

13 August 2007

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## Russia: Government efforts help only some IDPs rebuild their lives

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*Despite the efforts of the Russian government and the international community, more than 150,000 people remain displaced in Russia more than a decade after the beginning of armed conflict. Hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes as a result of an inter-ethnic conflict in North Ossetia in 1992 and separatist conflicts in Chechnya which started in 1994 and again in 1999. While large-scale warfare has ended, hostilities continue between government forces and separatist rebels in Chechnya, and an air of mistrust between Ingush and Ossetians prevails in North Ossetia. In the absence of political resolutions to the conflicts, the security situation has deteriorated in other parts of the North Caucasus and human rights abuses including abductions and enforced disappearances persist in the region.*

*The permanent settlement of internally displaced people (IDPs) has become a priority for the governments in Chechnya and North Ossetia. The Chechen government has been campaigning for the return of displaced people to the republic for some time, and in mid-2007 is also in the process of closing collective accommodation centres where many returnees had been housed. People leaving the centres have been either offered permanent shelter or asked to return to their original areas of residence. However, according to some IDPs, their wishes have not always been considered and in some instances, government officials have threatened to use force to evacuate residents of the centres.*

*In North Ossetia, many IDPs have been able to return home, but some of the 10,000 people still displaced have been blocked from moving back to their villages by district court decisions defining the areas as “water conservation zones”. Many IDPs from North Ossetia who could not return moved to a new government-established village where the government allocated land plots and humanitarian agencies provided temporary housing. Some of the displaced who refused to resettle and insisted on returning to their former place of residence were forcibly resettled to this new village.*

*Government land and housing allocation, as well as housing construction by humanitarian organisations and by IDPs themselves, are having an impact on internal displacement in Russia, but compensation schemes have failed to resolve the housing crisis. More time is needed to evaluate whether these initiatives will be sufficient to meet the needs of returnees and resettlers from Chechnya and North Ossetia.*

## **Background to displacement**

Internal displacement in Russia has largely resulted from armed violence and conflicts in two south-western republics, Chechnya and North Ossetia. Over ten years after the beginning of these conflicts, more than 150,000 people remain internally displaced (UNHCR, 20 June 2007).

In Chechnya, two rounds of armed conflict between rebels and government troops caused more than 600,000 people to flee their homes (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). Federal troops first entered Chechnya in 1994 to quash the republic's independence movement, and withdrew in 1996 after President Boris Yeltsin and Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov signed a ceasefire agreement. However, in 1999, armed separatists from Chechnya went to the neighbouring republic of Dagestan to support a call to create an independent Islamic state. In response to this and other destabilising events, the federal government sent troops back to Chechnya and full-scale war ensued. This second conflict in Chechnya was especially brutal, with both government and rebel forces guilty of indiscriminate attacks, arbitrary arrest, torture and inhumane treatment of suspected combatants and civilians alike (Grouping of Russian NGOs, November 2006). Despite Russian claims that the situation in the North Caucasus has normalised, and statements by the Chechen resistance of readiness for talks, the conflict is still not resolved and hostilities continue (Grouping of Russian NGOs, November 2006; RFE / RL, 14 July 2006; Memorial, 31 July 2006).

A briefer conflict in North Ossetia also caused significant internal displacement in 1992, when a territorial dispute over the status of Prigorodny district escalated into armed inter-ethnic confrontation between the Ingush and Ossetians. The eastern part of Prigorodny district had been within Ingushetia until 1944, when the Ingush and other ethnic groups were deported to Central Asia. The district was soon thereafter ceded to North Ossetia and has remained within North Ossetia ever since. Nevertheless, the Ingush continued to demand that the territory be returned to them, and a 1991 federal law allowing for the return of territory to peoples repressed under Stalin provided a catalyst for the conflict. Although the conflict only lasted a week, about 500 people were killed and up to 64,000 ethnic Ingush and Ossetians were displaced (HRW, May 1996). Many Ingush have since returned to their original place of residence in Prigorodny district and are living side by side with returned Ossetians, but the return process has met a number of obstacles (Open Democracy, 7 September 2004). The conflict remains unresolved and a climate of mistrust between the two groups prevails.

## **The security situation in the North Caucasus**

Change is evident in Chechnya as the conflict becomes less intense and the signs of war are erased. In the cities of Grozny, Gudermes and Argun, buildings and streets have been restored, squares and schools have been rebuilt and small businesses are opening up (The Independent, 6 March 2007). The brutality and intensity of the conflict has diminished since 2005, as shown by the decrease in the number of recorded abductions and by the replacement of large-scale "sweep" operations, in which government forces would seal off communities and search and detain individuals on an arbitrary basis, with more targeted

searches aimed at capturing rebels and their supporters (HRW, 13 November 2006; Memorial, 16 May 2007; Research Centre for East European Studies / Center for Security Studies, 5 June 2007). International organisations have also noted progress in Chechnya, with the UN decreasing its security phase rating for Chechnya from V (evacuation) to IV (emergency operations), and the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture noting an improvement in the material conditions of detention (UN OCHA, 13 December 2006; CoE, 13 March 2007).

Despite these signs of progress, life in Chechnya is not back to normal. While the number of armed insurgents remaining is disputed, they are still active and regularly clash with local and federal government forces throughout the republic (IWPR, 12 July 2007; Swisspeace, 28 May 2007 and October 2006; Prague Watchdog, 23 April 2007; Memorial, 14 March 2007). Abductions and enforced disappearances continue, albeit less often, and perpetrators are rarely investigated or punished (UN CAT, 6 February 2007; Memorial, 16 May 2007; HRW, November 2006; AI, 23 May 2007). Unofficial detention centres continue to be run by local and federal soldiers who mistreat and torture to extract confessions, though the government denies their existence (UN CAT, 6 February 2007 and 21 November 2006; UN HRC, 25 January 2007; IHF, 15 May 2006; HRW, November 2006; CoE CPT, 13 March 2007). Some victims of human rights abuses who have applied to the European Court of Human Rights have been subjected to violent pressure to discourage them from continuing their application (Grouping of Russian NGOs, November 2006). The result is a "climate of fear" where society is governed by force rather than by law (BBC, 24 February 2006).

The security situation in other North Caucasus republics remains volatile. As government forces have forced Chechen rebels out of Chechnya, the rebels have been gradually establishing themselves in other North Caucasus republics, mainly Ingushetia and Dagestan. The result has been an increase in the number of armed confrontations in the North Caucasus outside Chechnya (Research Centre for East European Studies / Center for Security Studies, 5 June 2007; The Moscow Times, 28 August 2006; RFE / RL, 25 August 2006). Abductions and disappearances continue in Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Dagestan, reportedly mainly by government forces trying to collect information about the rebels' plans (CoE, 25 January 2006; Kavkazski Uzel, 16 July 2007 and 18 July 2007; Memorial, 1 June 2007; Jamestown Foundation, 1 August 2007). Shootings and bombings by unknown parties also continue (Vesti, 19 July 2007; Swisspeace, 28 May 2007). The situation in Ingushetia became especially tense in mid-2007 as federal forces launched a major security sweep in response to a series of deadly attacks on government targets, and Ingushetia became the North Caucasus republic with the highest *per-capita* rate of abductions (Memorial, 1 June 2007; RFE / RL 31 July 2007).

### **IDP figures**

The majority of people displaced within the Russian Federation are from Chechnya. They are of different ethnic backgrounds and most have fled to other areas in Chechnya and to the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan. Those displaced by the conflict in

North Ossetia fled within North Ossetia and to neighbouring Ingushetia, making Ingushetia a host of IDPs from both Chechnya and North Ossetia.

		Source (date)
Total IDP population (persons)	158,905	UNHCR (June 2007)
IDPs from Second Chechen Conflict:		
In Chechnya	25,473	Chechen government (May 2007)
	57,349	UNHCR (December 2006)
In Ingushetia	15,384	DRC (July 2007)
In Dagestan	4,948	DRC (July 2007)
Other republics of Russia	40,000	UN (December 2006)
IDPs from conflict in North Ossetia:	10,019	Federal government (December 2006)

There is a lack of accurate and consistent figures on the number of IDPs in Russia. The overall UNHCR figure includes some 30,000 IDPs with forced migrant status, who UNHCR assumes are not included in the statistics above since they are accounted for separately. Also, the figure that UNHCR cites for the number of IDPs in Chechnya is more than twice that given by the Chechen government in May 2007. This difference is probably the result of an ongoing government campaign to verify IDP status, during which many IDPs have been de-registered from the government list. In November 2005, for example, the federal government's Migration Service removed some 130,000 IDPs living in private accommodation in Chechnya from the state register (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006).

Displacement in the North Caucasus is a fluid process and this has had an impact on records of IDPs. Many families have moved several times and some regularly move between republics. For example, after returning to Chechnya and finding inadequate security or housing there, some Chechen IDP families have gone back to Ingushetia. Others commute to Chechnya to attend university, look for work or secure documentation. As a result, some IDPs have not been present during government verification exercises and have subsequently been de-registered.

### **Displaced people from Chechnya**

People displaced within Chechnya mainly live in private housing or collective centres. At the beginning of 2007, there were 26 Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs) and 25 Temporary Settlements (TSs) in Chechnya, respectively housing 30,407 and 21,704 IDPs (UNHCR, June 2007). There were also some 6,700 IDPs living in private accommodation in Chechnya in late 2006, according to government figures ([www.regions.ru](http://www.regions.ru), 18 October 2006).

In Ingushetia, approximately 30 per cent of the republic's 15,384 IDPs were living in 76 TSs in mid-2007; the remaining 70 per cent were living in private housing (DRC, 30 June 2007). The majority of IDPs in Dagestan live in private rented accommodation, though some have spontaneously settled in collective centres. Whereas the property and utility payments of collective accommodation in Chechnya and Ingushetia are covered by the federal authorities, collective centres in Dagestan are neither recognised nor subsidised by

the local or federal authorities and as a result, IDPs there mostly pay rent and utility fees themselves.

Several years after they left their homes, internally displaced people in the North Caucasus continue to live in very poor conditions. Most collective accommodation facilities are crowded, damp and subject to inadequate sanitation and unreliable water, gas and electricity supplies (Conflict and Health, 13 March 2007; Chechenskoe Obshestvo, 26 November 2006; BBC, 24 February 2006; Kavkazski Uzel, 6 May 2006). The supply of gas and electricity to TSS in Ingushetia, as well as to IDP camps in North Ossetia administered by the government of Ingushetia, has been periodically interrupted due to Ingushetia's arrears in payments to the regional electricity provider, funds which should have been provided from the federal budget (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006; Kavkazski Uzel, 6 May 2006). Moreover, those living in collective accommodation in Ingushetia have been subjected to passport checks, detention and abductions by federal and local security officials (Kavkazski Uzel, 21 June 2006, 27 January 2007 and 16 March 2007; Memorial, 1 June 2007). Those who have not secured lodging in collective accommodation often live in even worse conditions, as there is a chronic shortage of adequate housing, and homes are often without water, electricity or gas (UNDP, 15 May 2007; IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006).

Displaced people can access healthcare to the same extent as other citizens, but it is often unaffordable for them. Patients must pay for prescriptions and, at times, pay bribes to health professionals (Memorial / Civic Assistance Committee, 15 March 2007). Those who have lost family members in the conflict may have no-one to take care of other dependent relatives during a visit to a medical clinic, and so diseases often remain untreated until they reach an advanced stage (Swisspeace, October 2006).

Many IDPs reportedly suffer from mental health problems. An MSF survey of IDPs living in collective centres in Ingushetia and Chechnya found that nearly all the people they interviewed were suffering from anxiety, insomnia, depressive feelings or social dysfunction (Conflict and Health, 13 March 2007). A UNICEF study found that children and teenagers from 11 to 15 years of age living in collective centres in Chechnya exhibited a higher number of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and were more withdrawn, irritable and aggressive than non-displaced children (UNICEF, April 2007).

Nearly 80 per cent of the population of Chechnya is unemployed, giving it the highest unemployment rate in Russia (UNDP, 15 May 2007). Humanitarian aid and social subsidies such as pensions, unemployment allowances and child benefits are the main source of income for IDPs (DRC, 2007; Memorial / Civic Assistance Committee, 15 March 2007), although UN agencies observed in 2006 that IDPs had become less dependent on food aid (UN OCHA, 7 December 2006; Conflict and Health, 13 March 2007). Many children in the North Caucasus do not go to school, since parents are unable to afford school supplies and clothes (Memorial, 30 September 2005), and in the Kizlyarski district of Dagestan, some IDP children do not go to school because their family has no residence registration (TV Center, 7 September 2006).

## **Return to Chechnya**

As government attempts to have IDPs return to Chechnya intensified in 2006, approximately 4,000 IDPs returned to Chechnya from both TSs and private housing in Ingushetia. By early 2007, the total number of returnees since 2000 stood at 57,000 (Swisspeace, 30 March 2007; DRC, 31 July 2007). Although the authorities provided temporary accommodation for these returnees, many were unable to find a place in the collective centres upon their arrival (Swisspeace, 25 May 2007; Memorial, April 2006), and were faced with finding alternative accommodation.

In April 2006 Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov announced plans to close all TACs (Kavkazski Uzel, 19 April 2006; AFP, 4 March 2007). A commission was created to review the legal status of TAC residents, and to determine whether they had received compensation for lost property and housing, or possessed other habitable accommodation. Those residents who had not received property compensation and were deemed not to have habitable housing were considered for government-renovated apartments or newly-built cottages. The rest were de-registered from the Migration Service's register and told to return to their original place of residence, where the local government would provide them with land plots. In the meantime, those without housing were instructed to move in temporarily with friends or family (SNO, 22 June 2007 and 11 July 2007). As a result of this verification exercise, six TACs were closed by mid-2006 and several thousand IDPs were excluded from government assistance (Kavkazski Uzel, 8 June 2006 and 26 January 2007; Chechenskoe Obshchestvo, 8 July 2007).

While the government verification exercise highlighted cases of people unlawfully residing in the TACs, there were a number of flaws in its implementation. In some cases, the government determined the original housing of IDPs to have been habitable when in fact it was not, and the intention of IDPs who were not willing to return to their original residence was not taken into consideration (SNO, 29 June 2007; IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006; Caucasian Knot, 6 June 2006). Although the government has allocated land plots to some people leaving the TACs, it has been left to IDPs to acquire building materials (SNO, 11 July 2007). In some instances, commission officials reportedly told residents that if they did not comply with the request to vacate the TAC premises they would use force to evacuate them (SNO, 29 June 2007 and 26 July 2007; Kavkazski Uzel, 23 June 2007).

## **Obstacles to return for Chechen IDPs**

The majority of IDPs from Chechnya currently living in Ingushetia want to return home, but have several concerns. A UNHCR survey of collective centre residents showed that 54 per cent intend to return to Chechnya, and a Danish Refugee Council survey showed that 79 per cent of IDPs surveyed (the majority of whom are currently living in rural areas) are planning to return to Chechnya (UNHCR, June 2007; DRC, 2007). Whereas personal security used to be the main concern of IDPs wanting to return to Chechnya, the main obstacles are now lack of housing, lack of income generation opportunities, and lack of physical security (UNHCR, June 2007; DRC, 2007). This contrasts with the IDPs from mountainous areas in Chechnya wishing to return to their original place of residence, for whom the main concerns are the lack of physical security, lack of housing and infrastructure and various

obstacles to cattle rearing (Memorial, 15 March 2007; IWPR, 16 August 2006; UN OCHA, 12 December 2006; IWPR, 5 April 2007). Although agricultural land was almost completely cleared of landmines by 2007, mines and unexploded ordnance still posed a threat to IDPs and returnees (Swisspeace, 22 June 2007; ICBL, 2006).

There is a great shortage of permanent housing for Chechnya's IDPs. A 2007 UNHCR survey showed that 99 per cent of all houses and flats owned by IDPs living in collective accommodation centres in Chechnya and Ingushetia have been totally or partially destroyed (UNHCR, June 2007). The survey also highlighted that 50 per cent of IDPs interviewed in Chechnya, and 40 per cent interviewed in Ingushetia, are in need of property of their own, the majority having lived with their parents prior to displacement. In 2007, the Chechen government listed such families as priority recipients of land plots.

### **Chechen IDPs' access to government assistance and compensation**

The system of compensation for lost property and housing has not led to widespread reconstruction of private housing by IDPs in Chechnya. People choosing to permanently reside in Chechnya are entitled to 350,000 roubles (approximately \$13,700) for their loss of property and housing, while those settling outside Chechnya are entitled to 120,000 roubles (approximately \$4,700). According to the federal government, some 39,000 people have received compensation (Government of Russian Federation, 5 April 2006). As inflation and the price of building materials continue to rise in the North Caucasus, these amounts are not enough to build or rebuild a house (Swisspeace, October 2006; The Independent, 6 March 2007). While some people have managed to buy an apartment with their compensation, others have rather put the money towards buying a car, a plot of land, construction materials, or towards daily living expenses. However, many IDPs have secured new housing thanks to assistance from international agencies.

While the compensation has helped many displaced people rebuild their lives, there have been several shortcomings with the programme. Those with partially destroyed housing were disqualified from applying, and there has often been contested ownership, with properties having passed through numerous hands. Corruption has also tainted the system: in Grozny an official on the committee for compensation payments was arrested in 2006 for accepting bribes (Prague Watchdog, 24 November 2006), while many people have also tried to make false applications (Kavkazski Uzel, 30 April 2007 and 9 June 2007). Furthermore, the availability and allocation of compensation depends largely on how the federal budget is formed. Although residents of collective centres were listed as priority recipients of compensation in 2007, payments and processing of the 25,000 outstanding applications have been on hold since 2005, due to a lack of federal budget funds (Kavkazski Uzel, 30 April 2007; IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006).

### **Integration of IDPs from Chechnya**

Despite assurances by both the administration of Ingushetia and the federal authorities that IDPs there would not be forced to return to Chechnya, there has been substantial pressure on them to return. In 2004, the Migration Service began to de-register people in the TSs, first targeting those who had received compensation or were believed to own habitable

residences in Chechnya. In autumn 2005, federal authorities increased pressure on the Ingush administration to close TSS, though in 2007 more than 70 remained open. Approximately 75 per cent of IDPs living in the private sector in Ingushetia were de-registered by the Migration Service in early 2007 on the pretext that they were not registered at their current residence (Caucasian Refugee Council, 25 June 2007; IA Regnum, 13 March 2007; Kavkazskiy Uzel, 20 July 2006). IDPs can appeal against de-registration, but the cost makes it prohibitive for many.

Approximately 25 per cent of collective centre residents would prefer to stay in Ingushetia than return to Chechnya (UNHCR, June 2007; DRC, 2007). The Danish Refugee Council survey showed that the majority of IDPs who wanted to remain in Ingushetia were living in district centres, and that about 25 per cent of IDPs surveyed had obtained their own housing in Ingushetia (DRC, 2007). The government of Ingushetia has several times announced plans for the integration of IDPs in the republic, though these plans have yet to materialise. While the government has allocated land plots to some IDPs intent on staying, international and national humanitarian organisations have until now been the primary actors supporting IDPs in their local integration.

As IDPs face problems obtaining residence registration in Dagestan, the prospects for those hoping to settle there permanently are poor. Unlike in Ingushetia and Chechnya, the Migration Service in Dagestan does not register IDPs, leaving this group more vulnerable than IDPs in the other republics. With no registration they have to pay for accommodation and there is a high risk of eviction. In order to access benefits such as pensions and unemployment allowances as well as medical care and education, IDPs must register in their place of residence; some have had difficulty registering their residence with the local authorities, since the authorities reportedly prefer them to return to their original place of residence rather than settle at their current location (Memorial / Civic Assistance Committee, 15 March 2007).

Regardless of their level of integration, Chechens living in the Moscow region are subjected to informal police surveillance and to discrimination (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006; OSI, 2006). According to the Russian human rights NGO Memorial, NGO workers and Chechens have heard from local interior ministry officials on numerous occasions that a secret directive exists that restricts the registration of Chechens in many regions of Russia. Indeed, displaced people from Chechnya have faced difficulties securing residence registration from local authorities outside Chechnya, limiting their access to medical care, education and social allowances (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). The Moscow region, Krasnodar territory and Kabardino-Balkaria are reputed to have the toughest regimes. The treatment of Chechens outside Chechnya worsened in 2006, when a brawl in Kondopoga in northern Russia between ethnic Russians and migrants from the Caucasus left two Russians dead. Migrants subsequently fled the area, but have since largely returned ([www.newsru.com](http://www.newsru.com), 2 November 2006). Since then additional clashes between Russians and Chechens have in at least one instance led to fatalities (Prague Watchdog, 7 June 2007 and 29 October 2006; RFE / RL, 7 June 2007).

### **IDPs from North Ossetia**

In North Ossetia, people displaced by the 1992 conflict live mainly in railway wagons or prefabricated rooms provided by humanitarian agencies, while in Ingushetia, IDPs from North Ossetia live in private residences and in 37 Temporary Settlements (TSs) (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). The housing conditions of IDPs from North Ossetia who are living in private-sector accommodation are unknown. Some IDPs from North Ossetia living in Ingushetia have been assisted by international organisations to build houses of their own after they have acquired a plot of land.

The compensation offered to IDPs from Prigorodny district is at least twice that paid to IDPs from Chechnya. Moreover, the South Federal Region authorities have ruled that this compensation is due not only to those who reside permanently in Prigorodny, but also to residents of dormitories in Prigorodny and to those without registration who prove to the court that they resided permanently in Prigorodny region before the beginning of the conflict (Government of the Russian Federation, 20 April 2006; IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). Information on the number of IDPs who have received this compensation and what they have managed to build with it was unavailable among the sources consulted.

Some displaced people who were living in Maiskoye, North Ossetia have highlighted problems in securing passports, residence registration, compensation for lost property and housing, and government support for house construction (IDPs from the villages of Terek, Yuzhnoe, Chernorechenskoe, Ir and Oktyabrskoe, 18 July 2006).

Approximately 24,000 people have returned to their homes in Prigorodny district in North Ossetia, and some 450 people returned in 2006 (IA Regnum, 17 July 2007; IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). The biggest problems facing them were the lack of livelihood opportunities and problems with the supply of water and gas (Kavkazski Uzel, 18 April 2006).

Not all IDPs have been able to return to their original residence in Prigorodny district. The district court deemed some villages part of water conservation zones and IDPs, as well as other citizens, were forbidden from settling there (Memorial, March 2006). The events in Beslan, North Ossetia, where a school occupation in 2004 led to the deaths of more than 330 people including 184 children, worsened inter-ethnic relations in the region and put a halt to Ingush returns to the republic. It was only in May 2005 that the return process gradually resumed. Furthermore, some peoples' homes had been occupied since their displacement by asylum seekers from Georgia.

Government resettlement of IDPs in Novy, a new purpose-built settlement in North Ossetia, has been especially sensitive. In 2006, after a court decision declared the North Ossetian IDP village of Maiskoye to be an agricultural pasture zone, the government offered IDPs land plots in Novy. While some 150 families accepted the offer and moved voluntarily, others refused and insisted on their right to return to their original place of residence in Prigorodny district. In protest against government plans to eventually close Maiskoye and transfer residents to Novy, IDPs launched hunger strikes in Maiskoye and in Moscow (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006; Kavkazski Uzel, 30 May 2007). Although govern-

ment officials assured the IDPs that their concerns would be raised in the appropriate meetings, government officials forcibly moved the remaining residents of Maiskoye to Novy in mid-2007 (Memorial, 28 June 2007; Committee for the Protection of the Rights of IDPs, 13 June 2007). As of mid-2007, approximately 300 families were living in Novy (Vesti, 20 July 2007).

### **Improved national response**

The federal and Chechen governments have made a notable effort to assist IDPs from Chechnya by providing pensions and children's allowances, paying compensation to those whose houses were totally destroyed and allocating funds for permanent housing. In 2006, a human rights commissioner post was established in Chechnya and the Chechen government joined a protection working group that brings together international and national actors to ensure protection of IDPs' rights (UN OCHA, 13 December 2006). A shortcoming of these efforts, however, is that compensation payments have been suspended, government promises of land plots for returnees have not always been fulfilled, and a government IDP committee was dissolved in early 2007 (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006; Swispace, 22 June 2007).

For its part, the North Ossetian government has allocated land plots for Ingush IDPs in Novy, a village it had established for displaced people (Vesti, 22 December 2005). The federal government has also devoted significant attention to IDPs from Prigorodny district and has achieved results including the increased return of IDPs to their place of origin or settlement in Novy (IDMC / Memorial, 10 October 2006). The government, however, has used force against IDPs in order to enforce court decisions deeming certain villages in Prigorodny to be district water conservation and pasture zones, thus denying some IDPs their wish to return to their former homes or to stay at their current residence.

The government in Dagestan has allowed IDPs from Chechnya to remain on its territory, but the Migration Service of the federal government has not granted them legal status, apparently due to lack of funds. In some cases, the local government in Dagestan has not registered the residence of some IDPs. This group of IDPs therefore must pay for their accommodation and faces obstacles to accessing social services and benefits.

The federal government has included "forced migrants" in a national housing programme established by decree in 2006. Those registered as persons in need of housing by the Migration Service's list are entitled to a housing subsidy issued from the federal budget, proportional to the number of members in the family and based on a government figure for the cost of one square meter of housing.

### **International response shifts to development**

In 2006, the UN and its NGO partners began to change their focus from emergency to development activities in the North Caucasus, while continuing to acknowledge that the conflict-affected population still needs humanitarian support. As a result, the 2007 Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus includes development activities such as economic growth and governance, in addition to humanitarian activities like

health, shelter and education. Meanwhile, some international actors have indicated their departure from the North Caucasus, including UN OCHA, which will close its office at the end of 2007 (UN OCHA, 13 December 2006).

As lead agency for the protection of IDPs in the North Caucasus, UNHCR, with the help of partner NGOs, provides shelter assistance and legal counselling for IDPs, monitors the situation of IDPs in Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan, and carries out independent verifications of cases of evacuation from TACs. Support to IDPs from Prigorodny district in North Ossetia is limited to *ad hoc* interventions such as housing support in Ingushetia and legal assistance on the right to return.

Other humanitarian organisations that directly assist IDPs include the Danish Refugee Council (in the areas of shelter, food and protection), the International Committee of the Red Cross (healthcare), Médecins Sans Frontières (healthcare), the Polish Humanitarian Organisation (water and sanitation) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (housing and healthcare). The work of several international NGOs in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan was interrupted in 2006 by their efforts to comply with a new law governing foreign NGOs. In some cases, this meant delays in assistance to IDPs. However, by 2007 most international NGOs in the North Caucasus had managed to resume their work.

Various institutions at the Council of Europe have continued to express concern over the lack of respect for human rights of institutions in the North Caucasus. In a 2006 resolution, the Council's Parliamentary Assembly identified Chechnya as the most serious situation of human rights violations of all Council of Europe member states, and stated that the security forces produced a sense of anxiety rather than security among the population. In March 2007, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture issued its third public statement on torture in Chechnya, a measure rarely invoked and used only when a party fails to cooperate or refuses to improve the situation. By mid-2007, the Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights had handed down 14 decisions on cases from Chechnya. The court found federal troops guilty of human rights abuses such as torture, enforced disappearances and illegal detention and ordered the Russian government to pay compensation to claimants (Prague Watchdog 27 July 2007).

*Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).*

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