

U N IN RUSSIA

Translating economic growth into sustainable human development with human rights

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Since 1999, the international donors generously contributed more than US\$ 217 million to support the humanitarian operation in the North Caucasus, UNHCR Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the Russian Federation Kasidis Rochanakorn tells in his interview

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My eldest sister Markha will get married first, and I will do her hair in such a way that she will look like a princess, says Seda Makhagova, a girl from Chechnya. She now lives with her family in Ingushetia. The World Food Programme has helped Seda to become a hairdresser

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Annual budget allocations for the health sector in Russia comprise less than 3 percent of Gross National Product, when in Belarus it is 6% and in European countries 8-10%. These figures were revealed at the press conference dedicated to the World Health Day

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The UN Secretary-General on Mine Danger

Extracts from Kofi Annan's message on International day for mine awareness and assistance in mine action

4 April 2006

Landmines are cruel instruments of war. Decades after conflicts have receded, these invisible killers lie silently in the ground, waiting to murder and maim. Through them, 20th century battles claim 21st century victims, with new casualties added every hour.

A single landmine – or even the fear of its presence – can hold an entire community hostage. It can prevent farmers from growing crops, refugees from returning home, even children from playing. It blocks the delivery of humanitarian relief and impedes the deployment of peacekeepers. In post-conflict societies landmines remain one of the greatest impediments to rebuilding and renewal.

Yet this scourge of the past century has the potential to become an early success story of the present one. The swift entry into force of the 1997 convention banning anti-personnel landmines underscored the broad moral condemnation of these weapons. The treaty, which has 150 State Parties, is already producing tangible results. Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations are collaborating on an unprecedented scale to address this problem, in more than 30 countries. Both the production and the laying of mines are in decline. Global trade in mines has virtually halted. Stockpiles have been destroyed. Clearance operations have accelerated. Mine-risk education has spread.

The message is clear and must be heard: landmines have no place in any civilized society.

The goal of a world without landmines and explosive remnants of war appears achievable in years – not decades as we used to think. But to realize this ideal, every one of us – donors, the general public and mine-affected countries – must focus our energies, and our imaginations, on the cause of mine clearance. Having been so effective in laying mines, we must now become even better at clearing them. Each mine cleared may mean a life saved. Each mine cleared brings us one step closer to building the conditions for lasting and productive peace.

On this International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, I call on governments to ratify the anti-personnel mine ban treaty as well as the new Protocol V – on the explosive remnants of war – to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. I ask donors to renew their financial commitments. I urge the international community to address the humanitarian and developmental impact of cluster-munitions. And I look to affected countries to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors, and to increase resources for mine action. Together, we must fight the evil of landmines as a high and moral calling.

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UN Development Programme

Opinions

Chernobyl's Myths And Misconceptions

The twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident of April 26, 1986 prompted a new wave of alarmist claims about its impact on human health and the environment. As has become a ritual on such commemorative occasions, the death toll is tallied in the hundreds of thousands, and fresh reports are made of elevated rates of cancer, birth defects, and overall mortality.

This picture is both badly distorted – and harmful to the victims of the Chernobyl accident. All reputable scientific studies conducted so far have concluded that the impact of radiation has been less damaging than was feared. A few dozen emergency workers who battled the fire at the reactor succumbed to acute radiation sickness. Studies are still under way into elevated rates of cancer, cataracts, and cardiovascular disease among the “liquidators” who worked at the reactor site in the months following the accident. And some 5,000 cases of thyroid cancer, attributed to radioactive iodine absorbed through consumption of milk in the weeks immediately following the accident, have been detected among those who were children at the time.

There has been real suffering, particularly among the 330,000 people who were relocated after the accident. About that there is no doubt. But, for the five million people living in affected regions who are designated as Chernobyl “victims,” radiation has had no discernable impact on physical health.

This is because these people were exposed to low radiation doses that in most cases were comparable to natural background levels. Two decades of natural decay and remediation measures mean that most territories originally deemed “contaminated” no longer merit that label. Aside from thyroid cancer, which has been successfully treated in 98.5% of cases, scientists have not been able to document any connection between radiation and any physical condition.

Where a clear impact has been found is mental health. Fear of

radiation, it seems, poses a far more potent health threat than does radiation itself. Symptoms of stress are rampant, and many residents of affected areas firmly believe themselves to be condemned by radiation to ill health and early death.

In part, this is because the initial Soviet response was secretive: Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader at the time, addressed the issue on television only weeks later, on May 14, 1986. Myths and misconceptions have taken root, and these have outlasted subsequent efforts to provide reliable information. Combined with sweeping government benefit policies that classify millions of people living in Chernobyl-affected areas as invalids, such myths encouraged fatalistic and passive behaviors and created a “culture of dependency” among affected communities.

The United Nations Chernobyl Forum, a consortium of eight UN agencies and representatives of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, reinforced these findings. Chernobyl Forum was created to address the prevailing confusion concerning the impact of the accident, both among the public and government officials, by declaring a clear verdict on issues where a scientific consensus

could be found. The Forum succeeded in this effort, and a fresh and reassuring message on the impact of radiation was made public in September. [An easily digestible summary is available at <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Booklets/Chernobyl/chernobyl.pdf>.]

The Chernobyl Forum findings should have brought relief, for they show that the specter haunting the region is not invincible radiation, but conquerable poverty. What the region needs are policies aimed at generating new livelihoods rather than reinforcing dependency; public-health campaigns that address the lifestyle issues (smoking and drinking) that undermine health across the former Soviet Union; and community development initiatives that promote self-reliance and a return to normalcy.

But the reception given to the Chernobyl Forum’s message has been surprisingly mixed. Some officials have reverted to alarmist language on the number of fatalities attributed to Chernobyl. Some NGO’s and Chernobyl charities have responded with disbelief, citing as evidence the general population’s admittedly poor health. Opponents of nuclear power suggest that self-interest has compromised the Chernobyl Forum’s integrity.





Set against the impressive body of science underpinning the Chernobyl Forum, such responses reflect the tenacity not only of myths and misconceptions, but also of vested interests. The new view on Chernobyl threatens the existence of charities – such as those offering health “respite” abroad for children – that depend for their fund-raising on graphic footage of deformed babies.

The new understanding also deprives the region’s officials of a routine way to seek international sympathy, even if the repetition of such appeals after two decades yields little financial aid. By

misstating the problems, these approaches threaten to divert scarce resources into the wrong remedies.

The twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident is an ideal occasion for all actors to do some honest soul-searching. Governments are right to worry about the fate of Chernobyl-affected territories, but the way forward will require fresh thinking and bold decisions, particularly a shift in priorities from paying paltry benefits to millions to targeted spending that helps to promote jobs and economic growth. Similarly, charities are right to worry about the population’s

health, but they should focus on promoting healthy lifestyles in affected communities rather than whisking children abroad as if their homes were poisonous.

All parties are right to worry about the affected populations, but, more than any sophisticated diagnostic equipment, what is needed is credible information, presented in a digestible format, to counter Chernobyl’s destructive legacy of fear. The children of Chernobyl are all grown up; their interests, and those of their own children, are best served not by continually evoking the nightmare of radiation, but by giving them the tools and authority they need to rebuild their own communities.

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The UN Secretary-General Message on World Health Day



Health workers save lives. They strive to ensure that advances in health care reach those most in need. They contribute to the social and economic well-being of their countries. And they are essential to their countries’ security, by being the first to identify a new disease or a new threat to public health.

Yet today, in many parts of the world, the health workforce is in crisis. The global population is growing, but the number of health workers in many of the poorest countries is falling. Across the developing world, health workers face economic hardship, deteriorating health infrastructures and social unrest. And the HIV/AIDS

pandemic has hit health workers particularly hard, taking their own health and lives, as well as those of their patients.

It is clear that to protect and improve the health of people worldwide, and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we need to rapidly bolster the global health workforce. Africa alone will require one million new health workers to achieve the Goals. Without such a dramatic increase in capacity, pediatric immunizations will not be administered; infectious outbreaks will not be contained; curable diseases will remain untreated; and women will keep dying needlessly in childbirth.

Addressing this crisis demands partnership and cooperation nationally and globally, across different sectors -- including education, transport and finance -- as well as within the health workforce itself. That is why the theme of this year’s World Health Day is “Working Together for Health”. On this Day, I urge all concerned -- Governments, professional organizations, civil society, the private sector, the media and international donors -- to join forces and step up investment in the health workforce. Let us work together for health in the 21st century.

Kofi Annan

Health Sector Workers in the Focus of the World Health Day 2006



The World Health Day, the main WHO annual event, has been celebrated on 7 April since 1950. Every year the motto of the World Health Day changes to focus the attention of the world public on specific health problems. This year's motto – “Working together for health” – is to draw attention to hard work of healthcare workers. Activities held on the World Health Day help to focus attention on a specific problem and mobilize resources needed to meet the objectives.

On 7 April 2006, a press-conference dedicated to the World Health Day was organized at the ‘Moskovsky Komsomolets’ newspaper office in Moscow. It was attended by WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr. Marc Danzon, Deputy Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe Dr. Nata Menabde, Acting Head of the WHO Office in Russia Ms. Mary Collins, Special Representative of WHO Director General in Russia Dr. Vladimir Lepakhin, Chairman of Health Care Committee of the State Duma Dr. Tatiana Yakovleva, Rector of the Moscow Medical Academy named after I.M. Sechenov Academician Mikhail Paltsev, Deputy Director of the Department of Public Health of the Moscow City Government Dr. Fedor Semenov.

Shortages in qualified health workers are experienced by public health systems in many countries. WHO calls upon governments to support health sector workers, to provide professional and advanced training and career growth both for medical doctors and nurses.



The problem of shortage of personnel in the healthcare sector is common for Russia. Chair of the State Duma Committee on Health Dr. Tatiana Yakovleva noted the imbalances in distribution of medical personnel in Russia with the highest shortage in primary care. In Europe the ratio between the number of doctors and nurses is 1:4, while in Russia there is only 1 nurse for 2-3 medical doctors. About 50 percent of all doctors are of retirement and close to retirement age, and about 30 percent of medical personnel have not been re-trained for the last five years. The annual budget allocations for the health sector in Russia (including the ‘Health’ national programme) comprise less than three percent of GDP, while in Belarus it is six percent and in European countries 8-10 percent. Despite certain social benefits,

introduced by the Government, there is still a severe shortage of health workers in rural territories. There is a need for legislative framework regulating public health sector in Russia. Dr. Nata Menabde said that there is no shortage of health-care staff in Europe but there is an imbalance in distribution of medical specialists. Several activities in the area of human resource management policy will be implemented in European countries and in Russia within the framework of the World Health Day 2006.

The four priorities for the development of workforce in public health sector outlined by WHO are as follows: support and protection of health sector workers, enhancement of efficiency of their work, and resolving problems of imbalances and unfairness in public health sector. One of the top priorities is professional training. The Moscow Medical Academy



named after Sechenov is a leading training centre for medical professionals in Russia, and it was symbolic that a meeting of students and teachers of the Academy, dedicated to the World Health Day 2006, was organized on 7 April at the Column Hall of the House of Unions in Moscow with leading journalists of the MK newspaper and WHO representatives.

The programme of the evening included presentations by politicians and popular actors, theatre and film stars, renowned sportsmen. There was a contest with awards for the best question and a student's joke; and a subscription to the MK newspaper for a special price for the second half of 2006 was organized for the participants. The event's motto was “ZDRAVstvuite!”, i.e. “Be healthy!”



Action for Life Towards a World Free of Tuberculosis



'Actions for Life: Towards a World Free of Tuberculosis' was the title of the press release announcing a press conference on the occasion of the World TB Day held in the Russian News Agency "NOVOSTI" on 23 March 2006.

At the press conference, media delegates addressed their queries to representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social

and awareness of the need to stop the spread of the disease." Throughout the last two years Academician Perelman has chaired a jury of the contest for the best media report on TB, launched by the TB WHO Programme and the Union of Journalists of Russia in 2004.

Ms Nadezhda Azhgikhina, the Secretary of the Union of Journalists of Russia,

The best radio programme:

1 prize – Larisa Kurushina, a commentary in the programme of the 'Ekho Moskvi' v Irkutsk, Irkutsk.

During the press conference Svetlana Chekalova, a six-form schoolgirl in Sharia secondary school, Ivanovo region, received her first prize for the best TB-related poster. This was her first time in Moscow, where she came with her drawing teacher.

In advance to the World TB Day, which annually marked on 24 March, many media outlets covered this issue, topical for the Russian Federation. Dr Wieslaw Jakubowiak, the Coordinator of the WHO TB Control Programme, gave interviews for the daily morning TV programme "Dobroye Utro" at the First TV channel and the daily news programme "Sobytiya. Vremya Moskovskoye" at TV Centre channel. Apart from TV interviews, a number of radio interviews were broadcasted at 'Ekho Moskvy', 'Mayak', 'UN Radio', 'German Radio', etc.

This year's World TB Day campaign helped to raise awareness about TB among the general population, while the success of the contest for journalists laid a firm foundation for bringing closer the professional and creative interests of central and regional media workers and their understanding of the importance of the problem for the state and the society.



During the press conference an award was presented to Svetlana Chekalova

Development, Federal Agency of Penitentiary System, USAID, Office of the Special Representative of the Director-General in Russia, representatives of research institutes, national and international partners involved in TB control projects.

According to Ms Ekaterina Kakorina, Deputy Director of the Department for Health Care and Resort Service Development of the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the RF, the number of registered TB cases increased from 118 000 in 2004 to 120 000 cases in 2005. With the increased TB mortality rate of 32 000 deaths registered in 2005 as compared to 30 000 death cases in 2004, the appeal of the Academician Mikhail Perelman, Chief TB Specialist of the Ministry of Health and Social Development, sounded particularly topical. Academician called on the TB doctors, the public, and mass media to join efforts in the fight against this dangerous infectious disease. "You can not be overestimated," - Academician Perelman said, addressing the journalists, - "you are the ones to ensure accurate reporting about TB

highlighted an improved quality of publications submitted for the contest in 2005. The number of publications indicate a systematic approach to the reporting and a deep interest in TB-related issues. Over 80 entries from 40 regions of the country were submitted to the contest. These included printed material, as well as TV and radio programmes.

The WHO TB Control Programme and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, prepared valuable prizes for the winners. Among the winners the jury named:

The best publication

1 prize – Alexander Kuznetsov, newspaper 'Belorechenskaya Pravda', Belorechensk, Krasnodarski Krai,

2 prize – Alla Astakhova, magazine 'Itogi', Moscow,

3 prize – Natalia Suvorova, newspaper 'Mescherskaya Storona', Ryazan

The best TV programme:

1 prize – Andrei Fedorov, a TV report for the programme 'Povorot Sobytii', Media Holding 'AC Baikal TV', Irkutsk

WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations with 192 Member States. It has four main functions: to give worldwide guidance in the field of health; to set global standards for health; to cooperate with governments in strengthening national health programmes; to develop and transfer appropriate health technology, information, and standards.

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United Nations Association of Russia

Events

United Nations Association of Russia Turns 50!

On 28 March 2006, the United Nations Association of Russia (UNA-Russia) celebrated its 50th anniversary. The Association was established by representatives of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University, Moscow State University of International Relations, research institutes and higher education establishments.

The Association expanded its activity during the 'perestroika' years. More attention was paid to the involvement of youth in the work of the organization. Specialized commissions of the Association were established on a wider range of issues. UNA-Russia offices were opened in the regions.

The organisation took an active part in large-scale international events and projects. In 1991-1992, in the course of preparation for the Earth Summit in Rio-de-Janeiro twelve international conferences on environmental problems and sustainable development were held. UNA-Russia organized such conference in Moscow. In 1992, UNA-Russia organized an international conference on the problems of ethnic relations in Irkutsk. In 1990-1999, the Association supported the organization of two international conferences on peacekeeping in the Russian capital. The Deputy Secretary-General and other UN officials responsible for peacebuilding participated in the conferences.

The United Nations Association of Russia was the only Russian organization invited to recent Interactive Hearings of the UN General Assembly with participation of representatives of the civil society organizations, NGOs and private sector.

Today, the United Nations Association of Russia includes more than 40 institutional members: institutions of the Russian Academy of Sciences, various education establishments, and a number of non-governmental unions. UNA-Russia's has a strong academic and human potential.



This was one of the reasons for awarding the UNA-Russia in 1998, along with a small number of public organizations, the highest consultative status under the UN Economic and Social Council (the General Status). This entitles the Association to attend all UN the meetings, disseminate documents, and make proposals to resolutions. In other words, it gives an opportunity to influence international policy priorities.

UNA-Russia pays great attention to the involvement of youth into active public and international life. A great number of programmes for students and schoolchildren are carried out under the aegis of UNA-Russia. One of them is an essay contest among schoolchildren on UN work and global problems organized by the Association. Winners, who are mainly not from Moscow, can enter MGIMO hors concours.

We should certainly mention International Moscow UN Models modelling of UN agencies work, organized by the Association every year. The largest is traditionally held in MGIMO in April. Russian and foreign students from Moscow, as well as representatives of Russian regions, take an active part in UN Models. Also, regional UN Models are held under the aegis of UNA-Russia.

Commissions on international law, realization of the Millennium Development Goals, healthcare, human rights, environment and sustainable development, legal issues, protection of culture, national problems, and youth actively work within the Association. Each has its scope of activity and high level specialists.

Several years ago the Associations, in cooperation with Russian Patriarchate, initiated a humanitarian action aimed at rescuing Russian pilots accused of arms trafficking in India. The Chairman of the Association Anatoly Torfunov headed the Committee on Humanitarian Support to Prisoners. Russian pilots could have been sentenced to life imprisonment. We helped the pilots with legal assistance, visited them in Calcutta, provided food and moral support. As a result of work of UNA-Russia representatives in association with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after complicated negotiations, the pilots were handed over to Russian authorities.

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Kasidis Rochanakorn: "Xenophobic Tendencies in Russia Is Another Concern to Us"

In his interview to Interfax, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the Russian Federation Kasidis Rochanakorn spoke about plans for 2006. UN in Russia publishes this interview with abridgements.



Kasidis Rochanakorn

- What areas will be a priority to UNHCR in the Russian Federation in 2006?

- As a humanitarian organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has two basic and closely related aims – to protect refugees and to seek ways to help them to rebuild their lives. Apart from refugees, UNHCR helps other groups in refugee-like situations, including internally displaced persons.

In 2006, we will advocate for better access of asylum-seekers to the national refugee status determination procedure and the procedure of issuing related documentation, as well as for reduction of waiting period while applications to obtain a refugee status are processed. While certain shortcomings in the system of granting asylum could to be addressed through better observation of correspondent procedures, real improvement can be achieved only if the existing legislation in this area is amended to ensure that all provisions are in conformity with the spirit and principles of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. To this end, UNHCR will be open for cooperation with the Government to provide advice and assistance necessary for introduction of amendments to the State Duma.

In the North Caucasus, our office will continue to provide assistance for local integration of refugees from Georgia presently living in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. UNHCR will continue to play a coordinating role in the provision of protection and shelter to internally displaced persons in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. These are the areas UNHCR is responsible for in the framework of the 2006 Transitional Workplan for the North Caucasus recently launched by the UN and the international aid community.

As in previous years, UNHCR implements its activities in close cooperation with over 30 government structures and non-governmental organizations.

- According to your information, how many refugees and asylum-seekers are there in Russia? How efficient are the Russian authorities in solving refugee-related problems?

- Today, about 3,000 asylum-seekers from non-CIS countries currently reside in Moscow awaiting access to the refugee status determination procedure. According to the official statistics, released in September 2005, last year, 16 people were granted refugee status, including 15 from non-CIS countries. According to the same statistics, a total of 535 persons, including 224 from CIS countries and 311 from non-CIS countries, were recognized as refugees. In addition, 1,101 people were granted temporary asylum.

Over the past decade, a certain progress was made by the authorities in creating a state system of granting asylum. However, we still have a lot more to do to bring it in line with the universally accepted international standards. With the new management recently appointed at the Federal Migration Service, our major gov-

ernment partner, we hope that this year concrete progress will be made. We are happy with the discussions we have had so far with the Federal Migration Service. The issues under discussion include the need for improvement of legislation and the quality of performance of existing procedures, as well as building of the infrastructure for reception of asylum seekers and facilitation of local integration of recognized refugees.

Today, we are witnessing a world moving at a faster pace towards increasing globalization. As a result, many countries, including the Russian Federation, have to deal with a consequence of this process, unauthorized entry of people coming from poorer and often unstable regions. A major concern of many governments today is the management of a flow of refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants and other people on the move. At UNHCR we believe that a key to the efficient management of a mixed flow of people with different motivations seeking entry in a country is establishment of a fair and fast asylum procedure.

Another issue of our concern is the xenophobic tendencies and intolerance towards refugees and migrants that seem to be on the rise in the country. We are sure that these unhealthy tendencies should be seriously addressed by the structures concerned. We are ready to provide the necessary assistance within our competence.

- What is your view of the humanitarian operation in the North Caucasus?

- Generally in 2005 humanitarian relief and recovery assistance in the North Caucasus was provided by the United Nations and NGO community at the same level as in previous years. The humanitarian operation in the North Caucasus has

been implemented since 1999. During this period of over five years, international donors allocated more than US \$217 million to support the humanitarian operation. From 1999 to 2004, the assistance was primarily geared towards meeting urgent humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable groups. From 2004, UN and NGOs have been steadily increasing assistance aimed at long-term recovery and reintegration.

The introduction of the 2006 Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan in the North Caucasus that combines humanitarian intervention with recovery assistance is based on the recognition that humanitarian needs in the North Caucasus remain serious. According to research, the humanitarian situation in 2005 neither deteriorated nor significantly improved. At the same time, poverty is widespread in the region and the need for socioeconomic development is clear. We also recognize that humanitarian intervention alone cannot restore the lives of the affected population.

The Government plays the most important role in recovery planning and funding. International support for longer-term recovery and development in the North Caucasus will be comparatively small. For this reason, the UN and NGOs will seek to play a supportive, catalytic role to complement Government efforts in this area.

- What amount of funds will be allocated for humanitarian operations in the North Caucasus in 2006?

- The budget of the Inter-Agency Transitional Workplan is US \$ 88.3 million. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross has put forth its 2006 programme with a budget of US \$ 28.5 million. Other UN partners working in the North Caucasus, mostly international and local



Renovated sport hall at one of schools in Grozny



In 2005, UNHCR provided 222 box-tents to returnees to Chechnya

NGOs, conduct their assistance programmes outside either of these frameworks. Thus, the total volume of funds sought by the aid community for 2006 exceeds US\$ 120 million. In fact, all these programmes depend upon voluntary contributions of people and private donors, but they have traditionally responded well to the North Caucasus appeals.

- How has the situation with IDPs in the North Caucasus changed in recent years?

- Approximately 90% of the 250,000 IDPs, who lived in neighbouring republics in 2000, have now returned to Chechnya. There are no more tented IDP camps, although a lot of IDPs still live in temporary settlements in Chechnya and Ingushetia. In other words, while the situation with IDPs has improved, it is still far from perfect. According to the Government of Chechnya estimates, over 60,000 people are still displaced within that republic. Our agency has registered 26,000 Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia and another 10,000 in Dagestan. UNHCR together with partner aid organizations and the Government focus their efforts on seeking long-term solutions for remaining IDPs. Most of them have neither permanent shelters nor jobs.

- What is the situation with UNCR staff in the North Caucasus in terms of security?

- The UN takes staff safety and security very seriously in this region. Chechnya

currently has the highest ranking in terms of the UN security classification. Our staff can travel in Chechnya provided very strict security measures are taken. The current security regime prevents UN staff from having permanent access to and extended presence in Chechnya. We continue to liaise with government security officials and monitor developments closely in all the neighbouring republics.

According to the UN security officers, in 2005 the overall security situation somewhat improved in Chechnya, deteriorated in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria, and remained unchanged in North Ossetia. The improvement of the situation in Chechnya made it possible for UN agencies, including UNHCR, WFP, WHO, and UNICEF, to despatch a record number of 99 missions to the republic in 2005, compared to only 23 missions two years ago. Should this positive trend continue, we are hopeful that sometime this year the UN would be able not only to increase further the frequency of its missions to Chechnya, but also enhance the operational presence in the republic.

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Regions

A Rehabilitation Centre for Families Opens in Beslan

On 29 March, UNICEF opened a Family Centre in Beslan jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science of North Ossetia and with the support of French, German and Italian contributions.

The Beslan tragedy had a profound psychological effect on parents and today, 18 months later, it still hinders



A group photo of the attendees of the opening inside the Centre

their ability to help with the rehabilitation of the children who survived. Many families are unable to provide the kind of environment these children need. The new Family Centre in Beslan will help to improve the psychological state of the families in general, as well as help in their reintegration into the wider community.

“The main objective of the Centre is to assist families, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles and others in Beslan to recover and to help their children,” said Carel de Rooy, UNICEF Area Representative in the Russian Federation and Belarus, during the opening ceremony. “We do hope that colleagues from other republics in the North Caucasus will come to see this experiment and learn from its success,” he added.

The official opening ceremony of the Family Centre brought together top officials from the North Ossetian Government, H.E. Jean Cadet, the French Ambassador to Russia, and his wife, and Mme. Florence Shaal, a journalist from TF1 in France, who wrote a book about the tragedy and played an

active role in mobilizing resources in France for the creation of the centre.

“I have a message to share with you on behalf of the people of France,” said Ambassador Cadet, “They asked me to express their solidarity with the people of Beslan and to tell you that they also feel deep pain and sorrow for your children, family members, friends and others who died during those tragic days.”

The Ambassador also expressed his appreciation of UNICEF: “We support and respect the work of UNICEF and welcome the creation of the Family Centre. We cooperate with UNICEF in implementing joint projects worldwide and hope to have more projects in future,” he said.

The delegation also had a meeting with the Head of the North Ossetia Government, Mr. Mamsurov, who assured the delegation members that the Government of North Ossetia would

do everything possible to support the work of the Family Centre and encouraged the families of Beslan to visit it.

The dignitaries also met with the representatives of the Committee of Mothers of Beslan, women who lost their children on that terrible day. One mother explained that these women were too traumatized to have children but they welcomed the idea of the Centre and expressed their hope that it could help many young women to decide to have children again.

The delegation also visited Beslan school No. 1 where the tragedy took place, the cemetery of the victims of the school siege, where the Ambassador and his wife laid a wreath at the foot of the Tree of Sorrows. The wreath had a black ribbon with the words “From the people of France” inscribed on it. Then all members of the delegation laid flowers on the children’s graves.

Bela Tsugaeva



French Ambassador and his wife in school No. 1.

(The photo's author is Vano Vazagov, 18, a young journalist from Beslan, trained to photography by UNICEF)

French Journalist Florence Shaal Revisits Beslan

Florence Shaal, a famous French journalist, recently revisited Beslan to take part in the inauguration of a Family Centre opened by UNICEF.

Me Shaal was with the people of Beslan during the terrifying three-day school siege of September 2004 and witnessed the horrors that engulfed the small town. She shot a documentary about that tragedy and published a book *I Will Never Forget Beslan*, which helped her to mobilize resources for the creation of a Family Centre.

“I admire the people of Beslan,” said Florence Shaal during the inauguration of the Centre. “You went through the tragedy with such dignity. I want you to know that the people of France and the whole world support you and will never forget Beslan,” she added.

Florence Shaal recognized many of the faces at the opening ceremony. She remembered them by name. And they looked at her with esteem. They spent many dreadful hours together. She was with them during the most difficult time in their lives, gave them her support - the only thing she could offer - when hundreds of people, most of them children, were carried out from the gym of School No. 1 dead or wounded.

When she returned to France after that tragic event she managed to mobilize resources to help the families of Beslan to cope with their losses and stress. Thus, UNICEF’s plan to establish a Family Centre in Beslan was realized.

“I hope the Centre will help rehabilitate families in Beslan,” she said standing in front of the board with the name of the Centre written on it,



БИНОНТÆ, meaning ‘a family’ in Ossetian. “I want to believe that the Centre will help families unite, be stronger and happier, so that the children of Beslan smile again,” she added.

Bela Tsugaeva

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HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategies Tested in Regions



On 28 March 2006 in Moscow, a final conference of the Project Complex Strategies on HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Russian Federation was held. The Project was implemented in the Altai region and the Volgograd region. Delegations of specialists from various agencies of both regions were chaired by vice-governors. High level of the conference participants once again proves that fighting HIV/AIDS at the shores of the Volga, the Ob, and the Katun rivers is included in the list of priority problems that require urgent solution. The guests gave evidence for that in their presentations on the project results.

The major Project outcome is as follows: a complex interagency HIV/AIDS prevention policy developed and implemented in both regions. As a result of the efforts supported by seven UN agencies, new services for youth were established, and existing ones were enhanced. These include youth friendly hospitals, information centres, consulting services on reproductive health, programmes, aimed at employment services,



risk groups, young people who practice risky behaviour, and the penal system.

Heads of UN agencies, representatives of federal ministries and agencies, the civil society, and other projects and programmes working in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention took part in the conference. All speakers highlighted the necessity of implementation of the lessons learned in the pilot regions in the every day work of the related services at the federal level and in other regions of the Russian Federation. It is especially important today, when the problem of

HIV/AIDS is recognized as one of the most important in Russia, and a national concept and a national project in the area of HIV/AIDS are being developed. As noted at the conference, the Project demonstrated a possibility of an effective cooperation of various UN agencies, donors, including the UK Department for International Development and the United Nations Fund for International Partnership, state structures and civil society in dealing with a very important social problem that poses a threat to the development of humanity.

Elena Kornysheva



Local Governance in Transition

On 27 March, a conference dedicated to the two years' work of the joint project of the Ministry of Regional Development and UNDP Support to Local Governance Reform in the Russian Federation was held in Moscow. Representatives of government structures, academic and business community, as well as of international and non-governmental organizations took part in the conference. Experts of the Centre for Fiscal Policy who worked in the pilot regions (republics of Buryatia and Karelia, Chita and Irkutsk regions) and representatives of these regions spoke about specific project results.

The Project was launched in 2003 when the new edition of the Law on General Principles of Local Governance System in the Russian Federation was adopted. Experts studied local legislations, held a survey among public officials and representatives of civil society, and made conclusions about the level of readiness of the subjects of the Russian Federation to reforms in the area of local governance. Further work was based on these conclusions.

What was done within the framework of the project? Following the project recommendations, a number of important amendments were introduced in the Federal Law on General Principles of Local Governance System in the Russian Federation at the federal level. At the level of the Russian Federation subjects, experts helped to optimize borders of municipal entities, adapt regional governance legislation to the requirements of the federal law, develop inter-budgetary relations methodologies, delineate property of different levels of authority, and to train public officials and employees of local governance bodies.

Over 120 regional regulatory acts were examined and brought into compliance with the fundamental federal law on local governance. In the framework of the project, unique methodologies to optimize inter-budgetary relations were introduced. Over 200 representatives of local authorities and non-governmental organizations

took part in the trainings organized under the project. Also, the project carried out information campaigns for local population.

Mr. Sergey Miroshnikov, the National Director of the Project and Head of the Department of Federative Relations, State and Local Governance of the Ministry of Regional Development, noted at the conference that in the majority of subjects of the RF a solid basis of the governance system was established. Now it is time to help regions in developing the reform. It is necessary to ensure that population takes an active part in solving their vital problems in close cooperation with local authorities without waiting for instructions or financial aid from higher authorities.

The Project Manager, Elena Ivanova, spoke about major areas of further project development. These include the



The conference participants couldn't stop lively discussion even during coffee break

development of social partnership mechanisms, further trainings for employees of administrations, assistance in development of regulatory framework of the subjects of the Russian Federation, establishment of information centres, expansion of civil society involvement in public administration practices.

After a lively discussion of plans for the future, which concluded the conference, the Deputy Minister of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Buryatia, Ms. Elena Tyzhinova, a participant of the event, answered UN in Russia questions.



A booklet dedicated to the project

-In what way was the project beneficiary to the regional administration?

– Firstly, the project provided consultations on legal issues, including such practical issues, as legal support and adoption procedures for laws and regulatory acts. Secondly, - recommendations related to regulatory acts developed before the project launch. It turned out that draft charters, which our municipal entities had developed and planned to adopt, were contradictory in some aspects to already adopted laws. These proposals and recommendations were taken into account. Also, the National Director of the Project, Sergey Miroshnikov, shared with us the experience of other regions. He held a number of meetings, workshops and round tables with representatives of legislative and executive power bodies, and NGOs. Hence, a lot of people could put questions directly to authors of laws.

– How did the project help common people?

– People have become more active. They understand that they should solve their problems themselves and look for better ways of distributing funds allocated by the republican budget in order to solve priority problems. However, initiative can bring surprises. There was a very active head of a community. We were sure that she will remain the community head in the future. She helped in organizing a seminar on elections in the republican training and methodology centre. The majority of residents attended this event. They listened to what was said and understood they had a right to vote independently, and in the end, elected someone else. So, they might have been unhappy with something. This is vox populi...

To Overcome Poverty by Self-Reliance

In March, when we celebrate the Women's Day, the heroine of the article received probably the most welcome gift from the UNDP Microfinance Programme.

The United Nations Development Programme assists countries in implementation of their development strategies. UNDP work in Russia has its specificities as compared to developing countries: today, situation in Russia is characterized by a considerable economic growth, increase of average per capita income, GDP, and investments. However, these positive changes have little influence on the situation in Russian regions, especially in those living on budget allocations. These regions often have to survive, let alone thinking of economic strategies. According to official statistics, 60 percent of rural population are poor, while the total number of poor people in Russia amounts to 25.5 million people, which equals to 17.8 percent of the population. That is why more UNDP programmes focus on Russian regions, where UNDP assistance is really most welcome.

One of such projects, UNDP/GEF Project on protected areas in Kamchatka, stipulates granting micro loans to the local population. Unemployment, poverty, and, as a consequence, widespread poaching are among major problems of the region. Also, the local population has no or little entrepreneurship experience. Upon analysing the initial situation, the Project donor (Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA) decided to allocate considerable funds for training of potential borrowers. The 'Sodruzhestvo' Fund for support of small and medium businesses has been working in the region for two years. It is constantly growing in terms of geography and clients and will possibly achieve break-even performance early next year.

In 2003, Svetlana Kozlova borrowed some money from her acquaintances to rent premises for a grocery store and started her own business. In April 2004, she received a loan of 100,000 roubles for six months in the 'Sodruzhestvo'

Fund and purchased two additional refrigerators to store fish and meat. This allowed Svetlana to enlarge the range of goods on sale and increase the shop's daily proceeds. Quite unexpectedly, the landlord told her that the lease agreement would soon be terminated. Svetlana found herself in a difficult situation. At first she hoped to find new premises for the shop, but she failed to find anything suitable. They

hired three people to work in her shop. In early March 2006, Svetlana Kozlova obtained her third 400,000 roubles loan for modernization of the shop and building of a summer cafe.

The "Sodruzhestvo" Fund issued 21 loans in 2004 and 92 loans in 2005. The sums of loans increased from 3 million to 23 million roubles. Apart from Kamchatka, UNDP Microfinance



were either badly located or required expensive renovation. Thus, Svetlana decided to build her own shop investing her own money and the second loan from the Community fund in the amount of 200,000 roubles. The new shop called 'Solnyshko' attracts clients not only by a wide range of goods, but also by the quality of service and its modern design. The majority of customers are Evens, an indigenous ethnic group. Evens are the most vulnerable group of population with a low level of income. The Solnyshko shop gives them an opportunity to buy quality goods at reasonable prices or take goods on credit. In addition, Svetlana made a small contribution of her own to dealing with social tension – she

Programme is operating in other Russian regions, including the Bryansk region. Soon the Programme will be launched in the North Caucasus. Is it possible to overcome poverty without state budget support? Lots of small entrepreneurs in Kamchatka answer this question positively.

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World Food Programme

People

I Will Do My Sister's Hair for Her Wedding Party

Seda Makhagova is a very attractive girl of 22. She is one of the four sisters who live in a settlement for displaced people called "Promzhilbaza" in the town of Karabulak in Ingushetia. Her home is a two-storey construction that looks more like a summer cottage than a building. In 1999, Seda and her family fled from the Oktyabrsky district of Grozny when it was severely shelled during the second armed conflict in Chechnya. Her home was completely destroyed. Since then she has lived in the settlement turning from a teenager into a beautiful girl with thick long shining hair. In the settlement Seda finished secondary school arranged for displaced people like herself by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), international non-government organization. Like all teenagers, Seda had her dreams. One of them was to go to university and become a teacher. That dream could not come true as her family could not afford it. Then she looked for a job but with the unemployment rate very high that was impossible. Even marriage was out of the question as, according to Chechen tradition, a bride should be taken by her bridegroom from her family house, and all relatives should be there to celebrate the occasion. She was very unhappy and depressed.

Sometimes she watched television and saw beautiful film stars, among whom Jennifer Lopez was her favourite. She would also cut out their photos from old magazines and put them on the wall above her narrow bed in a tiny room that she shared with her three sisters. Having only a couple of worn out T-shirts to change into she looked at the pictures of the film stars wistfully and dreamed of wearing beautiful clothes and stylish haircuts.

One day she heard that the International Medical Corps (IMC), WFP cooperating partner, was enrolling students for a two-month hairdressing course. In addition, she was told that along with the training the students would get food for attending the course. Part of her dream was coming true. "I applied for the course and was incredibly happy to learn that I have been selected. I could not



believe that one day I would acquire the skills to make stylish haircuts. I tried to imagine how as a graduate I would start providing hairdressing services and was excited about finishing the class," – she told WFP staff when they were visiting the "Promzhilbaza" settlement in June 2005.

Her new career took off quickly. A room was given to the new hairdressers in the cottage where Seda lives, and she decorated it with the photos of her favourite western film stars. Today, in this room newly trained hairdressers like Seda provide services to their clients, mostly displaced people living in the settlement.

"My life has changed for the better, and I am very thankful to the programme organizers for selecting and training me. I am now included into WFP's food-for-work programme and receive food for providing free services to these people. I can earn some money providing hairdressing services to the local people living outside the settlement. In summertime, the season for weddings, we often work long hours because women want to look particularly beautiful at their wedding parties. When asked if they would get married themselves, the hairdressers were matter-of-fact. "Not now, but as soon as we return home. So far it is impossible for us to get together as a family. Therefore our weddings should be delayed. But when it happens, my eldest sister Markha will get married first, and I will do her hair in such a way that she will

look like a princess. And my sister who is going to apply for the dressmaking course will make her a fancy dress," said Seda.

While the concept was conceived by WFP and CARE International, the first organization to implement the training programmes was a small local organization from Grozny called Women's Dignity, which works in partnership with Medcins du Monde to help traumatized women recuperate.

The food-for-work activities started in late 2004, when the International Medical Corps (IMC) provided training to vulnerable families on income-generating skills such as hairdressing, dressmaking, driving, computer literacy, accounting, which could be useful in finding jobs in Chechnya and Ingushetia. At least two thirds of the participants should be women. At the end of a two-month course they receive diplomas issued by the appropriate state counterpart. IMC records from earlier similar training programmes show that 53 percent of the graduates start earning money within six months of graduation.

During 2004-2005 WFP distributed about 100 tons of food through this programme.

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UN Office for the Coordination
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Russia as a Donor of International Humanitarian Aid

The largest amount of humanitarian funding globally comes from wealthy, industrialized states including countries of Western Europe, North America, Japan and Australia. These are the traditional donors, some of whom have dedicated themselves to the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. This article looks at one of the most important ‘non-traditional donors’, the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation has a long history of providing assistance to those in need during humanitarian disasters. It also has extremely good logistics capacity and its economy has improved over the past several years. Therefore, it is appropriate that Russia begin to be recognized as a leading humanitarian donor. In the past, the overwhelming majority of Russian aid has been given bi-laterally, that is, directly from the government of



Russia to the government of the receiving country without going through international mechanisms such as the UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, or NGOs. This has made it very difficult to track what humanitarian aid Russia has given, to whom, when and in what quantities. Recent cooperation between Russia and the UN has attempted to keep better track of bilateral assistance donated by Russia. It has also focused on helping Russia establish itself as a donor of UN specialized agencies working in humanitarian operations around the world.

What does this mean in practice? In 2005, according to the Financial Tracking System, a centralized database maintained by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

that tracks international humanitarian contributions all over the world, the Russian Federation donated or pledged to donate just over US \$39 million. This figure, however, represents only humanitarian donations that were reported to the Financial Tracking System. The actual size of Russian aid assistance, as well as that of other countries discussed in this article, could actually be much greater.

Contributions in 2005 were largely given towards mitigating some of the effects of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The Russian government airlifted food, medicines and medical equipment (including field hospitals), tents, and numerous other items needed during humanitarian emergencies such as water purification systems, blankets and mattresses. The government also provided search and rescue equipment and personnel and offered logistical support to the overall operation largely through air transport of needed goods. Many of the same goods and services were also donated in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake in October 2005. While most of these pledges and contributions took the form of bilateral aid, the Russian government also made donations to UN agencies working in the tsunami-hit region. Among its contributions was US \$3 million given to OCHA to support the UN’s capacity for rapid response to disasters.

These 2005 contributions to humanitarian activities represent 0.008% of Russia’s 2004 GNP. This compares well to other countries that are also considered prospective “non-traditional” donors. Slovenia gave 0.005% of GNP in 2005, China and Poland 0.003% and Hungary and Brazil only 0.002%. Other growing donor countries gave roughly the same percentage of GNP as Russia – India 0.007%, Azerbaijan 0.008%, the Czech Republic and Estonia 0.009%. While these trends are encouraging, there is still a wide gap between these levels of financing, and that provided by some other non-traditional donors. For example, Turkey donated 0.029% of its GNP to humanitarian action in 2005 and Saudi Arabia 0.04%. Higher levels are observed



among more traditional donors of Western Europe, North America, Australia and Japan. Among them, the most “generous” are Norway (0.11%), Sweden (0.1%), Denmark (0.074%) and Ireland (0.068%). Sweden, Denmark and Ireland also, as members of the European Union, provide resources for humanitarian action through the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid department, therefore these percentages are likely even higher in actuality. This is also the case for Italy and France, which have relatively low rates of humanitarian funding, but also contribute to EU aid assistance.

As these trends show, Russia is expanding its international humanitarian role. In the upcoming years, the UN is looking forward to working with Russia as it continues and hopefully increases its humanitarian budget to help provide life-saving assistance around the world.

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UN Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization



Peter Smith

G8 Education Experts Meeting

G8 Summit will take place in July 2006 in St. Petersburg, Russia. One of the questions that will be discussed by heads of the states is the development of education system. That is why the meeting of G8 Education Ministers will precede the G8 Summit in June 2006.

On 20-21 March 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation organized the G8 Education Experts Meeting in order to arrange the above-mentioned meetings. Mr. Peter Smith, Assistant to the UNESCO General Director on Education, was invited to this meeting. Experts and representatives of international organizations discussed the

draft Final Document of the forthcoming G8 Education Ministers Meeting.

To discuss education issues Mr. Smith also met with Mr. Fursenko, Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yakovenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and other officials.

Mr. Smith visited UNESCO Moscow Office and UNESCO Institute of Information Technologies in Education to discuss the full range of activities in the field of education, implemented in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, and the Russian Federation.

Restoration of Education in Chechnya: the Results and Prospects

On 28 March 2006, a round table devoted to the results and prospects of further development of the joint UNESCO and Russian Federation project 'Support for Rehabilitation and Improvement of Education System of the Chechen Republic' took place in the Baltshug Kempinski Hotel in Moscow.

The round table was attended and welcome addresses were delivered by Mr. Yoshiro Mori, Ex-Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Aleksandr Yakovenko, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RF, Mr. Alou Alkhanov, the President of the Chechen Republic, and Mr. Vladimir Fridlianov, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the RF. Mr. Mori declared that the Government of Japan and the United Nations decided to extend assistance totaling US \$ 977,874 through the Trust Fund for Human Security to the project 'Capacity Building for Psychological, Pedagogical and Medico-Social Rehabilitation of School Children and Educational Personnel'. This project will be implemented in the Chechen Republic by UNESCO and the

World Health Organization in cooperation with Russian education and health-care authorities.

All major partners involved in the project implementation had an opportunity to discuss developments and highlight prospects of the project. Representatives of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO, the UNESCO Moscow Office, Federal and Chechen Ministries of Education and Science, high educational establishments and post-graduate studies institutions, the embassies of Japan and Norway, UN agencies in Russia and NGOs participated in the discussion.

The project 'Support for Rehabilitation and Improvement of Education System of the Chechen Republic' was initiated in 2001 when the Russian Federation approached UNESCO for assistance in reconstruction of the education system of the Chechen Republic. The official presentation of the project was organized in January 2004, and since then the governments of Japan, Norway and

South Korea, UNESCO Programme for the Education of Children in Need allocated funds for upgrading skills of Chechen education professionals, support for the Chechen Institute for Teacher Retraining, introduction of communication and information technologies in Chechen education, modernization of Chechen school curriculum, and psychosocial rehabilitation of Chechen children.

In 2004 and 2005, the UNESCO Moscow Office in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Chechen Republic implemented project activities aimed at capacity building of the Chechen education system.

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Population Issues as Reflected by Media



Photo by Arina Flyugova, UNDP

On 11-13 April 2006, a workshop for regional journalists, writing on population and family health issues, took place in Moscow. This is the fourth workshop within the framework of the project 'Population, Reproductive Health and Gender Issues as Reflected by Russian Media', implemented by the Russian Union of Journalists and United Nations Population Fund.

A year-long partnership of journalists and experts has been successfully developing. The cooperation resulted in dozens of publications in regional mass media, TV and radio programmes on population and family health issues, international's best practices and Russian initiatives. Presentations by Russian scientists, policy-makers and government officials provide an opportunity for journalists to obtain the latest first hand most important information and to present it to the public. Recently, the Union of Journalists announced the first National Mass Media Contest on population, reproductive health, and gender issues.

For the first time in April, a broader format joint workshop was organised by combining efforts of the United Nations Population Fund with other UN agencies in Russia.

On the first day of the workshop, the journalists got acquainted with the work of leading national experts, the authors of the latest report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the UNDP Human Development Report.

The journalists were welcomed by Mr. Ercan Murat, UN Resident Coordinator in Russia, and Ms. Sietske Steneker, UNFPA Representative, representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Russian Union of Journalists.

Ms. Steneker noted: "At the Millennium Summit, international leaders, among them President Putin, adopted a historic pledge to combat poverty worldwide. The Millennium Development Goals have been endorsed by the Group of 8 major industrial



Photo by Arina Flyugova, UNDP

nations and adopted as a common strategy by governments, development banks, the United Nations and leading nongovernmental humanitarian groups. Every country has its own approach to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. This provides the opportunity for countries to adapt the Goals to their particular context, which, in the case of Russia, implies setting targets that go beyond the globally agreed goals. In Russia, the concern over poverty, low birth rates, low life expectancy, and the AIDS epidemic figure prominently in public and policy debates. These issues are complex and there are often no simple policy recipes to follow. That is why discussing these issues and sharing experiences and insights is so important. Such broad dialogue is vital for effective policy-making and essential to good governance. And the mass media, of course, have a major role to play in facilitating such dialogue, by informing both the general public and policy-makers."

The two following days were devoted to practical work, including analysis of interviews of the Project participants in press and strategic planning. One of the main Project objectives is to create an effective network, uniting journalists and experts in Russia's regions. The network is designed to ensure informing the public on a regular basis about population, gender and reproductive health issues, and equip journalists with updated knowledge in this field.

In the course of the workshop the participants, among other things, suggested developing interregional programmes, establishing a school of social journalism, conducting information events for journalists in big cities, and developing plans for closer cooperation with regional NGOs.

All the participants agreed on the need for: exchanging news and publications on a regular basis, using the existing websites for the promotion of the network ideas, as well as approaching local media outlets with a proposal of more active cooperation.

New meetings between experts and journalists will take place in the spring and summer in Siberia, Central Russia, and in the North-West of Russia. The project will be concluded by a final of the national media competition and a conference in Moscow in November 2006.

Valeria Kogay, UNFPA



Photo by Arina Flyugova, UNDP

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UN Information Centre

Measuring Contributions to Sustainable Development



Global Reporting Initiative™

On 23 March, a meeting, which may with good reason be characterized as remarkable, took place in Moscow. The event was a conference dedicated to the discussion of the third, new version of the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (G3 Guidelines).

The new standard was developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), an independent international institution, with a mission to develop and disseminate globally applicable Sustainability Reporting Guidelines. The GRI Guidelines are designed as a voluntary reporting by companies on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of their activities, products, and services.

The relatively young Russian private sector should be credited for its willingness to embrace new trends. The fairly recent Global Reporting Initiative, launched in 1997, has very quickly gained attention in Russia and received support from the Association of Managers, the Agency of Social Information, the Institute for Urban Economics Fund, as well as a number of other non-governmental organizations, which formed a Club for the Development of Non-Financial Reporting. It is within the Club, that an idea was born to approach GRI management with a proposal to make Russia one of twenty 'testing grounds', where the new standard will be discussed in detail.

The voluntary reporting by organizations of non-financial information quickly turned from an ambitious under-

taking into a widespread practice. As of today, more than 3,000 sustainability reports are published, and each month the number grows.

Russian companies started to follow this worldwide trend later than the others, however, each year the number of such companies continues to increase. Today, most Russian organizations prefer to follow a free format of social reporting and methods of measuring efficiency of their activity, which limits the potential for comparing the data submitted by different organizations. This problem may only be resolved by introducing universally accepted methodology.

The GRI methodology is based on a set of universal guidelines. A number of sector-specific annexes were developed to be used in conjunction with the Guidelines. The annexes contain specialized information on various sectors of economy.

A sustainability report contains data, which helps a company evaluate the quality and quantity of its intangible assets, the company's potential and risks, especially management risks and the nature of interaction with related parties, as well as the quality of management in the company.

The Global Reporting Initiative cooperates not only with associations of entrepreneurs and civil society activists, but with influential international organizations as well. The latter include the UN Environment Programme and the Global Compact, an initiative launched by the

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. UN agencies with offices in Russia, such as the World Bank, UNEP and the UN Information Centre, took a most active part in the March conference in Moscow.

In his opening address, President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Alexander Shokhin emphasized that for many in the business world it becomes evident that corporate sustainability, which combines economic, social and environmental factors, leads to reduced business risks, strengthened competitiveness and improved reputation. "Responsibility must be managed, and a process is manageable only if it can be measured," Mr. Shokhin said. "Achieving sustainability implies coordinated efforts and evaluation of the efficiency of such efforts," he added.

The Russian organizers of the conference assumed that joining the discussion on G3 Guidelines would give Russian companies a unique opportunity not only to speak as users of this international standard of non-financial reporting, but also to contribute to the very shaping of the standard. In fact, the Russian participants did make a number of insightful comments, which the authors of the new standards promised to carefully consider and analyze.

There is still time to process the results of the 'preliminary testing' of the G3 Guidelines, as the official launch of the third incarnation of the Reporting Guidelines in Amsterdam is scheduled for early October. More than 1,000 representatives of stakeholders from all over the world are expected to participate in the meeting. GRI movement activists emphasize that the meeting will be a major event for all advocates of sustainable development.

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Summary

You can find the full version of the UN in Russia Bulletin in English at www.undp.ru or www.unrussia.ru (Documents)

UN / The Secretary-General's Message on International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action 4 April 2006

In his message on the occasion of this newly announced UN observance Kofi Annan declared that landmines have no place in any civilized society and called on governments to ratify the anti-personnel mine ban treaty and the new Protocol V on the explosive remnants of war to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

UNDP / Chernobyl's Myths and Misconceptions

The 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe gives rise to a hot discussion of the latest UN report arguing that the impact of radiation is less damaging than feared.

UNDP / HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategies Tested in Regions

On 28 March, a final conference of the project 'Complex Strategies on HIV/AIDS Prevention' in the Russian Federation was held in Moscow.

UNDP / Local Governance in Transition

A conference in Moscow discussed the results of the project 'Support to the Local Governance Reform in the Russian Federation' implemented by UNDP in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development of the RF, as useful to both local administration and population.

UNDP / To Overcome Poverty by Self-Reliance

UNDP microfinance programme helps people in Kamchatka to get out of poverty and by this – to stop the poaching and to preserve the wildlife.

WHO / The Secretary-General's Message on World Health Day

In his message on World Health Day Kofi Annan acknowledges the contribution of health workers to the social and economic well-being of countries and stresses the need to rapidly bolster the global health workforce.

WHO / Health Sector Workers in the Focus of the World Health Day 2006

On 7 April 2006, WHO organised a press-conference dedicated to the World Health Day at the press centre of Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper in Moscow followed by an evening event for medical students at Kollony Zal concert hall.

WHO / Action for Life towards a World Free of Tuberculosis

This was the main message of the press conference, organised by WHO on the occasion of the World TB Day on 23 March 2006 RIA Novosti Information Agency.

UNA Russia / The 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Association of Russia

On 28 March 2006, the United Nations Association of Russia, established in 1956, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

UNHCR / Kasidis Rochanakorn: Xenophobic Tendencies in Russia is Another Concern to Us

Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the Russian Federation, Mr. Kasidis Rochanakorn, gave an interview to the Interfax new agency about UNHCR plans and priorities in 2006.

UNICEF / A Rehabilitation Centre for Families Opens in Beslan

UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education and Science of North Ossetia and with the support of French, German and Italian contributions, opened a Family Centre in Beslan.

UNICEF / French Journalist Florence Shaal Revisits Beslan

Florence Shaal, a famous French journalist, who was in Beslan during the tragic events of September 2004, visited Beslan again to participate in the inauguration of a Family Centre opened by UNICEF.

WFP / I Will Do My Sister's Hair for Her Wedding Party

Seda Makhagova, a girl from a family of Chechen refugees, took part in a two-month hairdressing course organized by International Medical Corps (IMC), WFP's implementing partner.

OCHA / Russia as a Donor of International Humanitarian Aid

Russia is expanding its international humanitarian role and the UN is looking forward to working with Russia as it continues to help provide life-saving assistance around the world.

UNESCO / G8 Education Experts Meeting

One of the issues to be discussed at the G8 Summit in Saint-Petersburg this summer is the development of the system of education. UNESCO is involved in meetings of G8 education experts and education ministers, which are being held prior to the Summit.

UNESCO / Recovery of Educational System in Chechnya: Results and Prospects

On 28 March 2006, UNESCO discussed in Moscow the results and prospects of its project 'Support for Rehabilitation and Improvement of Education System of the Chechen Republic'.

UNFPA / Population Issues as Reflected by Media

"The mass media has a major role to play in facilitating the dialogue in the society by informing both the general public and policy-makers," said UNFPA Representative in Russia, Ms. Sietske Steneker, at a UN workshop for regional journalists organized jointly with the Russian Journalists' Union.

UNIC / Measuring Contributions to Sustainable Development

On 23 March, a conference in Moscow discussed a new version of the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, a new standard of reporting for private companies on economic, environmental and social dimensions of their activities.

United Nations



Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals is a set of specific and measurable targets aimed at reducing poverty and raising living standards, which was adopted by 191 United Nations member-states, including the Russian Federation, at the Millennium Summit in 2000.

These Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be reached by 2015 or earlier, are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Goal 1 | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger |
| Goal 2 | Achieve universal primary education |
| Goal 3 | Promote gender equality and empower women |
| Goal 4 | Reduce child mortality |
| Goal 5 | Improve maternal health |
| Goal 6 | Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases |
| Goal 7 | Ensure environmental sustainability |
| Goal 8 | Develop a global partnership for development |