

## **SPCP Southern Caucasus Georgia Update February 2008**

### **Background**

In July 2007 UNHCR introduced the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project in the Southern Caucasus (SPCP-SC) to help strengthen protection responses to forced displacement in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In Georgia, it focuses on strengthening state capacities to protect refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons, drawing on the capacities of communities. To date, the SPCP-SC initiative in Georgia is supported by the European Commission, the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and Australia for UNHCR.

### **Methodology**

The SPCP proceeds from an initial identification of gaps in protection to the design of specific interventions to remedy those gaps. A central feature is collaboration, as the gaps and the measures to address them are collectively agreed by concerned stakeholders including key government authorities, partners, civil society and displaced persons.

### **Activities**

#### **Gaps analysis and consultation**

UNHCR Georgia has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the gaps in protection faced by refugees. Its findings will feed into a national consultation with governmental, international and national partners planned for mid-March

The Consultation aims to foster agreement on key protection challenges including gaps in refugee status determination procedures, health and education and importantly, to recommend means to remedy the gaps identified and prioritised

by capacitating national actors and refugees themselves.

A similar gaps analysis which examines the situation of IDPs is underway. It will draw upon assessments conducted with IDPs to highlight outstanding obstacles in accessing rights and solutions. The resulting IDP protection gaps analysis report will be utilised to support the Government of Georgia in the finalisation of its National IDP Action Plan.

The Action Plans agreed upon for both refugees and IDPs will form the basis for subsequent SPCP work in Georgia. Specifically, UNHCR will work with the Government and its partners in refugee and IDP protection to develop projects that make tangible improvements to the situation of displaced communities.

#### **Expanding self-reliance in displaced communities**

The lack of sufficient opportunities to achieve self reliance is a key protection concern in refugee and IDP communities, linked to a number of protection risks including poor health, domestic violence and child labour. Moreover, self reliant refugees and IDPs are more likely to find durable solutions.



As part of a strategy to expand the livelihoods of displaced persons within their local communities, SPCP-SC has supported small-scale projects aimed at expanding self-reliance and local integration

of refugees. In the last quarter of 2007, Chechen refugees in the Pankisi Valley been able to start up small enterprises including a coffee shop and store, a greenhouse, the rehabilitation of a stone processing workshop and fish-farming. These projects generate employment opportunities for refugees and the local population.

SPCP-SC will expand its work in this area in 2008 by conducting a survey to assess livelihoods needs and opportunities among refugees and IDPs. A small team of technical consultants will provide specific recommendations and project proposals aimed at enhancing the access of refugees and IDPs to vocational training, enterprise and income generation activities in a way that provides benefits to the local hosting communities.

### **Improving the Refugee Database**

SPCP-SC is supporting the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) to upgrade its database on refugees and asylum seekers. The modernisation of the database will allow the MRA to expand data highlighting vulnerabilities in refugee communities and facilitate the automatic generation of statistics. The project will also allow the MRA to make its database compatible with other Government information systems, improving coordination and information exchange with key partners such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

### **Establishing a Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers**

A protection gap which has been jointly identified by the Government of Georgia and UNHCR is the absence of reception facilities for asylum seekers. The identification of a suitable site for a reception centre or a building to turn into a reception centre by the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation with collaboration with UNHCR is ongoing.

### **Reducing Statelessness**

Funding from PRM has facilitated research on the incidence of Statelessness in Georgia. Two parallel studies have examined Georgia's legal framework on citizenship and statelessness, its current practice in order to identify gaps and recommendations. The results of the research will be discussed during a Workshop on Statelessness which is planned in March.

More information on the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, including its Southern Caucasus initiative can be found at [www.unhcr.org/spcp](http://www.unhcr.org/spcp)