

# Russian Federation



## Main objectives

- Support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards;
- Promote accession to the Convention on statelessness and acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons; assist in their effective integration;
- Identify appropriate durable solutions for refugees and facilitate their integration whenever appropriate; and
- Help meet the assistance and protection needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northern Caucasus.

## Planning figures

Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
IDPs in the Northern Caucasus	346,000	323,000
Others of concern	290,000	180,000
IDP returnees	16,000	10,000
De facto stateless (Mesketians in Krasnodar Krai)	10,500	9,000
Refugees	6,430	4,485
Asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Moscow	6,300	6,600
Temporary asylum	1,460	1,690
Asylum-seekers ("pending cases")	230	230
<b>Total</b>	<b>676,920</b>	<b>535,005</b>

**Total requirements: USD 12,130,003**

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## Working environment

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### Recent developments

Asylum-seekers continue to depend to a large extent on the individual assistance programme, as self-reliance opportunities remain scarce. The lack of affordable housing for persons of concern is becoming acute. The status determination situation in Moscow, where most asylum claims are lodged, has not improved, and asylum procedures have become considerably more time-consuming in St. Petersburg, the second largest location for asylum-seekers. In North Ossetia, however, substantial progress has been achieved in securing citizenship and forced migrant status for refugees, although housing and economic opportunities remain highly inadequate. A joint UNDP, UNHCR, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Danish Refugee Council mission reviewed integration opportunities in North Ossetia and Ingushetia.

The final date for exchange of USSR passports for new Russian Federation passports was moved to 30 June 2004. The Ministry of the Interior is maintaining its position that, after the 30 June deadline, the old documents no longer have any legal value. As a consequence, administrative penalties for lacking proper identity documents may be imposed on citizens holding only former USSR passports.

UNHCR continued to provide legal assistance to stateless persons of concern staying in the Russian Federation. Two categories of de facto stateless persons: Mesketians residing in the Krasnodar Krai, and "Baku Armenians" (i.e. ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan) in Moscow are of concern to the Office. IOM successfully started a resettlement programme for Mesketians in Krasnodar Krai, and so-called Baku Armenians have been departing under the framework of the US resettlement programme.

By May 2004, all tented camps for IDPs from Chechnya in Ingushetia were closed. UNHCR was intensively involved in protection monitoring and facilitating relocation during the closure of the tented camps, and the Office was able to ensure



the availability of alternative shelter in Ingushetia for IDPs not willing to return to Chechnya. Following the closure of the camps, UNHCR's focus shifted to the IDPs in the numerous temporary settlements in Ingushetia. The security situation has significantly deteriorated, after the assassination, in May, of the Chechen President, attacks in June in Ingushetia, attacks in August in Chechnya, and the tragic outcome in September of the hostage-taking in Beslan, North Ossetia.

For the first time, a Russian NGO, Memorial Human Rights Legal Centre, received the Nansen Award for its contribution to protection of human



Displaced Chechens in Satsita camp, Ingushetia, just prior to the camp's closure. Satsita was the last of six camps for Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia to be closed. *UNHCR / V. Soboleva*

rights and assistance to refugees. UNHCR actively assisted its NGO partners to obtain support for their programmes from other donors.

### Constraints

The Federal Migration Service underwent further reorganization. The national asylum system continued to be characterized by an extremely high rejection rate in general, including limitations on formal admissibility grounds (mainly the 24-hour deadline for lodging an asylum claim in case of illegal entry) as well as a strict interpretation on the merits (especially the definition of a refugee

and a safe third country). Recognition rates, for both refugee status and temporary asylum, remain very low. At the Sheremetyevo-2 international airport in Moscow, no arriving asylum-seekers were granted access to the procedures and UNHCR continued to submit mandate cases who were stranded there for resettlement. Xenophobic reactions are growing. In North Ossetia, refugees from South Ossetia/Georgia continue to be subject to evictions from the temporary accommodation where some have been staying for over ten years. The security situation in Chechnya hinders regular access to beneficiaries and monitoring of activities.

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## Strategy

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### Protection, solutions and assistance

Given the size of the country and the limited resources available, UNHCR continues to focus its efforts on the regions with the highest concentrations of persons of concern, i.e. Moscow and surrounding region, St. Petersburg and surrounding region, Krasnodar Krai and the Northern Caucasus.

### Asylum-seekers and refugees

UNHCR and its partners will continue to advocate for proper implementation of refugee legislation; better protection and self-reliance for asylum-seekers pending status determination; integration of recognized refugees; access to local medical facilities; resettlement for vulnerable refugees who are unlikely to be recognized by the Russian Federation's authorities as refugees and who have very few prospects for local integration; and voluntary repatriation for others. The Office will provide individual protection assistance and legal counselling, challenge illegal practices related to access to the RSD procedures before the courts and assist asylum-seekers with appeals. UNHCR will remain focussed on training officials in charge of migration and strengthening the networks of legal counselling centres with the long-term aim of establishing an efficient asylum management system in the Russian Federation. In North Ossetia, integration activities will be intensified through a multi-year, multi-agency programme focussed on the transition from relief to sustainable development.

### Stateless persons

UNHCR will carefully monitor implementation of the citizenship law. De facto stateless persons (Mesketians in Krasnodar Krai and the so-called Baku Armenians) will receive legal assistance to mount judicial or administrative appeals in their quest for Russian citizenship.

### Internally displaced persons in the Northern Caucasus

Within the Consolidated Appeal Process, UNHCR will maintain its coordination role in the protection and shelter sectors. UNHCR's own protection activities will focus on ensuring that all returns are voluntary and that the rights of returnees are fully respected. Its shelter activities will aim to ensure that alternative accommodation is available in Ingushetia for those not ready to return, and voluntary returnees have adequate temporary accommodation while they rebuild their homes in Chechnya. For those opting to integrate permanently in Ingushetia, a multi-year, multi-agency recovery programme will also be developed. As part of its two-pronged approach, whereby safe haven would be guaranteed in Ingushetia for those not wishing to return, those returning to Chechnya of their own free choice would be supported by greater involvement and presence within Chechnya. UNHCR will intensify the monitoring of the situation of returnees and expand its legal counselling network.

### Desired impact

Appropriate durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement) will be available to persons of concern. There will be constructive cooperation with governmental counterparts; the national asylum system will start functioning properly; the status determination procedure will be effective; asylum-seekers will be able to rely on basic living conditions and become more self-reliant; legal and administrative barriers will be lowered or eliminated for various beneficiary groups. In North Ossetia, refugees will continue to be successfully integrated. IDPs will return to Chechnya on a voluntary basis and those not willing to return will be offered viable alternatives outside Chechnya. If security conditions permit, UNHCR will have an effective system in Chechnya – to monitor the situation of returnees. Stateless persons who have not been resettled will acquire Russian citizenship and will be able to integrate in the Russian Federation. Local NGOs will maintain a protection and assistance role when UNHCR phases out its operations.



## Organization and implementation

### Management structure

In 2005, UNHCR in the Russian Federation will function with 78 staff: eleven international and 49 national, three JPOs, and 15 UNVs (three international and 12 national).

### Coordination

UNHCR works closely with other United Nations agencies and relevant intergovernmental organizations in the Russian Federation. Close liaison is maintained with OCHA, UNSECOORD, ICRC and other agencies engaged in the humanitarian operation in the Northern Caucasus.

Offices
<b>Moscow</b> Nazran Vladikavkaz

Partners
<b>Governmental agencies</b> Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of the Interior of North Ossetia-Alania Federal Migration Service of the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation Government of North Ossetia-Alania Institute of Migration Processes Management of the State University of Management Moscow City Education Department
<b>NGOs</b> Association of Media Managers Caucasian Refugee Council Children's Fund Civic Assistance Danish Refugee Council <i>Dobroye Delo</i> <i>Doverie</i> Ethnosphaera Centre Faith, Hope and Love

Gratis Psychological Support Centre Guild of Russian Filmmakers Legal System Magee Woman Care International Memorial Human Rights Legal Centre Moscow School of Human Rights <i>Nizam</i> <i>Opora</i> Peace to the Caucasus People in Need <i>Pomostch</i> Solidarity St. Petersburg Centre for International Cooperation of the Red Cross St. Petersburg Red Cross <i>Stichting Chechnya Justice Initiative</i> <i>Vashe Pravo</i> <i>Vesta</i>
<b>Others</b> IOM UNV

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,418,231
Community services	1,103,054
Domestic needs	810,162
Education	421,475
Health	961,853
Income generation	33,312
Legal assistance	3,434,351
Operational support (to agencies)	778,835
Shelter/other infrastructure	542,212
Transport/logistics	201,259
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>10,704,744</b>
Programme support	1,425,259
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,130,003</b>

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