

SPCP Southern Caucasus Georgia Update June 2008

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. To date, the SPCP-SC initiative in Georgia is funded by the European Commission, with additional support from the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and Australia for UNHCR.

In implementing the SPCP, UNHCR partners with 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, partners, civil society and displaced persons.

In Georgia, UNHCR is piloting a new 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.

Activities

Gaps analysis and consultation

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.

The Consultation reached consensus on key protection challenges including gaps in legislation, refugee status determination procedures, health and education as well as refugee self-reliance. Stakeholders put forward a broad set of recommendations to remedy these gaps and build upon the capacities of refugee communities and the national actors that serve them.



National stakeholders consultations in Tbilisi, March 2008.

UNHCR is carrying out a similar analysis of gaps in IDP protection to support the Government of Georgia in the implementation of its National IDP Action Plan. A Country Operations Planning Workshop held in March 2008 with international donors, government actors, NGO partners and IDPs themselves has been useful in the process of identifying and prioritising current needs.

UNHCR is working with the Government and its partners in refugee and IDP protection to develop projects that make tangible improvements to the situation of displaced communities, and submit them to donors for funding.



Establishing a Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers

Efforts are ongoing to find a suitable location for a Reception Centre for asylum Seekers near Tbilisi. Asylum seekers often live in squalid conditions due to the absence of national reception facilities. The reception centre will address this problem by providing accommodation and assistance to asylum seekers while their refugee claims are being considered.

Protection of groups with specific needs

An important gap identified in the protection of IDPs and refugees is the weakness of mechanisms to protect women, children as well as elderly and disabled persons from violence and exploitation. The SPCP project will complement activities aimed at strengthening prevention and response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) funded by the EC.



Income-generating projects help empower refugee women in Georgia.

SPCP supports UNHCR's partners to develop and implement project interventions to empower and reintegrate the victims of SGBV as well as children, disabled persons and the elderly who fall through the net of existing social protection mechanisms.

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 labour. Moreover, self reliant refugees and IDPs are more likely to achieve durable solutions.

In 2007 and 2008, with the support of various donors UNHCR has funded over 30 projects aimed at increasing the livelihoods of refugees and IDPs within their local communities. SPCP-SC is currently supporting surveys to assess livelihoods needs and opportunities among displaced communities. The results will shape future work to expand self-reliance and local integration of refugees and IDPs.

Access to basic and essential services

Access to adequate housing, food, health and education are priority gaps in the protection of refugees and IDPs. SPCP-SC is coordinating the development of projects that address the basic needs of vulnerable refugees and IDPs, including households headed by single women, older persons, and persons with disabilities. These include pilot exercises to strengthen the capacity of public bodies to deliver basic services those in need. If funded, these projects will contribute towards the successful integration of refugees and IDPs into host communities and foster their fuller participation in social and economic life.

Reducing Statelessness

Funding from PRM has facilitated research on Georgia's law and practice in the field of statelessness. The results of the research were discussed at a Workshop on Statelessness held in March 2008, which brought together experts from the Government, academia, NGOs and international organizations. The findings of these initiatives are being consolidated into a comprehensive analysis of gaps in the prevention and reduction of statelessness, as well as recommendations for future action.

More information on the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, including its Southern Caucasus initiative can be found at www.unhcr.org/spcp