

# Income Generating Grants

## Georgia



*“Allah tells us that it is not good to keep ones hands outstretched to beg. I became really happy and fulfilled when I was finally able to put my hands back into my pocket alongside the money which I earned – I did not have to ask for help any more”*

- **Anzor**  
a refugee from Grozny

### LOCATION

Various locations, Georgia

### DURATION

2009 – ongoing

### IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

UNHCR, Abkhazintercont (Imereti), Action contre la Faim (Samegrelo), Atinati (Samegrelo), Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazeti (Samegrelo), Gaenati (Samegrelo) International Relief and Development (Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli), Kakheti Regional Development Foundation (Kakheti and Tbilisi), Norwegian Refugee Council (Kakheti, Tbilisi), Première Urgence (Shida Kartli and Samegrelo) World Vision International (Abkhazia)

### DONORS

Various donors, including: European Union, the US Government, Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia, Polish Aid, Princess Haya Fund

### OVERVIEW

Over the years, support to small income-generating activities (IGA's) has proven to be one of the most effective tools to provide low-income households with steady revenue. Since 2006, UNHCR in line with its mandate, has extended income generating grants programme to the refugee households. During 2006-2008, 46 micro-projects have been funded at the cost of approximately US \$200,000 allowing over 150 refugee households to earn an income.

With a greater availability of funds, in 2009 the UNHCR-led Grant Selection Committee has approved funding for a further 32 micro-projects for refugees for an average amount of US \$4,400 each, to the total value of US \$140,000. Similarly, UNHCR's partners have been identifying vulnerable households whose members (single parents, elderly or people with special needs) have not been able to engage in usual income-generating activities. Such households are provided with 'Social' Grants to start small-scale livestock activities: cattle and sheep breeding, or poultry farming. Since January 2009, UNHCR has provided 40 vulnerable households with social grants for an average value of US \$1,500 each, and the programme continues.

Furthermore, earlier this year UNHCR extended the income-generating grants programme to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Shida Kartli, Imereti, Samegrelo and Abkhazia, encouraging newly displaced people and those in protracted displacement to apply for grants and, in most cases, offering a vocational training package. In certain cases, established local businesses are offered material support in return for providing IDPs with on-the-job training leading to permanent employment.

### AIM OF PROJECT

- To support small individual IGA's by providing grants
- By end 2009, UNHCR aims to provide around 1,500 IDP households with a stable income at the cost of around US \$4.5 million.

*The following three stories are about refugees from Chechnya, Russian Federation, who have now been living in the Pankisi Valley in Georgia since 1999.*

*Originally, some 9,000 fled the conflict of the second Chechen war, but now only around 1,000 remain in Georgia. The majority, who are ethnic Chechens and Kists, reside in Pankisi Valley among Georgian Kists who share the same roots as Chechens (around 100 refugees live in Tbilisi).*

*Granted refugee status on prima facie basis, the number of registered refugees has declined recently primarily due to two voluntary repatriation movements (2006 and 2007) to Chechnya organized by the Russian Federation. Since 1 April 2009, the Government of Georgia (which has already granted them temporary residence permits) started issuing Convention Travel Documents which will allow the refugees to leave Georgia in search of work, education or just to meet up with family that they haven't seen in years. Leave with the knowledge that they can return to Georgia who has made that commitment when it issued the CTDs.*

*The future for these refugees now lies with becoming naturalized citizens of Georgia, a process that has recently started. With the help of UNHCR and its partners, they are eagerly starting to learn new vocations and skills to become self-reliant and fully functioning members of society once more.*

## **RAZET'S STORY**

Razet is the mother of eight children. The older ones were born in Grozny, Chechnya, and the younger ones were born in their new, but very poor home in the Pankisi Valley. Although Razet continues to have a hard life and is always busy and tired, she is constantly smiling. Since she was a child, she loved to sew – her dolls always wore lovely dresses. This passion led her to take sewing courses in Grozny and get four red diplomas. She then worked in various places, and now she sews in the isolated, poverty-stricken Pankisi Valley (on the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation).

Razet was one of the first refugees to apply for a small grant to start a business and generate an income to support her family. With shaking hands, she chose her sewing machines, and bought rolls of material and thread. All her children helped to renovate one of the rooms in their house – until finally the small sewing workshop was open. Razet said; “the moment my little sewing workshop was opened was the biggest and happiest time since I became a refugee.” People are still coming from afar to order traditional Chechen clothes. Some of them who come by foot are walking many kilometers – but they know that it is worth it, because Razet is an extremely good sewer (even if they don't know that her dolls always had the best dresses).

When asked about difficulties that she has encountered, she just looks around and does not say one word of complaint. When asked about good moments she smiles a lot and starts telling stories about her kids, funny orders, and burning bread in the morning on a very old stove. When asked about her project, Razet becomes more serious; “the best way any one can help is by giving a tool which allows us to be independent, self-reliant and free again”...even though the real freedom, the possibility to return home, is still far from reality.

## **ANZOR'S STORY**

Some say he is a carpenter, others say he is an artist. In Grozny he was a policeman and later disappeared into the forest with the fighters. However, when the bombings of 1999 destroyed his house, he escaped to Georgia with his wife.

The Pankisi Valley gave him a safe home, but life without work and being completely dependent on humanitarian assistance was not for Anzor. From his earliest years he loved to draw and make sculptures – just simple ones, from wood. Over time his little knife, a gift from his grandfather, became his best friend.

With it he created sculptures at school, under the desk, on the way home, and in his room in the evenings. Passion led to his profession, and again Anzor started using his little knife to renovate an old, wooden wardrobe in the house of the host family where he and his wife were living. He did a good job and he soon started to get orders from other people.

Therefore, he applied for a small grant and two years ago he opened his carpentry workshop. As he was very skilled, he learnt how to create furniture by looking at pictures in furniture catalogues and copying ready-made furniture. Today he employs six people and his workshop produces various types of furniture – sofas, wardrobes, kitchen sets, desks, shelves.

When he was asked about the most difficult order he has received, he recalls making desks for computer classes at the refugee community centre: “I could not sleep for whole week – I didn't know how to do it. Finally I borrowed money from a friend and went to Tbilisi to the big furniture market. I spent the whole day there



then I came back home, worked all night, and in the morning it was ready!”.

When asked about the best moment in his refugee life Anzor says “Allah tells us that it is not good to keep ones hands outstretched to beg. I became really happy and fulfilled when I was finally able to put my hands back into my pocket alongside the money which I earned – I did not have to ask for help any more”.

## RAMZAN’S STORY

Imagine a remote village in the Pankisi Valley, with poor houses, destroyed roads, and children playing in mud. An unhappy picture? Not in Ramzan’s house – here you will always find happiness. Ramzan is not just any beekeeper, he is the beekeeper, and every one knows that bees are his best friends and the passion of his life. Ramzan learnt how to take care of bees when living in the Chechen mountains. War destroyed his house, and his beehives, but luckily he and his wife managed to escape. For many years he lived on humanitarian assistance, struggling



To build a new life. In this time, he and his wife had two kids, and adopted a third. Despite this, he continued to miss his bees.

Finally he applied for a grant and now has 15 beehives. Last year his bees produced 250 kg of honey. Some of it he gives away to poor families, some of it he sells. His work is his passion. When asked about what he thinks is special about bees, he said “They give you calmness, they feel human emotions like any other creature in this world. If I am nervous I will be badly stung, so to work with them I have to be calm. Absolutely calm. And this is a way they change you and your life. When you start to be calm, you have space in your mind to

see the world and your life differently”. When he received the money for the income generating project, he said “it was a way to take life in your own hands – to become independent, finally able to support your own family, and to be back, partially, to normality”. And to be calm again.