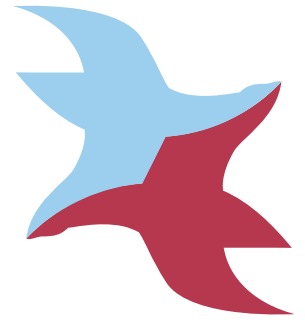


GENEVA CHALLENGE

JULY 2020



Multifunctional system  
for refugee support  
in Russia

# RUrelief

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## Alfiya Lyapina

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## Elizaveta Volosatova

Elizaveta Volosatova is currently obtaining a Master's degree in International Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry focusing on world politics and global development. Having a background in international education, she is eager to help vulnerable groups of people in their needs and, in her opinion, language is one of the most important aspects of integration process. Elizaveta is interested in environmental problems and sustainable development and she plans to focus on these topics in her further research. She is fluent in English and French. Elizaveta is Russian.



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# abstract



Refugees and asylum seekers constitute one of the most vulnerable categories of population in all countries. Fleeing their homes, they start an unsafe journey hoping to find shelter abroad. In most cases, these people have little knowledge of what is waiting for them in the outside world. In Russia, a host country for many asylum seekers, the situation is aggravated by the reluctance of governing elites to accept refugee flows as well as by distinctively negative attitudes of the local population to migrants in general. Paradoxically, despite the strong legislation that grants a number of rights to refugees, the government falls short to abide by the law and does not introduce integration programs. Our solution to the problem is RuRelief, a multifunctional system of information support for refugees and asylum seekers that combines a wide range of services and initiatives. RuRelief App is the heart of the complex mechanism of providing timely assistance for the targeted category of migrants at all stages of their stay in Russia.



Download the demo  
version of RuRelief App!

# logotype



Migration, displacement, relocation are natural indispensable elements of all living things. Hence, for a logo of the project we chose an image of flying birds as a symbol of eternal movement from one place to another. While in nature birds find their way home after some time, our 'birds' (refugees) don't always have an opportunity to return.

The combination of 2 colours was not chosen randomly. Burgundy is a strong colour that expresses stability and resilience underlining reliability of the RuRelief system. Sky blue is a shade of a peaceful sky in the absence of war. It was chosen to inspire confidence in users of the application.

The logo is a sign of perpetual motion, fragile balance of migration. It speaks of tolerance, compassion and empathy.

The name of our project consists of 2 parts. 'Ru' is an acronym of Russia, a vast country where, despite stringent laws and harsh climate, one can find support and get relief. The acronym is also used as a domain for Russian websites (for example, [refugee.ru](http://refugee.ru)).

The second word, 'Relief', reflects the goal of our project to facilitate and accelerate the process of information search for receiving support as well as to inform refugees and asylum seekers about available opportunities that they may not be aware of.



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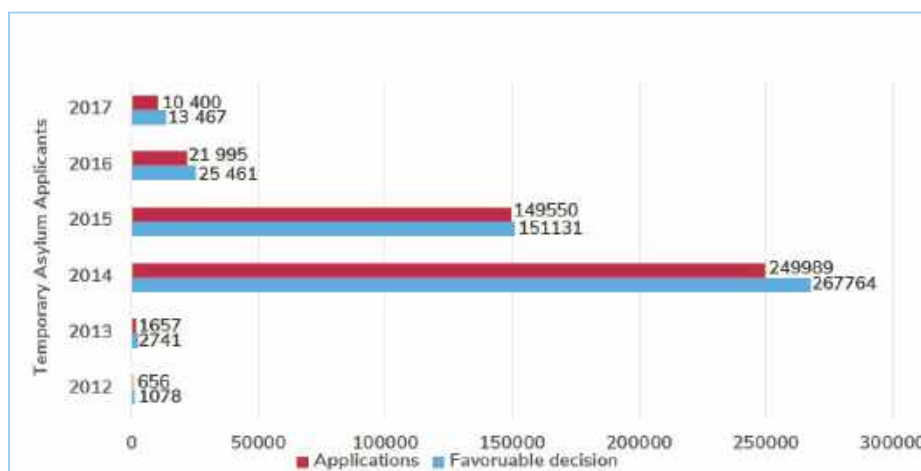
# introduction

The refugee reception has recently become an urgent international issue of high importance amid the drastic increase in the number of asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced people in the world over the past six years. The ongoing hostilities in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Congo, Somalia and the outbreak of military conflicts in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Iraq and Ukraine have led to the total number of displaced people worldwide reached 46.7 million in 2014 (UNHCR 2014–2015) and increased to 70.8 million in 2018 (UNHCR 2018), aggravated by the new humanitarian crises in Venezuela and Myanmar.

The topic of forced migration in Russia has been out of academic focus since the early 2000s. The issue was especially popular among researchers in 1990s that were characterized by the flows of migrants and refugees from the CIS countries after the collapse of the USSR, due to the intensity of armed and inter-ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, Central Asia and Moldova.

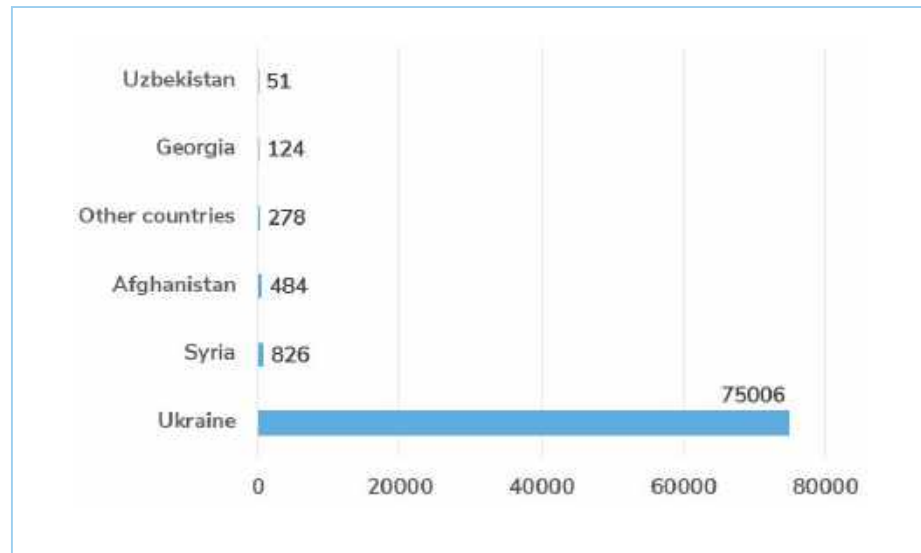
1990s became a “decade of international migration”: either internal (Vitkovskaya 1991–2002; Mkrtchyan 2002; Vorobyova 2004) or external (Vitkovskaya 1992–2002; Zayonchkovskaya 1993–2003; Regent 2001; Ivanova 1999–2001). The Federal Migration Service created in 1990 and headed by Regent T. M. had been defending the interests of refugees until it was dissolved and united to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. The Civic Assistance Committee, an important actor in the field of asylum in Russia that provides aid to refugees and migrants, launched its first activities in 1990. Six years later, a journalist Lidia Grafova, a respected author on refugee issues, founded “Forum of migrant organizations.” By 2000, 276 public organizations were helping migrants and refugees in Russia.

Since the early 2000s, asylum seekers do not consider Russia to be their final destination. However, as a big actor of international relations, the country is still present on the map of global displacement trends, despite the fact that the data on the number of persons who have applied for the refugee status or temporary asylum in Russia is not publicly available.



**Total number of asylum seekers and persons granted temporary asylum in Russia in 2012–2017**

Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation (the Main Directorate for Migration of the Ministry Of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, since 2016) (unpublished data)



**Distribution of persons with temporary asylum in Russia  
by country of origin, as of January 1, 2019, people**

Source: Federal Statistic Service, 2019

Nevertheless, we can trace a trend towards an increase in the number of people who have received temporary asylum in Russia (mainly due to arriving refugees from Ukraine and Syria). While at the end of 2014 2822 people were enjoying this status (the majority of them originated from Afghanistan), by the end of 2016 there were 313.707 of such migrants. 99% of those were Ukrainian (Rosstat 2019) and the ratio remains the same at the moment.

Referring to the statement of Ms Kirillova, the head of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there were 2.5 million Ukrainian citizens in Russia in 2016 (Kuznetsova 2018). In the case of Syrians, the situation was totally different. There were 52 Syrian citizens granted temporary asylum in 2013; in 2014 the number reached 1158 people and by 2019 it has slightly dropped to 826 people (Rosstat 2019).



relevance:  
Russian context

In our opinion, refugee reception may be a relevant policy for Russia due to the following reasons.

**1. Country image.** Nowadays refugee support for the country is a matter of good image in the eyes of the international community.

**2. Future economic benefits with a structured approach to the arrangement and integration at the state level.** Such approaches have been utilized in the United States (Palmgren 2016) and Germany and have proved to be rather successful (European Commission 2016–2018). The factor that Russia, Germany and the US have in common is the population ageing (Palmgren 2016) and the need for highly qualified specialists in various areas of the labour market. However, the policy of accepting non-CIS refugees in Russia remains unduly restrictive (Kubal 2016, 2019; Civic Assistance 2015–2019) although the Concept of Russian Migration Policy until 2025, adopted in 2018, states it is necessary “to improve the procedure of granting refugee status and temporary asylum” (The Concept of Russian Migration Policy for the period until 2025 of October 31, 2018).

**3. No sustainable mechanisms of refugee reception and integration.** In Russia, such mechanisms don't exist for asylum seekers from non-CIS countries. A relatively high rate of immigration growth is achieved by the continuous influx of CIS nationals and the resettlement of compatriots. However, this migration resource is depleted (Varshaver 2018).

**4. It is quite reasonable to assume that Russia will again face a refugee influx and will not stand aside from the growing trend** of an increase in the number of forced migrants in the world, as a result of wars and humanitarian disasters, the rapid increase in the population in Africa and the Middle East (Denisenko, Kozlov 2018) and a new emerging category of refugees such as climate migrants (Betts 2013, Su 2017).

Russia was one of 181 countries that voted in favor of the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (UN 2018) by the UN General Assembly designed to support countries that accept the largest number of refugees in the world. According to the Global Compact, the countries have agreed to share the burden of accepting refugees and stimulate the resettlement to third countries as well as create opportunities for voluntary repatriation. The repatriation program “Compatriots” has existed in Russia since 1990: in 2014–2015 it played a significant role in helping refugees from Ukraine (Kuznetsova 2019).

# 1. overview of the problem

## 1.1 Legal aspect

Russian legislation in the field of asylum is based on the Federal law “On refugees” (Federal Law no. 4528-1) adopted 19.02.1993. The law was intended to fulfil Russia’s obligations in regard to refugees which it accepted together with the ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees (Geneva Convention 1951) in 1992.

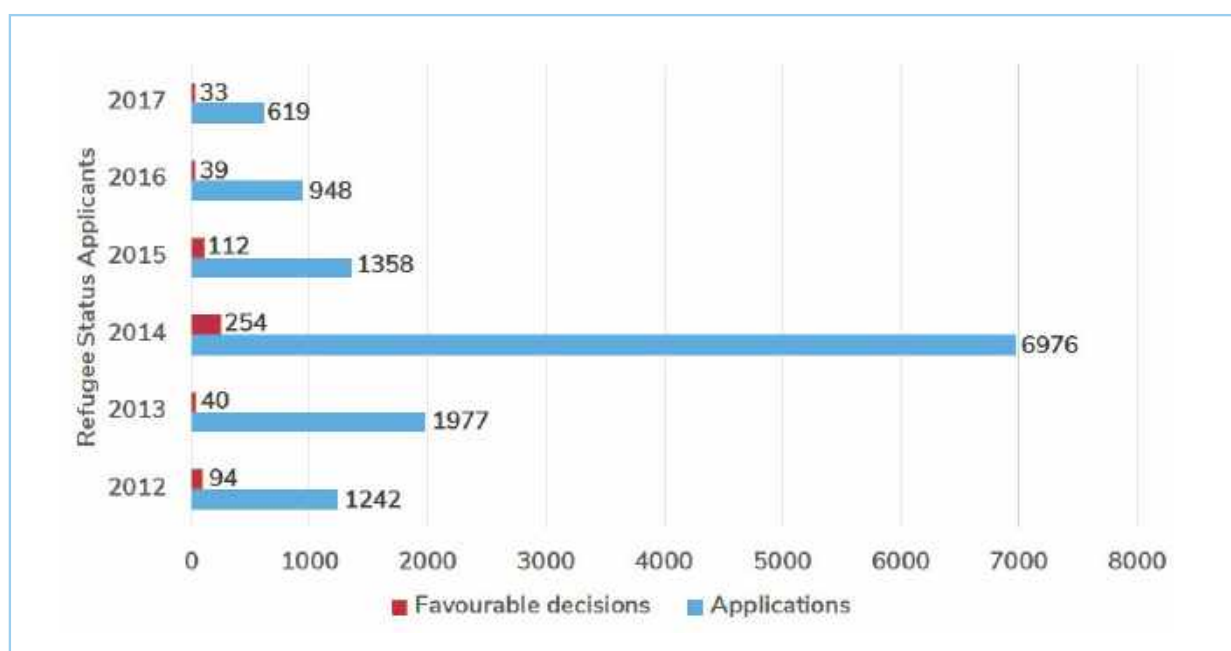
Besides, there is a law “On forced labour migrants designed to regulate the migration of internally displaced people.” Also, the laws “On the legal status of foreign citizens” (no. 115-FL of 25.07.2002) and “On education” (no. 273-FL of 29.12.2012) regulate separate elements of forced migration and other laws defining the rights of foreigners in Russia.

According to Russian legislation, asylum seekers can apply for two types of humanitarian protection — the refugee status and temporary asylum. The refugee status guarantees a person almost the same rights that any Russian citizen has, including they can claim social benefits and receive

assistance when enrolling children in kindergartens and schools.

**Temporary asylum is issued for a period of up to one year and grants the right to stay in Russia (with the principle of non-refoulement respected), the right to work and the right to medical care. This status can be renewed after a year (Article 12 of the Federal Law no. 4528-I of 19.02.1993). The rights of those enjoying temporary asylum are quite limited compared to refugee rights.**

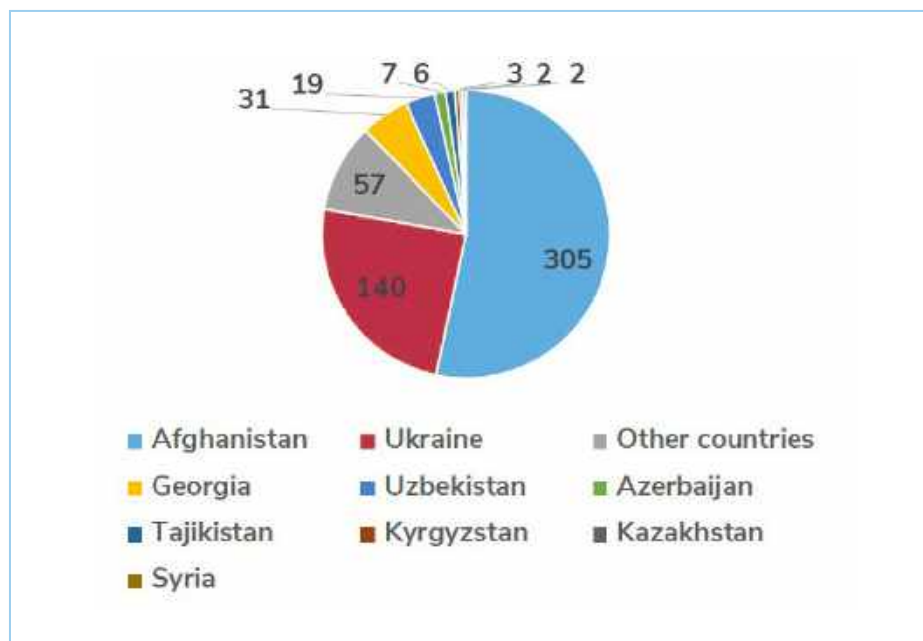
In recent years, there has been a decrease in the number of persons receiving the refugee status (while refugee flows to Russia have increased). For example, the percentage of people who have received refugee status from the total number of applicants amounted to 8% in 2015 and dropped to 4% in 2016.



### Total number of refugees 40 251 and asylum seekers in Russia in 2012–2017

Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation (the Main Directorate for Migration of the Ministry Of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, since 2016) (unpublished data)

The total number of applicants for temporary asylum status was 36% in 2013, in 2014-91%, in 2015-98%, in 2016-83% (calculated from unpublished according to the FMS of the Russian Federation for 2012-2016). The status was granted mainly to Ukrainian citizens. From 2011 to the date, 2,585 refugees from Syria have applied for refugee status (General Department for Migration The Ministry of Internal Affairs 2020). Of these, only one application was successful (Rosstat 2019). Thus, there is a certain “replacement” of the issue of refugee status with temporary asylum. In 2017, 33 forced migrants received the refugee status, in 2018 – 30, and 2019 — 23 (General Department for Migration The Ministry of Internal Affairs 2020).



**Distribution of persons with refugee status in Russia by country of origin, as of January 1, 2019, people**

Source: Federal Statistic Service, 2019



Civic Assistance Committee 2016

In Russia, refugees face many obstacles, such as difficulties with accessing medical care and humanitarian aid, the absence of state assistance in finding accommodation and paying for it, with the lack of reliable information on the application procedure being the most critical one. Refugees do not receive social benefits or any financial support. Their legal and socio-economic statuses (which is based on the law) are extremely unstable during the waiting period after the application is submitted.

In Russia only one NGO renders refugee assistance. The Civic Assistance Committee for refugees and migrants, founded in 1990 in Moscow (with network locations in 37 regions of Russia). Also, Civic Assistance deals with issues of access to education and has several integration programs for children and adults. In Moscow, there is also an NGO “Kids are kids”, which specializes in the integration of refugee’s children.

Theoretically, a refugee can apply for a temporary residence permit in Russia (TRP), which is granted for three years. Having a TRP, an asylum seeker can apply for a residence permit in Russia after six months. However, in practice, refugees often do not know the Russian migration legislation, and, therefore, do not qualify for a resident permit (the NGO also sometimes cannot inform refugees about possible opportunities). Besides, all Russian regions provide for quotas for obtaining a TRP. In many cases, refugees face the lack of TRP due to corruption when these guaranteed places are sold to solvent migrants out of order.

**However, it is worth mentioning the relatively successful cases of refugee reception demonstrating Russia’s capacity in this sphere (for instance, the case of hosting refugees from Ukraine in 2014–2016).** The Russian government organised refugee reception centres and temporary residence centres. The leadership of the country reduced processing time for considering temporary asylum applications for Ukrainian citizens and



Syrian refugees. ph: Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters

provided more quotas for them (as described above) (Kuznetsova 2019). Russia has shown good results in the field of inclusion of citizens in volunteer activities for refugee assistance (VTsIOM 2014). Some Ukrainian refugees moved to Russia using the State Program for Voluntary Emigration of Compatriots Living Abroad ("Compatriots" program). The program provided an accelerated procedure for the migration status and financial support. While in 2013 there were 78.2 thousand people in the program, in 2016 the number reached 289.8 thousand. Citizens of Ukraine have become the primary source of increasing the number of program participants (Denisenko, Chudinovskyh 2017).

**The second (less extensive, but significant) case is on hosting Circassian refugees from Syria in three republics of the North Caucasus-Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia.** Over the years, about 3,000 people arrived in total (The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs 2019). The military conflict prompted many Circassians to flee from Syria to their historical homeland. Unlike other categories of Syrian refugees in Russia, the Circassians tried to obtain a temporary residence permit (TRP)-the status of a permanent resident of Russia, and not refugee status. This case was due to the serious (primarily informational) support of the regional authorities of the republics. Also, the authorities of the republics did everything possible so that the Syrian Circassians could freely use their rights and integrate into the host society.

## Refugee journey in Russia.

**We have identified a significant contradiction between the existing legislation and its implementation in practice.** On the one hand, federal laws designed to fulfill Russia's obligations under the Geneva Convention are quite favourable to forced migrants who have received refugee status. On the other hand:

- The rights of refugees whose applications for status are under review or on appeal against the refusal to grant status (i.e., in the decision-making procedure) are extremely limited.
- Refugees who have received temporary asylum have significantly more rights than people under consideration for the status but much more limited compared to the rights of "official" refugees with an already granted status (currently 487 persons (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2020)).
- There are many unresolved legislative gaps in the refugee reception system in Russia.

**To describe the process of obtaining refugee status in Russia, we used our personal volunteer experience.** Together with applicants (refugees) we visited the Department for Refugees and Forced Migrants of the Russian Migration Office in Moscow and accompanied them during the process of applying for various statuses and receiving official decisions on the considered applications. In addition, we were teaching refugee and migrant children in the integration centre "Kids are kids" (including online lessons due to COVID-19). The analysis of documents and day to day observations thanks to the volunteer experience allowed us to draw up the route of a refugee from the moment of his arrival to Russia to the moment of obtaining any type of status.



We have divided the process of obtaining asylum in Russia into conditional stages in which it is carried out:

**Stage 1. The entry of forced migrants into the territory of Russia.**

In most cases refugees arrive in Russia through legal corridors, usually with a tourist or an invitation visa. In 2018 many refugees took advantage of the opportunity to enter Russia using a Fan-ID as a privilege for visitors of the FIFA World Cup (no visa was required). Sometimes in the country of origin refugees receive a visa to Russia with the help of intermediary firms for a certain cost (that is, through corrupted governmental bodies).

It should be noted that often the arrival of a refugee to Russia is not accompanied by official information support. The awareness of refugees about the need to contact the migration service in a timely manner upon arrival to a host country often depends on the presence of a well-established so-called “social network” (Palmgren 2016). Therefore, when applying to the migration service, refugees often find themselves in an illegal situation.

**Anna Gorodetskaya, a lawyer of the Civic Assistance Committee, notes (from our interview conducted in April 2020):**

**“It would be easier to defend the interests of refugees if they were legally on the territory of Russia at the time of applying to us. The migration service considers applying for asylum as an attempt to stay in Russia at any cost. However, holding valid documents is not the first thing a person thinks about when moving to an unfamiliar country. Firstly, he tries to satisfy primary needs like food and shelter.”**

The relocation of refugees from Ukraine was often accompanied by social network assistance as the majority of Ukrainians have relatives in Russia. Syrian refugees received invitations from friends who were working in textile factories in the Moscow region (Civic Assistance 2015).

**Stage 2. Applying to the Department for Refugees and Forced Migrants of Russian Migration Office for refugee status / temporary asylum.**

In most cases, it is the presence or appearance of a refugee's own acquaintances among people from the country of origin that contributes to their early application to an NGO. When applying for asylum, a refugee is interviewed by the migration service while an immigration officer fills in a questionnaire about the refugee. According to the experts of the “Civic assistance” Committee, the refugee rights are seriously violated at this stage. An employee of the migration service can often write down only half of the refugee's history or not focus on the most important points. To ensure fair treatment of applicants, Civic Assistance provides a lawyer who accompanies refugees to interviews. Sometimes the lawyer fills out a questionnaire template in advance based on the conversation with the refugee and offers the migration service employee the possibility of copying the completed questionnaire

so that the refugee's history is described in detail and their rights are respected. The lawyers not only interpret but also provide psychological support to the refugee during the interview.

In addition, the lawyers of the Civic Assistance Committee often insist that the application is accepted. The issue of non-admission to the procedure is widely raised by Russian researchers in NGO reports (Burtina et al., 2015; Civic Assistance 2015–2019). Non-admission can be expressed in a relatively mild form, for example, when refugees are asked to “come later” or, on the contrary, the representatives of the Migration Office say the request was received too late. In a more severe form, the rights of refugees with expired visas are violated — they may face a fine (for one administrative violation) or an entry ban for two or more offenses like “violating the rules of entry or the regime of stay (residence) in the Russian Federation” (Article 18.8 of the Administrative Code).

**In Moscow and Saint Petersburg expulsion is imposed together with a fine. Svetlana Gannushkina, the Chair of the Civic Assistance Committee, comments on the danger of receiving a refusal when applying (from our interview conducted in July 2019):**

**“When a person comes to the [migration authorities] of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he is taken away and fined if the deadline for applying for asylum is overdue. As a rule, at this point, a refugee has already run out of all [brought] money.”**

It is important to note here that the Law “On refugees” regulates the principle of non-refoulement, one of the core principles of the Geneva Convention of 1951. It is prohibited to expel refugees who are waiting for a decision on granting refugee/temporary asylum status, have refugee/temporary asylum status or have lost it (if the situation in their country of origin remains unsafe). However, according to the experts interviewed, in practice, a significant number of asylum-seekers who are under consideration or appealing against refusals risk being expelled to their country of origin due to illiteracy of police officers. Expulsion cannot be carried out without a court decision. Lawyers from NGOs usually enter the defence process at the stage when the decision on expulsion is being made in the first instance court and begin the appeal process in the second instance courts.

### **Stage 3. The period of consideration of the application for refugee status /temporary asylum.**

If the application for granting statuses is accepted by the migration authorities, refugees receive a “Certificate of consideration of the application on its merits.” According to this certificate, they are required to register at the place of residence in order to obtain the documents in case of successful admission. It is impossible to receive documents confirming the legal refugee status without registration at the place of residence (according to the Presidential decree). As a rule, if refugees manage to rent an apartment (which is extremely difficult due to reluctance of locals to rent an apartment to migrants and refugees), the landlord does not want to officially register the tenants, especially foreign citizens. In most cases, refugees are forced to “buy” registration in a place where they do not actually live, that is, to commit a corrupt

act. The most vulnerable categories of refugees (for example, single mothers) live in the shelter of the Civic Assistance Committee.

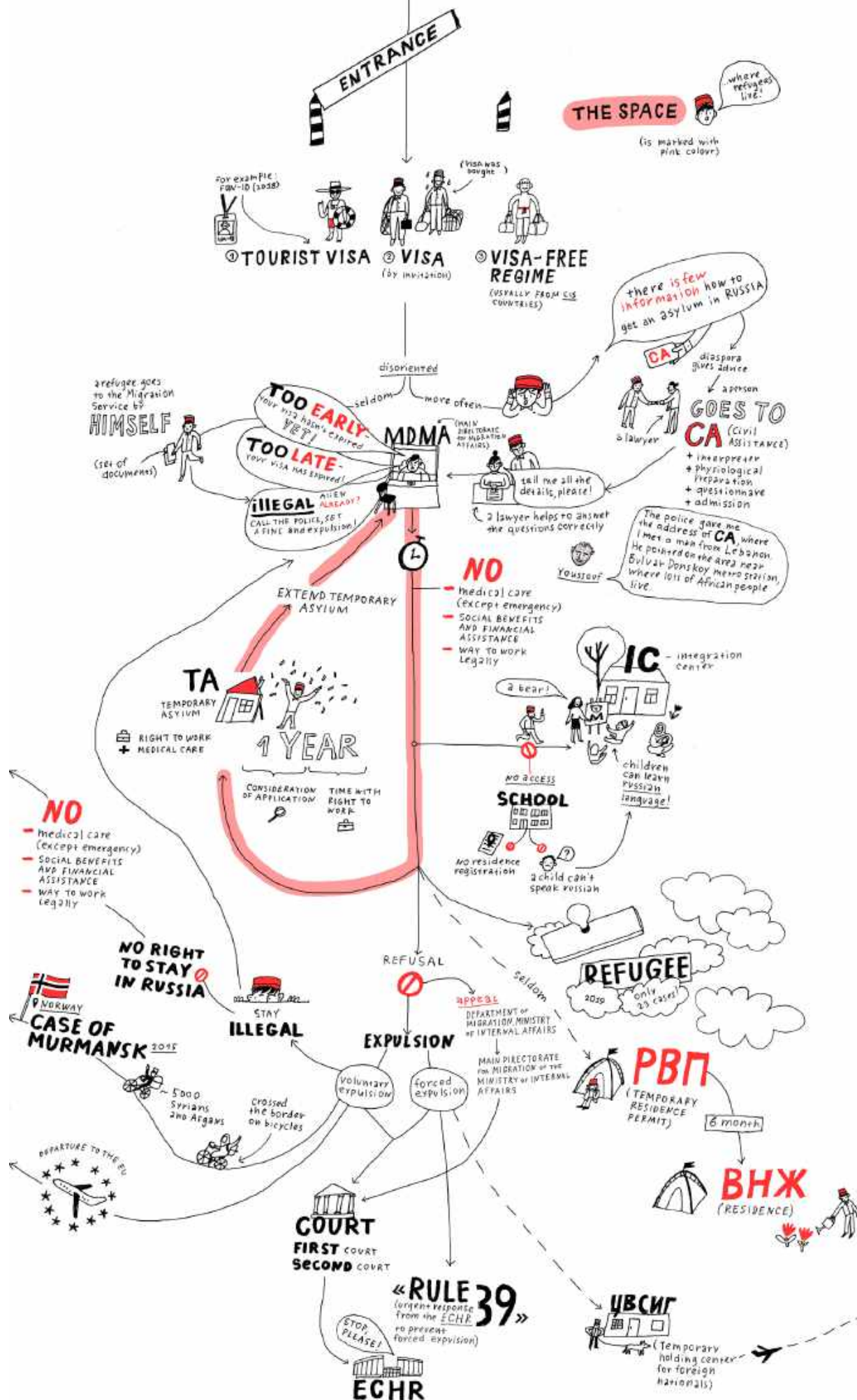
In addition, at this stage refugees do not have the right to work and to receive medical and social assistance. Sometimes NGOs provide humanitarian, medical, psychological and financial assistance to refugees, but these opportunities are extremely limited. The decision to obtain the status is considered for an average of 3 months but the process may take longer (Civil assistance 2019). Their situation becomes vulnerable both from the point of generating social issues and from the point of the risk of receiving administrative fines or expulsion for “violation of the order of work” (Article 18.10 of the Administrative Code) as usually, refugees work illegally. However, the right to education can be enjoyed at this stage.

#### **Stage 4. Appeal against the refusal of asylum.**

The legal status of refugees remains almost the same as when waiting for the application to be processed. If the appeal in the Department for Refugees and Forced Migrants of Russian Migration Office is successful refugees can re-apply to the appropriate Department for the status but need to include new reasons for requesting the asylum, for example, the escalation of the military conflict in the country of origin. Otherwise, asylum seekers must leave Russian territory within one month. Some refugees still manage to appeal decisions in higher courts (which also takes long but allows them to legally stay in Russia during this period).



One of 487 lucky asylum seekers who managed to receive the refugee status in Russia.



## Refugee journey in Russia in picture

idea and development of our team for Geneva Challenge  
artist: Katya Gushchina



#### Stage 5. Receiving temporary asylum.

Along with receiving temporary asylum, for one year a refugee acquires certain rights — mainly the right to work without the need to obtain a work patent or permit (the Law “On the legal status of foreign citizens”), as well as the right to medical care (Obligatory Medical Insurance policy), prohibition of expulsion (the Law “On refugees”) and a lower level of income tax compared to other foreigners employed in Russia (13% along with Russian citizens) (article 224 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation).

#### Stage 6. Loss of the “temporary asylum” status and extension of the status.

After a year, refugees can apply to the migration service for extension of temporary asylum. It is not always extended. When asked whether there are any criteria for extension, **Yevgeny Yastrebov, migration consultant for the Civic Assistance Committee**, answered this question (from an our interview conducted in April 2020):

**“Two Syrians come to the migration service, both have temporary asylum. One gets his status extended, and the other does not. The situation is the same — there is a war in Syria.”**

When losing temporary asylum, a big number of refugees resort to appealing the decision in courts with the help of NGOs that also help them re-file the application for extension with the indication of new circumstances.

#### Stage 7. Attempts to leave Russia for the EU or remain illegal.

Thereafter, refugees prefer to act in different ways. Some of them may live and work illegally for months or years “paying off” every time the police detain them in the street. Some manage to appeal asylum decisions in higher courts (which is a long process that, however, allows a legal stay in Russia during this period). Before 2016 some refugees tended to flee to the EU with the help of the Civic Assistance Committee and UNHCR. About 5000 refugees crossed Russian border with Norway in 2015 (Civic Assistance 2015).



Intermuseum festival of migration and ethnocultural diversity "Point of displacement" in The New Tretyakov Gallery

## 1.2 Sociocultural aspect

It should be considered that, before the Federal Migration Service (FMS) was disbanded and incorporated into the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2016, programs for the integration of refugees and labour migrants were included into the political agenda of the country. Among ideas expressed there were those on creating opportunities for refugees to learn Russian as well as "establishing mechanisms for interaction between officials, NGOs, representatives of embassies and migrant communities" (Civic Assistance Committee 2019). Unfortunately, after transferring the jurisdiction of the FMS to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such initiatives were no longer discussed.

The right for education is acknowledged in the Russian constitution: "Everyone shall have the right to education. Guarantees shall be provided for general access to and free pre-school, secondary and high vocational education in state or municipal educational establishments and at enterprises." Also, **the Federal law "On education" says that the education is guaranteed for everyone regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, religion and some other circumstances.** Experts from the Civic Assistance Committee point that the right for education is not only the right but the duty of the state and parents. **But despite these facts, jurisprudence testifies to multiple systematic violations of the right for education (Poletayev, Zayonchkovskaya, Mikhailov 2018).**

**The most common reason for non-admission of refugee children to school is their limited knowledge of Russian.** Some experts say that "the problem is related to the absence of language learning assistance in Russian state schools."

**Another problem is the absence of registration at a place of residence that is required for enrollment.** This requirement becomes an insurmountable obstacle for admission of refugee children to school in particular in Moscow where it is impossible for refugees to legally register at a place of stay.





Civic Assistance Committee 2018 reports

## Language courses

Nowadays several non-governmental institutions, such as Civic Assistance Committee, Red Cross, School of the Russian language, Ethnosphere, Kids are kids, Pereletnye deti, Children of St. Petersburg, teach Russian as a foreign language to refugees and their children. The Red Cross offers a free Russian language course for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and also for refugee children in St. Petersburg. The course includes lessons for students with various levels of Russian: beginner, intermediate or advanced. Being based in Moscow, “School of the Russian language” provides their educational service of intensive learning of Russian for refugee children during a 12 months period. At the moment five schools are opened and only 2 of them are free of charge.

These NGOs take into consideration refugees’ needs and work towards pre-school, primary and secondary education for children, teaching Russian both to adults and children. In 2016 in Noginsk “Civic Assistance Committee” in cooperation with UNHCR organised Russian language courses for Syrians who fled from the war to Russia. The courses were both for children and adults. Since September 2019 “Civic Assistance Committee” has been trying to organise language assistance for children unable to speak Russian in one of Moscow schools with the help of volunteers from the committee. Teachers and school administration gather children in groups for additional lessons of Russian as a foreign language. Furthermore, volunteers lead school-

based additional lessons of Russian not only for families they work with but also for those who are sent by the school. This is the only example of a state school allowing such initiative in its facilities.

The Integration Center for Children and Migrants “Kids are kids” is a volunteer project that for 22 years has been enabling children from any country to socialize, so as they don’t feel like strangers in Russia and are able to make friends. Their programs are attended by children from 3 to 18 years old from Syria, Afghanistan, Armenia, Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. “Pereletnye deti” is a new volunteer project of teaching Russian to migrant/refugee children based in Moscow in the lyceum “Ark-XXI.” During COVID-19 lessons were held online for 10 groups.

“The children of St. Petersburg” has been engaged in the sociocultural adaptation of children of migrants and refugees since April 2012. First they started by introducing courses of the Russian language and afterwards the project has become one of the most important for social inclusion of refugee children into Russian society. Most of the students come from countries of Central Asia such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, but there are also children from Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Ukraine, Moldova, Colombia, Cameroon, Tanzania, etc. All classes and activities are free and open to children of any nationality.



Intermuseum festival of migration and ethnocultural diversity "Point of displacement" in The New Tretyakov Gallery



### Cultural dimension

As state integration programs for migrants don't exist in Russia, the cultural integration of refugees in the hosting society happens only through their interaction with locals that is not always a positive experience. According to our observations made while volunteering for "Kids are kids", refugees and migrants in general have to endure racism, xenophobia and, at times, violence based on their race, nationality or religion. Discriminatory attitude of locals and authorities towards foreigners (in particular, migrant workers and asylum seekers) stems from the times when the USSR was a closed nation-state and there was no cross-border movement from or into the country. The established hostility towards foreign states has defined a highly patriotic trend, border on nationalism. Therefore, apart from the issues with registration, refugee status and employment, asylum seekers have to handle everyday discrimination receiving no support from governmental bodies to be truly integrated in the society (Malakhov 2013, Kuznetsova, Round 2018).

However, there are several initiatives at individual and organizational level that raise awareness of the population on refugee issues. For instance, several museums and libraries have started to extend their functions and turn into venues for discussing social and cultural problems of our time, becoming centres of intercultural communication. Some of them implement programs aimed at integrating persons with migration experience as well as educating the society about forced migration and ethnic diversity of the city (these initiatives are located in Moscow). For example, the modern art museum "Garage", the Moscow museum as well as Francoteca. Among the successful projects there are an intermuseum festival "Point of displacement" [Tochka Peremeshcheniya] and an exhibition of works of a young refugee painter from Afghanistan organized by Civic Assistance in Francoteca.

### 1.3 Employment aspect

The application for a refugee status is usually processed for an average of 3 months, however, the process may be extended up to several months (Civic Assistance Committee 2019). At this stage, while the claim is being considered, refugees do not have the right to work and to receive medical and social assistance. Their position becomes vulnerable from 2 different angles: firstly, from the lack of protection and, secondly, from the risk of receiving administrative fines or expulsion for “violation of the order of labor activity” (Article 18.10 of the Administrative Code) as refugees often fall into illegality by working without an official work permit.

Before the start of an armed conflict in Syria in 2011, Syrian citizens worked in the textile industry in the Moscow region; when the conflict emerged, those who successfully settled in Russia have been helping to move their compatriots in through job invitations. The growth of Syrian diaspora contributed to the employment of refugees in this industry and their compact settlement in Noginsk and Losino-Petrovskoe (towns in the Moscow region). Thus, those who arrived before 2011 work legally and those who arrived as refugees are employed in the grey economy due to the uncertainty of their legal status. According to interviews conducted with the locals, refugees ‘somehow negotiate, perhaps, with the local police’.

**Thereafter, refugees prefer to act in different ways. Some of them may live and work illegally for months or years “paying off” every time the police detain them in the street. Some manage to appeal asylum decisions in higher courts (which is a long process that, however, allows a legal stay in Russia during this period). Before 2016 some refugees tended to flee to the EU with the help of the Civic Assistance Committee and UNHCR.**

**In case of receiving temporary asylum, for one year a refugee acquires certain rights — mainly the right to work without the need to obtain a work patent or permit** (the Law “On legal status of foreign citizens”), as well as the right to medical care (Obligatory Medical Insurance policy), prohibition of expulsion (the Law “On refugees”) and a lower level of income tax compared to other foreigners employed in Russia (13% along with Russian citizens) (article 224 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation).

On the other hand, **few employers wish to hire refugees officially** (rather re-register already established illegal labour relations in legal manner), often for the purpose of tax evasion, due to the need to increase employee’s salary to the standard level and, mainly, due to unwillingness to contact national migration office (Kuznetsova 2016).

Nonetheless, a University diploma of a Syrian or his profound experience in a certain field will be put in question by the employer. Formally, Russia and Syria have an agreement on mutual recognition of higher education diplomas but, in fact, Syrians with diplomas of doctors, teachers and engineers admit that they were able to find a job only as unskilled workers or in NGOs that provide assistance to refugees. Syrians in Russia are forced to replenish the market of illegal and poorly paid labour, settling for any offered wage.

The attitude of migration authorities differs depending on where refugees come from. For example, most decisions related to Ukrainian refugees were first and foremost in 2014–2015 when a massive influx occurred after the beginning of the armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. **Such decision was due to the political will of the government to accept all Ukrainian asylum seekers as an act**

**of ethnic solidarity. The position of state agencies is controversial regarding notification of tax authorities when accepting Ukrainian refugees.** The notification period is 10 days after registration of the employment relationship. The obligation to notify is assigned to the employer, however, according to the Presidium of the Supreme court of the Russian Federation, when an employee who entered without a visa is employed, it is not necessary to submit such a notification (Avagar Group 2020). Following the political order from the government, local authorities were easing the application process and providing Ukrainian refugees with rights and social benefits.

According to Russian refugee legislation, refugees and asylum seekers have a right to work with several limitations. Such migrants cannot be employed if the company is engaged in sales, in tents and markets or retail sale of pharmaceutical products. Moreover, they cannot be employed in the governmental agencies, military facilities and top secret industries (Akimova 2018).

**Accepted refugees are eligible for unemployment benefits together with Russian citizens.** The monthly amount of unemployment assistance for all categories of population in Saint Petersburg, for example, varies between 850 (\$12) and 4900 rubles (\$70) while the minimum subsistence level in the city is 11499 (\$164). The final amount of unemployment benefits is assigned according to the conditions stipulated in the legislation of the Russian Federation. The payment plan is calculated from 3 to 12 months after the person is declared unemployed. Like nationals, refugees “have the right to free consultation, free access to information and services related to professional orientation, in the employment service in order to choose the field of activity (profession), employment, opportunities for vocational training and additional professional education” (Russian Red Cross 2018). **However, as the total number of people holding the refugee status in the country is very low (487 people), mentioned social benefits are allowed only for a very limited group of individuals.** Those who enjoy temporary asylum do not have access to above-stated opportunities.

**More potential employment opportunities for refugees are introduced by the concept of social entrepreneurship.** New amendments to the law on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), developed by the Ministry of Economy, were adopted on July 11, 2019, introducing the concept of “social entrepreneurship” into the legal field. **The focus of the project is on mass employment of socially vulnerable groups in “social enterprises”:** governmental authorities can provide support to such SMEs. The bill now includes the disabled and people with disabilities, single parents, pensioners and citizens of pre-retirement age, graduates of orphanages, persons released from prison, refugees and internally displaced persons, etc. (Kommersant 2019). The first social enterprises were to appear after April 10, 2020, however, the situation has been complicated by COVID-19. The areas of activity in which business can be considered social are socio-medical, socio-psychological, socio-pedagogical and labour services, production and sales of medical equipment, software, and technical tools that can be used only for disability prevention or rehabilitation of disabled, organization of leisure and health of the disabled and elderly, creating conditions for a barrier-free environment. Overall, social entrepreneurship is imagined by policymakers as “pure” entrepreneurship, for which profit is not the only measure of success.



# 2. solution

## the app and the website

### 2.1. General description of the idea and the application.

We conducted our research by analyzing documents and descriptive statistics, carrying out in-depth interviews with immigration experts and refugees of different nationalities living in various regions of Russia, as well as by making our own observations during volunteer activities. As a result, **we have identified several problems and deficiencies of the Russian asylum system as a whole including shortcomings of refugee assistance systems currently used by Russian-based and international NGOs operating in Russia. Our solution is RuRelief, a multifunctional system of information and service support for refugees and asylum seekers which intends to solve many of the existing issues.**

**We want to underline that our project in no way aims to attract more refugees to the Russian Federation or to act against Russian government. On the opposite, we strive to bring relief to those refugees and asylum seekers who have already arrived to the country as well as to provide verified information about the asylum situation for those who consider coming to Russia. As we cannot and do not wish to change the legislation, we do our contribution to ease the lives of those who lost their homes.**

The RuRelief system will consist of 3 components: **a website, an application for smartphones and a chatbot.** The logic behind our complex solution is as follows. The main part of our solution is the application, however, to check opportunities of fleeing to Russia, a refugee will type "Get asylum in Russia" in Google. It will show links to local NGOs providing assistance to refugees and forums with discussions on how to move to Russia, how to receive a refugee status, etc. However, necessary information appears to be scattered among many resources and it is quite difficult to get a comprehensive answer to all questions. Despite the fact that at the individual and NGO level there

are a number of initiatives on assisting refugees, there is no universal tool that would clearly and quickly provide information support on all refugee issues. **RuRelief app that we propose will solve the problem of fragmented information by providing a full list of useful links and resources that an asylum seeker will need on his way to receive the refugee status or to stay in Russia until his status expires.** Justifying the development of an app, applications are known to be more user-friendly as they display necessary, always-at-hand information in a concise manner.

Unfortunately, search engines do not show existing applications based on the key words; moreover, refugees may not be aware that the thing they look for may be in the form of an app. Therefore, we will create a website that will appear on the top of the list and will lead the user to downloading the application. The website will contain the same links and resources, however, the application will have additional interactive tools (such as To-do list, a map of NGOs addressing asylum issues, etc.). Both RuRelief website and the application will contain a chatbot that will quickly direct our target audience to the resources they need. All of these features will be explained below.

**Social capital is probably the only thing that a refugee can count on in Russia, as Russia's official policies towards displaced people remain extremely strict. While, unfortunately, we cannot influence Russia's state policy towards refugees and asylum seekers, we can make the journey of every refugee arriving in Russia who has become a user of the site and application RuRelief a little easier. The refugee will be able to accumulate their social capital more quickly and efficiently.**

### Sponsorship

One of the main advantages of our solution is that, while being highly efficient and solving many existing problems, it does not require significant investments, at least at the outset of its development. Nevertheless, the system requires a lot of time and effort to be developed and operationalized by the team which raises the question of covering development costs. For this reason we plan to use multiple methods to sponsor our work. First of all, we will attract relevant companies whose services and products can be useful for asylum seekers (for example, hostels) to advertise at our website and in the app. Secondly, at our resources we can place advertisements of our partner organisations (NGOs, funds, charity organisations, legal consultancy, etc.) that will contribute to our project in response. Thirdly, we will use fundraising and crowdfunding opportunities to attract investments in our start-up. Fourthly, we can act as a service provider for Russian Red Cross and UNHCR by informing refugees about existing non-state assistance programs.

### Conceptual background of RuRelief

Before describing features of our solution in detail, it is essential to highlight a few conceptually critical points on which the project is based:

- Social networks of migrants are formed in any country and city (Palmgren 2016). The broader and stronger these networks are, the more involved the newly arrived migrants (in this case, displaced people such as refugees or asylum seekers) are, and the higher their social capital will be in the host community. In Russia, social networks of refugees/asylum seekers



perform mainly an informational function. It is also thanks to social networks and social capital that refugees find jobs, send their children to integration centres, and start learning the Russian language. Not all refugees arriving in Russia, however, can quickly accumulate social capital, as their diaspora is not always widely represented in Russia and they do not always have acquaintances here. These individuals are not always quick to find the NGOs and other services that are designed to help them.

- **Social capital is probably the only thing that a refugee can count on in Russia, as Russia's official policies towards displaced people remain extremely strict.**
- Russia demonstrated its capacity to accept more than 1 million refugees from Ukraine in 2014–2016. The republics of the North Caucasus have also been accepting many refugees from Syria since 2012. These cases highlight precisely what the Russian refugee reception system lacks for refugees arriving from other geographic locations (who make up the majority of refugees in Russia) who typically find themselves in less favourable positions.

**While, unfortunately, we cannot influence Russia's state policy towards refugees and asylum seekers, we can make the journey of every refugee arriving in Russia who has become a user of the site and application RuRelief a little easier.** Emulating pathways that typically develop naturally offline (such as applying to NGOs with the help of casual acquaintances or informal practices for finding work and housing), we accumulate resources online through the site and application to create an online "social network of refugees." Thus, **the refugee will be able to accumulate their social capital more quickly and efficiently.** In other words, the project promises to be a breakthrough in the accumulation of social capital for each refugee individually.



Civic Assistance Committee 2018

## 2.2 Description of the functionality

At the moment, we have a demo version of the RuRelief app created with the help of the Glide system. It allowed us to present our product and develop it with minimal financial investment. **The application is available in English, however, we plan to expand the list of languages for all of the project platforms to the most popular languages among arriving refugees:** Russian (most CIS refugees speak Russian at a high or sufficient level), English (as an international language and a language widely used in Central African countries), French (widely used in Central Africa), Arabic (often used by people from Syria and Iraq), Dari and Pashto (for people from Afghanistan). In the future, the list of languages will be expanded to the languages of CIS countries and other languages that may become relevant due to unexpected reasons (such as a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers in Russia from certain countries, similar to the situation in 2012–2016).

**Currently RuRelief application is a mobile version of a website that can be used at any phone that has Internet connection and does not require a lot of free space at a phone memory card.** The logical question is whether refugees arriving in Russia have smartphones that will allow them to use the app and the website. **According to the interviews conducted this year with the representatives of Russian NGOs working with refugees, most adult refugees have smartphones and use such applications as WhatsApp for communication.** Therefore, our solution will not remain invisible and, as we hope, will be widely used by asylum seekers.

The app allows for creating a personal profile. **For security purposes the application will not request to verify their emails or phone numbers.** It will also not request a name as we believe asylum seekers should remain anonymous while receiving the information they need. The name may be required at later stages of our project when we create a network of reliable employers and need to match them with refugees wishing to find a job.

### **At the moment, the application displays three sections:**

- **Places** (a map with NGOs' locations);
- **Information** (useful links and tips);
- **To-do list** (steps a refugee may need to undertake to be legally registered in Russia and receive assistance such as legal advice or tangible things, for example, clothes, from relevant organisations).

### **In the Places section, the user will see:**

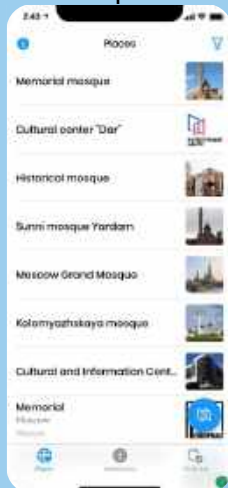
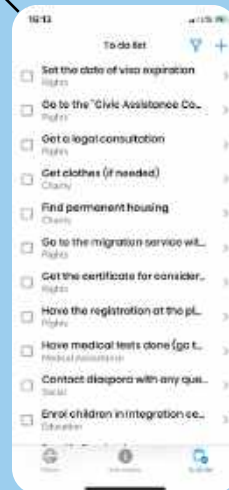
- Human rights organizations that provide specialized assistance to refugees;
- NGOs that provide various services to migrants;
- Organizations that provide humanitarian assistance to various vulnerable groups of people (food, shelter, and medical care);
- Religious centres, such as churches and mosques, where a refugee can get humanitarian assistance and help in finding a job;
- Centres for the integration of children of migrants and refugees;
- Centres and NGOs that provide Russian language courses.

The user can click on any cell and a map will open (Google Maps is built into the app) marked with the necessary organizations for a refugee at the different stages of their stay in Russia.

**In the Information section, the user will see four sub-sections:**

- **“Education opportunities”** — links to educational programs for refugees and tips on how to enrol children in schools and kindergartens as well as how to enrol into universities (for adults);
- **“Know your rights”** — interpretation of the fundamental rights and obligations of refugees in Russia according to the existing legislation;
- **“Job opportunities”** — tips on how to find a job holding the refugee status and links to companies that hire asylum seekers;
- **“Learn Russian”** — links to free language classes;
- **“Emergency steps in Russia”** — a recommendation on what urgent actions a user needs to take if he has recently arrived in Russia and his visa has not expired or if he has not yet applied to some NGO for protection.

**The ‘To-do’ section contains** a list of all actions that a refugee needs to undertake from the moment of entering Russia to obtaining their desired legal status. In front of each completed action, the user can tick boxes and track their process of obtaining all necessary documents. **Also, ‘To-do’ section allows the user to mark significant dates by creating their own “actions” that need to be remembered and to mark these actions in the calendar.** For example, “My visa expiration date is September 30, 2020.” The user will receive a notification at a chosen time, for example, “Your visa expires in 7 days.”



Download the demo version of RuRelief App!

## RuRelief system seeks to address the following problems:

### Problem 1

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A lack of easily accessible information in different languages on bureaucratic procedures and the rights and obligations of refugees is a main obstacle for many people. As we have described in previous sections, **refugees do not learn about the existence of NGOs that provide them with legal assistance while their visa/ stay period (in case of visa-free travel) is valid.** The Ministry of Internal Affairs often considers asylum applications as economic migration and attempts to legally reside in Russia and, therefore, denies asylum. If a refugee manages to find a lawyer through an NGO, the courts usually take the side of law enforcement agencies during the appeal process, resulting in the refugee being forced to leave the country or live and work in Russia illegally.

### Solution

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In the Information section **there are detailed instructions for the necessary actions with the contact information of the Civic Assistance Committee, their reception days and their address.**

### Problem 2

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Consultants at NGOs spend a significant amount of time informing refugees about the main points of the asylum system in Russia and recommending what needs to be done.

### Solution

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A checklist with pre-specified necessary actions that should be performed by a refugee from the moment they arrive in Russia is already available in the RuRelief app. If refugees in Russia are late for visiting migration services, they have to return more than once and repeat certain steps. **The 'To-do' section of the RuRelief application helps to avoid unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to obtaining legal status or temporary protection.** The user can tick boxes next to the completed actions. This will help organize and simplify the complex process by allowing refugees to avoid becoming entangled in complicated bureaucratic procedures.

**Potentially, the chatbot will determine what legal status the user has (recently arrived in Russia, waiting for asylum proceedings, illegally staying in the country, etc.) and offer a solution to any urgent problems based on the specified circumstances. The chatbot asks the user several questions to form its recommendations, and then lays out the necessary "steps", which are highlighted in the checklist. This instrument will be incorporated in the website design as well as in the application.**



## Problem 3

Outside of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, there is significantly less information about the asylum procedure and no specialized NGOs to help refugees. The objective reason is that the majority of refugees arrive in Moscow by plane and prefer to stay there since there are the most extensive social networks of migrants and the organized legal assistance of the Civic Assistance Committee. The total number of NGOs willing to aid refugees in Moscow is also higher.

## Solution

In the 'Places' section we highlight Russian and international NGOs that provide legal assistance to refugees and migrants, humanitarian organizations and religious organizations such as mosques and churches where a refugee can receive various types of support. Potentially, in this section we will display addresses of those NGOs that a user has already visited.



Moscow Cathedral Mosque



## 2.3 Future Developments

We have divided the following stages in which we will develop RuRelief system:

**Stage I – information support.**

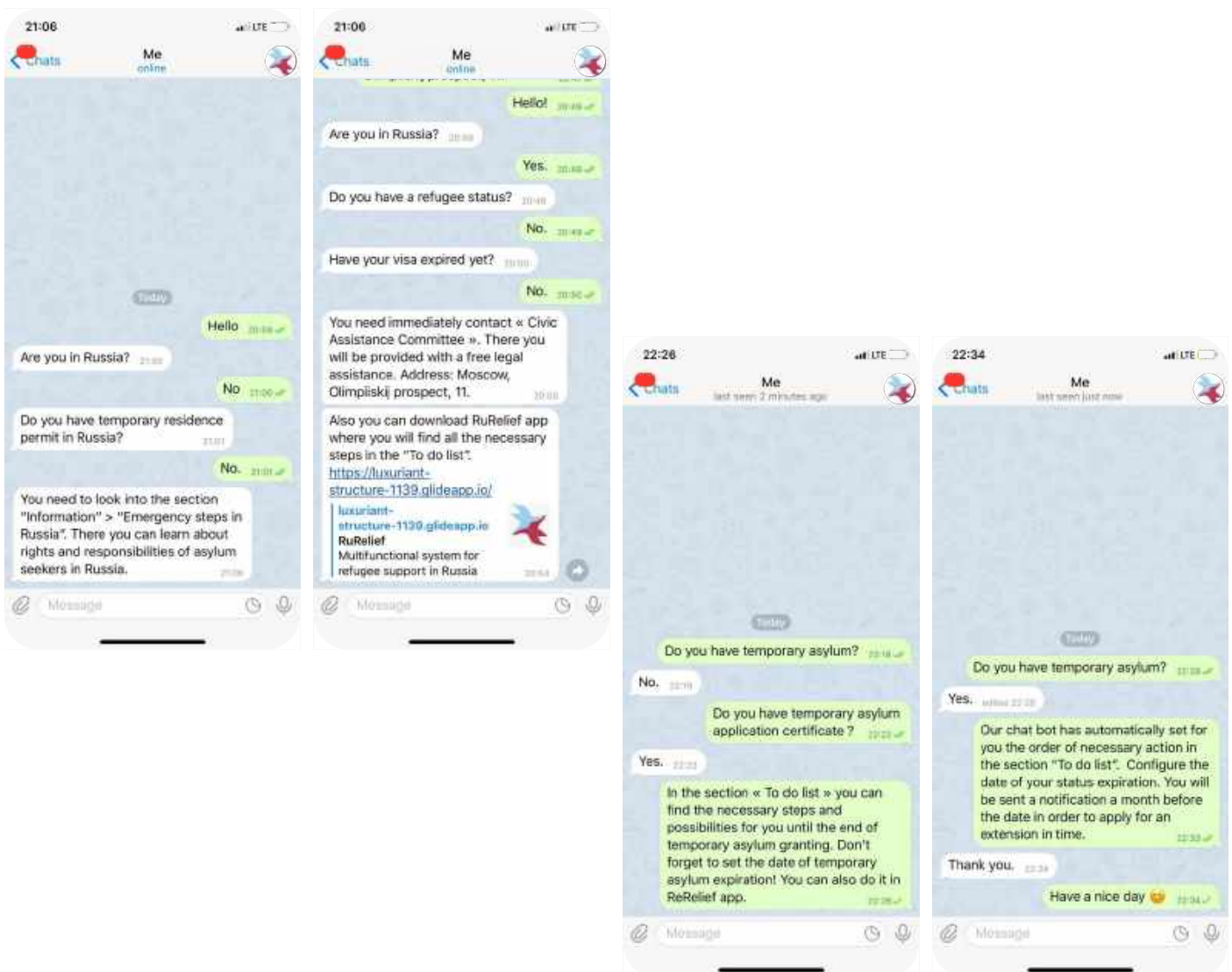
**Stage II – enter the offline space and provide assistance services.**

### Stage I.

At this stage we will focus on information support for refugees and asylum seekers presenting all existing programs, initiatives and NGOs in one place – the RuRelief app.

We plan to develop the following system: the user downloads the app (or completes similar actions on the website) and creates a profile (visible only to the user) which includes the details such as the user's gender, age, country of origin and his current location. Further actions depend on whether or not the user is already in Russia.

Then the chatbot contacts the user and asks him basic questions about his immigration situation. Below, we present some examples of scenarios the chatbot can currently engage with a user to discuss. In the future, dozens of other scenarios will be developed to embrace all possible conditions a refugee may find himself in.



## **Solution for the employment problem**

Finding a job, as we have previously discussed, is one of the primary challenges refugees face upon arrival in their new host country, as they often come from developing countries or simply do not bring many possessions with them, particularly when fleeing armed conflicts or natural disasters. For this reason, we decided to include information support on job opportunities as well as employment services in our project. In phase I (informative) we can already provide useful links and resources for officially registered refugees/asylum seekers looking for a job.

**The options will include the list of employers who may be interested in hiring asylum seekers (considering that they are often able to work for only a few months).**

The chatbot, in addition to providing guidance regarding immigration information, can also help refugees discover a path for finding employment. By answering employment-related questions, the chatbot can help identify and offer a relevant option for each job seeker (if eligible for employment in Russia). In Phase I, the options will include the list of employers who may be interested in hiring asylum seekers (considering that they are often able to work for only a few months), for example, in construction, cleaning services, and other temporary or seasonal jobs. Another

existing opportunity is to connect the app users to social initiatives of brands like IKEA or Uniqlo which are known for supporting migrant workers. Moreover, the app will also contain useful tips for job seekers, such as where to look for a job, what they need to know about their rights as employees in Russia, how to avoid untrustworthy employers and more.

## **Stage II-Services provision.**

### **1. Housing.**

**Problem.** We noted refugees frequently having difficulties finding and renting housing. In major Russian cities, xenophobic statements such as “only for Slavs” appear on housing websites. If a refugee manages to find an apartment to rent, landlords rarely agree to issue migrants and refugees an official registration at their place of residence. We remind our app users that in Russia, throughout the process of obtaining legal status, the state does not provide financial support nor does it provide temporary housing for refugees. NGOs can provide housing assistance but their options are limited.

**Solution.** We believe that in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other Russian cities, despite generally xenophobic tendencies, many landlords are friendly to migrants and refugees and ready to rent apartments or rooms to refugees as well as officially register them at their place of residence. We met such people among volunteers and NGO workers, friends and acquaintances of volunteers, university professors, and former CIS citizens in Russia who had the experience of forced displacement in 1990s. Understanding that such a community of supportive individuals exists, we plan to use social media and NGOs

**Understanding that such a community of supportive individuals exists, we plan to use social media and NGOs requests (as well as using any other available methods) to create a “network of helpful landlords” who are ready to accept migrants and refugees. We know that the refugee assistance community in Moscow and Russia is tiny but we see this as an advantage — thanks to close ties within the community, we will be able to create the network faster and easier.**

requests (as well as using any other available methods) to create a **“network of helpful landlords” who are ready to accept migrants and refugees**. We know that the refugee assistance community in Moscow and Russia is tiny but we see this as an advantage — thanks to close ties within the community, we will be able to create the network faster and easier.

**Moscow also has a real estate agency for migrants and we plan to foster a cooperative relationship with this agency.** If users of our platform make frequent requests from this agency, we could arrange for certain discounts on their services; we can subsidize these discounts using funds collected for donations as well as grants and investments.

## **2. Employment.**

As in stage II we aim to move beyond information provision and focus on providing services, **job seeking assistance will be one of the main innovations of our project. By this stage, we will have established a base of loyal employers who will cooperate with our team to hire refugee workers with short term contracts.** Our role will be to connect job seekers with job providers for a certain contribution by the latter to our project. Previously existing initiatives from large companies will be provided with a direct supply of refugee labour organized by our employment experts (to be hired when the project moves from stage I to stage II). Moreover, we intend to include a new concept of social enterprises into this network. Supporting innovative social projects, we intend to connect asylum seekers with social enterprises as a part of our RuRelief system.

## **3. Mentorship program.**

Another important part of our service provision in the field of employment is a mentorship program. **In Phase II we will create a network of mentors who will guide refugees and asylum seekers through the process of job seeking.** A mentor can be anyone with 3+ years of working experience wishing to share his job seeking skills and to teach migrants the details of what opportunities they can enjoy together with the refugee status. Russian nationals, as well as foreigners settled in Russia, will be eligible for this program. **The areas in which mentors can teach their charges may include but are not limited to new career development, job interview skills or assistance in recognition of education credentials.**

Besides assistance in employment, **a base of mentors can be a step towards the social and cultural integration of refugees and asylum seekers into Russian society.** A variety of ways in which locals can connect with refugees and share their culture and values is unlimited. A mentor of the sociocultural program can be any Russian national wishing to present his culture to migrants with an aim to build respect for national values and, for example, teach some rules on how to be a good citizen, neighbour, and employee in Russia. By introducing this program, we intend to ease the integration process into the new society for asylum seekers; reduce the gap between refugees and locals; and address a major concern of the local population about the divergence of their own culture and alien culture that forms negative attitudes and prejudice about refugees and migrants in Russian society.

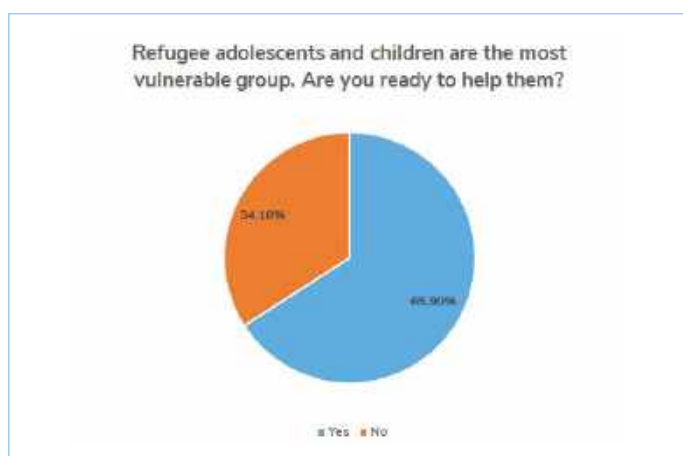
**Referring to this issue we suggested engaging students to assist refugee adolescents and children in a wide range of their problems.**

We chose students for various reasons:

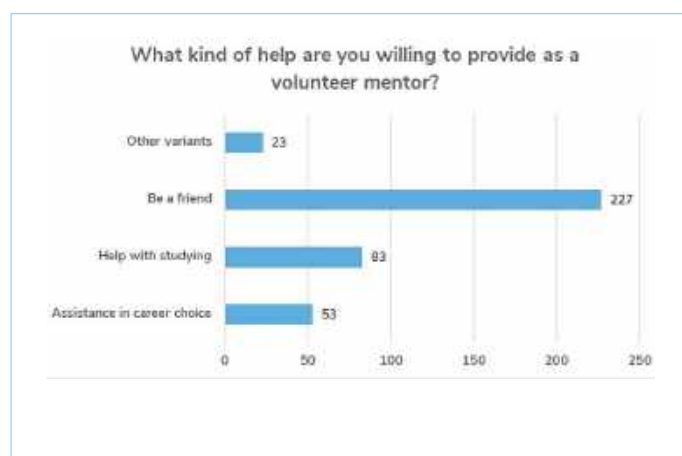
1. Students are capable of spending more time than any other social group: the majority of them are unemployed or have a part-time job
2. Students pursue spheres where they can develop their potential
3. Students are interested in gaining experience, practising foreign languages, receiving letters of recommendation from organisations.
4. Students can share the interests and hobbies with adolescents
5. Students are less susceptible to xenophobic attitudes, have less prejudices and are open to acquaintance with new cultures and people

To make sure that our initiative will be maintained by students, we conducted a survey among students from the leading Moscow Universities. Due to pandemic, we interviewed students online: 455 people aged 17 to 25 participated in our survey. As a result we received two significant responses:

1. 65.9% of the total number of respondents eager to help refugee adolescents and children in miscellaneous situations
2. The majority of respondents expressed a wish to “be a friend” (provide emotional support, leisure activities, sport activities), and slightly less students are ready to help with studying and career choice.



Percentage of respondents, %



The number of responses from among those who in the previous question indicated that they would like to help refugees (65.9% of the total number of respondents)

# conclusion

# conclusion



RuRelief innovative system of information and service support solves complex problems of asylum seekers in Russia and provides them with a comprehensive advice on a number of questions. The project is based on the shortcomings of the existing practice of granting asylum and numerous violations of refugee rights. Our solution circumvents slow and ponderous bureaucratic machine unable to integrate refugees into the society, by adapting to the governmental structures and filling the gaps in refugee protection.

The application, the website and the chatbot logically complement each other touching on different aspects of refugee experience throughout his stay in the country. The scope of questions considered by the system includes detailed information on asylum application procedure, assistance with finding accommodation, employment, education opportunities for children and adults, language learning, mentorship in various fields and many others. The smart system allows to track at which stage of asylum application procedure a refugee is, without the need to reveal his identity that solves a crucial problem of data protection. Potentially, RuRelief may be used to monitor the statistics on refugees and asylum seekers lacking adequate protection in Russia. Eventually RuRelief will be supplemented with services provision (stage II).

At the moment the application is already operating and can be downloaded and tested by the QR code. The website and the chatbot need further development and will be designed after the project receives necessary funding. One of the major advantages of the RuRelief solution is its low cost and high performance. Deliberate means of return on development and operationalization spending, such as advertisement placement and crowdfunding, make RuRelief stand out against other solutions considered by our team.

Therefore, we propose a system of full remotely-delivered support for refugees that does not require establishing a physical office at early stages. We believe that the expertise of each member of our team is enough for the functioning of the application at the moment. Taking into account that start-up development is currently gaining momentum in Russia and there are no applications for refugee support in its territory, our predictions on the success of the RuRelief project are highly positive.

We deeply believe that our solution will bring relief to all refugees and asylum seekers in Russia who are in need of support and assistance on their difficult journey.

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# appendix I

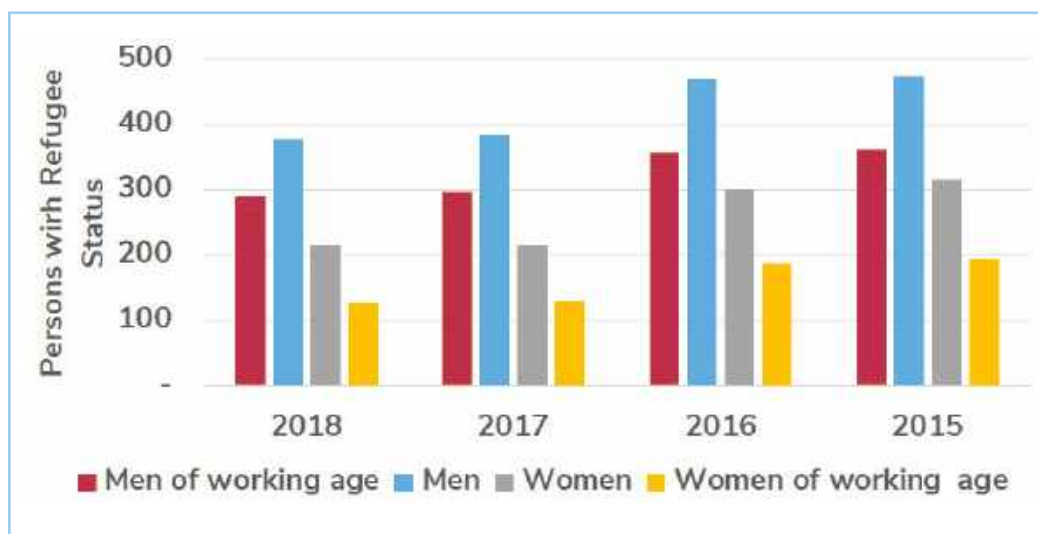
## Initial 6 month estimated expenditure:

Stage I: information support		
Expense	Cost	Total/6 months
IT-specialist	1000\$/month	6000\$
Maintance of website	1100\$/year	550\$
Maintenance of application	99\$ (IOS)/year; 25\$(Android)/year	62\$
Manager team (5 members)	4000\$/month	24000\$
Promotion expences	650\$/month	3900\$
Web-designer	300\$/if nedeed	900\$
Translator	1000\$/month (from the 3rd month onwards)	3000\$
<b>Total</b>		<b>43912\$</b>

## Examination of possible risks:

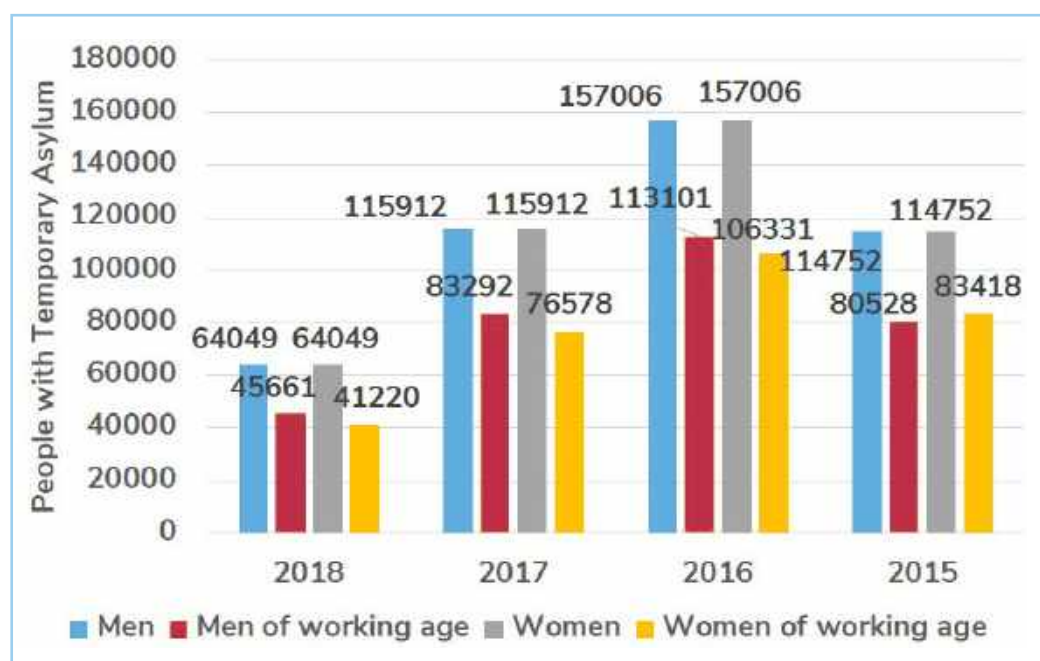
Risk	Risk mitigation	Risk weight	Probability
Lack of users	Promotion of the app in Russia by contextual advertising	Law	High
Poor qualified staff	Involvement of interested in refugee problem researchers with academic and working background in the area of their studies	Medium	Law
Difficulties in cooperation with government authorities	Development of partnership with government projects	High	Medium
NGOs' unwillingness to enter into partnership	Implementation of mutually beneficial projects	High	Law
Bureaucratic obstacles	Make up a strong detailed strategy and work on management in order to prevent possible obstacles	High	High
Lack of funding	Attraction of relevant companies with suitable for refugees products and services; implementation of advertisements of partner organizations; fundraising and crowdfunding	Medium	Medium
Law quality of implementation	Cooperation with governmental organizations and NGOs, promotion of the application	High	Law
Devaluation of the ruble against the dollar	Cut secondary costs and pause the development of the application	Law	Medium

# appendix II



The number of persons with refugee status in Russia by gender and working age, as of January 1, 2019, people

Federal Statistic Service, 2019



The number of persons with temporary asylum in Russia by gender and working age, as of January 1, 2019, people

Source: Federal Statistic Service, 2019