

EASTERN EUROPE

Regional Overview

Armenia • Azerbaijan • Belarus • Georgia • Russian Federation • Republic of Moldova • Ukraine

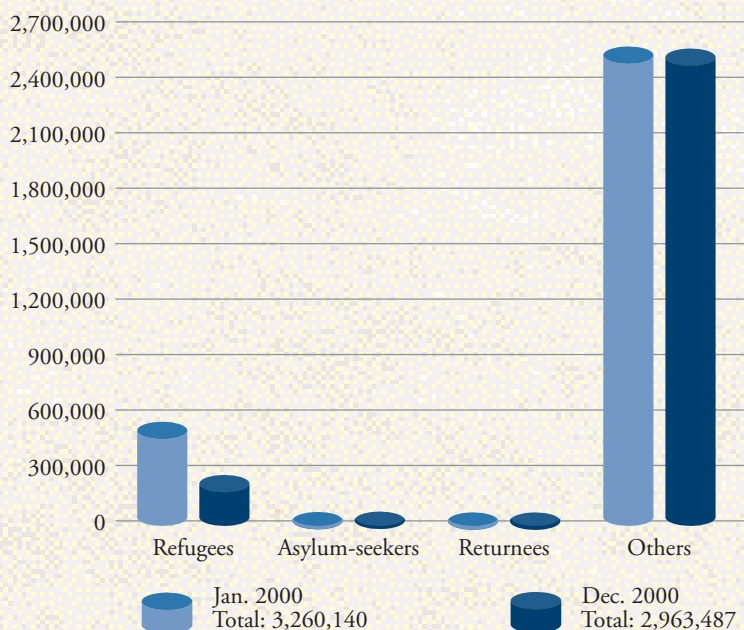


MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

In the Caucasus, very limited progress was made in the area of conflict resolution, and population displacement remained a powerful destabilizing factor in 2000. Despite the announced end to direct military operations in Chechnya (Russian Federation), neither the security nor the socio-economic environment proved conducive to the return of substantial numbers of displaced persons and refugees from Ingushetia (Russian Federation) and Georgia. In Georgia, there were some positive discussions, which pointed the way towards a peaceful solution to the South Ossetia conflict, but they were not translated into practical arrangements; meanwhile, the situation in Abkhazia remained essentially unchanged, and only a small number of displaced persons returned to the Gali region. Further south, Armenia and Azerbaijan were reported to have made some progress on settling the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute through high-level contacts. However, bilateral talks and efforts by the

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have yet to trigger a breakthrough. The expected eastward expansion of the European Union has lent additional momentum to the building of effective asylum systems in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and underlined the importance of partnerships with and between the many relevant parties.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

UNHCR's key objectives remained unchanged: the creation of internationally acceptable and effective national asylum and migration management systems in the CIS, including the implementation of national refugee and citizenship legislation; the reduction of statelessness; and support for NGOs giving protection and assistance to displaced persons. The attainment of lasting solutions to population displacements was hampered by unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus. Although progress was made in strengthening institutional frameworks for the management of migration and displacement, this was held back in several countries by political upheaval and frequent restructuring of government departments. Furthermore, governments in the region were often preoccupied with social and economic problems. There were widespread protection concerns, including a lack of mechanisms for putting relevant national legislation into practice, the difficulty of access to refugee procedures and high rejection rates. Another serious impediment to UNHCR's work was the level of risk entailed in merely accessing, let alone assisting and monitoring, persons of concern displaced by conflict, particularly in the northern Caucasus and Georgia.

Further progress in implementing the 1996 CIS Conference Programme of Action will depend on three factors: CIS Governments must themselves assume ownership of the process and translate this into practice; donor countries and other interested States must provide continued political and financial support; and the international lead agencies UNHCR, IOM, OSCE (including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner for National Minorities) and the Council of Europe must remain fully committed, individually and collectively, purposefully sharing tasks.

PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

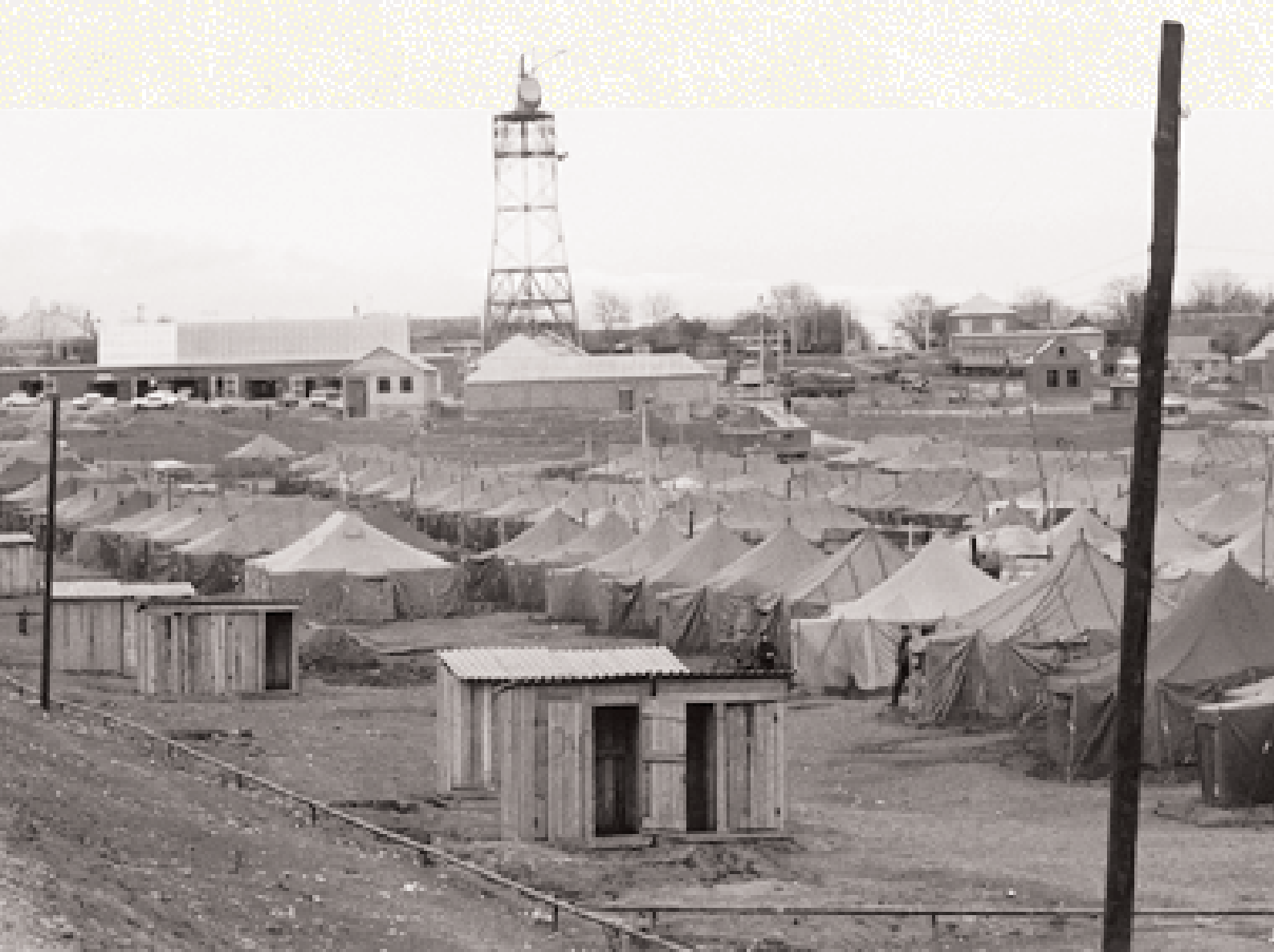
There can be no lasting solutions for refugees without the political resolution of conflicts. UNHCR therefore intensified its close collaboration with the UN and OSCE, in an effort to ensure that critical issues, such as voluntariness, safety and sustainability of return, be treated as an integral part of the conflict resolution process. UNHCR also promoted the principle that internally displaced persons (IDPs) must enjoy their full rights as citizens, regardless of being displaced,

and without prejudice to their eventual return to their former homes.

Whilst lasting solutions were being explored, UNHCR's largest operation in the region addressed the protection and assistance needs of some 160,000-175,000 displaced Chechens in neighbouring Ingushetia and approximately 7,000 refugees in Georgia. UNHCR initiated an inter-agency response, which managed to fend off a humanitarian disaster. As part of the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the northern Caucasus, UNHCR focused on the following protection issues: ensuring the provision of documentation; legal counselling; advocating respect for the rights of IDPs as citizens; and the provision of assistance in the sectors of shelter, water, sanitation and domestic needs. During the year, UNHCR spent some USD 20 million working on behalf of IDPs in the northern Caucasus. Although several thousand people did return to Chechnya, the situation there remained dangerous and humanitarian needs were evident on a vast scale. As a measure of support to the federal authorities, UNHCR provided some limited cross-border relief assistance. Some support was also provided for raising standards in civil and judicial institutions within Chechnya. (See separate country chapter on the Russian Federation).

The follow-up to the 1996 CIS Conference was officially concluded with the final annual Steering Group meeting in July, at which it was decided, however, that the process itself should continue for a further five years, and henceforth be referred to as the "Follow-up to the 1996 Geneva Conference on the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Migration and Asylum Issues". Future activities will reflect the priorities set out by the CIS countries, namely: building national asylum, migration and border management systems; and improving the sustainability of and partnerships with NGOs. UNHCR decided to gear its activities towards improving the frequently patchy implementation of the national legislation, which it has over the past several years helped to develop. The Office also concentrated on the promotion of accession by the CIS States to the international instruments on refugees and statelessness.

As in previous years, UNHCR continued to support national NGOs in the CIS countries through its country programmes and assisted NGO thematic working groups led by Counterpart International, International Alert and the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils. Each working group brought together some 30 member organisations. Their overall objectives were: joint programming and advocacy; the organisation of topical seminars and round-table discussions with NGO and government participation; enabling the



experience and expertise of NGOs to feed into international policy-making; and strengthening the operational and organisational management capacities of the CIS-based members.

Examples of activities in 2000 were: establishing a webpage and newsletter; conducting a survey of 1,000 IDPs and 95 NGOs to assess the implementation of the CIS Conference Programme of Action; conducting a workshop on the role of NGOs in emergency assistance and preparedness; and the publication of country reports on the situation of formerly deported peoples. The annual consultation of NGOs was held in July with the participation of 154 representatives of NGOs. UNHCR organised three review and planning meetings with the lead agencies of the NGO working groups. The aim was to ensure that NGOs remain involved in the next stage of the CIS Conference follow-up.

The NGO Fund was set up in 1997 as a temporary measure to enhance UNHCR's operational co-operation with indigenous NGOs in the 12 countries of the CIS, and to enable NGOs to participate effectively in the follow-up to the Regional Conference on Refugees,

Displaced Persons and Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement in the Countries of the CIS and Relevant Neighbouring States. Financial assistance provided in 1997-2000 was devoted to impressing upon indigenous organisations the need for familiarity with internationally acceptable standards of refugee protection and assistance; helping them acquire the skills required to meet that need; and building up a network of relevant contacts between countries.

The positive impact of the NGO Fund is clearly attested to by the vastly increased level of co-operation between UNHCR and indigenous NGOs, which now constitute the majority of implementing and operational partners. NGO support activities are mainstreamed into country operations and now benefit from greater co-operation and co-ordination with other stakeholders promoting NGO sector development (UNDP, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, ECHO, USAID and others). The NGO working groups are important NGO networks, which will be sustained beyond the Conference process.

All UNHCR country offices in the CIS administered small grants and other types of support activities, while regional projects were managed by the CIS Unit at Headquarters. In 2000, most of the NGO Fund projects were mainstreamed, with the exception of the regional programme and country projects in the five countries of Central Asia and in the Russian Federation. (See the Regional Overview for Central Asia and the country chapter on the Russian Federation).

In 2000, country expenditure from funds specifically earmarked to NGO activities in the CIS was as follows:

	USD
Kazakhstan	76,500
Kyrgyzstan	66,300
Russian Federation	135,893
Tajikistan	80,000
Turkmenistan	75,000
Uzbekistan	76,500
NGO Participation at Meetings	275,000

OPERATIONS

UNHCR's operations in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine** are described in separate country chapters.

Belarus faced population flows of several nationalities trying to transit to Western Europe. UNHCR therefore concentrated primarily on helping to develop a system of quality asylum and on enhancing the capacity of central and regional governmental authorities and local NGOs to deal with refugees and migration related issues. This was pursued by improving the legal framework in the country; enabling the implementation of national refugee legislation; monitoring the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers; providing them with legal and social assistance; and stepping up public awareness activities. As a result, significant progress was made in the implementation of national refugee legislation, particularly in the establishment of an effective nation-wide procedure for the determination of refugee status. There were 76 per cent more recognised refugees in 2000 than in the previous year. The Government also paved the way for the local integration of recognised refugees; UNHCR supported this through a joint pilot project with local authorities to provide permanent shelter. Legal counselling services were provided by a local NGO backed by UNHCR. Belarus made headway in preparing for accession to the 1951 Convention.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the main objective of UNHCR's policy and programme remained unchanged: to strengthen international refugee protection and to assist the Government to address asylum-related issues, notably through the adoption of national refugee legislation, the establishment of an appropriate central authority and accession to international legal instruments covering refugees and statelessness. Given the increase in the number of asylum-seekers and illegal migrants in Moldova, the Government recognised the relevance of these issues. UNHCR's efforts, including continued advocacy and awareness raising, yielded clear signs of progress: the passage of a new national refugee law and, following co-operation with the Council of Europe, the amendment of the citizenship law to comply with international standards. UNHCR provided basic assistance and counselling for asylum-seekers and refugees. The Office co-operated with OSCE and the World Bank in providing assistance for the improvement of medical and educational facilities in mixed-community areas of Trans-Dniestria.

FUNDING

Financial constraints experienced in the course of the year affected UNHCR's programmes in the region. Some planned activities had to be reduced or cancelled to save some 20 per cent of the initial budget for 2000. Although life-saving measures always received priority, budget cuts affected UNHCR's means to assist individual cases, to support lasting solutions and to improve the expertise of governments in the field of asylum.

The 2000 Global Appeal included a box with a short description of the follow-up to the CIS Conference, which indicated that UNHCR's programmes in the 12 countries of the CIS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia would require USD 44,413,100. The box was intended to maintain the link with the CIS Conference, which since 1996 has provided the framework for UNHCR's strategy and activities in the two regions, and to facilitate the transition from the former Special Programme for the CIS countries to the unified budget structure, which was launched on 1 January 2000. Earmarked contributions received for the CIS region are reflected in the tables at the end of this Regional Overview and that for Central Asia. Total expenditure in 2000 for all programmes in the countries of the CIS amounted to USD 36,179,790. A description of the corresponding activities may be found in the Operations section of the two Regional Overviews and in the relevant country chapters.

Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)					
Donor	Earmarking ¹	Annual Programme Budget		Supplementary Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
Canada	Russian Federation	0	0	944,648	773,415
Denmark	Russian Federation	0	0	900,901	900,901
Finland	Azerbaijan	155,298	155,298	0	0
	Eastern Europe	77,649	77,649	0	0
	Russian Federation	77,649	77,649	446,255	446,255
France	Eastern Europe	0	0	217,577	217,577
Germany	Georgia	0	0	226,436	226,436
	Russian Federation	0	0	467,307	467,307
Italy	Russian Federation	0	0	149,987	149,987
Japan	Armenia	370,000	370,000	0	0
	Azerbaijan	450,000	450,000	0	0
	Belarus	70,000	70,000	0	0
	Eastern Europe	60,000	60,000	500,000	500,000
	Georgia	860,000	860,000	0	0
	Moldova	100,000	100,000	0	0
	Ukraine	410,000	410,000	0	0
Malaysia	Russian Federation	0	0	100,000	100,000
Netherlands	Eastern Europe	0	0	541,609	541,609
Norway	Eastern Europe	1,046,512	1,046,512	169,492	169,492
	Russian Federation	0	0	479,616	479,616
Sweden	Eastern Europe	0	0	1,055,101	1,055,101
Switzerland	Armenia	303,030	303,030	0	0
	Russian Federation	0	0	301,205	301,205
Turkey	Russian Federation	0	0	100,000	100,000
United Kingdom	Armenia	970,588	970,588	0	0
	Azerbaijan	100,000	100,000	0	0
United States of America	Eastern Europe	7,091,980	7,291,980	0	0
	Georgia	0	0	565,000	565,000
	Russian Federation	100,000	100,000	5,080,000	5,080,000
	Ukraine	500,000	500,000	0	0
European Commission	Armenia	5,079	0	0	0
	Russian Federation	0	0	820,100	818,344
	Ukraine	11,991	0	0	0
Arab Gulf Programme for UN Development Organisations	Russian Federation	0	0	50,000	50,000
<i>Action Réfugiés (FRA)</i>	Russian Federation	0	0	30,925	30,925
<i>Deutsche Stiftung (GFR)</i>	Armenia	165,238	165,238	0	0
UK for UNHCR (GBR)	Armenia	10,794	10,794	0	0
	Russian Federation	0	0	2,977	2,977
USA for UNHCR (USA)	Russian Federation	0	0	945	945
ENI (Agip) (ITA)	Azerbaijan	1,760,000	2,200,000	0	0
NATO Music Festival Moenchengladbach (GFR)	Russian Federation	0	0	21,573	21,573
Private Donors Canada	Russian Federation	0	0	1,497	1,497
Private Donors Italy	Moldova	811	811	0	0
	Russian Federation	0	0	9,030	9,030
Private Donors Japan	Eastern Europe	98	98	0	0
	Russian Federation	0	0	2,457	2,457
Private Donors Korea	Russian Federation	0	0	985	985
Private Donors United States of America	Russian Federation	0	0	300	300
Total²		14,696,717	15,319,647	13,185,923	13,012,934

¹For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

²Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unrestricted voluntary contributions, lightly restricted contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Country	Budget and Expenditure (USD)					
	Revised Budget			Expenditure		
	Annual Programme Budget	Supplementary Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget	Supplementary Programme Budget	Total
Armenia	3,106,627	0	3,106,627	3,052,032	0	3,052,032
Azerbaijan	5,770,117	0	5,770,117	5,410,115	0	5,410,115
Belarus	779,397	0	779,397	771,778	0	771,778
Georgia	6,621,251	2,257,814	8,879,065	5,545,241	2,034,730	7,579,971
Republic of Moldova	1,007,054	0	1,007,054	961,973	0	961,973
Russian Federation	11,930,035	10,761,651	22,691,686	10,445,887	11,222,336	21,668,223
Ukraine	3,580,621	0	3,580,621	3,041,716	0	3,041,716
Regional Projects ¹	804,329	0	804,329	583,882	0	583,882
Bureau at Headquarters	1,533,660	0	1,533,660	1,500,560		1,500,560
Total	35,133,091	13,019,465	48,152,556	31,313,184	13,257,066	44,570,250

¹ Covers scholarships for refugee students, support to NGO activities (expenditure amounting to USD 227,054) and Follow-up to the CIS Conference (expenditure amounting to USD 231,828).

