

# Russian Federation



## Main Objectives

Support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards; identify and promote appropriate durable solutions for refugees; prevent and reduce statelessness; facilitate integration of stateless persons. Help meet the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons in the Northern Caucasus.

## Impact

- Advocacy, training and other capacity-building activities related to asylum reached a wide range of Government officials and NGO staff across Russia; some positive developments in the building of the asylum system were

achieved, such as the introduction of a clause on temporary asylum in the refugee legislation, and more positive appeal decisions by the courts (through intensive work with lawyers' networks).

- Provided direct protection assistance to asylum-seekers in Moscow and St Petersburg (including interventions at the airport). This had a positive impact on the lives of several hundred individuals who would otherwise have been left without recourse to any form of support.
- UNHCR provided resettlement opportunities to the most vulnerable non-CIS asylum-seekers for whom local integration remained unattainable.
- UNHCR's multi-sectoral assistance programme continued to target the most vulnerable of the urban asylum-seekers: those unable to access

national social services or legal employment. UNHCR also provided education, medical assistance and household support.

- UNHCR provided technical support on citizenship legislation and continued to advise on issues of statelessness. The draft law on citizenship was approved by the Duma. Some stateless Meskhetians received positive court decisions relating to their property rights and registration.
- The second phase of shelter assistance to Georgian refugees in Northern Ossetia was completed, reaching several more vulnerable families (previously housed in temporary accommodation centres) who now became eligible for residence registration, and therefore access to social services and legal employment.
- UNHCR provided assistance and monitored the protection of 150,000 IDPs in Ingushetia, intervening with the authorities to ensure the voluntary character of return and ensuring the preservation of a 'safe haven' there. The authorities issued documents to IDPs more efficiently and shelter was provided to the most vulnerable families, including those evicted from host families.
- UNHCR support to NGOs inside Chechnya helped to strengthen their activities. Support to the court system resulted in its better functioning in Chechnya. Shelter assistance to returning families was based on the "one dry room" approach. Security concerns in Chechnya made monitoring very difficult.

## Working Environment

### The Context

The Russian Federation ratified the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1993. Since the Law on Forced Migrants came into force in 1995, asylum-seekers from the CIS countries have gradually been provided with Russian citizenship. The national refugee law, enacted in 1993, was amended in 1997, when the procedure for non-CIS asylum-seekers started to be applied.

Asylum-seekers encounter several obstacles, both in initially accessing and subsequently during the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure. Two important factors can lead to rejection of applications on admissibility grounds: (i) the asylum-seeker entered the country illegally and failed to apply for asylum within 24 hours, and (ii) the asylum-seeker transited via a country considered safe by the Russian authorities. Asylum-seekers have to wait (in Moscow, up to two years) to obtain access to RSD procedures. During this 'pre-registration period' they are undocumented, frequently suffer police harassment and detention, and cannot obtain registration of residence in order to access social services and legal employment. For those whose files are finally processed, recognition rates remain low due to a very strict interpretation of the notion of persecution and the requirement of documentary evidence of the fear of persecution. These

factors conspire to cause a high rejection rate at the first instance.

The Russian Federation is not a State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness and official statistics on stateless persons do not exist. Stateless persons lack legal status and documents and, therefore, have difficulty integrating in Russia.

The hostilities that broke out in the autumn of 1999 in the Republic of Chechnya devastated the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Many were forced to flee from Chechnya, mostly to the Republic of Ingushetia, while

Main Origin/ Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
IRPs <sup>1</sup>	513,300	298,700	-	-
IDPs <sup>2</sup>	443,300	-	-	-
Refugees <sup>3</sup>	17,900	-	-	-
Asylum-seekers <sup>4</sup>	5,900	5,900	-	-

<sup>1</sup> Involuntarily Relocating Persons, referring in particular to ethnic Russians.

<sup>2</sup> Includes IDPs from the 1994-1996 conflict.

<sup>3</sup> Of whom 14,800 from Georgia.

<sup>4</sup> Represents only "active" cases. The total number of asylum-seekers in the country is estimated at 100,000.

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
17,135,819	6,195,513	9,579,969	15,775,482	15,202,972

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

those who stayed live in badly damaged towns and cities. At the end of 2001, the number of displaced in Ingushetia was estimated to be 150,000, and in Chechnya, 160,000. Return to Chechnya slowed in 2001, mainly due to continued security concerns.

## Constraints

Staff security, which is monitored through UNSECOORD, remained an overriding concern in the Northern Caucasus. Security constraints continued to affect the mobility of expatriate and local staff and the capacity of UNHCR and its implementing partners to operate effectively.

As part of ongoing governmental reforms, the Ministry for Federal Affairs, National and Migration Policy (designated to take over responsibility for all migration and refugee matters from the Federal Migration Service in May 2000) was dissolved in October 2001 and the migration policy portfolio was passed to the Ministry of the Interior, leading to uncertainty, further delays in implementation of RSD and insufficient co-operation, notably in the North Caucasus.

## Funding

Budget reductions during the year, and in particular in the last quarter, resulted in an undeniable deterioration in the quality of assistance for all groups, except for IDPs in the Northern Caucasus, for whom sufficient earmarked contributions had been received.

## Achievements and Impact

### Protection and Solutions

The main challenges remained, i.e: the long waiting period (two years in Moscow) before asylum-seekers receive their first eligibility interview; the lack of temporary residence registration, issued by the police, for documented asylum-seekers; and the high rejection rate on both admissibility grounds and on merits. As asylum-seekers remain without any form of registration documents while waiting to formally enter the RSD procedure, they are considered to be illegal aliens and may be subject to police harassment, including fines, adminis-

trative detention, threats of eviction from apartments and the risk of deportation. This precarious situation is aggravated by growing xenophobia.

UNHCR's intensive work with lawyers led to precedent-setting court rulings, while interventions at airports and detention centres have had an encouraging impact.

Advocacy and capacity-building efforts on the part of UNHCR contributed to the implementation of a provision in the refugee law dealing with temporary asylum, with the result that a few hundred persons had already been granted temporary asylum by the end of 2001. This is expected to provide protection for several thousand Afghans pending a durable solution for their plight.

Some 58 non-CIS and 111 CIS refugees received assistance for voluntary repatriation to their countries of origin. UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of 114 of the most vulnerable refugees, for whom local integration could not be envisaged. Efforts to promote self-reliance (e.g. job placement schemes) among the urban asylum-seekers yielded poor results due to lack of documents and registration.

Ten years after fleeing their homes, several thousand Georgian refugees in North Ossetia remained vulnerable and could not be described as socially or economically integrated. The second phase of UNHCR's shelter project reached an additional 50 of the most vulnerable refugee families previously living in temporary accommodation centres. These persons were granted residence registration, affording them access to social services and employment.

Within the UN inter-agency framework, UNHCR provided protection and assistance to internally displaced Chechens in the Northern Caucasus. UNHCR intervened with the authorities to ensure that IDPs in Ingushetia were not coerced (whether explicitly or implicitly) into returning to Chechnya, and efforts to regularise the issuance of valid legal documents yielded positive results. Furthermore, UNHCR co-ordinated the provision of assistance in the water, sanitation and shelter sectors. Some material assistance was also delivered in Chechnya, though security constraints hindered proper monitoring.

The Duma passed a draft law on citizenship, and UNHCR continued the promotional work for the accession of the Russian Federation to the international instruments relating to statelessness. UNHCR provided legal counselling and assistance to three main groups of de facto stateless persons of concern: formerly deported Meskhetians residing in the Krasnodar Region (11,000-15,000), Afghan orphans who were educated in the former Soviet Union (an estimated 2,000) and ethnic Armenians from Baku (4,000). Meskhetians won over 300 court cases on property rights and registration while a number of Armenians obtained citizenship through court decisions.

The number of Internally Relocating Persons (IRPs) – a term adopted by the CIS Conference referring mostly to ethnic Russians returning/resettling from former USSR countries to Russia – decreased to some half a million, with the expiry of IRP status after five years, and citizenship was obtained by many. Limited assistance in the areas of legal counselling, education and community services was provided to IRPs in the regions of the Russian Federation in 2001.

UNHCR promoted and supported Russia's active participation in the Global Consultations on International Protection.

## Activities and Assistance

**Community Services:** UNHCR continued to support community centres in Moscow and the surrounding metropolitan region. Educational activities were the main focus of the centres (since most asylum-seekers cannot attend local schools). Cultural, recreational, social and skills training activities, and individual and group psycho-social counselling were also organised at the centres, mainly aimed at women and children. UNHCR also helped refugees/asylum-seekers to form their own NGO, which will use a community centre as its base. In St. Petersburg, a weekend Afghan cultural centre was established for children; a women's club was supported, and some skills training activities for women were carried out. In North Ossetia, UNHCR supported counselling, art therapy and group/sports activities for children, a day-care centre for the elderly and tolerance-education for teachers. In Ingushetia, various

small-scale community service and educational activities for children, adolescents and women were supported for IDPs in camps and spontaneous settlements.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** Some 1,300 extremely vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in the Moscow area received cash assistance. Food packages, hygiene kits, school kits, and sanitary towels were provided to many others. UNHCR also provided assistance to persons detained either at the airport or at detention centres. In the North Caucasus, large-scale distributions of non-food items (such as soap, clothes, winter shoes, blankets, bed linen, mattresses and kitchen sets) were organised for IDPs.

**Education:** Some 900 children and adolescents attended informal education activities in the community centres in Moscow and the surrounding region. More than 300 children attending local schools were provided with some support (for lunch and stationery). UNHCR expanded a pilot project with the Moscow Committee on Education to increase access to local schools and develop teaching capacity for asylum-seeker and refugee children. Twenty-one university students received scholarships through DAFI, either to conclude or continue their higher education in Moscow.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR supported the provision of primary and basic medical assistance to over 4,000 asylum-seekers (men, women and children) in Moscow and the surrounding metropolitan region. Children were vaccinated to meet national requirements. Medical assistance was provided in St. Petersburg through the Red Cross Society, with preferential rates at local hospitals. Refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs received counselling and education on reproductive health, infectious diseases, and on pre- and post-natal care.

WFP, the main UN-partner responsible for providing food to IDPs in the Northern Caucasus, met basic food requirements. WFP's provisions were complemented with canned meat, salt and wheat flour received by UNHCR as in-kind donations from donors.

**Income generation:** Over 300 refugees and asylum-seekers in Moscow and St. Petersburg benefited from training opportunities in tailoring, design, sewing, hairdressing, cosmetics, batik, computer skills, and masonry. A job placement scheme initiated in Moscow and the greater Moscow region helped some 90 individuals find temporary employment in Moscow but could not yield long-term results due to the problems with documentation and registration. IRPs and IDPs continued to receive loans from a revolving fund created by UNHCR and managed by a local NGO (no longer requiring funding from UNHCR). Some 2,335 loans were approved in 2001.



Refugees from Georgia are living in a rehabilitated building. UNHCR / A. Hollmann

**Legal Assistance:** UNHCR continued to train government officials and NGOs on international legal refugee standards and RSD procedures through various training activities at home and abroad. In total, 730 persons were trained (333 civil servants and 397 NGO staff). UNHCR protection staff also worked as facilitators/resource persons at various events organised by the authorities and NGOs. Progress was made in issuing refugees with travel documents, temporary asylum certificates and temporary asylum documents; UNHCR provided the funding and equipment to facilitate this.

Over 27,000 consultations on legal issues were held for those registered at the Refugee Reception Centre

in Moscow. Screening and registration at the centre were streamlined and strengthened. Asylum-seekers were assisted in obtaining documents and registration and in pursuing the appeals process in the courts. A hotline and timely interventions helped many who were detained or at risk of eviction from premises. Legal counselling and assistance were also provided in St. Petersburg, and throughout the regions, for various groups of concern to UNHCR, by 'Memorial'. This is a lawyers' network which gave more than 10,000 consultations, including representation in court and interventions with law enforcement officials. A network of counselling centres in Northern Caucasus and in the south of

the Russian Federation benefited thousands of IDPs and helped raise awareness of protection issues for the displaced.

Public information and awareness activities in various regions of Russia helped to support protection objectives and, in the longer term, to promote the tolerance needed for local integration to become workable. Fifty asylum-seeker/refugee families received repatriation grants and travel assistance to return to their countries of origin, mainly in Africa. Seven convoys of Georgian refugees returned to Georgia during the year (31 refugee families). A total of 114 of the most vulnerable refugees departed for resettlement countries.

In Ingushetia, monitoring of the protection and social conditions of the IDPs, combined with timely interventions, helped to ensure that safe stay in Ingushetia was possible. This included review of shelter conditions and access to humanitarian assistance. Legal, social and medical counselling and referrals to appropriate local institutions were provided, with emergency assistance in a few individual cases. UNHCR helped support a mine awareness programme with UNICEF. Two training workshops were conducted for lawyers in Northern Caucasus.

In Chechnya, training for the judiciary and law enforcement structures was conducted. Also, UNHCR financed monitoring of the level of protection of IDPs and returnees in Chechnya and provided legal counselling (through partnership with various bodies including Memorial and other NGOs).

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** For the 50th Anniversary, UNHCR carried out an intensive countrywide public information campaign, including films about refugees and human rights issues, workshops and seminars, slots in regular radio programmes, and the publication of journals and newspapers.

**Sanitation:** UNHCR supported sanitation services (provision and cleaning of latrines, garbage collection) through its implementing partners and provided trucks for a UNICEF project to deliver water in Grozny.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** UNHCR helped to upgrade conditions in 60 spontaneous settlements to ensure adequate and dry accommodation (a minimum of 20 square metres per family) and replaced or repaired 750 of the most dilapidated tents in the camps – for the IDPs facing winter in Ingushetia. The Office maintained additional accommodation in case of unexpected shelter needs, helped upgrade infrastructure in the four major camps and in Chechnya, assisted 3,000 returning families with shelter materials to enable them to live in ‘one dry room’ while repairing damaged housing. In North Ossetia, 36 new houses were constructed for Georgian refugees to settle permanently and 12 half-finished houses were completed.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR organised 24 convoys to Ingushetia and two convoys to Daghestan, while UNHCR’s implementing partners organised 114 convoys of food and non-food items from Ingushetia to Chechnya. The goods were shipped first to Stavropol, then to two warehouses in Ingushetia, before reaching the final distribution points.

**Water:** Drinking water was trucked daily to over 100 IDP locations not serviced by the main water supply system. The second phase of the system

upgrade was completed, increasing capacity and averting a crisis during the summer.

## Organisation and Implementation

### Management

The UNHCR Regional Office in Moscow covered the field offices in Stavropol, Vladikavkaz and Nazran. The offices worked with 24 international staff (including three UNVs and two consultants) and 70 national staff including 18 UNVs and seven consultants.

### Working with Others

UNHCR worked with 47 national and 10 international NGOs. UNHCR worked closely with other UN agencies and relevant inter-governmental organisations in the Russian Federation. Close liaison was maintained with OCHA, UNSECOORD and other agencies engaged in the humanitarian operation in the North Caucasus. The main non-UN inter-governmental partners for UNHCR in Russia were the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In Ingushetia, UNHCR provided security, logistics and other support to the Swiss Humanitarian Agency’s “Cash for Shelter Programme” for the benefit of host families. Other bilateral development agencies were also important partners, as well as a number of private foundations concerned with political and economic stability and civil society development. In 2001, UNHCR signed a framework agreement on co-operation with the Government of Moscow.

### Overall Assessment

UNHCR plays a central role in promoting and strengthening the asylum regime in the Russian Federation, seeking to ensure that minimum standards are observed in the protection and assistance of asylum-seekers and refugees and that those standards are pulled into line with international standards. Although there have been some highly creditable manifestations of Russia’s international

commitments regarding fair and accessible asylum procedures and refugee protection and assistance (implementation of temporary asylum, positive decisions by courts), UNHCR needs to continue to work alongside the Government on this vital long-term process. Asylum-seekers are still served by a flawed protection regime, and recognition rates are still low. The main administrative obstacles are at the Moscow level, where most of the non-CIS asylum-seekers live. Currently, more than 80 per cent of protection staff time in UNHCR's Moscow office is devoted to individual cases. Once the migration authorities reduce the pre-registration period for asylum-seekers and provide more active assistance on several fronts, UNHCR protection staff will be able to spend less time on short-term protection interventions and focus instead on longer-term development of the asylum system.

The draft law on citizenship, to which UNHCR had contributed much advice and expertise, was submitted to the Duma and approved. In terms of avoidance of statelessness, this law is more or less in line with international standards. For the first time, UNHCR co-organised a meeting of experts in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe, with the Presidential Commission on Citizenship. UNHCR stressed that the implementing regulations are of crucial importance and it will now focus its advocacy and training efforts in this direction. This will be followed by support for training of relevant staff in the Ministry of the Interior and support for a public information campaign once law implementation is agreed upon.

Through systematic and timely protection interventions in Ingushetia, UNHCR prevented forced return and evictions of IDPs, and ensured relatively unhindered access of all displaced people to assistance. Monitoring, legal counselling, and small-scale education and community services helped to meet the psychological needs of IDPs, raised awareness of rights, and provided legal remedies in individual cases. Advocacy by UNHCR and its partners helped to improve the situation regarding the issuing of documents for IDPs. UNHCR's influence in other republics was more limited, although the network of counselling centres throughout the region is putting down deeper roots. This contributed to greater awareness of human rights among IDPs, local populations

and the local authorities, and meant successful recourse to law for some. Preparations for harsh winter conditions were not totally satisfactory as funding constraints halted procurement in the last months of the year and there were unforeseen problems with a tent supplier. UNHCR made every effort to contribute towards shelter, water and sanitation, and non-food items, but was only able to meet a fraction of the needs. Many IDPs faced the winter in cold, leaky tents or in spontaneous settlements that still do not meet basic standards. The water supply system in Ingushetia has improved, with several new remote locations now covered.

Security constraints and consequent limited access to the region remain the main obstacle to timely and properly planned aid into Chechnya. UNHCR carried out a major distribution of non-food items in mid-year. Shelter kits were provided to help give returning families basic accommodation while repairing damaged houses; however, it was difficult to gain an accurate picture of the effect of this aid. The assistance needs of the population in Chechnya remained largely unmet. UNHCR support to NGOs working in the legal domain in Chechnya has helped to strengthen their activities and to contribute to the overall monitoring of the protection situation in the Republic. Support for the administration of justice has resulted in a functioning court system, albeit one with difficulties.

In 2001, UNHCR started to reduce the number of partners and activities for 2002, trying to gradually ensure that in Ingushetia most sectors are covered by other agencies, with UNHCR re-orienting its assistance towards the (temporary) integration of those unable to return to Chechnya. It is also preparing to provide assistance in Chechnya, should there be a significant return movement.

## Offices

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### Moscow

Stavropol  
Vladikavkaz  
Nazran

### Partners

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#### Governmental Agencies

Government of North Ossetia – Alania  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Emergencies  
Ministry of Federal Affairs, National and Migration Policy  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection  
Ministry of Nationalities  
Office of the Presidential Representative for Elimination  
of the Ossetia Conflict  
State University of Management

#### NGOs

Association of Media Managers  
Care Germany  
Caucasian Refugee Council  
Chechen Committee for National Rescue  
Children's Fund, (North Ossetia-Alania, Stavropol Krai,  
Saratov)  
Chistye Prudy Ltd  
Civic Assistance  
Collegium of Lawyers of Chechen Republic  
Committee of Russian Lawyers in Defence of Human Rights  
Danish Refugee Council  
*Dobroye Delo* Counselling Centre  
*Doverie*  
Equilibre Solidarity  
Ethnosphera  
Faith, Hope, Love  
Forum of Migrants Organisations  
Guild of Russian Filmmakers  
Handicap International  
*Hilfswerk Austria*  
Hungarian Interchurch Aid and Russian Orthodox Church  
International Rescue Committee  
Islamic Relief  
Magee Woman Care International  
Memorial Human Rights Centre  
Moscow Helsinki Group  
Moscow School of Human Rights  
Partner Foundation  
Peace to the Caucasus  
People in Need Foundation  
*Pomosch*

Psychological Support Centre "Gratis"  
Publishing House "Perm News"  
Russian Fund of Mercy and Health  
Saratov Legal Clinic  
St. Petersburg Society of Red Cross  
VESTA  
Voice of Mountains

#### Others

UNV  
IOM

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual and Supplementary Programme Budgets	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	2,516,701		21,516	
Community Services	575,910		232,431	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	904,790		2,805,455	
Education	496,294		172,583	
Food	0		19,687	
Health / Nutrition	607,596		184,442	
Income Generation	26,108		480,781	
Legal Assistance	2,109,014		653,706	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	718,407		411,222	
Sanitation	278,903		47,173	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	743,813		1,546,264	
Transport / Logistics	441,164		400,531	
Water	715,335		50,944	
Transit Accounts	0		(3,027)	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	2,240,780		(2,876,636)	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>12,374,815</b>		<b>4,147,072</b>	
Programme Support	2,334,165		25,635	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>14,708,980</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>4,172,707</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	493,992	(3)	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,202,972</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>4,172,707</b>	

### Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	7,958,237		1,134,733	
Reporting Received	5,717,457		4,011,369	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2,240,780</b>		<b>(2,876,636)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		2,977,711	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		172,975	
Currency Adjustment	0		85,982	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>2,240,780</b>		<b>14,082</b>	

### Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1st January	0		4,342,587	(5) <sup>1</sup>
New Obligations	15,202,972	(1)	0	
Disbursements	14,708,980	(3)	4,172,707	(5)
Cancellations	0		169,880	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>493,992</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5

(5)<sup>1</sup> This balance includes USD 4,054, outstanding from operations before 2000. It is also reported under "Unearmarked" in Schedule 5, page 46 of UNHCR's Financial Statements.