640 refugees, asylum-seekers and IRPs were given medical assistance, as well as special courses on hygiene, reproductive health and other related issues.

**Income Generation:** Out of 168 applicants for professional training (computer classes, cooking, mechanics and hairdressing) 56 non-CIS asylum-seekers were selected. The micro-credit and revolving fund project was expanded. A total of 1,742 loans were disbursed (57 per cent for IRPs and 43 per cent for the local population) for trade and retail facilities. This resulted in the creation of 3,000 jobs, which improved the living conditions of about 9,000 people. UNHCR started a loan programme with a leasing company in Novgorod for manufacturing and service activities. Fifteen loans were disbursed and 90 jobs were created (50 for IRPs), thus enhancing the living conditions of an estimated 270 persons. Chechen IDPs benefited from agricultural lectures and 210 small loans, which created 250 jobs.

**Legal Assistance:** UNHCR's reception centre provided registration, social and legal counselling for asylum-seekers through some 18,000 consultations, some 2,500 involving new arrivals. The Office also intervened with the authorities in cases of harassment, detention or eviction from apartments. In North Ossetia, UNHCR assisted the migration services during the registration of refugees from Georgia and South Ossetia. Seminars on voluntary repatriation, refugee law and human rights principles were organised for the authorities and implementing partners. A training programme involved 80 professors and about 400 students at the North Ossetian State University. In Moscow, UNHCR implemented mass information activities and protection training. Migration services

in various regions received support for capacity building. In Stavropol, training sessions on international refugee law and local legislation were organised. In the north-west, legal advice was provided to 128 people. UNHCR provided legal assistance for 513 persons in the appeals process and independent lawyers ensured legal representation before the courts to some 79 persons in Moscow and 56 persons in the 32 regions. Office equipment was procured for migration services and for the local courts in order to enhance the quality of services. The staff of the migration service of St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast was trained in English and migration.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** UNHCR's implementing partners participated in training in order to broaden their knowledge of refugee-related activities. Law enforcement agencies as well as judges benefited from seminars on migration-related questions. In Vladikavkaz, public information activities focused on dissemination of refugee law and tolerance education. Other activities included support for publications, contests for mass media and the general public on migration issues, as well as projects such as the organisation of film festivals. UNHCR supported the participation of 100 NGOs in a parliamentary hearing on migration. Two seminars on migration helped establish a vital dialogue between local governments and NGOs. A third seminar on small-business development for migrant-led businesses focused on micro-credit activities in Saratov. In the Stavropol region, a series of short television features on the experiences of individual IDPs were produced in collaboration with local television.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** With a view to standardising assistance to non-CIS urban refugees and asylum-seekers, the Verbilki collective centre was closed and one-off cash grants were given to its former residents to help them set up new households. In Vladikavkaz, the heating system was repaired in the temporary accommodation and transit centre for refugees and IDPs. In Rubtsovsk, Orenburg and Peresypkino, repairs were undertaken, particularly of the plumbing in the temporary accommodation centres. The youth centre in the Voronezh region and some infrastructure in the Rostov region were also rehabilitated. In the south-west, gas and electricity were supplied to four priority sites housing large numbers of IDPs. Two hostels for elderly persons, housing 233 IDPs, were rehabilitated (canteen and water/sanitation system).

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR undertook the repatriation of 239 refugees to Georgia and South Ossetia, gradually involving the migration service of North Ossetia. In the south-west, relief items were released from the contingency stock for convoys to Dagestan and Ingushetia, following events in Chechnya.

**Water:** One water truck was procured for water delivery to the Saratovka settlement in the Altai region where 364 IRPs were living. In the Stavropol region, the water tower at Zolskaya village (Kirovski district), which houses a large concentration of IDPs, was repaired in order to provide a regular supply of drinking water. In the Novgorod region, UNHCR's implementing partner installed a drinking water supply system in an IRP settlement.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

A total of 63 regular staff worked in UNHCR's four offices in the Russian Federation (Moscow, Stavropol, Vladikavkaz and St. Petersburg), of whom 15 were internationals (including two JPOs), six were UNVs and 42 were national staff.

### Working with Others

UNHCR had joint programmes with WHO on TB-related activities and with UNFPA on family planning. In the wake of the financial crisis and a request from the Government of the Russian Federation, the UN Country Team agreed to send an inter-agency mission to some of the worst affected regions to assess humanitarian needs and provide an appropriate response. UNHCR concentrated its efforts in the Altai Krai where there are a considerable number of IRPs (42,000). In November, in connection with the Chechnya crisis, a UN inter-agency team undertook assessment missions in Ingushetia and Dagestan and prepared a Flash Appeal which was launched in December. The Georgian repatriation programme was undertaken in close co-ordination with the Office in Tbilisi, Georgia and OSCE. Several regional workshops and conferences were held, covering themes of concern to the East European region.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

UNHCR adopted a decentralised, regional approach to its operations in the Russian Federation which was essential to assess, monitor and evaluate the implementation of activities. Due to the size of the country

and the magnitude of the issues, this approach proved successful but future activities will more deliberately target sensitive regions and border areas. Further efforts will be made to merge concerns for refugees and asylum-seekers with activities for IRPs and IDPs, as mutually supportive components of a unified operation.

Additional support for government institutions will be given through technical assistance. Expertise and partnership with regional authorities needs to be further strengthened. Partnership will also be diversified to reach the nascent independent judiciary with the aim of ensuring effective protection to asylum-seekers who

are unduly rejected. The need for effective co-operation with the authorities, in order to integrate as many refugees as possible, protect asylum-seekers and find lasting solutions for IRPs and IDPs, became increasingly acute as the consequences of the conflict in Chechnya were felt.

UNHCR's continuous, albeit reduced, presence in the volatile region of the northern Caucasus and the availability of a stockpile of food and non-food items proved most valuable, as it enabled the Office to provide a timely response to the Chechnya emergency from the outset.



## Office

Moscow  
St. Petersburg  
Stavropol  
Vladikavkaz

## Partners

### Government Agencies

Committee on Social Protection of Novgorod Oblast  
Federal Migration Service of Russia  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Labour  
Ministry of Nationalities and External Affairs  
Pskov Oblast Committee on Education  
Regional Administration  
Regional Migration Services  
St. Petersburg Juridical Department

### NGOs

Children's Fund  
Civil Assistance  
Co-ordinating Council for Assistance to Refugees and Forced Migrants  
Danish Refugee Council  
Forum of Migrants Organisations  
Guild of Russian Filmmakers  
Hoko Youth Creativity Centre  
Magee Woman Care International  
Memorial Human Rights Centre/FMS  
Moscow Red Cross  
Novgorod Society of Families with Many Children  
Opportunity International  
Orenburg Temporary Accommodation Centre  
Partner Foundation  
Solidarity  
St. Petersburg Centre for International Co-operation of Red Cross  
St. Petersburg Red Cross

### Other

Committee of Russian Lawyers in Defence of Human Rights  
International Organisation for Migration  
St. Petersburg State University  
United Nations Volunteers  
World Health Organisation

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	2,494,595	927,653	3,422,248	39,377	4,078	43,456
Community Services	84,615	284,056	368,670	107,003	34,557	141,560
Domestic Needs / Household Support	1,496,108	73,001	1,569,109	569,809	48,147	617,956
Education	3,387	298,255	301,642	42,394	156,498	198,892
Food	1,346,805	0	1,346,805	3,109	0	3,109
Health / Nutrition	160,816	233,337	394,153	97,088	132,747	229,835
Income Generation	0	367,689	367,689	3,244	468,022	471,266
Legal Assistance	197,907	199,563	397,471	52,222	482,585	534,807
Operational Support (to Agencies)	143,883	292,311	436,194	195,461	184,135	379,596
Sanitation	0	0	0	3	0	3
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	42,889	64,364	107,253	131,139	293,979	425,118
Transport / Logistics	119,463	30,114	149,578	74,031	19,539	93,571
Water	0	26,878	26,878	0	91,752	91,752
Instalments with Implementing Partners	3,565,094	1,688,297	5,253,391	(1,135,907)	(1,801,651)	(2,937,558)
Combined Projects	19,773	0	19,773	(19,773)	0	(19,773)
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>9,675,335</b>	<b>4,485,519</b>	<b>14,160,853</b>	<b>159,199</b>	<b>114,389</b>	<b>273,587</b>
Administrative Support	505,807	0	505,807	0	0	0
<b>Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries</b>	<b>10,181,142</b>	<b>4,485,519</b>	<b>14,666,661</b>	<b>159,199</b>	<b>114,389</b>	<b>273,587</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	5,174,206	796,155	5,970,361	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,355,348</b>	<b>5,281,673</b>	<b>20,637,021</b>	<b>159,199</b>	<b>114,389</b>	<b>273,587</b>
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>						
Payments Made	3,848,801	3,362,093	7,210,894	3,732,353	315,152	4,047,505
Reporting Received	283,707	1,673,796	1,957,503	4,868,260	2,116,803	6,985,063
Balance	3,565,094	1,688,297	5,253,391	(1,135,907)	(1,801,651)	(2,937,558)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	1,279,649	2,116,041	3,395,690
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0	77,383	155,443	232,826
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0	0	6,255	6,255
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>3,565,094</b>	<b>1,688,297</b>	<b>5,253,391</b>	<b>66,359</b>	<b>165,201</b>	<b>231,561</b>
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>						
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	266,383	240,094	506,478
New Obligations	15,355,348	5,281,673	20,637,021	0	0	0
Disbursements	10,181,142	4,485,519	14,666,661	159,199	114,389	273,587
Cancellations	0	0	0	107,184	125,706	232,890
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>5,174,206</b>	<b>796,155</b>	<b>5,970,361</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

