



Eastern Europe

Major developments

With the accession, in 2002, of Ukraine and Moldova to the 1951 Convention, all States in Eastern Europe have now signed up. UNHCR was therefore able to shift its main focus of attention away from the process of drafting and passage of new legislation, towards their implementation, and the establishment of national institutions and mechanisms to deal with refugee status determination.

In 2004, the enlargement of the European Union will leave the countries of the Western CIS (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine) arrayed along the eastern frontier of the EU. UNHCR has consistently endeavoured to improve refugee reception capacity in the sub-region, with somewhat limited success, and to consolidate the existing legal and institutional framework, and here much remains to be done. Strengthening the NGO sector will also remain a priority for UNHCR in Eastern Europe. To this end, the Office has designed a dedicated support team to be located in Budapest to enhance eastern-central European co-operation. Support for such sub-

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Republic of Moldova
Russian Federation
Ukraine



regional co-operation is also illustrated in the field of cross-border co-operation with plans being laid for the establishment of an inter-state Secretariat in Ukraine sponsored by the European Commission.

In the Northern Caucasus, working as part of the United Nations country team, UNHCR aimed to provide protection and assistance for Chechens displaced into neighbouring Ingushetia, and to provide limited assistance to those returning voluntarily to Chechnya, when feasible. With respect to those not wishing to return to Chechnya at this stage, UNHCR continued to advocate that they should be enabled to remain in a safe environment outside Chechnya, in temporary accommodation, with the documentation necessary for full enjoyment of their rights as citizens. UNHCR's material assistance efforts were increasingly focused on the co-ordination and provision of shelter, since this is the essential underpinning of any realistic option of residence for IDPs in Ingushetia and is directly supportive of UNHCR's protection concerns. Meanwhile, the Office has been actively encouraging other partners to assume lead responsibility in other assistance sectors.

In the Southern Caucasus, UNHCR focused on international protection of refugees, seeking to give impetus to durable solutions. The Office also continued

to be involved in a number of IDP situations in the region, which are largely dependent for their resolution on progress in various stalled peace processes. In the meantime, UNHCR continued to phase down assistance as levels of self-reliance and the degree of integration into alternative programmes increased. In this context, UNHCR continues to advocate that governments and the international community include refugees and the displaced in national development plans. UNHCR also continued to maintain its focus on core mandate activities relating to the development of viable asylum systems.

Challenges and concerns

In the Northern Caucasus, humanitarian assistance operations continue to be conducted in a difficult environment that gives rise to heightened staff security concerns. Towards the end of the year there was significant pressure put on Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia to return, and a tented camp was forcibly closed. After vigorous protest from the international community and a network of local human rights NGOs, the situation improved. The global funding shortfall affected activities during the last quarter of the year, and unfortunately acted as an unwelcome brake on several activities of direct relevance to operations across the whole of Eastern Europe.

Progress towards solutions

In view of the limited human and funding resources, UNHCR continued to actively explore alternative funding possibilities. In a joint regional effort, UNHCR's offices in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine initiated a co-operation with the European Commission's technical assistance programme (TACIS) in an effort to strengthen reception facilities and provide extensive training to migration and border services. UNHCR had long been urging a strengthened international focus on building asylum capacity in this region and was extremely encouraged by this positive development.

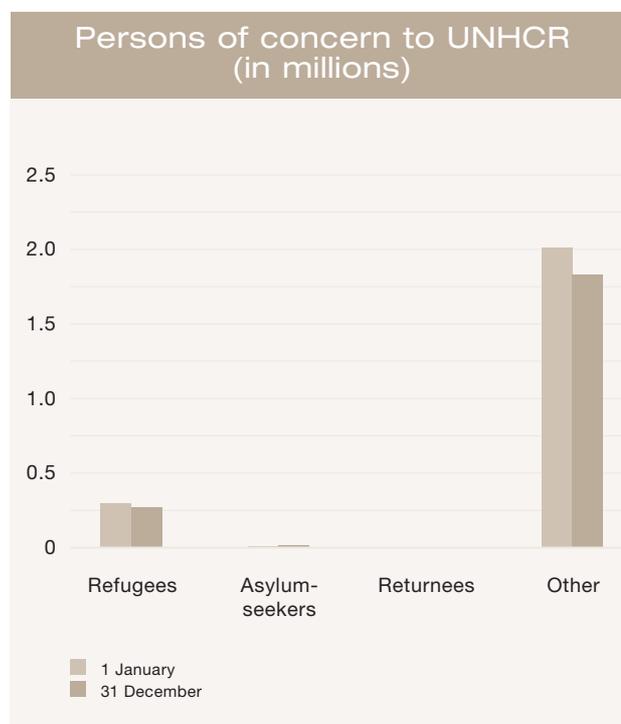
UNHCR has played an important role in the *Söderköping* Process, which involves cross-border co-operation on asylum and border management issues along the EU's new eastern border. With primary support from the Swedish Migration Board, UNHCR co-organised a series of field-level seminars in 2002, followed by a senior-level review meeting. The European Commission has expressed interest in supporting a Secretariat for the Cross-Border Co-operation Process. The Secretariat is to be based in UNHCR premises in Kyiv, and will improve the co-ordination of activities in the sub-region.

Operations

UNHCR operations in the Russian Federation and in Georgia are described in separate chapters.

In **Armenia**, UNHCR continued to pursue its three goals – asylum system development, reduction of statelessness and local integration of refugees from Azerbaijan. However, the lack of a political solution to the fundamental causes of the conflict and human displacement in the region led to a re-orientation of UNHCR's strategy and activities: more emphasis was placed on improving and maintaining the legal and institutional framework so as to facilitate local integration of refugees from Azerbaijan. The construction of permanent shelter is viewed as a central part of the overall strategy.

After a decade of direct humanitarian involvement, UNHCR's role started to shift towards a more catalytic one, bringing together various actors in an effort to push refugee issues into a more central



position within general human rights and development frameworks. In addition, UNHCR increased its activities to ensure a fair balance between asylum and migration control.

In addition to some 9,000 asylum-seekers, mainly from Chechnya and Afghanistan, **Azerbaijan** hosts one of the largest IDP populations per capita in the world (some 570,000 persons). In building the basics of an asylum and refugee status determination system, important progress was made both with the main Government partners (State Committee for Refugees/IDPs, Ministries of Interior, of National Security and of Foreign Affairs), and with the local authorities. The latter are, along with NGOs, the first point of contact for asylum-seekers on arrival in Azerbaijan (border guards, judges).

In UNHCR's operations, major readjustments were undertaken to balance the two programmes (one for IDPs, another for asylum-seekers/refugees) as well as to shift the focus of the IDP programme from rural to urban predicaments, in response to a World Bank poverty survey. Closer collaboration with the Council of Europe and OSCE is key to progress, but UNHCR is able to accept that these organisations have several priorities in Azerbaijan in addition to the situation of IDPs and refugees/asylum-seekers.

In **Belarus**, noticeable progress was made in improving and consolidating the national asylum



Russian Federation: A young asylum-seeker attending public school near an accommodation centre in the Moscow region. *UNHCR*

system, integrating it into the international refugee protection system and reducing statelessness. The newly adopted national refugee law was entirely in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention, and a new citizenship law addressed UNHCR's concerns. The opening of a temporary accommodation centre in Vitebsk helped ease the difficulties of vulnerable asylum-seekers, but the integration of recognised refugees remained problematic.

The impact of public information activities was demonstrated by the very positive attitude shown towards a group of stranded Chechen asylum-seekers by the President, other senior officials and the Belarussian media, and the opportunities that were presented to UNHCR to present its concerns and mandate on national television. Nevertheless, perennial difficulties remain, both political and

economic, and no progress was made towards the conclusion of a Host Country Agreement with UNHCR.

The adoption of a national law on the Status of Refugees was the single most important achievement in the **Republic of Moldova** in 2002. The strengthening of the government body responsible for implementation of the law, the Main Directorate for Refugees, was another priority. This included several training events and study visits to Central European countries with the objective of gathering knowledge of best practice in migration management, and refugee status determination in particular. In 2002, the country hosted a total of 175 refugees and 87 asylum-seekers; nine people were resettled to third countries and seven accepted voluntary return to Chechnya. In recognition of the need for a compre-

hensive approach to migration and overall economic development, UNHCR continued its co-operation with UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and OSCE. It also organised joint seminars on asylum and migration issues with the Council of Europe, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Swedish Migration Board. Due to its geographical location and insufficient border control, Moldova continued to attract a large number of illegal migrants in transit to the EU area. It should be noted that much of the Moldovan population (as much as one fifth, according to some estimates) has already migrated, for economic reasons, often illegally, to EU countries and Russia.

In January 2002, **Ukraine** acceded to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. For several months, the main obstacle to the development of a viable asylum system remained the suspension of the implementation of the new refugee law and thus of access to asylum procedures. Then when it did enter into force, in the latter half of the year, its shortcomings became all too apparent as restricted admission to procedures continued to narrow the asylum space.

UNHCR adjusted its activities to respond to the protection needs of the asylum-seekers. It therefore

focused on capacity-building of NGOs working on legal protection and relevant governmental bodies, with a redirection of strategy away from care and maintenance and towards local integration. The first refugees acquired Ukrainian citizenship in 2002. On paper, these were success stories in themselves. However, successful local integration of refugees has to be linked to an improvement in the general social and economic situation and the ability of refugees to enjoy adequate economic, social and cultural rights – including access to basic national services and employment.

Funding

The global funding shortfall in 2002 affected UNHCR's operations in the region: Eastern Europe's budget in 2002 was only 90 per cent of its 2001 level (USD 37.3 million, down from USD 40.7 million). Consequently, the pace of implementation fell, and many activities had to be cut back, including community services, income generation activities, procurement of household goods for refugees, operational support to implementing partners and training activities.

Voluntary Contributions – Restricted / Earmarked (USD)

| Earmarking ¹ | Donor | Annual Programme Budget | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | | Income | Contribution |
| Armenia | | | |
| | Norway | 68,027 | 68,027 |
| | Switzerland | 299,401 | 299,401 |
| | United States of America | 433,828 | 433,828 |
| Azerbaijan | | | |
| | STATOIL (NOR) | 50,000 | 50,000 |
| | United States of America | 430,000 | 430,000 |
| Georgia | | | |
| | Germany | 402,319 | 402,319 |
| | Japan | 150,000 | 150,000 |
| | Sweden | 32,864 | 32,864 |
| | United States of America | 877,038 | 877,038 |
| | | | >>> |

| Earmarking ¹ | Donor | Annual Programme Budget | |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | Income | Contribution |
| >>> | | | |
| Russian Federation | | | |
| | <i>Association française de soutien à l'UNHCR (FRA)</i> | 18 | 18 |
| | Canada | 232,919 | 232,919 |
| | European Commission | 558,091 | 1,016,588 |
| | Japan | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| | Netherlands | 571,028 | 571,028 |
| | Private Donors United Arab Emirates | 9,026 | 9,026 |
| | Qatar Charitable Society (QATU) | 250,000 | 250,000 |
| | Sweden | 187,793 | 187,793 |
| | Switzerland | 584,795 | 584,795 |
| | United States of America | 3,140,000 | 3,140,000 |
| | USA for UNHCR (USA) | 66,000 | 66,000 |
| Ukraine | | | |
| | United States of America | 90,606 | 90,606 |
| Eastern Europe | | | |
| | France | 185,464 | 185,464 |
| | Japan | 650,000 | 650,000 |
| | Sweden | 626,541 | 626,541 |
| | United States of America | 3,821,704 | 3,821,704 |
| Total | | 14,017,462 | 14,475,959 |

¹ For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

| Budget and Expenditure (USD) | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Country | Revised Budget | Expenditure |
| | Annual Programme Budget | |
| Armenia | 2,563,352 | 2,353,086 |
| Azerbaijan | 3,462,935 | 3,262,701 |
| Belarus | 860,618 | 749,161 |
| Georgia | 5,143,047 | 4,454,363 |
| Republic of Moldova | 1,094,503 | 910,728 |
| Russian Federation | 14,828,333 | 11,499,481 |
| Ukraine | 2,278,324 | 2,099,807 |
| Regional Projects ¹ | 645,000 | 391,543 |
| Total | 30,876,112 | 25,720,870 |

¹ Includes scholarships for refugee students, and follow-up on the CIS Conference.