

Russian Federation in short

Main Objectives

- Develop an asylum system that meets international standards.
- Identify appropriate durable solutions for refugees.
- Facilitate the local integration of various categories of persons covered by the CIS Conference Programme of Action.
- Help meet the need for protection and assistance of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northern Caucasus.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

During the first six months of 2000, ongoing conflict in Chechnya forced more people to flee their homes. Most went to Ingushetia and other neighbouring Republics of the Russian Federation, where UNHCR (along with other UN agencies and NGOs) assisted the authorities by providing basic facilities for camps and other refugee settlements, and for host families. UNHCR also rehabilitated public buildings and provided the means of subsistence for the displaced population. The Office addressed several problems associated with protection of the refugees. These included the prevention of involuntary return to Chechnya and lack of documentation.

During the summer months, several thousand IDPs returned to Chechnya or moved on to other parts of the Russian Federation. The lack of security and rudimentary living conditions led some IDPs to return to Ingushetia from Chechnya. As



PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Refugees ¹	52,000	40,000
Asylum-seekers	10,000	8,000
Involuntary Relocated Persons (IRPs) ²	850,000	800,000
IDPs from Chechnya ³	350,000	250,000
Formerly Deported People (FDPs)/Meskhetians ⁴	13,000	13,000
Total	1,275,000	1,111,000

¹ Includes 24,000 Georgian refugees of Osset origin in North Ossetia and 600-800 non-CIS refugees. UNHCR expects that in 2001 durable solutions (through a combination of repatriation, resettlement and local integration) will be found for up to 12,000 refugees.

² The number of IRPs is expected to decrease as their status expires after a five-year period.

³ Subject to an improvement in the security situation in Chechnya, and the rehabilitation of private and public infrastructure in areas of origin, UNHCR estimates that up to 100,000 Chechens could repatriate from Ingushetia in 2001.

⁴ In the Krasnodar region.

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 21,153,778

the winter approaches, some 170,000 people are outside Chechnya, mostly in Ingushetia, and are in need of shelter, food, health care, education and counselling. Host families shelter 70 per cent of the IDPs and receive some cash and food assistance (as a modest incentive), but their hospitality is wearing thin. Additional shelter is needed to ensure that the dis-

placed, if evicted or turned away by the host families, do not feel forced to return to Chechnya. Inside Chechnya itself, an estimated additional 170,000 persons are either displaced or have returned to heavily bombarded areas where many homes are in ruins. They are in great need. UNHCR has sent relief convoys into Chechnya whenever security conditions have permitted the assessment of needs and distribution of relief. Other UN agencies are now also participating in the relief effort.

The authorities in Moscow and St Petersburg have started issuing identity cards to recognised refugees. There was also an increase in the recognition rate, in part as a consequence of UNHCR's support and regular training for federal and regional bodies over the past few years. A higher number of asylum-seekers have received positive decisions on their asylum claims through the national courts, which now contribute to the fairness of the refugee status determination procedure. Nevertheless, court procedures are still lengthy and cumbersome. Access to education for children of non-CIS asylum-seekers has been introduced in Moscow, with UNHCR's support.

Fewer IRPs are arriving in the Russian Federation, and their special status expires after five years. The IDP population, by contrast, grew significantly in 2000 due to conflict in Chechnya. Under Russian law, a person in either category is termed a 'forced migrant'.

Constraints

Asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries still encounter several obstacles in attempting to have access to the refugee status determination procedure. There is a large backlog of applications, since decisions take two to three years on average. The authorities' strict interpretation of the definition of persecution results in 85 per cent being rejected in the first instance. Regulations for local registration (*propiska*) in large cities and other regions, where the majority of the non-CIS asylum-seekers are located, are restrictive: refugee status is valid for three years and has to be re-confirmed every year. As a consequence, asylum-seekers and refugees are often subject to police harassment, fines, arbitrary detention, eviction from apartments and threats of *refoulement*. Moreover, in the absence of any mechanism for offering temporary asylum, a number of asylum-seekers are left without any form of protection.

Recognised refugees encounter problems of social integration, despite the rights and obligations provided under the 1997 refugee law. In practice, their status can only be legalised after obtaining a *propiska* from the local department of the Ministry of Interior.

Funding constraints limit the scope of UNHCR's activities, affecting all groups of concern. The successful integration of recognised refugees, Meskhetians, IRPs and IDPs, also depends on the support of the authorities at various levels. Security will

remain a major constraint in implementing UNHCR's programmes in the northern Caucasus, limiting the Office's ability to assess the situation and to deliver or monitor assistance.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

The Russian Federation is both a final destination and a transit country for asylum-seekers, as well as a refugee-producing country. In co-operation with the Government and other international organisations and NGOs, UNHCR's protection and assistance activities concern four groups: asylum-seekers and refugees; IRPs; displaced persons fleeing the present Chechen conflict; and stateless persons. The programme covers three themes: (i) well-administered asylum in the context of mixed population flows, (ii) statelessness, and (iii) responses to population displacements resulting from conflict in the northern Caucasus.

UNHCR aims to enhance provision of protection and activities related to UNHCR's mandate in the country, by advocating improved refugee status determination procedures, increasing the percentage of non-CIS asylum-seekers who are granted refugee status and by creating conditions conducive to local integration and access to citizenship. UNHCR will seek to strengthen and expand partnerships with regional authorities, especially where asylum-seekers and refugees face problems with registration and social integration.

At the institutional level, UNHCR is promoting the adoption and implementation of rules in accordance with international standards. At the same time, in an effort to address current shortcomings in both legislation and legal practice, UNHCR will continue to intervene on behalf of individuals. This will entail legal and social counselling, support for legal representation, and resettlement in third countries (for refugees without prospects of local integration). UNHCR will also seek to forge linkages in various regions of the Russian Federation between the different groups of population of concern, in particular between refugees and IRPs, by strengthening the capacity of NGOs to provide social and legal assistance to all groups.

UNHCR had hoped to facilitate the voluntary repatriation in 2000 of some 400-500 Georgian refugee families from North Ossetia. The repatriation process slowed down over the course of the year, however, mainly owing to unfavourable conditions in places of return. The priority has therefore shifted more towards local integration, and a move by the authorities in North Ossetia to allocate land for local settlement has provided new opportunities for some refugees.

UNHCR aims to provide protection and humanitarian assistance for IDPs in Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Dagestan as



well as those returning voluntarily to Chechnya. The Office supports a range of measures conducive to the safe residence and return of IDPs. To date, no mass return has occurred. Recent missions have concluded that, while the security situation in Chechnya remains complex and volatile, adequate humanitarian assistance must still be provided for civilians in need, IDPs, and returnees – for the latter through cross-border activities. UNHCR will explore ways to strengthen the national protection framework within Chechnya by training and assisting the judiciary and civil administration at facilities outside the Republic.

UNHCR is concerned with two groups of de facto stateless persons, consisting of about 13,000 Meskhetians in the Krasnodar region and some 2,000 Afghan orphans spread throughout the Russian Federation. Durable solutions for the Meskhetians will be sought in co-operation with the federal and local government counterparts and with relevant intergovernmental organisations, such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, with a view to facilitating their integration in the Krasnodar region. UNHCR will also promote the granting of Russian citizenship to Afghan refugee children. UNHCR is actively involved in providing technical expertise for the citizenship law. Future requirements have also been identified in view of the expiry of the USSR passport at the end of 2000. The Presidential Commission on Citizenship estimates that one third of Russian citizens have already received a new pass-

port and that new passports will have been issued to all citizens by the end of 2005.

Activities related to the follow-up of the CIS Conference will be further incorporated into the mainstream of all UNHCR's operations in Russia. Integration programmes will be gradually handed over to other UN agencies and governmental and non-governmental counterparts. The NGO Fund was established under the auspices of the CIS Conference as a means of improving UNHCR's operational co-operation with local NGOs, by building up organisational resources and expertise within these organisations. In 2000, the NGO Fund was brought into the mainstream of all programmes. UNHCR works closely with several local NGOs and has been able to extend its collaboration with NGOs to cover most regions where displaced populations reside. The long-term strategy is to reduce the dependency of NGOs on UNHCR's financial assistance through greater donor co-operation and by facilitating local NGO fund-raising from multilateral and bilateral donors.

Assistance

Asylum in the Context of Mixed Population Flows

To strengthen the system of asylum, UNHCR and its partners will provide expertise and promote international legal standards, and ensure implementation of domestic law through

training activities, seminars and round-table discussions with relevant government authorities and NGOs (on such issues as legal documents, the principle of *non-refoulement*, temporary asylum). The Office will provide legal assistance to support *bona fide* asylum applications during the appeal process and strengthen eligibility procedures (for example by extending the competencies of regional migration services and a non-governmental lawyers' network). It will also provide protection and basic assistance for asylum-seekers from their time of arrival in the Russian Federation until their claims have been examined. Local integration of recognised refugees and asylum-seekers, covered by the provision in the law on temporary asylum (e.g. Afghan asylum-seekers), will be encouraged through skills training, Russian language courses, job placement and small business development. The Office will promote other durable solutions as appropriate, such as resettlement for the most vulnerable persons or voluntary repatriation. To combat xenophobia and raise public awareness of refugee issues, UNHCR will issue press releases and pursue intensive media campaigns on radio, television, and in the press, as well as through workshops and round-table discussions with government officials, journalists and relevant NGOs.

In order to manage mixed migration flows, UNHCR and its partners will provide legal expertise and material assistance, as necessary, in the design and issuance of legal documentation provided under the refugee law. The Office will extend competencies and resources at federal and regional levels to improve the quality of first-instance decisions and to increase access by asylum-seekers to a fair refugee status determination procedure, especially at certain border points (such as Moscow International Airport). This will include on-the-job training and study visits and internships in Western countries for Russian eligibility authorities, border guards and law enforcement agencies. UNHCR will also work with the judiciary in order to promote the

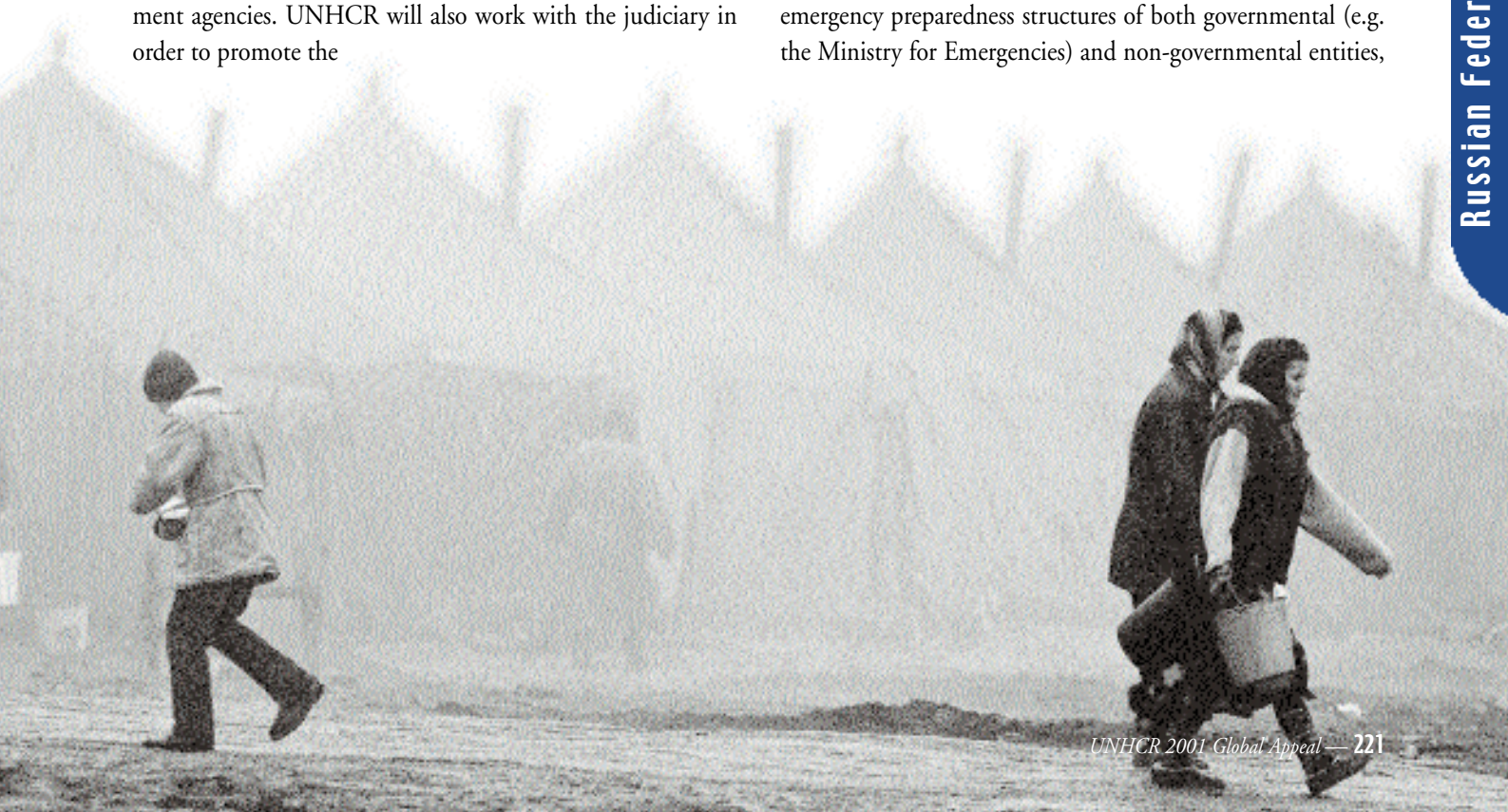
establishment of proper legal remedies for asylum-seekers denied refugee status and provide technical support for relevant migration services on data collection and registration, sharing of country-of-origin information, and better monitoring of migration flows at the border control points. The agency will lobby decision-makers and expand the resources and expertise of government entities and NGOs so that local legislation is made to conform to federal law and international norms. It will also urge the amendment of unconstitutional regional laws on the *propiska* system (in cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe) thus promoting the integration of recognised refugees, IRPs and IDPs.

Statelessness

In order to prevent and reduce statelessness, UNHCR and its partners will promote and improve national structures and simplified procedures for acquiring citizenship (primarily through training and legal advice at national and regional levels). The Office will lobby and work with federal authorities on the Russian Federation's accession to international and regional instruments on statelessness and citizenship. It will also provide expertise on drafting the new citizenship law, lobby regional authorities in areas where stateless persons are located and promote durable solutions for stateless persons (e.g. acquisition of citizenship, social integration). To increase public awareness of statelessness, appropriate messages will be delivered through the press and radio.

Response to Population Displacement in the Northern Caucasus

To respond to population displacement in the northern Caucasus, UNHCR and its partners will strengthen existing emergency preparedness structures of both governmental (e.g. the Ministry for Emergencies) and non-governmental entities,



through closer co-operation and joint capacity-building projects with ICRC and other relevant international partners. It will also undertake systematic evaluation and adjustment of its operational capacity to ensure preparedness, including stockpiling of relief items. UNHCR will continuously monitor and assess the protection and material needs of the displaced population, and organise public information and cultural activities promoting ethnic tolerance and reconciliation for children and youth.

UNHCR will distribute relief items (such as clothing, household goods and blankets) and provide assistance to improve water and sanitation, shelter, and community services and protection. Return or local resettlement and integration of IDPs will be supported with income-generating projects and start-up assistance for small-scale agriculture. An important part of the operation will concentrate on expanding the competencies of governmental and NGOs providing humanitarian and integration assistance and monitoring the human rights and protection situation. A mine awareness programme will be implemented with UNICEF.

Women constitute 54 per cent of the beneficiary population and are one of the main target groups in all the activities outlined above. Their special needs will be addressed, primarily in the areas of health, family planning, education, skills training and income-generation. Over 70 per cent of beneficiaries of

skills-training and income-generating activities are women. Vulnerable women within the local population also participate in these activities.

Children under the age of 17 represent 21 per cent of the beneficiary population. Children of local, IDP and refugee families will equally benefit from UNHCR's assistance in the sectors of education and health. Special activities will address the psychosocial and educational needs of IDP or refugee children who have suffered as a result of flight and prolonged displacement during the recent armed conflicts. Cultural and recreational programmes also aim to bring together children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Desired Impact

Thanks to lobbying and capacity-building efforts, the rate of recognition of refugee status will increase and asylum-seekers will benefit from prompt and correct appeal procedures. Legislation will be implemented fairly and documentation will be issued in a timely manner. Refugees will integrate successfully in North Ossetia and in Moscow and other large cities. The self-sufficiency of urban asylum-seekers will increase, as will that of vulnerable persons among IRPs. Development agencies will be more actively involved in consolidating durable solutions for populations of concern. IDPs from Chechnya will enjoy their full legal rights as citizens of the



Russian Federation, have access to social entitlements and benefits in the areas where they are settled and receive needed material assistance promptly. At the same time, material conditions and national protection mechanisms for returnees and the local population inside Chechnya will improve. Meshketians will enjoy better legal and social conditions, including Russian Federation citizenship.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

In 2001, UNHCR's programme in the Russian Federation will be managed by 90 staff (19 international and 71 national staff) as well as one Junior Professional Officer and a United Nations Volunteer.

OFFICES

Moscow
Nazran
St. Petersburg
Stavropol
Vladikavkaz

Co-ordination

Five government ministries and 20 NGOs will work with UNHCR as implementing partners in the Russian Federation in 2001. UNHCR's Regional Representative is also the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator and the Designated Official in charge of UN Staff Security. In handling matters relating to migration and asylum, and in finding durable solutions to involuntary population movements, UNHCR co-operates closely with other organisations, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe, IOM, international NGOs and donor agencies, and will further develop partnerships with ILO, EBRD, and EU/TACIS. UNHCR will continue to encourage other UN agencies to engage in development-oriented activities for the various groups of concern. In the northern Caucasus, UNHCR works within the UN inter-agency framework and provides the basic operational structures that support the overall UN effort.

BUDGET (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	3,151,510
Community Services	1,341,200
Crop Production	250,000
Domestic Needs/Household Support	2,709,760
Education	1,077,570
Health/Nutrition	1,072,904
Income Generation	1,395,000
Legal Assistance	2,018,476
Operational Support (to Agencies)	1,178,990
Sanitation	160,000
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	2,458,900
Transport/Logistics	1,276,800
Water (non-agricultural)	700,000
Total Operations	18,791,110
Programme Support	2,362,668
Total	21,153,778

PARTNERS

Government Agencies
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Emergencies
Ministry of Federal Affairs, National and Migration Policy
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NGOs
Association of Media Managers
Children's Fund of Stavropol and North Ossetia
Civic Assistance
Co-ordinating Council for Assistance to Refugees and Forced Migrants
Danish Refugee Council
<i>Dobroye Delo</i> Counselling Service
<i>Equilibre Solidarité</i>
Faith, Hope, Love
Forum of Migrant Organisations
Guild of Russian Filmmakers
International Rescue Committee
Magee Women Care International
Memorial Human Rights Centre
Moscow Committee on Education
Municipal Evening Lyceum
Partner Foundation
<i>Pomosch</i>
Psychological Support Centre
<i>Vesta</i>
Voice of the Mountains
Other
International Labor Office
International Organisation for Migration
United Nations Volunteers
State University on Management

