

SPCP Southern Caucasus Georgia Update October 2009

Background

In July 2007 UNHCR introduced the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project in the Southern Caucasus (SPCP-SC) to help strengthen protection responses to forced displacement in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In Georgia, it focuses on strengthening state and civil society capacities to protect refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons, drawing on the capacities of communities. The SPCP-SC initiative is funded by the European Union, and will finalize by the end of 2009.

In August 2008 the project was ongoing when the armed conflict broke out between Russian and Georgian troops over South Ossetia which resulted in the second wave of displacement over Georgia. In addition to 220,000 IDPs living in protracted displacement for about 17 years after the conflicts in 1992-93, some 138,000 persons were displaced during the August 2008 conflict. Presently, there are 251,000 IDPs in Georgia, while 85,000 people in IDP-like situations remain in need of assistance after returning home in the conflict zones. Despite interruptions in implementing the SPCP in Georgia due to the emergency situation, the project managed to reflect the changed circumstances including the core needs of the newly displaced population.

SPCP in Georgia has been implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation. In implementing the SPCP, UNHCR partners with the international NGOs operating in the field, including Norwegian Refugee Council and Danish Refugee Council as well as local NGOs and community groups.

Methodology

The SPCP proceeds from an initial identification of gaps in protection to the design of specific interventions to remedy those gaps. A central feature is collaboration, as the gaps and the measures to address them are collectively agreed by concerned stakeholders including key government authorities, the EU, donor Governments, other UN agencies, international and

national partners, civil society and displaced persons.

In Georgia, UNHCR piloted a Global Needs Assessment (GNA) initiative which draws on the methodology and the outputs of the SPCP to elaborate a clear picture of unmet needs of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, the consequences on those of concern and the costs of meeting those needs. GNA is now mainstreamed in UNHCR operations worldwide.

Presently UNHCR is implementing model projects to remedy the main protection gaps prioritized in consultative processes under the SPCP. These projects, funded through GNA, aim at mitigating the needs of the most vulnerable among IDPs, returned IDPs, refugees and stateless persons with a view to integrating them into the mainstream society and reducing gradually their dependence on external assistance.

Activities

Gaps Analysis and National Consultations

UNHCR Georgia has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the gaps in protection faced by refugees. Its findings fed into a national consultation with governmental, international and national partners in March 2008. An action plan included local integration and self-reliance projects implemented by UNHCR and its partners. These projects, including those to improve national capacity, help the Government of Georgia and local NGOs increasingly take over refugee protection roles.

A similar protection gaps analysis examining the situation of IDPs has been elaborated reflecting the impact of the August conflict on IDP protection. The



National stakeholders consultations on IDP protection gaps. Tbilisi, June 2009



National Consultations on “Protection and Integration of Internally Displaced People in Georgia” were held in Tbilisi on 23 June 2009.

The event brought together all relevant stakeholders including Georgian government representatives, the Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, UN agencies, international and national partners, UNHCR staff, civil society and IDPs themselves to discuss the present IDP protection system in Georgia, progress made to date and any ongoing protection gaps. The National Consultations were linked to the process of revision of the Action Plan on the implementation of the IDP State Strategy under the new circumstances after the August 2008 conflict. The consultative process is continuing in relation to the revision of the IDP Action Plan systematically, based on experiences in its ongoing implementation with a view to integrate all IDPs within a period of five years.

Establishing a Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers

UNHCR Georgia in cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia has identified the site for a Reception Centre for asylum seekers in the village of Martkopi, near Tbilisi. The construction works, funded by the EU and the US Department of State, started in August 2009.

The reception centre will address the needs of the asylum seekers by providing accommodation and assistance while their claims are being considered.

Expanding self-reliance in displaced communities

The lack of sufficient opportunities to achieve self reliance is a key protection concern in refugee and IDP communities, linked to a number of protection risks including poor health, domestic violence and child labor. Moreover, self reliant refugees and IDPs are more likely to achieve durable solutions.

UNHCR has supported a survey to assess the livelihoods needs and opportunities among refugee community. The report on “The Assessment of Livelihood Opportunities of Chechen Refugees for their Integration into Georgian Society” was presented at the workshop organized in April 2008 to discuss opportunities and challenges for refugee self-reliance and prospects. Livelihoods and income generation projects implemented by

UNHCR (built on the gaps and recommendations developed during the National Consultations on refugee protection gaps and the refugee self-reliance workshop) have contributed to a significant reduction of dependency of refugees on UNHCR’s living assistance. This has in particular allowed UNHCR to reduce, as of April 2009, the total cash assistance payments by about one-third.

A similar assessment was conducted to identify and address the gaps in IDP self-reliance. The report on “The Assessment of the IDP Livelihoods in Georgia: Facts and Policies” served to guide the discussions during the IDP self-reliance workshop in May 2009. The workshop participants came up with targeted recommendations with a view to link livelihoods opportunities to durable solutions for IDPs.

As part of a strategy to expand the livelihoods of displaced persons, SPCP-SC has supported small-scale quick impact projects with six activities to generate employment opportunity for 40 refugees and member of the host community. Majority of these refugee enterprises have already proved sustainable. In 2008-09 SPCP-SC enabled refugees to start up and expand small enterprises including food production and processing, modern plastic window and door production, carpentry workshop, and a number of beekeeping businesses. Experiences in supporting refugee livelihoods have been useful in designing and implementing project interventions to enhance IDP livelihoods.



Beekeeping project provides income for the family of the Chechen refugee in Pankisi Valley, Georgia

