

# 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, and assist in the effective integration of stateless people; 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 North Caucasus.

## Impact

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

- Asylum-seekers in Moscow and St. Petersburg continued to have access to UNHCR's individual assistance programme, while the authorities determined their status.

- All asylum-seeker children aged six to 12 continued to have access to local schools while teenage asylum-seekers in Moscow started to have access to secondary education through external study programmes at schools and vocational colleges.
- In North Ossetia (Russian Federation), work continued on implementation of the integration plan for Osset refugees from Georgia, with quick impact projects (implemented in cooperation with other agencies) and an increased Government contribution to the housing construction project.
- A strategic direction document for the transition from relief to recovery in North Ossetia was prepared for the Trust Fund for Human Security – in coordination with UNDP and other agencies.
- Almost 600 persons left Russia for resettlement, primarily in the United States and Canada.
- Voluntary repatriation was organized, notably to Afghanistan, Georgia and Iraq.

## Internally displaced persons

- The three remaining tented camps in Ingushetia were closed, with active monitoring by UNHCR and its partners, and consent was obtained from the authorities for the provision of alternative shelter in Ingushetia for those who chose not to return to Chechnya.
- Some 19,000 IDPs returned from Ingushetia to Chechnya in 2004; UNHCR and its partners were able to interview returnees on a regular basis to confirm the voluntary nature of their return (no forced returns of IDPs to Chechnya were recorded).
- In Chechnya, needy returnees received shelter materials or box-tents from UNHCR and its implementing partners.
- All persons of concern had access to free legal counselling in Ingushetia and Chechnya through the network of legal counselling centres.
- The European Court of Human Rights took positive decisions on six IDP cases submitted by a national NGO.

## Stateless persons

- Without federal support, little progress could be achieved to defend the rights of Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai against local restrictive policies. The resettlement project launched for this group by the United States continued to present a durable solution for eligible Meskhetians.
- In Moscow, UNHCR provided legal counselling to 242 Baku Armenians. While most have access to Russian citizenship, their effective integration is impeded by a lack of residence registration or access to their rights. However, the US Government offered resettlement as an alternative durable solution for some members of this group.

## Working environment

### The context

It was not easy for UNHCR to deliver protection in a harsh urban environment offering few opportunities for self-reliance. Protection of asylum-seekers' rights through the courts proved the most viable

Persons of concern				
Population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
IDPs	334,800	35,200	55	37
IRPs (forced migrants) excluding IDPs	192,600	73,000	-	-
Afghans in a refugee-like situation	100,000	-	-	-
Returned IDPs	19,000	13,700	-	-
Meskhetians	10,800	10,800	-	-
Non-CIS asylum-seekers	5,200	5,200	-	-
Afghanistan (refugees)	1,500	1,500	39	-
Various countries (refugees)	400	400	39	-
Afghanistan (asylum-seekers)	300	300	35	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget				
Revised budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
13,970,550	5,901,074	8,046,383	13,947,457	13,947,457

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

strategy. Only 42 persons were granted refugee status by the Russian authorities in 2004, as compared to 58 the previous year. However, the granting of temporary asylum increased (252 persons in 2004 compared to 88 in 2003).

In North Ossetia, integration of refugees from South Ossetia (Georgia) continued, with active Government support. Relatively few refugees were willing to repatriate to Georgia. Some 3,600 of the refugees (now either recognized refugees or naturalized Russian citizens) are accommodated in 53 sub-standard collective centres and need assistance with integration.

In the North Caucasus, no forced returns were registered in 2004, but the authorities continued to encourage return to Chechnya through information campaigns. Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia formerly living in tents now had access to alternative shelter, and by June 2004, all tented camps on the territory of Ingushetia were closed. Former camp residents either relocated within Ingushetia or returned to Chechnya. UNHCR and its implementing partners had regular access to these IDPs, interviewed them to confirm voluntariness of return and provided information on their options.

UNHCR assisted two potentially stateless groups: Armenians from Azerbaijan (so-called "Baku Armenians") in Moscow and Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai. The majority of Baku Armenians acquired Russian citizenship, but continued to face difficulties with sojourn registration and realization of their rights as Russian citizens. Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai continued to face local authority discrimination from the local authorities. Most of the Meskhetians are expected to resettle under the US resettlement programme, leaving roughly 2,000 who will continue to need legal assistance (primarily with residence registration) as the attitude of the authorities towards them is unlikely to change.

## Constraints

The Government remained focused on illegal migration and labour migration in general, regarding refugee policy as a lower priority. Amendments to the Refugee Law are being considered and changes to the Citizenship Law are expected. At the international airport in Moscow, no asylum-seeker was granted access to the procedure upon arrival. At the

end of 2004, it became apparent that management of immigration control would be transferred from the Federal Migration Service to the Border Guards Service (reporting to the Federal Security Service). However, UNHCR could not establish working relations with the Federal Border Guards Service in 2004, as it was being restructured. The health authorities in Moscow remain reluctant to grant asylum-seekers access to State medical care. The problems of xenophobia and widespread criminality impeded integration of asylum-seekers and refugees.

In the North Caucasus, the authorities continued to encourage IDP returns to Chechnya. Although provision of alternative shelter became a viable option, UNHCR pursued its monitoring of the return process to verify that it was voluntary. However, security concerns in Chechnya constrained monitoring of the returnee situation. It is worth noting nevertheless that the number of United Nations international staff missions to the republic has increased recently.

## Funding

The funding of operations and administrative costs was sufficient to cover priority activities. UNHCR's activities for IDPs in the Northern Caucasus were an integral part of the Consolidated Appeals Process. Despite the need for a significant budget increase in May 2004 as the level of assistance to returnees in Chechnya rose thanks to improved access. There remained considerable donor interest in the intervention, with the result that it was fully funded for the third consecutive year.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

The main protection problems encountered by asylum-seekers (especially non-CIS asylum-seekers) remained: 1) access to the refugee status determination procedure and lack of proper documentation not only during the "pre-registration" phase (mainly in Moscow and Moscow region) but also throughout the appeal procedure and 2) the high rejection rate on both formal grounds and on the merits of the case. Recognition rates declined, although more asylum-seekers received temporary asylum. While all

asylum-seekers had access to education, access to State medical care was non-existent (and the authorities showed reluctance to remedy this state of affairs). Asylum-seekers continued to a large extent to depend on UNHCR's individual assistance programme, given the difficult environment for self-reliance.

In the North Caucasus, UNHCR ensured that appropriate safeguards were put in place during camp closures. The Office also ensured safeguards for the voluntariness of return to Chechnya, and the availability of alternative solutions for those not willing to return. In North Ossetia, 20 quick impact projects were implemented, targeting over 4,400 refugees, forced migrants and local residents directly and benefiting more than 12,000 persons indirectly.

UNHCR's five commitments to refugee women were integrated into UNHCR's programmes. The needs of women were given special attention under the individual assistance programme. Unaccompanied/single women and female-headed households were given special attention in cases of family reunification and resettlement. Social workers and monitors received training on issues surrounding domestic violence and sexual abuse. Female asylum-seekers in Moscow had access to the domestic violence assistance programme. The cases reported to UNHCR were referred to various institutions for help and/or resettlement. In North Ossetia, cases of domestic violence reported to UNHCR and implementing partners received an appropriate response. In Ingushetia and Chechnya, no cases of abuse were reported, although there are unconfirmed reports of IDP women being subjected to sexual abuse by family members or others. Within the framework of the pilot project for gender and age mainstreaming, a multi-functional team was established in the North Caucasus in 2004, aimed at integrating age and gender considerations into every aspect of UNHCR's work.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** In Moscow and its environs and St. Petersburg, asylum-seekers and refugees (particularly women and children) had access to various cultural, educational and self-help activities through nine community centres. A psychological



Chechnya: A family who moved to Ingushetia from Grozny in 1999. The family lived in railway wagons, tented camps and chose to stay in Ingushetia due to security concerns. *UNCHR/V. Sokolova*

centre in Moscow provided over 5,500 consultations. In St. Petersburg, asylum-seekers and refugees were given access to a computer centre established with the support of a corporate donor.

In North Ossetia, some 6,700 social consultations were held, focusing on single mothers, large families, older persons and those with disabilities. A psychological support centre in North Ossetia rendered assistance to 550 refugee and local children aged six to 18.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** In Moscow, asylum-seekers continued to have access to the individual assistance programme, which provided temporary subsidy for families struggling to cope with the high cost of living (an average of 923

persons per month). In St. Petersburg, a local implementing partner gave emergency cash assistance to 47 people, winter clothing to 20 people and hygienic kits to 100 families. In both locations, asylum-seeker women received sanitary supplies.

In North Ossetia, a local implementing partner distributed 2,000 packs of hygiene items and 35 sets of bedding; more than 560 refugee/forced migrant women received sanitary supplies; and 600 children received school kits and clothing. UNHCR also provided humanitarian assistance to victims of the Beslan tragedy.

**Education:** In Moscow, all children aged six to 12 can attend local schools. Any who need help with enrolment attend special preparatory classes at community centres. In 2004, 11 asylum-seekers and refugees were permitted to attend these classes too, as well as to take school exams externally and obtain nationally recognized school certificates. Pre-school and adolescent education was available at community centres for those who could not attend local schools. A pilot project on provision of external studies to adolescents started in January 2004 and successfully continued in the new academic year in September. By year end, some 70 teenagers were studying at the Moscow schools under this programme. The assistance policy encouraged children to attend school by linking assistance (e.g. payment for school lunches, transportation, school supplies) to their enrolment and attendance. This support led to steady increases in the proportion of children attending educational activities, particularly adolescent boys and girls. A special trust fund enabled 26 students (more than half of them female) to have access to higher education.

In St. Petersburg, 34 adults received training in the Russian language, while six school children received individual tutoring at home to enable them to join the next grade. At week ends, 56 asylum-seeker children attended classes in their native language on history and cultural topics, while 14 pre-school children received Russian-language coaching in order to prepare them for entry into local schools.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR's implementing partners provided some 14,800 medical consultations in Moscow and Moscow region, more than 4,200 in St. Petersburg and almost 1,600 in North Ossetia. Preventive health education and vaccination

campaigns were undertaken in addition to primary health care (with referral to hospital in-patient and out-patient services when necessary).

**Income generation:** In Moscow and nearby regions, 107 persons benefited from skills training courses. Intensive Russian language courses were offered for 76 persons in community centres. The income-generation grants committee considered five projects and approved four.

**Legal assistance:** In Moscow, the Refugee Reception Centre remained the first referral point for many asylum-seekers and refugees. Besides legal counselling, the Centre actively monitors detention cases and other incidents involving the police (some 1,400 cases were reported during 2004). In St. Petersburg, over 23,000 legal consultations were provided to asylum-seekers and refugees at the Refugee Counselling Centre. Independent lawyers were contracted to represent asylum-seekers in court. UNHCR supported the work of a legal network, providing legal counselling to asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs and others of concern to the Office. The main NGO, The Russian Memorial Human Rights Centre, was the winner of the 2004 Nansen Award for its work in promoting legal and humanitarian advice to refugees. As part of asylum system development, UNHCR continued to provide regular training in the country and abroad for NGO and government officials dealing with migration issues (over 700 people were trained). For the first time, UNHCR organized a nationwide competition on refugee law for law students.

The voluntary repatriation project for Afghan refugees, initiated in June 2003 by UNHCR, allowed some 157 persons to return to their homes. In addition, 14 other non-CIS refugees were assisted with voluntary repatriation. UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of eight families (24 people) from North Ossetia (Russian Federation) to South Ossetia (Georgia).

In Ingushetia and Chechnya, IDPs had access to legal assistance that included counselling, management of cases of de-registration and arbitrary detention of IDPs, defending the rights of IDPs in courts, including the European Court of Human Rights, and assessment of the situation of IDPs returning to Chechnya. The legal counselling was supported by a public awareness programme implemented by a local NGO.

Outside Chechnya and Ingushetia, a network of seven counselling centres provided legal, social and medical support for IDPs and forced migrants, primarily from Chechnya. This support was complemented by training for governmental officials, the judiciary and UNHCR's partners. The European Court on Human Rights took positive decisions on six IDP cases submitted by a national NGO. Two implementing partners in Moscow and one in Krasnodar Krai provided counselling to people at risk of statelessness. Assistance included legal advice, court representation, management of eviction cases, and obtaining citizenship, or at least registration (and associated personal legal status) in the Russian Federation.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR supported the key management and administrative functions of implementing partners, often on a cost-sharing basis. Staff security was also supported, particularly for agencies operating in the North Caucasus. United Nations Volunteers provided support services in Moscow, Nazran and Vladikavkaz. Public information activities included public awareness campaigns, implemented through local partners, on TV, radio and in the written media. UNHCR started to produce a new quarterly newsletter "Asylum". UNHCR's Russian-language website ([www.unhcr.ru](http://www.unhcr.ru)) was regularly updated.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** In North Ossetia, under the local integration project for refugees from South Ossetia, the construction of 70 houses, initiated in 2003, was completed providing homes for over 260 people. Then construction began on another 40 houses (including an access road and electricity supply system).

In Ingushetia, UNHCR provided 220 box-tents to IDPs who did not wish to return to Chechnya but who did not want to relocate to vacant rooms in the temporary settlements within Ingushetia. Priority was given to vulnerable families and those wishing to integrate permanently in Ingushetia. A local NGO rehabilitated accommodation in selected temporary settlements. In Chechnya, as part of the temporary shelter programme, box-tents were distributed to 834 IDP families who voluntarily returned to Chechnya. An international NGO continued to provide shelter materials to returnees in Chechnya based on the principle of "one dry room per family". Eleven quick impact projects were implemented,

benefiting over 12,700 beneficiaries directly and some 11,500 indirectly.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR stored shelter items, including box-tents in the warehouse in Sleptsovskaya and the contingency stock of relief supplies in the prefabricated warehouses in Malgobeck. The warehouse in Sleptsovskaya was managed by UNHCR, while the warehouse in Malgobeck was managed by DRC. Through an implementing partner, UNHCR continued to deliver shelter items to the beneficiaries in Chechnya which were transported from the warehouses.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

UNHCR in the Russian Federation operated through its branch office in Moscow, sub-office in Vladikavkaz and field office in Nazran and had 66 staff (15 international and 51 national). In addition, 16 UNVs (14 local and two international) worked for the organization.

### Working with others

In the Russian Federation, UNHCR concluded sub-agreements with 32 implementing partners, including 22 local NGOs, four international NGOs, IOM, UNDP, UNV and three governmental entities.

Close cooperation was maintained with other UN agencies, especially on the issues related to the operation in the North Caucasus. UNHCR's Representative served as OCHA Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator and was an active participant in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals Process, coordinating the protection and shelter sectors. Within the UN Country Team, UNHCR is involved in the work of such theme groups as HIV/AIDS, Human Rights and Poverty Eradication. At the governmental level, UNHCR maintains close contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the agencies involved in migration issues (Ministry of the Interior and its Federal Migration Service and the regional migration departments, and Moscow Committee of Education). Close contacts were maintained with UNDP, FAO, ILO, Danish Refugee

Council and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in developing the recovery programme for Ingushetia and North Ossetia and preparing the concept paper for the Trust Fund for Human Security. The Swedish Migration Board was actively involved in training government officials in migration issues and co-funded some of the training sessions.

## Overall assessment

The working environment in Russia remains complicated. However, UNHCR managed to make progress in defending asylum-seekers' rights in courts, regularizing the situation of potentially stateless people, integrating refugees in North Ossetia and protecting IDPs in the North Caucasus.

At the time of writing, persons from the Russian Federation, specifically Chechens, represent the largest single group of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries. Chechens who choose to return to the Republic of Chechnya enjoy UNHCR's full support. The Office nevertheless continues to advocate that countries of asylum provide appropriate international protection for Chechen asylum-seekers.

The impact of UNHCR's efforts is diminished by widespread sentiments of xenophobia and the slow pace of development of the national asylum system. Effective implementation of the refugee legislation remains a key priority. As long as repatriation and resettlement are realistic options for only relatively small numbers of people, and as long as the constraints on self-reliance and local integration loom large, UNHCR will have to maintain a significant presence, in order to offer a costly but vital safety net for asylum-seekers.

### Offices

#### Moscow

Nazran

Vladikavkaz

## Partners

### Government agencies

Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of the Interior of North Ossetia-Alania  
 Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation  
 Government of North Ossetia – Alania  
 Moscow Committee on Education  
 Moscow State University of Management  
 Stavropol State University  
 St. Petersburg Kuibyshevski District Court

### NGOs

Association of Media Managers  
 Caucasian Refugee Council  
 Children's Fund (North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol)  
 Civic Assistance  
 Danish Refugee Council  
*Dobroye Delo* Counselling Centre  
*Doverie*  
*Equilibre* Solidarity  
*Ethnosphera*  
 Faith, Hope, Love  
 Fund of Mercy and Health  
 Guild of Russian Filmmakers  
 Legal System  
 Magee Woman Care International  
 Memorial Human Rights Centre  
 Moscow School of Human Rights  
*Nizam*  
 Peace to the Caucasus  
 People in Need  
*Pomosch*  
 Psychological Support Centre "Gratis"  
 Rakhmilov and Partners/Vashe Pravo  
 Stichting Chechnya Justice Initiative  
 St. Petersburg Centre for International Cooperation of Red Cross  
 St. Petersburg Society of Red Cross  
 Vesta

### Others

Council of Europe  
 European Council on Refugees and Exiles  
 IOM  
 OSCE  
 Swedish Migration Board  
 UNDP  
 UNV

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,741,442	0
Community services	822,537	361,128
Domestic needs / household support	624,389	84,435
Education	349,019	(32,265)
Health and nutrition	704,244	229,141
Income generation	24,795	12,074
Legal assistance	2,465,195	437,217
Operational support (to agencies)	590,157	113,216
Sanitation	0	80,223
Shelter and infrastructure	1,483,582	209,553
Transport and logistics	235,426	33,305
Water	0	45,630
Instalments with implementing partners	2,142,371	(1,573,657)
<b>Sub-total operational activities</b>	<b>12,183,157</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,764,300	0
<b>Total disbursements</b>	<b>13,947,457</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Payments made	7,525,488	
Reporting received	(5,383,117)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2,142,371</b>	
<b>Prior years' report</b>		
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Outstanding 1 January		1,557,245
Payments made		94,194
Reporting received		(1,573,657)
Refunded to UNHCR		(18,211)
<b>Balance</b>		<b>59,571</b>
<b>Unliquidated obligations</b>		
Outstanding 1 January		330,741
Disbursements		(257,268)
Cancellations		(73,473)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>		<b>0</b>