



AZERBAIJAN

IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Provide multi-sectoral assistance to promote local integration of ethnic Azeri and Meskhetian refugees.
- Provide multi-sectoral assistance to promote temporary local integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Assist IDPs to return home to accessible but war-damaged areas of the country, and to reintegrate.
- Provide protection and material support to refugees originating from outside the CIS region.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Government and national NGOs to respond to forced displacement of populations and to assist persons of concern to UNHCR.
- Implement a gradual hand-over to development-oriented national entities and international organisations of UNHCR's assistance to IDPs and to ethnic Azeri and Meskhetian refugees.

Planning Figures

Population	Jan. 2000*	Dec. 2000
IDPs	541,321	540,000
Returning IDPs	35,000 **	25,000
Ethnic Azeri and Meskhetian Refugees	221,616	220,000
Refugees/Asylum-Seekers from Outside the CIS	350	450
Total	798,287	785,450

* Government statistics. Overall, UNHCR's assistance will reach about 97,000 of the most vulnerable persons.

**Of this number, 10,000 were assisted by UNHCR during 1999. Assistance in 2000 is subject to an assessment of the first phase of the WB/UNHCR/UNDP returnee project.

Total Requirements
USD 4,676,373



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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

The majority of persons of concern to UNHCR in the country are IDPs who left their places of origin as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which erupted in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whereas initially UNHCR provided very substantial short-term humanitarian relief, the present de facto post-conflict situation requires a shift to longer-term development activities. Access by refugees and IDPs to income-generating activities has been facilitated by an international agreement signed in February 1999 by UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank and the Government which aims to improve living conditions for them through multi-sectoral assistance. Azerbaijan is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. In 1998, a Citizenship Law was adopted and a governmental commission was set up to work out the details of its implementation. In 1999, a Refugee Law was adopted and a parliamentary commission was set up to draft a law on national NGOs.

Constraints

The continuing weakness of the national economy renders access to services, including health care and education, particularly difficult for IDPs and refugees, who are at a disadvantage compared to the resident population. In implementing the Law on Refugees, the Government gives priority to ethnic Azeri refugees, so non-CIS asylum-seekers have yet to receive refugee status. Unless assistance for IDPs who are trying to return to accessible parts of war-damaged areas includes basic social services and guarantees minimum earnings for survival, IDPs will be reluctant to return.

UNHCR will continue a public awareness campaign, launched with the Council of Europe and the Government, to promote full and fair implementation of the Citizenship Law adopted in September 1998. UNHCR is encouraging the authorities to implement the 1951 Convention, as well as the procedures included in the Refugee Law adopted in May 1999 for granting asylum and determining refugee status for all categories of persons, including those originating from outside the CIS. UNHCR will recruit local lawyers to advise asylum-seekers and refugees, more particularly the Afghan refugees for whom local integration is the priority option. To speed up the fair and efficient implementation of the Refugee Law, UNHCR will provide training for officials.

Meskhetians, deported in 1944 from Georgia to Central Asia, started arriving in Azerbaijan in the sixties. However, a large new influx occurred in 1988, following communal violence in Uzbekistan. Following two regional consultations on the situation of Meskhetians, organised in cooperation with the OSCE, and with the participation of the Russian Federation, Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as Meskhetian representatives, UNHCR will provide legal assistance to Meskhetians to complete their local integration and obtain Azeri citizenship.

To improve the legal status of national NGOs and promote a favourable working environment for their activities, UNHCR, the Council of Europe and other partners have established a working relationship with the Parliament to encourage the adoption of a new domestic law on NGOs.

Assistance

Large numbers of IDPs remain without adequate shelter, so the construction of limestone cottages and the addition of social amenities will remain a high priority. UNHCR also plans to rehabilitate a governmental building in a rural area with a high concentration of IDPs in order to lodge some 40 families of vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees. The first phase of a World Bank/UNHCR/UNDP programme to assist IDPs returning to war-damaged areas consisted, for UNHCR, in the repair or construction of shelter for 10,000 returnees in 1999. Participants will review the results obtained so far before proceeding with the second phase.

Working relations with UNFPA and UNICEF will be further strengthened with a view to hand over most UNHCR-funded health activities by the end

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Given the absence of a political settlement which would allow IDPs to return to their places of origin, the Government, UNHCR, the World Bank and UNDP agreed to promote self-reliance and local settlement, without prejudice to an eventual return when conditions allow. This permits UNHCR to concentrate on programmes effectively promoting local integration. At the same time UNHCR will continue to assist IDPs who are able and willing to return to their places of former residence in war-damaged areas.

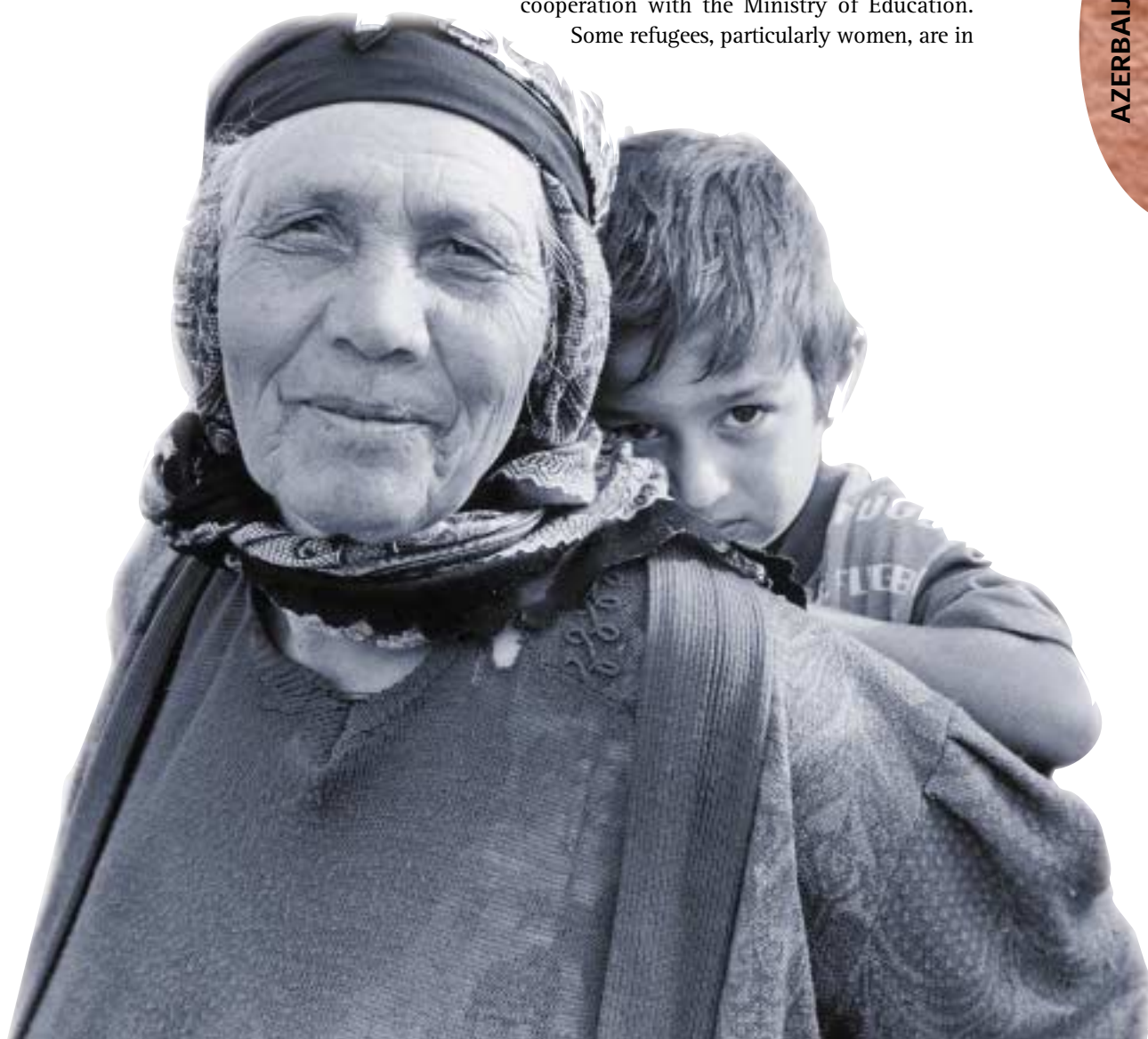
of the year. For 2000, UNHCR and UNFPA have agreed to joint planning and cost sharing. This is a concrete result of the incorporation into UNFPA-strategies of refugee/IDP reproductive health issues. A joint UNFPA/UNHCR Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the end of 1999 for this purpose.

Self-sufficiency of returnee and IDP communities will be promoted through small-scale income-generating activities, vocational skills training and micro-credit programmes in the regions of Sabirabad, Saatli, Bilasvar and Fizuli with possible extension to Aghdam and Terter. These activities include training of trainers, skills training and business orientation, with the setting up of workshops, possibly with the help of former students. Food dependency will also be reduced through training in greenhouse management, seed distribution and food preservation. The aim of these activities is to create employment and income-generating opportunities. A parallel aim is to speed up the development of local NGOs with local financial backing.

The Meskhetian communities residing in the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country will receive multi-sectoral assistance. Health facilities, child-care and education will be extended, while the construction of shelter will be limited to selected vulnerable families. To promote lasting solutions through sustainable initiatives, the emphasis will be on income-generation projects, business-management training, technical assistance, the dissemination of information on credit agencies. In 2000, agriculture will be supported. Monitoring and reporting procedures will be overhauled.

UNHCR will continue to provide individual material assistance to particularly vulnerable non-CIS refugees. Through an international NGO, UNHCR will continue providing direct medical assistance to this category of persons and encourage their self-reliance through specific income-generation activities adapted to the needs and abilities of the beneficiaries. Access to primary and higher education for refugee children, and to special activities for women, will be facilitated through close cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

Some refugees, particularly women, are in



need of psychological support and this aspect of the non-CIS refugee problem will also be addressed.

To prepare for the smooth scaling-down of its activities, through a gradual hand-over process, UNHCR will promote long-term development projects with the Government and concerned international organisations. UNHCR will support activities intended to bolster the expertise and resources of government institutions and national NGOs. It will also help set up a World Bank-funded Social Investment Fund to develop and implement programmes. In order to begin the process of transferring responsibilities, reducing dependency on aid and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programmes, links with local counterparts, government officials, agencies and institutions will be further strengthened.

Desired Impact

Areas of desired impact mainly include improvements to the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees, whose status should be legalised through the Refugee Law. Secondly, their self-reliance will be boosted in preparation for UNHCR's phased withdrawal from sectoral activities. International and local NGOs as well as the authorities should increasingly take over assistance to the population in question.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

UNHCR's activities in Azerbaijan will be conducted with five international and 19 national staff, as well as three Junior Professional Officers. A Regional Health Coordinator is also based in Baku.

Coordination

In 2000, there will be a shift from humanitarian assistance to sustainable, longer-term development, for which UNHCR will rely increasingly on its strategic partnerships with international development agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, USAID and the European Union. To this end, UNHCR will participate in several coordinating bodies.

Offices

Baku

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Labour and Social protection

NGOs

Azerbaijan Youth Union
 Azerbaijan's Children Fund
 Azerbaijan-European Literary-Cultural Relations Centre
 Azerbaijan Republican Children's Organisation
 Adventist Development and Relief Agency
 Children's Aid Direct
 Danish Refugee Council
 Hayat International
 International Rescue Committee
 Norwegian Refugee Council
 Relief International

Other

UNDP

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	147,614
Community Services	91,800
Crop Production	230,000
Education	360,825
Health/Nutrition	200,000
Income Generation	356,000
Legal Assistance	536,950
Livestock	100,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	174,425
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	1,500,000
Transport/Logistics	50,000
Total Operations	3,747,614
Programme Support	928,759
Total	4,676,373

