

A Z E R B A I J A N

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Help refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) and returnees become more self-reliant; facilitate their access to state departments and services; support the adoption of national refugee legislation which adheres to international standards, as well as structures and procedures for its implementation; prepare to hand over some activities to other agencies; help NGOs to take a more active role in asylum and migration-related work.



Impact

- A long-term policy on refugees and IDPs was finalised in an *Aide-Mémoire* signed by UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank and the Government.
- Some 170,000 persons received direct assistance. In addition, 50,000 received aid in kind, and other extra-budgetary contributions, channeled through UNHCR.
- Training and other assistance enabled a large number of refugees to increase their income.
- A total of 2,370 IDP families were able to return to their homes after UNHCR helped them to rebuild their war-damaged houses.
- A new Law on Refugees was passed in May, paving the way for the Government to implement provisions of the 1951 Convention.
- Twelve national NGOs received support, including two agencies carrying out sizeable assistance programmes on behalf of UNHCR, enabling them to function more effectively, especially as advocates for refugees on the national stage.
- UNHCR's Office in Baku secured significant financial support from companies in Azerbaijan.
- Reproductive health programmes supported by UNHCR contributed to a decline in the number of abortions.



Persons of Concern

MAIN REFUGEE ORIGIN/ TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Ethnic-Azeri Refugees from Armenia	188,400	*	53	50
Formerly Deported Meskhetians	33,216	18,000	53	50
Non-CIS Refugees (i.e. Afghans)	111	105	7	-
Asylum-Seekers	2,500	600	-	-
IDP Returnees	36,000	9,960	53	25
IDPs	530,000	152,000	53	27

* Ethnic-Azeri refugees were indirectly assisted through programmes for internally displaced persons (IDP).

Income and Expenditure - SP Activities (USD)

WORKING BUDGET*	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS*	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
7,185,937	4,598,961	1,336,285	5,935,246	5,609,964

* Includes contributions earmarked for the Special Programme in the CIS countries.

** Includes opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

Azerbaijan continued to face a complex humanitarian situation linked to the displacement of some 800,000 persons in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as a result of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. This conflict remains unresolved despite the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and direct dialogue between the two Presidents. The weakness of the national economy continued to hinder the delivery of essential social services, including health care and education. Unemployment remained high. IDP communities still heavily relied on external aid. UNHCR therefore focused its activities on IDP communities with access to plots of land, where relatively modest inputs could have given long-term benefits. In addition, targeted assistance was provided to vulnerable groups selected in close co-ordination with competent NGOs and beneficiary groups. This included support for income-generation, health and education. Assistance went hand in hand with training and support for local NGOs and governmental bodies, to help them expand the scope of their activities and efficiency.

UNHCR continued to engage in active dialogue with the European Commission, UNDP, the World Bank, ICRC, IFRC and USAID to prepare for possible humanitarian needs in the context of a peace settlement. Contingency plans also focused on the transition from humanitarian to development strategies, and include increased support for national NGOs.

A small number of individual asylum-seekers reached Azerbaijan, most hoping to proceed to other destinations. Although a Refugee Law has been adopted, neither government structures nor procedures are yet in place to implement it, so UNHCR continued to determine the status of asylum-seekers.

Constraints

The absence of a solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh made it difficult for UNHCR to plan for durable solutions. The uncertain legal status of fledgling national NGOs meant they were unable to contribute substantially to national development. Policy implementation and co-ordination were sometimes hampered by ill-defined attribution of responsibility and haphazard communication between senior government interlocutors. UNHCR's efforts to bring assistance to IDPs into the mainstream of state policy and procedures were largely undermined by the difficult economic and social situation.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR's continued efforts to pass national refugee legislation resulted in the adoption in May of the new Refugee Law. UNHCR's next objective is assist the Government to set up national implementation procedures. Co-operation between the Government, UNHCR and the Council of Europe was strengthened through a series of joint seminars and workshops which contributed to accelerating implementation of the Citizenship Law adopted in October 1998. The law made it easier for large groups of refugees and stateless persons in Azerbaijan to become naturalised citizens. The law therefore paves the way for lasting solutions to their plight. UNHCR and the Council of Europe also published three relevant international conventions in Azeri.

With UNHCR's assistance, a number of local NGO gained wider experience (for instance through access to international forums, such as the CIS Conference process) and began to become more effective advocates for refugees and IDPs.

The legal status of NGOs remained precarious. Many have not been able to register formally. UNHCR and the Council of Europe organised two workshops with parliamentarians and government departments, to review draft legislation on NGOs may be submitted to the Parliament in 2000.

In order to preclude their arrest and detention, UNHCR issued documents to recognised mandate refugees and asylum-seekers whose claims were under review. These documents, which are routinely shared with the concerned authorities, were generally accepted by the police. In the course of the year, 266 new asylum claims were reviewed, including some Chechens, and 26 people were found to be eligible for international protection. Resettlement was limited to 12 very vulnerable refugees. A total of 600 refugees and asylum-seekers received financial or medical assistance.

In February, UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank and the Government concluded an *Aide-Mémoire*, in which all parties agree to work towards integrating IDPs into the economy of the country and, in particular, to support the creation of jobs. It also envisages multi-sectoral assistance to temporary settlements so as to improve the living conditions of IDPs. The parties also agreed to support the creation of a Social Investment Fund to

disburse a USD 10 million loan from the World Bank for the creation of jobs.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Several implementing agencies succeeded in re-vitalising entire communities by organising youth groups and providing sports equipment. This led communities to propose - and UNHCR to support - additional activities in other sectors. IDP committees were organised to participate in the repair and maintenance of their residential buildings. In every building rehabilitated in 1999, female residents set up a committee to improve management and communal activities. NGOs organised seminars, discussions, training, clean-up and information campaigns, involving the press and the authorities whenever possible. A donation of nearly 213,000 items of winter clothing, donated by an international NGO was sorted and packed, providing work for 25 IDP women.

Crop Production: Support for market garden enterprises provided highly effective, enabling hundreds of IDP families to produce their own fruit and vegetables. They were given 269 greenhouses, tools, and seeds and as a result, were able to increase their income in a sustainable manner and improve their diet. More than 300 IDPs and refugees were given marketable skills under the "agricultural college" component of the project. In six regions (409 settlements), UNHCR funded agricultural training seminars attended by 1,235 IDPs, each receiving vegetable and flower seeds donated by an NGO.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: UNHCR provided funds for the improvement of 59 communal kitchens in five rehabilitated housing IDPs in Baku. Temporary financial support was given to 119 asylum-seekers and non-CIS refugees in need, such as unaccompanied minors and single female heads of household.

Education: For many IDPs with children, school is prohibitively expensive because of the cost of text books etc. UNHCR created a text book fund that gave 8,303 textbooks to 2,347 needy IDP/refugee children in two regions, especially targeting young girls. A local NGO organised several preparatory courses for gifted adolescents to help them go on to higher education. Of the 16 persons attending these courses in 1998, ten were admitted to institutes for higher training in 1999. UNHCR rehabilitated 109 classrooms in sub-standard schools; this benefited 2,245 children. Eleven

schools that had suffered storm damage were also repaired. The goal of UNHCR-funded vocational training was to promote job-related skills and enhance future income-generating opportunities. One NGO helped 310 people embark on training in construction and community services, which led them in 1999 to 74 permanent and 31 part-time jobs. Another agency implemented a programme of technical training involving 240 hours of instruction over 20 weeks, providing immediately marketable skills. An additional 300 students were enrolled at the Agricultural and Vocational School. A Mobile School was set up to introduce agricultural education to isolated IDP areas. Finally, the Mobile Library project delivered more than 30,000 text books to 23 schools in IDP settlements. The project should be self-sustaining in 2000. Because non-CIS asylum-seekers have no legal status, they find it very difficult to enroll their children in schools. UNHCR intervened on their behalf and allocated small grants at the beginning of the school year for the purchase of text books and supplies.

Forestry: Nearly 80,000 saplings were distributed, from a tree nursery established by UNHCR in 1997. The area under cultivation by the nursery was expanded from two to six hectares. An estimated 265,000 saplings will be ready for replanting in 2000.

Health/Nutrition: UNHCR's health programme concentrated mainly on reproductive health, working through four NGOs which ran clinics and engaged in health promotion activities. The programme included the establishment of Health Action Committees in 15 communities; training of Community Health Advocates; community-based family planning education for IDPs and the local population; the distribution of contraceptives; the establishment and/or upgrading of family planning centres in four regions in partnership with the health authorities; baseline surveys; health outreach activities in 13 IDP settlements conducted by two mobile teams; and train-the-trainer courses. One UNHCR-assisted NGO gave 15,000 consultations to women in 30 settlements. Six functioning reproductive health facilities were handed over to the Ministry of Health in 1999 (of which three were subsequently closed). As non-CIS asylum-seekers and refugees do not have access to public medical services, UNHCR provided medical assistance to some 300 persons.

Income Generation: UNHCR supported small-business initiatives conducive to greater economic inde-

pendence. During the year, 94 new businesses were established and 159 IDPs received loans. Vulnerable IDPs received priority in the selection process. One NGO only gave loans to women. An evaluation of 47 recipients selected at random showed that nine families had increased their income by over 100 per cent, 19 by 50-100 per cent and seven by 20-50 per cent. In four regions, 27 Women's Co-operatives provided funds for income-generating activities.

Legal Assistance: Limited amounts were spent to enable domestic lawyers to provide advice on individual cases, and to translate and publish the European Convention on Nationality.

Livestock: UNHCR provided 123 families in three regions with 615 sheep and fodder, as well as veterinary services. A local NGO conducted 80 poultry-raising and 80 sheep-rearing seminars. UNHCR supported the authorities in establishing a collective farm, employing 70 IDPs, by providing grants and purchasing 400 animals. By the end of 2000, the farm is expected to be self-sufficient.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR covered the operational expenses of implementing agencies involved in multi-sectoral projects, as well as five per cent of the direct operational costs of international NGOs. Funds were also provided to cover public information, donor reports, conferences, translation, etc.

Sanitation: UNHCR funded works in five rehabilitated communal buildings, including: new drainage systems, plumbing, toilets, showers, and refuse pits. In settlements with limestone houses, 230 pit latrines were constructed.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Since it began construction work in 1995, UNHCR has helped more than 2,100 families acquire adequate housing through the construction of limestone single-family cottages, based on a design developed by UNHCR's Technical Services. In 1999, UNHCR financed the construction of 225 houses in Aghjabedi and Barda regions, repaired the roofs of 11 houses and built three local offices for the State Committee for Refugees. In Baku, UNHCR financed the extensive repair of five public buildings, occupied by 1,615 IDPs. The NGO implementing this project exclusively used IDP labourers, who were trained in 1998 on similar rehabilitation projects and worked to standards published by the technical staff of another NGO. The programme of assistance to IDPs

returning to war-damaged areas (launched in 1998 jointly by UNHCR, the World Bank and UNDP) exceeded its scheduled targets for 1999. By 31 December, UNHCR had financed the construction or repair of 776 homes (for 1,200 families) in the Fizuli region, 627 homes in the Terter region (1,000 families), and 98 in the Agdam region (110 families). Cost savings allowed more families to benefit than had been envisaged. A 96 per cent occupancy rate was recorded for Fizuli. On the other hand, experience in the Terter region showed that the repair of homes in that region needed to be complemented by social and economic inputs, to ensure sustainable return.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR funded in-country transportation and storage of food, clothing, quilts, seeds (vegetables and flowers), and school kits donated by NGOs and private donors.

Water: UNHCR renovated the water supply system in four rehabilitated collective centres and purchased water tanks for newly constructed limestone settlements.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

The Office was run by eight international staff (including three JPOs and a Regional Health Consultant) and 19 national staff. The Office also drew on the expertise of regional advisors based in other UNHCR offices in the region.

Working with Others

Besides being in daily contact with agencies implementing partners of UNHCR's programme, the Office liaised closely with governmental partners, UN Agencies and donors. One of the purposes of these contacts was to plan a planned hand-over to other actors of the main components of UNHCR's assistance programme. An example is the *Aide-Mémoire* concluded in March between UNHCR, UNDP, the World Bank and the Government. Another example is the MOU signed with UNFPA to include IDPs into the National Reproductive Health Programme. A direct result of this was the creation of the Reproductive Health Working Group, which comprises all stakeholders, including the Government, the UN and NGOs. UNFPA also developed a project for its 2000-2005 programme, targeting reproductive health services for IDPs. UNHCR will promote funding of this project.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

UNHCR has succeeded in developing linkages with other actors to enable IDPs to benefit from their policies and programmes. This approach is now paying off. Awareness of the needs of this population has resulted in several co-operation agreements with partners with a development mandate, and new sources of funds. However, the majority of IDPs live in sub-standard conditions (aggravated by the economic straits of the country as a whole). These conditions justify continued inputs, notably for income-generating activities, health and education. The adoption of the Refugee Law has filled a vacuum and provides grounds for cautious optimism that improvements in the legal framework will gradually be mirrored by improvements in the situation of persons of concern to the Office.

Offices

Baku

Partners

Government Agencies

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

NGO

- Adventist Development And Relief Agency
- Azerbaijan Republic Children's Association
- Azerbaijani Youth Union
- Azerbaijani-European Literary-Cultural Relations
- Children's Aid Direct
- Danish Refugee Council
- Hayat International
- Humanitarian and Social Support Centre
- International Rescue Committee
- Mercy Corps International
- Mingechavir Branch of Azerbaijan Children Fund
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Relief International
- Social and Charitable Centre
- United Methodist Committee on Relief

Other

United Nations Development Programme



Voluntary Contributions - UNHCR/WB/UNDP Shelter Project (USD)

Donor	Income	Contribution
The Netherlands	146,067	146,067
Sweden	236,740	236,740
Mitsui Kur Dashi	600,000	600,000
TOTAL	982,807	982,807

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects			Prior Years' Projects		
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	169,846	730,407	900,253	0	24,045	24,045
Community Services	0	65,815	65,815	0	8,088	8,088
Crop Production	0	179,707	179,707	0	56,393	56,393
Domestic Needs / Household Support	74,467	2,450	76,917	0	21,425	21,425
Education	0	262,230	262,230	0	136,199	136,199
Forestry	0	7,607	7,607	0	0	0
Health / Nutrition	38,211	375,899	414,110	0	127,701	127,701
Income Generation	0	210,479	210,479	0	41,011	41,011
Legal Assistance	21,191	0	21,191	0	5,366	5,366
Livestock	0	90,590	90,590	0	4,514	4,514
Operational Support (to Agencies)	0	586,762	586,762	0	459,331	459,331
Sanitation	0	45,721	45,721	(3,631)	130,207	126,576
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	0	846,544	846,544	(88,716)	3,096,063	3,007,347
Transport / Logistics	0	42,156	42,156	(337)	25,631	25,294
Water	0	7,658	7,658	0	125	125
Instalments with Implementing Partners	6,742	779,542	786,284	(527,316)	211,816	(315,500)
Combined Projects	0	929,962	929,962	620,000	(1,549,962)	(929,962)
Sub - total Operational	310,457	5,163,528	5,473,985	0	2,797,953	2,797,953
Administrative Support	0	170,740	170,740	0	8,955	8,955
Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries	310,457	5,334,268	5,644,725	0	2,806,908	2,806,908
Unliquidated Obligations	47,938	275,696	323,634	0	0	0
TOTAL	358,395	5,609,964	5,968,359	0	2,806,908	2,806,908
Instalments with Implementing Partners						
Payments Made	8,142	3,471,072	3,479,214	2,853,675	4,404,628	7,258,303
Reporting Received	1,400	2,691,530	2,692,930	3,380,991	4,192,812	7,573,803
Balance	6,742	779,542	786,284	(527,316)	211,816	(315,500)
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	540,777	1,073,189	1,613,966
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0	13,461	240,811	254,271
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outstanding 31 December	6,742	779,542	786,284	0	1,044,195	1,044,195
Unliquidated Obligations						
Outstanding 1 January	0	0	0	0	2,878,477	2,878,477
New Obligations	358,395	5,609,964	5,968,359	0	0	0
Disbursements	310,457	5,334,268	5,644,725	0	2,806,908	2,806,908
Cancellations	0	0	0	0	71,568	71,568
Outstanding 31 December	47,938	275,696	323,634	0	0	0