

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 of and assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northern Caucasus.



Working Environment

Recent Developments

The year 2002 witnessed a number of developments in the Federation's asylum system. In March, the Federal Migration Service (FMS) of the Ministry of Interior started functioning. The new heads of departments and services were recruited from among law enforcement bodies. The FMS also took on many members of staff of the former migration services, at various levels of seniority, which in effect safeguarded UNHCR's earlier investment in training and capacity-building of migration officials. A major breakthrough for asylum-seekers was the Moscow decree of February 2002, which removed the requirement of registration as a pre-condition for official enrolment of children in schools. The main problems concerning the asylum system in Russia remain: 1) the long waiting period (in Moscow – up to two years) before asylum-seekers are granted their first eligibility interview, and during which time they

Planning Figures

Population	Jan. 2003	Dec. 2003
Refugees	12,500	8,500
Asylum-Seekers (Moscow)	5,000	4,000
Others of Concern ¹	261,000	211,000
Total	278,500	223,500

¹ Includes some 250,000 IDPs in various republics in the Northern Caucasus, as well as some 11,000 *de facto* stateless Meskhetians in the Krasnodar Region.

Total Requirements: USD 13,651,753

remain undocumented; 2) the failure of the police to issue residence or temporary stay registration (formerly known as *propiska*) to documented asylum-seekers; and 3) the high rejection rate (on non-admissibility grounds or lack of merit). Asylum-seekers arriving at the international airport in Moscow have not been granted access to the procedure. However, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of positive decisions by the courts of law on appeal cases. The new Law on Citizenship was adopted in July 2002. Under the general naturalisation procedure, applicants for Federation citizenship must be in possession of a residence permit and they must have remained in residence for a continuous period of five years since the issuance of the

residence permit. The continuous residence requirement may be shortened for certain categories, including for recognised refugees. On a less positive note, the situation of the Meskhetians in Krasnodar Region was exacerbated when a new local law forbade extension of their compulsory residence registration.

Local elections in Ingushetia brought in a new government. In May, the administration signed a Plan of Action to speed up the return of IDPs from Ingushetia to Chechnya. However, many IDPs are not willing to return because of security concerns and lack of adequate shelter in Chechnya. On 10 July, two tent camps in Chechnya were closed and their inhabitants were moved to temporary accommodation centres in Grozny.

Constraints

Public support for the cause of refugees is very low, and narrow, xenophobic views continue to gather support, resulting in both verbal and physical attacks on minorities and asylum-seekers. The implementation of the refugee law remains slow and the enforcement of court decisions granting refugee status or citizenship is not automatic. Difficulties in obtaining the compulsory residence registration prevent asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and IDPs from accessing social services and employment, making self-reliance and integration problematic. Several thousand Georgian refugees in North Ossetia-Alania remain vulnerable and insufficiently integrated, ten years after they were displaced. IDPs are being strongly encouraged by the authorities to return to Chechnya but most still feel that conditions are too insecure. The consequent security measures inevitably tend to complicate working conditions for the UN agencies and partners. At the time of writing, several abducted aid workers are still missing in the area.

Strategy

Protection and Solutions

Given the size of the country and the limited resources available, UNHCR will concentrate its efforts on the regions where the majority of asylum-seekers and refugees reside and where it has a good monitoring presence. These are Moscow City

and Moscow region, St. Petersburg (serving the majority of non-CIS asylum-seekers) and the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (serving the majority of CIS refugees). To reach out to other regions of the Federation in a more systematic way, UNHCR will put together a roving protection team.

The solutions pursued by UNHCR and its partners will involve: calling for proper documentation and, more generally, proper implementation of refugee legislation and respect for the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers; better protection for asylum-seekers pending status determination (and allowing them a greater level of self-reliance); integration for recognised refugees in the main cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg and selected regions of the Russian Federation (mainly in North Ossetia-Alania for Georgian refugees); access to local educational and medical facilities; access to citizenship procedures for *de facto* stateless persons (mainly Meskhetians in the Krasnodar Region but also ethnic Armenians from Azerbaijan now living in Moscow); resettlement for vulnerable refugees with scant prospects of local integration who are unlikely to be recognised by the Russian authorities as refugees; 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 judiciary system within Chechnya.

Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: The Refugee Reception Centre in Moscow and the Refugee Counselling Centre in St. Petersburg will continue to screen asylum-seekers and offer them legal counselling. In the regions, legal and social counselling will be carried out by national NGOs. The new assistance programme piloted in 2002 will be reviewed and fine-tuned in 2003 to reinforce the commitment to future integration and self-reliance of asylum-seekers. The education policy will also be re-oriented to encourage even more children to go to local schools (leading eventually to reduced UNHCR-supported parallel educational activities). Public information activities will be stepped up to give broader currency to a positive image of refugees and displaced persons.

Support for the integration of Georgian refugees in North Ossetia will concentrate on the sectors of shelter, legal counselling and community services. UNHCR will involve other donors and international



Ingushetia: IDPs from Grozny in Aki-Yurt camp. UNHCR / R. Riller

organisations in implementation of the programme with a view to the gradual hand-over of the integration activities to the development agencies. The Government of North Ossetia-Alania has provided a formal commitment that it will gradually increase its financial allocation for integration of this group.

At the institutional level, technical support, legal advice and training will be provided to governmental bodies (FMS, Federal Border Guards, Immigration Control Points). Local NGOs and educational institutions will disseminate legal knowledge through workshops, training sessions and conferences. Where feasible, other durable solutions (such as voluntary repatriation and resettlement) will be pursued for asylum-seekers and refugees.

Stateless Persons: Having provided input for the new citizenship law, UNHCR will carry out consultations with the authorities and with the Council of Europe on drafting the regulations governing its implementation. *De facto* stateless persons, mainly Meskhetians in the Krasnodar region and Armenians from Baku (Azerbaijan) in Moscow, will receive legal advice on acquiring citizenship. As an alternative durable solution, some of the Baku Armenians may be able to resettle to the USA under the so-called Priority-2 referral project and UNHCR will closely monitor this process. 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 North Caucasus: In 2003, UNHCR will maintain a co-ordination function in the sectors of protection and shelter. The co-ordinating role in the

sectors of water/sanitation and non-food items will be gradually handed over to IRC and ICRC. UNHCR will continue to monitor the overall humanitarian and protection situation of IDPs in Ingushetia and persons of concern in Chechnya, both directly and indirectly and within the parameters dictated by security requirements. The Office will intercede with the authorities in an effort to secure appropriate documentation and status for IDPs and adherence to the principle that return to Chechnya should be voluntary. In terms of anchoring voluntary returnees (i.e. trying to counteract any desire to flee for a second time), UNHCR will continue implementation of the “one warm dry room per family” concept by distributing shelter materials and box-tents through its implementing partners. UNHCR, in co-ordination with the OSCE and the Council of Europe, will implement a number of capacity-building activities (primarily training and technical assistance) in Ingushetia and Chechnya to reinforce the legal systems in these republics. The network of counselling centres in the northern Caucasus republics will continue to provide legal and psycho-social counselling, although UNHCR will actively liaise with other donors that may take over this activity. UNHCR will assist the Ingush Government with the integration of those IDPs who made the decision to integrate on a permanent basis in the republic.

Desired Impact

Constructive co-operation will be in place with the new governmental counterpart for asylum and migration matters (FMS); asylum-seekers will be properly documented and the pre-registration period reduced; asylum-seekers in the major cities will be able to enjoy a minimal but adequate standard of living and become more self-reliant; 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 Northern Caucasus will be 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 find a measure of security and seek legal redress to their protection problems; local and national NGOs will maintain a protection and assistance role beyond UNHCR’s presence.

Organisation and Implementation

Management Structure

In 2003, UNHCR in the Russian Federation will function with 64 staff (12 international and 52 national), three JPOs and 17 UNVs (including 14 national).

Co-ordination

Within the UN Consolidated Appeal for the North Caucasus, UNHCR remains responsible for co-ordinating the protection and shelter sectors. In the area of asylum, statelessness and internal displacement, UNHCR co-operates closely with the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Close co-operation has been established with the Ombudsman's office and its regional affiliates, the Moscow Committee of Education, the Moscow Health Committee. Co-ordination of assistance and activities is ensured through inter-agency consultations and regular exchanges with governmental and non-governmental partners in Moscow and at the field level. In the Northern Caucasus, joint mid-term and final evaluations of activities constitute vital groundwork for strategic and operational planning. As one of its priorities, UNHCR will encourage other relevant UN agencies, donors and international organisations to engage in development-oriented activities for the benefit of UNHCR persons of concern in the Russian Federation.

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,074,704
Community Services	792,815
Domestic Needs	1,483,375
Education	626,777
Health	762,016
Income Generation	112,504
Legal Assistance	2,815,077
Operational Support (to Agencies)	813,152
Sanitation	183,192
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	1,600,000
Transport / Logistics	571,550
Water	139,542
Total Operations	11,974,704
Programme Support	1,677,049
Total¹	13,651,753

¹ Includes some USD 5,5 million budgeted for the IDP programme in the Northern Caucasus.

Offices
Moscow
Nazran
Vladikavkaz
Stavropol

Partners
Government Agencies
Department for Migration Issues, North Ossetia-Alania
Federal Migration Service, Russian Federation
Government of North Ossetia-Alania
Moscow Committee of Education
State University of Management
NGOs
Association of Media Managers
Caucasian Refugee Council
Children's Fund
Civic Assistance
Collegium of Lawyers of Chechnya
Danish Refugee Council
<i>Dobroye Delo</i>
Ethnosphera Centre
EquiLibre-Solidarity
Faith, Hope and Love
First September newspaper
Gratis Psychological Support Centre
Guild of Russian Film-makers
International Rescue Committee
Legal System
Magee WomanCare International
Memorial Human Rights Legal Network
Moscow School of Human Rights
<i>Nizam</i>
Peace to the Caucasus
People in Need Foundation
<i>Pomostch</i>
Rakhmilov and Partners
St. Petersburg Red Cross
<i>Vesta</i>
Others
IOM
UNVs