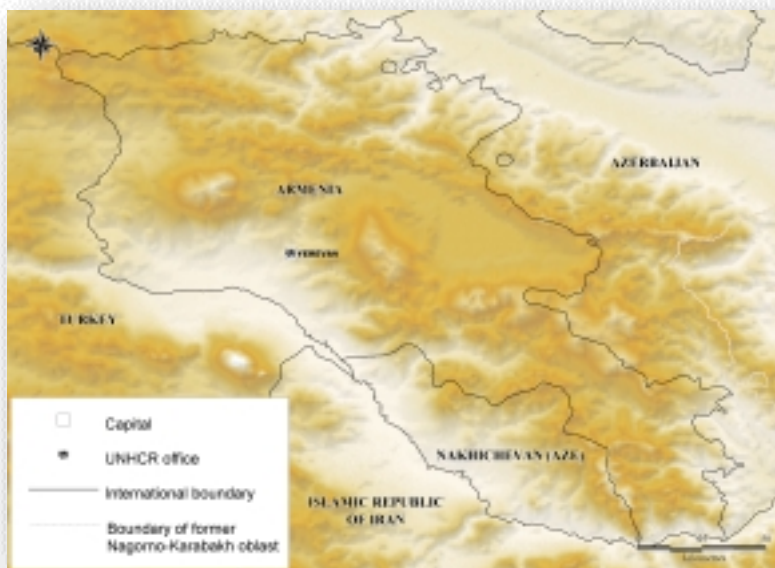


Armenia

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Promote the local integration of ethnic-Armenian refugees through naturalisation and multi-sectoral assistance; assist in strengthening the capacity of central and regional authorities and NGOs to address refugee issues; provide protection and assistance to other asylum-seekers and refugees and work towards the proper implementation of the national Refugee Law.



Impact

- Targeted assistance was delivered to 50,000 needy refugees (some naturalised) to promote their lasting socio-economic integration in Armenia. A total of 324 families were provided with improved and permanent individual housing, 1,100 households benefited from micro-credit schemes, and 9,600 vulnerable refugees living in temporary shelters benefited from improved access to health, community initiatives and social activities. Refugee and local children had better access to education and social activities.

- UNHCR continued to link its assistance projects with development programmes, through joint strategic planning and funding, thereby increasing the long-term sustainability of UNHCR's work.
- A total of 15,631 refugees were directly assisted to acquire Armenian citizenship, bringing to 23,700 the total number of refugees naturalised since the inception of the naturalisation programme in 1998.
- Governmental structures assumed greater responsibility for the social and legal protection of the refugees. Amendments to the National Election Code adopted in April 2000 allow for refugees to participate in local elections.

- In the context of the CIS Conference Plan of Action, seven additional national NGOs, working in several regions of the country, were helped to develop their capacity. Six national NGOs worked as implementing partners of UNHCR (whereas five years earlier there was only one).
- The capacity of the Government to deal with asylum claims was strengthened: this has improved the management of refugee status determination. Facilities have been set up for reception, interviewing and counselling, and adequate temporary accommodation for asylum-seekers.

Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Ethnic-Armenian Refugees	280,600 ¹	50,000	54	10

¹Includes some 60,000 persons who are believed to have left the country, mainly for economic reasons.

Since 1998, 23,700 refugees have naturalised of whom 15,631 in 2000.

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
3,106,627	1,824,729	1,232,383	3,057,112	3,052,032

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

The inter-ethnic conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh caused massive population displacement in the late 1980s. Some 280,500 ethnic Armenians, who between 1988 and 1992 fled Azerbaijan and other areas in the CIS, are still registered as refugees. A settlement of the conflict remained elusive, despite continued efforts by the international community, represented by the OSCE Minsk Group, and the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, to reach a solution.

UNHCR has been working in Armenia since the end of 1992. It is the main United Nations agency assisting the Government in its efforts to address the human dimensions of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, through local integration of the ethnic-Armenian refugee population from Azerbaijan. In January 2000, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by UNHCR and the Government, represented by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, to reaffirm the framework of co-operation between them.

The ethnic-Armenian refugees enjoy almost the same legal and social rights as the local population. However, Armenia's persistent social and economic difficulties tend to hit the refugee population harder than the local population, and thus hold back the process of integration, further postponing self-sufficiency. Despite its limited resources, the Government has assumed increasing responsibility for the management of its asylum system. Only a handful of refugees from other countries are residing in Armenia.

Constraints

A combination of factors has militated against economic and social recovery: political deadlock in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the economic blockade of the country by Turkey and Azerbaijan, economic reforms that have yet to bear fruit, social tensions, and corruption. Some 55 per cent of the population, including refugees, live in poverty; Armenia ranks 93rd on UNDP's human development index. This is the context that leaves many refugees hesitant about acquiring Armenian citizenship, fearing that they might thereby forfeit what they see as compensation or privileges linked to refugee status.

UNHCR has pursued its strategy of progressively handing over activities and responsibilities to development actors and government bodies. However, this process has been hindered by the lack of government resources allocated to refugee matters, frequent changes in the

Government, the dependence of national NGOs and implementing partners on UNHCR funding, and the weakness and inexperience of local community structures. These problems are compounded by a general hesitation on the part of development agencies. If they showed greater resolve, and became more deeply involved, it would be possible to gradually phase down humanitarian assistance.

Funding

During the year, only 76 per cent of the original budget was available. Some planned activities had to be revised downward, mainly in the areas of shelter, income generation and self-reliance. For instance, the number of apartments targeted for renovation (as permanent housing for refugees) was halved, from 600 to 300. Fifteen sites in mixed refugee/local areas had been targeted for the rehabilitation of communal infrastructure; this was reduced to eight. One thousand households were to have qualified for assistance with income generation; the number was reduced to 150. Funding constraints also frequently undermined UNHCR's efforts to motivate the Government, other actors and the local population to maintain a positive attitude toward asylum-seekers and refugees, and take on greater responsibility for their social, economic and legal integration.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

The ethnic-Armenian refugees enjoy the right to freedom of movement, free access to the courts, social assistance, work and education. New legislation passed in 2000 represents further progress toward the full integration of the refugees and naturalised persons. In April, a new law on Amendments and Additions to the National Election Code was passed, which allows refugees to participate in local government elections. In December, a law was passed on "social and legal guarantees" for naturalised persons. These included the right to purchase apartments and other property without losing entitlement to temporary shelter. However, even if the refugees do enjoy the same rights as the local population, they also experience the same socio-economic difficulties. This particularly affects the most vulnerable refugees, including those living in temporary accommodation, elderly refugees, households headed by women, and children. UNHCR has pursued programmes offering shelter, education, community development, health, social services and small loans, particularly for the most vulnerable groups within the refugee population, to facilitate their permanent local integration.

A total of 44,000 refugee children below the age of 18 are registered in Armenia. Like local children, they have access to public services, and attend the same schools. However, widespread poverty has had disproportionate consequences for the development of refugee children from economically and socially vulnerable families. A joint WFP/UNHCR survey on food security showed that severe malnutrition among children is significantly higher within the refugee population than in the local population. UNHCR continued to give priority within the overall programme to children's issues, and to implement assistance programmes that further integrate refugee children into society and address the needs of the most vulnerable groups. This is done through social activities, facilitated access to health and education, individual assistance, peace and tolerance education and an information campaign on naturalisation. Some public events were designed to raise awareness about refugee children, such as television documentaries, a photo exhibition and a youth forum organised around UNHCR's 50th Anniversary.

About 60,000 refugees – mainly males – are estimated to be temporarily or permanently out of the country, predominantly for economic reasons. This has affected

the demographic balance of the refugee population, leaving a comparatively large proportion of households headed by women. UNHCR has continued to promote gender mainstreaming in its assistance programme and has therefore targeted this group through a range of programmes for community development and self-reliance, income generation and micro-credit, individual shelter, and improved access to health services, including reproductive health.

UNHCR has helped with the implementation of the 1995 Citizenship Law and the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness. Through a countrywide information programme, 50,000 refugees have been informed about the rights and obligations of persons who acquire Armenian citizenship. 15,631 refugees were directly assisted to acquire citizenship in 2000, bringing the number to 23,700 since the inception of the naturalisation programme in 1998.

The capacity of the Government to deal with asylum claims has also been strengthened, and governmental bodies have assumed more responsibilities in the area of social and legal protection of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR actively assisted the Department for



Migration and Refugees in drafting sub-legislation to implement the Refugee Law. A series of important government decrees were adopted regulating the provision of temporary housing, medical services, translation and free legal services, lump sum allowances, as well as asylum-seekers' movement and choice of place of residence. These decrees are in conformity with the Refugee Law and the 1951 Convention.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: UNHCR helped the government to set up a mechanism to provide social and legal counselling and address the basic needs of newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees. It provided social and monthly financial assistance to seven asylum-seekers and recognised refugees in need. Through the services of an implementing partner, UNHCR also assisted those whose initial application had been rejected but were still awaiting an appeals decision. UNHCR continued to attend to the most vulnerable groups, including elderly refugees, women and children, by identifying and helping to bridge gaps in the national welfare system. UNHCR organised community-based activities, improved access to health, and provided individual assistance, social activities or basic humanitarian assistance as appropriate, while continuing to promote the integration of the refugee population. Isolated elderly refugees, who make up 44 per cent of the registered refugee population, were assisted with physical, psychological and medical care through existing health posts/medical points, of which a further 14 were established in 2000 with UNHCR funding, as well as mobile medical teams. Incapacitated and disabled older refugees received special and individual care. In addition, 1,000 vulnerable elderly refugees were provided with electricity coupons, 3,000 older refugees received privately donated eyeglasses, and 2,000 were given bed linen. Some 800 families in dire need were assisted directly by UNHCR or implementing partners with single lump-sum financial assistance. Some 100 extremely vulnerable refugee families in remote villages in the border area, including 268 children, were assisted with food and clothing parcels. They also received cash grants for electricity and fuel. Social activities were organised by implementing partners for 6,500 refugee and local children and adolescents in youth centres and through participation in festivities and youth initiatives. A survey was carried out with WFP on food security and the nutritional status of the population in Armenia, including a comparative analysis of the refugee population. The preliminary findings revealed the most vulnerable groups to be disproportionately represented among the refugee population. In the absence of a proper legal

framework it was not possible to transfer 15 health posts, or funding for medicine, to their respective communities. However, work on this continued, and local management teams were trained. For the refugees living in temporary shelters UNHCR funded training and awareness campaigns on reproductive health. A total of 2,500 nurses and women benefited directly or indirectly from the programme.

Education: The Government continued to include refugee adolescents in the education system by granting exemptions or discounts on education fees. UNHCR supported educational projects, linking them with the national reform of community-managed schools. Five schools (serving 1,250 children in all) were rehabilitated in a joint effort with the local communities; UNHCR also provided educational resources. UNHCR participated in a survey, initiated by UNICEF with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education and Science, on drop out and absenteeism. Initial results showed that all age groups in society experience great hardship but that schools tend to constitute a safety net that helps to reduce the psychological effects of poverty and dislocation on refugee children.

Income Generation: Since 1999, UNHCR and the international community have been co-funding activities conducive to economic self-reliance. A micro-credit scheme targeting low-income beneficiaries – 65 per cent women, often households headed by women and refugees – made use of revolving credit and group guarantees, employment loans and skills training. Some 1,100 households had access to credit services including revolving funds from prior years. An additional 171 households were included in the revolving fund in 2000, and 141 persons received management training. In addition, 63 persons benefited from the programme through direct employment.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR has helped the Government to implement the 1995 Citizenship Law and the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness, through a simplified and decentralised procedure for application for citizenship. In collaboration with other partners, 50,000 refugees were informed through various channels about citizenship application procedures and their rights and obligations as citizens. The number of regional and district centres providing counselling and processing increased from 20 to 30. UNHCR worked with the Department for Migration and Refugees to train officers in charge of the centres. In December, a law was passed on the legal and social guarantees for naturalised persons; this represents a further step towards local integration of the naturalised refugees.

UNHCR has assisted the Government in the development of structures and procedures for effective implementation of the 1999 Refugee Law. It provided technical and logistical support, training (in Armenia and abroad), the dissemination of information, public awareness, and lectures in areas such as refugee status determination, human rights, refugee law, international protection, statelessness, and border controls. UNHCR published and widely distributed a number of manuals on international protection, refugee status determination and permanent solutions to the problems of the refugees. In 2000, Armenia recognised four asylum-seekers as refugees. A mechanism has been developed to provide legal assistance to asylum-seekers whose initial applications have been rejected, and to refugees evicted from temporary shelters, but this needs further refinement. UNHCR published and distributed a brochure on the Convention Travel Document to clarify its purpose as well as its limitations. UNHCR backed that up with a series of round-table discussions, workshops and symposia with NGOs, government officials and refugees. UNHCR increased awareness of refugee matters through monthly television and radio programmes as well as the publication of a monthly bulletin. To mark UNHCR's 50th Anniversary, the Office organised public events such as television documentaries and a photo exhibition on refugee children. In collaboration with OSCE/ODHIR, UNHCR carried out a survey of the existing registration (*propiska*) system in Armenia, with a view to submitting proposals for its replacement.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR continued to encourage the development of the relevant governmental structures, by means of extended technical training, legal advice and operational assistance. This led to an expansion of the remit of governmental partners dealing with refugee matters, in terms of operations, the law, and co-operation. UNHCR continued to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of national NGOs to enable them to play a more active role in the integration of the refugees. The UNHCR-supported NGO Training and Resource Centre provided training and information for NGOs accredited to the CIS Conference follow-up process.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: UNHCR has assisted Armenia in its search for long-term (or permanent) accommodation for refugees currently living in temporary shelter. The authorities had offered some 50 objects for reconstruction and rehabilitation, and these were assessed and a comprehensive report was compiled. A shelter consultant on secondment from Swiss Disaster Relief supervised the process. Following this assessment,

nine structures were selected and reconstructed into 308 apartments for vulnerable refugee families living in dilapidated communal centres, and 16 for needy local families. The beneficiaries were identified in collaboration with the Government through a Housing Allocation Committee. A further six sites were identified for 2001. UNHCR has continued to support the Department of Migration and Refugees in identifying possible new sites for the construction of permanent housing for refugees. In addition, UNHCR provided emergency and basic shelter assistance through implementing partners to upgrade five communal centres. The lack of basic infrastructure is a major problem for many refugees in rural areas. UNHCR continued to work with the World Bank, the Armenia Social Investment Fund (ASIF) and WFP. Community participation, a matching contribution from the World Bank (WB), and hand tools provided by UNHCR assured improved access to drinking water, the repair of irrigation systems, and the reconstruction of schools and social centres. This co-operation benefited 20,000 refugees and locals in eight different sites. WB/ASIF included refugee-populated areas as priority targets in their development strategy for 2001-2005.

Transport/Logistics: Food donated by WFP was distributed to vulnerable refugees, of whom 2,400 were living in temporary shelter in Yerevan but were not assisted through the national welfare system. Refugees in need were given clothes, blankets, and bed linen (including some received from private donors).

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

UNHCR maintained an office in Yerevan. The programme was managed through a team consisting of three international and 17 national staff.

Working with Others

UNHCR continued to develop and strengthen the national capacity of governmental and NGO structures to address refugee issues and to encourage them to include the refugees as beneficiaries of their development and assistance programmes. UNHCR supported seven local NGOs based outside Yerevan (working mainly in social and legal fields), in addition to 14 NGOs for which networking, training and/or logistical support has continued. Although governmental and NGO partners and interlocutors have shouldered more responsibility (providing legal assistance to the refugees,

lobbying for detailed legislation implementing the Refugee Law, participating in the formulation of longer-term solutions for the refugees) they remained highly dependent on UNHCR funding.

Accountability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness were assured through timely and frequent monitoring against output parameters. The financial accountability of implementing partners was strengthened by linking payments to performance and ensuring timely reports. Partners were whenever appropriate involved in reviews and the setting of key performance indicators. In addition, ad hoc outside expertise was brought in when necessary to sharpen up technical aspects of the programme and management.

UNHCR worked in tandem with the World Bank and the Government in the area of micro-projects, with IOM in the area of migration management and micro-credit schemes, and with WFP on food-for-work programmes and a nation-wide food security survey. Joint planning with UNICEF resulted in activities to raise awareness on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a joint country-wide survey on education that included refugee children. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Co-ordinator, and with the participation of other UN agencies, UNCHR was active in theme groups on HIV/AIDS, Gender and Reproductive Health, and Poverty Reduction Strategy. UNHCR has maintained regular contact with the OSCE, including consultations on political issues such as the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia's future membership of the Council of Europe, and human rights issues.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The activities implemented to promote further economic, social and legal integration of the refugee population in Armenia have yielded some positive results. The number of refugees that acquired Armenian citizenship increased again in 2000, and legal integration is closely linked to social and economic integration. However, the impact of UNHCR's programme depends strongly on the success of social, economic and political reforms, while the overall situation in Armenia is deteriorating. Vulnerable refugees are one of the most affected groups. The capacity of the Government and NGOs has been strengthened and has led to positive results in terms of their ability to take on more responsibilities with regard to refugee issues and the application of internationally recognised standards in dealing with asylum-seekers. However, lack of government resources means that progress remains fragile and dependent on continued external funding.

Despite limited resources and only selective material assistance, UNHCR significantly contributed to an improvement in the living conditions of the most vulnerable refugees. International NGOs (which in previous years implemented various micro-credit and self-sustainability, health and community development projects using UNHCR funds) continued these activities in 2000 using their own resources; this has also meant targeting refugees within national development frameworks. In addition, UNHCR successfully pooled funds and resources to address refugee needs jointly with other agencies such as WFP, UNICEF, WB, UNDP and IOM.

UNHCR's exit strategy involves strengthening national capacities for asylum and refugee management. Humanitarian assistance is expected to be gradually phased out, as refugees are naturalised and integrate further into Armenian society, and as UNHCR links its programmes with those of national and other development agencies. At the end of 2000, UNHCR was preparing to hand over education and income generation programmes to local communities and other agencies. The increased coverage of refugee needs by other agencies is crucial to the success of longer-term solutions. Some progress here is already visible. However, UN and development agencies are still reluctant (on account of insufficient resources or other priorities) to commit themselves more heavily to Armenia.

Offices

Yerevan

Partners

Government Agencies

State Department for Migration and Refugees

NGOs

Armenian Social Investment Fund

OXFAM (Armenia)

Mission Armenia

NGO Training Resource Centre

Sakharov Armenian Human Rights Foundation

Young Lawyers Association

YMCA (Armenia)

Other

International Organisation for Migration

United Nations Children's Fund

World Food Programme

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	334,612		13,190	
Community Services	194,402		38,295	
Education	67,408		57,759	
Health / Nutrition	0		121,254	
Income Generation	68,596		202,913	
Legal Assistance	141,880		42,365	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	90,656		37,933	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	1,069,185		446,182	
Transport / Logistics	8,042		3,336	
Water	0		195,873	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	685,473		(762,537)	
Sub-total Operational	2,660,254		396,563	
Programme Support	363,566		33,433	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	3,023,820	(3)	429,996	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	28,212	(3)	0	
TOTAL	3,052,032	(1) (3)	429,996	(6)
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	2,130,720		351,848	
Reporting Received	1,445,247		1,114,385	
Balance	685,473		(762,537)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		787,715	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		25,178	
Currency Adjustment	0		0	
Outstanding 31 December	685,473		0	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		626,208	(6)
New Obligations	3,052,032	(1)	0	
Disbursements	3,023,820	(3)	429,996	(6)
Cancellations	0		196,212	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	28,212	(3)	0	

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6