

GEORGIA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Provide protection and assistance to Chechen refugees and support the Government in implementing the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.
- Support the conflict-resolution process sponsored by the OSCE in Georgia/South Ossetia and facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons from South Ossetia and Georgia proper.
- Support the conflict-resolution process sponsored by the UN in Georgia/Abkhazia; draw upon the Georgian Self-Reliance Fund to seek durable solutions for IDPs by promoting integration into their current places of residence (without prejudice to their eventual return); monitor spontaneous return to Gali District and provide limited material assistance.
- Seek improvements to the refugee law and asylum procedures and help the Government and NGO structures build up sufficient resources and expertise to respond to involuntary displacement; promote accession to the Convention relating to Statelessness.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED, AND CONSTRAINTS

Chechen Refugees

The most significant development in the first six months of the year was the new registration exercise implemented by the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA). Since 1999, Chechen refugees have been hosted in the Pankisi valley in Georgia. In April 2002, the MRA, with UNHCR's technical and financial support, started a sophisticated registration exercise and issued identity cards with photos to refugees. After

this exercise, the number of refugees fell from nearly 8,000 persons to less than 4,000.

UNHCR continued to distribute food and non-food items to refugees. Hygiene items were procured for distribution to the refugee population. There was concern that the exclusion from humanitarian assistance of a significant number of the residents of the valley would lead to security problems for the refugees and humanitarian staff (UNHCR and implementing partners). No incidents were reported, however to reduce tension, UNHCR initiated a Food for Work project for the local host community in the Pankisi valley, in co-operation with WFP and the local authorities.

The Duisi Community Centre, funded by UNHCR and managed by an NGO and a women's group, has been a successful and popular initiative. It offers a wide range of education and community support activities, sporting and cultural facilities, including a small café that helps defray running costs and promotes the Centre's self-sustainability.

From January 2002, a new implementing partner became responsible for health-related activities in the Pankisi valley. Approximately, 4,500 refugees were treated in the clinics. 310 patients (including 103 children, 160 women) were referred for emergency treatment or hospitalisation outside the Pankisi Valley. 276 refugee children were vaccinated. Medicines were supplied to three clinics in the Pankisi valley as well as a clinic and regional hospital in Akhmeta.

Attention was primarily focused on children and adolescents in the first half of the year. Two pre-schools in the villages of Duisi and Omalo were managed by an implementing partner and catered for 176 children between

the ages of two and five (including 120 refugee children). Mothers' committees were established, allowing for parental input on feeding of infants, hygiene and the pre-school curriculum. Playgrounds were installed and new toys procured. A complementary ecological education programme was initiated and 110 children participated in this programme. Nine DAFI scholarships covering tuition fees and living allowances were awarded to Chechen refugee undergraduates. The implementing partner also managed a forestry project and 22 hectares were planted with 13,200 saplings during the spring planting season.

Maintenance of water supply and improvement of sanitation, promoted jointly by refugees and host communities, fostered stability between the two communities. Income-generating activities for 100 of the most vulnerable refugee families were initiated and 20 kits for different professions and 80 agricultural kits were procured for distribution to refugees.

Returnees from the Georgian-Osset Conflict

Under the OSCE-sponsored conflict-resolution process, the Joint Control Commission (JCC) held two sessions with representatives from North and South Ossetia, the Russian Federation and Georgia, and observers from the OSCE, EU and UNHCR. All parties agreed that implementation of projects for the rehabilitation of the local economy was necessary, as was highlighted in the framework of the programme signed in December 2000 between Georgia and the Russian Federation. In June, UNHCR was requested to facilitate a joint mission from South Ossetia and Georgia to North Ossetia, to provide firsthand information on the situation prevailing in the former places of residence of the refugees. Despite these efforts, the pace of return to places of origin remained very slow. Only 56 persons (including 16 families) residing in North Ossetia applied for voluntary repatriation to South Ossetia. The original residences of all

applicants were assessed by UNHCR. In addition, 90 Georgian IDP families applied for voluntary repatriation to South Ossetia, of whom only 18 persons were approved by the authorities.

Returnees to Gali District

By early 2002, 24 schools had been rehabilitated in Gali and Ochamchira areas, providing schooling to some 4,342 pupils. In April 2002, UNHCR began a new scheme for the rehabilitation of schools focusing on the areas beyond Gali. The technical assessment of 49 schools (including eight in the Gali district) where 9,756 students are enrolled, was completed in May and rehabilitation of these schools is in progress. Following a community-based approach, school committees were established to organise and supervise the renovation of school buildings on a self-help basis. UNHCR also succeeded in retrieving two barracks in Gali district from the military forces operating in the area, to return them to their original use as schools. UNHCR maintains regular contacts with the SRSB, UNOMIG, the Friends of Georgia of the Secretary-General and other partners to share information and ensure a balanced approach to support the return of refugees. Security of the returnees and UNHCR staff remains of paramount concern.

Internally Displaced Persons from the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict

In Western Georgia, activities to promote the mobilisation of the community and the building of civil society continued in partnership with NGOs. 500 vulnerable IDP and local families, who are participating in a livestock and food-security scheme received training on agricultural activities and management issues from a UNHCR implementing partner. Unfortunately, recent flooding has affected pastures and crops and consequently their income-generation capacity. Highly motivated vulnerable IDPs and local adolescents participated regularly in 25 youth development clubs. Training on Civic Education, the English language and

computers was provided. The clubs implemented 12 community projects, 16 projects for club members and eight small business projects. Basic needs of a multi-ethnic group of 270 war-affected vulnerable elderly persons in Sukhumi were met and hot meals were served at an old-age home and a nearby hospital. A survey researching employment and educational background interviewed two-thirds of the IDPs living in Tbilisi. The Steering Committee of the inter-agency Georgian Self-Reliance Fund approved five new project proposals including one on the employment of IDP women.

Meskhეთians

Currently, 643 Meskhetian refugees reside in Georgia and an estimated 200,000 are living in a precarious situation in neighbouring countries. Georgia does not have a legal framework permitting repatriation and integration for those who wish to return to their places of origin. A draft law on these Formerly Deported Persons (FDP), prepared by the authorities, was discussed during a meeting convened by the Council of Europe (CoE) with representatives from the Georgian Ministry of Justice, OSCE, and IOM. Comments from the CoE experts were accepted by the authorities and an inter-agency follow-up meeting took place in Strasbourg in May 2002. A two-pronged approach of enhancing the legal status of Meskhetians in their countries of current residence and supporting Georgia in adopting a legal framework that would allow return and

access to citizenship in Georgia was agreed upon.

UNHCR organised training sessions for government officials and the media on refugee issues. A two-day seminar was held for police academy students on "Protection of Refugees and IDPs in Georgia." A legal clinic project was initiated by a UNHCR implementing partner at the Tbilisi State University, to enhance the practical knowledge of law students about refugee/IDP issues. The implementing partner also published several articles analysing refugee and IDP rights. UNHCR was instrumental in introducing International Refugee Law courses as part of the curriculum at the Tbilisi State University and the Diplomatic Academy of Georgia.

In June, educational sessions on children's rights, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, were conducted for IDP children residing in Shida Kartli area through an NGO. UNHCR initiated the translation into Georgian of a Legal Manual for Refugee/IDP Women in the region. A working group was created at the Public Defender's Office to prepare a draft law on changes and amendments to the Georgian legislation on child trafficking, child exploitation and child pornography. Activities such as monthly television and radio programmes discussing refugee/IDP issues and a monthly publication of a children's magazine were undertaken to raise public awareness. Two editions of "Refugee" magazine were also published.

Progress as measured against indicators

Impact/Performance Indicators	Actual Progress
IDP adolescents are motivated for positive change in their communities.	337 adolescents in 4 cities attend 25 youth clubs. 75 per cent were IDPs and more than 50 per cent were adolescent women.
The self-reliance and food-security of vulnerable IDP and local families is enhanced through 22 agricultural income-generating activities.	21 of 22 groups have constructed farms and other buildings after procuring all necessary supplies.
Refugee children have access to basic education in Georgia.	Some 800 refugee children continue to attend pre-school, primary and secondary schools in Pankisi Valley.
Immediate health needs of the refugees are addressed in a timely way.	4500 refugees have been treated on an outpatient basis in Pankisi Valley.
Number of refugees from Vladikavkaz and Georgian IDPs who have returned to their places of original residence.	56 Osset refugees and 90 IDP families have applied to return, and are awaiting clearance.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER 2002

- UNHCR will extend assistance to the local community in the Pankisi Valley to avoid refugee protection problems and reduce the potential for social tension in the area following the results of the April 2002 registration exercise.
- Due to UNHCR's present financial crisis, planned health and community services to assist 40,000 returnees in Abkhazia will not be implemented. Over 2,000 children

attending 49 schools in Abkhazia will not receive adequate school supplies. The reduction will also have a direct impact on the shelter assistance planned for returnees to South Ossetia. The projected number of assisted persons will be halved, from 3,000 to 1,500 families.

- UNHCR will continue to explore the possibility of relocation outside Pankisi of the refugee population following the April 2002 registration exercise by the Georgian authorities.

Financial Data (USD)

Annual Programme Budget			
Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available	Obligation Level
5,365,825	5,393,047	2,947,071	2,348,320