

# Russian Federation



## Main objectives

In 2005, UNHCR's objectives were to support the development of an asylum system that meets international standards; promote accession to the Conventions on Statelessness and acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons; identify appropriate durable solutions for refugees and facilitate their integration whenever possible; and help meet the need for assistance and protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

## Impact

- UNHCR continued to assist asylum-seekers in Moscow and St. Petersburg while the authorities determined their status.
- All asylum-seeker children aged 6 to 12 years continued to enjoy access to local schools; meanwhile, teenage asylum-seekers in Moscow gained access to secondary education through external study programmes at schools and vocational colleges.
- More than 220 refugees/asylum-seekers (mainly Afghans) voluntarily repatriated.
- In North Ossetia, the construction of some 59 houses was completed with UNHCR's support in 2005, bringing to 250 the total number of houses built there for more than 900 refugees since 2000 (with complementary support in the form of quick-impact projects).
- UNHCR monitored the living conditions of the more than 140 Chechen refugees who returned to Chechnya from Georgia.
- UNHCR continued to promote the principle of voluntary return and safe haven by helping IDPs to access a sound registration process (including the issue of personal documentation), shelter, and other basic services.
- More than 400 internally displaced families (approximately 2,100 people) were provided with temporary emergency shelter.
- UNHCR continued protection monitoring in Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan to identify protection needs and to ensure that significant numbers of IDPs become eligible for governmental and other forms of humanitarian assistance.
- All persons of concern in the North Caucasus had access to free legal counselling, while training events

were organized for representatives of prosecutors' offices, bar associations, and law enforcement and migration departments.

- In March 2005, a workshop on the protection of civilians was held under the auspices of the Humanitarian Coordinator, bringing together humanitarian agencies and governmental and donor representatives. Following a review of the ongoing humanitarian operation in the North Caucasus, recommendations were drawn up for further coordinated work.
- A durable solution for Baku Armenians residing in Moscow was arrived at in the form of naturalization. Any member of this group who had not already obtained Russian citizenship had by the end of the year entered the final stage of the naturalization process.
- Meshketians in Krasnodar Krai continued to depart to the United States of America under a specific resettlement project implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). During 2005, more than 6,300 people were resettled, bringing the total for 2004-2005 to approximately 6,600. UNHCR continued to support a legal counselling centre that provided legal assistance and facilitated the integration of those Meshketians in the Krai who did not want to resettle under the auspices of IOM.

## Working environment

### The context

The deportation of asylum-seekers, including those in detention, ceased after UNHCR modified its operational procedures and worked closely with the authorities to set up a new referral system for asylum cases. This entailed the regular exchange of information, including the provision of country of origin information for individual cases. Every month, UNHCR's refugee reception centre shared its refugee status determination assessments with the Moscow Migration Service.

Restructuring of the Federal Migration Service was completed by mid-2005. It became an autonomous body, with greater capacity and authority, operating within the orbit of the Ministry of Interior.

UNHCR established contact with two key committees in the State Duma, in order to promote improved refugee legislation as well as accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. The State Duma Committee on Constitutional Rights and State-Building examined the refugee law, while the State Duma Committee on Nationalities and Citizenship examined the problem of statelessness. Positive developments ensued: the deadline for applying for citizenship through a simplified procedure was extended to 1 January 2008. Although the validity of passports issued by the former USSR was not extended, the Federal Migration Service of Russia informed its territorial branches that applications for citizenship were to be accepted on the basis of these passports when accompanied by supporting identification.

Progress was made on the integration of refugees and forced migrants in North Ossetia. In the North Caucasus further progress was made in securing the well-being of IDPs in Ingushetia and ensuring voluntary return to Chechnya. However, the volatile situation in the North Caucasus continued to present significant protection challenges for UNHCR and partner staff. IDP returns to Chechnya were far fewer than in previous years (close to 1,700 in 2005, compared to 19,000 in 2004 and almost 20,000 in 2003). The fall in numbers is largely explained by the fact that most IDPs have a marked preference for local integration.

### Constraints

The situation of urban asylum-seekers and refugees did not significantly improve, due to a restrictive application of the refugee legislation and implementation mechanisms. The refugee recognition rate decreased and the granting of temporary asylum continued to be restrictive.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Afghanistan	1,300	1,300	-	-
IDPs	Russian Federation	170,500	-	53	-
Asylum-seekers	Afghanistan	200	200	-	-
Stateless persons	Meskhketians	14,400	14,400	-	-
Others of concern	Afghans in a refugee-like situation <sup>1</sup>	100,000	-	-	-
	IRPs (forced migrants)	131,900	51,600	-	-
	Non-CIS asylum-seekers	5,800	5,800	-	-

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR estimate.

In 2005, the migration authorities registered approximately 960 new asylum applicants in the entire country; meanwhile, UNHCR's refugee reception centre, which only covered the region of Moscow, registered close to 880 people.

UNHCR continued to work with the airport and immigration control authorities. Unfortunately, there was no change of any practical benefit to asylum-seekers arriving at the international airport in Moscow. Since 1999, immigration control authorities at the airport have admitted no asylum-seekers whatsoever into the Russian Federation.

In late 2005, legislative amendments introduced new requirements for NGOs to register their activities and sources of funding. The exact impact of these changes will not become apparent until later in 2006, but it is already expected that more control will be exercised by the authorities over the work of the non-governmental sector. Some NGOs operating in the North Caucasus, mostly international ones, experienced difficulties in extending their accreditation.

## Funding

Funding was sufficient to cover UNHCR's priority activities in 2005. UNHCR's activities for IDPs in the North Caucasus continued to be an integral part of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). UNHCR's portion in the CAP was fully funded in 2005 and the Office contributed to the elaboration of an Inter-Agency Transitional Work Plan for 2006, replacing the former CAP.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

Although significant progress was made in developing an asylum system in the Russian Federation, a number of shortcomings still affected the well-being of asylum-seekers and refugees.

In early 2005, UNHCR undertook a careful review of the RSD procedure implemented by the relevant authorities in the Russian Federation. A document entitled *The Gaps Analysis and Recommended Plan for Asylum Building*, in which the above-mentioned shortcomings were detailed, was prepared and submitted to the European Commission in light of the recently-concluded 15<sup>th</sup> European Union-Russia Summit, which adopted a comprehensive package of "road maps", including an action plan covering cooperation in the field of asylum development. UNHCR shared the document with the Federal Migration Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of the Federal Ombudsman. The continued

strengthening of the coordination between UNHCR and relevant official partners both at the federal and regional levels permitted progress in the resolution of problems affecting individual cases.

Legal assistance remained one of the integral components of efforts to accelerate the local integration of refugees and forced migrants in North Ossetia. Through its implementing partner, UNHCR ensured access by refugees and forced migrants to free professional legal assistance to regularize their status in the Russian Federation and obtain official documents. Three issues were shown to be of fundamental importance to the success of local integration: acquisition of citizenship, obtaining forced migrant status, and applying for different types of state assistance.

In November 2005, the Ingushetia branch of the Migration Service announced the forthcoming termination in January 2006 of its contracts with the owners of 67 (out of a total of 120) collective centres hosting IDPs. The closure was not carried out, but the Government indicated that they would proceed with the closure in the course of 2006 in coordination with UNHCR. The Office will maintain a dialogue with the authorities to ensure that the process is conducted in a way that respects the basic protection principles of safe haven and voluntary return.

UNHCR prepared more than 160 submissions for resettlement. At the end of 2005, more than 300 people had been accepted by resettlement countries, with another 275 awaiting final decisions. Resettlement was used as a means to protect 29 women in especially precarious circumstances. In December 2005, UNHCR's office in Moscow started to implement a Canadian resettlement project with a projected target of 1,000 persons in the first 12 months.

In Moscow, UNHCR and its partners created a refugee support centre in order to provide a safer environment and better services for asylum-seekers. In St. Petersburg, a "refugee house" was opened, thereby consolidating the previously separate medical, psychosocial and legal counselling services under one roof.

### Activities and assistance

**Community services:** UNHCR continued to support seven community centres for refugees and asylum-seekers in Moscow and its environs and one in St. Petersburg. More than 230 refugees and asylum-seekers attended literacy and Russian-language classes. In addition, asylum-seekers and refugees in Moscow and St. Petersburg had access to psychological support at the community centres. In St. Petersburg, 70 refugees and asylum-seekers attended computer training at a community learning centre created in 2004 with private sector funding.



Georgian refugee children in one of the three settlements built by UNHCR in North Ossetia, Russian Federation. In 1999 the Government of North Ossetia-Alania developed a plan aimed at the local integration of refugees. UNHCR supported it and since 2000 it has constructed over 200 houses. *UNHCR / V. Soboleva*

**Domestic needs and household support:** UNHCR continued to provide shelter and nutritional support to needy asylum-seekers and refugees in Moscow and St. Petersburg, with close to 7,000 food kits distributed in Moscow alone. Asylum-seekers waiting to be resettled received various types of assistance, and vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers received winter shelter assistance. All female asylum-seekers in Moscow and St. Petersburg received sanitary supplies.

**Education:** UNHCR continued to aid local schools and assisted the children of asylum-seekers and refugees to enrol in the educational system. Preparatory classes were organized for 6 to 12-year-olds in Moscow and St. Petersburg; almost 40 enrolled. Approximately 500 schoolchildren received school items.

**Health and nutrition:** UNHCR, through its implementing partners, provided asylum-seekers and refugees in Moscow and St. Petersburg with basic health care, which included vaccination of all school-age children. In 2005, UNHCR's partners carried out more than 17,000 medical consultations and more than 5,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were referred to other medical institutions.

**Shelter and infrastructure:** In North Ossetia, 19 refugee families originally from Georgia/South Ossetia were provided with permanent housing. Above and beyond the issue of housing, this assistance will lead to real integration if it results, as intended, in easier access to formal registration documents, education and medical care.

In Ingushetia, for the fourth consecutive year UNHCR continued to implement a permanent shelter programme

to support the local integration of IDPs who owned property or were granted a plot of land by the Government for the construction of housing. In 2005, 59 houses were completed under this programme. In 2005, IDPs from North Ossetia living in Ingushetia benefited from the programme for the first time, with a total of 12 families that received shelter assistance.

UNHCR provided more than 400 IDP families with temporary emergency shelter in Ingushetia. The beneficiaries included those IDPs who voluntarily decided to return to Chechnya in 2005. In Chechnya, UNHCR provided more than 900 households with construction materials, which enabled each family to rehabilitate at least one room in their home.

**Income generation:** UNHCR assisted asylum-seekers and refugees in Moscow and St. Petersburg to access vocational skills training and language courses in order to increase their chances of finding employment. More than 100 asylum-seekers attended the training or benefited from short-term financial support in 2005.

UNHCR continued to implement quick-impact projects through its partners to support the local integration of refugees in North Ossetia, the provision of basic assistance to IDPs in Ingushetia and the reintegration of returnees to Chechnya. In 2005, more than 80 of these projects were implemented throughout North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya, directly or indirectly benefiting more than 39,000 persons of concern to UNHCR.

**Legal assistance:** In Moscow and St. Petersburg, UNHCR continued to provide legal counselling through a

refugee reception centre and a refugee counselling centre. These centres registered asylum-seekers and refugees; screened cases for resettlement and voluntary repatriation; and addressed incidents involving law enforcement agencies, xenophobic attacks and detention. The centres also referred cases to UNHCR's other partners or private lawyers for follow up. Both centres are also responsible for maintaining working contacts with the migration authorities in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

UNHCR monitored the conditions of IDPs living in some 120 temporary settlements and scattered private accommodation in Ingushetia, as well as the return process at the border-crossing points between Ingushetia and Chechnya. This involved communicating with owners or managers of the temporary settlements, and reporting on return trends, security incidents and detention cases. Similar monitoring activities were also carried out in Chechnya and Dagestan.

The work of the legal counselling centres in Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan was complemented by that of other newly-established legal counselling centres in Stavropol Krai, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Direct assistance to beneficiaries was accompanied by capacity-building interventions, which included technical support and training of relevant local officials.

**Operational support (to agencies):** Public information activities continued to promote a more tolerant attitude towards refugees and asylum-seekers in Russia. UNHCR targeted various audiences, such as journalists writing on migration issues, civil servants, NGOs, teachers and schoolchildren.

**Transport and logistics:** UNHCR stored emergency relief and shelter items in Ingushetia, including box-tents in the warehouse in Sleptsovskaya and the contingency stock of relief supplies in the prefabricated warehouses in Malgobeck. The warehouse in Sleptsovskaya was managed by UNHCR, while the warehouse in Malgobeck was managed by an international NGO partner. Shelter items continued to be delivered from the warehouses to the beneficiaries in Chechnya.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

UNHCR in the Russian Federation operated through its Representation in Moscow, one sub-office in Vladikavkaz and a field office in Nazran. UNHCR had 70 staff (16 international and 54 national). In addition, 17 UNVs (14 local and three international) and one secondee from the Swiss Government worked for the organization.

## Working with others

As the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in the Russian Federation, the UNHCR Representative contributed to coordination between other UN agencies and the aid community as well as UNHCR's operational and implementing partners.

In the North Caucasus, UNHCR continued to work with other UN agencies, and international and local organizations within the framework of the Consolidated Appeals Process. In 2005, the multi-agency integration initiative for North Ossetia was formalized in a cooperation agreement signed by UNDP, UNHCR, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Danish Refugee Council.

The Office also developed a donor relations strategy targeting three main actors in Moscow: the Russian and international corporate sector; the international community; and Russian and foreign foundations and funds. Extensive contacts were maintained with the local embassies, international organizations and the European Commission.

## Overall assessment

In recent years, UNHCR has played a key role in assisting and protecting the rights of various groups of concern. Despite the difficult working environment, UNHCR managed to make a difference to the lives of its beneficiaries. This entailed such issues as access to local education for asylum-seekers and refugees; integration of recognized refugees; the voluntariness of return for IDPs, their freedom to choose their place of abode; and overall protection of the rights of persons of concern. The Russian authorities continued to regard UNHCR as a valuable partner, for its work both with urban refugees and in the North Caucasus.

### Offices

Moscow  
Nazran  
Vladikavkaz

### Partners

**Government agencies**  
Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Interior of North Ossetia-Alania  
Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation  
Government of North Ossetia-Alania  
Moscow Committee on Education

**NGOs**  
 Association of Media Managers  
 Caucasian Refugee Council  
 Children's Fund (North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol)  
 Civic Assistance  
 Danish Refugee Council  
 Equilibre Solidarity  
 Ethnosphera  
 Faith, Hope, Love  
 Guild of Russian Filmmakers  
 Legal System  
 Magee Woman Care International  
 Memorial Human Rights Centre  
 Moscow School of Human Rights  
 Nizaml  
 Peace to the Caucasus

People in Need  
 Pomosch  
 Psychological Support Centre *Gratis*  
 Stichting Chechnya Justice Initiative  
 St. Petersburg Red Cross Centre for International Cooperation  
 St. Petersburg Red Cross Society  
 Vesta

**Others**  
 Council of Europe  
 European Council on Refugees and Exiles  
 IOM  
 OSCE  
 Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
 UNDP  
 UNV

### Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
15,805,379	6,862,205	8,141,895	15,004,100	15,004,100

<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.

### Financial report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,962,436	0
Community services	783,166	214,279
Domestic needs and household support	492,287	69,514
Education	394,384	80,954
Health and nutrition	739,436	237,707
Income generation	33,328	8,569
Legal assistance	2,577,433	859,275
Operational support (to agencies)	695,662	64,463
Shelter and infrastructure	1,611,134	452,766
Transport and logistics	209,260	68,325
Instalments with implementing partners	2,837,581	(2,055,852)
<b>Sub-total operational activities</b>	<b>13,336,107</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,667,993	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>15,004,100</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cancellation on prior years' expenditure</b>		<b>(41,813)</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Payments made	8,020,291	
Reporting received	(5,182,710)	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2,837,581</b>	
<b>Prior years' report</b>		
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>		
Outstanding 1 January		2,201,942
Reporting received		(2,055,852)
Refunded to UNHCR		(175,188)
Adjustments		29,098
<b>Balance</b>		<b>0</b>