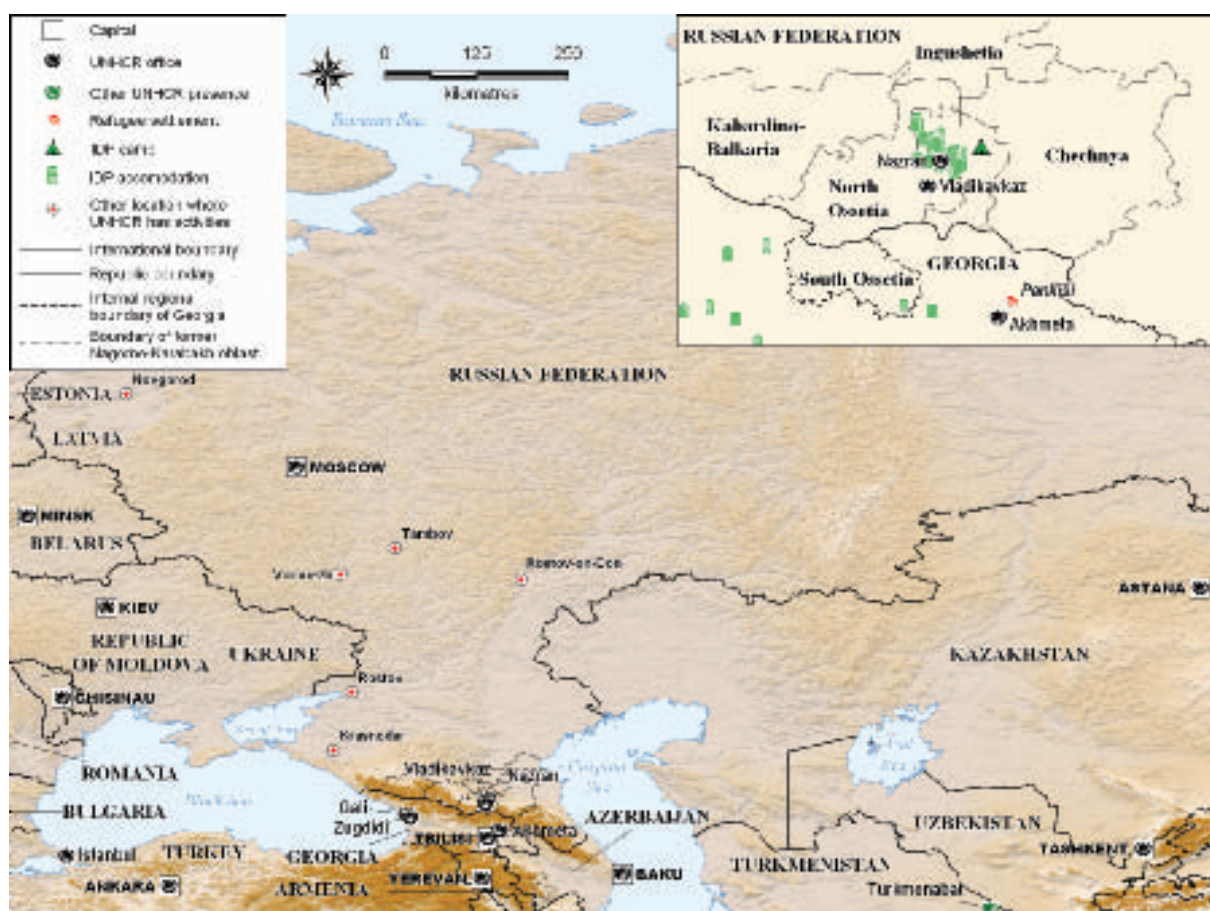


# Russian Federation



## Main objectives

Support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards; promote accession to the conventions on statelessness and the acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons, and assist in their effective integration; identify appropriate durable solutions for refugees and facilitate, in particular, the process of integration; help meet the need for protection and assistance of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northern Caucasus.

- Asylum-seekers' rights were recognized in the courts and precedents were set when courts took positive decisions on the registration of mixed marriages between asylum-seekers and Russian citizens and the prevention of deportation.
- Implementation of the integration plan for Osset refugees from Georgia in North Ossetia continued with the Government increasing its contribution to the housing construction project.
- Under the resettlement project 251 cases (451 persons) left Russia, primarily for the United States and Canada.

## Impact

### Refugees and asylum-seekers

- UNHCR's programme ensured a minimal level of subsistence for asylum-seekers in Moscow and St. Petersburg while the authorities determined their status.
- All asylum-seeker children aged six to 12 gained access to local schools.

### Internally displaced persons

- Elsewhere in the Northern Caucasus, despite the tense political climate and continuing security incidents, an estimated 20,000 IDPs returned from Ingushetia to Chechnya during the year 2003. Although pressure was exerted on some IDPs to return, no forced returns of IDPs from Chechnya were recorded in Ingushetia by UNHCR protection staff, who were able regularly to interview returnees on their way back to Chechnya to

confirm the voluntary nature of their return. Two tented camps were closed in 2003 but, further to extensive consultation with UNHCR, alternative shelter was finally made available for those IDPs who did not wish to return to Chechnya.

- In Chechnya, UNHCR, through international implementing partners, provided shelter material to returning IDPs and initiated a pilot project providing box-tents to returnees to Chechnya;
- All persons of concern had access to free legal counselling in Ingushetia and Chechnya thanks to the network of legal counselling centres.

### Stateless persons

Little progress could be achieved in defence of the rights of Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai against local restrictive policies. With the support of other international actors, UNHCR kept the issue high on the federal agenda. UNHCR acknowledged the resettlement project initiated by the United States for this group. It will offer a durable solution for eligible Meskhetians, provided guarantees are secured for those remaining in Krasnodar Krai. Return to Georgia should also remain an option.

In Moscow, UNHCR assisted many of the Baku Armenians to be recognized as Russian citizens. The US Government offered resettlement opportunities as an alternative durable solution for this group.

## Working environment

### The context

Only 58 persons were granted refugee status in 2003, and a comparison with 2002 and 2003 figures shows a 90 per cent fall in the number of people granted temporary asylum. The delivery of protection in a harsh urban environment offering few opportunities for self-reliance remained a great challenge for UNHCR. Nevertheless, positive results were achieved in representing the rights of asylum-seekers in the courts.

In North Ossetia (Russian Federation), the Government continued to support the integration of refugees from South Ossetia (Georgia). Voluntary

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
IDPs	368,200	-	-	-
IRPs (forced migrants)	290,700	88,700	-	-
Afghan asylum-seekers (in a refugee-like situation)	100,000	-	-	-
Meshketians	11,000	-	-	-
Georgia (refugees)	6,600	6,600	-	-
Non-CIS asylum-seekers	5,800	5,800	-	-
Afghanistan (refugees)	1,500	1,500	-	-
Tajikistan (refugees)	600	600	-	-
Afghanistan (asylum-seekers)	200	-	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget				
Revised budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
12,325,642	7,146,464	5,043,275	12,189,739	12,189,739

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at headquarters.

repatriation to Georgia has been accepted by a limited number of refugees. As of 31 December 2003, a total of 6,280 recognized refugees from Georgia remained in North Ossetia, of whom 297 were accommodated in 54 sub-standard collective centres. These centres also accommodate several thousands of former refugees who have obtained Russian citizenship and forced migrant status.

In the Northern Caucasus, the authorities continued to actively promote the return of IDPs to Chechnya by offering those remaining in the tented camps priority registration for compensation for destroyed property. However, many IDPs are still reluctant to return to Chechnya for lack of shelter and proper security in the Republic. In 2003, two more IDP camps were closed. When the Government in Ingushetia made it difficult to provide alternative shelter in temporary settlements, most of those unwilling to return were relocated to the remaining tented camps. The Federal Government officially launched the programme for compensating IDPs for their lost property in Chechnya. However, little progress was made in its implementation.

The new citizenship law adopted in 2002, and its November 2003 amendments, negatively affected the two groups of de facto stateless persons assisted by UNHCR (Meskhetians and Baku Armenians). While the amended version of the 2002 citizenship law contains provisions easing residency requirements for certain categories of former USSR citizens, they pre-suppose that the concerned persons are legally resident in Russia as of 1 July 2002. However, many Baku Armenians in Moscow and most Meskhetians in Krasnodar Krai lack proper police registration, which is a basic requirement for legal sojourn in Russia and, thus, for accessing the naturalization procedure.

## Constraints

The Government focused primarily on migration issues (legal and illegal), relegating refugee policy to a somewhat lower priority. Contrary to expectations, the consolidation of migration and refugee affairs responsibilities under the Federal Migration Service (FMS) of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) failed to benefit the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers.

In the Northern Caucasus, the focus of the authorities is on the return to Chechnya. UNHCR's role is to ensure that all returns are voluntary and that alternative solutions are made available to IDPs who do not want to return. The lack of easy access to Chechnya for UNHCR and other agencies hampered the monitoring of the returnees and the evaluation of programmes planned inside Chechnya.

## Funding

With several adjustments, the funding of operational projects and administrative costs was sufficient to cover priority activities. UNHCR successfully mobilized significant contributions for protection activities in the country. The Russian Federation provided its first cash contribution to UNHCR (USD 2 million for the Office's programmes in Africa).

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

The main problems encountered by asylum-seekers, especially those from outside the CIS, remained: 1) lack of access to the refugee status determination procedure and the lack of proper documentation, especially in the Moscow area, during the "pre-registration" phase, and 2) the high rejection rate (on both formal grounds and on merits). Temporary asylum was granted much less frequently in 2003. The problems of xenophobia and widespread criminality continued to impede the integration of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR addressed these problems by working with the authorities and courts and implementing public awareness programmes. Although repatriation and resettlement continued, numbers were relatively low and local integration remained the primary durable solution.

In the Northern Caucasus, UNHCR focused on ensuring that the return to Chechnya was voluntary, that IDPs unwilling to return were provided with alternative solutions (i.e. alternative shelter in Ingushetia), and that the camps were closed in a civilized manner. As security operations increased, UNHCR and partners were increasingly called upon to assist IDPs in detention.



Ingushetia: Chechen IDPs receiving food in a settlement in the Sunzhenski district. *UNHCR/T. Makeeva*

Progress was made with regard to the de facto stateless Baku Armenians in Moscow. In contrast, however, the situation in Krasnodar remained unfavourable for the Meskhetians. UNHCR continued to pursue integration, including access to citizenship. In the case of the Meskhetians, repatriation may also be an option, should Georgia fulfil its earlier commitment to the Council of Europe. The US Government complemented the programme by offering resettlement opportunities to both groups.

Women asylum-seekers received special consideration when applying for material assistance. Unaccompanied/single women and women-headed households were given special attention in cases of family reunification and resettlement. The issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse are addressed through the training of social workers and monitors. Asylum-seeker women in Moscow have access to the domestic violence assistance programme. The cases reported to UNHCR are addressed to various institutions for help and/or resettlement. In the Caucasus, there were no reported cases of sexual abuse of refugee/IDP women, although there were unconfirmed reports of IDP women being subjected to sexual abuse by family members or others. Such

issues are regarded as extremely sensitive in the cultural environment of Ingush and Chechen people and women prefer not to give them prominence.

## Activities and assistance

Activities for asylum-seekers and refugees from outside the CIS were implemented primarily in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the two main areas of concentration. In Moscow, major activities included: an individual assistance programme, education activities including Russian language classes, eight community centres, vocational training for asylum-seekers and a small-scale job placement scheme for recognized refugees. As of January 2003, all asylum-seeker children aged six to 12 had access to local schools. In the health sector, assistance included treatment, hospitalization, vaccination of children, medical certification for children attending schools, and reproductive health activities. No progress has been achieved so far in handing over the medical component to the local health structures. Asylum-seekers also had access to psychological counselling offered by a local partner. In St. Petersburg, a local partner implemented smaller-scale activities in community

services, health, vocational training and education. Sanitary materials are provided to women in Moscow, St. Petersburg, North Ossetia, Ingushetia and to a limited extent in Chechnya. In North Ossetia, two local partners provided legal, social and medical counselling to refugees and psychological assistance for refugee children. In 2003, UNHCR in cooperation with its local partners started Quick Impact Projects, implemented in the vicinity of UNHCR-funded housing and designed to benefit both refugees and the local population.

**Community services:** In Moscow and St. Petersburg, nine community centres offered a range of cultural, educational and self-help activities, particularly for refugee women and children. A psychological centre in Moscow provided 5,593 consultations, organized mutual support groups for women, and tolerance education at schools where refugee children study. In North Ossetia, social counselling was provided to 9,696 persons, focusing on single mothers, large families, older persons and those with disabilities.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** Persons in need of international protection in Moscow who have no other means of support are eligible for cash or material assistance (maternity kits, school supplies, winter clothing, etc.). In North Ossetia, 650 vulnerable refugee families received hygiene items, 180 received mattresses and bed linen, and 400 children received school supplies. In all locations, sanitary napkins were available for refugee women of child bearing age.

**Education:** All children aged six to twelve now have access to local schools in Moscow. Special preparatory classes assisted non Russian speaking asylum-seeker children to enter mainstream classrooms. Kindergartens and adolescent education at community centres were made available to those children who were unable to attend national schools. A special trust fund enabled 24 students, 50 per cent of them female, to benefit from higher education. In St. Petersburg, 30 adults received language training, 46 computer training and 34 school children received individual tutoring at home to enable them to be promoted to the next grade. In North Ossetia, school buses were provided to enable refugee children in remote collective centres to have access to local schools.

**Health/Nutrition:** Altogether, 954 women, 1,473 men and 1,535 children received medical assistance

in Moscow, and another 353 patients received assistance in the greater Moscow region. UNHCR's implementing partners provided 14,511 consultations in Moscow, 1,926 in St. Petersburg and 2,372 in North Ossetia. In addition to basic medical assistance, hospitalization and outpatient services, preventive health education and vaccination campaigns were provided.

**Income generation:** In Moscow, 161 persons benefited from skills training courses. An income-generation grants' commission considered eight projects and approved six. In St. Petersburg, 62 women participated in sewing classes and another 60 in hairdressing courses. While undocumented asylum-seekers are not granted work permits, informal contacts between refugee associations and the authorities have increasingly resulted in temporary job opportunities.

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR maintained a refugee reception centre in Moscow, which is the first referral point for asylum-seekers and refugees. In St. Petersburg, the refugee counselling centre provided legal advice to asylum-seekers and refugees. Independent lawyers were contracted to defend the rights of asylum-seekers in court. In Moscow, a local partner provided medical, social and legal counselling to persons of concern to the Office. UNHCR also supported the work of the Russia-wide legal network, which provides legal counselling to asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs and others in the regions of the Russian Federation. As part of asylum system development, UNHCR organized regular training sessions in the country and abroad for NGO staff and government officials dealing with migration issues. Voluntary repatriation and resettlement programmes complemented integration activities.

Four local partners implemented protection activities in Ingushetia and Chechnya and one undertook public awareness programmes in Chechnya. Legal assistance included: legal counselling, management of cases of de-registration, arbitrary detention of IDPs, representation of the rights of IDPs in the courts, and assessment of the situation of IDPs returning to Chechnya. The public awareness campaign was implemented through local mass media (newspapers and television) providing information on the situation of IDPs, their rights and compensation programmes. Outside Ingushetia and Chechnya, UNHCR supported a network of seven legal counselling centres, which provided legal, social, and medical support for

IDPs and forced migrants, mainly from Chechnya. This support was complemented by training activities organized for government officials, the judiciary and UNHCR's partners.

An international NGO implemented integration activities for IDPs choosing to settle in Ingushetia. Twenty families in the village of Berd-Yurt received construction materials to build houses. The carpentry workshop funded by UNHCR in 2002 was involved in the production of windows and door frames for these houses, and is beginning to secure private orders.

People at risk of statelessness received legal counselling through two local partners in Moscow and one in Krasnodar Krai. Assistance included legal advice, representation in courts, management of eviction cases, and obtaining registration, citizenship and legal status in the Russian Federation.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR supported the key management and administrative functions of implementing partners, often on a cost-sharing basis. Staff security was also supported, particularly for agencies operating in the Northern Caucasus. UNVs provided support services in Moscow, Nazran and Vladikavkaz.

**Sanitation:** An international NGO continued to coordinate the sanitation and water sectors under *The Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Chechnya and Neighbouring Republics*. Together with other agencies, it maintained sanitary conditions in the tented camps and temporary settlements for IDPs from Chechnya in Ingushetia. By the end of 2003, UNHCR phased out of the sanitation sector.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** In North Ossetia, UNHCR's focus was on the integration of refugees from Georgia/South Ossetia in North Ossetia. A major component of this was construction of housing for refugees, which would automatically confer registration and consequently, access to social benefits and local services.

**Transport/Logistics:** In Ingushetia, warehouses were maintained in Sleptsovskaya, primarily for shelter items, and in Malgobek, primarily for contingency stocks of relief supplies. International NGO partners transported shelter materials and sanitary material.

UNHCR provided materials for one dry, warm room to returnees in Grozny through an international NGO. Prefabricated box-tents were produced and distributed to IDPs in need of alternative shelter in Ingushetia. A pilot project was initiated for the provision of box-tents to returnees in Chechnya. International NGOs continued to maintain temporary IDP settlements.

**Water:** An international NGO delivered potable water to the IDP camps and settlements in Ingushetia. By the end of 2003, UNHCR phased out the water sector.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

In the Russian Federation UNHCR operated through its branch office in Moscow, sub-office in Vladikavkaz and field office in Nazran and had 79 staff (12 international, 51 national and, 16 UNVs).

### Working with others

UNHCR concluded sub-agreements with 30 implementing partners, including 22 local NGOs, four international NGOs, three governmental entities and IOM. Close cooperation has been developed with other UN agencies, especially in the Northern Caucasus. UNHCR is an active participant in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals Process, coordinating the protection and shelter sectors. Within the UN country team, UNHCR is involved in the work of theme groups on HIV/AIDS, Human Rights and Poverty Eradication. At the governmental level, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, close contacts have been maintained with the agencies involved in migration issues (Ministry of Interior and its Federal Migration Service, regional migration departments, Federal Border Guards, Moscow Education Committee). UNHCR established contacts with several international corporate benefactors and foundations. In addition to the monthly donor meetings on the Northern Caucasus, UNHCR organized a presentation of its activities on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers for embassies and other organizations.

## Overall assessment

In spite of the complicated working environment, UNHCR has made some progress in the Russian Federation, especially in defending asylum-seekers' rights in courts, acquisition of citizenship (by ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan), access to schools, and integration of refugees in North Ossetia and ensuring protection of IDPs in the North Caucasus.

UNHCR remains concerned about the widespread xenophobia and the slow pace in the establishment of an effective national asylum system. For the vast majority of non-CIS asylum-seekers in Moscow, the refugee status determination procedure remains a series of almost interminable delays ending in rejection. This leaves resettlement, and in some cases, voluntary repatriation, as the only potential durable solutions.

### Offices

#### Moscow

Nazran

Vladikavkaz

### Partners

#### Government agencies

Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Interior of North Ossetia-Alania

Federal Border Guards

Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation

Government of North Ossetia–Alania Moscow City

Department for Migration Issues of the MOI of Russia

Moscow Committee on Education

Moscow Region Department for Migration Issues of the MOI of Russia

Moscow State University of Management

St. Petersburg Department for Migration Issues of the MOI of Russia

#### NGOs

Association of Media Managers

Caucasian Refugee Council

Centre for Studies of Ethnic Minorities, Refugees and Forced Migrants of Rostov-on-Don

Children's Fund (North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol)

Civic Assistance

Danish Refugee Council

*Dobroye Delo* Counselling Centre

*Doverie*

*Equilibre* Solidarity

*Ethnosphera*

Faith, Hope, Love

Guild of Russian Filmmakers

International Rescue Committee

Legal System

Magee Woman Care International

Memorial Human Rights Centre

Moscow School of Human Rights

*Nizam*

Peace to the Caucasus

People in Need Foundation

*Pomosch*

Psychological Support Centre "Gratis"

*Rakhmilov* and Partners

St. Petersburg Society of Red Cross

VESTA

#### Others

Council of Europe

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

IOM

OSCE

UNVs

## Financial report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects		Prior Years' projects	
	Annual programme budget	notes	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	2,283,211		8,828	
Community Services	590,692		160,091	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	642,210		155,112	
Education	441,605		164,897	
Health / Nutrition	537,109		111,562	
Income Generation	27,178		7,614	
Legal Assistance	2,044,346		494,315	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	519,869		148,767	
Sanitation	192,513		60,595	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	866,248		113,179	
Transport / Logistics	241,149		58,050	
Water (non-agricultural)	109,722		51,272	
Transit Accounts	11,246		(9,456)	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,557,245		(1,421,267)	
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>10,064,343</b>		<b>103,559</b>	
Programme Support	1,794,655		16,430	
<b>Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>11,858,998</b>	(3)	<b>119,989</b>	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	330,741	(3)	0	(5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,189,739</b>	(1) (3)	<b>119,989</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	6,988,090		92,760	
Reporting Received	5,430,845		1,514,027	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>1,557,245</b>		<b>(1,421,267)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		1,544,740	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		128,565	
Currency Adjustment	0		5,092	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>1,557,245</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1st January	0		186,905	(5)
New Obligations	12,189,739	(1)	0	
Disbursements	11,858,998	(3)	119,989	(5)
Cancellations	0		66,916	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>330,741</b>	(3)	<b>0</b>	(5)

Figures which can be cross-referenced to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5