

Strengthening Protection Capacity Project – Southern Caucasus: Developing a regional protection response to forced displacement

Sub-project title: Supporting Income Generation Activities for Chechen Refugees
Implementing Partner: Kakheti Regional Development Foundation, KRDF
Location: Duisi, Birkiani, Pankisi Valley, Georgia
Funding: The European Union
Period: 9 April - 31 October 2009

Overall objective:

Facilitating local integration of refugees promoted as a mean of durable solution through livelihood opportunities.

Background:

Georgia hosts almost 1,000 Chechen refugees since 1999, most of whom are accommodated in collective centres or private homes of friends and families in the impoverished Pankisi Valley, Kakheti Region. Many refugees, who are of Kist ethnicity, speak Georgian and have family connections in the valley.

While return in safety and dignity is not possible for the majority of the refugees and resettlement opportunities remain limited, local integration is the only available durable solution. An in-depth study on refugee livelihoods in 2008 revealed that over 60% of the refugees now see their future in Georgia, and would therefore embrace projects that promote self-reliance as a mean to local integration. At present, however, the vast majority of Chechen refugees residing in remote villages in Pankisi Valley have limited access to livelihoods, social or recreational life.

UNHCR's main focus is on the legal, social and economic integration of refugees as well as the naturalization of Chechen refugees, in particular of those who are identified to be stateless.

In April 2009, UNCHR and its implementing partner KRDF launched three income generating projects benefiting refugee and local community in Pankisi valley.

Project Activities and Progress update:

Window and Door Production Workshop in Duisi

This workshop was started with three refugees and one person from the local community and it responds to the local market needs as it is the only workshop which can produce quality goods. Previously people in the valley had only access to more inferior wooden furniture while modern plastic doors and windows had to be bought from outside the valley. In the course of the project three refugees have already attended two-week vocational training course in Tbilisi, and a locally recruited business consultant provided training on the relevant national legislation and business management.

In total five pieces of necessary equipment have been purchased. The added value of the window and door workshop is that it shares the same building with a carpenter workshop and the equipment purchased can be used in carpentry as well.



Carpentry Workshop in Duisi

The carpentry workshop was established in 2007 in Duisi based on a small income generation grant from UNHCR. The extension of the project under the SPCP was decided upon the fact that within two years the workshop became a well-operating small enterprise employing one more refugee and providing training for the local and refugee youth.

Increased sustainability of the project enabled the owner of the business to purchase equipment costing 1,800 USD from the profit, thus ensuring reinvestment in the enterprise.

Extended under the current funding the carpenter workshop anticipates the purchase of a special saw for fibre board which significantly lowers the cost of production and ensures competitiveness of the enterprise. To further expand the production and create new workplaces, three refugee beneficiaries were locally trained and employed.



Beekeeping projects in Duisi and Birkiani

UNHCR has already successfully implemented IG projects through beekeeping in Pankisi valley, which is well-known in Georgia as a source of high quality natural honey.

Under the SPCP funding two bee-keeping projects have been launched in Duisi benefiting two refugee

families of Kist origin living with host families and one project benefiting a single refugee of Chechen origin residing in collective centre in Birkiani.



In total 30 beehives, sugar and medicines were purchased and a training course was conducted for the beneficiaries. The first production output is to be expected by mid-Summer and the second in September. Although the amount of honey per hive depends on the climate conditions, the worst scenario envisages at least 13-15 kg per hive per year and 20-25 kg at best. As the next step, the beneficiaries plan to transport the hives from their current location at least 3 km away to ensure better quality of the honey.



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing humanitarian assistance and protection to 290,000 IDPs, nearly 1,000 Chechen refugees, and around 1,500 stateless people in Georgia through projects and activities aimed at protecting their rights, improving their living standards and facilitating their reintegration.