

UNHCR Georgia 2010 Operation

UNHCR Tbilisi, November 2009

New Budget Structure in UNHCR

Four Pillars

UNHCR recently adopted a revised budget structure, in line with UNHCR's results framework, which uses populations of concern as the planning principle. Effective as of 1 January 2010, the new structure comprises four distinct components:

- **Pillar I - Refugees:** UNHCR's refugee mandate, this covers protection, assistance and durable solutions activities in countries of asylum, together with capacity building, advocacy, and resource mobilization activities.
- **Pillar II - Stateless:** UNHCR's mandate for statelessness, this covers all UNHCR's programmes addressing stateless people, including populations with undetermined nationality.
- **Pillar III - Reintegration:** This is an area where UNHCR has joint responsibilities with other UN agencies within the context of "Delivering as one" and covers long-term activities to reintegrate returning refugees in their country of origin or to locally integrate refugees in their country of asylum. *[not applicable to UNHCR Georgia's operation]*
- **Pillar IV - Internally Displaced People (IDPs):** This covers all IDP operations where UNHCR increasingly operates within the inter-agency collaborative framework of the "cluster approach". To the extent that UNHCR is called upon to become involved in the reintegration of IDPs in any given situation, these activities will be funded under the IDP pillar, not the reintegration pillar which is reserved for refugees.

UNHCR Georgia operations in 2010

Comprehensive needs assessment

In the first months of 2009, UNHCR Georgia conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to identify and cost the needs of people of concern to the Office in 2010. The assessment prioritized activities and involved consultations with the people of concern, relevant authorities, and agencies / NGOs operating in Georgia. With respect to IDP operations, UNHCR programming is closely linked to the UN-World Bank Georgia Needs Assessment and the Government IDP Action Plan to implement the State Strategy on IDPs.

A total operational figure for 2010 of nearly 55 m USD was established and is broken down as follows:

- I. (Refugees) – USD 4,000,800;
- II. (Stateless) – USD 1,110,000;
- III. Not applicable for UNHCR Georgia operations;
- IV. (IDPs) – USD 49,065,000

2010 Objective and Priorities (Rights Group)

Overall objective The overall objective of UHCR Georgia's operation in 2010 remains the full integration of all categories of persons of concern as the only viable durable solution. However, priorities and objectives, together with activities aimed at achieving them, differ according to the different categories.

Refugees (Pillar I)

Background There are around 1,000 refugees (primarily ethnic Kist and Chechen refugees from Chechnya, Russian Federation) and some 40 asylum seekers (mainly from Middle East countries) that are of concern to UNHCR Georgia. In 2010, UNHCR has three main priorities (Rights Groups) for these people of concern, namely durable solutions; a favourable protection environment; and security from violence and exploitation.

Durable Solutions Local integration in Georgia is the first and foremost option for finding a durable solution for refugees from Chechnya presently residing in Georgia. The potential for this option has been significantly strengthened by recent progress in the development of the asylum system in Georgia, in particular the introduction of temporary residence permits which provides refugees with proper, generally recognized documentation.

Local integration requires collaborative efforts to address legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions of integration, with particular challenges being: the restricted access of refugees to national health, education and social care programmes; limited livelihoods in refugee and host communities; and poor awareness among refugees of civil obligations and rights. Naturalization, which concludes the legal dimension of an integration process, will be promoted, in particular for some 400 refugees who are stateless.

The objective for UNHCR Georgia in 2010 is **“Potential for local integration realized”**. This will be through continued efforts to support local integration of refugees by offering (i) vocational / educational (including language) training; (ii) income generation projects; (iii) provision of integration grants allowing refugees to purchase houses; (iv) legal services to facilitate naturalization of refugees, including stateless refugees; and (v) enjoy access to the primary health care and other related activities.

Favourable protection environment UNHCR Georgia intends to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) in the field of protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers through enhancement of the national legal asylum framework. UNHCR Georgia will continue providing support and technical assistance to MRA and the NGO community to ensure better implementation of international obligations of Georgia in the field of admission, reception and treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2010 UNHCR Georgia has two objectives under this Rights Group, i.e.

1. **“National administrative framework affords better protection”** by strengthening the asylum related administrative framework through capacity building and technical / expert support to the MRA and other governmental structures in two main directions: (i) expansion and maintenance of reception facilities for asylum seekers, including support for the development of MRA management capacity (e.g. training activities) in the field of admission, reception and treatment of asylum seekers, and (ii) support to the national refugee status determination procedure through regular monitoring and provision of expertise, including country of origin information. UNHCR Georgia plans to ensure that regular and high-quality legal services are provided to individual asylum

seekers throughout the entire RSD procedure.

2. **“National legal framework developed or strengthened”** by implementing activities aimed at decreasing gaps in the present national asylum framework to bring it in line with international refugee law and standards. Activities will focus on (i) strengthening the capacity of the Government and national institutions, including civil society, in the field of protection and assistance of refugees and asylum seekers through targeted training activities of government, judiciary, border guards, NGOs and other key actors; (ii) lobbying for adoption of improved asylum legislation through meetings, workshops and seminars; and (iii) initiating relevant publications and media campaigns.

Security from Violence and Exploitation

The general security situation in the Pankisi valley has improved significantly over the past decade although feuds between families remain a security issue for refugees and host communities alike. Whilst there is no precise data on Gender Based Violence (GBV), profiling exercises, participatory assessments and NGO reports indicate wide-spread incidents. UNHCR Georgia will continue its involvement in preventing and responding to GBV cases to ensure the security of persons of concern from violence and exploitation.

In 2010 UNHCR Georgia will concentrate on the objective of **“Risk of GBV is reduced and quality of response improved”** through the provision of basic services to GBV survivors. Although an overall referral mechanism is already in place and implemented, within the framework of UNHCR Georgia’s internal guidelines and regulations, the project needs to ensure the provision of efficient legal and physiological services to (potential) GBV victims.

Stateless (Pillar II)

Background

Statelessness in Georgia, one of the consequences of the break up of the Soviet Union, is part of broader large scale migration and displacement issues. Although the Government of Georgia had registered more than 1,500 stateless people by December 2008, the actual number is thought to be considerably higher, especially among minority communities due to lack of birth certificates or other documentation problems. During the registration of newly displaced people in 2008, the Civil Registry Agency (CRA) counted up to 2,500 IDPs lacking identification documents. Georgia is not yet party to major conventions on statelessness, however ongoing efforts by UNHCR, such as comprehensive research projects and workshops, are beginning to bear fruit. The Government is beginning to acknowledge deficits in its national citizenship legislation and is seriously considering amendments and possible accession to relevant international instruments.

Favourable Protection Environment

In 2010 UNHCR plans to implement a number of activities directed to prevention and reduction of statelessness such as hiring an expert to draft recommendations to ameliorate citizenship legislation and bring it in compliance with the international and regional instruments; and raise awareness on the two UN Conventions through workshops, seminars, meetings and lobbying.

In 2010 UNHCR Georgia aims to achieve the objective of: **“Prevention of statelessness is strengthened”** by strengthening the capacity of authorities to process citizenship applications throughout Georgia. Capacity building would be directed at the CRA and its 80 regional offices, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and its consular representations. This would include enhancement of the capacity of CRA offices to provide adequate assistance with problems of documentation and civil acts registration, including the establishment of fact of birth, issuing relevant documentation of identification as well as the registration and documentation of stateless cases. These capacity building measures may also include rehabilitation, refurbishing and technical upgrading of CRA branch offices in regions with a high concentration of persons of concern to UNHCR. A thorough study would be undertaken on the gaps and grey areas of the citizenship, civil

acts registration legislation, comparing theoretical substance of the legislation with practical implementation, and assessing the state of stateless, undocumented and unregistered persons.

Fair Protection Processes and Documentation

Birth certificates are the primary means of documenting citizenship of children, therefore closing the gaps in birth certification of minors deriving from the early years of Georgia's independence is the most effective means of preventing (*de jure* and *de facto*) statelessness. Earlier research and outreach efforts (initiated and co-funded by UNHCR and UNICEF) identified a growing number of undocumented minors in Georgia. UNHCR's comprehensive strategy includes awareness raising, identification of undocumented persons through mobile teams, assistance in applying for documentation and provision of legal aid to beneficiaries in six regions of Georgia where the highest number of undocumented persons have been identified.

In 2010 UNHCR Georgia aims to achieve the objective of: ***"Birth registration & certificates provided for children of concern"*** by expanding awareness raising activities countrywide; identifying, documenting and providing legal aid to stateless people throughout Georgia; and undertaking training of local authorities (including police).

IDPs (Pillar IV)

Background

UNHCR addresses the protection and assistance needs of nearly 340,000 persons of concern in Georgia, which around 220,000 IDPs living in areas of Georgia effectively controlled by the Government; some 10,000 displaced within South Ossetia¹, and over 106,000 people who are continuing to live in IDP-like situations in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and areas adjacent to South Ossetia.

Countrywide:

UNHCR Georgia's 2010 strategy for IDPs and returned IDPs has four main geographical components, each with its own main activities and priorities:

- a) Protection monitoring (especially in Shida Kartli) and GBV as well as political lobbying and advocacy for a more coherent IDP policy. There are three priorities in 2010: (i) under **Favorable Protection Environment**, capacity building, legal advice and documentation will work towards the objective of ***"National administrative framework affords better protection"***; (ii) under **Security from Violence and Exploitation**, the objective of ***"Risk of GBV is reduced and quality of response improved"*** will be sought through the provision of basic services and efficient legal and physiological services to (potential) GBV survivors; (iii) under **Community Participation and Self-Management**, the objective of ***"Community self-management and equal representation strengthened and expanded"*** will be handled through monitoring and involvement of the community

Abkhazia:

- b) Shelter plus and community participation / self-management activities will be based on two main priorities: (i) **Durable Solutions** with two objectives, namely ***"Potential for local integration realized"*** through protection monitoring and community services; and ***"Potential for resettlement realized"*** through self-reliance / livelihood activities; and (ii) **Security from Violence and Exploitation** – with the same objectives and activities as indicated above.

Western Georgia

- c) Priority will shift from shelter to community mobilization and income generation, with new shelter interventions being focused more on IDPs with special needs (e.g. social

¹ Since humanitarian access has not been possible from Georgia since the armed conflict of August 2008, this figure is an estimate.

housing for elderly), or those in isolated areas that might not be receiving Government assistance. In 2010, UNHCR Georgia has one main priority, namely **Community Participation and Self-Management**, with the objective of *“Level of self-reliance and livelihoods improved”* through small business support together with livelihoods / self-reliance activities.

Shida Kartli

- d) Re-integration of returned IDPs in the adjacent areas to South Ossetia with assistance such as shelter kits and income generation will be the focus of UNHCR Georgia’s work in this region with two main priorities: (i) **Community Participation and Self-Management**, with the same objective and activities as indicated above for IDPs in western Georgia; and (ii) establishing a **Favourable Protection Environment** through protection monitoring, assessment of protection needs of IDPs and people in IDP like situation, coordination and referral to achieve the objective of *“National administrative framework affords better protection”*.

Results that cannot be achieved without full funding of the Comprehensive Plan

- No capacity building, expert or technical assistance to guide government officials about international principles pertaining to IDP protection;
- No training sessions of border guards, NGOs and relevant actors which might result in instances of risk of refoulement taking place unreported, decreasing UNHCR’s ability to intervene on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees;
- Possible increase in unregistered births, inconsistent national legal regulations and consequent increase in statelessness;
- Reduced advocacy for refugees to be included in development plans of government, international institutions, bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors.
- 80% of children may not have their birth registered nor documentation provided;
- 135 women / girls at risk might not have access to safe havens and 220 GBV survivors might not receive needed counseling;
- 40 children with specific needs will have to wait new funding before receiving support and assistance;
- Refugee and IDP women may have little recourse when subjected to domestic violence, forced early marriage, bride-kidnapping and abandonment and GBV incidents may increase;
- The majority of refugees have no right to free of charge first aid and health care facilities are inadequate, and lack of funding will hinder UNHCR advocating for access to the national health system and the introduction of health insurance for refugees, whilst providing assistance pending a solution;
- UNHCR will be unable to intervene in areas where there are known major gaps such as IDPs with specific needs, including the elderly and disabled who require tailored solutions;
- Reduction in number of income-generating projects offered may discourage refugees who have only recently realized the importance of becoming self-reliant (which is a requisite for eventual naturalization);
- Profile exercises and participatory assessments will not be feasible which may limit involvement of IDPs in project development and could result in programmes being launched that are not 100% tailored to their specific needs and expectations;
- Increasing representation of women in leadership / management structures to

50% will be delayed;

- Community structures will not be in place or will not be sustained to mobilize IDPs to identify their needs and address them with the help of the Government and international society.
- Insufficient number of model projects to adequately improve the implementation of the IDP Action Plan towards more sustainable resettlement of IDPs by complementing shelter provision with livelihoods and self-reliance support.
- IDPs with specific needs, including the elderly, unaccompanied children and victims of GBV, will have limited and unsustainable access to shelter assistance and durable solutions as the current one-for-all solutions do not fit their needs;
- Delays in finding local reintegration solutions, such as adequate housing and self-reliance projects, would slow down naturalization prospects for refugees and possibly create unwanted tension between those assisted immediately and those who will have to wait further funding.

PHOTO: New IDP Housing Settlement, Shida Karti; UNHCR/L. Foster

