

## FINAL REPORT TO USAID



'DOBROGRAD' YOUTH EXCHANGE IN KARACHAEVO-CHERKESSIYA/UNICEF, MAY 2011

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

(NORTH CAUCASUS,  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

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## Map of the North Caucasus



## North Caucasus Youth Situation Analysis. Problem Statement

The Northern Caucasus has been identified as the region with the lowest GRP in Russia, despite considerable natural resources, human potential and cultural richness<sup>1</sup>. The republic of Ingushetia demonstrates the highest Russia's registered rate of unemployment in 2008 - 47.4%, or more than 7 times the national level, according to the Russian Federal Statistics Service. Other republics of the Northern Caucasus fared only slightly better. The recent global financial crisis that had a sensible impact on the Russian economy has made the last year statistics even bleaker. The region also has an especially large youth population - while 18% of the country at-large is underage, this number climbs to 30% in some NC republics. A staggering 80% of young people are estimated to be unemployed in Dagestan and Ingushetia. The combination of poverty, unemployment, social stigmatization and idle at-risk youth is a prescription for larger conflict and violence, particularly in the republics where Islamic fundamentalism is growing<sup>2</sup>.

The roots of conflict in the North Caucasus include demographic conditions (including enormous cultural diversity - with over 300 identifiable ethnic groups in the North Caucasus region), Soviet social policies of forced migration from the region, and historical ethnic, religious and ideological tensions. These have been compounded in more recent years by the criminalization of the economic, which has further undermined peace, stability and development in the region.

Young Caucasians are highly exposed to the risk of violence, yet are demographically pivotal – both in terms of their numbers and their inter-generational position torn by the forces of tradition and modernity - for achieving peace and stability.

This project's main objective was to empower at-risk youth of different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds and their communities in the North Caucasus republics, by offering community-based youth-friendly services, supporting exchanges among youth and promoting economic opportunities for those groups of young people who are most likely to be drawn into the conflict. For this reason, programming directed at youth was considered to be particularly effective in keeping them from engaging in negative risk-taking behaviour which could lead to violence. Increasing access to youth-friendly services and offering safe and inclusive spaces for learning, including on health issues (reproductive health and healthy lifestyles) to young people was an important opportunity to engage youth in a constructive way.

## Background of the Project and UNICEF's Role

In 2008, a joint UNICEF-World Bank 'Youth Empowerment and Security' project was launched in the North Caucasus. It was a two and a half year project, which addressed the needs of vulnerable young people in the region with the objectives of developing life skills, encouraging healthy behaviours and improving livelihoods.

In line with the Russian Government's Strategy for Youth adopted in November 2005 and with the priorities of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, the project aimed to serve as a learning and development platform for sustainable young peoples' development and empowerment, as well as better social integration of young people in the North Caucasus and throughout the Russian Federation.

The project was launched with the establishment of the first Youth Steering Committee in the North Caucasus (NC) in July 2009. The main idea was to initiate a dialogue between Youth Ministries and Committees of the five North Caucasus republics enrolled in the project and thus ensure joint coordination, monitoring, evaluation and planning of project-related activities which would be sustainable even after

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<sup>1</sup> GRP per capita differences: latest available figures (from 2007) provided by the Federal Statistics Service:  
Russian Federation average - 198,816 rur  
Southern Federal District - 95,362 rur (Ingushetia (the country's lowest) - 29,904 rur; Chechnya - 39,103 rur; Dagestan - 62,367 rur;  
Kabardino-Balkaria - 56,529 rur; North Ossetia - 76,455 rur)  
Moscow - 643,733 rur

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, *Youth in the Northern Caucasus: From Risk to Opportunity*, 2006

UNICEF's withdrawal from the region. UNICEF had regular meetings with the Governments of the five NC republics. As a result, a joint strategy for implementation, monitoring and future hand-over of project activities was developed. The capacity of the ministries was significantly raised through procurement of supplies, and provision of trainings and workshops, including a series of trainings on strategic planning, as well as participation in cross-regional events, including the first cross-regional conference on youth entrepreneurship.

To gather information on youth problems, identify government priorities and capacity, as well as identify target groups for the project, UNICEF conducted a Beneficiary Survey in five NC republics, including Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnya and Dagestan. Five groups of young volunteers were selected and trained to conduct interviews in five republics. The exercise was welcomed by the ministries as it gave them a unique opportunity to obtain up-to-date information on youth problems and priorities in their respective republics, as well as in the region as a whole. Based on the findings of the survey, the first Pilot Youth Centre was opened by UNICEF in the village of Nesterovskaya, Ingushetia, to provide life skills, information technology, foreign languages and other employment-related courses and organize leisure activities for adolescents and youth. To ensure functioning of the Centre in 2009, and also start planning for a gradual hand-over of the programme to the government, UNICEF signed letters of exchange with the Youth Committee of Ingushetia highlighting current and future responsibilities of both parties. High level of beneficiary satisfaction with the YC programme has been proved through long waiting lists of applicants for the services offered by the centre as well as the number of young people who have participated in extracurricular events organised by the centre. The level of youth participation in the program design and implementation can be also marked as high: youth opinion was voiced through the Beneficiary survey and meetings with young people throughout all republics.

Location for the second youth centre was identified by UNICEF in early 2010, and was also based on the analysis of the survey results as well as on the security situation directly affecting youth. As a result, upon successful completion of negotiations with the local government and preparation of the basis for the launch of activities, the Galaktika Youth Centre was opened in Baksanski district of Kabardino-Balkaria.

In parallel, UNICEF developed and completed a Small Grants Component of the project. National professional agencies were invited to bid for provision of services on developing recommendations on creation of governing policies and instruments for distribution of small grants to young entrepreneurs and NGOs for youth-friendly services in the five focus republics of NC, as well as on development of the grant process itself. As a result, the Russian Agency of Support for Small and Medium Business has become the winner of the bidding and successfully completed the assignment. On 1 June 2010, the Small Grants component of the project was officially launched to invite the two groups of potential applicants – young individual entrepreneurs and NGOs working on youth issues in the five focus republics of the North Caucasus – to participate in the competition. The selection process was completed by mid August 2011, and all the winners received grants to start up the new businesses and support various activities aimed at improving the quality of lives of vulnerable youth.

## **Project Description**

### **Overall Goal**

- Increased local capacity to provide economic, governance, civic and healthcare opportunities to youth will contribute to reduction of the threat of violence in the North Caucasus.

### **Planned Project Results**

- Increased economic opportunities for at-risk youth of different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds
- Increased public satisfaction with the effectiveness of local governance
- Improved quality and access to social-medical services, including safe and inclusive spaces for learning

## Key Activities

All project-related activities were conducted based on UNICEF's expertise and lessons learnt in course of its Youth Empowerment project carried out in the five republics of the North Caucasus since early 2009.

Component 1: Baseline survey (focus groups)

Component 2: Opening of Youth Centres/Youth Friendly Services in three republics of NC

Component 3: Small grants for young entrepreneurs and NGOs from five republics of NC

Component 4: Youth exchanges

## Project Duration

2 September 2010 – 31 December 2011 (16 months)

## Outputs of the Project:

Cooperation with the Youth Ministries and Committees of the five North Caucasus republics enrolled in the project remained a key to the success of the project. The overall project coordination, monitoring, evaluation and planning of project-related activities were managed through the Youth Steering Committee established by UNICEF in 2009. This coordination mechanism proved to be effective in supporting the piloting of new initiatives simultaneously in 5 focus republics, facilitating the adoption of common approaches and policies for youth, and providing technical assistance to the governments through the Youth Ministries and Committees.

### *Component 1: Baseline survey (focus groups)*

In July 2011, UNICEF conducted a baseline survey/focus groups discussions with the aim to prepare basis for the development of programme for the three youth centres which were planned to be opened in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya. The main objective of the survey was to obtain baseline information on youth needs and expectations in the selected locations and neighbouring villages.

The assignment was carried out by an independent external consultant hired through an official bidding process and included the following activities:

- a) Design of the framework for conducting focus group discussions and individual interviews in three republics;
- b) Mapping of all national and international organizations providing services to youth in the mentioned areas and meetings with their representatives;
- c) Through interviews and focus group discussions, identification of:
  - some of the major social problems of youth in targeted communities such as drug abuse, unemployment, early pregnancy, family planning, violence level, HIV and STD prevalence, ethnic / religious / generational affinity, girls drop-out from education system, etc.;
  - type, cost and accessibility of services and programs for youth;
  - youth aspirations in given communities in light of the opening of youth centres by UNICEF.
- d) Preparation of a report.

As a result, up to 100 youth (approximate audience of an average center) aged 14-24 (both male and female, studying and working, single and married/divorced, urban and rural) were interviewed in each republic bringing the total number of respondents to 300.

In parallel, meetings were held with the staff of the Youth Ministries/Committees in charge of the project.

In addition, the consultant assessed the physical conditions of the premises proposed by the respective governments to host the Youth Centers. He found the premises conveniently located and friendly to youth. Availability of a canteen, a conference room or a stage in specific premises was considered to be a positive factor in favour of this or that location.

Then the gathered data has been entered into the database and processed qualitatively and quantitatively. Main indicators have been finalized per cent and links between the respondents' background (age, social position etc.) and their choices have been traced.

## Baseline Survey/Focus Groups Findings

### Grozny, Chechnya

The city is best positioned compared to other two in terms of service availability for the youth. Grozny is witnessing construction boom for the last few years. Population is growing so is the service industry. However the accessibility of services to youth can be questioned. Below is the list of basic services and their average cost:

- English classes are generally available and charged from RUB 300 per hour. A couple of places offer regular classes starting from RUB 1500 per month.
- Computer classes are more available. Charges vary from RUB 200 per hour to 3000 per month.
- Gyms and fitness centers are available from RUB 800 per month.

The total number of respondents was 95 (41% male and 59% female) aged 14-24. Out of them 53% - urban residents and 47% - rural, 90% are single, 8,5% are or have been married and 4% have children; 80% respondents are school students – 20%, 20% college students and 60% university students; 21% respondents have primary education, 70% - secondary, 1% - secondary professional and 6% - higher.

33% respondents aged 17-24 work with monthly wages of RUB 4200-16000. 41% respondents think their financial situation is below average, 56% -average and about 3% - above average. 24% consider their health excellent, 61% medium, over 11% below average and about 3% have a disability. 10% respondents have dependants out of which (the respondents) about 29% are or have been married and have children.

The respondents expressed their wish to be engaged in the following activities to be offered by the Youth Center (percentage per total number of respondents):

- English language classes – 43%;
- Computer courses – 60%;
- Psychologist counseling – 28,5%;
- Lectures on important youth-related issues – 50%;
- Sports – 61,4%;
- Music lessons – 17%.

### Derbent, Dagestan

The city does not have many places where young people can access services they need. This has been mentioned in the questionnaire several times by respondents:

- Computer course and English classes are available on individual basis from RUB 300 per hour. Only one private company offers regular computer courses from RUB 1500 per month.
- There is a psychologist at the local Children and Youth Art Center who offers free services for groups.
- Fitness service is available from RUB 600 per month.
- The city does not have karaoke club or dancing classes.

The total number of respondents is 90 (53% male and 47% female) aged 16-24. Out of them 93% are urban residents and 7% are rural. 61,4% are single, 37% are married and 25,7% have children; 38,5% respondents are students. 45,7% have secondary education, 18,6% - secondary professional, and 35,7% have higher education; 38,6% respondents aged 19-24 are employed with monthly salaries starting from RUB 1000; 10% respondents consider their financial situation as being below average, 77% - average, and about 13% - above average. 57% respondents consider their health as excellent, 41,4% as average. 20% respondents have dependants out of whom 50% are or have been married and have children.

The respondents expressed their wish to be engaged in the following activities to be offered by the Youth Center (percentage per total number of respondents):

- English language classes – 8,6%.
- Computer courses – 60%.
- Psychologist counseling – 52,8%.

- Interesting lectures on important issues – 70%.
- Sports – 68,5%.
- Music lessons – 50%.

### **Tyrnyauz, Kabardino-Balkaria**

The city was considered to be in the least favourable situation in terms of service availability. It is located in a remote economically poor mountain area of Kabardino-Balkaria. The following services have been reported to be available in Tyrnyauz:

- Computer and English classes only on individual basis from RUB 300 per hour. No company offers regular courses;
- Fitness for RUB 350 per month. That includes 8 hours in total, 2 hours per week;
- There is an Internet club in the city sponsored by IREX;
- There is no gym in the city.

The total number of respondents was 105 (44% male and 56% female) aged 14-24. Out of them 74% are urban residents and 26% are rural. 83% respondents are single, 17% are or have been married, 10% have children; 75,7% respondents are students, 22,9% respondents have primary education, 55,7% - secondary, 10% - secondary professional, and 11,4% - higher education; 42,9% respondents aged 15-24 work with monthly salary of RUB 1000-15000. 4,3% respondents (out of which 67% are working with average monthly wages of RUB 6000) consider their financial situation below average, 61,4% - average and about 34,3% - above average. 57% respondents consider their health as excellent, 37% - average, 4,4% - below average. 4,3% respondents have dependants out of which (the respondents) 33% are or have been married and have children.

The respondents wished to be engaged in the following activities offered through the new Youth Center (percentage per total number of respondents):

- English language classes – 55,7%.
- Computer courses – 75,7%.
- Psychologist counseling – 64,3%.
- Lectures on important youth-related issues – 72,9%.
- Sports – 80%.
- Music lessons – 62,9%.

Based on the republic-specific findings of the survey, recommendations were provided in three sets aiming at meeting the specific needs of youth residing in the three selected locations.

Family planning and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS were recommended to be considered among the main priorities for the educational parts of the centres' programmes.

In general, the following topics were recommended for inclusion into the curriculum of youth centers (listed in priority order):

#### **1.Sports:**

- a. Fitness for girls;
- b. Gym;
- c. Outdoor games;
- d. Table games.

#### **2.Computing:**

- a. Office applications;
- b. Graphics and design;
- c. Basic computer skills;
- d. Programming.

#### **3. Interesting lectures on important issues:**

- a. Healthy life styles (prevention of HIV/AIDS, STD, drug and tobacco addiction, etc.)

- b. Family planning;
- c. Juvenile delinquency;
- d. Professional orientation;

**4. Psychological counselling:**

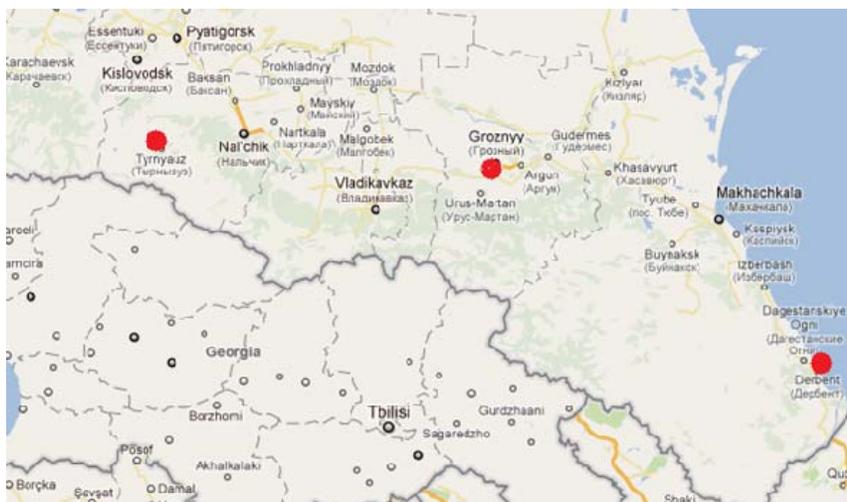
- a. Future planning;
- b. Interpersonal relationships;
- c. Lack of self-confidence;
- d. Loneliness;
- e. Fear;
- f. Nightmares.

**5. Music lessons:**

- a. Singing;
- b. Dancing;
- c. Playing instruments;
- d. Karaoke-club.

As a result, a list of findings and recommendations has been used by UNICEF and the Youth Committees/ Ministries as a baseline for planning the Youth Centre’s programmes. Staffing and supplies procurement have been also effected based on the survey results.

*Component 2: Opening of Youth Centres/Youth Friendly Services in three Republics of NC*



**Locations of the three new youth centres**

The new funding from USAID allowed UNICEF to open three additional youth centres in the North Caucasus. Locations for the centres were selected based on the outcomes of the Beneficiary Survey (see above) jointly with the governments. They included Derbent (Dagestan), Tyrnauz (Kabardino-Balkaria) and Grozny (Chechnya). These became a part of the network of youth centres established in the North Caucasus in course of the previously implemented UNICEF-World Bank project.

**Coordination**

Strategy for establishment, monitoring and future hand-over of the three Youth Centres to the Governments of Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan was developed in a joint effort with the Youth Ministries and Committees of the three republics. Official letters requesting opening of the centres and specifying the responsibilities of the governments were signed by the three Youth Ministers/Chairpersons and UNICEF.

Physical state of the premises, as well as the potential for future inclusion of all specialists of the youth centres into the government payrolls, was assessed by the Youth Committees/Ministries. UNICEF received detailed information on youth problems in the proposed location, available specialists, size and state of the premises, structure of the institutions which will host the centres, etc.

### ***Supplies***

In preparation for the opening, UNICEF procured the following equipment per each centre (a detailed list is attached):

- Furniture (15-20 tables, 50-60 chairs, 12 computer tables, 20 desks, 12 computer chairs, 10 book-cases, 2 blackboards, 5-7 coat racks, 2 sofas, 4 armchairs, small table, metal shelves, library furniture)
- Office equipment (5-7 heaters, 1 carpet, 3 flipcharts, 3 card index safes, 2 TV-sets, 2 DVD, 2 radio/music centers, etc.)
- IT equipment (12 computers & UPSs; 2 network printers; 1 color printer; 1 scanner; software -operating system, office suite, antivirus, LCD projector, laptop, copy machine.
- Materials and supplies for center's non-formal education, social, creative and cultural activities – one set per republic 1 digital camera; 5 pin boards; Stationery; sports items (5 balls, 20 skipping-ropes, 1 floor scales, 20 step stands, 1 table tennis set, 20 fitness rugs, chess, 20 spheres for aerobics); Books; 5 wall clocks; 1 tea/coffee set (a pot, cups, sources);

### ***Training***

The following training were organised by UNICEF for groups of selected volunteers and specialists of each centre to deliver their leadership skills and potential:

- Healthy Lifestyles (understanding health risks related to STDs, family planning/reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, tobacco and substance abuse, particularly intravenous drug use).
- Volunteer Movement (communication skills and positive identity building; youth leadership development, including training of peer educators).

### ***Staffing***

The following staff were hired by the Youth Ministries and local administrations in accordance with the job descriptions approved by UNICEF: the centre coordinators, teachers of Healthy Lifestyles, English teachers, IT specialists, psychologists, librarians, sports coaches and others. All specialists were put through a series of trainings together with the selected young volunteers. The rationale behind the initiative was to make them a united group of associates who will be jointly working with the young people in their respective communities.

In order to effectively promote the newly opened Youth Centres among the local children and adolescents, a clearly delineated **brand identity** was developed with the aim to eventually become an easily recognizable “trademark” of the centres. Taking into account the overall concept of a youth centre and the consequent promotional strategy, the visual elements of brand identity were developed by a contracted printing company, including the title, logotype, font etc. Once the samples were ready they went through the necessary field testing, the most appropriate versions were selected and manufactured in their original size. These included signboards, door tablets, information plates etc. (photographs attached). The exterior and interior of all three centres were decorated in accordance with the agreed concept.

**Official opening** of the centres took place in November and December 2011. Along with the young people, local administrations, staff of the centres, the ceremonies were also attended by the high ranking government officials. Mr. Uyanaev, the Deputy Prime Minister of Kabardino-Balkaria, who participated in the opening of the "Pegas" Center in Tyrnyauz, expressed his gratitude to UNICEF and USAID for supporting the establishment of the centre and handed over to the representatives of UNICEF a Thank You Letter signed by the President of Kabardino-Balkaria for a



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Minister of Youth of Kabardino-Balkaria is handing a certificate to a young volunteer at the opening of the Pegas Youth Centre in Tyrnyauz

significant contribution to youth development in the region.

The core offer for all three youth centres has been a *curriculum of classes*. These have been delivered by staff specialists including language teachers, computer instructors, psychologists, fitness specialists and others. Interactions between teachers and students are informal, and classes do not teach the same things that young people would learn in school, but are complementary. There are skill-building classes in computers and languages, as well as classes aimed at improving well-being such as Healthy Life Styles which warn against the risks of drugs and alcohol, HIV/AIDS and STDs. Special attention was paid to Family Planning issues. Due to a sensitive nature of the topic, the agency which provided training on healthy lifestyles for volunteers and specialists was requested to develop republic-specific guidelines to be further used by the youth centres. Emphasis was put on setting up a mechanism which would allow for referring those young people in need of special information, treatment or simply advice related to family planning, to medical institutions or service providers. The total of 110 referrals has been reported by the newly established centres by the end of the project.

In addition, the above lectures are also regularly delivered by the specialists and the volunteers through outreach activities conducted at schools and other places attended by youth. In some centres, there are also leisure activities like dance, choir and exercise classes. Two centres have libraries.

All the three youth centres reported high levels of demand for their services, and by the end of 2011 the two of them were already reaching the upper limit of the number of young people they could serve. Staff at those youth centres reported waiting lists for computer and language classes. With computer rooms that have room for only 10 computers, the youth centres are clearly not-equipped to keep up with demand. During the site visits UNICEF staff were told by the Youth Centres' management and specialists that they will need to re-examine their offer to see how they can service more young people.

UNICEF has made good progress with *handing the youth centres over to ministries* in Chechnya, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. Government agencies in the three republics have adopted staff salaries into their own payrolls, two – from the very beginning, one - by the end of the project. The process for setting up the youth centres involved republican, district and village level governments and have been smooth thanks to the efforts of the latter.

### ***Component 3: Small Grants for Young Entrepreneurs and NGOs from Five Republics of NC***

The Small Grants component was also a continuation of the activity launched by UNICEF North Caucasus in 2010.

UNICEF made sure that a rigorous selection process was set up, and also ensured that reservations within republican government ministries were allayed. Republican cooperation was very forthcoming.

The UNICEF team also drew on the expertise of other UN agencies. It secured the services of ILO-certified business trainers to give ILO's three-day course on starting a business. The course is thoroughly tested, having been run thousands of times around the world. UNICEF also worked with UNDP to review business plans during the competitive selection process, which led to synergy between UNICEF and UNDP programmes in their support for entrepreneurs.

#### **NGO Grants**

Through this component, UNICEF provided 14 grants to NGOs in all 5 republics. The average ceiling for grants was increased to allow for more tangible and sustainable results of the projects. The best proposals were selected from a total 36 submitted ones, of which 35 were considered eligible.

The grant programme allowed UNICEF to work with the recipients as with "implementation partners". This designation requires NGOs to demonstrate a minimum level of organisational capacity, and the status better positions organisations to attract funds from other donors. In order to ensure the process was fair, external evaluators were used to evaluate and score NGO proposals and those receiving the highest scores were short-listed. As part of the process, NGOs had to submit their accounts and registrations to ensure that all

government approvals and tax filings were complete. This was to ensure that the grants would not simply be used to cover past liabilities. UNICEF also reviewed the strength of NGOs' internal administrative systems and gave them a risk rating. A rating of low meant that there were no reservations for providing the grant, and high meant that the NGO was considered too risky to work with and was disqualified. A rating of medium meant that UNICEF would work with the NGO to put the right procedures in place. NGO grant recipients who were interviewed during the final project evaluation and beneficiary survey spoke positively about the support received from the project.

Projects implemented by the 14 NGOs grant recipient from the 5 North Caucasus republics included:

- “My DobrAlania” – support to volunteer movement in North Ossetia.
- “Creation of Business-consulting Centres for Young People” – help to young people wishing to start their own businesses;
- “Young People are our Future” - psychological rehabilitation of young people with disabilities;
- “Socialization of the Young People through Formulating their National Identity” – educating young people about Ossetian traditions and values;
- “North Caucasus School of Civil Activist” – educating young people in the sphere of not-for-profit management;
- “My DobrAlania” – support of volunteer movement across North Caucasus;
- “The Elder Friend” – organization of volunteer movement to help young people who have difficulties obeying laws;
- “Forming of Communication Competence of the Children and Teenagers from Rural Areas Using Game Technologies;
- “The School of a Young Leader” – organizing a series of leadership trainings in Chechnya and Ingushetia;
- “Promotion of the Healthy Lifestyle and Sports among People with Disabilities in Chechnya”
- Social Integration of Young People with Special Needs through Employment Assistance”
- “Prevention of Aggressiveness and Extremist Inclinations in Young People” – a series of trainings and educational activities in order to discourage destructive behaviors;
- “Young Leaders School” - series of trainings and seminars in order to help young people to develop their leadership potential;
- “Bringing Down the Barriers” – psychosocial support of the young people affected by the Chechen conflict;
- “The World through the Eyes of the Young People” – building tolerance through bringing together young people from different regions for capacity-building;

In quite a number of cases, the grants provided allowed the NGOs to expand their coverage to young people from other republics and hold events which had a cross-regional nature. Some NGOs did not have the opportunity to pursue specific issues in the past due to the lack of funding and coordination with their colleagues in the neighbouring republics. The receipt of the grants allowed them to follow up on those issues.

As a result, the activities undertaken by the NGO grant recipients fulfilled the original project objectives through engaging young people in community life, developing their leadership and other skills, ensuring integration of young people with special needs into the society, providing opportunities for income generation, etc.

All this has been clearly voiced by the heads of the winning NGOs from North Ossetia during the wrap-up meeting convened by the UNICEF Representative in the Russian Federation in December 2012. Several NGOs mentioned that due to their participation in UNICEF's competition they were required to improve their internal administration and reporting systems in



Wrap-up meeting with NGOs, the grant winners

order to qualify for a grant. This was good for the organisations not only in terms of improving their own efficiency, but also for positioning them well for attracting funding from other international donors. In a number of cases, the grant allowed NGOs to expand their activities to adolescents and young people. The Representative highlighted that by helping the new NGOs become more stable, and providing more established NGOs with the opportunity to extend their offer to young people the grants are expected to increase the amount of NGO activity directed towards adolescents and young people.

### **Entrepreneur grants**

UNICEF also provided 29 grants to entrepreneurs through this component. Grants for entrepreneurs were awarded competitively, and were not provided as cash but as goods and equipment for their businesses. Once the requirements were defined, UNICEF handled the procurement and delivered the goods to the winners. Entrepreneurs gained full ownership of these goods only after several months of operation, when they have demonstrated some progress against their business plans.

The entrepreneurship grants component of the project was delayed in getting started, but UNICEF should be applauded for the efficiency with which it conducted the initiative once it got underway. Grants were administered in a couple of stages. First, an announcement was placed in the media, inviting interested applicants to submit an application with an expression of interest to UNICEF and a panel of evaluators who would select the winners. All applicants were then invited to attend the ILO Start Your Business training programme, where they were led through a series of sessions to translate their idea into a business plan. After completing the course, applicants had a few weeks to refine their plans and then re-submit them to UNICEF, where an independent panel of evaluators scored and selected the winners. Two hundred ninety-nine (299) people submitted applications for the grant, and 199 took part in the training. Of those, 135 submitted business plans, from which 29 were selected.

The UNICEF team came up with an innovative approach for keeping applicants informed about the progress of their applications and the time and dates of meetings and training events through a text message application. This allowed the limited number of UNICEF staff to efficiently keep in regular contact with a large number of widely distributed applicants.

The 4-day business plan course was well-designed and took participants through a structured process of defining their product, identifying their customers, making sales projections and calculating financial results. The course included within it a short survey that trainees filled out and scored themselves to assess their readiness to start their business. The ILO trainer reported that at the beginning, only 37% of trainees achieved a “ready” classification, whereas by the end, 90% achieved it. This increase suggests that trainers were effective in conveying the information to trainees.

In interviews conducted in the end of the trainings, grantees gave mixed reviews of the utility of the business plan training. Several said that it was interesting and enjoyable, but some of them mentioned that it was “somewhat theoretical” and expressed their wish to have more practical sessions. It was clearly a benefit for the programme however, because the training session provided a good filter for identifying motivated candidates and for generating a set of business plans that could be assessed against a common set of criteria.

Generating a large pool of good quality proposals was necessary because there was some attrition of candidates after the business plans were selected. The grants would supply equipment for the new businesses, but the programme also required entrepreneurs to commit resources of their own. UNICEF discovered that a few of the candidates did not have all the resources they claimed in their applications, and had to be disqualified. That UNICEF managed to identify and eliminate such cases before any resources were committed demonstrates its sound and thorough approach to project management.

Entrepreneurs were very positive about the support they received from UNICEF throughout the startup process. UNICEF staff made themselves available on the phone, often outside of regular office hours, to answer questions or provide advice.

Small businesses started up in the 5 NC republics with support of the project included:

- Software development;
- Furniture production;

- Sewing business;
- Decorative articles of glass;
- Bakery;
- Sound recording studio;
- Vending business;
- Home repairs and doors installations;
- Tents and tables rental;
- Sewing mini-shop
- Sewing and alterations business
- Mini dairy-farm
- Production of quails



Mini-bakery run by the small grant winner in Grozny, Chechnys

- Greenhouse business
- Events agency
- Auto-repair shop
- Vulcanization shop
- Production of pea flour
- Events agency
- Production of silver jewelry
- Home repairs shop
- Mini-bakery
- Gym
- Confectioner's shop
- Mini cattle-farm
- Consumer services shop

Unsuccessful applicants to the USAID-UNICEF grants programme were advised to join the UNDP entrepreneurship club established in consultation with UNICEF, so they have continued support to help them follow up on their business ideas.

Results of the small grants programme for young entrepreneurs included increased personal incomes, self-confidence and respect from others. Grantees have also provided jobs for other young people.

#### *Component 4: Youth Exchanges*

Jointly with Youth Committees and Ministries, UNICEF conducted two youth exchange events with the involvement of young people representing seven republics of the North Caucasus Federal District, as well as their coevals from Stavropol Krai, Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Baku, Erevan and other locations.

The first event was hosted by Karachaevo-Cherkessia. It was the Cross-Regional Congress of Young Volunteers «Dobrograd-2011» held in Arkhyz from 5 to 10 May 2011. The total of 300 young people from the 5 NC republics actively participated in the exchange. The agenda of the congress included educational programmes, interactive volunteer sessions, ToT for volunteers, presentations by all groups of participants, cinema festival «Kind Movies» and the best social poster contest, song festival, etc. One of the unplanned results was that a youth volunteer network was established for the whole region.

The second event - cross-regional youth exchange entitled "Build your tower" - was hosted by the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania from 2-11 October 2011. Representatives of seven republics gathered in the Kurtat Gorge, one of the most picturesque parts of the republic, to study and work together. The authentic Caucasian tower built together by young people of various nationalities became a symbol of friendship and future development of the region. The Head of the Republic, representative of the Youth department of the Parliament, Youth and Sports Minister and UNICEF team met with the participants to answer their questions. "I am convinced that the young generation of the North Caucasus will continue to adhere to traditional values that have always symbolized openness, hospitality and kindness to the neighbours," - Taimuraz Mamsurov, the Head of North Ossetia during the press conference. It was decided to replicate the event in all NC republics making it an annual youth forum to ensure a continuous dialogue between youth of the region.



A Tower of Friendship built by youth from seven NC republics



Opening of the Youth Exchange Event in North Ossetia

## Summary of Project Outcomes and Impact:

### Indicators:

- Number of youth-friendly policies introduced – 3 (of 3 planned):
  - 1) internal circular by the Youth Ministries and Committees on opening of Youth centres/services;
  - 2) district-level circulars by the three respective administrations calling for cooperation between local educational institutions and the newly established Youth Centres.
  - 3) specially designed governing policies and guidelines for the small grants competition as a micro-finance support for young people of the region;
- Number of people benefiting from USG-supported social services - 7,100 young people and adolescents (of 6,000 planned)
- Number of counseling visits for Family Planning/Reproductive Health as a result of USG assistance - 110 referrals (of 70 planned)
- Number of people from “at-risk” groups reached through USG-supported conflict mitigation activities - approximately 1,800 young people and adolescents (of 1,500 planned)
- Proportion of youth who self-report improved healthy lifestyles behaviors, such as reduced substance abuse, improved RH practices – 65% (of 50% planned)
- Number of people that have seen or heard a specific USG-supported FP/RH message – 1500 (of 900 planned, of them 70% girls)

### Conclusion:

The aims and approach of the project were highly relevant to the needs of the region. The relationships UNICEF has built over more than a decade of work in the North Caucasus allowed the project to remain connected to stakeholders and well-adapted to local realities.

As a part of the bigger UNICEF Youth and Adolescent Development programme launched in late 2008, the USAID-supported project has brought about changes in attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of young

people. Apart from this, it still continues having an effect on a wider group of indirect beneficiaries as participants influence their friends and family. The kinds of changes that are taking place as a result of the project include increased participation in community activities, increased ethnic tolerance, and the perception that opportunities for young people are expanding.

The most meaningful project achievement was establishment of cross-regional networks of youth centres, young volunteers, young entrepreneurs, youth-oriented NGOs and government officials taking decisions affecting lives of young people in the region.

Much of what the programme has built is intangible, and the departure of the UN and other international organisations from the region poses a number of threats to the sustainability of results achieved. However, the fact that all project components have been successfully handed over to the respective governments of the 5 NC republics is speaking well in favour of their sustainability and future potential.