

RUSSIAN FEDERATION



Operational highlights

- UNHCR provided comments on draft asylum legislation that is expected to be enacted in 2010 and improve the asylum system.
- Some 2,700 applications for asylum were received in 2009. The Government has made steady progress in establishing a functioning asylum system throughout the vast country.
- The Russian Federation continues to make strides in tackling statelessness, including by developing legislation which would grant citizenship through simplified procedures to citizens of the former USSR. Nearly 22,000 stateless people reside lawfully in the Russian Federation, having obtained residence permits or permission for temporary stay.
- The number of violent incidents in the northern Caucasus increased during the second half of 2009, obliging UNHCR to adjust its programme for security reasons. UNHCR and its partners responded to more than 16,000 requests for legal or social counselling and were able to address the shelter needs of more than 100 families in the region.

Working environment

UNHCR has gradually decreased its operational role in the Russian Federation as the Government's Federal Migration Service (FMS) now conducts refugee status determination (RSD) and adjudicates asylum decisions. In 2009, the FMS granted nearly 200 people refugee status and some 2,300 "temporary asylum", bringing the total number of beneficiaries of international protection to almost 4,900. Close to 1,700 applications were still pending at the end of the year.

The global economic downturn had a negative impact on the labour market and a significant number of people of concern to UNHCR have lost their jobs.

In the northern Caucasus, security incidents continued to restrict humanitarian space and underscore the risks faced by human rights and humanitarian organizations.

Achievements and impact

• Main objectives

UNHCR continued to offer technical expertise to the FMS in order to improve the quality of asylum decisions through capacity-building measures. The Office also provided

individuals with legal and social support, but needs to increase medical aid to the most vulnerable asylum-seekers.

Addressing statelessness remained a priority. In close cooperation with the Government, UNHCR worked to identify and quantify the number of stateless people and those at risk of statelessness and provide them with counselling and support.

UNHCR also advocated for the Russian Federation to accede to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions as well as relevant regional instruments. It also advocated for amendments to citizenship legislation to bring it in line with international law.

The Office initiated the creation of a working group tasked with combating xenophobia and promoting tolerance with a wide range of partners. The first meeting was held in December in Moscow to exchange information.

In the northern Caucasus, UNHCR worked to find durable solutions.

● Protection and solutions

UNHCR commented on the draft refugee law that is expected to be considered by the Duma (Parliament) in 2010. The draft legislation contains positive provisions, including social protection for asylum-seekers.

The Russian Federation naturalized 369 refugees during the year. UNHCR found resettlement opportunities for 280 refugees who were unable to integrate locally or repatriate. Some 60 people opted to repatriate voluntarily, mostly to Afghanistan.

Most of the Chechen internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ingushetia had their displaced status revoked during the year, following a survey that showed that the majority of them were willing to return to Chechnya. UNHCR tried to ensure that their change in status did not compel their



At the UNHCR Refugee Reception Centre in St. Petersburg, asylum-seekers are given advice

immediate return. However, their access to social assistance was affected: more than 2,200 persons who had been accommodated in government-funded temporary shelters had to find alternative housing. UNHCR intervened with Government authorities to allow these persons to remain in the shelters throughout the winter. In addition, UNHCR through its implementing partner, produced 160 tents to offer accommodation to people returning to Chechnya or integrating in Ingushetia.

The approximately 46,500 Chechen IDPs in the Russian Federation faced a number of obstacles to return, including the lack of housing and unemployment. In total, 775 IDPs returned voluntarily to Chechnya from Ingushetia in 2009.

The Government extended residence permits to some 22,000 stateless people and sought solutions for the estimated 50,000 stateless people remaining in the country. UNHCR strengthened its cooperation with the Department of Citizenship, offering legal expertise and assistance documenting the scope and consequences of statelessness. The Office also helped NGOs to provide legal assistance free of charge. UNHCR has reached out to different NGOs to establish or re-establish contacts with minority communities such as the Meskhetians, Kurds and Yezidis to identify the root causes of statelessness among them.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Georgia	2,300	2,300	-	-
	Afghanistan	2,100	2,100	-	-
	Various	470	470	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Georgia	800	800	-	-
	Afghanistan	600	600	-	-
	Various	240	240	-	-
IDPs	Russian Federation	56,800	56,800	-	-
People in IDP like situations	Russian Federation	23,100	23,100	-	-
Stateless*	Stateless persons	50,000	2,500	45	-
Returned ex-IDPs including returned IDP-like	Russian Federation	900	900	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Various	30	30	-	-
Total		137,340	89,840		

* Gender breakdown refers to assisted populations only.

○ *Activities and assistance*

Community services: The Refugee Support Centre in Moscow, a community centre in St. Petersburg and three UNHCR-supported centres outside Moscow conducted community-based activities for some 700 people. They distributed emergency cash grants, sanitary materials for women and prosthetic limbs for those in need of them and ran activities for more than 500 children.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided cash assistance to at least 100 vulnerable families in Moscow and two vulnerable families in St. Petersburg. Also, sanitary materials were provided to more than 280 female beneficiaries in Moscow and some 150 female beneficiaries in St. Petersburg (accounting for 62 per cent of the eligible beneficiaries who actually came to collect sanitary materials). UNHCR also provided emergency assistance in the form of food, clothing and other essential non-food items to more than 240 extremely vulnerable individuals in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia-Alania.

Health and nutrition: UNHCR funded primary health services for some 2,500 asylum-seekers and recognized refugees in Moscow and St. Petersburg who did not have residence permits. Special attention was paid to children, and more than 300 were assisted to obtain the necessary vaccinations and health certificates to attend public school.

Income generation: UNHCR implemented 14 quick impact projects in North Ossetia-Alania, including 10 income-generation projects and four infrastructure rehabilitation projects. The latter included the upgrading of water and electrical systems. The projects benefited some 500 persons as part of UNHCR's efforts to enhance integration and livelihoods.

Legal assistance: UNHCR's network of legal partners throughout the Russian Federation provided more than 31,200 legal consultations through nearly 60 supported centres. The centres provided legal assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons or other displaced people. The assistance included writing legal support letters, filing *amicus curiae* briefs or giving support in court cases. The legal offices were also engaged on behalf of more than 40 unaccompanied minors and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Working with the Government and NGOs, UNHCR conducted information campaigns to increase stateless persons' awareness of the need to regularize their legal status and supported NGO networks providing legal assistance to stateless people applying for citizenship.

In 2009, UNHCR organized two seminars for judges and public prosecutors from Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and North Ossetia-Alania to discuss international standards and national mechanisms to secure legal protection for IDPs.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR sought to increase public awareness of forced displacement throughout the Russian Federation, especially through World Refugee Day events, including exhibitions and a familiarization trip for media to the northern Caucasus. More than 55 journalists participated in workshops, and

more than 35,000 people visited the 15th Human Rights Film Festival, which is organized by the Guild of Russian Film-makers and partially sponsored by UNHCR.

Shelter and other infrastructure: UNHCR provided permanent shelters for 49 IDP families who had access to land and sought to integrate locally. Of these, 35 families received shelter materials and 14 others who were especially vulnerable received houses. Another 30 families received shelter materials to help them return and re-integrate in Chechnya. UNHCR also provided temporary shelters (tents) for 27 families who voluntarily returned to Chechnya following the closure of temporary settlements in Ingushetia.

○ *Constraints*

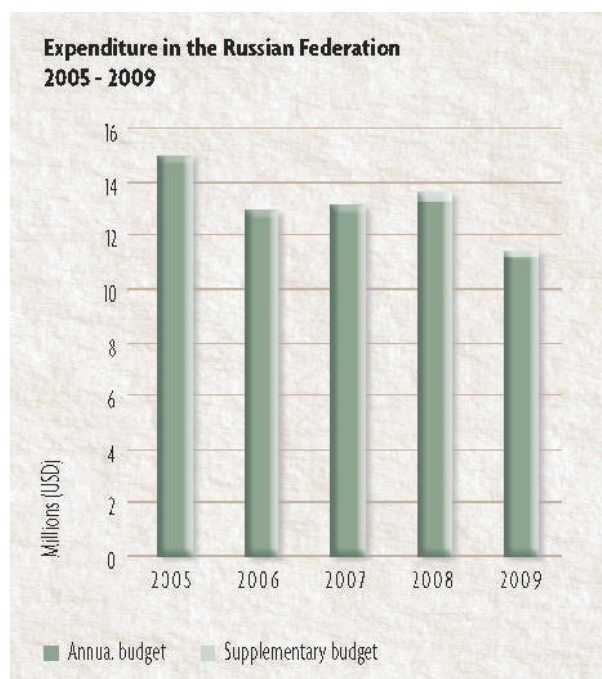
Despite the Russian Federation authorities' efforts to improve the asylum system, a number of gaps remained unaddressed. Among these was the need to implement the registration system in such a manner as to improve access to social and medical care for asylum-seekers and refugees. The large number of districts in the Federation poses a challenge when trying to ensure consistent procedures. In addition, the economic crisis further reduced employment opportunities.

In the northern Caucasus, up to one-half of the population in Dagestan and Ingushetia are IDPs from Chechnya. This large population of displaced people puts a heavy burden on the hosting Republics. Return conditions in Chechnya continue to be hampered by poor security and the lack of housing and economic opportunities.

Due to security constraints in the northern Caucasus, the Office relied on partners for monitoring activities.

| *Financial information* |

Under UNHCR's budget, all the assessed needs could not be adequately addressed. This sometimes prolonged programmes and delayed disengagement from direct operational interventions.



Organization and implementation

With the Government's asylum system in operation, UNHCR has been able to shift to an advisory role, devoting greater attention to counselling applicants and addressing first-instance negative decisions. However, the high number of cases in need of resettlement required adequate staffing for RSD and case-submission work.

In 2009, UNHCR's operation in the Russian Federation had 61 staff which included 10 international, 38 national, 2 JPOs, 6 UNVs (two international, four national), 1 consultant and 4 staff on temporary assistance contracts. Programmes were managed by the country office in Moscow and two field offices in Vladikavkaz and Nazran.

Working with others

UNHCR worked with 16 implementing partners. The global needs assessment, which defined the overall needs of persons of concern in the Russian Federation, led to the creation of working groups on tolerance, shelter, legal issues and women and children. The joint participatory assessment exercise has proven a useful tool in analysing problems, developing programme vision and identifying alternatives to material assistance activities while significantly increasing the range of operational partners.

Overall assessment

More effort is needed to improve access to the asylum system. For those who have been recognized, the issue of residence

registration to gain access to services and employment must be addressed. The groundwork has been laid for intensified attention to statelessness issues, especially through the provision of legal advice and advocacy for the Russian Federation's accession to the relevant UN conventions. In the northern Caucasus, there was some progress in gaining better access to rights for the internally displaced and returnees, but more resources are needed to find sustainable solutions.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: N/A

NGOs: Association of media managers of Russia "ARS-PRESS", Children's Fund of North Ossetia-Alania, Civic Assistance, Equilibre-Solidarity, Danish Refugee Council, Ethnosfera, Faith, Hope and Love; Guild of Russian Film-Makers, Magee WomanCare International, Memorial Human Rights Centre, "Migration and Law" Network, Nizam Foundation, St. Petersburg's Centre for International Cooperation of the Red Cross, St. Petersburg Red Cross, Stichting Russian Justice Initiative, Vesta

Others: United Nations' Volunteers, IOM

Operational partners

Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Migration Service, Supreme Court, Border Guards Service, Prosecutor's Office, Office of Ombudsman of the Russian Federation, Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM), Ministry of Investment and External Economic Relations Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Ministry of Nationalities Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Local Administration Republic of North Ossetia-Alania

NGOs: Caucasian Refugee Council, Branches of the Russian Red Cross, Gratis

Others: EC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), IFRC, ICRC

Budget, income and expenditure in the Russian Federation (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	12,722,492	4,361,004	8,590,972	12,951,977	11,296,188
Caucasus Crisis SB	124,127	0	124,127	124,127	124,127
Total	12,846,619	4,361,004	8,715,099	13,076,104	11,420,315

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in the Russian Federation (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,565,865	13,639	3,579,504	0
Community services	368,393	0	368,393	181,206
Domestic needs and household support	116,123	0	116,123	18,283
Health and nutrition	509,785	0	509,785	259,480
Legal assistance	2,277,167	0	2,277,167	743,558
Operational support (to agencies)	388,196	0	388,196	133,682
Shelter and infrastructure	644,526	0	644,526	114,503
Instalments to implementing partners	1,797,475	73,613	1,871,088	(1,471,092)
Subtotal operational activities	9,667,528	87,252	9,754,780	0
Programme support	1,628,659	36,875	1,665,535	0
Total expenditure	11,296,188	124,127	11,420,315	0

Cancellation on previous years' expenditure

(12,463)

Instalments with implementing partners

Payments made	4,748,255	73,613	4,821,868	
Reporting received	(2,950,780)	0	(2,950,780)	
Balance	1,797,475	73,613	1,871,088	

Previous year's report

Instalments with implementing partners:				
Outstanding 1st January				1,497,526
Reporting received				(1,471,092)
Refunded to UNHCR				(22,206)
Currency adjustment				0
Outstanding 31st December				4,228