

# GEORGIA

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## INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Provide protection and assistance to Chechen refugees and support the Government in implementing the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol.
- Support the Georgian-Osset conflict-resolution process sponsored by the OSCE, and facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons from South Ossetia and Georgia proper.
- Support the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict-resolution process sponsored by the United Nations, promote the self-reliance of IDPs while conditions do not allow for their safe return, and provide assistance to those who have returned to their homes in Gali district in Abkhazia.
- Seek improvements to the refugee law and asylum procedures and help governmental and NGO structures build up sufficient resources and expertise to respond to involuntary displacement; promote accession to the conventions relating to statelessness.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

### *Chechen Refugees*

Since October 1999, some 7,000 Chechen refugees have been hosted in Georgia, the majority of them residing in the Pankisi Valley. Although many refugees have expressed a wish to return to their homes when the security situation permits, no significant return movement have been observed. The Low security and frequent hostage-taking (UNHCR Head of the Field

Office Akhmeta was evacuated due to security threats in June 2001), hampers UNHCR's adequate access to the Valley. As a result, UNHCR has had to rely on local staff and partners travelling under police escorts. Nevertheless, the conditions of refugees, especially those who are vulnerable, were improved. UNHCR interventions included water purification supplies to the local Water Department, distribution of clothing, mattresses, kitchen sets and basic domestic items, as well as food supplied by WFP. Children and women have received special attention. Kindergartens were set up in three villages, benefiting both refugee and local children. In partnership with NGOs, community-based organisations have been set up to provide training and skills development for youth and women; reforestation activities; and counselling. These activities promote self-initiated and joint actions by refugee-host communities to foster harmony, improve security and stability. UNHCR also supported the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation in registering the refugees hosted in the Valley. When completed, the register will enable effective targeting of UNHCR assistance and protection support.

UNHCR offered training on refugee protection and human rights to representatives from the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights, several Ministries, judges, lawyers and members of parliament. The Office is working with the Ombudsman on setting up a working group for drafting a national law on deportation that will safeguard access to asylum.

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Effective targeting of refugees through re-registration exercise	90% of refugee registration has been completed by MRA as of 30 June 2001
Refugee children have birth certificates and are well documented	As a result of UNHCR's lobbying, procedures for birth registration of Chechen refugee children were adopted. The Ministry of Justice issued procedures on documentation of births to local administration
Refugee women and refugee-hosting communities are actively involved in community activities	The Duisi Community Centre has been established and needs have been identified to launch quick-impact projects in the second half of the year

***Returnees to South Ossetia/Return to Places of Origin***

The pace of return to places of origin remained very limited as mass return is linked to improved economy and property restitution, and is thus also impacting on the scale of UNHCR's involvement. UNHCR reiterated to the authorities and to IDPs and refugees its policy to support only return to places of former residence to avoid "ethnic engineering". In April, under the auspices of the OSCE-sponsored conflict-resolution process, the Joint Control Commission (JCC) held a session with representation from the North and South Ossetian sides to agree on the management of a Russia-Georgia programme (signed in December of 2000) for the rehabilitation of the economy in the conflict zone. The meeting could not induce a breakthrough of the stalemate on this issue.

Property restitution remains a complex political and legal issue. UNHCR continues to provide limited assistance packages, shelter repairs, counselling, and legal representations in court when returnees present their cases on return to places of origin. Contacts with the OSCE, Council of Europe and relevant local institutions concerning relevant legislation are being further pursued.

Given the prevailing operational environment, UNHCR's involvement will be reduced and covered from Tblisi at the end of the year. The post of Head of the Mobile team for South Ossetia has not been filled following the security evacuation of the incumbent at the end of 2000.

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATOR	PROGRESS
Supported return to places of origin	27 persons (7 families) returned to their places of origin in the conflict zone and Georgia proper

***Internally Displaced Persons from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict***

The Georgian Self Reliance Fund under the "New Approach to IDPs"-scheme is based upon innovative collaboration among the World Bank, UNDP, UNHCR, USAID, other donors, and representatives from the Government and IDP communities, with secretariat support from OCHA. Some 260 project proposals were reviewed based on criteria that aim at transiting from humanitarian aid to more sustainable development. As the selection process involves various parties, including Government representatives, reaching

consensus has been difficult and time consuming. It is anticipated that implementation of the four projects approved to date will begin in late summer and that others will be improved and resubmitted.

Several initiatives are being undertaken to promote community mobilisation and civil society building. These activities are carried out in partnership with NGOs. These interventions include, for instance:

- A local implementing partner has successfully managed over the past years to extend small loans to some 10,000

persons to set up small businesses. The performance of the agency is outstanding and within the first half of 2001, 800 additional beneficiaries received loans. The NGO has also been working with Women Aid International to mainstream a gender component into its micro-credit schemes.

- Another NGO implements a co-operative project for IDPs in Western Georgia to promote community self-reliance and decrease UNHCR's direct support. An important feature of this project is establishing permanent links between the most active and the most vulnerable members of the co-operatives. Needy families receive in-kind assistance equivalent to 20% of the income generated by the active beneficiaries of the co-operative programme. At least 200 of the most needy families targeted are female-headed households.
- Through the United Nations Association of Georgia, a roundtable discussion was held on the implementation of the "New Approach to IDPs", where its strengths and weaknesses were reviewed and debated.
- Other activities targeting adolescents aim at reducing delinquency and promoting constructive participation in building civil society amongst youth. Ten Youth Development Clubs have been successfully started in Western Georgia. Community-based organisations have been established and participants are given training on organisation and management.
- A pilot project set up with Women Aid International aims to raise awareness among IDP women on the realities of trafficking of women, as well as on human rights, reproductive health issues and sexual/gender based violence. Training workshops benefited 270 women.
- In partnership with a local implementing partner, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, a mobile team of lawyers travelled to collective centres in Tbilisi and other regions to provide consultation and legal advice to beneficiaries on their status and IDP rights and assist them with legal matters.

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Youth houses will reach out to motivated adolescents in West Georgia	10 new Youth Development Clubs target 350 young people. 70% are IDPs
Women entrepreneurs are given loans to set up micro-businesses	800 additional loan recipients. 95% are women. 98% repay in time.
Increased awareness on IDP's rights as equal citizens	Mobile team of lawyers offered advice and solutions to many IDPs

***Returnees to Gali District in Abkhazia***

The recommendations of the Joint Assessment Mission to Gali that was undertaken in November 2000, under the aegis of the Special Representative of the UNSG in co-operation with OSCE, included improvements of poor social infrastructure and promotion of human rights to support durable return. UNHCR activities are frequently undertaken in collaboration with the SRSG, UNOMIG, "Friends of Georgia" and other partners on sharing information and protection monitoring to devise a cautious and coherent approach to supporting return. As a consequence,

carefully considering the precarious security situation in Gali, UNHCR assumed a measured intervention in assisting the spontaneously returned population without jeopardising the peace process. Provisions included hygiene parcels, school kits and building materials to repair schools and community centres. Security is of paramount concern to UNHCR when considering redeployment into Gali District and beyond. Significant funds, beyond the current budget, to cover staff security and operations is a pre-requisite for an enhanced operation that meets the acute needs in Gali District (where it is reported that as many as 40,000

people have spontaneously returned without security and political guarantees).

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATOR	PROGRESS
Renovate 20 schools, which are in a deplorable condition, in the Gali District through a community-based approach. 3,700 children attend these schools	14 schools assisted to date, remaining 6 to be assisted before the end of the year.

***Meshkhetians***

UNHCR in consultations with the Council of Europe provided legal comments on a draft law intended to establish the right of return of Meshkhetians, and on a position paper addressing the principles of the right to return. UNHCR highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach that maintains the voluntary character of return, solutions in current places of residence, and safe return, which avoids conflict in former places of residence.

***Building the capacity of national bodies to provide protection***

A project has been launched to increase the expertise of selected government officials on international protection and state responsibilities towards protection of refugees and IDP rights. Workshops were also held for interested members of the media on international protection of refugees

and UNHCR’s mandate. Training sessions were offered to instructors from the State Department of State Border Defence. In addition, numerous field visits were undertaken to train both UNHCR field staff and groups of refugees on refugee rights as well as the rights of IDPs in Georgia. Pamphlets in Russian, Georgian and English were distributed to IDPs defining their status and detailing their rights while on Georgian territory. A sub-regional consultation with refugee women in Tblisi brought together representations from various groups affected by the conflicts in the Caucasus.

A series of TV talk shows were funded by UNHCR on topics such as IDP rights, IDP participation in the upcoming elections and military recruitment of IDPs. Three editions of a magazine (in English and Georgian) on refugees and IDPs were published.

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATOR	PROGRESS
Raise awareness among refugees, IDPs and returnees on their rights, as well as among government officials.	Increased number of training and debates on matters related to the rights of the beneficiaries.

**REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR JULY-DECEMBER**

The initial objectives for UNHCR in Georgia remain unchanged. Given developments in the operational environment, the security situation and UNHCR’s Action 2 exercise, the field offices are being streamlined with one protection team for western Georgia and another for the Chechen refugee operation. Each Mobile Team consists of a head, 2-field officers/UNV and 3-4 local staff in each hub. This approach provides for

efficient and flexible deployment of international staff from South Ossetia (where operations have scaled down) and Branch Office (when needed).

Priorities over the next 6 months will include, among others:

- A network of organisations working in emergency situations will be developed in order to improve co-ordination and co-operation of key actors.
- Review of activities in the Pankisi Gorge and update of contingency plans depending on prevailing events (a possible

- influx due to continuing hostilities in Chechnya or return home when conducive)
- Review the security situation in the Pankisi Gorge in light of recent security events, considering its serious implications on staff and beneficiaries
  - Promote the participation of donors and development agencies in South Ossetia, while UNHCR's involvement is being reduced.

#### **FINANCIAL DATA (USD)**

	<b>Initial Budget</b>	<b>Revised Budget</b>	<b>Total Funds Available<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Total Funds Obligated</b>
<b>APB</b>	8,526,634	7,040,151	3,624,549	3,083,642

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the regional, sub-regional and/or country level, opening balance and adjustments.