

SPCP - Southern Caucasus

Update, October 2007

Background

In July 2007 UNHCR introduced the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project in the Southern Caucasus (SPCP-SC) with a financial contribution of Euro 500,000 from the European Commission.

The key objective of SPCP-SC is to help strengthen protection responses to forced displacement in the South Caucasus. Its focus is primarily on strengthening state capacities to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, but as well draws on the capacities of communities.

The SPCP-SC proceeds from an initial identification of gaps in protection to the design of specific interventions to remedy those gaps. A central feature is collaboration, for the gaps and the measures to address them are collectively agreed by concerned stakeholders including key government authorities, partners, civil society and displaced persons.

Promoting Regional Dialogue

A distinct objective of the SPCP-SC is to improve the coordination between governments, international and national partners in the region in comprehensive response to forced displacement. Initiatives facilitating dialogue and exchange, including two regional meetings on forced displacement, will be undertaken taking into account existing sensitivities in the region.

Identification of Gaps and Measures to Remedy Them

- (i) conducting and publishing a comprehensive analysis of protection gaps faced by persons of concern;
- (ii) undertaking a comprehensive assessment of present livelihood strategies of refugees and propose means to improve self-reliance;
- (iii) national consultations with all concerned stakeholders to prioritize the gaps identified

and recommend measures to remedy them;

- (iv) subsequently working with partners to develop projects responding to an agreed Plan of Action for the coming years;
- (v) engaging donors in the funding of initiatives necessary to fully implement the Plan of Action;
- (vi) implementing a number of projects which respond to protection gaps that have already been identified jointly by UNHCR, the Government and other partners.



The process of analysing existing gaps in protection has commenced in all 3 participating states, drawing on available international and national data on the situation of persons of concern and integrating the results of participatory assessments held with refugees in Armenia and refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan and Georgia. It is anticipated that comprehensive Gaps Analysis draft reports will be produced in the final quarter of 2007 to provide a basis for consultation with national partners.

SPCP-SC is coordinated by UNHCR's Representation in Georgia. To enhance the impact of its harmonised approach, a regional project coordinator has been recruited to facilitate the sharing of best practices, liaise with partners and support the capacity of UNHCR multifunctional teams in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Specific Project Interventions

UNHCR and its partners in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have identified a number of urgent protection gaps to be addressed as a matter of priority by the SPCP-SC. Complementary capacity building initiatives will be designed and developed to address other protection gaps identified during gaps analysis and consultation. These will include projects aimed at raising protection standards, expanding means for self-reliance and promoting durable solutions.

Armenia



Completion of Refugee census in Yerevan Marz

SPCP-SC is supporting the finalisation of a Refugee Census in Yerevan Marz. Accurate census data on *prima-facie* refugees will facilitate the development of comprehensive strategies to address obstacles to naturalisation and integration of refugees and will tie in with SPCP's gap analysis and livelihoods survey. Census data is currently being verified, and will be shared with the Government and published at the end of April 2008.

Establishment of an electronic registration system

A protection gap jointly identified by the Government and UNHCR is the lack of an electronic registration mechanism in Armenia, enabling refugee data to be accurately and confidentially stored, used and updated. The absence of accurate reliable registration information makes it exceedingly difficult to design a coherent and comprehensive

protection strategy. SPCP will support the establishment of an electronic registration system by the end of June 2008.

Reception centre for asylum-seekers

It is recognised that existing reception facilities in Armenia have insufficient capacity to adequately provide for increased numbers of asylum-seekers. Facilities are currently in serious need of repair and extension. UNHCR will work with the Young Men's Christian Association of Armenia to renovate the reception centre in order to better meet the needs of asylum-seekers in accordance with European standards.

Azerbaijan

Reception centre for asylum-seekers

There is currently one reception centre for asylum-seekers in Azerbaijan on the southern border with Iran. The Government of Azerbaijan and UNHCR have jointly agreed on the need to establish reception facilities near Baku and have identified suitable premises. The funding allocated for this activity will be used to remodel the site and procure equipment for the centre, as well as training for the staff who will work in the centre.

Georgia

Reception centre for asylum-seekers



A protection gap which has been jointly identified by the Government of Georgia and UNHCR is the absence of reception facilities for asylum-seekers. SPCP-SC will support the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) to establish a reception centre in order to

provide conditions in line with minimum European standards. Discussions between UNHCR and the MRA on the identification of a suitable site have commenced. The MRA has proposed two sites which are under consideration by UNHCR.

Statelessness

SPCP-SC will be implemented in Georgia in parallel with a national SPCP project aimed at reducing instances of statelessness funded by a \$50,000 contribution from the US Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migrations. A gap analysis will be conducted to identify existing challenges and capacities in the prevention of statelessness.