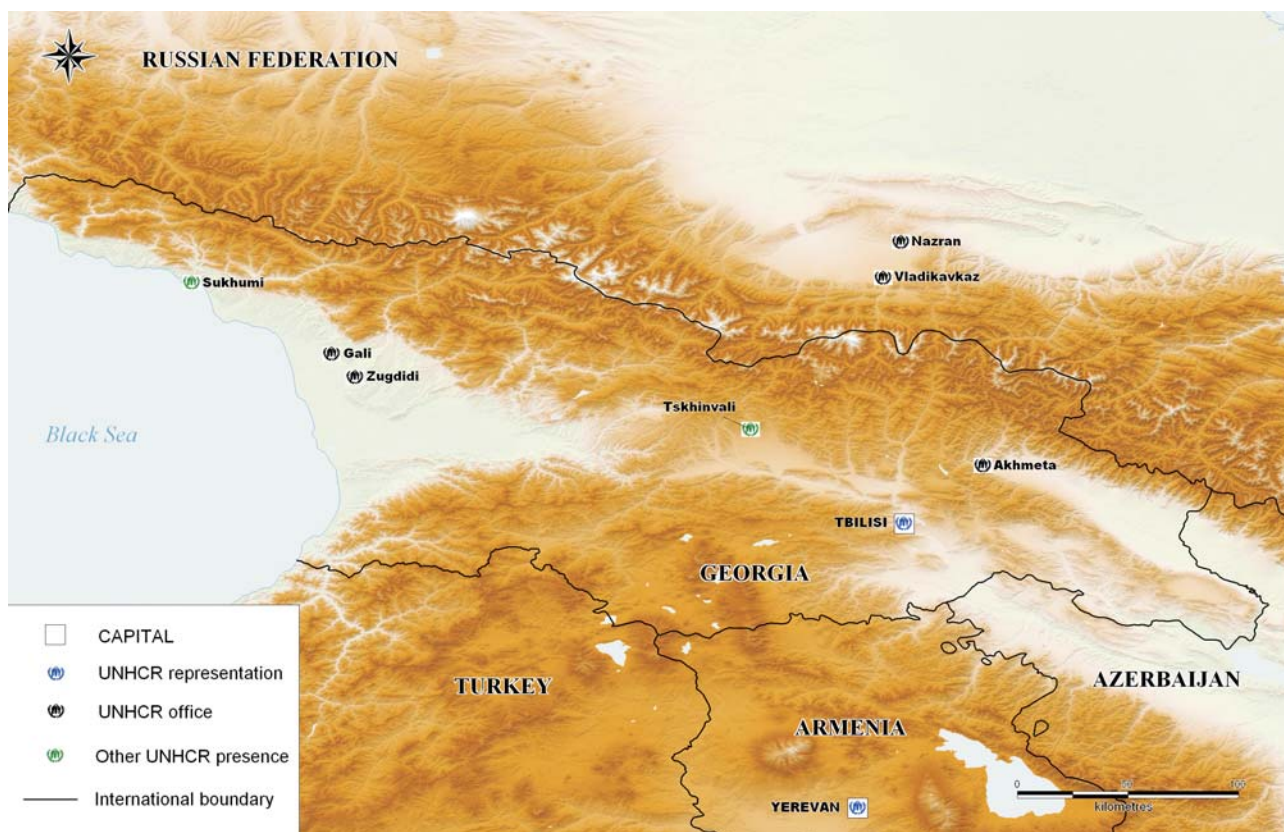


Georgia



Operational highlights

- The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) helped UNHCR to develop a new protection strategy for operations in Georgia.
- The National IDP Strategy, drafted in consultation with the international community, was endorsed by the Government of Georgia in February 2007. An IDP Action Plan was developed under the auspices of the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (MRA). The international community participated in this process through an IDP Secretariat supported and advised by UNHCR.
- Within the framework of UNHCR's Strategic Directions for (the return to) Abkhazia in Georgia, the Office and its partners intervened in many sectors to improve the daily lives of some 45,000 IDPs who have returned to Gali – a district in the breakaway region of Abkhazia – and are trying to reintegrate in their areas of origin.
- The Government issued Chechen refugees with temporary residence permits, improving the legal framework for durable solutions.
- In August 2007, special project funds were used to open a safe house for female victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

- A study on statelessness was launched alongside a review of legislative gaps. Both will inform a debate on the future accession by the Government to the 1954 and 1961 conventions on statelessness.
- In late 2007, the Government formed a drafting committee to revise the Refugee Law.
- Implementation of a planned shelter construction programme in the South Ossetia region was curtailed after Government restrictions reduced access to construction materials.

Working environment

UNHCR is working to assist, protect and find solutions for six groups in Georgia, including *prima facie* refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, internally displaced people linked to the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well as returnees and Meshkhetian Turks who had been deported in the Soviet era and who could only recently return to Georgia. The Office pursued its objectives on behalf of these groups in a receptive political environment with the support of the Government and other partners.

Nonetheless, political turmoil in the last quarter of 2007, including the unexpected announcement of presidential elections, affected UNHCR operations. Several key decisions were delayed, including the finalization of the Action Plan to implement the National IDP Strategy and set-up a transit centre for asylum-seekers. Political complexities and slow progress in reaching a peaceful resolution for Abkhazia and South Ossetia gave rise to an increasingly critical view of the UN, which in turn has reduced humanitarian space and access to the conflict regions.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

For refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people

- Pursue durable solutions, particularly local integration; seek resettlement for a small number of cases with specific protection needs.
- Promote self-reliance, advocating that people of concern to UNHCR be included in poverty-reduction strategies.
- Improve the legal status of refugees by helping them gain citizenship or permanent resident status.
- Begin discussions with government officials regarding accession to international statelessness instruments.

For IDPs and returnees

- Improve the legal status and self-reliance of IDPs in Georgia through protection, humanitarian assistance and self-reliance activities.
- Implement UNHCR's Strategic Directions programme to find durable solutions in the context of the peace process and support confidence-building activities for people displaced by the Abkhaz conflict.

- Promote sustainable solutions through a flexible assistance programme in South Ossetia that helps returnee families with reintegration and monitoring.

Protection and solutions

Chechen refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people

The Government of Georgia granted Chechen refugees temporary resident status. Based on this success and enhanced prospects for sustainable local integration, UNHCR expects to reduce its presence in the refugee-hosting Pankisi Valley by 2010. Meanwhile, it is working with partners to implement self-reliance activities which could reduce the need for humanitarian assistance. The Government agreed that the outdated Refugee Law should be revised, and invited UNHCR to co-chair a new drafting group. The Office launched a study on statelessness and began discussions with officials to determine how best to pursue accession to the relevant international instruments.

IDPs in Georgia

In February 2007, the Government of Georgia endorsed a national IDP Strategy, drafted in consultation with the international community. The IDP Action Plan implementing this Strategy will – as soon as it is adopted by the Government – provide a sound protection and assistance tool. This and a revised protection strategy will enable UNHCR to assist and monitor government efforts to find durable solutions for the IDPs from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Russian Federation	1,000	1,000	50	46
	Various	10	10	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Various	10	-	-	-
IDPs		222,100	222,100	55	24
IDP-like situation	Spontaneous returnees in Gali, Abkhazia	45,000	45,000	55	24
	IDP returnees to South Ossetia	4,200	4,200	55	24
	Returnees to South Ossetia	1,900	1,900	55	24
Stateless		1,300	-	-	-
Total		275,520	274,210		

IDPs from, and returnees to, South Ossetia (Georgia)

UNHCR remains concerned about the prospects for durable solutions for people displaced within South Ossetia as well as refugees and IDPs who have returned to South Ossetia. The unstable security situation frequently restricts movement and, moreover, interrupts monitoring and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The most serious problem occurred in June 2007, when a UNHCR transport vehicle carrying construction material in South Ossetia was blocked by the Georgian authorities, thereby halting all further implementation.

Returnees in Abkhazia (Georgia)

UNHCR's Strategic Direction for Abkhazia aims to implement activities to protect and assist spontaneous returnees and support their reintegration. However, full implementation is hampered by the reluctance of the Government to agree to verification and profiling exercises of the returnees in Abkhazia.

Activities and assistance

Community services: All refugee children and adolescents could participate in organized community and sport activities. A hotline provided counselling to refugees and members of the local community experiencing family violence. In western Georgia,

community centres in five villages were repaired. Fifteen displaced groups received seeds, greenhouse materials and equipment, which were used to grow more than 1.7 tons of vegetables per group. More than 150 displaced people affected by family violence sought and received immediate assistance.

Domestic needs and household support: All refugees received hygiene kits, and all women and adolescent girls were given sanitary supplies. More than 1,000 families were provided with three cubic meters of firewood each and nearly 600 families received wood-burning stoves. More than 27 schools in Abkhazia received firewood for heating.

Education: UNHCR provided classrooms, teacher salaries and supplies for Russian-language schools for Chechen refugees. However, their graduation certificates were not generally recognized by the Georgian authorities. After discussions, the Ministry of Education agreed to incorporate the Russian-language courses into the Georgian educational system for Chechen refugees. More than 800 internally displaced children and teachers in western Georgia benefited from access to improved educational facilities. Repairs were made to five schools in Gali district.

Food: Complementary food items were provided to all refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR helped more than 1,800 refugee host families with a one-time distribution of food items. IDPs and returnees in South Ossetia could



Chechen refugee woman at a temporary accommodation centre in Pankisi Valley.

not be given food assistance as the authorities did not agree to it.

Health and nutrition: All refugees could use public health facilities, including specialized services for women. A health survey concluded that more than 90 per cent of refugee children are healthy, though seven per cent suffer from worms and rickets. Medical professionals were trained to identify cases of HIV and AIDS and offer post-diagnosis counselling. More than 500 condoms were distributed.

Income generation: Farming support was given to returnees with specific needs through seeds and basic gardening tools as well as tips to improve production and distribution. Nearly half of all refugees received seed packages. More than 40 refugee families and 80 displaced people benefited from income-generation projects. To address the dire socio-economic environment, two professional training centres were opened.

Legal assistance: Some 28 refugees repatriated and 18 people were resettled. In-line with the legal framework for local integration and an improved security situation, UNHCR revised its resettlement policy for Georgia. Nearly 3,000 displaced people received free legal assistance, with a closure rate of 65 per cent. SGBV standard operating procedures were put into place for UNHCR and its partners. Five survivors and two children were accommodated in the newly-opened safe house for SGBV survivors in Tbilisi. Nine different radio programmes were produced and broadcasted in displaced areas in western Georgia. A registration exercise was conducted, registering more than 198,000 displaced people.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR worked in collaboration with international NGOs to build the capacity of local NGOs to help communities address refugee and IDP issues in a local context.

Shelter and infrastructure: The construction of two residential complexes for IDPs in South Ossetia commenced mid-year. Three collective centres housing displaced people from South Ossetia were partly rehabilitated with heating and insulation. Three small collective centres in western Georgia were converted into housing for 28 families (two in Zugdidi district and one in Khobi district).

Transport and logistics: Three warehouses and a sufficient number of trucks helped in the distribution of food, hygiene materials (including sanitary napkins) and non-food items, including firewood and heating stoves.

Water: All refugee-hosting villages and settlements had access to safe water.

Constraints

Staff shortages coupled with limitations on local staff (employees of Georgian ethnicity cannot move and work in Abkhazia) constrained the operation.

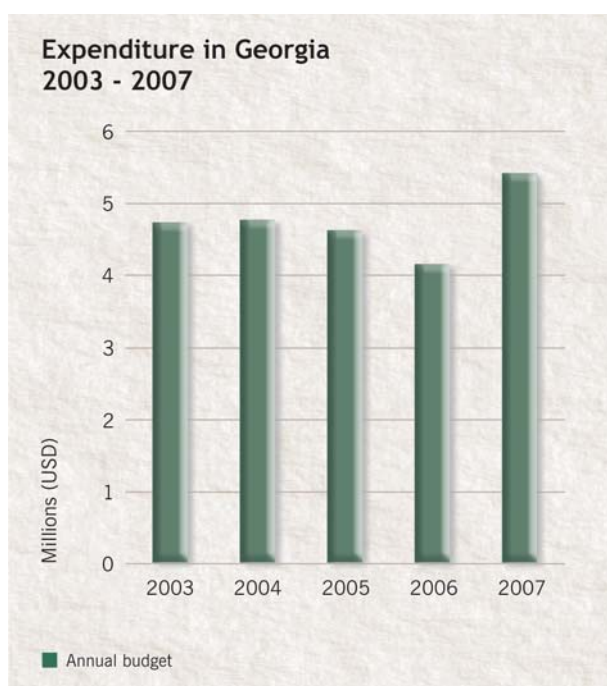
In the case of South Ossetia, shelter construction projects could not be implemented because of insecurity.

The continued insecurity and instability in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, had a negative impact on the return of IDPs and refugees. With regard to Abkhazia, spontaneous returns were hampered by the inability of ethnic Georgians to return to areas beyond Gali (the southern part of the Abkhazia region).

The political turmoil in Georgia at the end of the year impeded the completion of important UNHCR projects, namely the IDP Action plan and the registration of IDPs. This led to low implementation rates for IDP assistance programmes.

Financial information

From 1998 to 2004, the Office played an advocacy role on behalf of IDPs in Georgia. In 2005, following missions from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs and the High Commissioner, and the adoption of the Strategic Directions approach, funding and activities were reinvigorated.



Organization and implementation

Management

In 2007, UNHCR Georgia operated through its Representation office in Tblisi, two field units in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali and three field offices in Zugdidi, Gali and Akhmeta. The offices were staffed by eight international employees (including one JPO), 32 national personnel and four international UN volunteers.

Working with others

The Office had six international and 14 national implementing partners in Georgia in 2007. UNHCR expanded its partnership with the Chechen Refugee Coordination Council, a national NGO.

UNHCR strengthened collaboration with other UN agencies and took part in four UN Theme Groups, chairing one on IDPs and Conflict zones. UNHCR also collaborated with other UN agencies in Georgia on a needs assessment in Abkhazia which will form the basis for joint projects in 2008.

UNHCR's most important collaboration, however, is with the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Refugee Councils for the implementation of its Strategic Directions for Abkhazia.

Overall assessment

The receipt of funds at different times of the year for varied activities hindered efficient planning and implementation. With the increasing number of partners in an expanding programme, more staff are needed for monitoring, coordination and liaison functions throughout the country.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government: The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA)	
NGOs: Atinati, Avangard, Gaenati, Kakheti, Postfactum, Sakhli, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Technical Assistance to Georgia, The United Nations Association of Georgia, Georgian Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, Chechen Refugee Coordination Council in Georgia, Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazeti, Grassroots Support Centre, Premiere Urgence, Save the Children Federation, World Vision, The Accion Contra el Hambre	
Others: The apparatus of the JCC Co-chairman from the South Ossetian side	
Operational partners	
NGOs: Norwegian Refugee council, Danish refugee Council	

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	5,661,406	1,623,812	4,363,779	5,987,592	5,433,901

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)		
Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	Annual budget	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,313,059	0
Community services	299,159	33,529
Crop production	10,021	0
Domestic needs and household support	383,731	0
Education	197,599	42,344
Food	45,755	0
Health and nutrition	141,569	54,884
Income generation	88,333	2,819
Legal assistance	383,201	33,187
Operational support (to agencies)	499,198	89,378
Shelter and infrastructure	424,631	3,957
Transport and logistics	192,825	19,772
Water	137	14,915
Instalments with implementing partners	271,500	(294,786)
Sub-total operational activities	4,250,719	0
Programme support	1,183,182	0
Total expenditure	5,433,901	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	1,944,911	
Reporting received	(1,673,412)	
Balance	271,500	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		467,820
Reporting received		(294,786)
Refunded to UNHCR		(173,023)
Adjustments		(11)
Balance		0