

Programme of Action:

**Development and Stability in the North
Caucasus**

COMMISSIONED BY THE UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - DFID (MOSCOW)



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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Programme of Action is to provide the basis for dialogue and co-ordination on reconstruction in the North Caucasus between the Russian government and concerned international agencies. It covers key areas and priorities for Russian and international co-operation on promoting development and stability in the North Caucasus. The annexes contain the synthesis studies that serve as the basis for the Programme of Action, as well as suggested guidelines for the assessment of programme/project proposals.

The Programme of Action is a follow-up to the Strategic Reconstruction and Development Assessment: North Caucasus (SRDA) study commissioned by the Global Conflict Prevention Pool (United Kingdom) and finalised in December 2005¹. The SRDA was focused on broader action required for effective reconstruction and stability in the region.

The methodology used for the preparation of the Programme of Action included: (a) a survey of Russian and international policy and programmes in the North Caucasus; (b) interviews with key stakeholders on areas of common ground between Russian and international agencies; (c) an informal consultative meeting of Russian federal, regional/local, and international experts; and (c) preparation of studies on republic level issues.

The points and recommendations put forward in the Programme of Action are those of independent experts. They should be considered as expert opinion and do not reflect any political agenda². However, the "red thread" that runs through this Programme of Action is the concern for the human security and well-being of the population in the North Caucasus.

2. THEORY AND PRACTICE OF RUSSIAN-INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON THE NORTH CAUCASUS

2.1. OVERVIEW

Russian and international co-operation on the North Caucasus has been limited – despite official agreement on key policy issues. Understanding how such co-operation can be bolstered requires a review of the policy context and an assessment of key perceptions and issues. It also involves understanding current co-ordination initiatives and challenges. These issues are discussed in the sections below and introduce proposed entry-points/priorities in a more joined up Russian and international approach to the region, and the dialogue required for such enhanced co-operation.

¹ The SRDA report reviewed the policy directions of Russian institutions and Russian and international responses to the situation in the North Caucasus and concluded with a set of strategic recommendations. The core of the study was the analysis of security, development and governance nexus in the North Caucasus at regional and local levels.

² It should be noted that consultations have been conducted with Administration of the President of Russia at the expert level when producing this document. This was done to ensure that the document finds support in principle by the Administration.

2.2. POLICY CONTEXT

A systematic review of various policy documents on the North Caucasus shows that the Russian government and international agencies³ broadly agree on the main thrust of a solution to the problems in the region and key principles for moving forward.

Agreement on main thrust of solution

Despite the challenges presented by the North Caucasus, the broad outline of a sustainable solution is not in question. It includes the following pre-conditions and key elements: (a) the territorial integrity of Russia; (b) the creation/strengthening of representative political institutions; (c) respect for human rights and rule of law; (d) continuing humanitarian assistance and protection to those in need of it, especially vulnerable groups such as IDPs; and (e) a transition (as quickly as possible) from the provision of humanitarian assistance to sustainable socio-economic development and reconstruction programmes that address the key sources of conflict, crisis and instability.

There is also general agreement that the region is currently ripe for change in the response to its crises and conflicts. Although there is still scope for renewed conflict, the general assessment of all parties is that there now exists a window of opportunity for a concerted push on socio-economic development and reconstruction that could yield positive and sustainable results.

Agreement on principles for moving forward

However, if such a strategy is to stand a chance of success certain key principles should be observed, including:

Sustainability and ownership This requires that:

- The overall recovery and development process should be owned and managed by the *Russian authorities*;
- International reconstruction and developmental programmes should be complementary to and coordinated with governmental programmes, fill existing gaps, and support current recovery efforts of Russia in the region;
- Russian federal authorities should elaborate a coherent long-term strategy (or a number of coordinated state programmes) for the reconstruction and development in North Caucasus region to which international donors would contribute;
- International donors should seek to inject funding into strategic areas where this would add real value and act as a catalyst for a more effective and concerted governmental approach;
- Wherever possible socio-economic reconstruction and development initiatives should be *locally-owned* at the *municipal* and *republic* levels with as much input as possible from civil society; and

³ Particularly the EU, the United Nations (and its agencies), the World Bank and leading NGOs such as ICRC, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE and others.

- In order to build local ownership and implementation capacity, support should be provided to local initiatives that improve the quality of people's lives, generate visible and measurable results, and contribute pro-actively to local community development.

Balancing economic reconstruction with strengthening human security It is recognised that:

- There is need for programmes which would stimulate economic growth and trade, the establishment of legitimate opportunities for income generation and employment, as well as security and confidence-building; and
- Infrastructural development is a crucial part of recovery, but needs to be balanced with programmes aimed at strengthening human security, reducing poverty, peace-building and conflict prevention, upholding constitutional and general human rights.

Building on work that is already being done and providing for smooth transition This means that:

- Long term sustainable development in the North Caucasus should build on humanitarian and development projects currently carried out by UN agencies and their local partners. Phasing out of humanitarian aid and addressing aid dependencies that have already emerged in the region should not cause suffering and stress to beneficiaries, especially children, people with disabilities, IDPs and other vulnerable groups; and
- There is a pool of knowledge, expertise, contacts and lessons learned in the ongoing co-ordinated UN humanitarian effort that is of great value for longer term developmental efforts. The transfer of expertise to local NGOs, self-governance bodies and officials is essential.

Effective Coordination See section 2.4. below.

Conflict sensitivity All recovery and development efforts in the North Caucasus should be conflict-sensitive. Ethnic tensions, land disputes, negative implications of armed conflict have to be carefully considered.

Governance and political institutions Ultimately success will depend on reforming local state governance and self-governance institutions and realigning elite interests away from conflict and corruption towards stability and sustainable development. This is a long and arduous process that will require long-term commitment of resources and attention.

2.3. KEY PERCEPTIONS AND ISSUES

The policy-level areas of agreement provide an important point of departure for a more joined-up Russian and international approach to the North Caucasus. However, there remains significant distrust between the Russian government (at different levels) and international agencies. This distrust is based on several perceived and real issues that need to be tackled for co-operation on the North Caucasus.

Russian government perceptions and issues

Russian government officials are in need of a clear explanation of why international actors wish to continue operations in the North Caucasus. In particular, Russian policy-makers are concerned that humanitarian values serve as a smoke-screen for political interference instrumentalised through aid and recovery efforts. These concerns have to be addressed.

Russian officials are very sensitive to any imposition of democratic text-book solutions to the problems of the North Caucasus. However, there is openness to an exchange of expertise and preparedness to draw on expertise when offered. This requires an appropriate level of trust, credibility, and respect that can only be established through dialogue.

There are also concerns that international NGOs operating in the North Caucasus are unwilling to shift from the emergency relief type of activities to reconstruction and development. While their efforts in helping thousands of people are appreciated, it is also recognised that a transition to reconstruction is essential to address emerging aid dependencies and provide for normalisation of life in the region.

International perceptions and issues

International actors are concerned about the ability of the governance system in the region to effectively address existing humanitarian, recovery and reconstruction needs. The governance institutions in the North Caucasus are perceived as deeply affected by clan tribalism and corruption that might prevent fair access to benefits and opportunities for all population groups.

Another concern is that if international funds are channelled through government structures that inefficiencies and corruption in the system will limit the positive impact of funding. Co-funding options may help address this concern. However, the most sustainable solution perceived by the international actors is to strengthen good governance and mainstream human security approaches.

2.4. CO-ORDINATION CHALLENGES

Given the scope of the task at hand, and the large number of governmental and nongovernmental, regional and federal, international and national actors involved in current and prospective efforts, co-ordination and the setting of priorities are important requirements.

A brief overview of co-ordination approaches taken by international agencies and the Russian government is provided here.

Co-ordination among Russian government bodies

The first draft of the targeted federal development program "South of Russia" has been rejected by Plenipotentiary Representative of the President in the South Federal District Dmitry Kozak on the grounds of being excessively infrastructure-oriented. It is currently being revised. Nonetheless, it is clear that the dominant bureaucratic culture in the region/republics is that development is understood in "infrastructural" terms, and not as a complex "socio-economic" endeavour based on a comprehensive assessment of human needs, as well as the socio-economic and political context.

At present the Ministry of Economic Development leads consultations with republican administrations on priority action in the North Caucasus development programming. In the framework of these consultations each republic is supposed to prepare its own Development Programme for discussion with the Ministry. This process covers Chechnya as well. The Development programme for Chechnya is large in size, but is focused mostly on infrastructural projects. Institutional development measures, capacity building of local self-governance bodies and local communities, training for professional workers, etc. are not sufficiently addressed in the programme.

An important law "On distribution of power between various levels of public authorities" was signed in December 2005. One of its clauses prescribed decentralisation of the Federal Employment Service, which is responsible for income support and labour market programmes for the unemployed. Dmitry Kozak and his apparatus appear to have served as the main vehicle for promoting this law whereas the Federal Ministry on Social Development strongly opposed it. According to the new law, the two essential components of macro-economic strategies are now brought under greater control of regional authorities. These two components are: (a) labour-market regulation and policies, creation of jobs etc. (previously the task of Moscow-based Federal Employment Service); and (b) general economic development (previously the task of regional authorities). This is designed to ensure greater consistency and coordination of economic policies in the region.

Co-ordination among international agencies

Under the CAP, UN agencies and NGOs have established a set of humanitarian co-ordination mechanisms over the past six years. These mechanisms allow for consolidated planning, systematic consultation with other partners, as well as collective resource mobilisation and advocacy.

In 2006, a group of international NGOs formed an NGO Consortium sharing three goals: (a) consolidated representation; (b) exchange of humanitarian information; and (c) shared resources. The Humanitarian Co-ordinator invited representatives of the NGO Consortium and the ICRC to join the heads of UN humanitarian agencies in establishment of an Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Field Team.

In spring 2005, the UN Resident Co-ordinator and the Humanitarian Co-ordinator consulted with the UN Emergency Relief Co-ordinator and the Chair of the UN Development Group, and jointly worked out a joint plan for transitional international assistance in the North Caucasus.

Since the middle of 2005 the monthly Humanitarian Forum in Moscow had been converted into an integrated Humanitarian and Development Forum. The Transitional Workplan for 2006 grew out of these and other processes. The Workplan establishes a framework for co-ordination between humanitarian and development agencies during a transition period that is likely to last several years.

The participants in this Workplan have agreed to build upon the existing humanitarian co-ordination mechanisms through 2006 in order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the ongoing humanitarian operation. They also agreed to adapt the current mechanisms to the need to incorporate more planning for recovery and reconstruction across all sectors and to add several new sectors specifically aimed at addressing longer term development.

However, the mandate of OCHA is seen as expiring in the near future and no international organisation has been identified to replace it as an effective focal point for co-ordination of efforts.

Ways forward

Important new developments in Russian and international co-operation have taken place over the last year:

- The Republic governments of Chechnya and Ingushetia strengthened or created new co-ordination bodies in 2005 to co-ordinate with donors on humanitarian priorities; and
- The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the Humanitarian Co-ordinator in the 2005 Joint Stakeholders' CAP Review to evaluate humanitarian needs and co-ordination mechanisms in the region. This helped open a continuing dialogue with the Russian government on how the donors' recovery efforts can best complement the government's plans.

Despite new solutions and progress in co-operation, it is acknowledged that co-ordination is currently inadequate and fraught with serious obstacles. These include:

- OCHA is the most effective co-ordinating agency but its expertise and focus is primarily on emergency relief, humanitarian aid and contingency planning. UNDP in Russia is still not perceived by most actors as an agency that could effectively take on the task;
- "Cracks" between the mandates of key actors are wide, and significant differences in their status, internal decision-making processes, convening and financial power make coordination politically difficult. Consequently many needs and issues cannot be resolved;
- Russian government lacks a coherent "master plan" at present for the reconstruction of the region and single point of contact to maintain an effective interface with the international actors; and
- Trust remains to be built and stakeholders mutually educated to deliver on meeting the complex needs of the population in the region for common regional security in the Caucasus, as well as upholding the human security and protection of rights.

3. POTENTIAL ENTRY-POINTS AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR A JOINED-UP APPROACH

3.1. OVERVIEW

There is potential consensus on the entry-point for a more joined-up Russian and international approach to the North Caucasus, as well as on broad regional-level priorities and operating principles. These are outlined here.

3.2. ENTRY-POINT FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

Local self-governance is a key part of the human security equation in the North Caucasus as it creates a mutually-acceptable point of contact between the state and the population. The current reform, adoption of the law on local self governance, and its implementation provide a critical avenue through which international actors should be able to address the most pressing needs of the population in the short to medium term more effectively. Importantly, it also coincides with the policy priority of the Russian government to reform local self-governance.

However, in order to ensure that the opportunity offered by local self-governance reform becomes an effective channel for development and reconstruction activities in the region, projects are required to tackle a number of key weaknesses:

- Lack of good governance experience, trained personnel, and established mechanisms for the transfer of skills;
- Lack of planning, monitoring, evaluation and assessment procedures and skills in state governance sector at the local and regional level;
- “Rentier” as opposed to “service-oriented” nature of the local self-governance culture;
- Inflated expectations on protection of rights and realisation of socio-economic rights, which are not commensurate with the local/regional resources and capacity;
- Lack of mechanisms to directly allocate and effectively control resources from the federal level (where resources are presently available) to the level of local self-governance (e.g. in poverty-reduction programming and job-creation); and
- Lack of mechanisms to reintegrate vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, projects in support of local self-governance bodies and their constituencies should be focused on raising awareness of their rights and duties as per Russian federal and local legislation, as well as international law. This could include support to self-governance bodies in: (a) analysing their duties in protecting rights; (b) assessing the needs of the population (considering isolated, marginalised, and vulnerable groups); and (c) prioritising activities to fulfil their duties and meet the needs.

3.3. ENTRY-POINTS AND FUNDING/PROGRAMMING OPTIONS

Entry-points

The key entry-point for working on the regional and republic-level priorities identified above is local self-governance. However, in order to effectively use it as an entry-point, a number of actions are required – as listed above. Furthermore, funding and programming options for international agencies to work through this entry-point have to be both decided upon and co-ordinated in dialogue with the Russian government.

Funding and programming options

The following two funding and programming options should be discussed and explored:

- Create a jointly managed and funded (Russian and international) regional reconstruction fund that is used (a) for directly supporting locally-owned projects and initiatives through self-governance bodies; and (b) for funding other projects on expertise exchange, training and technical support; and
- Fund directly projects presented (and co-funded) by local self-governance bodies (or CBOs/NGOs in co-operation with local self-governance bodies), which include a technical support and capacity-building for project implementation.

3.4. REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Five priority sectors where the potential for Russian and international consensus is significant are proposed for regional programming.

i. Programme on local self-governance reform

Rationale

The promotion and strengthening of local self-governance should be given particular prominence because it is both a priority sector in itself *and*, as argued above, an indispensable channel for working optimally in different sectors. To ensure ownership and sustainability, most aspects of socio-economic development are best supported at the local level through local self-governance channels. Self-governance bodies are currently hamstrung by lack of training, expertise, leadership, capacity etc. Direct support to and through republic-level authorities does not appear to be feasible or politically acceptable to federal decision-makers at this stage, as the regional state governance system itself is subject to reform.

Opportunity

The adoption in January 2006 of the new federal law on local self-governance is widely regarded in the region as an opportunity to further harmonise the local traditional self-organisation mechanisms in a coherent manner with the legal space of the Russian Federation and to make local self governance bodies

effective and responsible. Decentralisation at the level of the republics, krais, and oblasts of the North Caucasus, as well as the mechanism of local elections, play key roles as vehicles for stabilisation, forming representative constituencies for a vertical dialogue, and equitable socio-economic reconstruction.

Risks

Making the reform of self government a reality has proven difficult for several reasons. Not all regions have the proper legislation and regulations. The legislation is still unclear on the important issue of how municipal property will be divided up. There are important vested interests in maintaining the deficient status quo – in particular there are concerns that the dominant groups at the level of the subjects of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus might interpret the new law in ways that favour their own usurpation of some functions of the local self-governance bodies.

Programming priorities

- Promotion of enhanced governance through training of personnel, training of trainers, and establishment of mechanisms for transfer of skills;
- Promotion of enhanced development management through technical assistance on development planning, needs assessment, monitoring, and evaluation procedures and training on management skills in state governance sector at the local and regional level;
- Promotion of culture of service to local communities in local self-governance bodies through raising awareness of rights and duties of local self government bodies as per Russian federal and local legislation and international law; and
- Creation of effective mechanisms to directly allocate and control resources from the federal level (where resources are presently available) to the local self-governance level (e.g. in poverty-reduction programming and job-creation).

ii. Poverty reduction programme for vulnerable groups

Rationale

Targeting vulnerable groups for poverty reduction reduces the risks that these groups will become involved in criminal or extra-systemic activism and reduces the grievances which fuel conflicts.

Opportunity

There is considerable scope for increasing efforts in poverty reduction through existing channels, as well as for improving delivery of poverty reduction programmes through the local self governance channel in the North Caucasus.

Risks

Direct assistance to some vulnerable groups may reinforce aid dependency, while other groups might recycle assistance but continue to present a threat as a risk group for violent and direct action.

Programming priorities

- Needs assessment to be carried out to determine priority groups and areas for a poverty reduction programme. Programmes should address the most needy communities and groups, those currently receiving insufficient benefits from the state and those considered at high risk of participating in conflict if their needs are not addressed;
- Needs assessment should be as inclusive as possible including local governmental and civil society inputs to ensure the optimal design of poverty reduction programmes;
- In addition to those covered by the Russian federal “targeted aid programmes”, available evidence suggests that poverty reduction should initially target (a) poor families with children; (b) young people without legitimate employment; (c) IDPs and people who have lost their homes; and (d) victims of armed conflict; and
- Ensure that poverty reduction development activities are calibrated in such a way as to dovetail with the current efforts to make transition from humanitarian emergency assistance to longer term socio-economic development in various sectors (health, education, economic growth, housing, local government and civil society capacity building etc.).

iii. Programme on governance reform and equal opportunities

Rationale

Governance reform at the regional level enables the more effective delivery of much needed services to the population. It can also help to reduce grounds for grievance and conflict if governance is perceived to be less influenced and corrupted by partisan, ethnic, tribal and socio-economic interests.

Opportunity

Country-wide administrative reform provided for the transformation of existing clan-based governance into a more publicly accountable system that can enjoy trust from the population. This proved impossible to achieve without vertical centralisation of some functions and horizontal decentralisation of others. It would be possible to capitalise on the currently increased manageability at the republic-level in the North Caucasus in order to create effective mechanisms for public accountability and civil society control⁴.

Risks

Although many Russia’s controlling bodies such as Accounting Chamber are active in the region (e.g. in Chechnya reconstruction spending is audited up to four times a year), the effectiveness of control may remain very low⁵.

⁴ According to the Federal Law №32 of 4 April 2005 the right to control the activities of the state governance bodies at different levels is provided to the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. This law makes the Public Chamber the only legitimate entry-point for civil-society control, but it does not exclude the possibilities for external Russian and international actors to cooperate with and under the auspices of the Public Chamber on this critical issue.

⁵ This is due to the weakness of response mechanisms (except for the Prosecutor’s Office system) and cross-cutting bureaucracy networking.

Civil society control efforts outside of the Public Chamber frameworks may also be regarded as politically unwelcome by the Russian federal actors.

Programming priorities

In addition to the priorities enumerated under the heading of local-self governance reform, these include:

- Support governance reform efforts by the federal authorities that enable equitable access to legitimate economic opportunities and jobs/positions in the state and non-state sectors for all citizens;
- Ensure sensitivity to clan/teip/vird-type tribalism in the governance system across the region (with particular attention to Ingushetia, Chechnya and Daghestan) in international reconstruction planning and implementation; and
- Help ensure that local self-governance bodies (Federal Law on Self-Governance) are properly established and independent from the state power bodies.

iv. Programme on an enabling business environment

Rationale

Creating an enabling business environment will generate vested interests in peace and stability.

Opportunity

There is an opportunity to capitalise on and strengthen a strong tradition of entrepreneurialism in the region.

Risks

Much of the economic activity of the region currently is part of the shadow economy. There are entrenched vested interests in maintaining this state of affairs. However, it has to be recognised that the shadow economy does provide important economic benefits to large numbers of people, including the poor. It is therefore something to be acknowledged, harnessed and transformed rather than ignored or criminalised.

Programming priorities

- Support the development, optimisation and implementation of the transparent and simple regulatory frameworks at the regional level to stimulate the creation of SMEs and to making it easier to start up a business;
- Facilitate access to markets outside the North Caucasus;
- Revive traditional economic ties and cooperation with Russia's other regions; and

- Assess options providing micro-credit for small start-up businesses and access to financial institutions and markets for larger credit opportunities.

v. Programme on mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in administration reform and development programming

Rationale

Mainstreaming conflict-sensitivity into administrative reform and development aid will help to ensure that development programmes address the complex causes of conflict and will provide the framework for a “do no harm” approach.

Opportunities

The best time to incorporate conflict sensitivity into development plans is at the outset. Given the recent history and issues currently facing the region there is clearly a compelling argument for mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into the Russian government’s efforts to develop a “master plan” for North Caucasian development. International actors, such as the World Bank, have supported such mainstreaming efforts in other parts of the world (for example, through PRSPs) and are in a position to provide inputs if desired.

Risks

Some of the conflict issues involved are highly sensitive and touch on vested interests of powerful players. There is a risk therefore that those recommendations that emerge from incorporating a conflict lens into development planning will be ignored or marginalised.

Programming priorities

- Mainstream conflict-sensitive approaches in the management of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, territorial and land disputes in Daghestan, unsettled administrative border issues in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics, and issues related to the enlargement of the subjects of the federation in the North Caucasus;
- Creation of a state-sponsored ethno-political risk management and early response system at the regional level to identify signs of dangerous tensions and act early to prevent outbreaks of violence. Security risks, such as terrorism and activities of armed groups should be tackled separately; and
- Creation of a firm and clear regulatory framework for land distribution, allocation and ownership (including public land-use rights by administrative units). Such a framework should be elaborated and implemented to address unlawful re-division of property across the region.

3.5. REPUBLIC-LEVEL RISKS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Some of the general risks associated with proposed priorities for the Programme of Action were identified in the section on Regional Priorities above. There are

also specific risks associated with each of the republics of the North Caucasus. A range of the most important ones are identified here along with proposed risk management action.

Chechnya

Risks

- There is potential for the territorial dispute between Chechnya and Ingushetia (Sunzhensky district and part of Malgobek district) to re-surface when the Treaty on Division of Jurisdictions is signed between the federal centre and Chechnya; and
- Post-conflict trauma, acute aid dependency and poverty, corruption and vested interests in the war economy, can all serve to sustain instability and even to fuel renewed conflict

Risk management

- Assess the potential of the Treaty on Division of Jurisdictions between the Russia and Chechen Republic to spark conflict and take early preventive measures to address this potential;
- Build conflict-sensitivity into reconstruction efforts with a view to addressing post-conflict traumas, aid dependencies, corruption and the war economy; and
- Prioritise the reconstruction of housing and social/communal infrastructure, as well as the development of the oil industry and agriculture.

Ingushetia

Risks

- The new law on local self-governance raises the issue of definition of borders of the municipal districts, which may aggravate territorial disputes with North Ossetia over the status of Prigorodny district;
- Likely support by federal authorities for Chechnya's territorial claims (Sunzhensky district and part of Malgobek district) could provoke Ingushetia to "retaliate" by pursuing its territorial claims for Prigorodny district thus putting additional pressure on the federal centre and North Ossetia; and
- Lack of a clearly defined plan for Ossetian-Ingush conflict settlement.

Risk management

- The federal authorities should address potential threats to stability posed by the implications of the new law on local self governance. A first step to tackle the threat of renewed conflict over Prigorodny would be to set up a

special State Commission on determination of administrative borders between North Ossetia and Ingushetia; and

- Elaboration of a jointly-owned Ossetian-Ingush settlement plan. Socio-economic reconstruction programming should be synchronized with that plan.

Daghestan

Risks

- Elite struggles for power and control of property through political violence poses a range of risks to development efforts. It is an internal political issue that can only be successfully addressed by the federal authorities.

Risk management

- Current land-use rights and land distribution practices would benefit from an in-depth and conflict-sensitive analysis by local and federal-level experts in connection with the reform of local self-governance (under the newly adopted legislation); and
- Revision of the existing legislation and the adoption of new regulatory frameworks on small and medium business, as well as the maintenance of the important ethnic balances in the administrative hierarchy of the republic.

Karachaevo-Cherkessia

Risks

- Proliferation of religious extremism among the youth;
- Failure of the current republic-level programme of support to traditional/official Islamic leaders; and
- Failure to encourage the Russian population could play a more active role in ethnic conflict prevention.

Risk management

- Promote culture of religious tolerance among youth through education, including religious education;
- Supporting the development of stronger civil society organisations in the republic is critical. Conflict-sensitivity in such work would involve ensuring that projects do not lead to the civil society sector being polarised along the ethnic lines; and
- Enabling the republic's Russian community and its CSOs to play a stronger role in conflict prevention.

North Ossetia

Risks

- Increasing social discontent poses a significant threat to republican stability. Employment statistics in North Ossetia show a decrease in jobs and consequent drop in employment rate despite the relatively positive aggregate economic performance of the Republic;
- The quality of governance has been severely weakened by corruption, tribalism, lack of professional leaders, low rotation within the political leadership, and limited accountability; and
- Lack of political space for young, active political leaders.

Risk Management

- Job creation and poverty reduction are priorities here as elsewhere in the region; and
- Governance reform programmes should include efforts to open up opportunities and arenas for emerging political leaders.

Kabardino-Balkaria

Risks

- Religious extremism and the proliferation of extra-systemic activism among youth; and
- Heavy-handed police action may exacerbate the problem of extremism.

Risk management

- Address extremism through dialogue and the integration of youths into the constructive socio-economic, cultural and political space in the republic, as well as through security measures; and
- An opportunity exists to co-operate with the Kabardino-Balakaria's expert community and raise local knowledge on priority areas for reconstruction.

3.6. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

In addition to basic developmental operating principles, programmes in the North Caucasus should be based on the following five principles:

- *Co-ordination and ownership* International activities should be co-ordinated with governmental programmes (as elaborated in Federal and Republic strategies), be complementary, and focused on filling gaps. Wherever possible development initiatives should be *locally*-owned at the *municipal* and *republic* levels with significant input from civil society and NGOs thus enabling local implementation capacity.

- *Local capacity-building* All programmes and projects should include capacity-building measures for local self-governance bodies. These measures should include basic skills development on project planning, management, and monitoring/evaluation (if needed) in addition to other sector-specific technical support.
- *A balanced basket of development initiatives* Russian and international efforts should contain a balanced basket of infrastructure and broader socioeconomic projects.
- *Conflict sensitivity* Development efforts should be conflict-sensitive – both in the principles that inform their design and implementation, as well as in their sector and target group focus. Ethnic tensions, land disputes, and the impact of and on conflict are key considerations.
- *Resilience to shocks* Given violence and instability-related risks associated with the region, it is important that programmes and projects implemented are resilient to shocks. As such, development programmes and projects should include contingencies for the risks highlighted in the Programme of Action.

4. A DIALOGUE PLATFORM FOR IMPROVED RUSSIAN AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The parameters for enhanced Russian and international co-operation on the North Caucasus have to be set through dialogue. It is recommended here that a platform for informal multi-stakeholder dialogue involving a single point of contact from the Russian authorities⁶ and from international agencies should be established.

The agenda should broadly cover: (a) the terms for international engagement in the region; (b) co-operation and co-ordination with Russian authorities – including programmatic priority-setting and regional/republic-level risk management; (c) contingency planning; (d) conflict sensitivity in programmes; and (d) an exit strategy for international actors from the region.

The terms of dialogue need to include the following mutually acceptable principles:

- Centrality of Russian ownership and complementarity of international assistance can be assured by the formulation at an appropriate stage of the Russian federal “master plan” for reconstruction and development;
- Centrality of the rights protection issues for both federal and international efforts as the key pre-condition to the regional stabilisation, strengthening of human security as well as the regional security as a whole. It would be critical to address inefficiencies in the sphere of protection constructively and through dialogue;
- Reconstruction should be understood in terms of “provision of services” to the population, as opposed to a simple infrastructural approach. This also covers the need to ensure that humanitarian aid dependencies, as well as dependency on state benefits and social services are overcome in due course and without damage to current beneficiaries in the region;
- The importance of the need to settle existing regional conflicts and prevent further regional destabilisation as part of the regional security in the Caucasus as a whole, including the energy security dimension (i.e. the export corridor through the South Caucasus); and
- Double standards in the fight against terrorism (e.g. criticism by one party of the other on issues that the first is guilty of in other parts of the world) should be avoided by all parties.

Existing co-ordination challenges (see 2.4. above) entail that dialogue should also include discussions on objectives for priority actions (see chapter 3), distribution of responsibilities, resource mobilisation, implementation plans, risk management/contingency plans, mechanisms for monitoring progress, and evaluating effectiveness.

⁶ E.g. Assistant to the President S. Prikhodko, Special Representative of the President on developing relations with the EU S. Yastrzhembskiy, the human rights envoy of the Russian Federation V. Lukin, the head of the Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President E. Pamfilova, an assigned representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, etc.

Renewed regional instability and outbreaks of violence should not be dismissed as improbable. Indeed, key inter-ethnic and political conflicts in the region have not yet been fully settled, there are active conflict-generating factors at work (see SRDA), and new emerging threats. It is necessary, therefore, to co-ordinate international and Russian Government thinking on contingency planning.

Contingency plans should cover three issues: (a) the management of outbreaks of violence; (b) the impact avian flu on the region; and (c) the acute needs of vulnerable groups affected by a poorly planned phasing out of humanitarian aid.

Key triggers can also be found in reconstruction and development programmes that are not conflict sensitive, particularly in relation to ethnic and intra-elite dynamics, as well as religious extremism and extra-systemic activism. Also important is the potentially negative impact on vulnerable groups of a phasing out of humanitarian aid – particularly in Chechnya – in the event of an abrupt and poorly planned transition. These issues should also be covered in the dialogue platform.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: SECTOR AND PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

Introduction

Both Russian and international agencies recognise that broad-based development is necessary for Caucasian stability in the long-term. Also, given complex inter-linkages between ethnic groups and conflict systems across the region, all six North Caucasus republics (Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia) should be prioritised.

However, in the short to medium term regional development priorities can be identified that will contribute to stability. How they are implemented at a republic level requires further study. Nonetheless, a range of issues and risks that are relevant to planning can be identified. An overview of these is provided in the subsequent sections, along with entry-points and programming options, as well as co-ordination and contingency planning needs.

It is important to note that the overview is based on technical and political feasibility considerations – where the broader needs for stability are outlined in the main SRDA study.

Regional Priority Sectors and Programmes

At a regional level, particular attention should be placed on: (a) promoting local self-governance; (b) targeted poverty reduction for vulnerable groups; (c) governance reform and equal opportunities; (d) creating an enabling environment for small and medium businesses; and (e) mainstreaming conflict-sensitivity into administrative reform and development programming.

The “red thread” that runs through the selection of priority sectors at a regional level is their importance for stability and peace in the short and medium term. For example, targeting vulnerable groups for poverty reduction reduces the risks that these groups will become involved in criminal or extra-systemic activism. Governance reform enables the more effective delivery of much needed services to the population. Creating an enabling business environment will capitalise on and strengthen the regional entrepreneurial spirit and create vested interests in peace and stability. Finally, mainstreaming conflict-sensitivity into administrative reform and development aid will help to ensure that development programmes address the complex causes of conflict and will provide the framework for a “do no harm” approach.

Promoting local self-governance (emphasised here) is not only one of the priority sectors, but also the main avenue for working effectively in different sectors. Local development capacities are best supported through local self-governance channels, as neither direct support to or through republic-level authorities appear to be feasible or politically acceptable to federal decision-makers at this stage.

Local Self-Governance

The new Federal law "On General Principles of Local Self-Governance in the Russian Federation" (Nº 131) came into effect on 1 January 2006. It launched a wide-scale reform of local self-governance. One of the main goals of the reform is to guarantee the constitutional right to local self-rule. In previous legislation, regions in practice did not have to organize local self-governance, and 18 regions neglected to do so. Making the reform a reality has proven difficult for several reasons. For example, not all regions have the proper legislation and regulations. Furthermore, the legislation is still unclear on the important issue of how municipal property will be divided up. Many other aspects of the law remain untested and hard to put into practice.

However, the adoption of the new federal law on local self-governance is widely regarded in the region as an opportunity to further harmonise the local traditional self-organisation mechanisms in a coherent manner with the legal space of the Russian Federation. Decentralisation at the level of the republics, krais, and oblasts of the North Caucasus, as well as the mechanism of local elections, play key roles as vehicles for stabilisation, forming representative constituencies for a vertical dialogue, and equitable socio-economic reconstruction.

There are concerns, however, that the state authorities at the level of the subjects of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus might interpret the new law in ways that favour their own usurpation of some functions of the local self-governance bodies.

Projects should be designed in support of self-governance reform to address:

- Lack of good governance experience, trained personnel, and established succession of skills;
- Lack of planning, monitoring, evaluation and assessment procedures and skills in state governance sector at the local and regional level;
- "Rentier" as opposed to "service-oriented" nature of the local self-governance culture;
- Inflated expectations on protection of rights and realisation of socio-economic rights, which are not commensurate with the locally/regionally available resources;
- Lack of mechanisms to directly allocate and control resources from the federal level (where resources are presently available) to the local self-governance level (e.g. in poverty-reduction programming and job-creation); and
- Lack of mechanisms to reintegrate sensitive vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, projects in support of local self-governance bodies and their constituencies should be focused on raising awareness of their rights and duties as per Russian federal and local legislation, as well as international law. This could include support to self-governance bodies in: (a) analysing their duties in protecting rights; (b) assessing the needs of the population (considering isolated, marginalised, and vulnerable groups); and (c) prioritising activities to fulfil their duties and meet the needs.

Poverty reduction for vulnerable groups

Implement targeted poverty reduction activities aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable groups (in addition to those covered by the Russian federal “targeted aid programmes”): (a) poor families with children; (b) young people without legitimate employment; (c) IDPs and people who have lost their homes; and (d) victims of armed conflict.

The above groups are prioritised because they simultaneously belong to the categories of the population receiving insufficient benefits from the state and those who are considered risk groups for participating in conflict.

Governance reform and equal opportunities

Support governance reform efforts by the federal authorities that enable equitable access to legitimate economic opportunities and jobs/positions in the state and non-state sectors for all citizens. This would involve:

- Control of clan/teip/vird-type tribalism in the governance system across the region (with particular attention to Ingushetia, Chechnya and Daghestan) optimising personnel selection/appointment/advancement processes; and
- Ensuring that local self-governance bodies (Federal Law on Self-Governance) are properly established and independent from the state power bodies.

The government systems need to be reformed to make the delivery of services more efficient and due to the fact that the presently wide-spread nepotism and tribalism emerge as a key grievance issue (and therefore source of instability).

An enabling business environment

It is critical to support the development, optimisation and implementation of the transparent and simple regulatory frameworks at the regional level to stimulate the creation of SMEs and to make it easier to start up a business.

Access to markets outside the North Caucasus should be facilitated and traditional ties, economic cooperation and positive interdependencies with Russia’s other regions should be revived.

It is essential to study different approaches to providing micro-credit for small start-up businesses and access to financial institutions and markets for larger credit opportunities.

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in administration reform and development programming

Conflict-sensitive approaches need to be mainstreamed in the management of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, territorial and land disputes in Daghestan, unsettled administrative border issues in Chechnya and the neighbouring republics, and issues related to the enlargement of the subjects of the federation in the North Caucasus.

There is also a need to create a state-sponsored ethno-political risk management and early response system at the regional level to identify signs of dangerous

tensions and act early to prevent outbreaks of violence. Security risks, such as terrorism and activities of armed groups should be tackled separately.

A firm and clear regulatory framework for land distribution, allocation and ownership (including public land-use rights by administrative units) should be elaborated and implemented to address unlawful re-division of property across the region.

Republic-Level Issues and Risks

At a republic-level there is a range of localised issues and risks that will affect how regional programmes are implemented. These issues and risks require on-going monitoring. However, some of these issues/risks and risk management options are provided here as a present-time snap-shot.

Chechnya

In Chechnya, the reconstruction of housing and social/communal infrastructure is a priority sector. Particular attention needs to be placed on supporting SMEs servicing the construction industry, as well as access to cheaper construction materials and equipment, transportation, etc.

Conflict-sensitivity in reconstruction efforts should address post-conflict traumas, aid dependencies, and the war economy. Apart from the reconstruction of housing and social/communal infrastructure such results could be achieved in the development of the oil industry and agriculture.

The treaty on division of jurisdictions between the Russia and Chechen Republic should be signed to provide for locally-driven rehabilitation and reconstruction, and development programming based on local capacities. It is of critical importance, however, to build into the treaty measures for addressing (by federal authorities and civil society through appropriate legal instruments) risks associated with corruption.

A key risk is the potential for the territorial dispute between Chechnya and Ingushetia (Sunzhensky district and part of Malgobek district) to re-surface upon signing the treaty on division of jurisdictions between the federal centre and Chechnya.

Ingushetia

The new law on local self-governance raises the issue of definition of borders of the municipal districts, which in Ingushetia may aggravate territorial disputes with North Ossetia over the status of Prigorodny district. The federal authorities should address potential threats to stability posed by these implications of the new law.

A first step to tackle the threat of a territorial dispute would be to set up a special State Commission on determination of administrative borders between North Ossetia and Ingushetia. This Commission should work together with the republic's authorities and local self-governance bodies to offer viable long-term solutions encompassing both political and socio-economic issues.

It is very likely that the federal authorities will support Chechnya's territorial claims (Sunzhensky district and part of Malgobek district) and this, in turn, would

provoke Ingushetia to “retaliate” by putting additional pressure at the federal centre and North Ossetia in pursuing its territorial claims for Prigorodny district.

There is no clearly defined plan for Ossetian-Ingush conflict settlement. Elaborating a jointly-owned Ossetian-Ingush settlement plan is, therefore, a top priority. Socio-economic reconstruction programming should be synchronized with that plan.

Daghestan

The presently entrenched culture of struggle for power and property through political violence poses a range of risks to development efforts in Daghestan. It is an internal political issue that can only be successfully addressed by the federal authorities.

The key to the creation of an enabling environment for reconstruction in Daghestan is the revision of the existing legislation and the adoption of new regulatory frameworks on small and medium business, as well as the maintenance of the important ethnic balances in the administrative hierarchy of the republic.

Family-run businesses and micro-level enterprises should be freed up from the tax burden and supported in a targeted manner.

Current land-use rights and land distribution practices would benefit from an in-depth and conflict-sensitive analysis by local and federal-level experts in connection with the reform of local self-governance (under the newly adopted legislation).

Karachaevo-Cherkessia

Supporting the development of stronger civil society organisations in the republic is critical. Conflict-sensitivity in such work would involve ensuring that projects do not lead to the civil society sector being polarised along the ethnic lines.

The Russian population could play a considerably more active and important role in ethnic conflict prevention, decreasing tension, and fostering stability in the republic. Enabling the Russian community and its CSOs to play such a role is an opportunity.

Local self-governance reform in the republic is at an embryonic stage and requires considerable support.

The current republic-level programme of support to traditional/official Islamic leaders is not succeeding in its objective of limiting the proliferation of religious extremism among the youth. Approaches based on education, including religious education, would be considerably more effective and would carry less risk.

North Ossetia

Employment statistics in North Ossetia show a decrease in jobs and consequent drop in employment rate despite the relatively positive aggregate economic performance of the Republic. Attempts by the federal centre to place responsibility for employment-related issues to the regional level have not been successful so far. A key risk is in the brewing social discontent that poses a significant threat to republican stability.

The quality of governance has been severely weakened by corruption, tribalism, lack of professional leaders, low rotation within the political leadership, and limited accountability. All this is reducing the opportunities for young and active leaders – as few as there are – to step into the political arena.

North Ossetia has the strongest economy among North Caucasus republics but it is also prone to greater risks found in the shadow economy sector. North Ossetia could serve as the model for development in its regional peer group if these risks are managed successfully (through relaxed taxation, amnesty of capital, law enforcement, and other instruments).

Kabardino-Balkaria

The newly established leadership in the republic encourages the active involvement of the population in the formation of local self-governance bodies. Local expert capacities have also been mobilised to provide meaningful input into the recovery and development of the republic's economy.

An opportunity exists to co-operate with the Kabardino-Balakaria's expert community and raise local knowledge on priority areas for reconstruction.

In terms of anti-corruption efforts, the anti-corruption telephone hotline created in December 2005 requires support to make reaction rapid and effective. Civil society participation in exercising control over the implementation of the anti-corruption measures is a critical pre-requisite of their effectiveness in the republic.

Religious extremism and the proliferation of youths' extra-systemic activism pose a risk in the republic. It should not be addressed through police measures alone, but through dialogue and the integration of youths into the constructive socio-economic, cultural and political space in the republic.

ANNEX 2: GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PROPOSALS

Programme/project Synopsis

Programme/project title, implementing agency/local self-governance body, and budget:

Summary description of the programme/project (including timeframe):

Regional Priorities

How does the programme/project contribute to regional priorities identified in the Programme of Action? [complete table]

Regional Priority	Proposed contribution by programme/project:
<i>Programme on local self-governance reform</i>	
<i>Programme on poverty reduction for vulnerable groups</i>	
<i>Programme on governance reform and equal opportunities</i>	
<i>Programme on an enabling business environment</i>	
<i>Programme on mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in administration reform and development programming</i>	

Operating Principles

How does the programme/project address key operating principles for work in the region? [complete table]

Operating Principle	Approach in programme/project:
<i>Co-ordination and ownership</i>	
<i>Local capacity-building</i>	
<i>A balanced basket of development initiatives</i>	
<i>Conflict sensitivity</i>	
<i>Resilience to shocks</i>	

Risk Management and Contingency Planning

How does the programme/project aim to manage actual and potential risks in the republics of where it is to be implemented? [complete table]

Risks (regional/republic)	Risks identified	Proposed risk management measures
<i>Regional level risks</i>		
<i>Republic level risks</i>		

What contingency planning measures are included in the programme/project?

Summary Assessment

Programme/project contribution to regional priorities:

Programme/project approach to operating principles:

Programme/project risk management and contingency measures:

Overall assessment:

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