

RUSSIAN FEDERATION



Operational highlights

- UNHCR's activities in the Russian Federation continued to focus on asylum-seekers and refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless people and returnees. The main activities are related to developing the asylum system, improving the protection environment for IDPs, and providing direct individual assistance.
- UNHCR focused on developing national capacity for addressing refugee issues, sharing best practices in refugee status determination (RSD), providing updated country of origin information to the authorities, assisting in the appeals process and supporting the adoption of a new Refugee Law.
- UNHCR implemented a multi-sectoral assistance programme, primarily in Moscow and St. Petersburg. While access to education continues to be guaranteed, access of asylum-seekers and holders of the temporary asylum status to state medical care and the obligatory medical insurance remains problematic.
- In 2008, the UNHCR constructed 37 houses in Ingushetia and 29 houses in the Chechen Republic. Priority was

given to vulnerable IDPs from rural areas residing in temporary collective shelters. In Ingushetia, vulnerable IDPs who have expressed a wish to locally integrate are considered for UNHCR housing assistance.

- UNHCR's protection activities in the Chechen Republic resulted in increased access to governmental services, including the provision of permanent accommodation for IDPs and others of concern, and increased awareness among judges and law enforcement agents of human rights related issues of the displaced. UNHCR's cooperation with the Chechen Ombudsman resulted in the inclusion of people remaining in temporary shelters into the priorities of the Chechen authorities.

Working environment

Migration matters linked to the issue of the demographic decline in the Russian Federation remained high on the political agenda of the Government. In 2008, the Russian Federation recorded 7 million migrants including 2.8 million legal immigrants and some 4 million irregular immigrants.



A monitor from a UNHCR partner organization talks to Chechen IDPs in one of 82 temporary settlements in the Republic of Ingushetia, Russian Federation

UNHCR / J. MAKEEVA

Xenophobia played a role in 83 recorded murders and 356 violent injuries in the Federation in 2008. The number of recorded homicides attributed to hate crimes increased by one third, as compared to 2007. There have been strong calls for the Federation to adopt a long-term programme to oppose extremism.

The armed conflict between Russia and Georgia over the territory of South Ossetia in August 2008 resulted in an influx of displaced persons into the northern Caucasus. The Federal Migration Service reported that nearly 35,000 people fled the South Ossetian territory in Georgia to North Ossetia-Alania and other regions of the northern Caucasus in the Russian Federation. As of September, more than 32,000 people had returned to the territory of South

Ossetia after the end of hostilities that followed the Russian Federation's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent States.

Achievements and impact

● Main objectives

UNHCR supported the development of an asylum system that ensures full and unhindered access to asylum procedures in the Russian Federation. It also helped meet the assistance and protection needs of IDPs and returnees. Furthermore, it identified and pursued appropriate durable solutions for refugees and IDPs and strengthened public awareness of refugee issues.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Afghanistan	2,400	2,400	-	-
	Georgia	700	700	-	-
	Various	440	440	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	800	800	-	-
	Georgia	600	600	-	-
	Various	330	330	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Various	70	40	-	-
IDPs		89,500	89,500	-	-
IDP-like situations		2,000	2,000	-	-
Returnees (IDPs)		1,100	1,100	-	-
Stateless	Stateless	49,970	170	-	-
Total		147,910	98,080		

● *Protection and solutions*

UNHCR stopped conducting status determination in Russia at the beginning of 2008, and concentrated on cases of asylum-seekers who were denied refugee status by the authorities in the first instance.

Unhindered access to asylum procedures was available throughout the Russian Federation. Asylum-seeker certificates and prolongation of the documents after the lodging of an appeal are now guaranteed by administrative regulations adopted in May 2008. The Convention refugee recognition rates as well as the temporary asylum recognition rates rose significantly during the year. UNHCR assisted asylum-seekers awaiting decisions on their refugee claims.

In the northern Caucasus, UNHCR remained the lead agency for shelter and protection. It helped IDPs and others of concern make greater use of government services, including the provision of permanent accommodation, and increased awareness among judges and law enforcement officials of human rights issues related to the displaced.

UNHCR assisted stateless persons in the Russian Federation and helped them with naturalization procedures. The Office also advocated for the Federation's accession to the Statelessness Conventions of 1954 and 1961.

UNHCR made further progress in developing fund-raising capacity in Russia.

● *Activities and assistance*

Community services: The Refugee Support Centre in Moscow and five community centres in St. Petersburg, the Moscow region and surrounding areas provided a range of community-based activities and assisted some 5,000 individuals. At least 650 people regularly visited the community centres for courses in the Russian language, computer literacy, sewing, knitting and hairdressing and to participate in women's clubs and cultural events.

Domestic need and household support: A total of 1,200 persons were provided food assistance during the first half of 2008. Thereafter, it was decided to stop this assistance and provide cash and emergency help only; in Moscow and St. Petersburg 400 individuals benefited. Some 1,700 individuals displaced by the August 2008 conflict from the territory of South Ossetia in Georgia were provided with non-food items in North Ossetia-Alania, while in the northern Caucasus some 540 large or extremely vulnerable families received a special package of non-food items.

Education: All asylum-seeker and refugee children were able to attend local schools. A network of Russian language schools was accessible to persons of concern to UNHCR.

Health and nutrition: An effective diagnosis, treatment and referral system was maintained by UNHCR's implementing partners in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the absence of state medical care for persons of concern. Some 1,400 people, accounting for almost 60 per cent of the registered refugee population in Moscow, have been assisted. In St. Petersburg some 300 people, or 93 per cent of the registered refugee population, received medical support. Professional psychological counselling was provided to more than 200 people in Moscow and 39 in St. Petersburg.

Legal assistance: The Refugee Reception Centre in Moscow recorded a total of 18,600 visits for legal counselling, extension of documents and to report incidents involving the police. Legal counselling helped prevent the *refoulement* of 20 individual cases. With the support of its legal partners UNHCR achieved a total of almost 200 positive court decisions for asylum-seekers and refugees, stateless persons and IDPs.

In the northern Caucasus, 12 Legal Counselling Centres were managed by UNHCR's implementing partners. The Office also monitored the assisted returns to the Chechen Republic, primarily from Azerbaijan, and counted more than 300 people who had returned from Ingushetia to the Chechen Republic. Two cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in the northern Caucasus and followed up in accordance with standard operating procedures.

Operational support: Support was provided to partners for publications like quarterly newsletters, information leaflets and posters marking World Refugee Day.

Shelter and other infrastructure: In 2008, 20 IDP families from the Chechen Republic who wished to settle permanently in Ingushetia were assisted with materials for construction of a family house. 'Self-help' and 'turn-key' programmes were implemented in 13 villages in Ingushetia.

UNHCR also focused on the rehabilitation of houses in the Chechen Republic. A total of 29 returnee families received construction materials and 'self-help' rehabilitation assistance. Prior to the commencement of the shelter project, beneficiary selection criteria were established in accordance with operational protection priorities. UNHCR selected beneficiaries, focusing on rural residents living in or former residents of collective centres and temporary settlements without any permanent shelter solutions. In Achkhoy-Martan, Urus-Martan and Grozny rural districts, UNHCR conducted 10 missions to the Chechen Republic from its base in Vladikavkaz in the course of the year, to ensure monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the shelter programme.

Transport and logistics: In August 2008, immediately after the end of the conflict with Georgia, UNHCR sent two international cargo flights to Vladikavkaz with relief items for those displaced by the conflict. The distribution of relief items was implemented through EMERCOM of the Russian Federation.

● *Constraints*

By year's end, the effects of the global financial crisis had begun to show in the Russian economy. The national currency lost 30 per cent of its value against the United States dollar. Increasing inflation had a particularly dire effect on shelter activities in the northern Caucasus.

Security concerns dominated the operation in the northern Caucasus. However, in the Chechen Republic security improved. In the main cities of Grozny, Argun and Gudermes there was less violence than in the recent past. Insecurity is more prevalent in the southern, mountainous parts of the Republic, especially along the border with Dagestan. In Ingushetia the situation remained tense in 2008.

Financial information

UNHCR's operation in Russian Federation was fully funded in 2008. However, the assessed needs of UNHCR's beneficiaries in that region exceeded UNHCR's budget, in particular for shelter and medical assistance.

Organization and implementation

In 2008 UNHCR increased staff at the Refugee Support Centre in Moscow and reduced it in the Representation Office in the city. Unexpected increases in office rental costs severely affected operations.

In the northern Caucasus, the Field Office in Nazran remained closed for security reasons. UNHCR was awaiting the approval of the federal authorities before opening a Field Unit in Grozny. The operation throughout the northern Caucasus was managed from the sub-office in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia-Alania.

Working with others

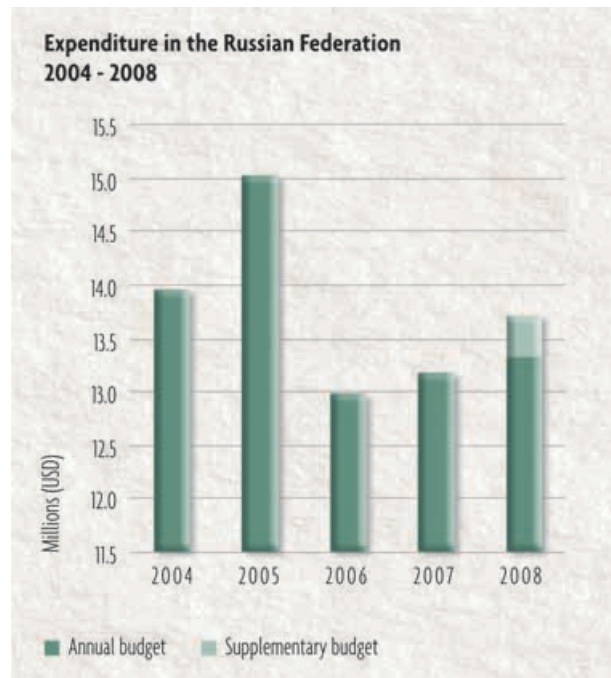
In 2008, UNHCR worked with 16 partners in the Russian Federation. In the northern Caucasus, UNHCR ended its partnership with local NGOs managing legal counselling centres in the republics other than the Chechen Republic, Ingushetia, Dagestan and North Ossetia-Alania. At the end of the year, UNHCR established a new NGO partnership to represent the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees in courts.

In the northern Caucasus, UNHCR cooperated with the Office of the Chechen Human Rights Ombudsman to coordinate protection activities in the Chechen Republic. The Sector Working Groups held regular strategic planning meetings to analyse emerging issues and develop appropriate solutions.

Overall assessment

It remains difficult to find durable solutions for urban refugees, and resettlement remains the primary option. Opportunities for voluntary repatriation are limited as conditions in most countries of origin are unstable. Many refugees have spent a number of years in Russia and feel disengaged from their communities of origin. There are few prospects of local integration for urban refugees, as this would require residence registration, which is available only to a few minorities.

In 2008, UNHCR reviewed the individual assistance programme and revised the criteria for cash assistance to eligible beneficiaries. Asylum-seekers and refugees have limited access to state medical care and state medical insurance, making it difficult for UNHCR to disengage from the medical assistance programmes in Moscow and St. Petersburg.



Also in 2008, UNHCR and its implementing partners presented the cases of hostel residents in Chechnya. This required the intervention of the Office of the Chechen Human Rights Ombudsman, and also brought the attention of the relevant authorities to the needs of hostel residents with no housing alternatives. These actions resulted in the allocation of government-built apartments to some 280 families comprising 1,380 individuals among former and current hostel residents.

In North Ossetia-Alania, seven stateless persons were granted citizenship of the Russian Federation in 2008 through legal assistance provided by UNHCR's implementing partner. Co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior and the judiciary needs to be expanded to better address the problems of stateless or undocumented people in the Republic seeking legal status.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government:	Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation and its Departments in the regions, Moscow City Education Department, Ombudsman Offices
NGOs:	Psychological Support Centre Gratis
Others:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UNDP
Operational partners	
NGOs:	Association of Media Managers (ARS-Press), Caucasian Refugee Council (CRC), Children's Fund of North Ossetia-Alania, Civic Assistance, Centre for Inter-Cultural Education Ethnosfera, Danish Refugee Council, EquiLibre Solidarity, Guild of Russian Filmmakers, Magee WomenCare International, Memorial Human Rights Centre, Nizam, Stichting Russian Justice Initiative, St. Petersburg Centre for International Cooperation of the Red Cross, St. Petersburg Red Cross Society, Vesta
Others:	IOM, UNV

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

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available ¹	Total expenditure
Annual budget	13,555,676	6,194,638	7,144,224	13,338,862	13,323,304
Caucasus Crisis SB	400,000	0	387,136	387,136	387,136
Grand total	13,955,676	6,194,638	7,531,360	13,725,998	13,710,440

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.

¹Total funds available include currency adjustments. See Note on Table 3.

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

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,371,131	72,064	4,443,195	0
Community services	552,107	0	552,107	0
Domestic needs and household support	167,258	2,412	169,670	0
Education	230,718	0	230,718	0
Health and nutrition	652,333	0	652,333	0
Legal assistance	2,722,382	0	2,722,382	49,761
Operational support (to agencies)	358,820	58,851	417,671	0
Shelter and infrastructure	1,001,547	0	1,001,547	0
Transport and logistics	0	177,800	177,800	0
Instalments to implementing partners	1,424,453	73,073	1,497,526	(49,761)
Subtotal operational activities	11,480,749	384,200	11,864,949	0
Programme support	1,842,555	2,936	1,845,491	0
Total expenditure	13,323,304	387,136	13,710,440	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				4,446
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	5,191,358	73,073	5,264,431	
Reporting received	(3,766,905)	0	(3,766,905)	
Balance	1,424,453	73,073	1,497,526	
Outstanding 1st January				84,162
Reporting received				(49,761)
Refunded to UNHCR				(71,929)
Currency adjustment				37,528
Outstanding 31st December				0