

# COUNTRY OPERATION

# UKRAINE

## AT A GLANCE

### Main Objectives and Activities

Ensure basic protection and assistance for refugees, asylum-seekers, and Formerly Deported Peoples (FDPs); assist the government in strengthening refugee status determination procedures; help create an effective system of asylum which upholds international standards and a framework for the integration of recognised refugees, through increased awareness of the issues, involvement of government staff, and support for citizenship campaigns; encourage the country to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol; and promote the establishment of an effective regional network of NGOs.

### Impact

- Refugee status determination procedures were implemented in all 27 regions of Ukraine and a legal network was established covering most of the territory.
- UNHCR and its partners raised awareness of refugee and asylum issues among civil servants, police, lawyers and others.
- A significant reduction of statelessness was realised, largely due to the citizenship campaign in Crimea. The status of 10,000 stateless persons was resolved by the end of May, bringing to 50,315 the number of FDPs who became Ukrainian citizens during the year.

### Persons of Concern

MAIN REFUGEE ORIGIN/ TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Afghanistan (Refugees)	1,900	-	39	54
Azerbaijan (Refugees)	120	-	-	-
Congo (Refugees)	130	-	35	45
Other Refugees	550	-	29	45
Mandate Refugees	1,025	-	-	-
Asylum-Seekers	303	-	-	-
Others of Concern (FDPs)	260,000	110,000	-	-

### Income and Expenditure - SP Activities (USD)

WORKING BUDGET	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS*	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
1,656,531	1,080,627	1,103,687	2,184,314	1,408,700

\* Includes contributions earmarked for the Special Programme in the CIS countries.

\*\* Includes opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT

### The Context

Ukraine is a country experiencing fairly severe political and economic difficulties in its transition to a market economy and democracy, while at the same time trying to meet the challenges of integrating over a quarter of a million formerly deported Crimean Tatars returning to Crimea from Central Asia and attempting to manage the significant flows of irregular migrants transiting further westwards.

It is estimated that there were about 250,000 Crimean Tatars and between 10,000 and 20,000 other minorities in Ukraine, out of which a group of about 8,000 persons approached the Directorate for Migration in Crimea and were recognised as persons in a refugee-like situation. In 1997, the Citizenship Law of Ukraine was amended, simplifying the requirements for FDPs to acquire Ukrainian citizenship. In addition, all persons whose parents and grandparents previously resided in Ukraine became eligible for citizenship. The citizenship campaign organised in 1999 aimed at encouraging the naturalisation of the remaining populations.

The step-by-step policy adopted by the Ukrainian authorities since the creation of an administrative structure in charge of refugee issues (1996) has continued, but the pace of reform has been slower than expected.

### Constraints

In addition to persistent economic difficulties, Ukraine faces a delicate political situation whereby antagonism between the Executive Office and Parliament has led to legislative paralysis. In responding to external criticisms over the slow pace of promulgating legislation on human rights, the authorities argued that they were anxious to avoid any possible spill-over effects from terrorist activities and other political upheaval in the Russian Federation. These perceptions colored their view of asylum-seeker and refugee movements: the Ukrainian authorities continued to consider the refugee issue to be one of transit, temporary in nature and tending to resolve itself as asylum-seekers move on in a westerly direction.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

### Protection and Solutions

A delegation of government officials visited UNHCR Headquarters in February 1999 to discuss Ukraine's accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its

1967 Protocol. Later in the year, the Government announced that accession would be considered after the introduction of a revised law on refugees. Following UNHCR's comments, the new draft national law on refugees was presented in June. Its definition of a refugee was similar to that of the 1951 Convention, and included the principles of non-refoulement and family reunion. The drafting process was unfortunately suspended because of the presidential election campaign.

A major protection problem was the rejection of asylum-seekers on the grounds that they could be returned to a "safe third country" through which they had travelled. In practice, however, they were unable to return to the country of transit and had no choice but to remain illegally in Ukraine. An effort to address this situation by amending national legislation concerning refugees and asylum-seekers (introduction of temporary protection) was stymied by the 1999 presidential campaign, which monopolised the attention of the authorities and members of Parliament during the second half of the year.

Officials of the Ukrainian migration service received intensive training to enable them to undertake refugee status determination in all 27 regions of Ukraine. The increasing number of positive decisions made by both regional and central courts reflected the authorities' increasing awareness of refugee issues. The requirement to re-register every three months (with bureaucratic delays in the release of certificates) accompanied by the difficulties for refugees and asylum-seekers to obtain valid papers from their landlords increased the hardship faced by refugees in regularising their status. Refugees and asylum-seekers were increasingly subjected to harassment by the local police during the period of terrorist attacks in Russia and the Office had to intervene on several occasions. Two particularly serious cases of physical violence were presented to courts. Training of police officers and the joint publication of a brochure with the Ministry of Interior helped to improve the situation.

Simplified naturalisation procedures were still not available for about 21,000 FDPs and they continued to face practical difficulties and heavy costs associated with the renunciation of their previous citizenship. More than 80 per cent of the eligible FDPs made use of the Ukrainian-Uzbek agreement while 8,599 FDPs with Uzbek citizenship voluntarily abstained from applying for naturalisation mainly because they feared losing properties in Uzbekistan.

### Activities and Assistance

**Community Services:** Activities designed to help refugees integrate (especially women and children) included counselling, participation in national festivals and the publication of books in various languages to promote tolerance and diversity. Refugees approaching the Nivki counselling centre were encouraged to participate in the assessment of their needs, as well as the planning and implementation of projects to meet those needs. With initial support by the Ukrainian National Commission for UNESCO, UNHCR continued to implement its Programme for Reconciliation in Crimea through Education, Arts and Culture. The project aimed to revitalise traditional and popular culture of different ethnic groups, in an effort to promote mutual understanding.

**Domestic Needs/Household Support:** UNHCR gave financial assistance on a case-by-case basis to about 2,260 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers (large families, the sick and the elderly). In addition, bed linen, kitchen utensils and mattresses were distributed to improve the living conditions of about 600 beneficiaries. In Crimea, UNHCR provided monthly allowances to approximately 300 vulnerable FDPs.

**Education:** With a view to guaranteeing access for children of concern to primary schools, the Office upgraded premises (repair of windows, roofing and floors) and procured equipment (photocopiers, computers and textbooks) for 12 schools accepting refugee children. In co-operation with its partners, UNHCR financed supplementary mother-tongue education for 350 Afghan and Iranian children in Kiev and Odessa. Some 400 refugees in Kiev benefited from a vocational skills programme to help them find employment in the informal labour market. In Crimea, schoolbooks highlighting issues of statelessness and tolerance were produced by local students and artists and then distributed to all schools in the region.

**Food:** UNHCR allocated funds for emergency assistance to some 3,500 vulnerable persons of concern residing in the Mukachevo and Uzhgorod regions, and 200 needy families in Kiev.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR provided funding for staff, equipment, medical supplies and drugs for integrated health services in Kiev and Odessa through agreements signed with local public hospitals. This arrangement provided medical assistance to some 5,500 refugees and asylum-seekers. Illnesses, which

could not be treated in these hospitals, were referred to other medical institutions with the required expertise. In such cases, the Office covered costs directly incurred. An immunisation campaign was conducted and 400 children were vaccinated. In Simferopol, basic medical assistance was provided to 300 vulnerable FDPs.

**Income Generation:** In the FDP communities, the Office launched 367 pilot projects in poultry-raising, cattle-breeding and sewing benefiting 1,762 FDPs, 982 of them women. Grants were provided to 25 refugees and asylum-seekers to help them establish small businesses in accordance with business plans submitted to and approved by UNHCR's partners.

**Legal Assistance:** UNHCR implemented a comprehensive programme of conferences, seminars and round-table discussions. This included three seminars organised jointly with the Swedish Immigration Board and the German Federal Office on refugee status determination procedures, interviewing techniques and the acquisition and interpretation of information on the situation prevailing in the country of origin. A workshop on refugee issues and basic human rights was attended by middle-ranking police officers and lawyers. In addition, a Ukrainian journal on refugee and migration law and policy was published and 15 research projects were funded to examine the legal situation, including citizenship issues, of refugees and other persons of concern. In Crimea, the Office procured office and data-processing equipment to facilitate the issue of passports and registration. Three vehicles were also provided for mobile teams covering remote settlements. In order to address the remaining bilateral issues related to the naturalisation of FDPs, UNHCR facilitated several missions by the presidential administration and other relevant government bodies to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and the Russian Federation. A total of 20 training seminars were conducted for government officials to ensure the implementation of the naturalisation campaign.

**Operational Support (to Agencies):** Implementing partners received administrative support (salaries and equipment). UNHCR supported various publication and mass information activities to ensure that the targeted population was aware of the citizenship campaign and related procedures. These included mass media campaigns (television commercials, radio clips, newspaper articles and posters), outreach activities (concerts for citizenship and visits to the Tatar national schools)



and awareness-raising workshops on citizenship issues for authorities, NGOs and journalists.

**Shelter/Other Infrastructure:** In Crimea, six projects were established to help 335 people rehabilitate their living quarters. Half of the FDP population continued to live in virtually uninhabitable accommodation: damp basements or half-built houses.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR continued to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and resettlement of selected groups of persons of concern whenever feasible: 26 people were assisted, of whom 22 returned to their country of origin while four were resettled in third countries.

## ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### Management

UNHCR operated out of its offices in Kiev and Simferopol, which were supported by a total of five international staff (including one JPO) and 14 national staff.

### Working with Others

Regular contacts were maintained with the diplomatic community and the Office worked closely with the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The objectives set out in the initial plan were not entirely met within the time frame allotted, due to political uncertainty and economic constraints. There was a need to continue to lobby lawyers, parliamentarians, the police and opinion-makers since only convergence of interests between UNHCR and the authorities could ensure the success of the citizenship campaign in Crimea. With UNHCR's help, the local NGO sector expanded and became more effective, taking over several activities previously implemented by international NGOs. Nevertheless, UNHCR will have to continue to support operational activities in the country. There is still a need for local institutions to develop closer links with international organisations to improve their knowledge and management of refugee issues. Co-operation with other UN agencies and international organisations could be further strengthened, in order to improve services to persons of concern.

### Offices

Kiev  
Simferopol

### Partners

#### Government Agencies

Department of Migration  
State Committee for Nationalities and Migration

#### NGOs

Adventist Development and Relief Agency  
Charity Foundation for Medical and Psychological Rehabilitation  
Charity Foundation for Refugees and Migrants "Sympathy"  
Counterpart Creative Centre  
Crimean Lawyers Foundation "Initsium"  
Danish Refugee Council  
Edelweiss  
Foundation for Naturalisation and Human Rights "Assistance"  
Ukrainian Centre for Human Rights/Ukrainian Legal Foundation

#### Other

United Nations Volunteers  
Public Hospital in Simferopol  
The Oil Refinery Hospital of Ukraine



### Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	749,760	202,297	952,056	380	0	380
Community Services	204,546	27,212	231,758	37,218	6,715	43,933
Domestic Needs / Household Support	484,003	4,903	488,906	4,393	0	4,393
Education	48,032	16,644	64,675	5,547	3,191	8,738
Food	9,881	0	9,881	9,364	0	9,364
Health / Nutrition	117,261	45,871	163,132	37,063	29,533	66,596
Income Generation	5,283	121,423	126,706	8,294	1,691	9,985
Legal Assistance	286,303	384,589	670,892	85,780	91,907	177,686
Operational Support (to Agencies)	28,064	69,899	97,963	17,544	33,795	51,339
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	16,399	259,082	275,481	2,875	15,889	18,764
Transport / Logistics	6,117	0	6,117	0	0	0
Instalments with Implementing Partners	111,245	181,704	292,949	(144,956)	(161,491)	(306,447)
Transit Account	0	0	0	(3,600)	0	(3,600)
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>2,066,894</b>	<b>1,313,621</b>	<b>3,380,515</b>	<b>59,902</b>	<b>21,229</b>	<b>81,131</b>
Administrative Support	76,869	0	76,869	0	0	0
<b>Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries</b>	<b>2,143,763</b>	<b>1,313,621</b>	<b>3,457,385</b>	<b>59,902</b>	<b>21,229</b>	<b>81,131</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	42,895	95,078	137,974	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,186,659</b>	<b>1,408,700</b>	<b>3,595,358</b>	<b>59,902</b>	<b>21,229</b>	<b>81,131</b>
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>						
Payments Made	512,068	1,022,276	1,534,344	2,196	0	2,196
Reporting Received	400,823	840,572	1,241,395	147,152	161,491	308,643
Balance	111,245	181,704	292,949	(144,956)	(161,491)	(306,447)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	388,518	436,965	825,483
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0	1,068	0	1,068
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0	(8,457)	(3,996)	(12,453)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>111,245</b>	<b>181,704</b>	<b>292,949</b>	<b>234,037</b>	<b>271,477</b>	<b>505,514</b>
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>						
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	85,226	458,317	543,542
New Obligations	2,186,659	1,408,700	3,595,358	0	0	0
Disbursements	2,143,763	1,313,621	3,457,385	59,902	21,229	81,131
Cancellations	0	0	0	25,324	437,087	462,411
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>42,895</b>	<b>95,078</b>	<b>137,974</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

