

Russian Federation

Main objectives

Support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards; identify and promote appropriate durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers; promote accession to the Statelessness Conventions, the acquisition of citizenship by the stateless, and assist their further social and economic integration; help meet the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northern Caucasus.



Impact

- Advocacy, training and capacity-building interventions were carried out to strengthen the asylum system and improve refugee status determination (RSD) procedures; restructuring of the relevant ministry reduced the immediate impact of these activities;
- While RSD procedures remained slow and recognition rates very low, increasing numbers of persons were granted temporary asylum in 2002 (1,144);
- UNHCR worked within the Russian court system, particularly on cases of rejection on admissibility grounds and prevention of access to the RSD procedure; this yielded significant results, including the curtailment by a Moscow Region court of certain illegal practices;
- Protection and multi-sectoral material/financial assistance programme was continued for non-CIS asylum-seekers in Moscow and the Moscow Region; this gave access to medical care and education for all, while the most vulnerable received material/financial assistance;
- 220 vulnerable asylum-seekers with no prospects of local integration in the Russian Federation left for resettlement countries, and 45 persons were assisted with voluntary repatriation;

- Integration assistance to Georgian refugees in North Ossetia was delayed but construction of 70 houses began; legal assistance was provided to refugees seeking citizenship;
- Legal counselling to Baku Armenians in Moscow resulted in citizenship being granted in 33 cases;
- UNHCR and its partners carried out regular protection monitoring and made interventions to ensure vulnerable families had access to shelter; provided shelter assistance; and counselling and advocacy to ensure IDPs were appropriately documented. UNHCR maintained advocacy work at local and federal levels to ensure that the principle of voluntariness of return was respected;
- Inside Chechnya, UNHCR provided shelter materials to over 600 returnee families and supported various capacity-building activities for NGOs providing legal assistance and the legal system.

Working environment

The context

Asylum-seekers and refugees, stateless persons
CIS asylum-seekers were granted *prima facie* refugee status in the early 1990s, while the procedure for

non-CIS asylum-seekers started to be applied only in 1997. The Russian Federation ratified the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees and its Optional Protocol in 1993. A national refugee law was enacted in 1993 and amended in 1997. Since the Law on Forced Migrants came into force in 1995, asylum-seekers from the CIS countries have been gradually directed toward the procedure for acquisition of Russian citizenship. A new law on foreigners came into effect in November, designed to reduce illegal migration and to strengthen the sanctions against those found to be in violation of the law. The new law does not cover the situation of asylum-seekers or refugees specifically, and appears to contradict some of the rights provided in the refugee legislation.

Asylum-seekers have encountered several obstacles both in initially accessing the RSD procedure, and also at subsequent stages. In Moscow City and Moscow Region, where the majority of the refugee applications are submitted, asylum-seekers have to wait two years on average before being able to formally submit their application. During this waiting period, they remain without any official document attesting to their status. As a result, they may be subject to police harassment by law enforcement agencies. While several hundred cases have benefited from the article 12 of the law on temporary asylum,

the number benefiting is still very small in comparison to the thousands of asylum-seekers who have no form of protection.

The Russian Federation is not a State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness. The new citizenship law came into force on 1 July 2002, but lack of implementing regulations until November delayed processing of claims. UNHCR is concerned about two categories of de facto stateless persons: Meskhetians residing in the Krasnodar Krai, and Baku Armenians, mainly in Moscow.

Internally displaced persons

The humanitarian consequences of hostilities in the Republic of Chechnya affected the lives of some 300,000 IDPs and up to 690,000 residents in Chechnya and Ingushetia. Return to Chechnya increased significantly in 2002 (7,400 organised returns and an estimated 11,000 who returned spontaneously from Ingushetia and 2,000 from Daghestan). This can be attributed in part to Government incentives within Chechnya and in part to powerful pressure to leave Ingushetia. An Action Plan for the return of IDPs was drawn up in May by the authorities and regular statements were issued by the authorities in this regard. The first major step taken was to dismantle two tented camps inside Chechnya (Znamenskoye).

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin / Type of Population	Total In Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Forced migrants, Meshketians, a/s (non-CIS)	425,700	223,500	-	-
IDPs	371,200	371,200	-	-
Asylum-seekers (Afghanistan-UNHCR est.)	100,000	-	-	-
Refugees (former IDPs)	59,400	59,400	-	-
Georgia (Refugees)	11,400	11,400	-	-
Afghanistan (Refugees)	1,490	1,490	-	-
Tajikistan (Refugees)	700	700	-	-
Asylum-seekers	610	-	28	-

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
14,828,333	5,899,670	5,953,577	11,853,247	11,499,481

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.
² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

The authorities' determination to see the closure of camps in Ingushetia increased after the October theatre hostage crisis, organised by Chechen gunmen in Moscow, and a camp in Aki Yurt was dismantled by the authorities in December. Adequate alternative accommodation was not available in either Chechnya or Ingushetia.

Constraints

In October 2001, responsibility for migration policy was passed to the Ministry of Interior. The reorganised Federal Migration Service within the Ministry was preoccupied throughout 2002 with its own internal reorganisation and put emphasis on the need to resolve the problems of illegal migration rather than on asylum issues. This resulted in much slower processing of asylum claims.

The theatre hostage crisis hardened the attitudes of the authorities and the public toward Chechens, as well as other nationalities seen to represent potential terrorist threats to the Russian population. The new harder mood led the authorities to start closing tented camps in Ingushetia.

Staff security in the Northern Caucasus deteriorated further (an international employee of *Médecins Sans Frontières* was kidnapped in Dagestan in the summer of 2002 and has not been released yet). This continued to reduce the efficacy of UNHCR and its implementing partners.

In 2002, UNHCR was unable to quickly resolve staffing problems in the Northern Caucasus (following the cutting of 16 posts in 2001) and a consolidated team was not in place until January 2003. The staffing shortage caused delays and reduced the implementation of UNHCR's programmes.

Funding

Financial difficulties led to reductions and delays in the implementation of shelter activities in the Northern Caucasus and the multi-sectoral assistance programme for asylum-seekers in Moscow.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

For the overwhelming majority of (non-CIS) asylum-seekers concentrated in and around Moscow, the main protection challenges remained: the long wait before the first eligibility interview, during which they remain undocumented; the lack of sojourn registration by the police for documented asylum-seekers; and the high rate of rejection (95 per cent) on grounds of both admissibility and/or merits. Mounting xenophobia towards non-Slav people was aggravated by the theatre hostage crisis.

In the absence of any progress on the issuance of provisional documents for asylum-seekers by the authorities, UNHCR designed a "UNHCR beneficiary card". This should be issued on a pilot basis in early 2003 to asylum-seekers who have effectively submitted their claim to the authorities, in order to provide protection against *refoulement*. The 'pre-registration' procedure and various practices hampering access to RSD were successfully challenged in the Moscow courts.

UNHCR continued to try to reduce the high rate of rejection of applicants for asylum. Training was undertaken, country of origin information was shared with the authorities, as were UNHCR guidelines and standards. Rejected asylum claims were appealed in the courts, with only moderate success.

Resettlement opportunities were sought for those with no prospects of refugee status or of local integration, especially those with severe protection problems or in a situation of extreme social vulnerability. More than 300 cases were submitted to resettlement countries, and 107 cases (220 persons) departed during the year.

More than ten years after their displacement, the Georgian refugees in North Ossetia-Alania constituted the largest group of remaining CIS refugees, and their integration was still a problem. UNHCR assisted the authorities with the integration of some of the most vulnerable through a shelter project linked to the obtaining of residence registration, and through legal counselling to assist in the acquisition of citizenship.

UNHCR pursued its goal of ensuring that IDPs were able to stay in safety in Ingushetia if they chose not to return to Chechnya. This mainly involved protection monitoring, especially with regard to shelter conditions; access to shelter; interventions in cases of eviction; and advocacy to ensure proper documentation of IDPs, access to assistance and voluntariness of return. Assistance was provided for shelter, water and sanitation in camps and temporary settlements. In Chechnya, UNHCR pursued longer-term objectives of strengthening the capacity of the judiciary and of NGOs providing legal counselling and information. In an effort to help persons wishing to return to or stay in Chechnya, basic shelter materials were provided to some vulnerable families to enable them to have one warm dry room while repairing their homes.

Activities and assistance

Community services: In the Moscow area, a range of activities were carried out at community centres, including psycho-social support for children and adults, women's clubs and a women's conference, concerts and national celebrations. In North Ossetia, 814 children (39 per cent of them refugees) received assistance in psychological rehabilitation and education. In Ingushetia, more than 500 young people benefited from vocational skills training, and various children's events were supported.

Domestic needs/household support: Assistance was provided through a re-oriented 'Individual Assistance Programme' to some 1,000 vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in Moscow and the surrounding region. In Ingushetia and Chechnya, limited procurement and distribution activities were carried out to provide IDPs with basic non-food relief supplies, targeting only the most vulnerable families in 2002 (3,239 persons in Ingushetia and 5,000 in Chechnya).

Education: The education programme of Solidarity helped children and adolescents prepare for and make progress in the national education system. Co-operation with the Committee on Education expanded to involve more than 100 children aged 6-12 and resulted in the enrolment of 32 children in regular classes in September. Following a decree by the Moscow authorities, access to local schools has become easier for non-CIS asylum-seekers and UNHCR's assist-

ance policy was re-oriented accordingly. *Deutsche Akademische Flüchtling Initiative* (DAFI) criteria were reviewed and adjusted to better fit the caseload; 23 students from the Russian Federation and Belarus received scholarships and/ or grants to study.

Health/nutrition: UNHCR supported the provision of primary and basic medical assistance to over 4,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in the Moscow area. Medical consultations were provided by the Red Cross in St Petersburg.

Income generation: Skills training courses were organised for recognised refugees in order to increase their chances of social and economic integration. Loans continued to be issued from the revolving fund established with UNHCR's financial support under the CIS Conference programme. Vocational training/education was facilitated for 432 IDPs planning to integrate permanently in Ingushetia.

Legal assistance: Legal counselling remains the core function of the Refugee Reception Centre (RRC): assistance was given to nearly 700 individual cases pending judicial review. In 2002 there was a more than 100 per cent increase in the number of court decisions on asylum and there were far more positive rulings in favour of the asylum-seekers (65 per cent). RRC's staff monitored police harassment and detention cases and made contact more proactively with local police. This resulted in more timely release of asylum-seekers and a slightly reduced incidence of harassment.

UNHCR financed the Memorial legal network, which provides consultations in some 36 regions of the Russian Federation (more than 10,000 in 2002) and representation before the courts. UNHCR organised 13 training events attended by nearly 300 governmental and NGO officials. These events were designed to strengthen the capacity of the asylum system. Expertise, information and some equipment and software were provided to federal and regional migration authorities. Various public information activities were undertaken to back up UNHCR's advocacy and legal assistance efforts. These emphasised tolerance towards refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and other migrants.

In co-operation with the Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR continued to register all IDPs from the

present conflict in Chechnya. They were informed of their legal rights and given consultations and referrals to governments and NGOs for further support. Six counselling centres in the Northern Caucasus provided legal assistance to over 4,000 people, as well as consultations on social and medical issues for more than 18,000. In North Ossetia, the Children's Fund provided legal and social counselling to Georgian refugees. Civic Assistance in Moscow (an NGO) gave legal counselling and social support to some 10,000 people (of whom 47 per cent were IDPs, 17 per cent were stateless people and 13 per cent refugees from the CIS countries).

Operational support (to agencies): Four national UNVs were employed for the asylum programme; an Information Systems Officer working in Moscow in support of all programme activities, an Assistant Durable Solutions Officer working in Moscow (part of the year) and a Community Services Assistant, and an Assistant Protection Officer in St Petersburg. Three international UNVs were employed: the Director of the Refugee Reception Centre (RRC) in Moscow, the Community Services Officer and a Legal Officer at the RRC.

Sanitation: In Ingushetia, UNHCR supported sanitation services such as the installation and/or replacement of latrines, as well as their maintenance and cleaning. In Chechnya, a UNHCR garbage truck served three districts of Grozny on a permanent basis.

Shelter/other infrastructure: The construction of 70 houses began in North Ossetia to facilitate local integration and the permanent registration of refugee families from Georgia. It is expected that the construction of these houses will be completed by April 2003. In Ingushetia, more than 9,000 IDP families were assisted with shelter materials, 867 tents were replaced. With participation of beneficiaries all tented camps, mainly in camp B (Sleptovskaya). In Chechnya, UNHCR's implementing partner, People in Need Foundation, assessed 1,500 damaged houses in Grozny and assisted more than 600 families with shelter material, based on the principle of "one dry, warm room". Whenever possible, families voluntarily returning from Ingushetia were given priority.

Transport/logistics: UNHCR closed its warehouse in Stavropol at the end of March and transported the stock to the warehouses in Ingushetia.

Water: In Ingushetia, potable water was tested and trucked to 142 IDP locations daily. In Chechnya, UNHCR operated six water trucks, distributing drinking water daily in three districts of Grozny.

Organisation and implementation

Management

Following the redeployment from Stavropol, the UNHCR Regional Office in Moscow provided support to one sub-office in Vladikavkaz and one field-office in Nazran. The offices were run by 19 international staff (including three UNVs and two consultants) and 68 national staff (including 14 UNVs and one consultant).

Working with others

UNHCR currently works with 29 national NGOs and three international NGOs. The Office works closely with other UN agencies and relevant inter-governmental organisations in the Russian Federation and operational co-operation has been established with UNICEF, WHO, and WFP. Close liaison is maintained with OCHA and other agencies engaged in the humanitarian operation in the Northern Caucasus. With the deployment of a senior Deputy Humanitarian Co-ordinator and an Area Security Co-ordinator in Nazran, UNHCR was able to reduce its role in co-ordinating humanitarian assistance, following the Office's strategic plan to focus on protection and shelter. UNSECOORD's presence was increased by more staff so that UNHCR could hand over some of its security responsibilities, resulting in a more consolidated and unified security structure. Minimum Operational Security Standards compliance was completed and staff safety training carried out.



Overall assessment

Little progress was made in 2002 in capacity-building for the asylum system and in increasing the effective protection afforded by national RSD procedures, mainly due to the recent restructuring of the ministry responsible for migration and asylum. UNHCR's intensified efforts to work with lawyers through the courts yielded further encouraging results, particularly with regard to access to the RSD procedure. Clearly the judicial system was capable of serving the institution of asylum.

The situation of asylum-seekers did not improve, nor did the length of the pre-registration waiting period they had to endure in Moscow. More than ever, resettlement has become a vital mechanism for protection and a durable solution for many African cases and some vulnerable Afghans, Iraqis and others whose efforts to negotiate the RSD procedure were to no avail. UNHCR's resettlement unit screened all the remaining families who had been stranded for several years without legal or social protection, and submitted the files of more than 300 families to resettlement countries in the course of 2002. Due to security measures imposed

by the United States of America after 11 September 2001, actual departure rates have slowed considerably, and only a third of these families departed. This has caused prolonged protection problems for the people concerned. The re-orientation of individual assistance (social, material, and financial) was helpful, but suffered from delays due to UNHCR's financial constraints.

UNHCR was unable to start the next phase of its shelter project in North Ossetia until almost the end of the year. This was regrettable, as it leaves the targeted refugee families living in precarious conditions in temporary accommodation centres. UNHCR will make a concerted effort in 2003-5, with local government and NGO partners, to complete the necessary shelter assistance for the remaining vulnerable families. This will be tied in with residence registration with the authorities. The Office will make more effort to familiarise the international community with these problems and involve development agencies.

UNHCR plays a central role in promoting and strengthening the asylum regime in the Russian Federation, seeking to ensure that minimum stan-

A refugee woman from Georgia living in the former dormitory of a technical school waiting to be moved to a new UNHCR-funded house. UNHCR / T. Makeeva



dards in the protection and assistance of asylum-seekers and refugees are observed and that those standards are in line with international standards.

Legal assistance for Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai (de facto stateless persons) has resulted in over 320 positive court decisions on property rights and registration over the past four years. However, police authorities in 2002 refused to issue Russian passports to Meskhetians even on the basis of these positive decisions. As a result of UNHCR's activities rendering legal assistance to Baku Armenians (also de facto stateless persons) in Moscow in 2002, about one third acquired Russian citizenship. Following joint UNHCR/IOM/US Immigration Service consultations, the United States' resettlement programme for these Armenians was declared open in July 2002. By the end of 2002, 763 cases (1,526 persons) were found to be eligible for resettlement in line with the selection criteria established jointly with UNHCR. First departures were expected at the beginning of 2003.

UNHCR played a key role in assuring the protection of IDP rights in Ingushetia and in ensuring that the principle of voluntary return was respected. This was achieved through the quality and regularity of field monitoring and through advocacy at the highest levels, co-ordinated with other UN and non-UN actors. UNHCR's protection role was supported by its shelter activities and its co-ordinating role in this sector. The Office's parallel strategy was to assist with returns to Chechnya (providing that return is clearly voluntary) by providing basic shelter materials (to set up one warm, dry room). This was conceived to allow IDPs to pursue the option of return when they themselves considered the security conditions to be right. In Ingushetia, UNHCR had reduced the number of partners and activities scheduled for 2002, with the aim of transferring coverage of several sectors to other agencies. UNHCR's support to NGOs providing legal assistance inside Chechnya has helped to strengthen their activities and to contribute to the overall monitoring of the protection situation in the Republic.

Offices

Moscow
Nazran
Vladikavkaz

Partners

Government Agencies

EMERCOM Ingushetia
Government of North Ossetia (Alania)
Ministry of Education
State University of Management (Institute for Migration Processes Management)

NGOs

Association of Media Managers
Caucasian Refugee Council
Chechen Committee for National Rescue
Children's Fund (North Ossetia-Alania, Stavropol)
Chistye Prudy Ltd
Civic Assistance
Collegium of Lawyers of Chechen Republic
Danish Refugee Council
Dobroye Delo Counselling Centre
Doverie
Equilibre Solidarity
Ethnosphera
Faith, Hope, Love
Guild of Russian Filmmakers
International Rescue Committee
Legal System Ltd.
Magee Woman Care International
Memorial Human Rights Centre
Moscow School of Human Rights
Nizam (Chechnya)
Partner Foundation
Peace to the Caucasus
People in Need Foundation
Pomosch
Psychological Support Centre "Gratis"
Publishing House "Perm News"
Rakhmilov and Partners
Russian Fund of Mercy and Health
St. Petersburg Society of Red Cross
VESTA
Voice of the Mountains
Vozrozhdenie

Others

Council of Europe
IOM
OSCE

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	1,793,855		47,817	
Community Services	568,979		239,030	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	838,839		237,400	
Education	434,281		234,979	
Health / Nutrition	486,891		154,624	
Income Generation	47,886		15,072	
Legal Assistance	1,931,912		1,192,945	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	627,635		121,963	
Sanitation	209,199		42,962	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	418,360		192,200	
Transport / Logistics	320,366		109,486	
Water	253,226		25,696	
Transit Accounts	9,455		0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,535,930		(2,147,734)	
Sub-total Operational	9,476,815		466,439	
Programme Support	1,835,761		1,705	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	11,312,576	(3)	468,144	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	186,905	(3)	0	
Total	11,499,481	(1) (3)	468,144	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	8,228,275		408,550	
Reporting Received	6,692,345		2,556,284	
Balance	1,535,930		(2,147,734)	
Outstanding 1st January	0		2,254,862	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		94,184	
Currency Adjustment	0		(4,134)	
Outstanding 31 December	1,535,930		8,810	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1st January	0		493,992	(5)
New Obligations	11,499,481	(1)	0	
Disbursements	11,312,576	(3)	468,144	(5)
Cancellations	0		25,849	(5)
Outstanding 31 December	186,905	(3)	0	

Figures which cross-reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5