

About 148 IDP families who fled the conflict in Abkhazia in the 90s live in this collective centre in Tbilisi, Georgia



**Armenia**  
**Azerbaijan**  
**Belarus**  
**Georgia**  
**Moldova**  
**Russian Federation**  
**Ukraine**



# Eastern Europe

## | OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- The conflict over South Ossetia in August 2008 displaced 134,000 people. Some 102,800 returned by the end of 2008, leaving some 21,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of humanitarian assistance. UNHCR provided emergency assistance including non-food items and winterization activities. The Georgia UN Country Team used the cluster approach for the newly displaced IDPs.
- With UNHCR's support, national legislation in the region was brought closer to international standards.
- Under the 10-Point Plan of Action for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, border monitoring was discussed within the Söderköping/Cross-Border Cooperation Process and improved in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, with particular focus on protection-sensitive entry systems.
- A subregional local integration study, *Local Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – Strategy for Action*, has been conducted in close cooperation with government officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and its recommendations resulted in a multi-year project to begin in 2009.
- The Government of the Russian Federation took steps to improve migration legislation. Several legal acts became effective, among them amendments to the federal law, *On Registration of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons Temporarily Residing in the Russian Federation*, which streamlined registration procedures and allowed UNHCR to focus on building national capacity to deal with refugee matters.
- UNHCR held a regional workshop on prevention and response strategies for sexual and gender-based violence. It aimed to create a better understanding of this type of violence as a human rights and protection issue, while seeking solutions for its victims and those at risk.

## Working environment

In Georgia, the conflict over South Ossetia adversely affected UNHCR operations, hampering humanitarian access to some 10,000 IDPs in South Ossetia. A European Union (EU) monitoring mission was deployed to observe compliance with human rights norms in the zones adjacent to the administrative boundaries with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the fulfilment of the EU-Georgia-Russia peace agreement.

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine all strove to align their policies, legislation and governance with EU standards. Belarus made substantial progress in the areas of border management, migration and asylum. Moldova finalized the implementation of the Moldova-EU Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy. For Ukraine, the signature on 9 September 2008 of the Association Agreement with the EU was an important step towards closer cooperation with the latter.

In the context of the global economic crisis, governments in Eastern Europe reinforced restrictive migration policies, affecting refugees, asylum-seekers and people with temporary protection status.

## Achievements and impact

UNHCR strengthened its partnerships with government authorities dealing with asylum matters at the bilateral level and through subregional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Söderköping Process. Extensive formal and on-the-job training on the process was provided to all relevant interlocutors. Additional efforts focused on incorporating refugee issues into the training curricula of border guards, police officers, social workers, journalists and others.

In response to the August crisis, UNHCR provided some 65,000 new IDPs in Georgia with basic non-food items and winterization packages, including stoves and firewood.

The adoption of a National IDP Action Plan by the Government in July 2008 was a major step towards resolving the situation of long-term IDPs. This provided UNHCR with a legal basis for its interventions for durable solutions. Although the Plan was suspended due



to the August events, the Government adapted it to the new circumstances and expressed strong commitment to finding durable solutions for people in protracted displacement.

UNHCR worked with the Government on sustainable local integration and a reduction of the Office's presence in the Pankisi Valley, where some 1,100 Chechen refugees live.

In all the countries of the region UNHCR has advocated for accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. A statelessness gap analysis formed the basis for recommendations on the amendment of the Georgian Law on Citizenship. Moreover, Belarus and Moldova agreed to work on bringing their national legislation in line with the Conventions in preparation for future accession.

Based on the recommendations of a subregional study which covered Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, local

### Budget and Expenditure in Eastern Europe (USD)

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Armenia	1,619,055	1,000,000	2,619,055	1,616,847	938,910	2,555,757
Azerbaijan	3,938,197	0	3,938,197	3,773,277	0	3,773,277
Belarus	1,501,672	0	1,501,672	1,332,856	0	1,332,856
Georgia	6,223,971	39,437,073	45,661,044	6,163,689	15,542,423	21,706,112
Republic of Moldova	715,996	0	715,996	703,321	0	703,321
Russian Federation	13,555,676	400,000	13,955,676	13,323,304	387,136	13,710,440
Ukraine	3,104,464	0	3,104,464	2,937,820	0	2,937,820
Regional activities <sup>1</sup>	1,654,913	0	1,654,913	1,130,064	0	1,130,064
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,313,943</b>	<b>40,837,073</b>	<b>73,151,016</b>	<b>30,981,176</b>	<b>16,868,469</b>	<b>47,849,646</b>

Note: Excludes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the 'New or additional activities - mandate-related' (NAM) reserve.

<sup>1</sup> Includes activities in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and strengthening protection capacities.

integration was promoted as a durable solution for recognized refugees. This involved multi-stakeholder dialogues and promotional activities in which civil society and refugees were fully involved.

The Russian Federal Migration Service was restructured to improve the national asylum procedure. This allowed UNHCR to focus its attention on supporting national capacity in refugee matters, sharing best practices in refugee status determination (RSD), providing updated country-of-origin information to the authorities, supporting the appeals process in general and assisting with individual appeals.

Since 2000, more than 20,000 houses have been built or repaired in Ingushetia and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation by the international humanitarian community. In 2008, the UNHCR shelter programme completed 37 houses in Ingushetia and 29 in the Chechen Republic, allowing IDPs to return to their places of origin. UNHCR accorded priority to IDPs in temporary collective shelters who do not have alternative shelter, meet the vulnerability criteria and are from rural areas where the Government's shelter programme has not begun. IDPs who expressed a clear wish to integrate in Ingushetia were considered for UNHCR housing assistance under the set conditions.

## | Constraints |

The conflict over South Ossetia adversely affected UNHCR operations and required a new focus on protection and humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian access to some 10,000 people of concern in South Ossetia remained problematic.

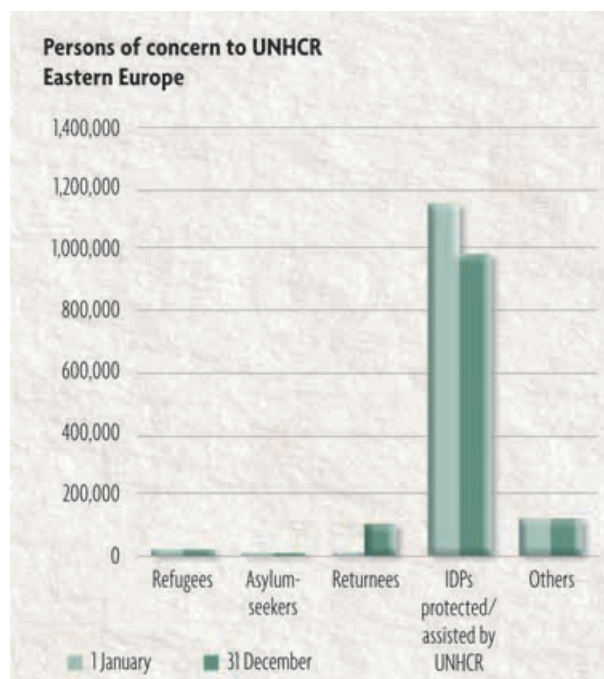
Increases in the prices of goods and services in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine led to hardship for the local population and persons of concern and increased the costs of UNHCR's operations. Asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons were struggling to make ends meet while their prospects for local integration grew more gloomy.

Hostile attitudes by the local population towards foreigners in Ukraine and the Russian Federation posed a risk to people of concern to UNHCR. The Office worked with partners in the international community and among government authorities and civil society to promote acceptance of diversity, tolerance and law enforcement action to combat racially motivated crimes. This led to increased awareness of the importance of opposing racism and xenophobia.

## | Operations |

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

In **Armenia**, national consultations by UNHCR and its partners resulted in recommendations on strategies, projects and activities to strengthen the protection capacity of the local authorities. UNHCR renovated and expanded the reception centre for asylum-seekers and carried out a livelihoods assessment among refugees in rural areas across the country. A survey among female asylum-seekers and refugees on sexual and gender-based violence was followed by recommendations on how to prevent and respond to such violence.



UNHCR Armenia supported the basic needs of Iraqi refugees and facilitated their local integration. Various projects in the fields of shelter, livelihoods, health and education were implemented. Two buildings provided by the Government were remodelled into 59 apartments for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugee families in need of shelter. Basic services were provided, including psychosocial support, health care, vocational training and language classes.

With the aid of its implementing partners, UNHCR continued to assist some 6,000 refugees and naturalized former refugees from Azerbaijan living in communal centres, in addition to refugees from Iraq. Refugees with specific needs received basic social and health care, covering individual care, personal hygiene items and psychosocial support. Asylum-seekers were provided basic social and material assistance.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR promoted a fair and efficient asylum regime that complied with minimum international standards in the provision of protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and recognized refugees. The Office continued training border guards, government officials and representatives of local human rights NGOs on refugee legislation and procedures.

UNHCR implemented the regional two-year project *Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among Displaced Populations in the Southern Caucasus*. The project's goals were to improve community mechanisms to deal with such violence, learn about its prevalence in Azerbaijan, raise the awareness of victims on protection mechanisms, promote non-violent family relationships and increase victims' self-reliance.

As a result of substantial collaboration with the authorities in the drafting process, the new refugee law of **Belarus** that enters into force in mid-2009 includes provisions for subsidiary and temporary protection. A memorandum of understanding sets out the roles of NGOs and international organizations in the border-monitoring process. A mobile monitoring team made some 40 visits to the border and migrants in detention. The temporary accommodation centre in Gomel became operational in the second half of 2008; asylum-seekers staying at the centre received legal, social and humanitarian assistance.

In December 2008 the Parliament of **Moldova** adopted a new Law on Asylum that was drawn up with the participation of UNHCR, NGOs and other experts. Training and capacity-building activities continued for government and State institutions, including the police, judiciary and officials of the Refugee Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. UNHCR's advocacy efforts with members of the judiciary contributed to a more inclusive interpretation of refugee law, thereby improving the quality of RSD.

An average of 65 asylum-seekers and vulnerable refugees were accommodated in the reception centre in Moldova. The reception centre's management participated in regional events and hosted reception centre directors from the Commonwealth of Independent States during familiarization visits.

In **Ukraine**, uncertainty over responsibility for migration and asylum issues delayed the legislative process. Nonetheless, UNHCR's collaboration with the authorities in the drafting process improved legislation pertaining to refugees and aliens. In particular, it focused on the urgent need for a protection regime for persons in need of complementary forms of protection.

The strengthening of UNHCR's and its partners' presence along the western border increased the number of successful interventions to prevent *refoulement* and release asylum-seekers from detention.

In 2008 a total of 2,300 stateless people became citizens of Ukraine. Legal assistance continued to be provided to approximately 700 formerly deported individuals returning to the Crimea, of whom some 500 were naturalized.

## Financial information

UNHCR's budget for Eastern Europe remained at the same level as in previous years. Donors provided additional funds under a supplementary budget to fund assistance for the new IDPs in Georgia and to help them survive the winter.

With additional contributions, UNHCR continued building national capacity to address the needs of those affected by HIV and AIDS and to reduce sexual violence. Georgia was one of the pilot operations for the Global Needs Assessment in 2008.

Voluntary contributions to Eastern Europe (USD)				
Country	Donor	Annual Budget	Supplementary Budget	
Armenia	CERF	100,787		100,787
	European Commission	43,732		43,732
	<b>Armenia Subtotal</b>	<b>144,519</b>		<b>144,519</b>
Azerbaijan	European Commission	1,134,894		1,134,894
	Medicor Foundation (Liechtenstein)	65,100		65,100
	Switzerland	395,154		395,154
	United States of America	300,000		300,000
<b>Azerbaijan Subtotal</b>	<b>1,895,149</b>		<b>1,895,149</b>	
Belarus	European Commission	407,130		407,130
<b>Belarus Subtotal</b>	<b>407,130</b>		<b>407,130</b>	
Georgia	Australia		438,679	438,679
	Belgium		120,466	120,466
	Bulgaria		69,649	69,649
	Canada		889,952	889,952
	CERF	32,472	837,000	869,472
	Czech Republic		168,072	168,072
	European Commission	528,697	732,064	1,260,761
	Finland		180,466	180,466
	France		289,269	289,269
	Germany		723,173	723,173
	Greece		233,530	233,530
	Ireland		206,056	206,056
	Italy		422,088	422,088
	Japan		934,579	934,579
	Norway		867,537	867,537
	Poland	132,888		132,888
	Australia for UNHCR			156,191
Statoil Azerbaijan	159,225			159,225

Country	Donor	Annual Budget	Supplementary Budget	
	Private donors in Canada		1,349	1,349
	Private donors in China		1,103	1,103
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO</i> (Germany)		82,277	82,277
	Private donors in Greece		18,211	18,211
	Japan Association for UNHCR		33,333	33,333
	Linfil Holding B.V. (Netherlands)		44,645	44,645
	Eurocash (Poland)		30,117	30,117
	<i>España con ACNUR</i> (Spain)		6,455	6,455
	HQ Online Donations		637	637
	HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein (United Arab Emirates)	15,500		15,500
	Private donors in the United Kingdom		2,309	2,309
	Romania	145,773	120,310	266,083
	Spain		421,632	421,632
	Sweden		1,223,886	1,223,886
	Switzerland	661,447		661,447
	Council of Europe Development Bank		602,332	602,332
	United Kingdom		3,989,438	3,989,438
	United States of America		3,487,500	3,487,500
<b>Georgia Subtotal</b>		<b>1,676,002</b>	<b>17,334,305</b>	<b>19,010,307</b>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	European Commission	2,138,210		2,138,210
	Japan	300,000		300,000
	Netherlands	676,000		676,000
	Switzerland	1,322,096		1,322,096
	UN Trust Fund For Human Security	58,333		58,333
	United States of America	1,700,000		1,700,000
<b>Russian Federation Subtotal</b>		<b>6,194,638</b>		<b>6,194,638</b>
<b>Ukraine</b>	European Commission	309,044		309,044
	Latvia	4,608		4,608
	Private donors in the United Kingdom	64,483		64,483
<b>Ukraine Subtotal</b>		<b>378,134</b>		<b>378,134</b>
<b>Eastern Europe Subregion</b>	Canada	204,499		204,499
	European Commission	899,797		899,797
	Sweden	1,386,749		1,386,749
	United States of America	3,786,986		3,786,986
<b>Eastern Europe Subtotal</b>		<b>6,278,031</b>		<b>6,278,031</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>16,973,602</b>	<b>17,334,305</b>	<b>34,307,908</b>

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.