

ARMENIA



IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Promote the local integration of ethnic Armenian refugees through naturalisation and multi-sectoral assistance.
- Provide protection and assistance to other asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Assist in strengthening the capacity of central and regional Government authorities and NGOs to address refugee issues.



Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Ethnic Armenian Refugees	300,000	300,000
New Asylum-Seekers and Refugees	15	50
Total	300,015	300,050
Total Requirements USD 3,875,960		

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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

Since 1993, UNHCR has assisted ethnic Armenian refugees – most of them having fled Azerbaijan – initially with substantial emergency relief and, in recent years, with programmes promoting local integration into Armenian society. Of the more than 300,000 refugees registered by the authorities, some 70,000, mostly men, are estimated to have left the country temporarily due to economic hardship. A nationwide campaign promoting naturalisation of refugees, has started bearing fruit.

The very small number of asylum-seekers and refugees from Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and elsewhere have required UNHCR's protection and assistance in the absence of a national policy and administrative framework for dealing with such cases. In March 1999, Armenia adopted refugee legislation, and UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Security signed a Memorandum of Understanding which lays out cooperation on refugee issues, and the organisational structures and procedures for handing asylum applications.

Constraints

The difficult economic conditions in Armenia affect refugees even more than Armenian citizens, and restrict their effective integration and self-sufficiency. Many refugees are still reluctant to apply for citizenship. National structures and procedures for refugee and migration issues are still in their infancy. Improvements are slow owing to frequent staff changes in the government, which necessitate repeated training on top of other much needed investment.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

Armenia has acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Since 1998 UNHCR's efforts have focused on the naturalisation of ethnic Armenian refugees, who arrived almost a decade ago. Many refugees are still hesitant to become citizens for legal, social, economic and psychological reasons. To promote the full integration of the refugees, and to reduce statelessness, UNHCR is facilitating the naturalisation process by helping improve legal procedures and advisory services, as well as increasing information available to the authorities, refugees, the

media, NGOs and the public at large. Since the start of the campaign more than 10,000 refugees have applied for citizenship.

At the central level, the Department of Migration and Refugee Affairs at the Ministry of Social Security is being strengthened with a separate unit which will be established to deal with the naturalisation campaign. The decentralisation of the application process to the country's regions is expected to trigger an increase in applications. The existing social protection structures in the regions will be supported by UNHCR through training and technical assistance on refugee issues, with the overall aim of creating and nurturing close links between central and regional structures.

Armenia was the first country of the CIS to accede to the 1951 Convention. Now that refugee legislation is in place, UNHCR is helping the Government to develop its structures and procedures for dealing with asylum claims. For this purpose, UNHCR will assist in training and public information, and provide institutional support. UNHCR will also help the authorities with printing and distribution of documentation and identification papers for new refugees and asylum-seekers.

Assistance

Improving the housing conditions of vulnerable ethnic Armenian refugees remains a priority. For many years UNHCR has provided housing and emergency repairs in communal centres. In the context of the strategy to promote naturalisation, the provision of adequate permanent shelter is an important incentive. UNHCR, in collaboration with the authorities, will continue to invest in this area. Though the needs of the 10,000 families urgently requiring housing outstrip the capacity of UNHCR alone, its programme to rehabilitate unfinished or abandoned buildings in urban centres (with refugees requesting naturalisation being given priority) has proved successful and will continue. UNHCR will also encourage privatisation of allocated housing, increased participation of the Government in improving shelter in the year 2000 and finding solutions for larger-scale housing improvement.

In 2000, UNHCR plans to help 1,000 families become more self-reliant, through micro-projects and small-scale income-generating schemes, as well as skill training. A revolving loan scheme will be continued and UNHCR will develop local facil-



ities for managing loans and repayments. UNHCR aims to transfer the ownership of the revolving fund to competent NGO credit organisations by the end of 2000.

Although the Government has achieved modest success with its social and economic development programmes, a social safety net remains essential. Vulnerable refugees who have no other support will continue to receive targeted assistance from UNHCR. This includes: special care for the elderly, women and children; counselling for women, children and young people struggling to adapt to their new environment; community development and other social services benefiting both locals and refugees. The rehabilitation of 10–20 schools will contribute to the normal intellectual and social development of children. Access to primary and reproductive health services and advice will be ensured through a continuing village health insurance scheme. It is UNHCR's intention to hand over these services to local communities and the health authorities for self-management by the end of the year. A special challenge in 2000 however will be to ensure that UNHCR's hand-over of activities in health care and primary education takes place within the framework of national development plans.

UNHCR will assist the Government in improving basic reception facilities for new asylum-seekers and refugees, including accommodation for needy families or individuals. Financial and social assistance and psychological counselling will be provided when necessary.

An essential goal of UNHCR throughout the CIS is to help develop the private sector in areas of relevance to UNHCR's work. In Armenia, UNHCR helps selected national NGOs to enhance their operational capacity. This is accomplished, inter alia, by involving these NGOs in implementing UNHCR programmes and addressing issues mentioned in the CIS Conference Plan of Action. UNHCR includes these NGOs in policy discussions, technical training, international visits and workshops, and helps them in the areas of management and administration.

Desired Impact

UNHCR's programme in 2000 is expected to help an increased number of refugees apply for citizenship, to improve the well-being of the most vulnerable refugees in the country and to increase the authorities' capacity to apply internationally

recognised standards in dealing with asylum-seekers and refugees.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

The activities of UNHCR in Armenia will be conducted by a total of 24 staff (three international and 21 national) and supported by one Junior Professional Officer.

Coordination

UNHCR's cooperation with the authorities aims at building national capacity to assume full responsibility for dealing with refugee issues. Cooperation is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Social Security, outlining responsibilities and activities of both parties. UNHCR implements all its assistance projects in the country through the Government and (mainly local) NGOs. UNHCR also has several joint programmes with other United Nations agencies such as WFP, UNICEF, UNDP, IOM and the World Bank (through the Armenian Social Investment Fund) in the areas of shelter, health, income-generation, education and Food-for-Work projects. This cooperation is assuming increasing importance as UNHCR scales down its assistance programmes and encourages other agencies to include refugees as beneficiaries of their development and assistance programmes.

Offices
Yerevan
Partners
Government Agencies
Ministry of Social Security/Department of Migration and Refugee Affairs
NGOs
Bridge of Hope
Catholic Relief Services
Charity and Work
Mission Armenia
National Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
NGO Training and Resource Centre
OXFAM
United Methodist Committee on Relief
Women's Health Care Association
Young Men's Christian Association
Other
Armenian Social Investment Fund
IOM
UNDP
WFP

Budget (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	391,026
Community Services	395,000
Education	160,000
Health/Nutrition	205,000
Income Generation	482,000
Legal Assistance	305,000
Operational Support (to Agencies)	247,000
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	1,229,000
Transport/Logistics	40,000
Total Operations	3,454,026
Programme Support	421,934
Total	3,875,960

