

People in Need Foundation (PINF)
Report on the Humanitarian Operations
in Chechnya and Ingushetia

(September-October 2001)

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1. General Overview

1.1. Introduction

The People in Need Foundation is a Prague-based non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization. PINF operated in Chechnya in 1994-95 and has been working in the area again since January 2000.

1.2. Short review of 2000/2001

* CONVOYS. PINF was the first international agency to deliver humanitarian aid to Grozny after the fall of the city to Russian forces in February 2000. Its convoys delivered more than 700 tons of aid to 13 war-damaged communities throughout Chechnya during the first six months of 2000.

* FOOD PROGRAM. Having established an efficient aid distribution system in Grozny, PINF substantially expanded its provision of food aid to Grozny during the second half of 2000 through an implementing partnership agreement with WFP. From August to December, PINF distributed more than 2.000 MT of WFP flour, oil, sugar, pulses and salt to a total of 164.000 recipients from six distribution points in the worst-affected districts in Grozny - Leninski, Oktyabrski and Zavodskoy. Another 1.200 MT of WFP flour, oil, sugar, pulses and salt was distributed to a total of 88.000 recipients in Grozny during the period April – June 2001.

* NON FOOD PROGRAM. PINF signed a sub-contract agreement with the UNHCR to complement WFP food distribution with non-food items in summer 2000. Each month hygienic supplies are distributed through the established PINF distribution system in Grozny. Between August and December 2000, more than 230.000 packages of soap and washing powder were distributed to a total of 163.500 recipients, with the number of recipients per month growing steadily from 24.500 in August to 39.000 in December. Another 123.121 pieces of UNHCR soap were distributed to a total of 88.000 recipients in Grozny during the period April – June 2001.

* SCHOOLS. With a special emergency grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation (USA), PINF completed the reconstruction of the 14th State School in Leninski district of Grozny in May 2001. The reconstruction began in autumn 2000. It was the first major reconstruction project undertaken by an international agency in Grozny since the city fell to Russian forces. In Ingushetia, PINF is responsible for operating the largest alternative educational network for children of Chechen IDPs. In cooperation with UNICEF, PINF has been running basic schools in 19 refugee centers since summer 2000. At present, it coordinates grade 1–4 education and after-school programs in Ingushetia with UNICEF funding which are attended by a total of almost 1.700 pupils.

* ROOFING PROGRAM. With UNHCR funding, PINF implemented a shelter project in late 2000, which provided roofing material for a total of 823 houses in four villages where 45% of homes were destroyed: Duba Yurt, Dachu Borzoy, Ulus Kert and Katyr Yurt. Some other 200 houses were covered in Staraya Sunzha and Serzhen Yurt by Czech Ministry of Interior funding. PINF's shelter project has continued in 2001 with additional UNHCR support, with 549 houses having received roofing material in the badly affected Chechen municipalities of Agishty, Chiski, Pionerskoe and the capital of Grozny.

1.3. Situation in Chechnya

1.3.1. General overview

Guerilla war in Chechnya mixed with many criminal acts continues to smolder. The whole region is constantly marked with instability. The perception and influence of the terrorist attacks on World Trade Center in New York (September 11th, 2001) and subsequent US attacks on Afghanistan is surprisingly marginal in Chechen political situation, at least in the visible sphere. The situation is much more affected by instability in the Georgian republic of Abkhazia, Georgia itself and also in North Ossetia.

Incidents are reported throughout North Caucasus; according to unofficial information number of kidnappings reached 70 cases in Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, even though most of these incidents were neither investigated nor even officially reported. Most of the cases should be considered as settling old scores between criminal groups but the growing number indicates that this way of making profit is again becoming more “fashionable”.

The activity of Chechen guerillas remains basically at the same level. Mopping-up operations of the Russian Army are seemingly more targeted now (there was a big mopping-up operation in October in the region of Staryie Atagi). But there are also signs that president’s envoy for Southern Russia District General Viktor Kazantsev will continue talks with the representatives of Aslan Maskhadov, namely with Mr. Akhmed Zakayev.

1.3.2. Unclear internal struggles in the Chechen Government

According to many unclear signals there is an internal struggle going on inside the pro-Russian Chechen administration. The head of the administration Akhmad-Khadzhi Kadyrov recently publicly voiced his discontent with the work of the Chechen government lead by Mr. Stanislav Ilyasov accusing the government of acting against the very basic interests of Chechnya’s peaceful population. Kadyrov even officially announced the replacement of the republic’s administration by a new structure subordinated to him and appointed Yan Sergunin as the head of his apparatus instead of Viktor Aleksenitsev,. Both Kadyrov and Ilyasov later downplayed the significance of this decision and Ilyasov called the information a provocation.

1.3.3. Another subtle improvements in Grozny

A subtle improvement of living conditions is noticeable in Grozny. The local market is growing every month, offering essential food and non-food goods at affordable prices, some items even lower than in Ingushetia. An increasing number of people are arriving in the town, many of them attempting to reside there. However, security risks are still considerable for Grozny inhabitants and coming winter is also a great source of worry to many. The unemployment rate currently exceeds 90%. Pensions are distributed rather regularly, social benefits are sometimes paid to families with children. Other sources of income include trading at the local market and small businesses, such as cafes and garage rentals. Another widespread source of income is the sale of low-grade gasoline. However, majority of Grozny inhabitants are still dependent on humanitarian aid. Theft, bootlegging and other criminal activities are widespread.

1.3.4. Conditions for NGO work

The heated discussion about the Chechen Administration’s Resolution No. 22, a temporary provision regulating the presence of international non-governmental organizations (INGO) inside Chechnya, has culminated in autumn. The Resolution stipulated new requirements on documentation to be carried by INGO representatives travelling to Chechnya and, in addition, new obligation to announce any planned travel to various Chechen and Russian authorities 5

days in advance of their departure. This announcement should specify purpose of the travel and a detailed itinerary, including location of planned accommodation.

That was why PINF has been working under constant threat of having to stop its work in September and October. PINF convoys were still able to cross the border to Chechnya, but with more obstacles than usual, even though the sort of obstacles remained the same (soldiers asking for bribes, drunk soldiers, mopping-up operations, shooting). Because of the threat of detention resulting from the Resolution No.22, mentioned also on the new confusing permits, nobody from PINF expatriate staff entered Chechnya in October.

As the final solution to the problem, the representatives of humanitarian community and the government of the Republic of Chechnya signed a letter of understanding (LoU) on humanitarian action in Chechnya on the 31st of October. All NGOs working in the region signed the LoU. The memorandum affirms that international humanitarian action is based on International Humanitarian Law and guided by standard humanitarian principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. The LoU also confirms that the humanitarian community and the government will cooperate in providing humanitarian assistance in Chechnya. The LoU stipulates that the government will grant access to and freedom of movement in Chechnya by issuing passes, valid no less than three months. Consequently, the LoU is now the reference point for permit applications and the Resolution 22 seems to be forgotten. According to the LoU and other agreements, foreigners travelling to Chechnya are obliged to follow the Russian law namely the obligation to register within 24 hours of the stay on the territory of the region.

1.4. Ingushetia

1.4.1. General overview

There were no major events in Ingushetia throughout September and October. President Ruslan Aushev was still able to alleviate any discrepancies caused by changed international circumstances. Parallels could be found between North Ossetian and Ingushetian situation – also in Ingushetia presidential elections will take place soon (beginning of March); president Aushev is not allowed to run for his third term in the office even though there are many signs that he is trying to negotiate with officials on federal level and ensure their support to actually run in the elections for the third time. If Aushev succeeds, there is no doubt he will be elected again.

Aushev's hesitation causes precariousness among the remaining presidential candidates; there is no favorite for presidential office if Aushev does not participate. The same feeling of precariousness is widespread throughout Ingush society.

1.4.2. IDP Situation

There were no major changes among the Chechen IDPs in Ingushetia. Neither big influx nor outflow of IDPs was reported. A total of approx. 145.000 IDPs were registered in Ingushetia. Most of them finally decided to spend one more winter in more secure conditions of IDP camps, spontaneous settlements and host families than those in Chechnya, which are still marked by high instability.

2. PINF activities in Chechnya and Ingushetia

2.1. Chechnya

2.1.1. Regular food (WFP) and non-food (UNHCR) distribution in Grozny

a.) September

PINF continued regular monthly distribution of basic food commodities (wheat flour, vegetable oil and iodised salt) for up to 50 000 most vulnerable people of Chechen capital Grozny. Five convoys with these commodities were dispatched to three most damaged districts of Grozny (Leniski, Oktyabrski and Zavodskoy). Access to the city was quite smooth, no major obstacles were encountered either at checkpoints (except the above mentioned problem with new rules regulating the access of international NGO staff) or during off-loading in Grozny. PINF also distributed UNHCR soap in three Grozny districts. A total of 43.427 beneficiaries were assisted.

b.) October

PINF again distributed WFP wheat flour, vegetable oil and iodized salt in the three districts of Grozny. Commodities were transported in five convoys together with UNHCR soap. Since the level of WFP food stocks was low, this agency reduced the monthly ration of wheat flour from 13.5 kg to 10 kg for the October distributions. But the distribution went on and a total number of 43.227 beneficiaries were assisted.

| <i>Month</i> | <i>No. of beneficiaries</i> | <i>Flour (MT)</i> | <i>Sugar (MT)</i> | <i>Salt (MT)</i> | <i>Oil (MT)</i> | <i>Soap (pcs.)</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>September</i> | 43 427 | 600,48 | 0,73 | 6,49 | 40,05 | 43 427 |
| <i>October</i> | 43 227 | 472,12 | 1,27 | 6,5 | 40,21 | 43 227 |
| TOTAL | 86 654 | 1072,60 | 2,00 | 12,99 | 80,26 | 86 654 |

2.1.2. Food for work groups in Grozny

In addition to the direct food distribution in Chechnya, PINF started the implementation of food-for-work activities in three districts of Grozny. The first part concentrates on rehabilitation of destroyed Grozny schools and the second part includes mainly cleaning of streets and other public places in the city. Up to 300 individuals received food rations through these activities.

2.1.3. Additional help to most vulnerable cases

A system of home deliveries of WFP foodstuff to group of specifically vulnerable people has been organized in Grozny by PINF staff. People called “podvalschiki” live in very provisional conditions in cellars or destroyed blocs of flats in the city. Beneficiaries are identified by PINF Grozny monitors according to the following criteria – disability to go to the distribution point of PINF or DRC and receive food ration there; handicaps caused by psychic, mental, health and ethnic status. Most of the beneficiaries have specific reasons why they cannot receive the WFP ration in orderly manner at distribution points: they are too old, they are psychically or physically handicapped, they are ethnic Russians who are too scared to leave their relatively save homes, they are not in the state to register themselves, or they don’t have any relatives to help them.

The system of regular home deliveries is now in the process of restructuring. PINF tries to support regular home care system in Grozny by food-for-work program and plans to include its beneficiaries into it. The program will start in December 2001 as a small-scale project, 6

nurses will be employed during the six-week pilot phase, on the basis of the evaluation of the pilot phase, from January up to 40 nurses will be involved.

2.1.4. Shelter activities

The first phase of the continuing joint UNHCR/PINF shelter program in Chechnya started in early April 2001. The program aims to provide shelter for the most needy inhabitants of damaged Chechen villages and Grozny through distribution of roofing materials (roofing desks, ridge capping, nails, timber). Roofing materials were first distributed in three villages south of Grozny: Chishki, Pionerskoe and Agishty. Since May 2001 PINF focused mainly on Grozny and until the end of October covered some 2800 houses in three districts of the city (Zavodskoy, Oktybrski and Leninski).

Private homes in Aldy, Chernorechye and Tsentr 2 settlements (Zavodskoy district) and 20th Uchastok and Okruzhnoy settlements (Oktyabrski district) were covered during September and October. Further monitoring and distribution was completed in large area around "Avtovokzal" (main bus station), and in the area southwest of Minutka square.

| <i>Month</i> | <i>Houses assisted (no.)</i> | <i>Inhabitants (no.)</i> |
|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| September | 639 | 3 848 |
| October | 597 | est. 3 100 |
| TOTAL | 1 236 | 5 948 |

2.1.5. Rehabilitation of schools in Chechnya

In August 2001, the Czech Ministry of Interior approved funding for reconstruction of the primary school in Duba Yurt. Also in August, the US Government approved funding for reconstruction of State Schools No.7 and No.16 and State Kindergarten No.95 in Grozny through PINF sub-grant with the International Rescue Committee. The reconstruction works started in early September.

State School No. 16 (Grozny)

The heavily damaged school consists of the main building and a corridor to a separate gymnasium; its war destruction is at level three of UNICEF scale. Back side is completely destroyed, roof heavily affected. However, the school is already functioning. Number of pupils in 1999 was 1200, nowadays only 553. There are 32 teachers currently working there.

After cleaning the school building, reconstruction started in September with dismantling of damaged roof panels. In total, approximately 34 big concrete panels will be repaired, 14 of which have already been replaced, 6 were mended and 14 more need to be replaced in the next weeks. Other works included reparation of walls (1600 bricks were used), replacement of doors and windows etc. New timber construction was built on the flat concrete roof, which already covers 70% of roof surface.

State School No. 7 (Grozny)

The capacity of the school is today approximately 900 pupils, but in 1999 it housed up to 1500 students. Wooden roof timber is mostly preserved, only few beams will have to be replaced. Roof is not covered. The biggest damage is on the street side of the building, hit by shelling during the war. Ceilings on the second and the first floor are damaged. Floors and windows are destroyed. The school is currently not functioning.

During September most roof timber was replaced or repaired. Two wings were completed and covered by approximately 1500 roofing desks. Only the totally destroyed central part of

timber roofing still awaits reconstruction. Plastering and floor reconstruction works inside the building started in mid-September.

Works on roof covering were finished in October, roof is now fully covered. Missing part of wooden timber was in special procedure renovated and covered by roofing desks. New windows were put in place. Approximately 300 m² in 4 classrooms have been plastered.

State Kindergarten No. 95 (Grozny)

A kindergarten for 140 children is currently not functioning. The roof of the building is partly damaged. The interior, doors and windows need to be repaired.

Rehabilitation works have begun in September by cleaning the building and its surroundings. PINF local workers almost finished roof reconstruction, only last layer of insulating material needs to be laid. Works on electricity, water supply, sanitation and heating are progressing. Heating in one wing of the building has been mended. Plastering of walls and ceilings on the first and second floor is almost finished.

In October the work concerned mainly shelter needs of the kindergarten such as replacing windows, mending roof, changing the heating system etc. In the first stage, the preparation work have been completed and replacement of windows started. The whole reconstruction has been progressing at a speedier pace than expected and thus the anticipated date of completion of the reconstruction will most probably move forward to the end of November 2001.

2.1.6. Support of Chechen culture in Grozny schools

Thanks to Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funding, PINF was able to fully finish the reconstruction of the 1,500-student 14th School in Grozny in summer 2001. PINF has subsequently turned its attentions to improving the educational and feeding activities in this school. One of the highlights is the program of support of Chechen culture that has been jointly with UNICEF.

Implementation of additional school programs focusing on traditional culture and Chechen language is regarded as one of the most important steps to restore the traditional Vainakh culture of the Chechens. The proposed after-school activities in the 14th School include traditional Vainakh dances, theatre, wrestling, art classes, girls' clubs and opening a new library. Professional artists and sportsmen will supervise all the activities. This program aims to be a pilot project for other educational centers rehabilitated by PINF in Chechnya.

2.2. Ingushetia

2.2.1. Ingushetia school network for Chechen IDP children

The school year has started normally in all 19 PINF temporary tented/wooden schools spread throughout Ingushetia. Thanks to the support of UNICEF some 1800 pupils were given all necessary teaching aid and textbooks as in standard Ingush state schools. In spite of the existing shortage, PINF succeeds to provide textbooks of Chechen language and literature to all schools of our temporary network.

Regarding the coming winter, PINF tent and wooden schools have been equipped with heating, gas supply and/or wood and coal to assure a stable temperature in the classrooms.

Since the beginning of September 2001, the continuing support of Ingush Ministry of Social Affairs enabled more than 400 IDP children from PINF temporary school network to enjoy two weeks of rest in the camp of Dzheirakh situated in the painteresque surrounding of the Caucasus mountains.

German NGO, HCC, has continued to provide hot meals to 8 schools of PINF network until the 20th of October 2001 when their program had to be ceased. PINF would like to thank our

German colleagues for such an important support that strengthens the physical and psychological health and the attendance to school of the IDP children.

A sports center in the Altievo refugee camp launched in late August has developed an intense sport activity. Since the beginning of the school year several competitions have taken place there with the attendance of sportsmen from other Chechen IDP camps in Ingushetia.

2.2.2. Medical care

PINF medical care unit continued to work in approx. 15 spontaneous settlements in Ingushetia. It focused mainly on providing special financial help to children that had to be treated in other cities of the Russian Federation.