

GEORGIA

IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Support the process of conflict resolution sponsored by the OSCE in Georgia/Ossetia and facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons from North and South Ossetia to their places of origin.
- Support the process of conflict resolution sponsored by the UN in Georgia/Abkhazia and seek durable solutions for some 270,000 IDPs from Abkhazia; in the interim, and without prejudice to their eventual return, promote the de-facto integration of IDPs in their present places of residence; protect and monitor those who return spontaneously to their homes, as well as local residents.
- Seek improvements to the Refugee Law and asylum procedures and help governmental and NGO structures build up sufficient resources and expertise to respond to involuntary displacement.
- Advise the Government on a legal framework for the repatriation of the formerly deported Meskhetians.

Planning Figures

Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Returnees and IDPs (Georgian-Ossetian conflict)	50,000	50,000
Returnees and IDPs (Georgian-Abkhaz conflict)	270,000	270,000
Total	320,000	320,000

**Total Requirements
USD 8,946,202**



W

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

UNHCR started working in Georgia in 1992, to assist some 300,000 persons of mainly Georgian ethnicity fleeing secessionist fighting in Abkhazia. Some IDPs subsequently returned, primarily to the Gali district of Abkhazia where UNHCR helped them rebuild their lives, but the majority has remained in government-controlled areas, primarily in western Georgia. Here UNHCR has provided assistance in rehabilitating shelter and generating income through agricultural projects, micro-credit and the distribution of tools. UNHCR has also participated in the UN-led conflict-resolution process. Discussions with the Abkhaz side have not resulted in any security guarantees permitting UNHCR to promote voluntary repatriation, and the situation in Abkhazia remains volatile.

In the course of secessionist fighting in 1991, some 42,000 ethnic Ossets fled across the border to North Ossetia in the Russian Federation and 10,000 to South Ossetia, while a further 10,000 ethnic Georgians fled to government-controlled areas. Since 1997, UNHCR has assisted voluntary repatriation to and reintegration in South Ossetia and Georgia proper. Although insecurity in the northern Caucasus has reduced UNHCR's ability actively to promote and assist repatriation, movements and reintegration assistance have continued, increasingly to areas of return in Georgia proper. In 1999, 51 families returned to South Ossetia and 40 to government-controlled areas. In addition, some 200 IDP families returned to areas in South Ossetia and Georgia proper. A governmental working group on property restitution was established in April 1999 to prepare a presidential decree that will be the basis for drafting relevant legislation.

Some 300,000 Meskhetians, descendants and survivors of the 1944 deportation from Georgia to Central Asia, are scattered throughout the CIS, though the main groups are in the Russian Federation and in Azerbaijan. Some wish to return to Georgia, which requires a legal framework and other preparation.

In May 1999, the Government ratified the 1954 Convention and the 1997 Protocol. Increasing numbers of asylum-seekers have entered Georgia, many of them becoming stranded on their way to Western Europe.

Resumed fighting in Chechnya in late 1999 resulted in the arrival in Georgia of several thousand persons, mostly of Georgian origin. Contingency plans were reviewed and updated to prepare for larger influxes, but as winter has set in massive arrivals are unlikely. UNHCR established a Mobile Team in Akhmeta District, near the border with Chechnya, to monitor the movement of and provide assistance to refugees.

Constraints

Until the two conflicts in Georgia are peacefully resolved, UNHCR's cannot play a substantive role in identifying durable solutions. Access to shelter, basic services, and employment is extremely limited, a situation which has perpetuated reliance on outside assistance and has placed a great strain on the local population. The flare-up of the conflict in Chechnya could reduce the Government's commitment to identify and implement durable solutions. National refugee legislation remains restrictive and Government institutions remain limited in their ability to deal with refugee issues.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR will continue to support the efforts of the UN and the OSCE to resolve the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As long as the prospect of full-scale return to Abkhazia is blocked by the security situation and the need for protection guarantees, the Office will concentrate on monitoring spontaneous return and protecting the rights of returnees and the local population in areas of return, particularly Gali District. UNHCR is involved in the protection of the rights of the vast majority of IDPs in Georgia and promotes lasting local solutions, without prejudice to their eventual return when conditions permit. UNHCR will continue to chair the working group on IDPs as part of the UN-led conflict-resolution process and to work towards an agreement permitting the return of IDPs in safety and dignity.

Through a strong field presence in areas of return in Georgia proper and the involvement of OSCE, development agencies, donors and local institutions as well as NGOs, UNHCR will stimulate greater returns from North Ossetia. UNHCR will pursue the adoption by the Government of efficient and effective legislation for the restitution



of returnee property and the reinstatement of citizenship rights.

A central goal for 2000 is to increase the ability of government departments, NGOs and other agencies to provide legal and material assistance and to contribute to conflict resolution. UNHCR will work to strengthen procedures for the determination of the status of refugees and to amend the national Law on Refugees to conform to international standards. As events unfold, contingency plans will be updated in coordination with other agencies, such as the OSCE, to reflect different possible scenarios in the Northern Caucasus.

UNHCR will promote accession to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and other international legal instruments, in order to regulate the legal status of Meskhetians. Some 20 training activities will be organised for the authorities, NGOs and civil society partners to ensure full and fair implementation of legal standards.

Assistance

In the year 2000, UNHCR will continue to help returnees reintegrate in South Ossetia and support reconciliation efforts through self-help repair of original or alternative accommodation, the distribution of wood stoves and winter kits, the rehabilitation of clinics and schools, and counselling. Income-generation projects are designed to increase family income, food security and employment opportunities with the help of a revolving loan fund and workshop or agricultural kits. A national NGO will be identified to take over this sector towards the end of the year. The focus of UNHCR's reintegration activities will shift gradually to returnee areas inside Georgia proper, where the process will be repeated. However, a Mobile Team will continue to cover South Ossetia to monitor return, conduct an information campaign to promote more return, and to underpin reconciliation together with development agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs. In all assistance, women and vulnerable IDPs and returnees receive priority.

UNHCR will work to ensure that IDPs from Abkhazia enjoy access as Georgian citizens to existing social and economic opportunities. Material assistance, strictly for vulnerable IDPs, will include accommodation, health services, domestic items, education, community services, crop and livestock production, and income-generation. The assistance schemes will be

modified, in close cooperation with UNDP and the World Bank, to emphasise integration and the inclusion of IDPs in national development strategies, without prejudice to their eventual voluntary return when conditions permit.

UNHCR attaches considerable importance to the development of national NGOs to support, and eventually take over tasks closely connected to UNHCR's field of work. To this end, NGOs will receive on-the-job training as implementing partners, gradually gaining experience and independence.

Desired Impact

UNHCR's programme is expected to increase the longer-term self-sufficiency of returnees and IDPs. IDPs from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict should be able to function as ordinary citizens in all spheres of life – political, economic, social and legal. This should not, however, preclude their eventual voluntary return, when conditions permit.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

The Office in Georgia will function with 14 international staff, 49 national staff and one Junior Professional Officer. In South Ossetia and returnee areas in Georgia proper, the Office works with a Mobile Team, based in Gori, to increase its protection and assistance monitoring capacity. A second Mobile team will be based in Akhmeta, near the border with Chechnya.

Coordination

UNHCR is part of a well-functioning coordination structure functioning under the guidance of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. The structure gathers representatives of all UN agencies, OSCE, ICRC, IFRC, key NGOs, donors and the Government to meet and exchange information, coordinate activities and liaise on cross-organisational issues.

Offices
Tbilisi 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> Children's Fund of South Ossetia <i>Constanta</i> Dawn Foundation International Rescue Committee Georgian Young Lawyers Association Norwegian Refugee Council UN Association of Georgia
Other
United Nations Volunteers

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	2,252,454
Community Services	267,566
Crop Production	157,620
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	247,250
Education	50,000
Health/Nutrition	90,000
Income Generation	1,207,327
Legal Assistance	499,831
Livestock	111,314
Operational Support (to Agencies)	609,715
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	2,053,713
Transport/Logistics	299,664
Total Operations	7,846,454
Programme Support	1,099,748
Total	8,946,202

