

GEORGIEN (87)

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Georgia: no improvement in return conditions despite decade-long ceasefire

Tens of thousands of people displaced from Georgia's secessionist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been waiting to return home for more than a decade. Since a ceasefire was enforced in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 1992, more than 200,000 people have lived in precarious conditions, mostly accommodated in collective centres dependent on meagre state benefits. Several recommendations and agreements have addressed the need to strengthen security in return areas, in particular the Gali district in eastern Abkhazia, where up to 60,000 IDPs have gone back permanently or semi-permanently. However, violence from armed bandits continues to pose a serious threat to returnees and humanitarian agencies operating in the Gali district. The authorities in both Abkhazia and Georgia have failed to restore security and rule of law in the return areas, as have regional peace-keeping forces. People who remain displaced in the rest of Georgia have long been prevented from integrating into their host communities. Since 1999, the Georgian government has taken steps to end discriminatory practices against IDPs. However humanitarian organisations say more needs to be done to help IDPs live as normal citizens and rebuild a new life in their host community until return is possible.

A poverty-stricken population

After a decade away from home, the majority of IDPs continue to endure inadequate housing conditions, the most visible sign of their destitution. Humanitarian agencies estimate that approximately half the displaced population live in collective centres, often located in former hotels, schools, factories and hospitals. Save the Children reports that displaced families in collective centres live in about nine square metres per person, compared to 30 square metres for the rest of the population. According to UN OCHA, 70 percent of the collective centres in Georgia do not meet minimum living standards, with inadequate access to clean water, unsafe electric system, and insufficient insulation (UN OCHA November 2003). It is believed that an increasing number of IDPs previously living in private accommodation have moved to collective centres as a result of decreasing willingness of local families to host them and their inability to pay rents (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002).

IDPs have lower incomes than the rest of the population and many remain dependent on external assistance. The unemployment rate is higher among IDPs, especially those living in collective centres, than among the general population. Even though surveys show that displaced households receive more state benefits and other types of humanitarian assistance than other households, these benefits are not sufficient to bridge the income gap between IDPs and other citizens. The IDP allowance enables IDPs to purchase 500gr of bread every day. But payment of this allowance is often in arrears (UN OCHA 13 February 2003). A 1999 field survey showed acute malnutrition affecting displaced children (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002).

IDPs generally enjoy a level of access to public services which is comparable to the rest of the population. However, the collapse of the Georgian economy following its separation from the Soviet economy in 1991 and armed conflicts have left the Georgian state unable to maintain basic infrastructure and provide a social safety net to the vulnerable (WFP 2 September 2002). Surveys confirm that, while IDPs do not face specific problems in accessing health care facilities, they are more likely to suffer from illnesses and chronic diseases, particularly those IDPs living in collective centres. Access to education and public utilities does not seem to be more problematic for IDPs than for the rest of the population (IFRC November 2000, Dershem and Gurgenidze November 2002).

Unsafe return to Gali

Only a minority of the Georgian population displaced from secessionist Abkhazia has been able to return. However, the Gali district, located on the Abkhaz side of the security zone with Georgia proper, has seen

the return of an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 people since 2000, mostly on a seasonal basis (UN OCHA November 2003). Many IDPs return to their area of displacement on the Georgian side after the harvest season while between 30,000 and 40,000 reside almost permanently in the Gali district, with a low level of assistance and protection. Only recently have donors have shown increasing interest in supporting infrastructure, small community building and food security programmes to help returnees settle in Abkhazia in 2003 (UN OCHA 20 January 2004).

Violence and the absence of the rule of law continue to prevail in the Gali district, where returnees live in very difficult conditions. Despite the presence of UN monitors and CIS peacekeeping forces, abductions, ambushes, the use of landmines and robberies continue to spread anxiety among the population. While Abkhaz authorities have failed to curb criminal activities in the Gali district, the Georgian government is also responsible for failing to prevent incursions from criminal groups based in Georgia proper (RFE/RL 6 February 2004). Education has also been a problem, as the Georgian language continues to be prohibited in elementary education. In response to the security concerns of returnees, security assessment missions under UN leadership have been organised in the Gali district, most recently by UNDP in December 2003. Insecurity has so far prevented the establishment of a permanent presence of the UN Human Rights Office in the Gali district which was recommended by an inter-agency assessment mission in November 2000 (UN SC 14 January 2004).

New steps towards return?

The obstinate refusal of Abkhazia's de facto authorities to consider any sort of association with Georgia has negated the chances of concluding a formal agreement on the return of IDPs to Abkhazia. By treating Abkhazia's political status as a separate issue, however, several initiatives in 2003 have sought to achieve some progress on return.

¶The presidents of the Russian Federation and Georgia met in March 2003 and agreed that the return of IDPs to the Gali district should be implemented in parallel to the restoration of railway connections from the Russian Federation and Georgia through Abkhazia (RFE/RL 13 March 2003). A bilateral working group on the return of IDPs was created with the participation of UNHCR. UNOMIG prepared a draft return concept paper to be discussed by the working group in 2004 (UN SC 14 January 2004).

¶The "Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General" (comprising France, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation) which supports the Georgian peace process, revitalised peace efforts in 2003 by creating three task forces on economic rehabilitation, IDPs and refugees and political and security issues (UN OCHA 20 January 2003).

¶The UN Security Council also agreed to the deployment of a civilian police force (20 officers) in the security area, including to the Gali district, to contribute to the creation of return-conducive conditions (UN SC 30 July 2003). However, the deployment of this contingent in the Gali district was still pending in January 2004, as a result of obstruction by the Abkhaz authorities (UN OCHA 20 January 2004).

The forced resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze in December 2003 and the election of Mikhail Saakashvili as new head of state in January 2004 have considerably changed the political environment in Georgia. The new president showed his determination to reach a settlement to the conflict with Abkhazia by addressing the UN Security Council in New York and pursuing bilateral talks with the Russian Federation on this matter. In Abkhazia, uncertainty continues to prevail, as calls for the resignation of ailing de facto president, Vladislav Ardzinba, have been growing (RFE/RL 6 February 2004). However, the impact of these developments on the settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict remain uncertain.

Return to South Ossetia has also been limited despite the 1992 ceasefire. Persistent security concerns, as a result of criminality and tensions with the Russian Federation continue to raise concerns among the local population. The poor economic situation in South Ossetia has also deterred many displaced people from returning home as opportunities for income generation and basic services are lacking, resulting in modest annual return figures (UN OCHA 15 January 2004). Finally, the restitution of property to displaced persons has also continued at a slow pace, both in Georgia proper and South Ossetia (NRC 14 March 2004).

Georgian authorities address discrimination against IDPs

The Georgian government has recently accepted to remove legal and obstacles to the integration of IDPs. Return of IDPs to Abkhazia is still seen as the only acceptable solution by the Georgian authorities and by IDPs themselves. This position resulted in the creation of a set of special rules for IDPs which in many ways has denied them rights granted to other citizens. It was only in 2002 that the reform of the election code restored the right of IDPs to vote in local and parliamentary elections (NRC Georgian 14 March 2003). The election code was further amended in August 2003 to restore IDPs' rights to stand for election (UN OCHA December 2003). In November 2003, the constitutional court also declared that legal provisions preventing IDPs from acquiring property without losing their national IDP status were unconstitutional. However, mismanagement, corruption, and lack of funds continue to limit the impact of the state's action towards the integration of IDPs. The humanitarian community in Georgia recommended that the Georgian government should make a more effective use of its funds by introducing vulnerability criteria in assistance programmes for IDPs (UN OCHA November 2003).

International focus on return and self-reliance

Attention from the international community to IDPs has only decreased despite a continued high level of need. UNHCR is planning to further scale down its direct assistance programmes to IDPs in 2004 with the exception of basic shelter assistance to returnees (UNHCR December 2003). A limited number of agencies, such as ICRC and WFP, have continued to provide direct food aid to the most vulnerable IDPs, while other humanitarian organisations have increasingly mainstreamed IDPs into programmes benefiting the general population (ICRC 16 January 2004, UNOCHA 13 February 2003, WFP 2 September 2002). Persistent insecurity in the Gali district and in South Ossetia, and widespread corruption have long deterred donor countries from supporting activities in return areas. However, UNOCHA reported donors were increasingly interested in funding humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes in the Gali district and South Ossetia during 2003 (UN OCHA November 2003).

International agencies widely acknowledge that more should be done to help IDPs take care of themselves. In 1999, UN agencies and the Georgian government, launched a policy entitled a "New Approach to IDP Assistance". This initiative aims to raise awareness within the humanitarian community and national authorities on the need to help IDPs access their full range of rights as citizens, in particular by strengthening their self-reliance capacity and reducing their dependency on traditional humanitarian aid. A Self-Reliance Fund, with an initial capital of US\$ 1.3 million was created to support innovative programmes that strengthened IDPs' self-reliance (UN OCHA October 2002). In 2003, a working group on legal issues, involving UN agencies, authorities and NGOs, reviewed IDP rights in the national legislation and their implementation on the ground. In particular, the survey highlighted the lack of information among IDPs and officials about the rights of IDPs, and recommended that measures were taken to improve awareness among all actors concerned (UN OCHA June 2003).

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

Background

Basic facts on Georgia (1995)

- Georgia is multiethnic state made up of 68.8 percent Georgians, 9 percent Armenians, 7.4 percent Russians, 5.1 percent Azerbaijanis, 3.2 percent Ossetians, 1.9 percent Greeks, and 1.7 percent Abkhazians.
- Two regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have taken up arms to gain independence from Georgia
- A Russian-dominated peacekeeping force and a UN international military observation force (UNOMIG) are trying to prevent the resumption of armed conflict

"The former Soviet republic of Georgia is a country spanning some 26,911 square miles in the Transcaucasus region to the south of the towering Caucasus mountain range. In 1989 the population of Georgia, which then included the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, stood at 5,443,359. The ethnic composition of the republic is situated between Russia to the north, Turkey and Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the southeast is a mosaic depicting its rich and turbulent history. The Black Sea provides Georgia's economic and cultural gateway to the West. Significantly, the Abkhaz region occupies half of this spectacular and fertile coastline.

The ethnic composition of pre-war Georgia was 68.8 percent Georgian (including several regional subgroups speaking distinct languages in addition to Georgian, e.g. Mengrelians, Gurians, Svanetians); 9 percent Armenian; 7.4 percent Russian; 5.1 percent Azerbaijani; 3.2 percent Ossetian; 1.9 percent Greek; and 1.7 percent Abkhazian. Most of the population is of the Christian faith (followers of the Georgian Orthodox church) but Islam is professed by the people of Ajaria in southwestern Georgia, by Azerbaijanis in southeastern Georgia, and by the small population of Kurds.

In the northwestern corner of Georgia lie the 3,300 square miles of snow-capped mountains and subtropical coastline that form the territory of Abkhazia. Prior to the war, the total population of Abkhazia was roughly 537,000, with just under 100,000 people of ethnic Abkhaz origin. Historically, the Abkhaz people allied themselves with the Russian-speaking population (notably Russians and Armenians). Together, these groups comprised roughly half of the region's population. Ethnic Georgians comprised some 46 percent of the population.[...]

The status of Abkhazia is still the subject of negotiation between the warring parties [Georgian and Abkhaz forces], with participation from the Russian Federation and the United Nations. In November 1994, the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia adopted a constitution declaring Abkhazia an independent state, but the UN Security Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. Meanwhile, a CIS peacekeeping force (PKF), comprised mostly of Russians, and a 136-member international military observation force from the United Nations have helped to prevent the resumption of full-scale fighting since the agreement on a cease-fire and separation of forces was signed in Moscow on May 14, 1994."(Open Society Institute, 1995, pp.14-15)

Ethnic divisions in Abkhazia during the Soviet era (1920-1989)

- According to the 1989 Soviet census, ethnic Abkhaz make up 17.8 per cent of the total population of Abkhazia
- Changing Soviet policies have influenced the ethnic and national consciousness of the population in Abkhazia
- In the 1930s, the Soviet Union favored Georgianization policies, but in the 1970s affirmative action policies in favor of the Abkhaz population was instituted
- Cities and regions were formally multi-ethnic but on a village level populations were ethnically concentrated

"The Abkhaz Autonomous Republic is named for the Abkhaz people, but the prewar population of Abkhazia was quite mixed. According to the 1989 Soviet census, ethnic Abkhaz were 17.8 per cent of the total population of 525,000 people, while Georgians were 45.7 per cent, Armenians 14.6 per cent, and Russians 14.3 per cent. The picture is more complicated however, since these demographic proportions varied throughout the period of Soviet rule, as the Georgian and Russian populations increased proportionally at the expense of the Abkhaz. Nevertheless, throughout the twentieth century the population has been multi-ethnic.

Throughout the period of Soviet power, this multi-ethnic population was the target of vacillating Soviet nationalities policies that assigned access to power and resources in accordance with official nationality. After enjoying in the 1920s the status of Unionrepublic, attached by treaty to the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, Abkhazia was joined to Georgia in 1931. Beginning in the 1930s, Soviet Georgianization policies closed Abkhaz language schools, changed place names, and guaranteed Georgians key official positions. Following the Second World War, Lavrentii Beria orchestrated resettlement of Georgians into Abkhazia to work in agriculture and the expanding industry, changing the ethnic balance of the population. But in 1978, in response to protests, Soviet authorities instituted "Abkhazization" affirmative action policies that reinstated Abkhaz language instruction and assigned official positions to people of Abkhaz nationality. These policies, with the privileges they conferred or rescinded, were applied to each citizen according to his or her official nationality, a fixed designation inscribed into the passport of every citizen over 16 years of age. Thus, changing Soviet policies over time concretized the idea of nationality for all residents of Abkhazia as an issue associated with competition for advantage.

In addition to official policies, patterns of daily life also worked to shape the ethnic consciousness of the prewar population. Almost all cities and regions were formally multinational. Residents still remaining in Tkvarcheli, for example, proclaim with pride that over fifty nationalities lived in that city of 22,000 people. Sukhumi's role as the designated economic and political centre for all of Abkhazia guaranteed integration at the republican level. Enterprises and state farms needed support from Sukhumi in order to function, and individuals made trips to Sukhumi since it was by far the best place to find many goods and services. At the household level, mixed marriages, particularly Georgian-Abkhaz, were common, and in a culture that emphasized strong ties with extended family members, for many this meant frequent inter-ethnic interaction in their own homes.

Nevertheless, at the level of village life, there was a strong tendency toward nationally compact populations. In some cases this applied to whole villages. In Ochamchire district, for example, the villages Labra and Atara Armianskaia were primarily Armenian-populated, Mokva was primarily Russian, and Kochara was primarily Georgian. In other cases, for example the Georgian population of Dranda, members of one nationality lived compactly within a larger village or town. Furthermore, agricultural and economic organization especially in the countryside tended to coincide with village boundaries. Thus to the extent that nationalities lived compactly, they also tended to be organized economically by nationality. The 500 prewar households of the Armenian town of Shaumianovka, for example, constituted the workforce for a tea and tobacco state farm. And the neighbouring villages Tskenis-Tskali, with a largely Abkhaz population, and mostly Georgian Kochara, had shared a collective farm. But in late Soviet days they separated, forming two more or less mono-ethnic agricultural enterprises.

Thus, Soviet authority institutionalized both macro integration through Sukhumi's economic position, and micro differentiation through employment and residence patterns, creating a patchwork patterned prewar population. Personal level interaction modified this, but the zero sum game of the cultural politics of official nationalities policies worked to reify national difference."(Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

The Russian Federation: a major actor in the Abkhaz conflict (2001)

- The Russian Federation extend its support to Abkhazia
- The presence of Russian peacekeeping forces has been an issue of discussion
- The Russian Federation is also reluctant to close down its other military bases in Georgia
- The presence of Chechen refugees in the Pankisi valley is an additional source of tension

"In 2001 the Russian Federation continued to extend moral, political, financial and military support to Abkhazia. It openly showed its support to Abkhaz secessionists during the UN sponsored negotiations, and hindered the publication of the document on the status of Abkhazia, prepared by the Group of States Friends of Georgia.

[...]

Several large demonstrations of IDPs were held in Georgia, demanding the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping troops from the conflict zone and possible deployment of Ukrainian or any other troops under the UN mandate (Ukraine has officially agreed to this possibility).

In October, the Parliament of Georgia decided not to extend the mandate to Russian peacekeeping troops. Russia reacted by stating that the withdrawal of Russian troops would lead to unpredictable results for peace and stability for all the Transcaucasus region. In February 2002, however, the Georgian Government prolonged the mandate of the Russian peacekeeping forces until 30 June 2002.

Apart of peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia, Russia had two military bases on Georgian territory. The OSCE summit in Istanbul decided that Russia should withdraw its troops but Russia failed to do so. Apparently in retaliation of Georgia's insistence for the withdrawal of Russian troops, Russia imposed a one-sided visa requirement for all Georgian citizens in the beginning of 2001, however, it excluded the residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As Georgia was unable to control its borders between Russia and Abkhazia, and between Russia and South Ossetia, many people interpreted the imposition of a visa requirement as a virtual annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia to Russia.

In addition, Georgians who have been living in Russia for years (numbering over 900,000), including refugees from Abkhazia, were obliged to apply for Russian visas or could be considered illegal residents in Russia. They were under the threat of arbitrary detention, police brutality, deportation, and other human rights violations. In its letter of 31 January to President Putin, the IHF criticized strongly the new discriminatory Russian visa requirements for Georgian citizens. Russian authorities continued the practice of granting Russian citizenship to persons living in Abkhazia.

[...]

The total number of Chechen refugees in Georgia was approximately 7,000 at the end of 2001. They mainly lived in eight villages of Pankisi gorge with families of the local Kist population which is ethnically related with Chechens. [...]

In the last years, many businessmen who have been kidnapped in Georgia have been brought to Pankisi gorge and held there, and the location was also a centre of drug trafficking, in both of which some Georgian officials were believed to be involved. However, Georgian authorities accused Chechen refugees of involvement in criminal acts and therefore demanded for their deportation to Russia. Russia, again, accused Georgia of sheltering Chechen criminals and in this way – plus citing the international ant-terrorist

campaign – tried to justify its bombing the territory of de-manding Georgia to accept the deployment of Russian Special Forces in Georgia." (IHF 28 May 2002, pp. 142-143)

See also "Reading Russian-Georgian tea leaves", Radio Free Europe, 8 August 2002 [Internet]

Armenia expresses concern over threat against Armenian minority in Abkhazia (2001)

"Galust Sahakian, who heads the Armenian parliament's largest faction, Miasnutiun, said on 11 October in Yerevan that the Armenian government should take unspecified steps to protect the Armenian community in Abkhazia, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported. Several Armenians were reported killed in the village of Giorgievskoe on 3 October, and 14 more died during a raid late on 8 October on the village of Naa. On 10 October, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian expressed concern at those killings, warning against any attempt to damage relations between Armenia and Georgia. Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaktsutiun faction leader Aghvan Vartanian advocated on 11 October sending a fact-finding mission to Abkhazia." (RFE/RL 12 October 2001)

The severe economic breakdown seriously affects the State's capacity to care for the most vulnerable (2002)

- Georgia is facing a severe economic recession since its separation from the Soviet economy in 1991
- This crisis, combined with civil conflict, political crisis and economic mismanagement has plunged the majority of the population into poverty
- Market prices for staple foods are in line with or above world market prices, while wages are at the level of the world's poorest developing countries
- In 2001, the incidence of poverty among the urban population remained higher than among rural population, but latest trend show impoverishment of rural households
- The visa regime imposed on Georgian citizens by Russia in December 2000 has reduced another important source of employment and remittances
- The low levels of social expenditure will soon result in declines in basic social services, such as health or education
- There is little evidence that government ministries and other stakeholders are keen to tackle poverty systematically

"Georgia is undergoing an economic and political crisis that dates back to independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Like other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—particularly those relatively poor in natural resources—Georgia experienced severe shock after separation from the highly centralized Soviet economy. According to government figures, between 1990 and 2000, the GDP fell by 78 percent. As a result, public finances are insufficient to maintain basic infrastructure or provide a social safety net for the vulnerable. On the positive side, the Government has recently managed to control inflation and limit public expenditures. Moreover, a national dialogue on economic growth and poverty reduction has begun.

The devastation of the economy has been compounded by a series of territorial disputes, armed conflict and political missteps. Unresolved ethnic conflicts in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia—where the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is promoting peaceful negotiation and has fielded an ongoing border monitoring mission— and Abkhazia (patrolled by the United Nations Observer Mission for Georgia) have resulted in the displacement of more than 250,000 people. These regions, as well

as the border area near Chechnya, are highly insecure. The risk of renewed fighting remains real. Political and economic isolation from Russia, Georgia's main trading partner, continues to hamper economic prospects.

Contributing to the sense of instability—and as a consequence of it—progress on governance and democratization has been uneven. Georgians and donors alike vastly underestimated the effect of the break-up of the Soviet Union on the country's economy, and the challenge of transition to a market economy. The external shocks of the past decade—combined with civil conflict, political crisis and economic mismanagement—have plunged the majority of Georgia's population into poverty. It is most disturbing that no coherent government plan for exiting this situation has yet been articulated and embraced by stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels.

Situation Analysis

Classified by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as a low-income, food-deficit country (LIFDC), Georgia imports nearly 50 percent of its cereal requirements. After rising slightly between 1995 and 1997, by 2000 the country's per capita GDP had fallen to US\$610 (World Bank: World Development Indicators Database). As a result of low incomes and high market prices for food, an overwhelming majority of the population—urban and rural alike—faces enormous difficulties in achieving household food security. Market prices for staple foods are in line with or above world market prices, while wages (e.g. US\$24 a month for a teacher) are at the level of the world's poorest developing countries.

Low incomes force the population to take loans and sell their remaining assets, which aggravates their situation. The poor have very little to spend on non-food items as a result of spending a high proportion of their income on food (around 55 percent in 1998–2000 and 64 percent in 2001). Further, in 2001, the percentage of people with a low caloric intake (below 1,800 kcal) represented 30 percent of the total population. In contrast, the prevalence of both chronic and acute malnutrition among children remained low, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), due to the fact that in Georgian families children are fed first.

In 2001, the incidence of poverty among the urban population remained higher compared with that of the rural population (54.4 percent and 47.6 percent, respectively). Nevertheless, overall poverty trends show a slight improvement in the economic situation of the urban population, while among rural dwellers there is a pronounced downward trend. Poverty and food insecurity are consistently highest in 5 of Georgia's 12 regions: Racha-Lechkhumi and Lower Svaneti, Imereti, Guria, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Kakheti. [...]

The first stage of land privatization, begun in 1994, resulted in 55 percent of Georgia's arable land being divided into small plots and distributed to some 1 million farmers, mostly former employees of State farms. Ranging in size from 0.3 to 1.25 ha, privatized farms in Georgia are so small that few farmers are able to exploit them economically. Poor infrastructure and lack of capital and cash earnings, which prevents farmers from buying fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds, result in extremely low yields. Most farmers are unable to produce enough to cover even the basic nutritional needs of their families. Off-farm employment opportunities are extremely limited, both in urban and rural areas. The visa regime imposed on Georgian citizens by Russia in December 2000 has reduced another important source of employment and remittances.

The protracted economic and political crisis in Georgia has decreased employment opportunities for women and men alike. However, women have adapted more quickly to the transition, finding informal employment and in many cases taking over the role of primary breadwinner. At the same time, limited participation of women in high managerial structures, where remuneration is higher, results in women's average wages being only 60 percent of the minimum subsistence level vis-à-vis 96 percent of that for male labour. The almost complete absence of women in government at the local level and their reduced participation at the national level (7 percent of parliamentary seats) does not augur well for the equality of women in future Georgian society.

Although basic human development indicators in Georgia remain positive (a legacy of Soviet-era achievements), there are worrisome signals that the present low levels of social expenditure will soon result in declines across all fronts. Among the seven CIS countries, only Tajikistan invests less than Georgia in education and healthcare.

The most vulnerable people comprise old-age pensioners without family support—another indication of the State's inability to meet basic social needs. The standard retirement pension in Georgia (Lr 14 or US\$6.5 per month) is worth the equivalent of less than a loaf of bread a day. Benefits are often paid in arrears and are sometimes subject to deductions for taxes or utilities.

Government Recovery Policies and Programmes

Government economic policy is dominated by structural reforms begun in 1995, which aim at stabilizing the currency and State finances through disciplined monetary and fiscal policies. With inflation and government expenditures under control, the emphasis has shifted to improving systemic weaknesses in tax and revenue collection.

Government policies and programmes for recovery, however, are fragmented and highly centralized. The main vehicle for recovery launched by the Government is the preparation of a Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Programme (PRGP). Although the PRGP has been under discussion since 2000, there is little evidence that it has galvanized government ministries and other stakeholders to work within a common framework towards growth and poverty reduction." (WFP 2 September 2002, paras. 1-12)

Abkhazia

Six years of on-and-off war (1992-1998)

- Armed conflict between Georgia and the secessionist province of Abkhazia broke out in August of 1992
- Fighting was resumed several times, most recently in May of 1998

"[T]he conflict began as a war of laws during the Soviet collapse, capped in July 1992 by a declaration of sovereignty by a partial Abkhaz Supreme Soviet, in turn quickly annulled by the Georgian Government. Some weeks later Georgian troops were ordered into Abkhazia, purportedly to secure transportation and communication lines. Whatever the intentions of the Georgian forces, on 14 August in Ochamchire district south of Sukhumi, Georgian and Abkhaz troops exchanged fire. The same day, Georgian troops entered Sukhumi, and Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba declared full mobilization. As Georgian troops occupied Sukhumi, the Abkhaz Government fled north to Gudauta, its base for the rest of the war, and the Gumista river just north of Sukhumi became the major front line. Just over one year later, Abkhaz forces took back Sukhumi and pushed Georgian forces back across the Inguri river and out of Abkhazia, an effective Abkhaz victory.

[...] Though the war had an identifiable front line and produced an eventual victor, the fighting was far from orderly. The very first days witnessed not a planned assault but rather random widespread violence in the city of Sukhumi and to the south. In addition to the Gumista front line, the war was also fought in patches in Ochamchire, whose villages had high prewar concentrations of Abkhaz. Lines of battle formed between villages of predominantly Abkhaz or Armenian, and Georgian population. To the east, ethnic Swans defended the Kodori river valley against the Abkhaz, while Abkhaz and many others were effectively blockaded in the mountain city of Tkvarcheli.

[...]The patchwork population and the scattered conduct of the fighting combined to produce a war that was effectively highly localized and highly personal. The story of one informant, a woman from Reka, is a representative illustration. Reka, a village of mixed but primarily Abkhaz population in Ochamchire district, is located a few kilometres up the road from the village Okhurei, which had a largely Swan and Mingrelian population. Throughout Soviet times, the two villages shared one citrus fruit collective farm, and most residents of the two villages worked there. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a great deal of contact and intermarriage between the two villages. This informant's father is Abkhaz, and her mother Mingrelian, so in keeping with accepted patrilinealism she considers herself Abkhaz. But she also considers herself to be from Okhurei, where her mother's family lived. Most members of her mother's family fought on the Georgian side during the war along the front line that ran between the villages. Those relatives are all now displaced and living in Tbilisi, while she stays in her husband's home in Reka, with portraits on the wall of her husband's Abkhaz brothers who were killed in the war. For this informant and many others, the war was not a political battle for sovereignty, but a highly personal, bloody contest among neighbours and family members." (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

"In May this year [1998] an increasingly tense situation in the Gali district finally exploded into the worst fighting seen in Abkhazia since the end of the war. An attack by Georgian guerillas on a group of Abkhazian militia in the village of Repi on 18 May 1998 was the catalyst for a large-scale Abkhazian response against an increase in such actions, sparking hostilities which also, for a while, drew in troops from Georgia's Interior and Defence Ministries. Although hostilities subsided after a cease-fire agreement was reached on 25 May, by the time the fighting had died down over 200 people were estimated to have been killed and most of the Georgian population, said to number some 30 to 40,000 people, had once more fled across to the Georgian side of the Inguri river border. Many left after what has been described as the systematic torching of their villages, in which an estimated 1,400 houses were destroyed." (AI, 1998, p.14)

Displacement and "ethnic cleansing" (1992-1999)

- Both the Georgians and the Abkhaz population consider themselves victims of ethnically directed violence
- Abkhaz population fled ethnically based threats of violence
- Georgians reportedly burned down Abkhaz homes during the war
- Abkhaz leadership argues that anti-Abkhaz ethnic violence was intentional and planned
- Many displaced Georgians state that they left because their lives were in danger because they were Georgian
- Destruction of property and looting reported to be ethnically directed towards Georgian homes in the Gali district
- UN source describes the violence in Abkhazia as "ethnic cleansing"

"One approach to [the question of 'ethnic cleansing'] would be to seek to determine whether there existed on either side at the highest levels a clearly formulated intention to eradicate an ethnic group. But such an intention might have existed without manifesting itself in any way during the war, while at the same time, even without a clear policy, wartime practices might be ethnically directed. In fact, the ways that people individually experienced the war, and their subjective understandings of what happened, far more directly determine future behaviour and thus the chances for a lasting settlement on the ground, than the existence or not of some official policy formulation. Therefore, the approach of this essay is to base the analysis on personal accounts of wartime experience by Georgian IDPs and current residents of Abkhazia. While over time personal understandings of what happened may be reworked and revised through ongoing conversations with others, these new collective understandings play a critical role in the search for a lasting settlement." (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

Abkhaz population

"Many accounts suggest that Abkhaz migration during the war was prompted by the threat of personal violence against the civilian Abkhaz population for reasons of ethnicity. In Sukhumi, certainly much thievery was perpetrated for its own sake, for economic gain. But residents relate that would-be perpetrators often first asked the nationality of the intended victim. Further, many accounts suggest that the best defence for Abkhaz was to seek shelter with Georgian friends. Georgian friends at first could turn away thieves by saying the Abkhaz in their flat were relatives, but several months into the war even this ploy ceased to work.

Among those who fled from their homes in Sukhumi, many knew immediately, through friends and acquaintances, that Georgians had moved into their flats. A young woman now living in Adziubja relates that she previously lived in her own flat in Sukhumi, but it was taken over during the war by Georgians, who apparently stole everything when they left, since nothing of any value remains. While in fact it is not necessarily the Georgian occupants who later looted the flat, this story pattern in which Georgians are blamed, is quite widespread.[...]

Among those who lived in the countryside, many understand that Georgians intentionally burned down Abkhaz homes during the war. An Abkhaz man in Adziubja relates that Georgians intentionally destroyed 32 of 35 Abkhaz homes in upper Adziubja, and also the local Abkhaz language school. And a Mingrelian woman in the market in Ochamchire tells how Georgians burned down Abkhaz homes in her own village and others nearby, in Ochamchire district.

Theft and property destruction were not the only apparent threats. Both Natella Akaba's parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, and Otar Kakalia's former NGO, Askarial, have publicized information about many cases of physical threat, torture, and murder directed against ethnic Abkhaz civilians. All of these practices, to the extent they occurred, certainly constitute ethnically directed violence, even if it was not centralized and coordinated, and the belief that such violence took place is widespread among Abkhaz. Much Abkhaz migration during the war can be attributed to fear of ethnic violence, and at least some postwar migration is attributable to intentional destruction of Abkhaz homes.

In addition, much of the Abkhaz leadership argues that anti-Abkhaz ethnic violence was intentional and planned. In evidence many point to the thorough destruction of the Abkhaz State Archives in the first days of the war, and the Abkhaz State Security Service produces what it claims is a Georgian military map left behind during the war, indicating plans for the complete annihilation of Abkhaz villages in Ochamchire district. This official Abkhaz rhetoric of ethnic violence may serve to frame popular beliefs, but it is not the only source. Instead, local level experiences during the war also work directly to generate wide spread popular understanding of wartime violence."(Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

Georgians

"In order to assess whether Georgian migration out of Abkhazia was ethnically driven it is necessary to consider two key parts to the claim of ethnic cleansing: that people were driven out by the threat of physical violence, and that Georgian homes and property were destroyed during and after the war to make return less likely.

Almost all displaced Georgians state clearly that they left because their lives were in danger precisely because they were Georgian. As evidence they recite stories of atrocities committed by Abkhaz forces against civilians during the war. Some of the stories are highly personal. For example a displaced Georgian in the market in Zugdidi, who is from Gali district, tells how Abkhaz forces killed her husband, and then killed her parents for good measure 'just because they were Georgian'. Another woman now living in Zugdidi tells how Abkhaz forces came to their home in Pitsunda and gave them a choice: either take an Abkhaz surname and fight on the Abkhaz side, or leave your home now. An older Georgian returnee to

Gali district tells how after the war he witnessed Abkhaz approach a Georgian peasant neighbour and ask his surname. Hearing it was Mingrelian they proceeded to burn him. The role a victim's surname plays in these stories gives the violence a distinctly ethnic character.

[...]

In order to substantiate that Georgian mass migration was forced by ethnic violence, do we need to document that all displaced people were personally threatened at gunpoint, forced to hear of the horrors that would soon be practiced on their bodies, and given a choice whether to stay or not? Or, is it sufficient to ascertain that some unquestionably ethnically directed atrocities did take place, that people had reasonable opportunities to hear the tellings and retellings of these events, and that they fled in fear on this basis?

Concerning the second element of Georgian forced migration, many or most displaced Georgians say that their homes have been destroyed, or are now occupied by others. This knowledge comes through friends or even distant acquaintances, whom they have asked to check on the fate of their homes. In the market in Zugdidi, five displaced people say their houses in Gali district were burned after the war had ended. Armenians still living in Abkhazia note that Georgian homes in Dranda were intentionally attacked, and Abkhaz say the same thing about Georgian homes in Tamysk. Even Abkhaz authorities in Ochamchire city note that in the first days after the Abkhaz took back Sukhumi and then returned to Ochamchire, it was very difficult to control looting of the homes of people who had fled. Looting may be an exercise primarily for economic gain, but when people of a given official nationality are disproportionately selected as victims, the crimes take on an ethnic character.

Georgian authorities at all levels, like Abkhaz officials, tend to draw together the various accounts of violence and label it 'ethnic cleansing'. One head of administration from Gali district, in a conversation in Zugdidi, recited a list of murders and lootings directed against Georgians in Gali district since the war, and asked, 'Is this not genocide?' The Vice Mayor of Zugdidi agrees, noting that 5,000 Georgian houses were burned intentionally by the Abkhaz. The Kutaisi representative of the Abkhaz Council of Ministers in exile, echoing the words of Tamaz Nadareishvili and Zurab Erkvania, states that what happened after the war in Abkhazia was 'ethnic cleansing and genocide'. And he adds the personal account of his brother, who after returning to his village Otobaia in lower Gali district was attacked by the Abkhaz police and left paralyzed as a result." (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

"Locked into constant interaction with one another, IDPs tell and retell one another stories of their wartime experiences. One result is the move from individual experiences of violence in which they, the victims, happened to be Georgian, to a sea of stories of ethnic violence in which all the victims are Georgian and all the perpetrators Abkhaz. Here, prolonged displacement works to create a compelling and widely shared narrative of ethnic cleansing." (Dale, 1997, sect.5.3)

"Even if it is accepted that application of the label 'ethnic cleansing' to the violence enacted upon either the Abkhaz or the Georgians would require demonstrating the existence of a concerted policy on the part of the leadership, what happened in practice may be much more important than what may or may not have been intended by some political entrepreneurs. The *de facto* conduct of this highly local war was superlatively ethnic in character. The best evidence is less the absolute horror of some observers' accounts than the fact that ethnicity is the primary trait of each key player in each of the accounts. Whatever role ethnicity *per se* may have played in producing the conflict, it has become the primary category with which people on the ground narrate and comprehend the war's violence. In practical terms, much of the Abkhaz population, and most of the Georgian population, have been displaced; property throughout Abkhazia has been destroyed, narrowing significantly the options for reconstruction and return in the near future; and among all former residents of Abkhazia the belief prevails that the best term for characterizing what happened to them is 'ethnic cleansing'. (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

This conclusion was echoed by the UN Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Mr. A. Eide: "[In Abkhazia] the challenge to the territorial integrity of Georgia has been accompanied by processes of ethnic cleansing" (Commission on Human Rights, 6 July 1994, para. 31)

Tensions along the ceasefire line between Abkhaz and Georgian side (2001-2003)

- Violent incidents in the Kodori valley and the Gali district were reported throughout 2002
- Road blockade by protests of IDPs have also continued in 2002
- UNOMIG patrolling in the Kodori valley has helped diffuse the tension
- In Gali District, criminality and sporadic paramilitary activities continue to raise concerns about the safety of the growing returnee population

"In most of Abkhazia the security situation has generally been calm and stable throughout 2002. No major incidents, such as hostage takings or the downing of the UN helicopter in October 2001 (which killed all nine persons on board) have taken place of late. The two exceptions to the relatively quiet situation in Abkhazia are the Kodori Valley and Gali District, which are widely considered insecure areas for both the local population and humanitarian agencies. A number of violent incidents, including some tragic ones, with criminal and possibly political motivations, have taken place in Gali District throughout 2002.

Occasional road M27/Inguri bridge blockades by IDP groups have continued in 2002. The latest protest lasted for less than a month in August/September 2002. It effectively blocked the traffic at the only legal crossing from Georgia to Abkhaz-controlled territory. Among other demands, the protesters demanded timely payments of IDP allowances and the withdrawal of the CISPKE from the area. The previous blockade in 2002 lasted for nearly a month, in January/February, prior to a vote on the mandate renewal, with demands for improved living conditions and payment of IDP allowances, and it seriously hampered humanitarian activity in the area.

In the Kodori Valley, security had improved in early 2002, but the Abkhaz-Georgian tensions heightened in summer, coinciding with the 10-year anniversary of the commencement of military operations in Abkhazia. A number of high-level Abkhaz-Georgian meetings, some with participation of the SRSG and the UNOMIG Chief Military Observer, have taken place in efforts to diffuse the crisis. By late 2002, UNOMIG has re-established regular patrols to the area, with collaboration from both sides. No evidence of unauthorised armed groups has been found.

In Gali District, criminality and sporadic paramilitary activities continue to raise concerns about the safety of the growing returnee population that have already returned spontaneously, as well as the safety of humanitarian aid workers. CISPKE and UNOMIG regularly conduct patrols in the Restricted Weapons Zone and the Security Zone to monitor the 1994 Moscow Agreement. CISPKE and UNOMIG have themselves been victims of criminality and/or partisan attacks, as have some NGOs. The latest reports of the Secretary General on the situation in Abkhazia acknowledged that the level of tension in the Gali District has decreased in comparison with the same periods in previous years due to a moratorium on partisan activities. Figures concerning criminal actions are also lower, although 'cross-border' crime remains a serious problem, particularly in lower Gali. Criminal activities typically increased during the hazelnut and mandarin seasons." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

For more details about the incidents along the ceasefire line in 2001, see the Report of the UN Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, 24 October 2001, paras. 9-25 [Internet].

See also "Who attacked Abkhazia and why?" in: RFE/RL Caucasus Report Volume 4, number 34, 12 October 2001 [Internet].

[T]he impact of the recent clashes and tensions in Abkhazia on the civilian population has been limited. There were reportedly several civilian casualties in villages in lower Kodori valley and surrounding Gulripsh district, but no significant population movements have been reported from Abkhazia.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that a small number of persons have temporarily relocated from the Upper Kodori Valley to Mestia and Zugdidi. The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, UNHCR, OCHA, and ICRC are all closely monitoring events and thus far there have been no reports of significant population movements from the Gali district." (UN OCHA 6 November 2001)

For more details on the tensions along the ceasefire line in 2002, see the Report of the UN Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, 14 October 2002, paras. 7-19 [Internet]

The peace efforts: the challenge of IDP return (1994-2002)

- An agreement on ceasefire and separation of forces was signed in Moscow in 1994
- The parties agreed to the deployment of a peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States to monitor the agreement
- The UN Military Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) also monitors the agreement
- An agreement on the return of refugees and IDPs was signed in 1994 in Moscow
- In 1997, the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was created, chaired by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG)
- The Council comprises three working groups, including one devoted to IDPs and refugees
- In May 1998, fighting broke out in the Gali District, causing the renewed displacement of approximately 30,000-40,000 persons
- As of 1999, a number of new spontaneous returns to the Gali District has been observed on the ground, with some encouragement by the local authorities
- In November 2000, a Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) led by the United Nations visited the Gali District to evaluate conditions for the return of IDPs to the region
- Attempts to resume negotiations on the political status of Abkhazia have remained unsuccessful
- Working Groups meet intermittently but no meeting of the Coordinating Council has taken place since January 2001
- A UN led-security mission visited Akhabzia in July 2002

"The 1992-1993 civil war in Abkhazia led to a displacement of over 250,000 persons and devastation of this once thriving agricultural centre and tourist destination squeezed between the Black Sea and the Caucasus mountains. In 1994 the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and with the facilitation of the Russian Federation, signed the Moscow Agreement on the separation of forces, bringing two years of fighting to a halt. The Commonwealth of Independent States Peace Keeping Force (CISPKF) has been deployed to monitor compliance with the Agreement, with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) monitoring the implementation of the Agreement and observing the operation of the CISPKF.

A Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons was also signed in 1994 by the Abkhaz and Georgian sides, the Russian Federation, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This agreement, however, resulted at that time in a low level of official return of IDPs to the Gali District. By 1996 and 1997, an increasing number of spontaneous returnees drew the support and assistance of international organisations. A United Nations office for the protection of human rights in Abkhazia was established in 1996.

In 1997, negotiations resumed in Geneva, leading to the establishment of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. The Council is chaired by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) to Georgia, assisted by the Russian Federation as facilitator, and the Organisation for

Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Group of Friends of the Secretary General consisting of France, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation as observers. The Coordinating Council comprises three working groups: 1) On Security and the Non-Resumption of Hostilities; 2) On IDPs and Refugees; 3) On Social and Economic Issues. This Council has since been the main negotiating body within the UN-led peace-process for the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia.

In 1998, within the framework of the Working Group on Social and Economic issues, the UN-led Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) visited Abkhazia. On 19 February 1998, four UN Military Observers (UNMOs) were kidnapped in Western Georgia during the Mission. Despite this incident, the Mission continued and was able to identify short- and medium-term needs in the primary production and social sectors. In addition, the Mission reviewed food security issues, landmines, facilities for post-trauma counselling and continuing humanitarian needs.

In the spring of 1998, the situation in the Gali District and Western Georgia deteriorated. From 12 March to 29 April 1998, a prolonged protest on the Georgian-controlled side of the Inguri River Bridge closed the only legal entry point into Abkhazia to vehicle traffic. The blockade severely impaired the movement of humanitarian aid workers and the delivery of assistance to civilians in need, as have a number of similar subsequent protests. In May 1998, fighting broke out in the Gali District, causing the renewed displacement of approximately 30,000-40,000 persons, many of whom were returnees receiving assistance from international organisations and were now displaced for the second time. During those events, many homes and communal facilities built or rehabilitated by UNHCR to support returnees were destroyed. Since the events of May 1998, security in Gali District has remained a serious concern to international community. The safety and dignity of returnees has not yet been guaranteed and international humanitarian organisations have not resumed regular assistance programs in areas of return. Nonetheless, as of 1999, a number of new spontaneous returns, with some encouragement by the local authorities, have been observed in the Gali District. The living conditions of these returnees have not been satisfactory either from the security point of view or in terms of the process of rehabilitation of their homes, infrastructure or socio-economically normal living conditions.

In November 2000, a Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) visited the Gali District. The JAM was led by the United Nations, with the participation of OSCE, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE/HCNM), the Council of Europe, and the European Commission, while the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNHCR sent their observers. The purpose of the mission was to evaluate conditions for the safe, secure and dignified return of IDPs to the region.

Since the declaration of independence by the de facto Abkhaz authorities, attempts to resume negotiations on the political status of Abkhazia have been unsuccessful. To restart a dialogue, a document called 'Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi' was created by the SRSG to Georgia in late 2001. This document, known as 'Boden's paper', aimed at facilitating meaningful negotiations on the political status between the two parties in conflict, and received full support of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General; however, the Abkhaz side has not yet accepted to receive and discuss the document. Despite protracted efforts by the international community, the peace-process remains in a deadlock.

In parallel to these efforts aimed at resolving the political status of Abkhazia, the United Nations, in the framework of the 1997 Geneva Process, have addressed the issues of security, the return of IDPs and social and economic problems through the Coordinating Council and its three Working Groups. However, the Coordinating Council has not met since January 2001. Initially, the Abkhaz side suspended its participation due to aggravation of tensions, including hostage incidents and increased presence of armed groups along the ceasefire line in April and May 2001. Later Coordinating Council meetings were also cancelled by the two sides due to continued tensions and hostage incidents throughout 2001. Although - after several successful meetings of respective working groups in 2002 - tentative date for next meeting have been

announced on several occasions, the Coordinating Council has not yet met and there is no indication on the timing of the next meeting.

In late 2002, the security situation in Gali District and Kodori Valley - despite a number of minor incidents and at times heightened tensions in Kodori - has in general improved. This has brought some positive results, i.e. the resumption of Working Group III dealing with social and economic issues. At the Working Group III Meeting in April 2002, agreements were reached on further steps regarding education, provision of painkilling drugs by Georgian side to Abkhaz side. It was also acknowledged that the Phase I of the telecommunication project, implemented by UNDP with German government funding, was completed. At the next Working Group III Meeting in June 2002, the sides, among other things, discussed the issue of teaching in native the language in Gali District. The sides also agreed to conduct cardiac surgery for children suffering from heart diseases, endorsed the sport proposal for youth in the conflict zones, endorsed the second part of the telecommunication project and adopted mutually agreed points to be included in next phase, and endorsed the proposal for the development of Zugdidi and Sukhumi electricity infrastructure. The last Working Group III Meeting took place in Tbilisi in November 2002. The meeting discussed the implementation of projects such as reinforcement of the Inguri river banks, production and transportation of Abkhaz and other unique grape saplings, restoration of Abkhaz cultural heritage thru UNESCO. On the sensitive issue of language of instruction in Gali, the sides agreed to consider concrete measures within three months. The next Working Group III Meeting was originally foreseen for February 2003, but has been postponed to date.

From 8-12 November 2002, Mr. Guehenno, the UN Under Secretary-General (USG) for Peacekeeping Operations, paid an official visit to Georgia, including Abkhazia. This was the highest-ranking UN official's visit ever to Abkhazia. The USG had an opportunity to learn first-hand about some technical and material aspects of UNOMIG operation. The visit, which included a series of high-level meetings in Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Moscow, was expected to upgrade the profile of the conflict and reinvigorate the Geneva Process, as well as prompt further negotiations over the peace process. In November 2003, Mr. Guehenno again visited Georgia, including UNOMIG offices in Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Gali and Zugdidi. During the visit, he met with the representatives of the Georgian government in Tbilisi as well as the Abkhaz de facto authorities in Sukhumi and Gali and discussed issues related to the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process. The USG highlighted the firm commitment of the UN to a peaceful settlement as well as the need for real progress on practical issues." (UN OCHA 20 January 2004)

Developments in 2003: International attempts to support the Abkhaz-Georgian dialogue

- Countries supporting UN peace efforts in Georgia, "The Group of Friends for Georgia", tried to revitalize the settlement process in Geneva (February 2003)
- Georgian and Russian Presidents met in Sochi in March 2003, and agreed on the synchronized restoration of railroad links between Georgia and Abkhazia and IDP return
- A new political management was installed in Abkhazia in April 2003
- In July 2003, the UN Security Council endorsed the deployment of a civilian police force in return areas in Abkhazia and western Georgia
- Abkhaz side continued to invoke its 1999 declaration of independence as an obstacle to any negotiations regarding its status

"Despite continuing efforts by the international community, in 2003 there was little progress in the political process over the conflict in Abkhazia. The 'UNSG's Group of Friends for Georgia' held a brainstorming session in Geneva on 19-20 February 2003, in which the 'Friends' reaffirmed their commitment to the principles of political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and recommended the establishment of task forces to deal with the three groups of issues: economic rehabilitation, IDPs and refugees, and political and security issues. Tbilisi-based 'Friends' visited Sukhumi on 3 March 2003, and met with local authorities, CIS PKF and UNOMIG, for the first time in 4 years. The expectations were that the three task forces, broader-based than existing working groups, would act as mechanisms to help revitalise the political and the Geneva/Coordinating Council process. The Abkhaz side, however, reiterated their refusal to accept the 'Boden' document. At the same time, they objected to establishment of the so-called Task Forces recommended by the 'Group of Friends' as part of the Geneva Process, since there existed the Coordinating Council mechanism. The UNSG's Group of Friends for Georgia met again in Geneva on 21-22 July 2003 to discuss situation in Abkhaz conflict zone. Economic cooperation, return of IDPs, political and security issues were discussed at the top-level meeting, chaired by Mr. Guéhenno, the United Nations USG for Peacekeeping Operations.

The Presidents of Georgia and the Russian Federation met in Sochi on 6-7 March 2003. They discussed, among others, issues related to Russian-Georgian co-operation, the political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, and international and regional issues of mutual interest. The de facto Abkhaz authorities participated in part of the talks. The Presidents agreed on the necessity of synchronization of the repatriation process to the Gali district with the reopening of the railway line. The Sochi process has been designed to function through two working groups, one dealing with economic rehabilitation, with the emphasis on the railroad link restoration and Inguri Hydro-power station, and another on the return of IDPs and refugees. The bilateral working group on return of IDPs held two meetings (in June and July, in Moscow and Tbilisi respectively), with the participation of UN/UNHCR, which have not yet resulted in concrete agreements on principles and modalities of a potential return of the displaced persons concerned, initially to the Gali district.

On 7 April 2003, the entire Cabinet of Ministers of the de facto Abkhazian Government, collectively resigned. The resignation followed the letter submitted to the Government by the 1992-1993 Association of War Veterans of Abkhazia called 'Amtsakhara'. This resignation, compounded with the escape of 9 'high-profile' prisoners from the detention centre in Sukhumi, created an acute temporary political crisis in Abkhazia, which was defused by the end of the month with the formal establishment of the new political management.

On 26 July 2003, UN Secretary-General recommended the UN National Security Council to prolong the mandate of the UN Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). On July 30, the UN Security Council extended the UNOMIG mandate in Abkhazia, Georgia until 31 January 2004. Unanimously adopting resolution 1494 (2003), the Council also endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation to add a civilian police component to the Mission to strengthen its capacity to carry out its mandate and, in particular, to contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees. Civil police was planned to work closely with Georgian and Abkhaz sides in building trust and cooperation in areas of law enforcement, good governance and protection of human rights, and more concretely helping the creating safer conditions for the return of IDPs in Gali District. In preparation for launching the deployment, under the auspices of UNOMIG, the high delegations of Georgia and breakaway Abkhazia visited and got acquainted with the peace processes and UN civil police experience in the post-conflict areas in the Balkans, i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, Serbia-Montenegro. Security issues were the main topic of discussion, which included the assistance provided by international civilian police to local law enforcement agencies. The actual deployment of the first division of 20 international UN civil policemen to Abkhazia, Georgia started in the last quarter of 2003, although the actual commencement of all planned civilian police officers' work is pending further consultations." (UN OCHA 20 January 2004)

"While the Abkhaz side took a generally constructive approach towards increased practical cooperation, it persisted in its refusal to receive the paper on competences and its transmittal letter. It continued to invoke its unilateral 'declaration of independence' of 1999 (see S/1999/1087, para. 7) as the key obstacle to any status negotiations." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 11)

New Georgian leadership maintains focus on the Abkhaz issue (2004)

- The UN Security stressed the urgent need for progress on the question of refugees and internally displaced persons (January 2004)
- New president of Georgia appealed to the Security Council to enhance its efforts to advance the cause of peace and stability in his country (February 2004)
- To promote that process, he was ready to guarantee the highest possible degree of autonomy to Abkhazia, within the Georgian State
- Abkhaz side failed to attend a meeting of the Group of Friends in Geneva in February 2004
- Georgian and Russian ministers agreed that IDP return to the Gali district and the resumption of rail traffic between Abkhazia and Georgia should begin simultaneously (March 2004)

The Security Council

"The Security Council this morning extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 31 July 2004.

By the terms of Council resolution 1524 (2004), the extension was subject to a review of UNOMIG's mandate in the event of changes in the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force.

Unanimously adopting the text, the Council welcomed the start of the deployment of a civilian police component of UNOMIG and looked forward to an early confirmation by the Abkhaz side that the deployment in the Gali district of the remaining police officers could proceed.

Deploing the deterioration in the security environment in the Gali sector, including repeated killings and abductions, the Council called in particular on the Abkhaz side to improve law enforcement involving the local population.

The Council stressed the urgent need for progress on the question of refugees and internally displaced persons, and called on both sides to display a genuine commitment to make returns the focus of special attention and to undertake that task in close coordination with UNOMIG and consultations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Group of Friends." (UN SC 30 January 2004)

Georgia's President briefs the UN Security Council (26 February 2004)

"Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili, briefing the Security Council this morning, pledged his unwavering commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia and appealed to the Council to enhance its efforts to advance the cause of lasting peace and stability in his country.

[...]

Today, President Saakashvili stated, Georgia still suffered from the painful wounds of civil conflict, wounds that had left hundreds of thousands homeless, separated families and destroyed the future of a generation. Referring to the 'Revolution of Roses', he said the citizens of Georgia created history during the month of November. Using peaceful, non-violent methods, they rose up in defence of the principles of freedom and democracy.

Encouraged by certain positive developments, he said the task forces established in the framework of the Geneva process might form a powerful mechanism for the entire peace process. Also, the deployment of a civilian police unit in the Gali region was a real and positive step forward that should be fully implemented. That was particularly necessary for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Following a 'very constructive and positive' meeting with President Putin in Moscow, he said that, for the first time since Georgia regained its independence in 1991, he began to sense that a new door was opening leading towards the establishment of positive relations between the two countries. At the same time, real challenges lay along the path towards establishing a long-term positive relationship.

In concrete terms, he noted, that would mean ending Russia's policy of providing citizenship to the population of the conflict regions. It would also mean ending the visa-free regime now in place in Abkhazia and the former South Ossetia, and putting a stop to illegal acquisition of property on Abkhazian soil. He appealed to the Security Council to work towards reversing those damaging policies, which reduced the chances for lasting peace and security.

Presenting his vision for achieving progress in the United Nations-led peace process, he said that the definition of Abkhazia's political status, as outlined in the Boden Paper, provided the key to resolving the conflict. He issued a call to the Abkhaz people to rise above the confrontation and seize the unique window of opportunity, opened due to the recent changes in Georgia. That window of opportunity offered a chance to build a new, common future — a future defined and based on the firmest guarantees of security, human rights and the promise to live in a free and open society.

To promote that process, he was ready to guarantee the highest possible degree of autonomy to Abkhazia, within the Georgian State. He was committed to dedicating enormous resources towards the development of Abkhazia's economy." (UN SC 26 February 2004)

The "Geneva Process"

"A United Nations-chaired meeting to review the peace process between Georgia and Abkhaz separatists today hailed progress made in political and security matters, refugee returns and economic cooperation despite the difficult situation on the ground.

In a statement to the press, the so-called Group of Friends of the Secretary-General – France, Germany, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States – meeting in Geneva said they were 'encouraged' by the progress.

A senior Georgian delegation presented its position but the Abkhaz side declined an invitation to take part in the meeting, which was chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno and marked the third in the 'Geneva Process'. The Friends reaffirmed the value of the meetings as a means to maintain momentum towards peace and agreed to meet again before the end of the year." (18 February 2004)

The Sochi process

"Georgian minister says progress reached in Moscow talks on Abkhaz settlement

During talks in Moscow on 2 March, Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution Gogi Khaindrava and Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Valerii Loshchinin reached agreement that the return of Georgian displaced persons to Abkhazia's southernmost Gali Raion and the resumption of rail traffic from the Russian Federation via Abkhazia to Tbilisi and Yerevan should begin simultaneously, Caucasus Press reported on 4 March. The two processes were agreed upon one year ago during a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his then-Georgian counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze, but the Georgian and Abkhaz governments have been unable to agree which process should begin first, or whether one should be completed before the start of the second." (RFE/RL 4 March 2004)

South Ossetia

South Ossetia: peace efforts under the OSCE mediation (1992-2002)

- Declaration of autonomy of South Ossetia in 1989 was followed by a violent conflict with Georgia until 1992
- A ceasefire agreement was signed in 1992, followed by the deployment of a joint Russian, Ossetian and Georgian peacekeeping force
- The OSCE has been requested to help mediate and promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict
- A Joint Control Commission (JCC) supports confidence-building measures and helps to address issues of mutual concern, such as refugees and IDPs
- Notwithstanding EU and UNDP rehabilitation programmes, much need for rehabilitation and development work remains
- In 1997, UNHCR began programming designed to create conditions for the return of IDPs and refugees
- Most refugees and IDPs remain reluctant to return unless economic conditions improve and basic services are adequately restored
- However, the local population enjoys freedom of movement across the ceasefire line
- Russian-Georgian inter-governmental programmes on economic rehabilitation in the zone of conflict were finalized in December 2001

"The South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast consisted of the four districts of Tskhinvali, Akhagori (formerly Leningori), Java, and Znauri. Tskhinvali, the capital of the Oblast, is a half hour's drive north of Gori, the administrative centre of the Georgian region of Shida Kartli. In 1989, the Supreme Soviet of the Oblast declared its intention to raise its status to that of an Autonomous Republic within Georgia. The Georgian authorities annulled this decision and further revoked South Ossetia's status as an Autonomous Oblast. A violent conflict ensued during 1989-1992.

As a direct consequence of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, South Ossetia and adjoining regions of Georgia proper, including Gori, suffered substantial material damage, and over 60,000 individuals, mainly ethnic Ossetians, were displaced from their homes. Some 40,000 of them crossed into North Ossetia in the Russian Federation and became refugees. At the same time as the conflict raged, several violent earthquakes and aftershocks struck the region, causing significant damage, particularly in Java.

As early as the summer of 1992, an attempt was made to seek an amicable solution to the conflict and to establish an end to the hostilities. A cease-fire agreement was signed, leaving the authorities of the former Oblast in control of Tskhinvali, Java, Znauri and parts of Akhagori, and the central Government in control of Akhagori and several isolated ethnic Georgian villages. A peacekeeping force from the region was deployed. These forces consist of joint Russian, Ossetian and Georgian troops and are known as the Joint Peacekeeping Force or JPKF.

In 1992, a mission from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later renamed as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), was requested by the Georgian and South Ossetian sides to help mediate and promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict. With the OSCE's facilitation, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict settlement machinery has evolved. This machinery has two principal components: political negotiations of Georgian and South Ossetian plenipotentiary delegations

with the participation of Russia, North Ossetian authorities, and the OSCE; and the Joint Control Commission (JCC), which supports confidence-building measures and serves as a mechanism for the sides to address issues of mutual concern while leaving the issue of the region's political status to the political negotiators.

The JCC has three principal working groups: 1) On Military and Security Issues; 2) On Economic Issues; 3) On Refugees and IDPs. All four parties (i.e. Georgia, Russia, North Ossetia and South Ossetia) and the OSCE are represented on the JCC Working Groups. In addition, the JPKF is a participant on the working group on Military and Security Issues, the European Commission (EC) on the working group on economic issues, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the working group on refugees and IDPs.

During the early phases of the conflict, international humanitarian agencies addressed the emergency needs of the population. Later, during 1996-1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) addressed confidence building and development needs through a US\$2 million project designed to rehabilitate essential components of the region's infrastructure. The UNDP project relied on an innovative system of joint technical groups with representatives from the Georgian and South Ossetian sides that identified and approved projects by consensus. Similarly, in 1998, the European Union (EU) issued a budget line to facilitate the normalisation of relations between the two sides and has allocated several million ECU for the rehabilitation of the region's infrastructure, including electricity and gas distribution networks and the railway line. Notwithstanding the achievements of the EU and UNDP programmes, much need for rehabilitation and development work remains.

In 1997, in light of progress on the political front and further reductions in tension and a steady improvement in the security environment, UNHCR began programming designed to create conditions for the return of IDPs and refugees to the region. Nonetheless, an overwhelming number of IDPs and returnees remain displaced. Vigorous efforts by UNHCR and its implementing partners to promote a voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees and IDPs to their places of origin have had only limited results. Until economic conditions improve and basic services such as healthcare and utilities are adequately restored, and the number and potential for income generating opportunities is sufficiently increased, many if not most refugees and IDPs will remain reluctant to return to their places of origin. In 2003, however, there had been some progress observed: more returnees have been registered than in 2002.

In November 2001, local presidential elections, unrecognised by the international community, were held in South Ossetia. This resulted in the defeat of the incumbent and a relatively peaceful transfer of power to the new *de facto* President and administration. At present, the central authorities in Tbilisi continue to exercise little direct control over the region. Despite the South Ossetian authorities' declaration of independence from Georgia in 1990, the region's status continues to be the focus of negotiations, and the international community remains firmly committed to Georgia's territorial integrity. The separation of the negotiations on political status from other issues under the auspices of the JCC allows the sides to maintain a level of pragmatism to continue to resolve issues of mutual concern.

Pragmatism is also evidenced in the attitude of the local populations residing on each side of the 'cease-fire line.' Much of the adult population speaks Ossetian, Georgian and Russian to varying degrees of proficiency, a sign of the close interethnic ties that prevailed throughout the region prior to the conflict. The local population on both sides enjoys freedom of movement across the lines of *de facto* South Ossetian-Georgian control. The freedom of movement refers to both ethnic Georgian enclaves under *de facto* South Ossetian administration and the population from South Ossetia and Georgia proper in general. A regular bus service operates between Tskhinvali and Gori. Georgian villagers bring their produce to the Tskhinvali market, and transactions take place in a variety of currencies, including the Russian ruble, US dollar and Georgian lari, although the economy is based primarily on the ruble.

In early 2002, and later in Autumn 2002, there were some negative developments in political talks and security repercussions on the ground. This to a certain extent impeded the peace-settlement process, which

suffered along with the authority of the JCC being questioned. At the same time, the level of criminality, an acute problem in South Ossetia, has been intermittently on the rise. However, despite those passing tensions, the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict settlement process continued. The momentum in the Georgian-Ossetian negotiations was reflected in regularity of meetings held within the framework of the JCC in 2002 and 2003. As a result, some agreements were reached on important issues related to urgent security matters, economic rehabilitation, and IDPs/refugees. Moreover, the finalisation of the Russian-Georgian Intergovernmental Programmes on Economic Rehabilitation in the Zone of Conflict in December 2001 and working on the draft law on Return, Integration and Re-integration of Refugees and IDPs would be conducive to further deepening of confidence and rehabilitation between the two sides." (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

Small steps done through the EU supports to rehabilitation programmes in South Ossetia (2002-2003)

- OSCE continues to support the peaceful settlement of the conflict
- Efforts are focused on confidence-building measures
- There continues to be no agreement on key issues of the political conflict settlement
- The Georgian and Ossetian parties agreed to an EU sponsored joint customs control project in 2002
- In exchange, the EU released a rehabilitation fund of 2,5 million euros

"OSCE in 2003 continued to work towards peaceful settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, through facilitation of the JCC meetings and its subsidiary bodies. At the present juncture, it is stepping up its activities aimed at facilitating the two sides to implement the OSCE Mission's proposals, which have also a strong confidence building effect, on the release of a JCC newsletter and the enhancement of the operational efficiency of the Special Co-ordination Centre, that is joint policing activities. OSCE is also exploring the possibilities to enhance its efforts in the field of confidence building with a view of contributing to an atmosphere of trust and positive examples of co-operation. This, in turn, could be instrumental in bridging the gap between the two sides and facilitating JCC activities.

From 14 to 17 October 2003, OSCE facilitated the 10th Experts' Groups meeting of the authorized delegations for the sides within the framework of the negotiation process on a full-scale resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, which took place in the Hague, Netherlands, upon invitation of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Hague meeting was a follow-up to the Experts Groups meetings in Vienna/Baden (2000), Bucharest (2001) and Castelo Branco (2002). It was attended by participants from the Georgian and South Ossetian sides, as well as representatives of the Russian Federation, North Ossetia - Alania, the OSCE Mission, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus. Representatives from the European Commission also took part in the meeting. Unfortunately, the discussions revealed strong differences between the Georgian and South Ossetian sides on key issues of the political conflict settlement. The meeting ended without adoption of a concluding document. Nonetheless, taking into account the commitment from both sides to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict, OSCE will continue to facilitate a political dialogue next year as well.

On economic issues, the sides shared the view that rehabilitation in the zone of conflict played a growing role in the overall conflict settlement process. In November 2002, they expressed their readiness to participate in the EU joint Customs Control project, a joint taxation scheme on transit cargo traffic through South Ossetia the proceeds of which would be beneficial for the population in the zone of conflict. This,

and other economic rehabilitation projects funded by the EU, were to be implemented and administered under the aegis of the OSCE through its field office in Tskhinvali. In exchange for agreement on joint taxation scheme, the EU would go ahead with the EUR 2.5 million in rehabilitation funds (1999 budget), mainly foreseen for road rehabilitation. However, de facto South Ossetian authorities reiterated they would not make any concessions, i.e. accept conditionalities, which would impede the sovereignty of the territory they control.

Nonetheless, the negotiations over these projects with some modifications in implementation programme have continued and are expected to bring positive outcomes shortly. OSCE has submitted to signature of the Georgian and South-Ossetian sides a Memorandum of Understanding on the projects to be financed under the EUR 2.5 million EC grant. The proposal is to allocate part of the fund to finance the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures in the amount of EUR 1.3 million. The proposal also envisages allocating the remaining EUR 1.2 million for projects in support to returnees and IDPs. In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding foresees that the projects be implemented with the support of UNDP and UNHCR and outside the framework of the Joint Control Commission (JCC). Some alterations have been proposed to the Memorandum. They are being discussed with the implementing partners UNDP and UNHCR, the EU Representative, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Special Affairs of Georgia. Once agreement on the adapted text has been reached parties will be invited to sign." (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

Other Georgian regions

Need for displacement prevention in other Georgian regions (2000)

- Reports of ethnic tensions in southern Georgia between Armenian and Georgian communities (Djavakheti and Tsalka region)

Region of Djavakheti

"Ethnic Tensions Flare Up Again In Southern Georgia. Two incidents this month in the predominantly Armenian-populated region of Djavakheti in southern Georgia have spotlighted the latent animosity between the regions Armenian and Georgian communities. And recent ill-considered moves by the Georgian authorities may exacerbate those tensions.

On 1 June (the religious festival of St. Nino, who converted the Georgians to Christianity in the fourth century A.D.) fighting broke out in the district of Ninotsminda, apparently between local Armenian residents and Georgian pilgrims and clergy. Then on 12 June, Armenians from Ninotsminda who were returning from a visit to Armenia clashed with Georgian border guards at a border post.

Georgia's National Security Council has created a special commission to clarify the circumstances of that latter incident. But at the same time, the Georgian presidential representative in Djavakheti, Gigla Baramidze, has risked further alienating the region's Armenian population by warning that all local officials who do not acquire spoken and written fluency in Georgian within the next three years will be dismissed. Baramidze's appointment of an Armenian alleged to be engaged in smuggling to head the Akhalkalaki local administration has compounded the anger of the Armenian population, many of whom risk losing their jobs when the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki is closed." (RFE/RL 23 June 2000)

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Region of Tsalka

"Nor is Djavakheti the only potential ethnic flashpoint in southern Georgia. Tensions between Georgians and Armenians exist also in the Tsalka region which borders on Akhalkalaki to the north east. Until recently, the majority of Tsalka's 25,000 population were Greeks, with Armenians the second largest ethnic group and Georgians comprising only approximately 10 percent of the total population. (At the time of the 1989 Soviet census, there were some 100,000 Greeks in Georgia. That figure has now sunk to 50,000 partly as a result of the exodus of 15,000 Pontic Greeks from Abkhazia during the 192-1993 war. Last year, the Greek government adopted legislation simplifying the naturalization process for Greek immigrants from the former USSR.)

The outmigration of Greeks from Tsalka has left empty many houses that the Georgian government intended to appropriate and auction off, regional governor Levan Mamaladze said last August. But some members of the local population (whether the remaining Greeks or the Armenians is not clear), apparently oppose those plans: "Alia" on 20 June quoted Mamaladze as accusing unidentified "provocateurs" from preventing an influx of Georgians to Tsalka. Earlier in June, Nationalist Party of Georgia leader Zaza Vashakmadze warned that the situation in Tsalka is comparable to that in Abkhazia in the late 1980s. He claimed that the Georgian minority are deprived of Georgian-language education for their children, and are under pressure to leave the region. (Liz Fuller)" (RFE/RL 23 June 2000)

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POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

Global figures

Total internally displaced population: 260,000 persons as of September 2003

- 95 percent of the IDPs in Georgia were displaced from Abkhazia, the rest from South Ossetia
- 38 percent of the IDP population lives in the Samegrelo province, bordering with Abkhazia
- Tbilisi is the second province with the highest concentration of IDPs (35 percent)
- The total population of Georgia has shrunk by 20 percent in 12 years, as a result of a massive outflow of workforces to other countries
- Abkhaz authorities suggest compiling a precise register of the Georgians eligible for repatriation
- There has never been a proper registration of IDPs, while IFRC estimated that 20 percent of the IDP addresses were non-existent or wrong

UNHCR Data as of 30 September 2003
IDPs from Abkhazia

	GAGRA	GALI	GUDAUTA	GULRIPSHE	OCHAMCHIRE	SUKHUMI	SUKHUMI DISTR.	TKVARCHETI	Total
ADJARA	529	785	99	1675	1017	1758	778	142	6784
GURIA	72	69	11	88	148	169	25	11	593
IMERETI	3828	3443	1218	4495	7784	5165	4049	556	30538
KAKHETI	181	169	265	226	126	185	67	10	1229
KARTLI	245	345	42	277	424	431	299	53	2116
XVEMO	2362	1255	466	1815	1799	1324	845	284	10150
KARTLI									
MTSKHETA- MTIANETI	84	126	123	229	180	218	16	23	999
RACHA- LECHKUMI	323	48	78	66	162	178	324	30	1209
SAMEGRELO	3245	54642	862	10232	12947	12740	4755	1226	100649
SAMTSKHE- JAVAKHETI	191	583	48	481	289	320	345	41	2298
TBILISI	10556	17229	2267	13085	11505	28689	6702	849	90882
Total	21616	78695	5479	32669	36381	51177	18205	3225	247447

IDPs from Districts of South Ossetia

TSKHINVALI 10083	ZNAURI 2389	JAVA 203	Total 12675
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Persons of Concern to UNHCR (Government statistics)

	Total in Country	Per cent Female	Percent under 18
Georgia (IDPs) [note]	264,000	55	26

Note: includes some 250,000 IDPs and returnees from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. As estimated 40,000 IDPs have returned spontaneously to Gali District. Also includes some 7,000 IDPs and refugees from the Georgian-Osset conflict. In 2001, 425 refugees and IDPs returned to their places of origin in South Ossetia and Georgia proper. (UNHCR June 2002, p. 383)

"According to the Georgian State Department for Statistics release of May 5, as per the findings of the national census taken in January 2002, Georgia's population shrank by 1.1 million people: from 5.5 million in 1989 to 4.4 million at the beginning of 2002. The census did not cover two conflict areas outside central government's control. As per official communication, Georgian and international experts believe the population of Abkhazia may be around 160,000 people at the moment, while South Ossetia is home to about 70,000 people. Generally, the shrinkage of Georgian population by such huge, almost 20 per cent, over the past 13 years, had been caused by an amassed outflow of workforce to other countries in hope to get better living and working opportunities. Most of the emigrants now live in the Russian Federation, but the emigration trend shows increasing percentage of emigration to the Ukraine, Western Europe and the USA." (UN OCHA May 2003)

"Russian and Georgian government working groups met in Tbilisi on 31 July to discuss measures to expedite the return of Georgian displaced persons to Abkhazia in line with an agreement reached during talks in Sochi in March between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Georgian counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze, Caucasus Press reported. The Georgian delegation again called for the creation of a temporary international administration under UN auspices in Gali Raion, the pre-war population of which was predominantly Georgian. In Sukhum, Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba proposed on 1 August compiling a precise register of the Georgians eligible for repatriation, rejecting as 'fantasy' Georgian claims that the displaced persons number 300,000, Caucasus Pres reported. Shamba also argued that in order to stabilize the situation in Gali, Tbilisi should take action to neutralize Georgian guerrilla formations operating in the district who, Shamba argued, pose a threat to the safety of Georgians who wish to return there." (RFE/RL 4 August 2003)

"According to government as well as NGO figures, there are in Georgia today, some 280,000 internally displaced persons who have been uprooted as a result of armed conflict, out of a population of just 5 million. This displacement is actually the result of two separate armed conflicts in different regions of the country: in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia (also referred to as Tskhinvali region). The overwhelming majority of these internally displaced persons, some 266,000, are ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia, while the remainder were displaced by the conflict in South Ossetia.

In addition, the Government reports that some 20,000 persons were internally displaced as a result of natural disasters, in particular, floods, earthquake and landslides, which occurred in the Svanetia and Ajara regions between 1987 and 1989. Though little mention was made during the mission of this group of internally displaced persons, their plight was highlighted by the President and by the Minister for Refugees and Accommodation, who both called for international assistance in providing shelter assistance required to facilitate durable solutions." (UNHCHR 25 January 2001, paras. 11-12)

"It should be noted that figures for displacement associated with the Georgian-Osset conflict are estimates on account of the fact that there has never been an effective registration of the displaced. Today, estimates of the remaining internally displaced and refugee population remain vague, with conflicting figures offered by both sides. UNHCR estimates that there remain roughly 6,000 out of the 10,000 ethnic Georgian internally displaced persons in Georgia proper; 1,000 out of the 10,000 ethnic Osset internally displaced persons in South Ossetia; and 23,500 Osset refugees in North Ossetia and the North Caucasus." (UNHCHR 25 January 2001, para. 21)

"According to the records of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) in November 1999, IDPs in Georgia are divided into approximately 49,570 households in private accommodation and 39,764 in collective centres (former sanatoria, hotels, tourist camps, hostels etc.). The total number of IDPs, according to the Ministry, is 272,000, with an average household size of just over 3.04 persons. However, according to the [IFRC] survey, 20 per cent of the IDPs addresses were non-existing or wrong. If we deduct 20 per cent households equally from both types of accommodation and apply the survey figures of average household size (3.38 persons per household in private accommodation, 3.51 in collective centres) the total number of IDP households would be approximately 40,000 in private accommodation and 32,000 in collective centres, a total of 245,700 persons. They are scattered throughout Georgia, with heavy

concentrations, however, in the Tbilisi and Samegrelo-Imereti areas in western Georgia." (IFRC November 2000, p. 71)

IDPs of concern to/assisted by UNHCR (based on UNHCR annual statistical reports)

31 December 2002	261,585 (including 144,839 women)
31 December 2001	264,221 (including 146,298 women)
31 December 2000	272,221
31 December 1999	278,500 (UNHCR also reports a total of 590 returns to places origin in 1999)
31 December 1998	277,000 (UNHCR also reports a total of 21,100 IDP resettled within the country in 1998)
31 December 1997	273,400
31 December 1996	272,359
31 December 1995	288,600 (including 150,000 IDPs assisted by UNHCR)
31 December 1994	280,000 (including 150,000 IDPs assisted by UNHCR) [Note 1]
31 December 1993	260,000 (including 70,000 IDPs assisted by UNHCR)

[Note 1: The number of internally displaced persons of concern to UNHCR (280,000) is based on a registration carried out by the Georgian State Committee for Refugees and Accommodation in mid-1994 as well as on an estimate of the unregistered population. The difference with the end-year statistics of 1993 reflects a more detailed registration of internally displaced persons rather than new displacements.]

Age groups	0-4	5-17	18-59	60 +	Total
Total	9 410	63 337	15 2709	46 645	272 101
Female	4 524	31 957	85 595	28 525	150 601
Male	4 886	31 380	67 114	18 120	121 500

(UNHCR 26 January 2001)

Disaggregated data

About 40 percent of the IDPs live in collective centres but updated figures are not available (2003)

- No study exists that has examined the movement of IDPs between various living arrangements and the reasons for these movements
- Many IDPs who have purchase private accommodations for themselves reportedly refrain from registering their location for fear of losing IDP benefits

"As per official Government data, 262,000 persons (7% of the population) who were displaced from the two ethnically fuelled conflicts in South Ossetia (1989-1991) and Abkhazia (1992-1994), still reside in Georgia proper, unable to return to their places of origin. After more than 10 years of displacement, approximately 40 % of IDPs inhabit collective centres, only some of which were renovated several years ago to serve as temporary dwellings, while a majority of the remaining 60% continues to live in crowded conditions in host families. A limited number of IDPs received private shelter with donor assistance, but such approaches are costly and not widely applied." (UN OCHA November 2003, p. 12)

"Conflicts in Abkhazeti⁴ and South Ossetia, Georgia generated significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia. First, IDPs came from South Ossetia in 1990/91 followed by the larger group

from Abkhazia in 1992/93. According to the UNHCR statistics, currently there are 241 733 IDPs from Abkhazia and 11 631 from South Ossetia. IDPs represent approximately 5% of the Georgian population (UNHCR).

IDPs, upon displacement from their places of residences, were placed in one of three accommodations: 1) in collective centers (such as hostels, hotels, hospitals, school buildings, other state owned premises), 2) in host families (with relatives and friends), 3) in private accommodations by themselves (rented or bought an apartment/house). According to the IFRC (2000) as of November 1999 there were approximately 245 000 IDPs (or 71 467 IDP families), of which 55% lived in private accommodations [5]. *The [Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MoRA)] does not provide a breakdown on the percentage living with a host family or unhosted.* The slight minority, 45% of IDPs, live in approximately 1 540 collective centers throughout the country. According to IFRC, almost 70% of all IDP households reside in five locations:

- in (1) private and (2) collective accommodation in Tbilisi (32 per cent),
- in private accommodation in (3) urban and in (4) rural Samegrelo (27 per cent)
- in (5) collective centers in urban Imereti (10 per cent).

Discerning the exact number of IDPs and location is problematic. First, there are rumors that approximately 5% of persons eligible for IDP status have not registered with the Government of Georgia (GoG).[6] Secondly, there is anecdotal evidence that IDPs move from one of these three living arrangements to another, for example, leaving a host family and moving into a collective center or into a their own private accommodation. [7] *To our knowledge, no study exists that has examined the movement of IDPs between various living arrangements and the reasons for these movements.* Third, it is reported by local NGOs that many IDPs who have purchase private accommodations for themselves refrain from registering their location for fear of losing benefits."

[Footnote 5: IFRC found while conducting their survey a 20% error rate and, thus, these figures are 20% less than reported by the MoRA]

[Footnote 6: Meeting at UNAG Office 29 June 2002 with local NGOs]

[For example, IFRC in their 1999 study used the MoRA's lists and found 20% of the IDP addresses either wrong or nonexistent.] (Dershem & Gurgendze November 2002, p. 9)

Data of IDP population by shelter from the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (as of January 2001) are available on website of the humanitarian community in Georgia, Assistance Georgia [Internet]

Survey highlights lack of consistent figures on IDPs (2002)

- Accurate statistics on numbers, locations and living arrangements of IDPs are not available
- There are few systematic surveys that allow for the assessment of differences in poverty or vulnerability between IDPs and the general population

"IDPs live in a wide variety of accommodations (collective centers, with host families, and by themselves in private accommodations), living arrangements (in collective centers with other relatives and previous friends and neighbors) and in different locations (regions and urban/rural settings). An IDP's accommodation, living arrangement and location can affect his or her economic situation and vulnerability. To begin to examine the differential effect(s) that accommodation, living arrangement and location has on an IDP requires having accurate, up-to-date, information on the numbers of IDPs in each of these various circumstances. However, **accurate and up-to-date statistics on the numbers, locations and living arrangements of IDPs is not available.** The government agency responsible for this information, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, provides some statistical accounting of IDPs but the numbers are not always consistent and data on types of accommodation, living arrangement and/or locations are very general.

To understand the relative difference of IDPs and the general population requires having accurate, up-to-date, information on the general population as well as IDPs. However, there are few systematic, representative, and reoccurring surveys of the general population and IDPs of comparable data that will allow for the assessment of differences in rates of poverty or vulnerability between or among them.

Moreover, even among the few systematic surveys and assessments of IDPs and the general population, comparative findings are not easily found due to differences in sampling frames, definitions of concepts and terms, unit of analysis, implementation of fieldwork, respondent identification, and the design of questions." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 4)

Demographic structure of the internally displaced population differs noticeably from the rest of the population (2000-2002)

- Households in the general population tend to be more multi-generational, according to a survey conducted by Save the Children in three region of western Georgia
- There is a larger proportion of younger persons and a smaller proportion of retired people among IDPs in collective centres than in the general population
- Single person households are more prevalent among IDPs than in the local population
- Birth of displaced children is reportedly be registered with delayThe divorce rate among the displaced (1.8%) is much higher than in the general population (0.9%)

"Both the IFRC study and [Save the Children (SC)] surveys agree that there are a larger proportion of younger, 0-17 years of age and smaller proportion of retired people among IDPs living in collective centers than in the general population (26.2% vs. 24.2% and 13.3% vs. 18.0% respectively). [57] SC's surveys found an average age of 35.6 years for IDPs living in collective centers and 37.6 years for the general population.

The size of households is only slightly smaller among IDPs living in collective centers than the local population (3.5 vs. 3.7 members), but lower among IDPs living in private accommodations (3.4 members). Single person households are more prevalent among IDPs living in private accommodations (16.4%) than among IDPs living in collective centers (15.9%) and the local population (12.9%)."

[Footnote 57: According to NGO representatives, a child born to IDP parent(s) is registered at the hospital to receive a birth certificate. The child's IDP registration occurs later, IDP benefits only start at the time of registration, which leaves a time (sometimes months) between birth and receipt of benefits. It has been reported, but not confirmed, that last year the government earned an income from the non-delivered allowances.] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 30)

The International Federation of the Red Cross conducted a survey of the IDP population in 1999. IFRC published this survey in November 1999 under the title "Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey".

Save the Children conducted a survey on an annual basis from 2000 to 2002. This survey was designed to provide comparable data of IDPs living in collective centres and local households in the regions of Samegrelo and Imereti, Western Georgia.

More detailed results of the SC survey are available on the website "AssistanceGeorgia" [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/>]. See in particular:

• *Age Structure of All Household Members in the General Population and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]*

• *Composition of Households in the General Population and IDPs Living In Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]*

• *Marital Status of Adults (18 yrs and older) in Households in the General Population And IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]*

Demographic data from the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (as of January 2001) are available on the website of the humanitarian community in Georgia "Assistance Georgia" [Internet]

The number and ethnic origin of those who have fled Abkhazia, have remained or have returned is a highly controversial political issue between Abkhazia and Georgia (2000)

- The number of internally displaced willing to return to Abkhazia and to the Gali region varies from only 60,000 to some 130,000
- Authorities and other local institutions have no interest in reporting a decline in the number of IDPs under their care, as this would expose them to a reduction of funds allocated to them

"Like the number of victims of the conflict in Abkhazia (in addition to civilians killed - twice as many as participants in uniform? - some 8,000 Abkhazian soldiers and 13,000 Georgian soldiers or paramilitary fighters? Two committees are co-operating regularly on both sides to locate more than 1,000 missing persons, according to Mr Avtandil Ioseliani, Chairman of the relevant Georgian committee), the number and ethnic origin of those who have fled Abkhazia, have remained or have returned is a highly controversial political issue. According to Georgian estimates (cf., eg, UN doc. E/CN.4/1997/132, p. 34), the population of Abkhazia has declined (from 535,000 in 1992 to some 146,000 in 1997), in particular following the mass exodus in the course of the period of ethnic violence, by nearly 390,000 persons, in general of ethnic origin other than Abkhazian, including more than 200,000 Georgians. According to other figures (provided in part by the OSCE), the population in Abkhazia now stands at some 225,000 persons (315,000 according to the Abkhazian authorities!), with some 80 to 90,000 Abkhazians (in the past about 18% of the local population), or 35 to 40% of the total. In any case, the '300,000 persons displaced' from Abkhazia - and from South Ossetia! - who are said to have gone to the rest of Georgia seem very 'volatile' (some 100,000 of them are said to have settled there definitively or to have left for other countries?), so that the exact number (173,000 from Abkhazia and 10,000 from South Ossetia?) of those currently entitled to and having obtained the status of internally displaced person ('IDP') is not known (this was confirmed in the 1999 Report of the Georgian Ombudsman [...]). Nor does there seem to be a clear approximation on how many IDPs who would now like to return to Abkhazia and would be willing to settle in the Gali region (some 130,000 or only 60,000?). To cite an example, more than 50,000 IDPs were said to have returned de facto to Gali, but were driven out again following a renewed explosion of ethnic violence in May 1998; nevertheless, since then, some 40,000 persons (according to the estimates of several international observers) have again returned clandestinely and even resettled in Gali for all or at least part of the year. In short, as in the case of the Meskhetians [...], there is considerable uncertainty about the actual number of persons prepared to return to Gali immediately; yet reliable data are essential, for example if it is decided to negotiate the return of IDPs from Abkhazia 'in stages'.

(ii) A rather convincing explanation for this disturbing lack of reliable official figures can be found by analysing more closely not only the political stakes, but also the consequences of granting IDP status: this status automatically entitles the person who has obtained it, by law at any rate, to a whole set of privileges and advantages as well as certain allowances in kind and subsidies, including 12 (or 18?) lari (about US\$ 6)

in cash monthly (the minimum monthly wage in the civil services in Georgia is about US\$ 10). It is thus understandable that those judged eligible for this status have no interest in relinquishing it as long as they remain under Georgian jurisdiction, and both the civil services and non-official bodies have no interest either in reporting a decline in the number of IDPs under their care, because they would then face what would be a virtually automatic reduction in their funds, which are calculated according to the number of IDPs they are looking after. This is all the more valid in that the total 'funds allocated for refugees' in the national Budget is said to have increased considerably and even doubled this year (some 100 million lari?), and what was a policy of temporary assistance has now become a policy of economic and social development whose aim is to prevent the IDPs from increasingly becoming second class citizens during the long wait to be able to return home." (Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights 13 July 2000, III - Refugees and displaced persons wishing to return to their place of origin)

Distribution of the displaced by type of accommodation (November 1999)

- 72 percent of the displaced live in urban areas
- 55 percent of the displaced live in private accommodation

*Distribution of IDP households in Georgia, as of November 1999**

	Kakheti	Tbilisi	Shida Kartli	Kvemo Kartli	Samtskhe Javakheti	Ajara	Guria	Samegrelo	Imereti	Total No.	Total %
Total	362	22,978	2,628	2,671	928	2,321	178	29,515	9,886	71,467	100
Urban	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Private accommodation	55	13,862	611	1,450	105	441	62	8,280	1,177	26,042	36
Communal centres	190	9,115	770	835	731	1,720	0	4,651	7,418	25,432	36
Total urban	246	22,978	1,382	2,285	836	2,161	62	12,931	8,595	51,474	72
Rural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Private accommodation	89	0	979	341	87	102	97	10,862	1,057	13,614	19
Communal centres	28	0	267	46	5	58	20	5,722	234	6,379	9
Total Rural	117	0	1,246	386	92	160	117	16,584	1,290	19,993	28

(Imereti contains Racha Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions; Shida Kartli contains Mtskheta Mtianeti)

* The figures of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation less 20 per cent.

"Of the approximately 72,000 IDP households, 50,000, (over 70 per cent of the total) are concentrated in just five out of the possible 36 cells: namely in private and collective accommodation in Tbilisi (32 per cent), in private accommodation in urban and rural Samegrelo (27 per cent) and in collective centres in urban Imereti (10 per cent). However, the remaining, more scattered, groups are of considerable interest, if only because they tend to receive less public attention [...]" (IFRC November 2000, p. 71)

Displacement of Georgians (1992-1997)

- The majority of Georgians were forced to flee the province of Abkhazia
- Some Georgians, such as members of mixed marriages, children of mixed marriages, or older people, never left their homes

"The conflict moved several different populations, in diverse ways. In most cases, the general contours of migration are far less contested than the numbers of people involved, and claims concerning the magnitude of displacement have become effective political weapons.

Certainly the largest group affected by the war are ethnic Georgians, the vast majority of whom have left Abkhazia and have settled in other parts of Georgia. The Georgian Ministry for Refugees claimed in March 1997 that there were 268,072 displaced persons from Abkhazia in Georgia. The Abkhaz argue in turn that there were 239,900 Georgians in Abkhazia in 1989, according to the Soviet census. They claim that some never left Abkhazia, many others have repatriated already, and still others fled to Russia not Georgia. There are thus at most 140-150,000 displaced people still waiting to be repatriated in Georgia. Since a number of Georgians did indeed stay behind, it is difficult to see how the Georgian Government can substantiate its figures. However, without passing judgement on this issue, it is possible to describe the contours of Georgian migration. From cities, the vast majority of the Georgian population has gone. In towns that had quite small Georgian populations, like Verkhniaia Eshera above Sukhumi, and Labra below it, literally all the Georgians have left. In other places, when residents note that Georgians have remained, it often transpires that these "Georgians" are children of mixed marriages who self-identify as Abkhaz or some other nationality.

However, a number of Georgians never left Abkhazia, even during the fighting. Members of mixed marriages stayed, particularly if the husband was Abkhaz. Many older people stayed, particularly if they had no close relatives to help them flee or to take them into their homes in a safer place. Neighbours, in Nizhniaia Eshera, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchire and Kutol among other places, emphasize that these Georgians can stay with impunity precisely because they did not fight on the Georgian side. In other cases, Georgians who were long-term residents of a village considered it home and quite naturally not only stayed during the war, but also helped the Abkhaz as they were able. [...]

Those who stayed are certainly not representative of the Georgian population as a whole. The conditions under which they stayed show one way in which Georgians and Abkhaz have continued to live together. But the ominous implication is that without the full loyalty they demonstrated during the war these Georgians would not be welcome."(Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

Displacement of Russians, Armenians and Greeks (1992-1993)

- Abkhazia's large Russian and Armenian population looked for protection in Russia while most Greeks were repatriated to Greece.

"There were [...] about 280,000 internally displaced persons in Georgia at year's end (1999). The overwhelming majority (266,000) were ethnic Georgians displaced from Abkhazia, about one third from the Gali district. The rest - about 14,000 persons - were displaced from South Ossetia. Of these, about 10,000 ethnic Georgians displaced from South Ossetia lived in government-controlled areas and about 4,000 persons remained displaced within South Ossetia. About two percent of Abkhazia's displaced were ethnic Jews, Ukrainians, Greeks, Abkhaz, Armenians, or Russians.

Some 42 percent of Georgia's displaced population lived in the Samegrelo region adjacent to Abkhazia, followed by Tbilisi (31 percent), and the Imereti region (13 percent). No significant new displacement or returns took place during the year." (USCR 2000, pp. 239)

"Caught in the middle of the madness were members of other official nationalities. In the earliest days of the war, Greece arranged an orderly and thorough evacuation for Abkhazia's Greek population of about 15,000 people. Many of these long-term residents of Abkhazia have found it difficult to adjust and some have attempted to return home.

Abkhazia's Russian and Armenian populations, each about 75,000 strong, were not temporary visitors who could simply return "home" when the fighting began. Most Armenians could trace their Abkhaz roots to the beginning of the century, and many came as a direct result of persecution in 1915. By the start of the war, Armenians in Abkhazia were Soviet cultural constructs, speaking Russian and even Turkish, living in compact Armenian villages but in a multinational society, with few or no ties to Soviet Armenia. When the war began, Armenians found themselves directly in the line of fire, but "returning" to Armenia was a nonsensical option. Instead, the most natural option for many, especially women and children, was to flee to friends or distant relatives in Russia until the end of the war. In a frequent pattern, many young people stayed on in Russia, studying or earning money to send remittances back to Abkhazia.

Abkhaz Russians, despite cultural affinity with the Russian Federation, were also longtime residents. Like the Armenians, many Russians who had the necessary personal ties left their homes for Russia for the duration of the war, and many, particularly young people, have stayed on in Russia to work or study. In this way, the war scattered members of some nationalities and in some cases removed them altogether." (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General pattern

Displacement patterns lead to a concentration of IDPs in a number of Georgian cities (1997)

- Flight from Abkhazia generally chaotic causing breakup of villages
- IDPs concentrated to the towns of Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zugdidi
- Zugdidi (Georgia) has a large IDP population from the adjacent Gali district (Abkhazia) and Kutaisi (Georgia) has a high concentration from the Ochamchire district (Abkhazia)
- Forty to fifty percent of the IDP population lives in collective centers

"The displaced in Georgia are compactly settled in several senses. Not only have they almost all stayed in Georgia, there are particularly large IDP populations in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zugdidi. In addition, within the districts where they have settled, they tend to live in clearly bounded spaces in close proximity to one another. This is particularly true for the 40-50 per cent of the IDP population living in collective centres, rather than in the private flats of friends or relatives. Collective centres include empty administrative buildings, schools, kindergartens, hotels, and tourist camps, among other buildings. In Zugdidi, just across the border from Abkhazia and therefore the easiest safe place to reach, the proportion in such centres is higher, with about two-thirds of the displaced settled in collective centres.

Flight from Abkhazia was chaotic, and whole villages seldom made the journey and settled together. Instead, the IDP residents of most collective centres come from various districts of Abkhazia and were not acquainted before the war. Nevertheless, some patterns are clear. Zugdidi has a disproportionately large IDP population from the adjacent Gali district. And Kutaisi has a high concentration from Ochamchire district, primarily because transportation between the two places was made available during the war, and because the word went out among IDPs that Kutaisi, while farther away, had a lot of living space available.[...]

Thus the patterns of settlement of IDPs throughout Georgia work to create a relatively bounded and identifiable population."(Dale, 1997, sect.5.1)

Displacement of Abkhaz population (1992-1999)

- Complicated and multidirectional displacement of Abkhazians took place within the province of Abkhazia
- In order to gain access to food-producing land, many families have left the economically devastated urban areas
- Many Abkhaz returned home after the war, but others entered a phase of more permanent dislocation, due to the destruction of housing and economic infrastructure.

"Unlike Georgians, Russians and Armenians, most Abkhaz did not leave the territory of Abkhazia. But Abkhaz experienced substantial internal displacement both during and after the war. As sources on all sides report, in Sukhumi the first days of the war were accompanied by looting and physical violence

against the local population. While Abkhaz authorities retreated to Gudauta, Abkhaz who were not engaged in fighting left Sukhumi for Gagra or Gudauta to the north for the duration of the war. Similarly, Abkhaz residents of villages to the south found themselves in the middle of confused criss-crossing front lines. Some also fled north, while others sought safety to the east in Tkvarcheli. But as the war progressed, Georgians effected a blockade against that mountainous city, and local residents as well as the newly displaced sought in turn to flee from Tkvarcheli. Indeed, it was the downing by Georgian forces in December 1992 of a Russian Mi-8 helicopter evacuating women and children from that city that raised the level of general malevolence in the war and catalyzed more concerted Russian military intervention on the Abkhaz side.

After the war ended, many Abkhaz returned home, but many others entered a phase of more permanent dislocation, due to the destruction of both living space and economic infrastructure. Some Georgian authorities claim that all of post-war Abkhazia is simply depopulated. This is true in some places, for example in industrial Tkvarcheli, whose prewar population of 22,000 has been reduced to about 8,000 due to the complete collapse of industry and communication and transportation networks. But in other cases the claims are exaggerated, for example Georgian Presidential Adviser Irakli Machavariani's statement that the present population of Ochamchire district is only about 3,000 people, when more than twice that number live in Ochamchire city alone.

Instead, postwar Abkhaz migration is complicated and multidirectional. Where homes in villages have been destroyed, Abkhaz have migrated either into the cities, or into former Georgian houses and flats in other villages. Even in villages with limited destruction, many youths have left their family homes to seek an income of some kind in Abkhaz cities or even in Russia, from where they send back remittances. Meanwhile, many other families have left economically devastated urban areas with no access to food-producing land, for the countryside. Thus many city dwellers have rapidly "ruralized". This pattern stands in sharp contrast, for example, to the displaced Azeris in Azerbaijan from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding Armenian-occupied regions of Azerbaijan, two-thirds of whom were rural before displacement and two-thirds of whom now live in urban areas. On the other hand the pattern is similar to the choice faced by many Armenian refugees fleeing Azerbaijan. Given the devastation brought about by the earthquake in 1988 and the Soviet collapse, Armenia did not have the resources to resettle all of the hundreds of thousands of refugees in urban settings. Many faced a choice between accepting a new rural life and migrating further to some other country. [...].

The key characteristic of most postwar Abkhaz migration is its partial and unfinished nature. Most of the pragmatic solutions Abkhaz have found in order to survive in the postwar setting involve subsistence agriculture, not sustainable incomes, and temporarily occupied housing, not reconstruction." (Dale, 1997, sects.2.1-4.2)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

General

Criminality remains high in South Ossetia (2003)

- Georgian and South Ossetian sides have strengthened their cooperation against criminality in South Ossetia
- However, criminality remains an acute problem in South Ossetia as a result of cross-border trade with Russia
- Law enforcement officers from both sides are suspected to be at times involved in criminal activities
- Security incidents and unproductive investigations have provoked dissatisfaction among the local population
- However, the security situation in general has been calm throughout 2002 and 2003, despite tensions with the Russian Federation in 2002
- The OSCE continues the collection of small arms and ammunition in the region

"The security situation, from a military point of view, remains in general calm and quiet. OSCE continued its monitoring of the JPKF in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict, with an emphasis on transparency of their activities and co-operation among the sides. The JPKF monitors the ceasefire and also maintains a rapid reaction force, which has proved itself capable of responding quickly to threats to the peace and defusing tense situations in the past.

The Georgian and South Ossetian sides have over recent years achieved substantial agreements on joint action against criminality. A Joint Law Enforcement Coordination Body was formed in February 2000 with the JPKF, with participation of South Ossetian and local Georgian law enforcement authorities. In February 2002, the EU donated communication equipment and vehicles to the Joint Georgian-South Ossetian law enforcement unit, the 'Special Coordination Centre' (SCC), which is subordinated to the JCC. To address some of the shortcomings of the SCC, OSCE has urged the two sides to agree on concrete measures to improve the efficiency of the SCC for addressing the growing criminality in the region.

Criminality, nevertheless, remains an acute problem in South Ossetia, in part due to attempts to control the lucrative trade in 'transit' goods shipped between the Russian Federation and Georgia proper via South Ossetia. Robberies are common in the region, especially car thefts. Casualties are often suspected to be victims of 'business' disputes. Law enforcement officers from both sides are suspected to be at times involved in criminal activities. Furthermore, there have been cases of a kidnapping and assaults on officers in the zone of conflict. These incidents and unproductive investigations have provoked dissatisfaction among the local population. It has also become common that frustrated villagers block the major road for hours in protest against various events. There have been constant concerns among the international community that the present trend of rampant crime and series of incidents could incite ethnic tension and violence. The 'Falloy' market disputes are often of high importance in security matters. This is often combined with 'legal actions', for instance, 'escort' fees by the South Ossetian de facto authorities and 'Customs' fees by the Georgian authorities have caused further dissatisfaction among the population.

Although the security situation in general has been calm throughout 2002 and 2003, it has significantly deteriorated in mid-summer 2002, along with heightened tensions between Russian Federation and Georgia, which culminated in the Russian President's ultimatum to Georgia to take action against 'terrorists' or face Russian unilateral action. This was compounded with fear felt by the local authorities and population over hostile intentions by the Chechen boyevics who were allegedly seen in the vicinity of South Ossetian eastern 'border,' and the possibility of a Georgian 'anti-criminal' operation in the area. Although no major incidents related to those issues was recorded, these events resulted in some genuine concerns by the population for their safety as well as in partial mobilisation of South Ossetian military reserves called upon by local authorities. By late October 2002, the tension about Chechens was somewhat defused, and the South Ossetian de facto authorities were then more concerned over the 'anti-criminal' operation in South Ossetia (officially, Georgian authorities place this operation in 'Shida Kartli'). The mobilisation of troops in South Ossetia was retained for some time mainly due to the fear of Georgians using this operation as a pretext to take South Ossetia by force. By year's end, the tensions over the above issues abated, in parallel with positive developments in adjacent areas, which normally reflect on the situation in the zone of conflict. In recent months, heightened tensions in Georgia proper of late 2003 prompted local de facto authorities in South Ossetia to declare temporary 'State of Emergency', as they feared possible repercussions of the crisis in Georgia proper in South Ossetia. To date, however, there have been no indication of neither any serious deterioration or improvement of the existing situation in near future as regards to the new political management in Georgia proper.

In the framework of the conflict resolution mechanism, the OSCE Mission to Georgia has worked for enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Special Co-ordination Centre (SCC) in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. For this purpose, consultations were held between the Georgian and Ossetian sides, facilitated by the representatives from the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) of the OSCE and the OSCE Kosovo Police service School. OSCE has also continued with the implementation of the projects for the collection of small arms and ammunition of the zone of conflict - which commenced in 2000, for providing small-scale, community needs based assistance projects such as providing the most modern ultrasound equipment for children's clinic, arranging summer camps for vulnerable children from the conflict zone, small-scale various infrastructure rehabilitation works for the villages, etc. So far hundreds of small arms as well as munitions, grenades, landmines, and one 100mm gun have been collected. The OSCE is considering further plans to implement projects for the benefit of communities from the zone of conflict." (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

Insecurity in Abkhazia: a concern for the safety of returnees (2003)

- The security situation has generally been calm in 2002 and 2003
- The kidnapping of UNOMIG staff in June 2003 led to the suspension to UNOMIG patrols in the Kodori Valley
- In the Gali district, the level of violence has decreased in 2003 due to a moratorium on partisan activities
- Most criminal incidents are increasingly more of purely criminal rather than political nature
- Criminal activities typically increases during the hazelnut and mandarin seasons
- Insecurity in the Gali district continues to raise concerns for the safety of returnees and humanitarian aid workers
- UNOMIG increased its patrolling in the Gali district (October 2003)
- The UN has still not been able to establish a permanent human rights office in the Gali district

"The human rights situation remained precarious, particularly in the Gali district. Monitoring by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Sukhumi of several murder and abduction cases in the Gali district confirmed that the rule of law remains too weak to ensure the protection of the basic human rights - to life,

physical integrity and security – of its residents. The Human Rights Office also noted that many children in the Gali district still do not have the right to education in their mother tongue. The ability of the Human Rights Office to raise awareness of, and encourage adherence to, international human rights norms will remain limited until it is permitted to establish a full-time presence in the Gali district, as recommended by the November 2000 joint assessment mission (see S/2001/59, annex II)." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 27)

"In most of Abkhazia the security situation has generally been calm and stable throughout 2002 and 2003. However, a first major incident in recent years involving international community took place in June 2003. On 5 June 2003, four UNOMIG staff were kidnapped. The incident occurred when a joint UN Mission and CIS peace-keeping force were on a regular patrol in the upper Kodori valley, scene of previous clashes in the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. The CIS soldiers were released shortly thereafter but the UN personnel, consisting of two military observers, a paramedic and a local interpreter were kept by unidentified armed group for almost a week. After various demands allegedly put forward by the kidnappers and negotiations by Georgian law enforcement bodies as well as official requests from the UN, hostages were released unharmed and brought to Tbilisi on June 10. All UNOMIG patrols to the area were suspended after the incident. This was the fourth time UNOMIG staff were kidnapped since the commencement of the Mission. Each time the kidnapping occurred in the same area and each time the hostages were released unharmed after negotiations. Another major incident during the UNOMIG's Mission was the downing of the UN helicopter in Kodori in October 2001, which killed all nine persons on board.

The two exceptions to a generally relatively quiet situation in Abkhazia are the Kodori Valley and Gali District, which are widely considered insecure areas for both the local population and humanitarian agencies. A number of violent incidents, including some tragic ones, with criminal and possibly political motivations, continue to take place in Gali District. In 2003, the rise in criminality was also observed on Zugdidi side of the Inguri River. The latest reports of the Secretary General on the situation in Abkhazia acknowledged that the level of tension in Gali District has decreased in comparison with the same periods in previous years due to a moratorium on partisan activities. Figures concerning criminal actions are in general also lower, although 'cross-border' crime remains a serious problem, particularly in lower Gali. Criminal activities typically increased during the hazelnut and mandarin seasons. It has been noted of late that most criminal incidents are increasingly more of purely criminal rather than political nature.

In Gali District, criminality, including cases of robberies, shooting accidents, abductions, explosions, and sporadic paramilitary activities, continue to raise concerns about the safety of the growing returnee population that have already returned spontaneously, as well as the safety of humanitarian aid workers. Insecurity in the area also hampers visits, assessments, and possible additional support to the population of the area by international organisations. CISPKE and UNOMIG regularly conduct patrols in the Restricted Weapons Zone and the Security Zone to monitor the 1994 Moscow Agreement. CISPKE and UNOMIG have themselves been victims of criminality and/or partisan attacks, as have some NGOs. The Abkhaz de facto authorities have also been the target. On 11 March 2003, near the village of Zemo Bargebi in the Gali District, a gang of 4-5 men shot at a UNHCR truck. There were no casualties and it is assessed that the gang misidentified the vehicle for another that was possibly involved in smuggling scrap metal. A few days later, a private truck was attacked at the same location, with the driver killed and several passengers injured. On 16 April 2003, a HALO Trust soft skin vehicle was hijacked by four armed and masked men near the Sukhumi Airport. The vehicle was found abandoned in Sukhumi later the same day, along with the hijacked driver and passenger. However, reportedly the sum of US\$ 95,000 and other items were robbed.

The security concerns in Abkhazia were particularly raised in early April 2003, upon the resignation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the de facto authorities of Abkhazia, which coincided with the escape of 9 criminals from the detention centre in Sukhumi, all of them classified as 'dangerous', and 6 of whom had been sentenced to death. UNOMIG then imposed temporary movement restrictions. However, the tensions were gradually been reduced by end-April. By August 2003, the harvest season, including a traditional economic battle over lucrative hazelnuts business, compounded with the upcoming 10-year anniversary of the Abkhaz

'Independence/Victory Day' which falls on September 30, conspired to make the security situation more fragile again, including a possible threat to UN employees in view of global developments. As a preventive measure, UNOMIG imposed temporary security-related travel and movement regulations and restrictions for UNOMIG personnel, effective from 1 September - 15 October 2003." (UN OCHA 20 January 2004)

Development October 2003-January 2004

"There was a significant deterioration in the security environment in the Gali sector in early October, with the killing of 10 persons over an eight-day period. In the most serious incident, two Abkhaz militia personnel, one local woman and two of the perpetrators were killed on 5 October in an ambush near the Dikhazurga Abkhaz security post, east of Gali city close to the ceasefire line. In separate attacks, two men were killed on 3 October. On 9 October, one woman was killed during a robbery, and in addition, two dead bodies were found in Kokhora village, north of Gali city.

It will be recalled that, on 8 October 2003, the sides, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force signed in Gali a protocol under the terms of which both parties agreed to cooperate more closely with each other in the fight against crime and with UNOMIG to improve the prevailing security climate (see S/2003/1019, para. 10). The implementation of this protocol is monitored at the weekly quadripartite meetings. As a further step to improve security, UNOMIG increased its patrolling, with the redeployment to the Gali sector of six additional military observers from other parts of the mission area.

The security situation improved by mid-October, though there were further periods of instability. Six more killings were reported during the balance of the reporting period, including a murder on 17 October; the killing of one man on 3 November and of another one on 14 November; the killing of two men in separate incidents on 12 December; and, most recently, the murder of the mayor of Gagjda, a village in the lower Gali district, on 20 December. Most of these incidents took place in locations near the ceasefire line. Figures for the overall reporting period included 16 killings in 10 separate incidents, 15 robberies, 3 shootings and 5 abductions. In addition, on 23 November, three persons were detained by the Abkhaz militia after an incident on 17 November, in which a CIS peacekeeping force vehicle was fired upon. They had all been released by 29 November. On 27 December, 25 local residents were temporarily detained by Abkhaz militia following the kidnapping of three Abkhaz guards on 25 December. The latter were freed unharmed on 28 December. Some villages organized self-protection units and/or employed security forces in the Gali sector remained on a heightened state of alert throughout the reporting period, initially in preparation for, and later as a result of, the Georgian parliamentary elections.

There was similar increase in the number of violent and criminal acts in the Zugdidi sector, though the number of killings was well below that recorded in the Gali sector: 6 killings in four separate incidents, 16 robberies and 3 shootings were recorded." (UN SC 14 January 2004, paras. 20-23)

"The human rights situation remained precarious, particularly in the Gali district. Monitoring by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Sukhumi of several murder and abduction cases in the Gali district confirmed that the rule of law remains too weak to ensure the protection of the basic human rights – to life, physical integrity and security – of its residents. The Human Rights Office also noted that many children in the Gali district still do not have the right to education in their mother tongue. The ability of the Human Rights Office to raise awareness of, and encourage adherence to, international human rights norms will remain limited until it is permitted to establish a full-time presence in the Gali district, as recommended by the November 2000 joint assessment mission (see S/2001/59, annex II)." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 27)

About the role of guerilla groups operating in the Gali district, see also "What did Georgia hope to gain from anti-smuggling operation?", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 6 February 2004 [Internet]

Mines in the Gali district: an obstacle to return (2002)

- Mines were used during the armed conflict in 1992-1993
- Homes, orchards and industrial estates are contaminated
- Incidents caused by mines continue to be reported

"In Abkhazia the mines were left over from the secessionist war with Georgia in 1992-93, which was characterised by front lines moving along the Black Sea coast from the Gumista River north of Sukhumi city to the Inguri River in the south.

Mines were laid in flat and fertile valleys to augment the natural obstacles of the rivers. Although the war is over, these mines are now an obstacle to the repatriation of over 300,000 displaced people.

Homes, agricultural land, orchards, and industrial estates lie deserted, contaminated by mines and UXO.

Abkhazia resembles the worst-affected areas of Bosnia, yet receives a fraction of the international aid deployed in the Balkans. The economy, which was based on light industry, tourism, citrus fruits, and vineyards, is shattered." (The HALO Trust, 2003)

"Landmines remained a threat, especially in the Gali sector, where two mine incidents took place, on 29 April and 6 May. In the 6 May incident, four people were killed and two injured. UNOMIG suspended its patrolling until the area was cleared by the CIS peacekeeping force." (UN SC 10 July 2002, para. 16)

For more information on land mines in Georgia and in Abkhazia, you can consult the Landmine Monitor Report 2002 [Internet].

Returnees to South Ossetia remain exposed to harassment and violence (2000-2001)

- UNHCR presence, in the form of regular patrols, is widely regarded as a major contribution to the security of the returnees
- Problems of criminality and lawlessness should be addressed

"With respect to security conditions, though active hostilities have long since ended and the ceasefire continues to hold, security incidents of a criminal nature pose risks to returnees, the local population and international personnel. Ethnically targeted incidents of harassment and violence were reported and are a particular risk in ethnically mixed villages, to which return has begun. The presence of UNHCR in the region (since 1997) was widely regarded, by returnee communities, the local population, the authorities and international personnel alike, as having made a major contribution to the security of returnees and the population at large, as well as to a general climate of reconciliation and confidence-building. A particularly important aspect of the UNHCR protective presence has been the regular patrols undertaken throughout the region by its Mobile Team Unit, which monitors protection conditions, investigates and mediates security and other incidents or problems suffered by returnees and collects information on conditions in areas of return, which is then shared with persons contemplating return. Especially now that return to ethnically mixed communities has begun, the contribution that these patrols make to supporting a stable security environment for returnees and peaceful coexistence among ethnic communities divided by the conflict is critical. In addition, there is also a need for the local authorities to take measures to restore law and order so as to address the problems of criminality and lawlessness which prevail." (UNCHR 25 January 2001, para. 97)

"The security situation from a military point of view remains calm and quiet. The JPKF [Peacekeeping force] monitors the ceasefire and also maintains a rapid reaction force, which has proven itself capable of responding quickly to threats to the peace and defusing tense situations. The OSCE observes the work of the JPKF.

The Georgian and South Ossetian sides have achieved substantial agreements on joint action against criminality. A Joint Law Enforcement Coordination Body was formed in Feb. 2000 with the JPKF, South Ossetians, and local Georgian law enforcement authorities participating. Criminality remains a problem however, in part due to attempts to control the lucrative trade in goods shipped between the Russian Federation and Georgia proper via South Ossetia.

The JPKF in cooperation with the local authorities has begun a campaign on voluntary handover of illegally kept weapons. Thus far hundreds of small arms as well as munitions, grenades, landmines, and one 100mm gun have been collected." (UN OCHA 15 March 2001)

For more information on security conditions in South-Ossetia, see "Developments in 2002: persisting uncertainty on the ground" [Internal link]

SUBSISTENCE NEEDS (HEALTH NUTRITION AND SHELTER)

Health

Health condition of IDPs in collective centres below average (2002)

- IDPs, primarily those living in collective centres, are more likely to be ill or have a chronic disease than the general population
- However, access to health care services does not seem to be more problematic for IDPs than for other Georgian citizens
- Some studies even suggest that a greater percentage of IDPs in collective centres receive medical care than the rest of the population

"Most surveys report that IDPs, primarily those living in collective centers, are more likely to be ill or have a chronic disease than the general population. For example, in 2002, SC's survey found that 40.6% of IDPs families in collective centers had at least one member with an acute illness in the previous three months compared to 32.8% of families in the general population. As for chronic diseases, 33.1% of IDP families in collective centers had at least one member with a chronic disease compared to 18.4% of the families in the general population. When accounting for both illnesses and chronic diseases, a higher percentage of IDP families living in collective centers had both (55.4%) than in the general population (35.7%).

Several studies report that IDPs have as many health care services available to them, and physical access to these medical services, as the general population. That is, studies show that above 95% of IDPs living in collective centers have physical access to hospitals, obstetric clinics and polyclinics

In SC's study in 2002, 80.3% of IDPs living in collective centers in west Georgia reported having medical expenses in the previous three months (Dec. 2001 to Feb. 2002) compared to 68.2% of households in the general population. Moreover, since households in the general population have, on average, a greater household income than IDPs **economic access to health care appears to be greater among the general population than IDPs living in collective centers.** However, some studies show that a greater percentage of IDPs living in collective centers receive free medical care than households in the general population. For example, in SC's survey in 2002, 26.4% of IDP households reported using medical services without payment compared to 15% of households in the general population." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 7-8)

Field surveys reveal psychosocial trauma of displaced persons (2002-2003)

- There has been insufficient access to psychological counseling for IDPs
- 90 percent of the IDPs in collective center were over the threshold of depression in 2000
- Among IDPs living in collective centers, depression increased with age

"It should be emphasized that apart from scarce interventions, no comprehensive initiatives have been undertaken in the field of psychosocial rehabilitation of IDPs. IDPs, like all citizens of Georgia, are technically entitled to free psychiatric services, but these services envisage only in-patient treatment and do not include psychological counseling. Researches related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder prove that with

a decisive impact on their economic activity, IDPs suffer from depression and psychosomatic illnesses (e.g. alcoholism and winners) adversely impacted family structures. There have been insufficient structures to assist women who have experienced trauma and children with their secondary traumatization. Psychosocial problems, together with hard socio-economic conditions, were named as main motives compelling IDPs to increasingly migrate towards Tbilisi and from Georgia." (UN OCHA November 2003, p. 14)

"Due to being displaced from their homes and livelihoods, and confronting high rates of unemployment, crowded living conditions, and decreasing hopes of returning back to their homes, most NGOs report that IDPs are showing signs of stress and depression.

In 2000, [Save the Children] used a standardized depression-scale instrument in a survey of IDPs living in collective centers in western Georgia. The same depression scale instrument was used in another survey of the general population in west Georgia in 2000.

The depression scale is from the Center for the Epidemiological Study of Depression (CES-D), and is thus called the CES-D scale. This scale is designed to detect psychological 'moods' associated with clinical depression in a general population. Respondents are asked how often they experience each of the eleven different symptoms during the previous week. A CES-D score of 16 or more is considered the threshold for symptoms of depression.

Using criteria of a score 16 or more on the CES-D Scale as showing symptoms of depression, 89.9% of the IDPs living in collective centers were over the threshold for depression compared to 65.4% of the general population. This finding corresponds with the health findings [...] that show higher rates of hypertension, neurosis and stomach ulcers in IDPs living in collective centers than the general population.

Most studies of depression find certain social groups with consistently higher levels of depression than others, such as women, divorced individuals, and widows. This finding was the case for both IDPs living in collective centers and the general population.

Also, most studies of depression find that younger adults and the elderly show higher symptoms of depression than middle-age people. This finding held true in the general population, however, it did not hold true for IDPs living in collective centers. Rather, among IDPs living in collective centers, depression increased with age." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 35-36)

Access to health care services is good despite low state funding (2000-2003)

- IDPs are often unaware of the few benefits they are entitled to with regard to access to healthcare
- As of January 2003, public health care policies have been issued to 190,000 IDPs (67 percent of the total IDP population)
- There have been many cases of IDPs contracting TB because of inadequate diet, housing, etc.
- IDP collective centres are often remote from inhabited areas, which makes visits to doctor difficult
- Total health expenditure fell from 4 percent of the GDP in 1991 to less than 1 percent in 1998
- There are 33 medical institutions for IDPs located on the entire Georgian territory, but other medical institutions are also available to IDPs

"Quality health service is largely inaccessible to IDPs because of the high costs involved. Moreover, IDPs are often unaware of the benefits they, as holders of IDP status or as part of the socially vulnerable community, are entitled to.

The State budget of 2003 has room for GEL 300,000 to provide vulnerable IDPs with a one-time allowance, for medicines or enable them to travel for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment if needed.

Since 1999, IDPs residing in Samegrelo and Upper Svaneti have been entitled to additional free medical service (costing GEL 300,000 and financed from the state budget). Furthermore, all IDP children under 14 are subject to the Children Medical Care Programme, which provides them with standard medical care. IDP women are entitled to the benefits as envisaged within the State Obstetrics Programme.

The Programme for Active Detection of Pathological Developments and Preventive Health Care is particularly important, as it allows IDPs to have a one-time medical examination.

The 2002 joint decree of the Ministry of Labour, Health Care and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation entitles certain groups of IDPs (all pensioners; single mothers and children dependent on them; children of 3-18; orphan students, deprived of both parents, under the age of 23, as well as all the IDPs resident in Samegrelo and Upper Svaneti) to the benefits of a state health care policy, which makes overnight medical care, basic medicines and part of in-patient treatment, if hospitalised, available to them free of charge. This practice is in force at the state medical institutions that have been contracted within the programme. As of January 1, 2003, the public health care policies have been issued to 190,000 IDPs (which is 67% of the total number of IDPs) residing across the country.

Many IDPs, as well as health-care workers have either no idea of the policies or have incomplete or inaccurate information. According to IDPs in Rustavi, it was only the cost of overnight care, which they did not have to pay when hospitalised.

Moreover, IDPs (e.g. in Tskaltubo) are not aware of the medical institutions where they can possibly get preferential medical treatment envisaged by the state health care policies.

IDPs have also had a problem with ambulances, which cost GEL 10-20, a fairly high price not only for IDPs but for locals as well. Due to the fact that telephone lines are inoperative at IDP collective centres, IDPs are often unable to call for an ambulance when they need to.

While the vaccination of children is free of charge all across Georgia, there are a number of cases when IDPs have been requested to pay GEL 1 - more than the cost of the syringe necessary for the vaccination of their children.

There have been many cases of IDPs contracting TB, because of inadequate diet, housing, etc. Often IDP collective centres are rather remote from inhabited areas, which make it impossible for them to visit a doctor due to the lack of money necessary for travel. Many IDPs are ill with either mental or neurological disorders (and consequently need daily medical treatment and specific medicines which are exceptionally expensive). Although they are supposed to be provided with necessary medicines free of charge, in reality they are not. Some of the collective centres are provided with medicines not in popular demand, while specific necessities of the IDPs often go unheeded.

There are special IDP polyclinics in some of the regions - in Tbilisi, Samegrelo, Imereti, Adjara - which operate under the Ministry of Health Care of Abkhazia. The polyclinics provide IDPs with free of charge medical service and medicines distributed by humanitarian aid organisations and the Ministry of Labour, Health Care and Social Welfare of Georgia.

The Social Insurance Fund of Georgia and Tbilisi Municipality provide for non-standard medical treatment necessary for IDPs, and make occasional arrangements for replenishing supplies of medicines at IDP medical institutions. The IDPs we have interviewed so far, however, underlined the necessity for the needs-based provision of medicines, since medicines provided to their polyclinics currently are not in popular demand." (UN OCHA June 2003, pp. 21-22)

"During the Soviet Period, health care was provided free of charge to all citizens. Every medical institution was financed from the state budget. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the transition to a market economy, private medical institutions started to emerge. IFRC reports that, 'total health expenditure fell from 4% of GDP in 1991 to less than 1% in 1998.' Some public medical institutions were also privatized, some still partly providing free medical care. Article 3.3 of the Georgian Constitution provides that, 'in the circumstances determined by law free medical care is provided.'

Apart from hospitals and other medical centers both local population and IDPs can be treated in, there are 33 medical institutions for IDPs located on the entire Georgian territory, including 10 medical points (poliklinika) and 11 ambulances where approximately 1000 IDP doctors and medical personal are employed.[62] In a SC study in west Georgia in 2000, virtually all IDPs living in collective centers reported that hospitals, obstetric clinics and polyclinics were available.[63] In addition, almost all (85.7%) mentioned that emergency services are also available."

[Footnote 62: Legitimate Structures of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic in Exile, Published in Tbilisi, 2000.]

[Footnote 63: Health Status and Health Care Services in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo, by David Gzirishvili M.D., for Save the Children, August 2000.] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 32)

See also "Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia", a survey by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), 1999, section on healthcare [Internal link]

Deteriorating health situation in South Ossetia: (2002)

- Sanitary condition is very bad and there is an enormous need for medical supplies
- Sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis have been of concern to authorities and humanitarian agencies

"In September 2002, the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) continued the primary health care initiative programme for two more years. It first began in November 2000. The programme addresses some of the needs of the deteriorating health care system. Initial findings from ADRA's baseline survey indicate that the incidence of chronic thyroid diseases such as goiter is endemic, the sanitary situation is very bad, and there is a high level of ignorance amongst the local population concerning Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), particularly HIV/AIDS. In addition, the local authorities have expressed their concerns about the incidence of tuberculosis in the region. There is an enormous need for medical supplies (such as drugs and equipment to diagnose and treat TB and goiter), as well as rehabilitation of hospitals, which are now decrepit owing to lack of maintenance and war damage. ADRA plans to conduct further assessments in order to better assess and address the primary health care challenges in South Ossetia. DFID supported the translation into Ossetian and free distribution of the 'Mother's Calendar' which contains user-friendly guidelines for mother's to be and infant care." (UN OCHA 30 December 2002)

Difficult access to health care for the displaced aggravates effects of poor living conditions (2000)

- Proportions of illness and modes of treatment are similar for the IDPs and the local population
- They remain however more susceptible to certain problems, such as physical disabilities
- 1998 nutritional survey among displaced children show high rate of chronic malnutrition

- Parallel health structures specifically for the internally displaced may not necessarily provide better services in many cases

"About the same proportions of illness were reported by the three categories of households [Local population, IDPs in collective accommodation, IDPs in private accommodation]. Their mode of treatment is also similar. Self-treatment and absence of treatment altogether are common response, usually for financial reasons. The implied neglect of some forms of chronic illness could be serious in the longer term. Intensive health (including nutrition) education could be a cost-effective remedy for all groups of the population.

Reproductive health is similar for IDPs in collective centres (no data are available for IDPs in private accommodation) and the general population. IDP women's fertility rate is lower, as is the abortion rate. IDP make slightly greater use of public health institutions for pre-natal care and delivery, but the differences are small.

Although no nutritional data were collected in the survey, material from other studies indicated a tendency for a slightly higher degree of stunting (height for a given age) among IDP children than children in the local population." (IFRC November 2000, p. 8)

"In the area of health also, internally displaced persons, in common with the local population, face a number of problems in terms of ailments and of access to health services. Iodine deficiency disorders, for instance, are a common problem throughout Georgia and, indeed, much of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). A 1996 survey of 30,000 schoolchildren, commissioned by UNICEF found iodine deficiency in 64 per cent of the surveyed population. Severe iodine deficiency in utero causes severe mental retardation or cretinism. Consumption of iodized salt is considered the most effective way of ensuring an adequate intake of iodine. Yet an IFRC survey found that most households, internally displaced and local alike, used salt that either was not iodized or contained an inadequate quantity of iodine.

However, in addition to sharing many health problems common to the general population, internally displaced persons are also more susceptible to certain types of problems resulting from their displacement and the circumstances leading to it. Most notably, the Save the Children Fund Survey found that physical disability was more prevalent in internally displaced persons' households than in the local population. Injuries suffered during conflict and flight provide a partial explanation for this discrepancy. But the survey also suggests that little or no access to health-care services during the conflict and soon afterward, low household income to pay for health care, medicines and treatment, and poor living conditions also are factors which have resulted in a higher rate of physical limitation among internally displaced children.

Regarding nutritional status, a 1998 IFRC survey of internally displaced children in western Georgia found that, although the prevalence of acute malnutrition was low, there was a high rate of chronic malnutrition, manifested by stunted growth. A diet of poor quality, that is one particularly low in biological protein and micronutrients even though it may have an adequate energy content, accounts for these results.

With respect to access to health services, surveys by the Government and international NGOs have shown that a low percentage of internally displaced persons and of locals report receiving medical treatment for illness or disability, even when their condition is serious, the main reason being cost. Although health care is supposed to be provided free of charge to all citizens, in practice payment is required. In part, payment is required because the doctors and nurses frequently do not receive their full salary from the State. The issue of free access to health care thus is closely linked to the budgetary problems faced by the central Government.

In some regions, health clinics specifically for the internally displaced have been established as part of a larger programme of parallel public services offered by the Government in Exile, using funds channelled to it from the central Government. The extent to which such parallel structures impede internally displaced

persons from having access to the regular system of public services appeared, from the answers of the displaced, to vary. For the most part, such impediments appeared to derive not so much from institutionalized discrimination - the law recognizes the equality of all citizens to have access to the health services for instance - as from the practical problems of physical proximity to the public services and the ability to pay for them. In some cases, it was suggested that the health clinics set up specifically for the displaced provided them with better services, in particular as they were free of charge, than were available to the local population." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 49-53)

Field survey by Save the Children in western Georgia highlights health needs of the displaced (2000)

- SCF survey reveals that limited access to healthcare services during and after the war and poor living conditions have resulted in a slightly higher rate of physical limitations among displaced children

"On 2 June, Save the Children (SC) at the offices of the Institute of Polling and Marketing (IPM) presented an overview of selected differences between IDPs and general households in three regions of western Georgia (Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo). The presentation was based on a survey conducted in February 2000 by SC as part of the Georgia Assistance Initiative (GAI) -- a programme funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID)." (UN OCHA 10 June 2000)

"Health sector results show that IDPs are slightly more than twice as likely to have a physical disability as households in the general population. There appears to be a slight decrease in the frequency of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses from 1996 to 2000." (UN OCHA 10 June 2000)

More detailed information from the GAI review can be found on the "Assistance Georgia" website [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge>]. See in particular:

Chronic Diseases Among Household Members in the General Population and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]

Health Care Expenditures in Previous Three Months (Nov. 1999 – Jan. 2000) by Households in the General Population Living in Samegrelo, Imereti and Guria [Internet]

Health Care Expenditures in Previous Three Months (Nov. 1999 – Jan. 2000) Reported by IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Samegrelo and Imereti [Internet]

See also other reports posted on Assistance Georgia website:

"Children with Irreversible Physical Limitations in West Georgia", Save the Children, September 2000 [Internet]

"Rapid Appraisal of Healthcare, in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo regions of West Georgia", Save the Children, July 2000 [Internet]

"Reproductive health survey, Georgia", preliminary report printed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), June 2000 [Internet]

"Health Status and Health Care Services in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo Regions of West Georgia", [Internet]

"Population's Health Needs in Western Georgia: Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo", Report prepared by George Gotsadze MD., Ph.D. Nino Nanitashvili MD., MPH., February 2000 [Internet]

Field surveys reveal psycho-social trauma of displaced women and men (1995-2000)

- Internally displaced persons living in communal centres have been more exposed to depression than the rest of the local population
- Psychosocial trauma tend to increase with age and to affect primarily women and single heads of households
- Other surveys show that men have also been affected by displacement and have been less successful than women to adapt their new environment

"On 2 June, Save the Children (SC) at the offices of the Institute of Polling and Marketing (IPM) presented an overview of selected differences between IDPs and general households in three regions of western Georgia (Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo). The presentation was based on a survey conducted in February 2000 by SC as part of the Georgia Assistance Initiative (GAI) – a programme funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID)." (UN OCHA 10 June 2000)

"For the evaluation of social-emotional depression of both IDPs and the local population a scale was used from the Centre for the Epidemiological Study of Depression. Results showed that regardless of gender or marital status, IDPs in communal facilities have higher depression scores than the general population. In general, females, widows and divorced individuals are more depressed. Depression increases with age among IDPs thus the oldest IDPs tend to be the most depressed. In the general population the oldest and the youngest are more depressed than the middle-age population, with the lowest depression score at age 27 and increasing age." (UN OCHA 10 June 2000)

More detailed information from the GAI review can be found on the "Assistance Georgia" website [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge>]. See in particular:

"Psychological Distress and Depression Among Households in the General Population in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Imereti and Samegrelo", GAI Survey Report, February 2000 [Internet]

"Various forms of psychosocial stress have long plagued Georgian internally displaced women and their families on a nearly epidemic scale. A 1995 Oxfam study rigorously examined 653 displaced women and children residing in collective centers in Tbilisi and other regions of Georgia. Its team of psychiatric specialists concluded that over 86 percent of adults suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder and its various resulting symptoms, including heart and cardiovascular diseases (21 percent), chronic migraines and long-lasting sleep disorders (51 percent), and severe depression (22 percent). Twenty-one percent of displaced women surveyed by USAID had been clinically diagnosed with a form of neurosis (Kharashvili 1995, 24–29; Zurikashvili 2000, 7).

Causes for psychosocial stress were both conflict- and postconflict-related. Substantial numbers of women surveyed by Oxfam were traumatized by the loss of their homes and property (91 percent), by bombings (82 per-cent), and by the loss of close family members during the conflict (34 percent), among many other factors. The continuing period of displacement, arduous living conditions, and deepening economic troubles has added to the stress disorders of people living in collective centers. In a 1997 examination of 219 internally displaced families, a Georgian nongovernmental organization (NGO), Foundation for the Development of Human Resources, concluded that conflict-related psychological and psychosomatic complaints among the internally displaced had decreased over the previous two years. Stress-related health problems and depression were now more attributable to factors related to the postdisplacement environment

and the strains of everyday life. Many families increasingly believed themselves to be victimized, feeling ostracized and segregated by local populations unhappy with their continued presence and with the Georgian government's perceived lack of interest in their plight (FDHR 1997, 20-21; Kharashvili 1995, 24-29; Zurikashvili 2000, 7).

In addition to the heavy toll on the psychological and physical health of women, the trauma of displacement has also affected the psychological well-being of men in profound ways. Put simply, women have been much more successful at adapting to the difficult conditions and strains of every day life in the IDP community. As humanitarian aid has dwindled, many displaced women have worked tirelessly and relentlessly to provide desperately needed income and provisions for their families through petty street trade and other menial labor. Many men, meanwhile, have largely been unwilling to trade and to find other menial methods of generating income, instead spending much time idle and loitering in housing centers. In a 1996 study of the internally displaced, the Foundation for the Development of Human Resources noted that men were much more fixed on re-turning to their past lives and were 'paralyzed' by the problems of the present day. Their lives were often characterized by escapism, by 'empty and routine time-passing,' and by a growing pattern of alcoholism. Any hope they had was held out for the 'magic rod' of outside help (FDHR 1996, 7).

Most displaced women interviewed by the CDIE team indicated that their husbands and other men were 'double traumatized' by the conflict and its aftermath. On the one hand, many displaced men felt personally responsible for losing the war and abandoning their homes and former lives, their families forced into exile and destitution simply through their inability to win the war. On the other hand, men have felt unable to fulfill their traditional role as leaders of their families. Worse, many were deeply ashamed that women had become more creative at finding alternative sources of income, however paltry, through trading and other ventures. Displaced men tended to shun income-generating donor programming such as microcredit out of this growing sense of shame. NGO and donor officials have indicated that up to three quarters of internally displaced persons participating in income-generating programming have been women. Not surprisingly, these same officials increasingly agreed that programs should concentrate on the problem of displaced men." (Buck September 2000, pp. 6-7)

See also "Socio-Emotional depression among respondents in households in the general population and IDPs living in communal facilities", Save the Children, February 2000 [Internet]

Shelter and non-food items

Donor agencies consider privatisation of collective shelters (2003-2004)

- Privatisation of collective shelters should increased the feeling of responsibility among future IDP owners
- UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council initiated the creation of a working group to investigate the legal and practical viability of privatization

"Some donor agencies perceive the privatization of collective centres as one of the solutions to IDPs problems. The positive side of this approach is that after becoming bona fide owners of centres, IDPs will generate increased feeling of responsibility towards the proper maintenance of their residences. According to official data from the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA), approximately 10% of all collective centres are state-owned, the rest are either privatized by private or judicial persons or are recorded to be on the balance of various public organizations. Although some donor funding for improvement of current living conditions in collective centres is available, it is not sufficient to cover basic needs." (UN OCHA January 2004, p. 13)

Working Group on Privatisation of IDP Collective Centres

"In 2003, UNHCR and NRC initiated the creation of working group to enhance/facilitate the process of privatisation of IDP collective centres through research and advocacy activities in the field.

The main aim of the initiative is to investigate the legal and practical viability of privatising rooms in collective centres in Georgia. NRC tried to find out other countries', in particular, Armenia's experience and learned that in Armenia the 'Law on the legal and socio-economic guarantees for the persons who had been forcibly displaced from the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1988-1992 and have acquired the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia' allows rooms in certain state owned buildings to be privatised for a nominal fee by refugees that acquire Armenian citizenship. NRC has conducted interviews with beneficiaries of the privatisation process in Yerevan which gave a positive impression of the advantages that IDPs and refugees win through ownership of their rooms.

Several meetings of the working group took place attended by NRC, UNHCR, UN OCHA, SDC and UNDP New Approach Support Unit. The Group tried to jointly identify potential drawbacks, obstacles or advantages of privatisation. The group has also investigated the existing cases of privatisation of collective centres in Georgia, in particular, of Hotel Kolkhida in Kutaisi. The initiative has already been discussed with the new Minister of Refugees and Accommodation, Ms. Eter Astemirova who expressed her willingness to support the issue." (UN OCHA January 2004, Information Bulletin)

IDPs in collective centres: substandard living conditions (2001-2002)

- Available data suggest that between 43 and 53 percent of IDPs live in collective centres
- Collective centres often do not meet minimum living standards for a lengthy period of time
- IDPs in collective centres report living space as their greatest difficulty
- Only 40% of IDPs in collective centres have access to an unshared toilet
- 70% of IDPs claim their collective center need major repairs

"Collective centers - There are several types of accommodations for IDPs in Georgia. While official statistics from the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation determine only two categories of shelter (private accommodation and collective centers), relevant reports on the issue provide more detailed classification. According to the available data, IDPs have been accommodated in one of the following types of premises: collective centers (former hotels, hostels, schools, hospitals, etc) owned by state; private housing owned by relatives/friends; rented apartments or houses; purchased apartments or houses; or occupation of abandoned apartment or houses.

According to the MoRA, as of September 2001, there are 125 216 (43%) of IDPs residing in collective centers. The percentage of IDPs residing in collective centers varies and, sometimes, contradictory findings are presented - there are more IDPs in collective centers than private accommodation. NRC reported that in 1995 53% lived in collective centers, while 37% lived with host families, and the remainder indicating other accommodation. IFRC suggests that after displacement government accommodated over 50% of all IDPs in collective centers (which is slightly lower than the MoRA figure of 57%). Thus, there is no reasonably accurate percentage, or trends, of IDPs living in collective centers as opposed to private housing.

While there is information available on communal centers and private accommodation, reports usually do not make difference between the latter one. Private accommodation usually implies both host family and independent residency. More limited data is available on rented accommodation or occupation of abandoned buildings.

Since collective centers were constructed for different purposes, often they do not meet minimum living standards for a lengthy period of time. When asked by IFRC that was the worst problem in respect of housing, IDPs in collective centers identified living space as their greatest difficulty. IFRC reports an average of 8m² per person compared with 18m² for the local population. SC found 9m² per person in collective centers in west Georgia in 2002, compared with an average of 30m² for the general population nationally, 32m² for the general population in Imereti and Samegrelo, and 16m² for the general population in Tbilisi.

As for hygiene, IFRC reported that only 40% of IDPs had access to an unshared toilet compared to almost 70% of the general population; similar figures by SC, in 2002, were 37.6% for IDPs in collective centers compared almost 95% for the general population nationally.

The conditions of collective centers are not good, with those in rural areas considerably worse reports IFRC. In their study, they found few of the centers fully intact, and most had broken windows, leaking roofs and walls in disrepair. In SC survey of collective centers in west Georgia in 2002, on 5% of IDPs said that their collective center was in good condition, with 70.5% mentioning that their collective center need major repairs and fewer (24.1%) mentioning their collective center only needed minor repairs. When asked what major repairs were needed, most IDPs identified windows, the roof, and then the basic structure (plumbing, electricity and walls)." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 22-23)

See also

ICRC, Georgia: frozen in time and space, 12 March 2003 [Internet]

UN OCHA, Study on IDP Rights, June 2003, section 3.6 on shelter (pp. 24-25) [Internet]

More detailed information from the Save the Children's review can be found on the "Assistance Georgia" website [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/>]. See in particular:

"Evaluation of Quality of Housing/Shelter Conditions by Households in the General Population in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo" [Internet]

"Households in the General Population & IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo That Use Wood As the Primary Fuel for Heating" [Internet]

See also "Consolidated report on IDP settlement issue", a report by the UN Association of Georgia (2000) [Internet]

Insufficient information on legal regime deters IDPs from purchasing property (2000-2002)

- Due to the fear of losing their IDP status many either refrain from purchasing property or do so secretly
- IFRC reports that 30% of IDPs living in private accommodations own their own apartment or house
- Local NGOs believe that many of the IDPs that originally purchased housing have sold it, and moved to collective centers

- IFRC reports that IDPs living in private accommodation have approximately 16m2 per person, which is twice as much as IDPs living in collective centers

"Private accommodations [...]"

In the Soviet period, under a system of 'propiska' housing rights were regulated under the 1983 Housing Code, which did not provide right to ownership but rather tenancy. It did allow occupancy on an indefinite basis and allowed for inheritance by members of the household.

If a person was absent from the apartment for the period exceeding six months without a valid reason determined by the law, she or he could lose right to the property with a court order. At this point, the apartment could then be assigned to other person or family. There were eight valid reasons envisaged in the law, such as health condition, military service, employment outside the city/village, but displacement was not considered a valid reason for absence. Although Housing Code was abolished in 1995 and partly replaced by the new Civil Code of Georgia, the current law is not in force on territories of Abkhazeti and South Ossetia where the old Code is applied.

The new housing registration system in Georgia was primarily enacted for voting purposes. Thus, a person can simultaneously own several apartments or houses but is registered at only one location. An IDP may purchase an apartment or houses yet keep his or her registration at the temporary housing provided by the government (e.g., collective center) or offered by friends/relatives (host family or private accommodation). However, it has been reported by different NGO representatives that if IDPs were to purchase housing and property they would be required to register as permanent residents at that location, resulting in them losing their IDPs status and benefits.

IFRC reports that 30% of IDPs living in private accommodations own their own apartment or house, with 47.2% living in accommodations provided rent free from a private individual (31.3%) or the state (15.9%).^[41] But from these findings it is still unclear if the remaining 22.8% are renting their living space. **Thus, little, if any information is available on ownership of houses/apartments by IDPs and the legal ramifications to their repatriation status or benefits.** Local NGOs believe that many of the IDPs that originally purchased housing have sold it, and moved to collective centers, because they have exhausted their savings and their inability to earn a regular income. In general, all data indicate that compared to almost 95% of the general population owning their apartment or house, significantly fewer IDPs own their accommodations.^[42]

IFRC reports that IDPs living in private accommodation have approximately 16m2 per person, which is twice as much as IDPs living in collective centers. Only a slightly higher percentage (45%) of IDPs living in private accommodations have access to an unshared toilet than IDPs living in collective centers (40%).

[Footnote 40: Rapid Assessment Shelter and Social Infrastructure in Guria, Imereti, and Samegrelo Regions of West Georgia, Ben Roohi for Save the Children, July 2000.]

[Footnote 41: In 1996, UNHCR reported that approximately 15% of IDPs from Abkhazeti had purchased houses (Assessment of the Shelter Sector for Refugees and IDPs in the Caucasus). In a study by SC that included a smaller number of IDPs living in private accommodations in 2002, of 111 IDP households living in private accommodations 55% reported owning their current apartment/house.]

[Footnote 42: According to the law, if an IDP purchases property and registers there s/he loses their IDP status, subsequently their cash benefits. NGOs report that although ownership of apartment/house does not imply registration at the given address, many IDPs were provided incorrect information. Due to the fear of losing their IDP status many either refrain from purchasing property or do so secretly (GYLA).] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 24-25)

See also "IDPs purchasing property do not lose their IDP status (2003)" [Internal link]

IDPs leave host families and move to collective centres (1994-2003)

- Some reports indicate an increasing fatigue from host families
- There is no sufficient housing space to relocate IDPs who have to leave host families
- A small percentage of families in the general population are willing to host IDPs
- Host family fatigue increases with the duration of the IDPs stay, especially with non-relatives

"Majority of IDPs continue to demand effective services in support of social and economic activities that would enhance their livelihoods while displaced. The most prominent IDP demands are those for better housing, employment opportunities, or improved health and education services. A strong desire of majority of IDPs to move from the private sector to collective centres has long been obvious, as they either can no longer afford to pay rental or can no longer abuse host's hospitality. At the same time, approximately 70% of collective centres do not meet minimum living standards – roofs are leaking, windows are broken, water supply/sewage systems do not function, there is not access to safe potable water in majority of buildings, there are constant problems with electricity. The situation has been further deteriorated after the Tbilisi earthquake in April 2002." (UN OCHA November 2003, p. 13)

"Host families - IDPs living in private accommodations that do not own their apartment or house may be living with a host family. **(There is little data on the number of IDPs living with host families.)** Most surveys suggest that IDPs moved in with relatives.[43] The length of their stay is totally dependent on the willingness of the host families. Since displacement has, in many cases, gone on for almost 10 years some reports indicate an increasing fatigue by host families. [44] NRC reported that between 1994 and 1996 there was a movement of IDPs from private accommodations to collective centers due to the 'desire to stick together, have better access to humanitarian aid, and not to burden host families.' [45] NGO representatives, some of whom were personally approached by IDPs in search of alternative shelter, further support these results.

Several factors could be triggering departures from host families, such as the length of time, humanitarian assistance for host families being reduced, and the general economic status of the host family worsening. However, with the limited living space available in collective centers, accommodating new residents is difficult. **There is limited to no information on prevalence of this type of relocation and the outcomes.**

If there is a type of host family 'burn-out' factor then programs that would place IDPs with families on a temporary basis would appear to be ineffective. However, some data does suggest that it is not all host families that are facing burn-out. SC has reported some data that suggest two important findings: 1) that a small percentage of families in the general population are willing to host IDPs and 2) that a small percentage of former host families are willing to host IDPs again.

Specifically, a random household survey of 1450 households in the general population in west Georgia (Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo), 32.1% of rural households and 24.4% of urban households said they would be willing to host IDPs. When asked for how long, these rural households said, on average, 7 months and urban households said, on average, 5 months.

In this same household survey, 197 households had hosted IDPs previously (slightly more in rural areas). On average, these households have hosted IDPs for a little over 1 year. And, when asked if they would be willing to host an IDP family again, 62.5% answered yes. Finally, when asked how long they would be willing to host, former host families in rural areas answered, on average, 10 months and former host families in urban areas answered, on average, 8 months.

Thus, at least one-third of the general population in west Georgia is, at least theoretically, willing to host IDPs, which may quickly change if they were actually asked to do so. And, although it is a small number of the total number of host families, at least two-thirds of the 200 former host families would host IDPs again.

To reconcile the two versions of host-family burn-out and willingness to host, the answer may be in the amount of time a family must host IDPs. Even though there is little to no data, we would venture that host family burn-out occurs primarily among host families that accommodate IDPs for more than 2 years, and maybe even greater among host families accommodating non-relatives for more than 2 years. It may very well be these IDPs that have been highlighting host-family fatigue."

[Footnote 43: SC reports, that of the almost 200 former host families that were interviewed in 2000, 85.4% hosted relatives who were IDPs.

[Footnote 44: Specific groups and individuals mass exoduses and displaced persons, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, Mr. Francis Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/53, Profiles in displacement: Georgia, & Assessment of the Shelter Sector for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Caucasus, UNDHA, Complex Emergency Unit, Geneva, Switzerland, 1996 & GYLA).

[Footnote 45: While IDPs living in communal centers are protected from evictions under the Georgian legislation, there is no legal framework addressing the protection of those living with the host families.] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 25-26)

Insufficient firewood to face winter heating needs in South Ossetia (2002)

- International support is needed to distribute firewood to vulnerable groups, such as collective centres residents

"People in the region suffer from particularly harsh winters while gas and electricity supplies are insufficient to provide adequate heating. Thus, a large portion of the population relies on firewood and wood stoves, which has caused large-scale deforestation. Furthermore, local authorities are unable to distribute sufficient quantities of firewood to address the needs of vulnerable segments of the population, such as the single elderly and those residing in collective centres. Those most at risk reside in urban areas and are unable to pay utility bills, purchase firewood on the market, or even to simply cut woods. Despite an appeal launched jointly by ADRA and OCHA to the international community, it is not clear whether any international organisation, as has been the case in past years, will address a firewood shortfall this winter. This is considered to be a seasonal humanitarian priority for some segments of the population." (UN OCHA 30 December 2002)

See also "Firewood distribution to the vulnerable people in South Ossetia", OCHA Georgia, 18 November 2002 [Internet]

IDPs have same access to public utilities as the rest of the population (2002-2003)

- IDPs in collective centres are entitled financial support for utilities
- Due to the short supply of electricity, IDPs have to pay themselves for firewood, candles, and kerosene
- Most of collective centres are not properly connected to the water supply system
- However, IDPs living in collective centers receive almost equal amounts and quality of electricity and water as the general population
- Connection to the telephone network is also missing in collective centres

"In pursuance with the *Law on State Budget* (Chapter 2, Article 13) an IDP residing in a collective centre is entitled to utilities worth GEL 17,2 in Tbilisi and GEL 11,5 in the regions, of which GEL 1,5 is to cover communal utilities, with GEL 2 for paying staff at the centre and the remainder (GEL 13,7 in Tbilisi and GEL 8,0 in the regions) allotted for electricity.

Not unsurprisingly, IDPs in collective centres, for instance in Borjomi, have said that these sums are not enough, which is why they themselves have to make up for the difference in the cost thereof.

The situation is different in other regions (Samegrelo, Imereti, Bolnisi, Rustavi) where electricity is only supplied to IDPs either for a few hours a day or is not supplied at all. This is why IDPs have to pay for firewood, candles, and kerosene. IDPs in Bolnisi have said that the amount allotted by the government for electricity per person is more than they consume: when electricity supply is limited with four or even more people living in a room, families are unable to consume the electricity worth the amount allotted for the purpose. The same is true of Tskaltubo collective centres, which are only supplied with electricity two hours a day. The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, however, pays Electricity Consumer Market GEL 8 per IDP. Veterans are entitled to 250kw/h to be paid for by the government and 50kw/h to be paid for by USAID. Pursuant to the *Law on Social Guarantees to Fighters for Territorial Integrity, Freedom and Independence, the Missing and those that Died of Battle Wounds*, the following family members are entitled to claim partial exemption from electricity payments: parents of any age group; a spouse that has not remarried; under-age children that are either at school or students; other disabled members of the family that were dependent on the deceased and receive a pension following his/her death.

IDPs in this category who reside in private accommodation must submit a certificate issued by the local Commissariat to their respective power supply company to be entitled to the exemption.

The situation with water supply is nothing less than dire. Water supply systems in most of collective centres are either completely out of order or the centres have been disconnected from the water-mains because of delays in payment for the service. IDPs are obliged to carry water from remote areas, and face a severe lack of clean drinking water, which in turn forces them to distil the water before it can be drunk.

Most of the collective centres visited by us are not furnished with telephone lines, which, if available, are often inoperative following delays in payment for the service, which makes calling an ambulance or fire-brigade for the occupants impossible." (UN OCHA June 2003, p. 19)

"Although the provision of social services, such as electricity and water is poor throughout Georgia, most surveys and assessments report that IDPs living in collective centers receive almost equal amounts and quality of electricity and water as the general population. For example, in SC's survey of collective centers in west Georgia in 2002, IDPs reported, on average, 7 hours a day of electricity during the winter months. In a nationwide survey by SC in 2002, the general population reported, on average, 9 hours of electricity a day in the winter months. As for potable water, in SC's study, when asked if accessing water was easy or difficult, 60.4% of IDPs in collective center reported that accessing water was easy compared to 76.6% of the general population. As for the amount of time water is available, IDPs reported, on average, 10 hours per day compared to 16 for the general population. When asked to evaluate the quality of the water, 79.1% of IDPs living in collective centers stated average to very good, compared to 82.1% of the general population with a similar evaluation." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 6-7)

IDP collective centres hit by earthquake in Tbilisi (2002-2003)

- An earthquake in April 2002 damaged thousands of buildings in Tbilisi, including some 50 IDP collective centres
- A donation by Norway in 2003 will allow the rehabilitation of 20 buildings housing IDPs in 2003

"An earthquake measuring 4.8 on the Richer scale and MSK 6-7 intensity occurred in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, on Thursday 25 April 2002. Thousands of buildings, mainly in the older part of the city were seriously damaged or completely destroyed. Among the damaged and destroyed buildings were some of the collective centres where many internally displaced people live.

There are five IDP collective centres that are damaged beyond repair, and 14 more are significantly damaged. Some relief and financial assistance has been received from the German, Turkish, Russia and Israeli governments." (UNICEF 29 May 2002)

"Following a special donation of US\$560,000 from the Norwegian Government, UNHCR announces that, in close partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the organization will soon begin rehabilitating earthquake damaged IDP collective centres in Tbilisi.

In April 2002, a strong earthquake seriously damaged many official and private buildings in Tbilisi. The emergency assistance received by the government for the rehabilitation of official buildings was used on a priority basis for education institutions. However, numerous other governmental buildings were damaged including some 50 collective centres where IDPs have been living for many years. The IDPs housed in these collective centres lack resources to rehabilitate the facilities. For many months the local offices of UNHCR and NRC have been looking for additional funding as they were convinced following the specific plea of the Minister Valery Vashakidze (former Minister for Refugees and Accommodation) that the IDPs housed in the damaged collective centres have been living in unsafe conditions. The Government of Norway answered positively to the request.

This project will benefit 3,000 persons living in collective centers consisting of different buildings such as former schools, dormitories, hospitals, factories, train stations and government office buildings. The list of collective centers targeted for the rehabilitation has been prioritized and identified in cooperation with the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation. In total, 17 collective centre sites, comprised of 20 buildings, will be rehabilitated. This project is scheduled to start immediately with the objective to terminate by the end of the year.

In addition, on 26 August, the Parliament of Georgia ratified Georgian-German financial agreement between the governments of Georgia and Germany. Under the agreement, the German government will allocate Euro 26 million, one part of which is a long-term credit and the other is a grant. A part of the financial assistance will be used for reconstruction of various earthquake-affected buildings in Tbilisi." (UN OCHA September 2003, pp. 6-7)

Precarious housing conditions of the displaced (2000)

- Collective centres consist mainly of former hotels, sanatoriums and hospitals
- Only a small portion of the displaced persons have the financial means to establish themselves independently
- There have been reports of eviction of internally displaced persons from host families
- Displaced are fearful that moving to alternative, more comfortable accommodation would undermine their ultimate aim of return
- This apprehension could in part be attributed to outside influence

"As is often the case, in the initial period of displacement, large numbers of displaced people found emergency shelter in public buildings such as schools. Seven to nine years on, however, approximately 40 per cent of the displaced, numbering some 112,000 persons, remain in collective centres (defined as residences accommodating 10 or more internally displaced persons). Following efforts undertaken several

years ago to move the displaced out of schools, with a view both to providing more suitable accommodation and to ending the disruption this created for the educational system, the collective centres in which the internally displaced currently reside consist mostly of former hotels, sanatoriums and hospitals. The Representative was informed of one case of 100 families living in a former factory. The mission visited collective centres in Tshkinvali (South Ossetia) and in Tskhaltubo and Ingiri, where internally displaced persons have been living for some seven to nine years.

Sixty per cent of internally displaced persons live in private accommodation. Though some internally displaced persons have the financial means to establish themselves independently, most of those in private accommodation are staying with host families, who frequently are relatives or former acquaintances. The continued hospitality of host families is noteworthy, especially given the difficult economic conditions facing the population of Georgia as a whole. This generosity, however, is beginning to show signs of strain: reportedly, the eviction of internally displaced persons from host families is occurring. This suggests the need to ensure that host families receive support in shouldering the added burden of having taken internally displaced persons into their homes, several years ago now.

Although the mission did not visit internally displaced persons residing in private accommodation, where of course the conditions would vary depending on the situation of the host family, the prevailing view is that they are in a better situation than those in collective centres, where conditions are considered to be much worse. A survey comparing the shelter conditions of internally displaced persons in private accommodation versus those in collective centres was being undertaken in 2000.

A number of problems were common to the various collective centres visited by the mission. These problems largely stem from the fact that the buildings serving as collective centres were never designed for communal living. Even in hotels or sanatoriums, the rooms where entire families now live were intended for the temporary stay of one or two people. Conditions are cramped and overcrowded; on average, the general population has almost five times more living space than internally displaced persons living in collective centres. In hospitals, internally displaced families are crowded into empty rooms, surrounded by sick people in adjacent rooms.

In terms of structural conditions, a 1999 survey of 757 collective centres throughout Georgia, except Abkhazia and South Ossetia, classified approximately half of the buildings as being in very poor or poor condition and a third as being in need of minor repair. Roofing, sewerage and glazing were determined as being in urgent need of repair in order to winterize the shelters and contain disease. Electrical systems also were highlighted as a priority for repair. Water systems, not designed with a capacity for the number of people now using them, have been strained and also require repair. Former hotels housing the displaced have largely been gutted of their facilities and furniture.

Conditions in rural areas were reported to be even worse than in the towns and cities. The Representative was told of one case of 100 families living in a former gravel factory in very dusty conditions and with no windows. Furthermore, it was noted that this example was illustrative of conditions in outlying regions, to which, apparently, little attention and assistance had been devoted.

As to how to address these conditions, internally displaced persons often pointed out to the Representative that they would be prepared to undertake the repair work themselves, if only they could be provided with the material and tools required. Some assistance had begun to be provided to improve basic services. For instance, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) had a programme to improve sanitary facilities, but significant work still needs to be done for the collective centres to approach adequate shelter conditions.

Given these inadequate conditions, the question inevitably arises of relocating the displaced to alternative, more appropriate, accommodation. The reaction of internally displaced persons from Abkhazia to this proposition was most revealing. Consistently, they replied without hesitation that they would prefer to remain where they were, until such time as they could return home. It thus became apparent that the displaced were fearful that moving to alternative, more comfortable accommodation would somehow

undermine their ultimate aim of return. This apprehension is deep-seated, apparently having emerged as a problem early into the displacement crisis, when efforts were being undertaken to move internally displaced persons out of local schools with a view both to improving their shelter conditions and enabling educational services to resume. For the displaced, who held fast to the hope of returning within a matter of days or weeks, the move to alternative accommodation gave a certain permanence to their situation that proved very difficult to accept.

To be sure, as indicated by the comments of the displaced in collective centres, there is clear interest in effecting improvements to their current living conditions. Yet, an immense psychological barrier clearly stands in the way of doing so by means of relocation to alternative accommodation. It was suggested by some observers that this apprehension could in part be attributed to outside influence, coming from representatives of political groups, themselves displaced, who are bent on the return of the displaced and on the regaining of territory over which control was lost during the conflict. Indeed, this could help explain the consistency of the response among various groups of displaced persons, and the categorical manner in which it was so quickly offered. The pressure that these political forces exert extends also to the central Government, having an influence on its policies for responding to the plight of the displaced. (UNCHR 25 January 2001, paras. 25-33)

**See also "Tbilisi struggles to house displaced Georgians". Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 24 July 2001 [Internet]*

Shelter needs in South Ossetia: a prerequisite for return (2000-2001)

- More than 1,000 shelters for returnees have been repaired by UNHCR since 1997
- UNHCR and NGOs have recently reduced their programmes due to the low level of return

"In addition to protection and physical security, repair and restitution of property is another prerequisite for return. Support for the repair or reconstruction of war-damaged shelter is the other main component of the UNHCR programme in the region. More than a thousand shelters for returning refugees and internally displaced persons as well as other vulnerable families, have been repaired or rehabilitated since 1997." (UNCHR 25 January 2001, para. 98)

"UNHCR and NRC have scaled back their shelter rehabilitation programs due to the low level of return. It is urgent to identify an organization whose mandate and mission allow it to focus on the rehabilitation of the shelter and accommodation of vulnerable segments of the community regardless of their status. In addition, there are several priority communal sites, such as the Main Republican Hospital and the Elderly Home, which require urgent renovation." (UN OCHA 15 March 2001)

Collective shelters in western Georgia need major repairs (2000)

- More than 85 percent of such people live in "collective" or public housing provided by the Georgian government
- Survey conducted by Save the Children in 2000 shows that the general population has on average almost 5 times more living space than the displaced living in collective centres

"While the Georgian conflicts themselves were relatively short in duration, the misery of internally displaced women and their families has only grown in the decade since the fighting largely ceased. Much of the distress can be attributed to the deteriorating living conditions endured by the vast majority of displaced persons. Today, more than 85 percent of such people live in 'collective' or public housing provided by the

Georgian government, according to UNDP[*]. These collective centers consist of Soviet-era hotels, hospitals, schools, factories, and other buildings roughly converted into 'temporary' living centers.

Though conditions vary, most of the 3,600 collective centers throughout the country can barely be considered adequate housing. A 1995 Norwegian Refugee Council fact-finding mission pointed to the overcrowded nature of the centers, averaging 3.2 people per room; similarly, collective centers visited by the CDIE team averaged four persons to a room. Cooking spaces and toilets are usually shared, and sanitary conditions are often dismal. In one center visited by the CDIE team—a converted steel and cement storage facility near the city of Zugdidi—the plumbing system had broken down completely, causing the basement to be filled with open sewage. As a result, 82 families were crammed into windowless rooms on the two top floors desperate to avoid the stench. Unsurprisingly, environmentally based disease rates among the internally displaced have increased dramatically through the years, particularly cases of tuberculosis and hepatitis (Boutroue and Jones 1997, 15; NRC 1995; UNDP 1998, 18).

Gender roles were clearly delineated in prewar Georgian society; whereas men were traditional heads of the family, making the critical decisions involving family and livelihood matters, women ran the households. Put simply, women were in charge of maintaining family order, health, and welfare, with particular attention to their children. Since moving into collective centers, lack of space, decrepit living arrangements, growing rates of poverty have all made for particularly stressful times for displaced women. A 1997 survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council concluded that 51 percent of the IDP households consistently lacked adequate clothing, and 70 percent were without enough food. (UNDP 1998)*

[Footnote*: Immediately following the conflict, most internally displaced peoples lived in private housing, usually with 'host' families consisting of family members or friends. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimated that 84 percent of such people lived with host families and in private housing between 1991 and 1994. After 1995, however, many IDP families moved into public housing as the generosity of their host families began to wane and the likelihood of repatriation shrank to very low levels. In addition, almost all 'second-wave' Abkhazian internally displaced persons were housed in public shelters in 1998 (MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield 1996; Norwegian Refugee Council 1995).] (Buck September 2000, pp. 5-6)

More detailed information from the GAI review can be found on the "Assistance Georgia" website [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge>]. See in particular:

"Evaluation of Quality of Housing/Shelter Conditions by Households in the General Population in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo" [Internet]

"Households in the General Population & IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo That Use Wood As the Primary Fuel for Heating" [Internet]

See also "Consolidated report on IDP settlement issue", a report by the UN Association of Georgia (2000) [Internet]

The situation of unaccompanied children and elderly IDPs (1999)

- Orphan IDPs often taken care of by relatives
- Old people are attended in communal IDP shelters

"Children without persons accompanying - there are orphan children but they have persons to take care of them. Grand parents or relatives are taking care of them. The refugees socium has found mechanisms of additional protection. This is visible especially in respect of children. There are no vagrants among refugee children almost. No cases of giving away children for adoption, all the children are living with their relations and neighbors.

The same could be said about old people. They are under protection at the centers of mass living of refugees. They are in a very poor situation being aided by strangers for such a long period of time.
"(The Horizonti Foundation, 29 January 1999, sect.9)

Food

Indicators show lower nutritional status of IDPs (1999-2002)

- There has been no generalizable nutritional survey of IDP children
- Available nutritional data suggest that malnutrition is higher among displaced population

"The nutritional status of children under 5 years of age is used as an indicator of nutritional problems in a population since they are undergoing rapid growth and tend to be the first affected by malnutrition.

Two indicators of malnutrition are generally used: acute and chronic. Acute malnutrition is general referred to as wasting, and chronic malnutrition is referred to as stunting.

A large-scale nutritional survey was conducted of children living in the general population in six regions of Georgia in 2000/2001 in response to the drought [Nutritional status of children less than 5 years of age in six drought-affected regions of Georgia: 2002-2001, National Center for Disease Control and Save the Children, 2002]. *However, to date, there has been no systematic, generalizable nutritional survey of IDP children.*

The only nutritional data available on IDP children is a small study conducted in 1999 by IFRC. This study reported a higher rate of acute malnutrition among IDP children (2.6%) than children from the general population (0.7%). The large-scale survey found 1% of children in the general population acutely malnourished. According to the World Health Organization, the international standard for low acute malnutrition is 5% or less.

Also, this study reported a higher rate of chronic malnutrition among IDP children (18.1%) than children from the general population (12.1%). The large-scale survey found 10% of children in the general population chronically malnourished. According to the World Health Organization, the international standard for low acute malnutrition is 20% or less.

As for adults, nutritional status is indicated by a body mass index (BMI). The 1999 IRRC study, using a BMI, found that 3% of adult IDPs and 4% of adults from the general population were underweight. Interestingly, 43% of adult IDPs and 34% of adults in the general population were overweight." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 35)

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

Issue of language of education in Abkhazia: a decisive factor on return (2000-2004)

- Prohibition on instruction in Georgian in elementary education deters durable return of displaced ethnic Georgians
- Abkhaz authorities have shown readiness to reach compromise on the use of the Georgian language in Gali district schools
- Abkhaz and Georgian sides discussed language of instructions in schools in the Gali district (November 2002)
- UN and OSCE continued to report problems with the right of returnees to education in their own language in 2003
- The government of Georgia claims that the Abkhaz "authorities" have closed 122 Georgian schools in Abkhazia since 1992

"Another factor influencing the seasonal nature of return is the issue of education, in particular the language of instruction. According to the curriculum developed by the de facto Abkhaz 'Ministry of Education', elementary education, from grades one to five, is provided only in Russian. This is true even in what are designated as Georgian language (as opposed to Russian or mixed Russian/Georgian) schools. Though instruction is provided in the Georgian language from grade six onwards, the prohibition on instruction in Georgian in elementary education was pointed out as being a powerful deterrent to durable return of displaced ethnic Georgians as it threatens to impede the possibility for higher education elsewhere in Georgia. Though some language and cultural instruction is provided on the margins of the core material, Georgian history reportedly is not taught at all.

Principle 23 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement affirms that the authorities concerned should ensure that internally displaced persons receive education which respects their cultural identity, language and religion. Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes, in article 29.1 (c), that a child's education shall be directed, inter alia, to the development of 'his or her own cultural identity, language and values'. General reference was made to the content of these provisions when the Representative raised the issue of language of education policy with the de facto 'President' of Abkhazia. The Secretary-General subsequently reported to the Security Council that there have been 'signs that the Abkhaz authorities are taking a more pragmatic and flexible view on the use of the Georgian language in Gali district schools', pointing out that '[s]uch issues, relating to the education of children, are significant for the decision-making by displaced families considering a return to their former homes'." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, para. 80)

"The ethnic Georgian population in the Gali district continued to be denied the right to education in its native tongue, although elective courses in the Georgian language have recently been initiated in one of the Gali schools. The heads of the Education Departments of the two sides met on 11 March and 8 April to overcome the current obstacles. They agreed on a follow-up meeting, scheduled for 22 April for further discussions on this matter." (UN SC 19 April 2002, para. 27)

"On the ground, the Mission continued its efforts to promote dialogue between the sides within the framework of the Coordinating Council. On 14 November, Working Group III of the Council (on socio-

economic issues) met in Sukhumi under the chairmanship of the United Nations Development Programme resident representative, with the assistance of the Georgian-Abkhaz Bilateral Coordination Commission. The sides discussed the reinforcement of the Inguri riverbanks, restoration and protection of Abkhaz cultural monuments and the issue of the language of instruction in schools in the Gali district." (UNSC 13 January 2003, para. 6)

On visit to Georgia on 25-27 March 2003, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Rolf Ekéus "raised the issue of language of instruction in schools in the Gali district and discussed the situation of persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities in the region." (UN SC 9 April 2003, para. 6)

"The Human Rights Office [...] noted that many children in the Gali district still do not have the right to education in their mother tongue." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 27)

The issue of teaching in native language in the Gali district schools has also been discussed by the working group III of the Coordinating Council in June 2002. See "Protocol of the meeting – Working Group III meeting held on 25 June 2002 in Tbilisi" [Internet]

"In spite of numerous statements made by the Abkhazian side that they are committed to a peaceful solution of the conflict and recognize the right of refugees and displaced persons to return, it flagrantly violates the human rights of even the small number of those who have returned to Abkhazia. The most painful blow for this population was the decision to ban the teaching of the Georgian language, literature and history.

In 1992/93 there were in Abkhazia 122 Georgian, 49 Abkhazian, 49 Armenian, 24 Russian and 62 mixed schools with 82,000 pupils, among them 35,000 Georgians.

In 1993 in the Gali region there were 58 Georgian schools, with 14,000 pupils and 1,800 qualified teachers. Last year there were 34 schools working with 4,514 pupils and 288 of them received Georgian certificates.

Today officially there is no single Georgian school. As to the mentioned 34 Georgian schools in the Gali district, they are working in clandestine circumstances and pupils and teachers are risking their lives every day." (UN CHR 21 October 1997)

Displaced children face difficult conditions at schools (2000-2003)

- IDP children are entitled to free education at state secondary schools and to certain benefits when it comes to higher education
- Rate of illiteracy has increased among IDP children, due the fact that vulnerable displaced families cannot afford schooling costs (books, clothing)
- In November 2000, enrollment figures at all levels of education were similar for IDPs and the local population, according to IFRC field survey
- However, fewer IDPs in collective centres are enrolled in higher educational institutions
- School enrollment of displaced children is high throughout the country but a high number of them actually do not visit schools, especially in the Zugdidi area
- Displaced children have been exempted from paying school fees but clothing and educational materials remain an obstacle to many
- The only substantial assistance has been provided to the Tskhinvali region where UNHCR has been supporting the rehabilitation of schools and the distribution of text books

- Regions have different approaches, ranging from to the total integration of the displaced children into the regular system to the creation of a separate education system
- Experience in Zugdidi, where most displaced children visit separate schools run by displaced teachers, shows increasing isolation of the displaced children

"Contrary to widespread belief, enrolment figures at all three levels of education (kindergarten, primary/secondary and higher) are similar for IDPs and the local population. Nor is there much evidence of segregation. Most children attend mixed schools (of IDPs and locals) and mixed classes within schools. Attendance also is reported as fairly regular (in the spring and summer months; it may be worse in the winter). Surprisingly, also, almost as many IDPs as locals continue their studies from the age of 18 years, most of them at university." (IFRC November 2000, p. 8)

"IFRC reports that between one fifth and one third of the IDPs, as well as the local population, have a university degree. About one third of the relevant age-group (18-24 years of age) is continuing their studies, most of them at university or technical college. Slightly fewer IDPs in collective centers were enrolled at this level than in the other two groups due to lack of finances.

Then again, it is well known, that in Georgia enrollment in higher educational institutions (e.g., universities or institutes) is competitive and thus very often 'connections' accompanied by "bribes" are the process to get admission. **IDPs, most likely, are at a disadvantage when it comes to having 'connections' and being able to offer 'bribes'**" (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 7)

"From general figures the most interesting is that of enrollment: from 1 to 3 percent of children do not belong to any school at all. They usually assist their parents in trade by selling cigarettes or roasted sunflower seeds. The only fact that most of IDP children are enrolled in primary and/or secondary education does not mean that they actually have access to them. Number of absentees grows with time reaching in some regions (especially Zugdidi region). This problem is, basically, caused by the fact of impossibility by IDP parents to provide educational materials and decent clothing for their children who are otherwise shy to attend classes. Some children do not go to school due to missed years.

In past, government as well as some international organizations (e.g. UNICEF) has provided assistance in distributing school materials but these programs have been cancelled now. Furthermore, old books could not be used as official program requirement has been changing recently almost every year. The only assistance that IDPs receive is that government has freed them from any fee related to education in schools. In Ajara IDP students receive 50% discount in private universities as well.

[...]

As to the education process itself, it should be noticed that no special programs are designed for IDP children and they follow the program approved by the Ministry of education of Georgia. Only several children in Gori region study at private school and receive alternative education. IDP students attend same universities as others. Even affiliations transferred from conflict zones (from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region) do educate not only IDPs but also non-IDP youth.

Education process of IDP children in school is either together with locals or separately. Different regions have different approaches in this direction from having no separate school (in Gori region) through allowing only several (one in Ajara and just few in Imereti serving 10-12% of IDP children) to having mostly separate education system (in Samegrelo).

Our study has indicated that most problems with integration of IDP children exist in Samegrelo, which employs separate school system for them. While tension and embarrassment is less in Imereti and almost not existent in Ajara and Shida Kartli. The latter region has introduced special post in the Department of Education of the region dealing with special education methodology used with regards to IDP children.

In Zugdidi, where most IDP children study at separate schools, faculties consist of IDP teachers. This increases isolation and aggravates psychological environment in schools - teachers extrapolate their attitudes, feelings and problems onto children who bear gigantic pressure coming from homes, schools and local population. Frequently children are exposed to harassment from non-IDP population including local children. This problem is most expressed, again, in Samegrelo and has been overcome in other regions.

Managing free time of children stays as acute problem despite several projects implemented by international and non-governmental organizations.

[...]

Despite this substantial list of activities most of IDP children are ostracized from participation in them simply because of lack of funding. Much more needs to be done. The most vulnerable group still is that of IDP children who are frequently placed under pressure coming from their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Name 'IDP' has become a shameful label for them." (UNA 2000)

See also "Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia", section 2 on Education (pp. 10-14), report by the Georgian Young Lawyer Association [Internal link]

ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

Many barriers to the agricultural sustainability of the displaced population (2000-2003)

- IDPs, especially those living in collective centres, have little access to land to produce their own food
- There is also a lack productive inputs, such as equipment and livestock
- The needs are more acute for IDPs in collective centres located in urban areas
- Under Georgian Law, an internally displaced person is not entitled to own land without losing the status of internally displaced person and the benefits that it entails
- 1996 Law on Internally Displaced Persons provides for the allocation of land plots to the displaced for temporary use
- Internally displaced persons have pointed to problems of corruption

"With the collapse of the economy and the high rate of unemployment since independence, most households in Georgia rely on subsistence agriculture for cash income as well as food security. Most surveys find the IDPs, especially those living in collective centers, have little access to land in which to produce food, or potentially, a surplus to sell. In general, IDPs living in collective centers are 3½ times less likely to have access to land than the local population, and 2 times less than IDPs living in private accommodations. And, for the few IDPs that report having access to land, it is generally quite small; approximately 400m² on average reported by IFRC, which is 3 times less than the amount of land used by IDPs living in private accommodations and 6 times less than the local residents. Thus, **access to land is one of the primary disparities between IDPs and the general population.** However, this may not be as relevant for IDPs living in private accommodations by themselves or with host families. In addition, little is known about the proportion of IDPs who seek access to land but are unsuccessful, and for those who were successful, how it was accomplished.

As for IDPs living in collective centers in urban areas, urban agriculture is not a new phenomena and in transitional economies is quite prominent. Although the number is not known, some IDPs classified as living in urban areas actually live in peri-urban areas that potentially available land. Thus, access to small plots of land is an important strategy for basic household food security and income generation.

Although land is one of the most important inputs in subsistence household agriculture other productive inputs are also needed to produce food and a surplus, such as equipment and livestock. The IFRC and SC's surveys found that IDPs living in collective centers were 2 times less likely to own poultry than IDPs living in private accommodations and 4 times less likely to own poultry than local residents. A similar gap was found for the ownership of livestock, especially pigs and cows. IFRC and SC's surveys found that IDPs living in collective centers were 2 times less likely to own pigs than IDPs living in private accommodations, and 3 times less likely to own pigs than the local residents. As for another important livestock, IDPs were 3 times less likely to own cows than IDPs living in private accommodations, and 5 times less likely to own cows than the local residents.

As for equipment, cars can transport supplies to the field and products to market, tractors can prepare land, and sprayers can protect produce in the field. IDPs living in collective centers are 2 times less likely to own a car than IDPs living in private accommodations and 6 times less likely than local residents. For tractors

and sprayers, local residents are 2 times more likely to own them than IDPs living in collective centers or private accommodations. Thus, most studies report that **IDPs have substantially fewer productive assets than the general population**. Again, this situation applies mostly to IDPs living in collective centers, and especially to those living in urban areas." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 5-6)

"As regards to exercising IDP economic rights, it is worth noting that although the basic law regulating IDP rights exempts IDPs from taxes on agricultural lands for temporary use, IDPs fail to enjoy the right, as the exemption provided by the law on the displaced is not envisaged by the Georgian Tax Code. Therefore, it is recommended to amend the Tax Code so as to unambiguously inform IDPs and the relevant structures on the above-mentioned exemption." (UN OCHA September 2003, p. 3)

The International Federation of the Red Cross conducted a survey of the IDP population in 1999. IFRC published this survey in November 1999 under the title "Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey".

Save the Children conducted a survey on an annual basis from 2000 to 2002. This survey was designed to provide comparable data of IDPs living in collective centres and local households in the regions of Samegrelo and Imereti, Western Georgia.

"Access to land is the primary determinant of this discrepancy. The World Bank, in a report on poverty and income distribution in Georgia, singled out land ownership as the most important factor affecting poverty in rural areas, noting that 'landless households have a higher poverty risk and depth of poverty than households who own more than one hectare'. Under Georgian law, however, an internally displaced person is not entitled to own land without registering as a permanent resident in the place of refuge and potentially (the law is not clear on this) losing the status of internally displaced person and the benefits that this entails. Internally displaced persons reportedly fear that they would then lose their right to return. This fear is of course unfounded, for as citizens they would retain their right to freedom of movement and choice of residence. It was suggested that this mistaken assumption may have been cultivated by elements of the political leadership that are bent on return and concerned that ties to the land will literally ground the displaced in their present location and diminish their interest in return. For these reasons, those internally displaced persons who have the means to purchase land or residential property reportedly tend to do so secretly, outside of the normal legal processes.

As many displaced nonetheless still lack the financial means to purchase land, they should at least be given the opportunity to lease or otherwise have access to plots of land. According to the Law on Internally Displaced Persons, local authorities are obliged to provide internally displaced persons with plots of land for temporary use. Some regional authorities affirmed that they had indeed provided displaced persons with the possibility of using plots of land on a temporary basis. However, internally displaced persons have pointed to problems of corruption, noting that if they did not pay 'extra expenses' when requesting plots of land, they either did not receive it or received land of such poor quality and so far from their accommodation that it would not be worthwhile to use it." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 36-37)

"According to Law on IDPs, IDPs should be provided with plots of land and they should have the right of temporary users in these plots. This is obligation of local authorities. During questioning cases have been discovered when IDPs directly pointed on corruption: while requesting the plot of land if they did not pay "extra expenses" they either did not receive land (because limited land fund), or received it but of such a poor quality and so far from places of their settlement, that there was no sense in using the land. Besides the general responsibility of providing lands to IDPs, there is no program designed for assistance during cultivation of land. While it is impossible to cultivate the land without necessary equipment." (GYLA 1999, pp. 19-20)

See also

Summary of baseline data for selected target communities in three regions of West Georgia: Imereti, Guria and Samegrelo, UMCOR, CAP Agricultural Assessment Team, Kutaisi, 31 May 2000 [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/common/categories/agreculture/acpsurvey.pdf>]

Rapid Appraisal of Agriculture in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo Regions of West Georgia, Save the Children, July 2000 [Internet]

Household and Small Commercial Agriculture in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo as of January 2000, Save the Children, 17 August 2000 [Internet]

Reports from the Georgia Assistance Initiative (Save the Children Survey in western Georgia, February 2000):

- *Agriculture Production in 1999 by Households in the General Population and IDPs living in Communal Centres in West Georgia [Internet]*
- *Amount of Potatoes Grown by Urban and Rural Households in the General Population by District in Samegrelo, Imereti and Guria [Internet]*
- *Ownership of Poultry by Households in the General Population and IDPs living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]*
- *Ownership of Cows by Households in the General Population and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet]*
- *Amount of Land Used by Households in the General Population and IDPs living in Communal Facilities by District, in Guria, Imereti and Samegrelo [Internet] and [Internet]*
- *Percentage of Households in the General Population and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities That do not have Land to Produce Food [Internet]*

Poor economic situation in South Ossetia hampers large-scale return of the displaced (2000-2002)

- The situation of the displaced, returnees and the local population is extremely difficult
- Returnees stay only in their houses during the cultivating season and go back to Georgia proper during the winter months
- Displaced persons of working age remain in Georgia proper or North Ossetia, where economic and employment opportunities are comparatively better
- There is a need to support the general economic development of the region

"Though the number of returns to South Ossetia is [...] much greater than to Georgia proper, it must be said that, for many returnees to South Ossetia, return is only semi-permanent. As an indication of the semi-permanent nature of return, it was estimated that about 50 per cent of rehabilitated houses in the region are unoccupied for a significant part of the year, usually during the winter months outside of the cultivating season and when the weather is warmer in other parts of Georgia. The poor economic situation in the region relative to that in Georgia proper and North Ossetia is the primary factor for this seasonal population movement. In general, and certainly with respect to those who remain permanently, most of the returnees coming from outside of South Ossetia are pensioners and elderly persons, whereas displaced persons of working age remain in Georgia proper or North Ossetia, where economic and employment opportunities, though still limited, are comparatively better (it was suggested that the living standard in South Ossetia is

about half of what it is elsewhere in Georgia). UNHCR has observed that more sustainable return has occurred since it began providing returnees with agricultural inputs.

There is also a need to support the general economic development of the region. Though Tskhinvali was said to have previously been an industrial centre, there was little evidence of this as a result of the destruction of infrastructure and industry that had resulted from the war. To be sure, reconstruction has begun: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for instance, noted that it had invested over 2 million dollars in development projects over the past two years, especially in infrastructure. However, UNDP-funded development projects in the region were scheduled to end and there is no expectation of further funding in the future. Sustained reconstruction and development assistance is required. The delegation's chance encounter with a delegation of parliamentarians and business leaders from a donor country, who had come to dialogue with the authorities on the issue of development investment in the region, was a hopeful sign." (UNCHR 25 January 2001, paras. 102-103)

Access to income generating activities: higher unemployment among IDPs (2000-2002)

- Some studies approximately 80% to 90% of IDPs receiving a government benefit compared to 40% to 50% of the general population.
- But IDPs have a lower monthly household income, on average, than the general population
- There is little difference in the proportion of IDPs living in collective living in collective centers and general households that operate a business
- IDP household businesses generally involve petty trade whereas businesses of households in the general population involve sells of agricultural production
- There is a need to help IDPs to mobilize their own capacities to become self-sufficient

"Unemployment is a major problem throughout Georgia. However, most studies show that **the rate of unemployment is greater among IDPs** than the general population; ranging from rate of 40% of unemployment among IDPs living in collective centers vs. 20% for the general population. Some studies show, however, the difference in the rate of unemployment between the general population and IDPs decreases for those IDPs living in private accommodations, especially those living by themselves. Employment in Georgia is basically either through the public sector (although many of these jobs may be a case of 'underemployment' and represent the 'working poor') or the private sector, comprised mainly of small individual or household enterprises in the informal economy. Employment of IDPs, whether living in collective centers or not, in the public sector is lower than the general population simply because these positions were held by the general population prior to displacement. Moreover, over the last five years employment in the public sector has been declining, which would not allow for many IDPs to be hired.

As for the private sector, employment is based on an individual or household having some basic resources (land, animals, building) to exploit for income generation. Most surveys indicate that IDPs in collective centers have few resources, whereas IDPs in private accommodations may have some of these resources, which increase their opportunities for employment, compared to the general population.

Do you mean that unemployment in private accommodation for IDPs is very close to resident population or is it still significant but less than for collective centers? Do we think it is still a problem for private accommodation IDPs (or we don't know)? The operational difference is between focusing on collective centers because of a characteristics of the population there or of the collective centers themselves vs. obstacles to IDPs employment in general.

Government transfers, although small and paid sporadically, are one source of needed cash income. IDPs receive an 'entitlement' based on their IDP status, as well as the old-age pension, veterans, multi-child, and

other government benefits such as subsidized electricity. Studies show approximately 80% to 90% of IDPs receiving a government benefit compared to 40% to 50% of the general population.

Thus, IDPs are at more likely than the general population to receive government benefits. IDPs receive an entitlement based on their political and not economic status. In addition to this entitlement and other government benefits, IDPs receive a disproportionate amount of the humanitarian aid. Using an expenditure (consumption) based income, IFRC reported an average monthly income in 1999 of 114 GEL for IDPs living in collective centers, 146 GEL for IDPs living in private accommodations, and 152 GEL of the local population. Using an income-based approach, SC reported, in the winter of 2002, a median monthly household income in 2002 of 111 GEL for IDPs living in collective centers in west Georgia and 171 GEL for the local population nationwide. Thus, whether using an expenditure (consumption) or income-source based method, IDPs have a lower monthly household income, on average, than the general population, especially IDPs living in collective centers. For IDPs living in private accommodations the income gap with the general population is much less.

Another economic survival strategy throughout Georgia is to operate a household business. One of the few studies to do so is SC's. In their survey of IDPs living in collective centers, and another one of the general population in west Georgia in February 2002, 14.1% of IDPs living in collective centers operated a household business increasing slightly to 16.5% of the general population. This indicates that there may be little difference in the proportion of IDPs living in collective centers and general households that operate a business. The basic difference between them is the type of household business; IDP household businesses generally involve petty trade whereas businesses of households in the general population involve sells of household agricultural production." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 5-6)

"Basic and urgent humanitarian needs still exist among some IDPs for food, health care and shelter. The allowance is sufficient to purchase 500g of bread daily, but it does not cover expenses for adequate caloric intake, let alone other household, hygiene and health needs. However, some IDPs with the physical or resource potential to meet their household needs are unable to do so because they cannot utilize this potential. These people require not only a response to their immediate needs, but also assistance to mobilize their own capacities to become self-sufficient. Such IDPs would also benefit from development activities aimed at improving their capacity to withstand risks (such as losing a job or poor harvests), prevent decapitalization, and falling into destitution again, requiring assistance to meet their basic needs." (UN OCHA 13 February 2003)

The International Federation of the Red Cross conducted a survey of the IDP population in 1999. IFRC published this survey in November 1999 under the title "Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey".

Save the Children conducted a survey on an annual basis from 2000 to 2002. This survey was designed to provide comparable data of IDPs living in collective centres and local households in the regions of Samegrelo and Imereti, Western Georgia. Data collected in 2000 for this survey are available on Assistance Georgia, the website of the humanitarian community in Georgia [Internet]:

- *The Amount of Monthly and Yearly Transfers (in USD) to Households in the General Population and IDPs Living in Communal Facilities in Samegrelo, Imereti and Guria, February 2000 [Internet]*
- *Worst Districts in Western Georgia for Micro & Small Business, February 2000 [Internet]*
- *Comparison of The Structure of Monthly Income for Households in the General Population and IDP Families Living in Communal Facilities in Imereti and Samegrelo, February 2000 [Internet]*

- *The Structure of Monthly Income for IDP Families Living in Communal Facilities in Imereti and Samegrelo in January 2000, February 2000 [Internet]*

See also "Cumulative Report on IDP employment issue", UN Association of Georgia, 2000 [Internet]

See also a report from the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, "Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia", 1999 [Internal link]

See also World Bank Report, "Georgia: Poverty Update", 10 January 2002 [Internet]

Employment opportunities of the displaced are constrained by the difficult economic situation (2000)

- Internally displaced could benefit from training on new employment practices in the market economy
- Other useful programmes include vocational training, support to small business development and micro-credit
- Young women sometime turn to prostitution to earn sufficient income to move out of the collective centres

"In addition to limited access to land and ownership of livestock, the IFRC survey also found that local households were five times more likely than internally displaced persons to own a car, van or truck. As the IFRC point out, this is an important difference as a car, van or truck can be put to productive use and thus become a source of income.

As to employment opportunities for the displaced, these are constrained by the general economic situation of the country as a whole: national unemployment stands at a rate of 26 per cent. Even so, it was pointed out that internally displaced persons could benefit from skills training as well as training to familiarize them with new employment practices that have been introduced with the shift to a market economy – a transition which has largely occurred during their period of displacement and unemployment. The food-for-work programmes operated by the World Food Programme provide a means both for meeting food needs and re-engaging displaced persons in productive employment. Another important initiative is the vocational training programme run by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Zugdidi, which the Representative visited. The programme provides training in languages, computer skills and trades such as carpentry. Furthermore, once participants have completed the training, they are assisted in making contacts with prospective employers.

In some cases, employers may be internally displaced persons themselves. For instance, the mission visited a tea enterprise owned by an internally displaced person who had relocated his business from Sukhumi, Abkhazia, to Tskhaltubo in Imereti region. Special efforts were made by the owner to hire internally displaced persons, who accounted for 80 per cent of the workforce in the factory and 50 per cent of field labourers. Moreover, they were provided with bus transportation from the communal centres, which were some distance away, to and from the enterprise.

New business development also is needed. Important support for this purpose is provided by the business incubator programme run by the IRC in Zugdidi, alongside the IRC vocational training programme noted above. The programme provides physical space for fostering small business, with a resource centre and access to business services, expertise and advice, as well as a credit programme. Though neither the business incubator nor the training programme is specifically targeted to internally displaced persons, they are actively encouraged to participate and information about the programme is disseminated in the collective centres. In addition, among the criteria for businesses to be accepted into the programme is a

commitment to hire a certain percentage of internally displaced persons. Another component of the programme is a micro-credit scheme, of which internally displaced persons constitute an estimated 65 per cent of the beneficiaries.

Ensuring that small business development support and micro-credit opportunities reach internally displaced women, as well as men, is essential. In the absence of such alternatives, the problem of young women turning to prostitution to earn sufficient income to move out of the collective centres was noted. Both in Tbilisi and in the regions, the delegation met with members of women's organizations active in promoting business opportunities for internally displaced women. For example, small business development is one focus of activities of the NGO 'Sokhumi', formed in 1997 by and for professional internally displaced women, which now has a membership of over 100. Such women's organizations and their goals - skills training, business development and credit support for women - merit strong support." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 44-48)

Public participation

Recent reform of election code restores IDPs' voting rights (2002-2003)

- IDPs could exercise their right to be elected in the November 2003 parliamentary elections
- IDP voters were not included systematically in voter lists

"Public awareness campaign for IDP voting Rights was launched and implemented to promote and stimulate IDPs' participation in Parliamentary elections of 2 November (a video clip featuring former Defender, Central Electoral Commission Chairperson, Nana Devdariani was shot; 3,000 posters with key information on elections were distributed throughout Georgia in collective centres, Post-Bank branches, Precinct and District Election Commissions)." (UN OCHA December 2003, p. 1)

"Efforts to enforce IDPs' political and civil rights had long been neglected, mainly because of political considerations. However, a major progress has been achieved of late: at the November Parliamentary elections, for instance, IDPs could for the first time exercise their rights to passive (the right of citizen to be elected as the President, a member of the Parliament and the representative body of local self-governance – sakrebulo, a gamgebeli and a mayor) and active (the right of a citizen to elect, as above) votes." (UN OCHA December 2003, p. 9)

Parliamentary Elections 2 November 2003, report of the international election observation mission:

"Repeating a pattern noted during previous elections, in August 2003 the [Unified Election Code (UEC)] was amended substantially while election preparations were already underway. The UEC incorporated many recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. Overall it provided an adequate framework for the conduct of democratic elections if implemented impartially and uniformly. Recommendations adopted by Parliament included provisions to:

- Permit internally displaced persons (IDPs) electoral rights in majoritarian contests" (OSCE 28 January 2004, p. 6)

"Reports on errors in voter lists included: omitting entire apartment blocs or streets; voters being listed in the wrong districts; listing many deceased persons; and large numbers of duplicate entries. Despite the enormity of the task, many PECs worked conscientiously to rectify errors. However, some PECs failed to supply PECs with voter lists, and many PECs appeared unfamiliar with new registration procedures and applied inconsistent methods. Many failed to display lists in a systematic or practical manner, and many minority populations were unable to read lists produced in Georgian. Other problems included: a 2,250-page list of deceased persons in Tbilisi that was unusable as it was not broken down by district or precinct;

IDP voters not being systematically included in lists; and significant numbers of voters lacking ID documents." (OSCE 28 January 2004, p. 10)

"IFRC reported in 1999 that IDPs participated as fully as local residents in those elections in which they were entitled to vote, for President and Parliament. However, IDPs were not allowed to participate in elections for local councils, which requires permanent residential status. Currently, a new code abolished this provision. Nevertheless, this code does not establish a clear understanding of 'residential rights' and 'passive electoral rights.' NGOs report that no IDPs were elected as majors or local governors in the last elections. Since access to services (e.g., education) and employment opportunities often relies on 'connections' with the elected officials, IDPs are at a disadvantage compared to the general population." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 36)

Georgian Electoral Code was also amended on 25 April 2002 in order to enable IDPs to vote at parliamentary elections both for party lists and for the representative to Parliament from the district in which they are "temporarily" residing. The right of IDPs to vote in local elections is also guaranteed but legislation was long unclear about the right of IDPs to be elected (NRC Georgia 14 March 2003)

For more information on the regime on voting rights for IDPs as of 2000, see chapter on Georgia in: "Internally Displaced Persons and Political Participation: the OSCE Region – An Occasional Paper", published by the Brookings Institution, September 2000 [Internet]

See also Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia, Section 5 "Political Rights", Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Tbilisi 1999 [Internal link]

IDPs in collective centres are socially isolated (2000-2002)

- As the size of the collective centers increase in a community the relations between IDPs and the general population becomes less friendly

"In [Save the Children's] 2002 survey, IDPs in collective centers and the general population were asked, 'approximately how many adult relatives /friends /neighbors live in this city/village who you believe will help you if needed?' A slightly higher percentage of IDPs living in collective centers, about 30%, mentioned no one would help them compared to 23.5% of the general population. Thus, a slightly higher percentage of IDPs are socially isolated than the general population.

As for community relations, IFRC and SC report that, on average, IDPs and local residents have almost similar views of their relation: neither very friendly nor very hostile. However, SC study in 2002 found that as the size of the collective centers increase in a community the relations between IDPs and the general population becomes less friendly." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 36)

The International Federation of the Red Cross conducted a survey of the IDP population in 1999. IFRC published this survey in November 1999 under the title "Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey".

Save the Children conducted a survey on an annual basis from 2000 to 2002. This survey was designed to provide comparable data of IDPs living in collective centres and local households in the regions of Samegrelo and Imereti, Western Georgia. Data collected in 2000 for this survey are available on Assistance Georgia, the website of the humanitarian community in Georgia [Internet]

IDPs stage demonstrations against national authorities and international organisations (2001-2002)

- IDPs in the Zugdidi sector protest against CIS peacekeeping forces against poor living conditions, and lack of return-conducive conditions
- They also demand the timely payment of their benefits by the Georgian authorities
- Freedom of movement of UNOMIG personnel has been occasionally restricted by demonstrators
- Protests by IDPs in Tbilisi have also been reported

"During the period under review, the situation in the Zugdidi sector was calm. [...] Several peaceful demonstrations took place, mostly by internally displaced persons in protest of their living conditions. The local authorities took some steps to improve the situation, in particular the supply of electricity. Since 6 January, a group of internally displaced persons has been blocking the movement of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force at the main bridge over the Inguri River on the Georgian side. They protest, among other things, the extension of the CIS peacekeeping mandate, the resumption of the rail link between Sochi in the Russian Federation and Sukhumi and the continuing granting of Russian citizenship and Russian passports to residents of Abkhazia." (UNSC 13 January 2002, para. 14)

See also RFE/RL, "Georgian displaced persons suspend protest action", 20 February 2003 [Internet]

"In the Zugdidi sector, UNOMIG patrols were on occasion confronted with demonstrations by internally displaced persons, who are becoming increasingly critical of the Georgian central authorities, as well as of the CIS peacekeeping force and international organizations, because of their perceived incapacity to achieve progress in creating conditions for return. In one incident a patrol vehicle was hit by a stone, and in another a patrol was temporarily encircled and had equipment stolen from it before being allowed to proceed.

UNOMIG's freedom of movement was restricted for a total of three weeks in January and February when internally displaced persons blocked the major ceasefire line crossing points. In response, UNOMIG had to temporarily introduce restrictions on patrolling in the Zugdidi sector." (UN SC 19 April 2002, paras. 18-19)

"Popular demonstrations are a feature of the region, primarily by the politicised or disaffected local population or IDPs demanding improvement of their social-economic condition, timely payment of benefits, and progress in negotiations on return and settlement. On 30 September 2001, for example, the bridge along the Inguri river was blocked by approximately 150 locals blaming local authorities for neglect of their poor living conditions. There were also several cases of denial of freedom of movement to UNOMIG escorts. The protesters were not hostile, but wanted the patrol to contact the authorities so that the unpaid benefits, allowances and salaries would be distributed." (UN OCHA 9 November 2001)

Reports of demonstrations by IDPs in Tbilisi:

United Nations Association of Georgia, "Georgia: IDPs protest in front of Parliament", 22 January 2003 [Internet]

UN Association of Georgia, "Georgia: IDPs demand Abkhazia status determination", 20 June 2002 [Internet]

RFE/RL, "Displaced persons threaten to renounce Georgian citizenship", 28 March 2002 [Internet]

Parallel structures of governance function as an assistance network for the displaced from Abkhazia (2001)

- The creation of a government-in-exile has allowed many displaced to keep their jobs
- The Supreme Council, which was the highest legislative body in the AR of Abkhazia before the war, was reconstructed in 1995
- The government-in-exile's hard-line stance on Abkhazia has been an obstacle to many peace initiatives

"After the Georgian population fled Abkhazia in the autumn of 1993, they restored the Georgian segment of executive power from Abkhazia to create a virtual government-in-exile with the intent of making it easier for people to trace relatives, find accommodations, benefit from humanitarian assistance and otherwise cope with their displacement. Each ministry or department of the central Georgian government allowed its counterpart from the AR of Abkhazia to use its facilities to register staff who had worked before the war for the same organisation in Abkhazia.

By retaining these structures of government, some of the displaced were able to continue to work, not just in the government bureaucracy, but also as teachers, doctors and other specialists. For example, the exiled Ministry of Public Health provided the displaced population with qualified medical assistance and distributed medicines among the most vulnerable persons. The creation of two polyclinics for the displaced in Tbilisi and several others in other areas, including Zugdidi and Kutaisi, allowed the disabled, newborn, pregnant women and elderly among the displaced population to be registered for special assistance. Although these polyclinics are not well equipped, they do have qualified professional personnel on staff.

Administrative structures from Abkhazia were also revived, so a displaced person who lost identity documents during the flight could apply for new documents to the municipality of his/her city in exile. The displaced also have their own military commissariat, tax authorities, police force and many other institutions and agencies.

The Supreme Council, which was the highest legislative body in the AR of Abkhazia before the war, was reconstructed in 1995 following a decision by the Georgian Parliament. According to an election law adopted shortly before the war, the Abkhazian minority in Abkhazia had a special quota for representation in the Supreme Council. Representing 17.8 per cent of Abkhazia, they had 28 seats in the Supreme Council; Georgians, who represented 45.6 per cent of the population, held 26 seats. Eleven more deputies represented Abkhazia's other ethnic communities. The reconstructed Supreme council consist of 24 deputies.

Both the Abkhazian Council of Ministers and the Supreme Council of the AR of Abkhazia in exile say they represent the displaced in Georgia, and the official Georgian government recognises them as representatives of the displaced community. Yet both bodies maintain a radical position regarding the conflict-resolution process, a position that is not shared by a large part of the displaced community. The government-in-exile's hard-line stance on Abkhazia has been an obstacle to many peace initiatives developed in Georgia proper and by the displaced population itself." (Kharashvili 2001, pp. 234-235)

Displaced persons under pressure not to demand their right to vote (2000)

- Abkhaz political structures in exile have an interest in discouraging internally displaced from voting
- IDPs should be explained that exercise their right to political participation does not negate their right to return

"It was also suggested that the issue of political participation by the displaced has been manipulated by political forces bent on the return of the population and regain of territorial control over Abkhazia. Specifically, it was widely alleged that they have pressured internally displaced persons to refrain from demanding their right to vote by suggesting that in so doing the displaced will somehow lose their right to return. It thus is important not only to amend the electoral law but also to counter this misinformation by explaining to internally displaced persons that exercising their right to full political participation in the areas where they currently reside in no way negates their right to return.

Moreover, the representatives from Abkhazia, whose mandate continue to be extended indefinitely, also have an interest in discouraging internally displaced persons from voting in order to maintain their own positions. Their legitimacy, however, is beginning to be questioned by internally displaced persons. However, because the displaced often depend upon the parallel system of services provided by the Government in Exile, they may feel compelled to refrain from openly expressing discontent with the current arrangement and demanding their right to vote for local and regional representatives. The reality is much more complex than the suggestion that internally displaced persons are simply apathetic in pressing for their right to full political participation.

Local NGOs pointed out that they had proposed that internally displaced persons at least be able to elect new representatives, but the Government had refused. The most appropriate corrective measure, however, would be for the legislation on electoral participation to be revised to enable internally displaced persons to participate in the election of local and regional representatives for the areas in which they currently reside. As noted above, a number of senior government officials at the national and regional level conceded that the current policy on political participation by the displaced required reform." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 67-69)

Marginal political participation of displaced women (2000)

- Internally displaced women are not associated to the political process of postconflict Georgia and the privatization
- Absence of political mobilization and lack of knowledge about rights make programmes educating women about their rights, in particular in rural areas, indispensable

"Internally displaced women remain very much disconnected from the political processes of postconflict Georgia. As in the broader Georgian and Caucasian political world, there are disproportionately few women in position of power. No women had central roles in the political run-up to the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; likewise, no women currently participate in the ongoing political negotiations between the Georgian and separatist Abkhaz governments. Almost universally, the handful of displaced women currently in positions to power at both the national and local levels are former communist elites with little interest in advancing women's rights - displaced or otherwise.

The main representative institution for the IDP community from Abkhazia continues to be the 'Government of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic in exile,' composed of the same unelected Georgian-Abkhaz party officials in power at the start of the war, though now residing in Tbilisi as a de facto shadow cabinet to the separatist Abkhaz government. Women interviewed by the CDIE team expressed almost universal disgust with the institution. They perceived it to be genuinely uninterested in and out of touch with issues and concerns of displaced people. Complaints about the government-in-exile typically revolved around nepotism and corruption (Zurikashvili 2000, 4).

Segregation from local communities and a lack of permanent residence has had adverse effects on the political rights of displaced women. In its report to the UN Development Program, the Gender Development Association (an indigenous women's group) notes that participation of displaced women in

local elections and in privatization processes has been impeded by restrictive regulations and laws unmodified in the aftermath of people settling in collective centers and with host families (GDA 1999, 68). Many respondents in the survey voiced deep frustration with a lack of any kind of representation from local officials. Women were particularly concerned with the glaring absence of representation by the displaced in the privatization processes taking part throughout western Georgia. Those who confronted local officials about privatization issues were met with weak arguments and vague promises (Zurikashvili 2000, 4).

Most displaced women interviewed were much more interested in everyday economic and psychosocial issues confronting their families and communities than they were in political questions. Political mobilization and motivation were rare, if not nonexistent. No survey respondents were members of political parties. Most felt betrayed and abandoned by President Shevardnadze's government, which was blamed by many for losing the war and abandoning displaced persons in their times of deepest need. Local officials, as mentioned above, tended to be distrusted. Individual leaders in the displaced-women community who have taken their concerns to local and government officials have tended to be striving in two general directions. First, leaders press officials regarding the immediate everyday needs of displaced communities. Second, they are concerned with improving and speeding the negotiation and repatriation processes with the Abkhaz government, with the ultimate goal of returning home and taking up their 'real' lives once again. Displaced women were often unaware of their rights. Of the 105 displaced women questioned in the survey, only 5 knew of their basic human rights under the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Of those five, two leaders of women's organizations and three had recently graduated from university. The Georgian government has recently passed laws defending the rights of women, mothers, and children, but as several displaced women leaders stressed, most displaced women remained ignorant of the laws and their legal consequences. Several displaced women's organizations have dedicated efforts and programs to educating women about their rights, in particular women residing in rural and remote regions of the country (Zurikashvili 2000, 4)" (Buck September 2000, pp. 9-10)(

See also case studies on the Koka Farmers' Union: "Cooperative boosts self-respect of displaced Georgian women", Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID (July 2000) [pdf][Internet]

See also "Willingness to participate voluntarily in community affairs", SCF survey, February-June 2000 [Internet]

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

General

Many IDPs have lost their personal identification documents (1999)

- Identification documents cumbersome to renew
- IDPs hesitant to give up their Soviet passports

"Personal identification is a serious problem in the regions of Georgia. Many of the refugees have lost their documents in the conflict zone and it is very complicated to renew them. There are cases when a person addresses corresponding instances several times but in vain, as he/she is asked to pay or submit a document (e. g. birth certificate) and he/she has none and has to live without any document. Often, these persons have problems with the police." [...]

The refugees do not want to give up their soviet passports as permanent residence is not written in the identification cards and the soviet passports are the only documents for them to prove their permanent residence when they return to Abkhazia. Therefore, the refugees from Abkhazia have refused to give up their passports. And, it has been decided to give the refugees new identification cards and enable them to keep their soviet passports at a time. Besides they have certificates of refugees issued by the Ministry of refugees and accommodation. These certificates are often changed and this entails many technical complications." (The Horizonti Foundation, 29 January 1999, sect.3)

"Ninety-nine percent [of IDPs] claim to be registered with the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia, and possess respective cards. Only 1% of the [IDP] respondents reported to have no IDP card." (NRC 1997, p.17)

ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

General

Fate of Georgian and Abkhaz missing persons who disappeared during the conflict in Abkhazia still unknown (2002)

- Georgian and Abkhaz sides agree that over 1,000 Georgians and several hundred Abkhaz remain missing from the conflict
- ICRC increased its support to make progress on the issue

"Georgian and Abkhaz commissions on missing persons reported that over 1,000 Georgians and several hundred Abkhaz remained missing as a result of the 1992-1994 war in Abkhazia. Officials have agreed to joint efforts to determine their location and repatriate the remains of the dead. The ICRC assisted in this effort." (U.S. DOS 4 March 2002, sect. 1b)

"In January 2000, after the request of the two Missing Persons Commissions, ICRC decided to increase its support to them in their respective efforts to make progress on the issue of missing persons. An independent forensics specialist from Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) was invited by the ICRC to provide technical assistance to the two Commission on the issue of exhumation and identification of mortal remains related to conflict situations. This specialist's initial assessment mission took place in Tbilisi and Sukhumi in October 2000 and in April and October 2001. The fourth visit was carried out in early July 2002, in order to check the data collected, to identify possible sites for exhumation and contact families of missing persons." (ICRC September 2002)

Changing gender role: displaced women become the main household income earners (2000)

- 72% of the displaced women were fully employed before the conflict while more that 60% of them were currently formally jobless in 1999
- They have however adapted much more readily to their new situation as displaced persons than have men and have become the main source of income in most displaced families
- Displaced women in urban areas are engaged in trade but are reluctant to register their activities with the government out of fear that existing humanitarian aid would not be distributed to "working" women and their families
- In western Georgia, women make up the vast majority of the seasonal agricultural work force on tea plantations and in corn farming
- Increasing numbers of Zugdidi-based displaced women have also begun to cross the border into the Gali region of Abkhazia to tend to family farms abandoned during the conflict
- Displaced women seeking basic loans to begin or expand their trading have turned to donor microcredit programs
- Women are still expected to perform traditional household duties of feeding and caring for their children, even after long and difficult days trading on street corners and in market places

"As in all intrastate conflicts, the forced displacement had major economic effects on the many thousands of internally displaced women who fled Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Prewar Georgia had been one of the wealthier republics in the former Soviet Union, benefiting in particular from its agriculture-intensive position as the breadbasket of the USSR. Abkhazia itself had long had the reputation as the richest region within Georgia, with its highly fertile lands accounting for much of Georgia's agricultural output and its strikingly beautiful Black Sea coastline attracting multitudes of tourists from through-out the Soviet Union.

Most of the Georgian women who fled the region left relatively prosperous lives behind them. Many were trained professionals who had worked as teachers, economists, and in manufacturing and healthcare, among other trades. Seventy-two percent of displaced women surveyed had been fully employed before the outbreak of war. Over 21 percent of displaced women, meanwhile, had completed higher education degrees, while 31 per-cent had finished vocational or professional schooling (Zurikashvili 2000, 5, 8).

In the years since the displacement, internally displaced women and men have struggled under the massive weight of poverty and unemployment. According to unofficial statistics, 75 percent of displaced families earn less than half the monthly subsistence income level, set by the Georgian government at \$35 per family member (Zurikashvili 1998, 8). Unsurprisingly, physical displacement has been accompanied by widespread professional displacement. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Norwegian Refugee Council concluded in 1998 that upwards of 64 percent of internally displaced persons were jobless (GDA 1999, 69). The CDIE survey confirmed that formal employment was one of the most acute and unsolved issues for displaced women, increasingly demoralized by almost a decade of epidemic-level rates of joblessness. Of women questioned in the survey, 68 percent were without work as of late 1999 (Zurikashvili 2000, 7-8).

Faced with such difficult living conditions, many internally displaced Georgian women have quietly taken the lead in providing basic income and food for their families. They have adapted much more readily to the extreme stresses of the life of displaced persons than have men. They have begun to alter the long-standing tradition of men as main earners and providers for the family.

According to a 1998 survey organized by the Women's Study Center of Tbilisi State University, women have come to be the main sources of income in 72 percent of Georgian displaced families. Displaced women have left their shelters and homes by the thousands throughout Georgia to squeeze out meager livings through unofficial trade and agriculture. In larger cities such as Tbilisi, they have become the backbone for much of the unofficial or gray-market trade that has flourished in recent years. They sell products in crowded bazaars, on street corners, in subway stations, peddling everything from sunflower seeds to imported electronics. Some women have opened street kiosks selling basic foodstuffs, cigarettes, and alcohol, to name a few of the items offered. The vast majority of the trading remains unofficial; 75 percent of the women questioned in the 1998 survey had refused to register their activities with the government (Zurikashvili 1998, 8).

Trading activity was rarely considered 'work' by the women themselves. Indeed, many women interviewed considered themselves unemployed even as they spent long hours laboring on streets and in markets. Others would simply not admit to their trading, even when sacks of produce were clearly visible in their living quarters. Reasons for the silence range from basic shame to the common fear that existing humanitarian aid would not be distributed to 'working' women and their families. Women traders, often skilled and educated professionals or farmers during their previous lives in Abkhazia, equated trading with basic survival and were rarely proud of their activities. The large majority made barely enough to make ends meet. One woman surveyed spoke for many when she said, "We all consider ourselves unemployed, as all we can earn is the money for our daily bread" (Zurikashvili 2000, 8).

Koka

Koka was the most unlikely of business ventures, made up of 22 women and 8 men from the Gali region of Abkhazia increasingly fed up with their growing misery and inability of the Georgian government to help

them. Although most of the women members were professionals and knew little about farming or trading before the war, their experiences with the group have provided great psychological as well as material help.

Major obstacles exist for displaced women who hope to transform trading from a method of survival into a formal venture. The 1998 survey found that 94 percent of displaced women who traded were strongly dissatisfied with business conditions. Corruption, extortion, and stifling tax levels were all cited as major impediments. Of those questioned, 93 percent claimed to have paid 'tributes' to the police, local administrations, and tax collectors (Zurikashvili 1998, 8).

As in cities, displaced women have become increasingly active in rural areas, providing needed food and income for their families and altering traditional gender roles along the way. In western Georgia, women make up the vast majority of the seasonal agricultural work force on tea plantations and in corn farming. One group of Zugdidi-based displaced women formed a small cooperative association, called Koka, that produced basic agricultural goods including fruits and milk products on donated farmland. Food was produced both for members' families and for trading in the marketplace (see box).

Increasing numbers of Zugdidi-based displaced women have also begun to cross the border and brave the short trip into the Gali region of Abkhazia to tend to family farms abandoned during the conflict. Known as pendulum migrants, these women grow vegetables, fruits, and nuts both for their own family and for trading in markets. They travel to Abkhazia early in the morning, often bribing Russian peacekeepers guarding the border, and return very late the same day. Though Abkhaz authorities have tolerated 'pendulum migration,' these displaced Georgian women work and travel in constant fear of Abkhaz reprisal.

Georgian men rarely risk the journey, so sure are they of military reprisal. From a gender perspective, this phenomenon represents yet another economic change attributable to the conflict as women have taken over the farming responsibilities reserved for men before the war. As with trading, many displaced families have come to rely on women to deliver income and food necessary for survival (Zurikashvili 2000, 8).

Donors have begun to recognize the value of internally displaced women traders as they have moved away from humanitarian assistance toward more development or "self-reliance" programming in recent years. Specifically, many desperately poor women who seek basic loans to begin or expand their trading have turned to donor microcredit programs for financing. The Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA), a USAID-funded international NGO, offers innovative group lending. It consists of small low-interest short-term loans starting at \$100 to groups of traders without the need for collateral. Since most displaced persons have very little in the way of valuable possessions that could be put up as collateral, this system has quickly evolved into a critical method for assetless people to receive loans (Georgian banks customarily require collateral worth at least twice the amount of the loan). Recipients receive the money in small groups, usually no larger than seven people. Each member pledges solidarity with the group and promises to pay back as a group.

Though the program was not designed exclusively for women, 75 percent of FINCA's 4,500 clients are women, and well over 70 percent of those women are from displaced families based in the Tbilisi region. The Norwegian Refugee Council has partnered with an indigenous Georgian women's organization, Women in Business, to create a revolving fund of microcredit for women's ventures. They have the aim of eventually transforming the fund into a credit union. In addition to trading, the fund's successfully funded enterprises have included laundry services and bakeries. Generally, FINCA and Norwegian Refugee Council microcredit lending has been successful. Only 1 percent of FINCA's first time 'group-clients' have defaulted on loans. That represents a mere \$ 14,000 of the \$3.1 million invested.

The role of displaced women as leading family income earners has not led to a growing sense of empowerment within the family or IDP communities in general. On the contrary, gender roles have remained clearly delineated. Women are still expected to perform traditional household duties of feeding

and caring for their children, even after long and difficult days trading on street corners and in market places. Men spend much of their time in and around the household, as observed by the CDIE team, but they do little to help in chores traditionally reserved for women in Georgian society. As many surveyed women stressed, time is always in critical demand. On an average day, respondents spent seven hours working outside the home and eight caring for their children. This double burden of both caring and providing for their families has left little time for rest and has logically contributed to growing levels of stress diagnosed in displaced women (Zurikashvili 2000, 9)." (Buck September 2000, pp. 7-9)

You can also consult following documents:

Stable Instability of the Displaced People in Western Georgia: a Food-security and Gender Survey after Five Years, Jose Luis Vivero Pol, in: Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999, pp. 349-366 (Oxford) [Not available on the web]

"Cooperative boosts self-respect of displaced Georgian women", USAID, July 2000 [Internet]

See also " Field surveys reveal psycho-social trauma of displaced women and men (1995-2000)" [Internal link]

Marital status of IDPs: surveys indicate higher percentage of single parents households (2000-2002)

- 2002 data show a higher percentage of single parent households among IDPs living in collective centers (13.7%) than among the general population (7.1%)
- But divorce rates among IDPs and the rest of the population are similar

"Marital status in IFRC report includes all individuals regardless of age, which makes it a little difficult to compare with other data since marital status in a population is, generally, based on individuals either 15 or 18 years of age or older. However, both IFRC's report and SC's surveys indicate a higher proportion of the general population being married than IDPs living in collective centers. Some local NGOs report that IDPs, especially those in collective centers, refrain from marriage mainly due to the limited living space as well as their inability to economically support a family.

Another difference is that SC's 2002 data shows a higher percentage of single parent households among IDPs living in collective centers (13.7%) than among the general population (7.1%). However, both studies show an almost equal percentage of divorced households (~2%). Thus, the higher percentage of single parent households in collective centers must be due to another reason, perhaps the spouse (most likely the husband) working outside the country. *There is no data on the percentage of IDPs households that are comprised of single parents due to the spouse working abroad.*

According to the old provision in the law, if an IDP male married non-IDP female, she would get IDP status. However, if an IDP female married non-IDP male he would not get IDP status. The provision has been abolished with the effect of the amendments to the law, nevertheless not regulated." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 30)

The International Federation of the Red Cross conducted a survey of the IDP population in 1999. IFRC published this survey in November 1999 under the title "Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey".

Save the Children conducted a survey on an annual basis from 2000 to 2002. This survey was designed to provide comparable data of IDPs living in collective centres and local households in the regions of Samegrelo and Imereti, Western Georgia. Data collected in 2000 for this survey are available on Assistance Georgia, the website of the humanitarian community in Georgia [Internet]

PROPERTY ISSUES

General

IDPs purchasing property do not lose their IDP status (2003)

- UN-led legal review confirms that IDPs have the right to purchase property without being deprived of IDP status
- IDPs are not informed properly about their rights and prefer to register purchased property in others' name
- The constitutional court removed restriction to free property purchase by IDPs (November 2003)

"Regarding the purchase of property by IDPs, there is a perception that if an IDP purchases property (e.g. an apartment), s/he could be deprived of her/his status. This is incorrect. Property rights are not bound up with registration. According to Article 2, Point (3) of the Law of Georgia 'Concerning the Rule of Registration and Identification of Georgian Citizens and Aliens Living in Georgia,' being or not being registered should not restrict constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens of Georgia and aliens living in Georgia, including limiting rights of property or the provision for their implementation, unless envisaged by the election legislation.

Therefore, an IDP has a right to purchase and own property unreservedly on the territory of Georgia (The Constitution of Georgia, Article 21) without being deprived of IDP status.

In everyday life, IDPs often come across persons who, despite working on IDP related legal issues, still are not well informed about existing opportunities for IDPs to purchase real estate and get temporary or permanent registration. Due to such a lack of knowledge among persons concerned, IDPs are compelled to register the purchased property in others' names. This might ultimately result in IDPs losing their property.

Of course, it is desirable to create a proper legislative basis, so that neither IDPs nor other interested parties are unclear about the purchase of property."

[Footnote 1: At the same time, because of decisions of Sakrebulo, IDPs are exempt from paying tax for 0.3-0.7 ha land plots.]

[Footnote 2: Usually, legislative authority, i.e. a right to submit a bill to the Parliament, rests with the President of Georgia, Members of the Parliament of Georgia, any Parliamentary Commission, Parliamentary Faction, and with not less than 20,000 voters (citizens).

[Footnote 3: At present, the State only owns approximately 100 ha of agricultural land.] (UN OCHA June 2003, pp. 9-10)

On 7 November 2003, the Constitutional Court of Georgia declared unconstitutional the loss of the national IDP status following the registration of an IDP as resident in Georgia proper. Following this decision, the Parliament of Georgia removed Article 6, para. 2c of the "Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted" providing that "IDP status is lost in case IDP permanently settles and registers in a region of Georgia where reasons listed in article 1 of this law do not exist" (UNDP 28 February 2004)

Land allocation to IDPs: inconsistent implementation (1992-2003)

- Legislation provides for a taxation exemption for IDPs using agricultural land plots allocated to them temporarily but regulation enforcing this provision has not been passed
- In practice, IDPs either pay or do not pay land tax depending upon the regional authorities
- IDPs need additional help to get fertilizers, equipment for cultivating land, transport, fuel
- IDPs were not allowed to participate in land privatization since they were not considered local residents
- Land allocated to IDPs is often of lower quality and far from IDPs' places of residence

"Existing legislation does not envisage special norms pertaining to the availability of land to IDPs. According to this legislation, rules regulating ownership of land apply equally to all citizens of Georgia, including IDPs. As well as this, the legislation has no provision that would restrict an IDP in terms of (real or movable) property.

In addition, Article 5 of the 'Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted' envisages an exemption for IDPs who have agricultural land plots for temporary use. In particular, according to Point (h) of this article, agricultural land plots allocated to IDPs for their temporary use in accordance with existing norms for IDPs, are exempt from land tax. However, an amendment in the Tax Code of Georgia incorporating this has not been passed. This means that, in fact, IDPs are not exempt from paying the tax.[1]. Thus, the 'Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted', which exempts IDPs from paying the land tax, comes into collision with the Tax Code, which has not been correspondingly amended [2].

In practice, IDPs either pay or do not pay land tax depending upon the regional authorities. For example, the Khobi district administration refused to allocate land plots for the temporary use of IDPs registered in Senaki. However, consent was given after IDPs offered to pay. In general, the majority of local authorities are aware of IDPs' rights to have land plots for temporary use and try to assist those IDPs who express a desire to cultivate land. In their efforts to have land plots for cultivation, IDPs primarily face problems connected with the lack of land where they temporarily reside (as in Jvari), or natural conditions are not favourable for land cultivation (as in Borjomi), or the land allocated to them is of poor quality (as in Imereti region, Samegrelo and Bolnisi). It should be noted that the Land Reform in Georgia that enabled the population of Georgia to privatise land (however, IDPs failed to enjoy this right), was completed in 1994 [Footnote 3: At present, the State only owns approximately 100 ha of agricultural land.]. IDPs were late in addressing local authorities for allocating land plots to them. As a result, IDPs were in most cases given remote and poor quality land plots (as in Tskaltubo, Didi Jikhaisi and other regions). In such circumstances, IDPs have to fence pastures (as in Menji Resort case). This, in its turn, entails conflicts with locals. At meetings held in Samegrelo, Imereti and Bolnisi, IDPs repeatedly stated that if they are provided with technical (e.g. fertilizers, equipment for cultivating land, transport, fuel) and financial assistance, they are ready to cultivate even remote land plots. However, at Imereti meetings, IDPs reiterated that remote land plots need additional care in terms of security, because there are cases when the crop is stolen and/or the land plots are destroyed.

According to the data of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, 12,000 IDP families were granted 4,000 ha of land for free on a temporary ownership basis on the territory of Georgia.

As for the land lease, neither the 'Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted', nor the Tax Code envisages provisions for preferential treatment of IDPs." (UN OCHA June 2003, p. 9)

"Background - The privatization of land, and agricultural reform, started in early 1992, with a Presidential decree, and should have been completed by 1 January 1999. The procedures and time schedules for the privatization process varied from village to village depending on the size, type of land (arable, perennials, pastures), allotment criteria, order of distribution. Privatization did not include certain state-owned land that cannot be sold to private persons, but can be rented or leased.[14] Individuals must obtain an ownership

certificate issued by the local authorities at a cost of approximately \$19 USD per hectare. However, IDPs were not allowed to participate in land privatization process since they were not considered local residents. Until IDPs were given the right to land in 1996 (discussed below), they only had the right to rent or lease the land. No laws were in place that exempted IDPs from paying land tax. [15]

Even though IDPs could not participate in the land privatization process, according to the Georgian Law of 1996, [16] IDPs could be allocated plots of land with the right of temporary use as long as they did not construct any structures. Local authorities (i.e., Village Mayors) were to identify land that could be used and are responsible for ensuring use of it if IDPs request so. If IDPs stop using the land temporarily allocated to them for some reason (e.g., relocation to another place), the land is transferred back to the local authorities.[17]

Anecdotal evidence suggests several problems have arisen with the allocation of land to IDPs. First, the highest quality land was distributed in the privatization process and, subsequently, the land that can be allocated to IDPs is of poor quality. [18] Second, since IDPs cannot make build or permanently alter the land, it is difficult to produce sufficient quantities of food for consumption or sales. Third, local officials request IDPs to pay 'extra expenses' to receive an allocation of land. Fourth, when IDPs do receive an allocation of land it is all too often far from their place of residence."

[Footnote 14: "Whose Land?" – Overview in land reform and privatization process in Western Georgia Agriculture and its Implications for Displaced People, Accion contra el Hambre – Georgia, Zugdidi, August 1998

[Footnote 15: Annual land tax depending on soil quality ranges between 11,2 and 21 USD per hectare, with an average of 15,75 USD per hectare for Zugdidi region. ACH survey, August 1998.

[Footnote 16: Article 5 of the Law of Georgia on "Forcibly Displaced Persons – Persecuted," of June 28 1996.]

[Footnote 17: Report on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Law of Georgia, 2002.]

[Footnote 18: Whose Land? Overview of land reform and privatization in west Georgia, Accion contra el Hambre, 1998; The Working Group on Enhancing Capacities for Self-Sufficiency: Report of the Sub-Group on Agriculture, IRC, 1998; Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, 1999.] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 13-14)

Privatisation in South Ossetia: rights of IDPs at risk (2002)

- Authorities in South Ossetia have agreed not to privatize apartments belonging to IDPs
- It is unlikely that IDPs from South Ossetia have been able to participate in the process of privatisation

"[S]ome IDPs are living in private accommodations. From 1991 to 1992, based on a government resolution, privatization of socially owned apartments was initiated. To date, approximately 90% of apartments have been privatized in Georgia (OSCE). In SC's nationwide survey in 2002, 92.5% of urban families and 97.6% of rural families owned their apartments or houses.

The privatization of housing occurred also in South Ossetia. (Not really. It is believed that privatization did not occur in Abkhazeti). An OSCE report indicates that through their intervention of OSCE, authorities agreed not to privatize apartments belonging to IDPs. **However, data available to us does not indicate percentage of apartments that have been privatized by either IDPs themselves or others.** Since IDPs did not reside in their homes in South Ossetia when privatization started it is unlikely that they participated in the process." (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, p. 24)

Properties left behind: uncertainty on the restitution process (2002-2003)

- IDPs have often lost all documents proving their property rights in Abkhazia
- Occupation of IDPs' properties has been legalized according to Housing Code still in force in Abkhazia
- IDPs have also sold their property but still lack official documents for the sale
- There are no data on houses which are still intact or unoccupied
- Draft laws on property restitution, have been prepared and submitted to the Georgian government but the issue remains unsolved
- While Georgian courts reconstitute property to Ossets in Georgia, this is not the case in South Ossetia
- Georgia made reservation to property rights enshrined in European Convention on Human Rights as a result of Abkhazia's secessions
- Some IDPs continue to use their land on a seasonal basis, especially in the Gali region and in South Ossetia
- UNHCR reported reinstatement of property rights by Georgian courts

"IDPs left their houses behind when they fled. There are four basic scenarios of what happened with their housing after displacement.

a. Some IDPs fled so quickly that they did not even have time to take essential documents or these documents were burnt or lost. The old Soviet passport contained the 'propiska' stamp documenting their residency. Another important document proving their right to occupancy was the one titled, 'Forma #1.' To complicate this situation, some archives have been destroyed making it even more difficult to reconstruct residency. A number of these houses were either totally destroyed or arbitrarily occupied by other persons who later legalized their stay according to the Housing Code.

b. Some IDPs sold their property for very low price. And, in many cases there are no legal documents showing the sale of the property.

c. Over time, some second-occupants have sold their legalized apartments to other people.

d. Finally, a number of houses remain undestroyed and unoccupied. *However, there is no statistical data available on this issue.*

Draft laws, addressing the issue of property restitution, have been prepared and submitted to the Georgian government for further adoption. However, the issue still remains unsolved. NGOs report facts of court cases (in Georgia, excluding Abkhazia and South Ossetia) when property was returned to its owner applying the Civil Code. It is also mentioned that while Georgian courts reconstitute property to Ossets in Georgia, this is not the case in South Ossetia.

Ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was a pre-condition for Georgia to become a member of the Council of Europe. Georgia ratified the Convention with 8 reservations (2 of them particularly important for IDPs). One of them – territorial reservation restricted its application to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region before restoration of territorial integrity of Georgia.

Second reservation is as follows: 'not to apply article 1 [38] of the Protocol 1 to persons who were granted or will be granted status of persecuted in accordance with the Georgian Law on 'Forcibly Displaced Persons – Persecuted' until circumstances based on which they were granted the status cease to exist – until restoration of territorial integrity of Georgia. According to the given law, the state undertakes obligation to

ensure property rights of persecuted to ownership existing at their permanent places of residency after elimination of reasons listed in paragraph 1, article 1 of this law.'

NGO Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) intends to appeal in the Constitutional Court on two grounds: reservations aims at restricting particular social group, thus being discriminative and against to the Georgian Constitution and impairing property right protected by the Constitution and other laws of Georgia.

IFRC reported that almost one-half of the IDP's houses in Abkhazia are reportedly destroyed and 12% needing major repairs. Also, one out of every five IDPs does not know the condition of his/her house. 'IDPs reported that their houses were either completely destroyed (30%), only walls remain (12%), damaged but repairable (11%), normal (22%), and 26% do not know.' SC found similar findings in 2000; 21.3% did not know the condition of their house, with 4.7% reporting it in good condition, 4.8% saying it needed minor repairs, 12.1% mentioning it needed major repairs, and 56.1% reporting that it was not repairable (dilapidated). Thus, IDPs living in collective centers have vulnerable shelter conditions presently and when, if, they return.

IFRC stated that some IDPs continue to use their land. Most are IDPs from the Gali region and from South Ossetia. SC's survey of IDPs in collective center in west Georgian in 2000, reported that that '2.3% of IDPs confirmed returning to Abkhazeti to use land for food production. These IDPs reported returning about once a month, remaining about 8 weeks and using, on average, about 0.2 hectares.

[...]

UNHCR reports that IDPs from Gali region bordering Zugdidi cross Enguri river (dividing Gali and Zugdidi) 'to work their land' but return back. [39] Other sources suggest that border crossing is mainly seasonal – when land needs to be cultivated or harvest (hassle nut, citrus) obtained."

[Footnote 38: Article 1 of the protocol determines that "Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law. The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the rights of a State to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties."]

[Footnote 39: Prospects for the Return of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees to Abkhazia, a UNHCR Review of the Situation in Georgia, May 1997.] (Dershem/Gurgenidze/Holtzman November 2002, pp. 21-22)

Reinstatement of property rights of persons displaced by the Georgian Osset conflict (2000)

"In an attempt to reinstate property ownership, 29 cases passed through the courts, which, without exception, ruled in favour of the original owner. These few court cases went a long way towards removing a notable obstacle to return. After the court rulings, UNHCR found temporary shelter for the secondary occupier." (UNHCR June 2001, p. 358)

For more information on legal development regarding the right to restitution please consult the following publications (not available on Internet):

Report on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Law of Georgia, by Giorgi Chkeidze and Konstantin Korkelia, in: The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Law of the South Caucasus – Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Studies in Transnational Legal Policy, No. 34, The American Society on International Law, The Brookings Institution SAIS Project on Internal Displacement, 2003

Housing and Property Restitution in the Republic of Georgia, by Zurab Burduli and Anna Dolidze, in: Returning Home: Housing and Property Restitution Rights of Refugees and Displaced Persons, edited by Scott Leckie, Transnational Publishers, 2003

international study proposes concrete legal and political measures to resolve the housing and property issue in Georgia (1998)

- Proposals include the issuance of a Presidential Decree on the Right to Return, the adoption of a Restitution Law and the creation of a Housing and Property Claims Commission

"[An independent 1998 study commissioned by UNHCR] recommends that a multi-pronged strategy, grounded firmly in the rule of law, will stand the best chance of ensuring full respect for the housing rights and property rights of all affected persons and thus facilitate the large-scale exercise of the right to return. The study emphasizes that both the rights of refugees and IDPs and the rights of the secondary occupants must be fully secured throughout the process of return and beyond, and that the housing rights of all affected persons are guaranteed such that no person becomes homeless in the process.

It is recommended that several key measures be adopted to provide the legal framework required to redress past injustices, increase confidence sufficiently to allow large-scale return and to build a solid basis for national reconstruction and reconciliation. These measures include:

[...]

1. **The Presidential Decree on the Right to Return** should officially proclaim the right of refugees and IDPs to voluntarily return to their original homes, in an environment of equality, full protection of human rights and clear guarantees of safety and security. The Decree should form the first part of the return process. It should be declaratory in nature, forming a consolidated official pronouncement recognizing the basic nature of the rights associated with return. The decree should reiterate past pronouncements and instill confidence in the returnees that they will be afforded the full spectrum of rights enjoyed throughout Georgian society, including and to return to their original homes, the right to freedom of movement and to choose one's residence and the right to register in their areas of origin.

2. The second element of a comprehensive return package envisages the adoption of a **Housing and Property Restitution Law** clearly and precisely outlining the legal position of affected refugees, IDPs and secondary occupants with respect to all aspects of their housing and property rights. This study recommends that the new legislation ensure the right of refugees and IDPs to the restitution of their original homes should they wish to reclaim them. If a returnee does wish to return to their original home, in accordance with the law and a subsequent finding by the envisaged housing and property claims commission, the law should require the State to facilitate such return and to fully ensure the full protection of the housing rights of secondary occupants.

In cases where returnees do not wish to return to their original homes, the law should oblige the State to secure adequate housing for them in such manner that no detriment is suffered *vis-a-vis* their original housing situation, and which ensures the right of refugees and IDPs (should they choose to invoke it) to the ownership of a dwelling; a right they would have enjoyed had they not been forced by circumstances beyond their control to flee.

The law should enable all affected persons to present formal claims to the HPCC for adjudication within a limited time period.

This study argues that cash compensation should be generally avoided except in instances concerning compensation for past human rights violations or lost movable property. If compensation is to be paid at all, the law should delineate when, in what form, to whom and in what manner compensation should be provided.

Any financial compensation which is provided should come from the State budget of Georgia and should not be provided by the international community. Funds could, however, be allocated by the international community to assist in the establishment of the HPCC or towards the overall implementation of the new law.

The new law should also adequately address the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged housing in rural areas and develop the necessary mechanisms required to ensure that refugees and IDPs returning to rural areas will have access to housing which complies with international standards of adequacy. Equally, the law should ensure the existence of adequate safeguards to protect against homelessness and other possible housing rights violations.

3. Finally, this paper recommends, within the framework of the housing and property restitution law, that a fully independent and impartial, three-person *Housing and Property Claims Commission (HPCC)* be established to examine any housing or property claims put forth by refugees, IDPs or secondary occupants regarding these questions. The HPCC should be vested with the powers required to determine the housing and property rights of the claimants and thus guarantee every returnee the right to an effective remedy and the right to have his or her case heard on an individual basis.

The commission will fill a significant procedural and administrative gap and prevent the potentially serious overloading of the judicial system with related complaints which could, in turn, substantially delay the overall return process. The HPCC (which should be overseen and monitored by UNHCR and the OSCE) will be required by law to protect all persons against homelessness or other detriment with respect to their housing and living conditions. Decisions of the HPCC should be legally binding. The right to appeal any decision of the HPCC to the Supreme Court of Georgia should also be guaranteed.

The implementation of these recommendations are designed to facilitate the large-scale return of all remaining refugees and IDPs linked to the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict and thus assist in increasing regional stability and the further emergence and strengthening of the rule of law in Georgia. Although the specific modalities of the housing and property situation in Georgia are, of course, unique, each of the recommendations made in this study are consistent with international human rights law, including the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter, and have been or are being successfully implemented by other countries confronting similar challenges and possessing similar legal obligations."(Scott Leckie, 7 July 1998, sect. "Executive Summary")

Right to property restitution: Georgian NGO submits draft legislation (1999)

- The property rights of as many as 60-80.000 persons could have been violated.
- Georgian Young Lawyers' Association asked to draft bill regulating property restitution and housing issues related to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.
- Clear-cut cases could be determined by a Special Committee on housing rights

"Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) drafts the bill that regulates the property restitution and housing issues of the victims of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Judging from conflict details and the legal character of the restitution problem itself it certainly is one of the extremely complicated issues. In this case we talk about 60-80 thousands of persons, or about 20thousand families the property rights of which could have been violated. Inconsistency of the past and present legislation connected with the property rights and other issues prevents these rights from being restored. Usually these cases should be dealt with by court, but the huge volume of the work and the peculiar character of the issue would complicate the settlement of the subject in this manner. As the Georgian legislation prohibits establishment of the special courts, when elaborating the draft, or more precisely the restitution mechanism we talked about the establishment of the special committee.

The duties of this committee would be to settle relatively easy cases though simplified procedures. These cases may include the ones where the property ownership documents exist, the witnesses are present and so on. The experience of formation of such committees exists, for example in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The

committee, naturally, can not solve more complicated legal issues, as for instance, when there is the property sales contract, but one side maintains that the contract was made under threat. Of course these issues remain in the competence of civil courts.

Particular problems are connected with the committee staffing and legislative framework issues. As for the staff the option foreseeing participation of 3 Georgian and 3 Ossetian representatives was discussed. But the division of votes could have stalled the work of the committee and to avoid this GYLA considered it possible to involve the representatives of international organizations in its activities. As for the way of accepting the draft, it is our opinion that if the Georgian Parliament passes the law without the advance agreement, it would complicate its implementation and participation of the Ossetian side. Also there exists the idea of implementing the foreseen activities based on the bilateral agreement. There are two options here - perhaps this agreement could have the general, declaratory character and it would only state the fact of the committee being formed, leaving the determination of the specific procedures for the committee itself. In this case the question on functionality of the developed procedures arises. According to the second option the bilateral agreement would contain the procedure details from the very beginning. This would prolong the negotiation process. Though by mid-November the Association plans the conference on this and other issues related to the restitution. The participants of this conference would be foreign experts, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and representatives of the Ossetian side.

As for the real dates of passing the bill or agreement, Mr. Burduli hopes that it is possible to reach the agreement on the legal form by the end of this year, and the restitution mechanism can become functional from the next year already."

(UNA, November 1999)

Discriminatory implementation of housing codes could impede IDP return to Abkhazia (1999)

- IDPs absent for more than six months sometimes lose their right to housing in Abkhazia
- Minorities are particularly at risk of violations of their rights to housing, and frequently suffer harassment when trying to ensure that right
- A solution to the housing issue considered fundamental for safe and lasting return to take place

"Both inside the security and restricted weapons zones and in the rest of Abkhazia, abuses of property rights continue to be a cause for concern. This will become more acute in a wide-scale return to Abkhazia; however, such abuses are currently pervasive in many larger villages in the territory. The housing code of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic from 1983 is still in effect in Abkhazia. The *de facto* parliament of Abkhazia has only partially updated this legislation to reflect the current situation, passing a "Law on Rental" in September 1994 and "Regulations on the Means to Allot Residential and Immovable Property from the State Housing Fund to Persons and on the Payment of Expenditures for its Maintenance and Repairs" in February 1997. The housing code generally covers all state-owned buildings (including kolkhozes and "builders' cooperatives") and private property. All citizens are guaranteed the right to housing in article 2.1 of the 1997 Regulations. Article 69 of the 1983 Housing Code prohibits absences of more than six months - with certain exceptions such as working abroad or illness - unless extended by a court. Article 2.5 of the supplementary February 1997 Regulations, states that only persons constantly residing on the territory of Abkhazia have the right to acquire state housing and that exceptions to this can only be decided by the *de facto* Cabinet of Ministers. [Footnote: The term in Russian xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx can be translated either as permanently, constantly or continuously residing, each of which has a different legal meaning in its application.] The application of this article is not further defined. Thus, persons who fled Abkhazia during the conflict, or those who have spent lengthy periods with relatives in Georgia proper or Russia, for example, may no longer have the right to continue living in their apartment, nor are they guaranteed housing elsewhere if their apartment has been reassigned.

The imprecise nature of the term constantly residing leads to discriminatory implementation in practice. HROAG is aware of 11 cases in which members of minority groups such as Russians, Georgians and Greeks, have complained that their apartment was illegally given to an Abkhaz family by the city housing authorities – even as they are residing within it. HROAG has received several complaints that the defendants (and sometimes even their lawyers) are harassed by the judge presiding the case or the prosecutors. One woman alleged that she was shot at in her apartment after a positive decision by the judge. The human rights office is aware of three positive decisions in the Sukhumi city court and Gagra administration; however, enforcement has been slow. While the complaints brought before the UN office cannot be considered exhaustive and completely representative, they do indicate a certain trend in which the laws are applied to the detriment of minorities. This may be in part due to the pre-eminence of *de facto* authorities, which negatively affects minorities by marginalizing their role and position. Moreover, there have been five reports of houses with Georgian/Mingrelian residents, being occupied by Abkhaz militia groups or *de facto* Abkhaz customs groups in the villages of Chlou, Dikhazurga, Gagra, Gali and Gumurishi. The owner's reception towards the new inhabitants is mixed; nonetheless, there is no legal basis for this occupation.[...]

[...] in order to ensure a safe and lasting return to both the Gali region and Abkhazia as a whole, housing issues must be resolved. Minorities are particularly at risk of violations to their rights to housing, and frequently suffer harassment when trying to ensure their right to housing."(Samuel, 1999, p.5-6)

See also the 20 March 2002 resolution of the Parliament of Georgia "On the unlawful misappropriation of state property and refugees and internally displaced persons' private property in Abkhazia" [Internet]

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

Return prospects

Return hampered by widespread poverty in South Ossetia (2003)

- Since 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the civil war, and earthquake contributed to a grim economic climate in the area
- International aid has decreased in recent years, while the humanitarian situation slightly deteriorated
- Local authorities objectively cannot provide more than a minimal and irregular assistance to their own needy population
- Unprecedented level of crime and related manifestations, such as increased drug addiction and suicide rates, are a huge concern
- Lack of potential for improvement in the immediate future explains the low number of returnees into South Ossetia, even for the Ossetian ethnic group

"During the time of the Soviet Union, the region was a relatively prosperous one. Its mines, factories, and farms supplied raw materials to markets across the Soviet Union, and the mountainous regions of Java were dotted with resorts and tourist bases. Since 1989, however, the collapse of the Soviet Union, compounded with effects of the ensuing civil war and the powerful earthquake that hit the region, all contributed to a grim economic climate. Poverty has become widespread across the region and is growing.

The humanitarian situation in South Ossetia cannot be described as critical, but remains precarious and certainly requires more attention by international community. The Georgian-South Ossetian peace-process is practically in a deadlock, and the conflict in South Ossetia is at times described as a forgotten one. International aid has markedly decreased in recent years, while the humanitarian situation has actually slightly deteriorated, and some basic rehabilitation needs have grown. Local authorities have no external support to their budget for social security programmes and objectively cannot provide more than a minimal and irregular assistance to their own needy population. There is a widely-perceived need for continuing, and possibly increasing humanitarian aid, especially in the medical sector, as well as basic infrastructure rehabilitation in the fields of electricity, water, sanitation, etc.

[...]

A large majority of South Ossetia's population lives on extremely low salaries or pensions. Some are involved in petty trade or the 'transit' goods trade. Some have obtained the right of Russian pensions, which are considerably higher than the South Ossetian ones. Many working age people are economic migrants and increasingly emigrants to Russia, who then provide remittances that support their relatives. The majority of the population, however, survives on subsistence agriculture. Due to the gloomy overall socio-economic situation, unprecedented level of crime and related manifestations, such as increased drug addiction and suicide rates, have become a huge concern to all. Furthermore, South Ossetia faces demographic erosion as ever larger number of working-age people migrate, or rather emigrate, primarily to the Russian Federation, in search of better employment and income opportunities. Lack of income and employment opportunities is the central issue in addressing the dismal socio-economic situation in the region.

In the absence of adequate programmes to stimulate the economy, the local population, especially the most vulnerable groups, such as single elderly without family support, will remain dependent on humanitarian assistance, for which funding has been low and decreasing. It should be highlighted that the current situation is not conducive to potential returnees. The lack of potential for improvement in the immediate future is a crucial factor in the low number of returnees into South Ossetia, even for the Ossetian ethnic group. Due to the low level of return, UNHCR and its implementing partners have scaled down their presence in the region." (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

UN endeavours to put return on the negotiations' agenda (2003)

- UN officials urge both parties to continue regular dialogue and practical cooperation, in particular on security matters and issues of return
- UNOMIG elaborated a draft concept paper on return in cooperation with UNHCR
- UNDP led a mission to the Gali region and other affected areas in Abkhazia in December 2003 to assess return conditions
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"In the ongoing effort to advance the Georgian Abkhaz peace process, [the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General] and UNOMIG, with the support of the Group of Friends, continued work in three priority areas – economic cooperation, return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and political and security matters – as recommended at the United Nations- chaired meetings of the Group of Friends in February and July 2003 (see S/2003/412, para. 3, and S/2003/1019, paras. 5-8). Results-oriented activities on these three sets of issues, including within the framework of the working groups, agreed to in Sochi by the President of Georgia and the President of the Russian Federation in March 2003 (see S/2003/412, para. 5), remained key vehicles for building common ground between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, and ultimately, for initiating meaningful negotiations on a comprehensive political settlement based on the paper entitled 'Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi' and its transmittal letter (see S/2002/88, para. 3).

[...]

From 20 to 24 November 2003, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, together with my Special Representative, held talks with the Georgian and Abkhaz leaders in Tbilisi and Sukhumi. While reviewing progress since his previous visit in November 2002, the Under-Secretary-General impressed upon the sides the importance of further compliance with the 1994 Moscow Agreement (S/1994/583 and Corr. 1, annex 1), regular dialogue and continued practical cooperation, in particular on security matters and issues of return. On 24 November 2003, he confirmed in a meeting with the newly appointed Interim President of Georgia that the United Nations remained committed to facilitating a lasting settlement with full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

[...]

Meanwhile, the Mission continued to prepare the ground for sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons in safe and dignified conditions, initially to the Gali district. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNOMIG further elaborated its draft concept paper on return, on the basis of feedback received from both sides, in preparation for a subsequent session of the Sochi working group on this issue.

[...]

As a follow-up to the 2002 security assessment mission (see S/2003/412, para. 16), the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) led a mission to the Gali region and the adjoining country-affected areas of Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts from 30 November

to 17 December 2003. The purpose of the mission was to assess the feasibility of a sustainable recovery process for the local population and potential returnees and to identify further action to improve the overall security conditions and ensure sustainable return. In particular, the mission examined the social and economic rehabilitation needs and the modalities and priorities for implementation of the mission's recommendations. Representatives of UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and UNOMIG took part in the mission. UNOMIG played a key role in the preparation and the implementation of the mission. The mission reviewed the level of damage to the local economic and social infrastructure, rehabilitation needs in agriculture and economics, shelter and infrastructure, health and education, and institutional strengthening and examined the feasibility of a phased holistic and area-based rehabilitation approach. The mission noted that possible rehabilitation programme efforts should contribute to the achievement of an adequate security environment and vice-versa. (UN SC 14 January 2004, paras. 3-10)

UN supports confidence building measures to improve security in return areas (2003)

- The UN Security Council approved the addition of a small civilian component to the UNOMIG mission to improve security conditions in return areas
- The deployment of this component in areas under Abkhaz control has been postponed following Abkhaz opposition
- UNOMIG civilian police have started preparations for patrolling in the Zugdidi sector, in conjunction with UNOMIG military observers
- Daily UNOMIG ground patrols of the Gali and Zugdidi sectors continued
- Patrols in the Kodori Valley remained suspended in the wake of the kidnapping of four UNOMIG personnel on 5 June 2003
- UNOMIG continued its efforts at the operational level to build trust between the sides and reduce the potential for misunderstandings

"The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 31 January 2004, subject to a review of this mandate by the Council in the event of changes in the mandate of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS peacekeeping force).

Unanimously adopted resolution 1494, the Council also endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation, contained in his report of 21 July (S/2003/751), to add a civilian component of 20 officers to the Mission to strengthen its capacity to carry out its mandate and, in particular, to contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees." (UN OCHA 2 September 2003)

"In keeping with the Security Council's decision to strengthen the capacity of UNOMIG to carry out its mandate by adding a civilian police component to the Mission, the first 10 officers, including the senior police adviser and his chief of staff, were deployed in November and December 2003. The deployment of the remaining members of the component, however, has been temporarily delayed. This followed advice from the de facto Abkhaz Government that the de facto Parliament had responded negatively to the establishment of a UNOMIG police presence on Abkhaz-controlled territory, especially in the Gali district, and that as a consequence it would be necessary to delay the deployment of the remaining officers.

My Special Representative has been working closely with the Abkhaz authorities to agree on a formula for the operation of those officers already in place in Abkhazia, Georgia, prior to the full deployment of the remaining personnel. In the meantime, UNOMIG civilian police have held introductory meetings with members of the Georgian Government and have begun a preliminary assessment of the most immediate

training and equipment needs in the Zugdidi sector. They have also started preparations for patrolling in the Zugdidi sector, in conjunction with UNOMIG military observers. The selection of 15 Zugdidi district police officers for participating in training at the OSCE-led Kosovo Police Service School is also under way." (UN SG 14 January 2004, paras. 25-26)

"Daily UNOMIG ground patrols of the Gali and Zugdidi sectors continued throughout the period under review. No violations of the 1994 Moscow Agreement were recorded.

Patrols in the Kodori Valley remained suspended in the wake of the kidnapping of four UNOMIG personnel on 5 June 2003 (see S/2003/1019, para. 18). Following the completion of UNOMIG's inquiry into the hostage incident, which recommended additional security measures for the safety and security of the military observers, the Mission has begun working with the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, as well as with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force, to formulate an appropriate operational plan for the resumption of patrolling in the spring of 2004. Patrols will resume only when more robust security measures have been finalized and implemented, and following a demonstrable commitment by both sides, in particular the Georgian authorities, to ensure the security of UNOMIG staff. Helicopter patrols also remain suspended due to ongoing concerns about security; administrative flights have continued along specially designated routes over the Black Sea.

UNOMIG continued its efforts at the operational level to build trust between the sides and reduce the potential for misunderstandings. The UNOMIG-chaired joint fact-finding group, which includes the active participation of the sides and the peacekeeping force, continued to investigate violent incidents. The working group of the joint fact-finding group moved from Sukhumi to Gali to reduce its response time; most incidents continue to take place in the Gali sector. Eight cases are currently under investigations.

The weekly quadripartite meetings have continued to provide a constructive platform for both sides to discuss security-related matters in the presence of the Chief Military Observer and senior staff of the CIS peacekeeping force. Issues of concern during the reporting period included Georgian objections to Abkhaz 'border guards' and 'customs posts', and Abkhaz concerns about the activities of illegal armed groups operating across the ceasefire line.

[...]

UNOMIG worked to establish additional mechanisms to build confidence between the sides in the Kodori Valley. In this connection, it facilitated the establishment of a direct telephone link between the Abkhaz authorities and the senior Georgian representative in the upper Kodori Valley. It has already been used by the sides to brief each other on the extent of the damage following the October floods and subsequent winter snows; it has also been instrumental in facilitating humanitarian assistance to members of the local community.

[...]

It will be recalled that, on 8 October 2003, the sides, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force signed in Gali a protocol under the terms of which both parties agreed to cooperate more closely with each other in the fight against crime and with UNOMIG to improve the prevailing security climate (see S/2003/1019, para. 10). The implementation of this protocol is monitored at the weekly quadripartite meetings. As a further step to improve security, UNOMIG increased its patrolling, with the redeployment to the Gali sector of six additional observers from other parts of the mission area." (UN SC 14 January 2004, paras. 15-21)

"Facilitating the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes in safe and secure conditions remains a core aspiration of the United Nations, even though no additional progress has been made in the implementation of the 1994 quadripartite agreement on voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons (see/1994/397, annex II). The recent agreement between the Georgian and Russian sides [...] to proceed with the re-establishment of the railway in parallel with the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons should open the door to progress on this issue. The United Nations remains committed to the creation of conditions conducive to return, in accordance with UNOMIG's mandate and the recommendations of the Joint Assessment Mission to the Gali district of November 2000. Implementation of the measures proposed by the security assessment missions, aimed at creating a safer

environment in the area, will also be an important factor in facilitating the process of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons." (UN SG 9 April 2003, para. 29)

UN continue to monitor return conditions in Gali and Zugdidi sectors (2002)

- UN security assessment mission visited the Gali and Zugdidi sector
- Sustainable return is hampered by gaps in law enforcement structures and the absence of a political agreement on return
- Consultation on the issue of IDP return will be held regularly within Working Group II of the Coordinating Council

"In follow-up to the November 2000 joint assessment mission (see S/2001/59, annex II) and as requested by the Coordinating Council's Working Group II (on internally displaced persons and refugees; see S/2002/1141, para. 18), a security assessment was undertaken in the Gali and Zugdidi sectors. The assessment team consisted of UNOMIG personnel, two officers from the Civilian Police Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and two police monitors with experience in other United Nations missions. The assessment was carried out with the consent and cooperation of the authorities on both sides of the ceasefire line. Preliminary findings identified specific gaps in the organization, training and equipment of the local law enforcement organs. This, together with the absence of a political agreement on the return of refugees, constitutes a deterrent for persons wishing to exercise their right of return and aggravates the already difficult situation of those who have already returned to the Gali area. Enhancement of the rule of law and the administration of justice in the region so as to provide a safe and secure environment for returnees and internally displaced persons is urgently needed. UNOMIG will study the findings and recommendations of the security assessment upon completion of the team's full report and will follow up in consultation with the two sides." (UN SC 13 January 2003, para. 13)

"The return of internally displaced persons to their homes in safe and secure conditions remains a burning issue. Regrettably, no progress has been made in the implementation of the 1994 quadripartite agreement on voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons (S/1994/397, annex II). The report of the joint assessment mission to the Gali district of November 2000 (S/2001/59, annex II) included recommendations for improving the situation, which should be implemented. On the specific issue of strengthening the law enforcement institutions, an assessment mission has been conducted, and I welcome the full cooperation of the two sides as a positive sign of their willingness to improve the situation for returnees and internally displaced persons." (UN SC 13 January 2003, para. 31)

"Working Group II agrees to discuss the problems of the returnee population regularly. In order to explore ways of strengthening the law enforcement agencies, my Special Representative continued consultations with the two sides. In this connection, a meeting of Working Group II of the Coordinating Council was convened on 20 July, chaired by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Georgia. Working Group II had previously only met twice in 1998. The outcome included a request for UNOMIG to dispatch a security assessment team to the Gali and Zugdidi districts later this year, as a follow-up to the recommendations of the joint assessment mission undertaken in November 2000 (see S/2001/59, annex II). [...] Working Group II also agreed that the problems of the returnee population would become a topic for the weekly quadripartite meetings (these meetings bring together the two parties, UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force for regular exchange on practical issues on the ground)." (UNSC 14 October 2002, para. 18)

For more information on the 20 July 2002 meeting of the Working Group II, see UN OCHA IDP Bulletin, October 2002, p. 13 [Internet]

See also "Abkhaz side ready to start talks on return of IDPs in Gali district", United Nations Association of Georgia, 1 February 2003 [Internet]

International organisations have been mandated to assist in creating conditions for return (2000-2001)

- Insecurity obliges UN Observer Mission (UNOMIG) to limit its patrols in return areas to daylight hours
- The passivity of the CIS Peacekeeping Force in the face of physical attacks against returning internally displaced persons has been a cause for concern
- The United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia (HROAG) is expressly mandated to contribute to the safe and dignified return of the displaced
- The Human Rights Office has undertaken to facilitate preparation of an Abkhaz version of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

"The Security Council, which regularly reviews the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, has repeatedly affirmed the imprescriptible right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return in safety and dignity to their previous places of permanent residence. A number of international and regional mechanisms deployed to the region have expressed responsibilities to assist in creating the conditions conducive to return. The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), consisting of unarmed military observers charged primarily with monitoring and verifying implementation of a 1994 ceasefire agreement, is, 'by its presence in the area, to contribute to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons'. UNOMIG explained that it does so primarily through regular patrols throughout the region, meeting with community leaders and reporting violations to local law enforcement officials for response. UNOMIG also used to maintain team bases in a number of outlying villages. However, the deterioration in the security condition led to the termination of semi-permanent presence in isolated areas. As a result, its patrolling activities now are limited to pre-planned visits in daylight hours. Local and international NGOs in Abkhazia both noted that it would be useful for UNOMIG to undertake patrols in lower Gali more frequently.

The Commonwealth of Independent States Peacekeeping Force (CISPKF), composed of Russian troops, with which UNOMIG is to cooperate in observing the ceasefire, was also established with the expectation that 'its presence should promote the safe return of refugees and displaced persons, especially to the Gali district' [Moscow Agreement of 14 May 1994, Protocol concerning the peacekeeping force of the CIS]. The mandate of CISPKF refers to 'facilitating the return to their former places of permanent residence, in conditions of safety and dignity, of persons who left the conflict zone and the implementation of other provisions of the Quadripartite Agreement on the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons of 4 April 1994' and 'ensuring compliance with the norms of international law and human rights'. The passivity of CISPKF in the face of physical attacks against returning internally displaced persons, however, has been a cause for concern in the past. Although the Representative did not have the opportunity to meet with officials of CISPKF to discuss how the Force presently carries out its protection functions, UNOMIG and other United Nations officials pointed out that CISPKF is currently playing a crucial role in combating the widespread criminality and lawlessness which is a main source of violence in the Gali district.

The United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia (HROAG) established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1077 (1996) as a component of UNOMIG in cooperation with OSCE is also expressly mandated to contribute to the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Relevant in this regard is the monitoring by HROAG of the human rights situation in the region, bringing cases of violations to the attention of the de facto authorities. Many of the cases raised were reported to relate to property rights, in particular to the restitution of homes and property of the displaced, which may be occupied by militia, and to harassment on ethnic grounds.

Though a number of international and regional mechanisms thus have specific mandates to support the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons to Abkhazia, primary responsibility for the creation of the necessary security conditions for return of course rests with the authorities. The Abkhaz authorities with whom the Representative met readily acknowledged that they had certain obligations to ensure security and, in reference to the events of May 1998, that their armed forces had committed 'a number of grave mistakes' in the past. They suggested that now the problem of insecurity stems not so much from politically motivated violence but, rather, is largely one of general lawlessness and criminality. Yet both at the central and local levels, the Abkhaz authorities have failed to take measures to address this situation of insecurity and thus bear responsibility for its persistence which, it must be said, appears to be in their interest in that it impedes the safe return of ethnic Georgians. It is incumbent upon the central and local Abkhaz authorities to establish law and order and, in particular, to address the issue of impunity, by investigating and responding to security incidents and prosecuting perpetrators.

The work of HROAG in providing human rights training to law enforcement officials makes a contribution to this end. The Human Rights Office has undertaken to facilitate preparation of an Abkhaz version of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and to integrate it into its training programmes for law enforcement officials." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 84-88)

See the full text of the Moscow Quadripartite Agreement, 4 April 1994 [Internal link]

A critical view on the role of the CIS peacekeeping forces

"Back in their home region, the returnees live in constant danger. While the Abkhaz militia continues to harass and kill ethnic Georgian inhabitants, the Russian peacekeeping troops deployed in the area do not provide any effective protection. In fact, there are many well-documented cases in which peacekeepers participated in raids against ethnic Georgian civilians. Most regrettably, the Russian government continues to contribute to the poor human rights situation in the area by supporting the self-proclaimed regime morally, politically and financially. It seems a prolonged state of instability in Abkhazia lies in the interest of Russia, as it justifies its military presence and involvement in the region. Attempts of the Georgian government to change or broaden the composition of the peacekeeping troops, as a means to improve the protection of the non-combatant citizens in the self-proclaimed republic, have also met with severe resistance from the part of Russia. (IHF September 2001, p. 36)

Joint assessment mission to the Gali district evaluate conditions for the return of the displaced (November 2000)

- The mission led by the head of the UN Human Rights Office included experts from other UN agencies and the Council of Europe
- The mission recommended the UN to explore the opening in Gali city of a human rights branch office and to contribute to improving law enforcement in the area
- The mission also reviewed the issues of the language of instruction in Gali district schools
- Abkhazian and Georgian sides have agreed to discuss practical implementation of the mission's recommendations (2001)

"Under the aegis of the United Nations, a joint assessment mission led by the head of the United Nations human rights office was carried out in the Gali district between 20 and 24 November, in close cooperation with OSCE and with the participation of experts from, inter alia, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Council of Europe. The purpose of the mission was to evaluate conditions for the safe, secure and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons to the district. The mission, in its preliminary findings (see annex II), recommended that my Special Representative explore the opening in Gali city of a branch office

of the United Nations human rights office; consider with the two sides how to improve law enforcement training and further integration of the local population in the law enforcement structures; seek broader cooperation between the law enforcement organs of both sides; and assist in finding a non-discriminatory solution to the question of the language of instruction in Gali district schools. On 27 and 28 November, at the invitation of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, my Special Representative attended the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Vienna to inform participants about the mission." (UN SC 18 January 2001, para. 8)

For the preliminary finding of the joint mission, see annex II of the Secretary-General's report [Internet]. The full text of the report of the joint assessment mission is available on the website of UNOMIG [Internet]

"As a follow-up to the Joint Assessment Mission to the Gali district, conducted in November 2000, on 24 September the Georgian and Abkhaz representatives and participants of the Mission explored ways for the practical implementation of recommendations set forth in the Joint Assessment Mission Report (see S/2001/59, annex II) and agreed to a number of recommendations for the Coordinating Council. The meeting gave specific attention to progress in the return of displaced persons to the Gali district, human rights, public security and language of instruction. The issue of the language of instruction in the Gali district was also taken up during a visit to the Gali region on 20 September by the Georgian and Abkhaz Ministers of Education, who agreed to continue their efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution." (UN SC 24 October 2001, para. 24)

International humanitarian agencies are reluctant to undertake programmes that may encourage return to unsafe areas (2000)

- Concerns about the security and financial shortages prevent UNHCR from providing reintegration assistance to returnees in the Gali district
- UNHCR however is planning to resume protection-monitoring activities in the accessible parts of the security zone

"UNHCR activities are frequently undertaken in collaboration with the SRSG, UNOMIG, 'Friends of Georgia' and other partners on sharing information and protection monitoring to devise a cautious and coherent approach to supporting return. As a consequence, carefully considering the precarious security situation in Gali, UNHCR assumed a measured intervention in assisting the spontaneously returned population without jeopardising the peace process. Provisions included hygiene parcels, school kits and building materials to repair schools and community centres. Security is of paramount concern to UNHCR when considering redeployment into Gali District and beyond. Significant funds, beyond the current budget, to cover staff security and operations is a pre-requisite for an enhanced operation that meets the acute needs in Gali District (where it is reported that as many as 40,000 people have spontaneously returned without security and political guarantees)." (UNHCR September 2001, pp. 210-211)

"UNHCR remains ready to provide reintegration assistance to returnees in the security zone should the Abkhaz and Georgian sides agree on and implement towards tangibly improving the security situation further to the security arrangements already established the Coordinating Council framework. However, for time being, criminality and sporadic paramilitary activities continue to raise concerns about the safety of sizeable population that has already returned spontaneously despite the security threats, and of United Nations civilian personnel. There are continuing consultations by UNHCR with the two sides, initiated request of my Special Representative, to explore conditions for a constructive meeting of Working Group II on refugees and internally displaced persons, which could help address this situation. In addition to security concerns, the current financial situation of UNHCR makes it difficult to ensure an adequate deployment of staff in the zone of conflict. However, efforts are being made for a limited resumption of protection-monitoring activities by UNHCR staff in accessible parts of the security zone." (UN SC 18 January 2001, para. 21)

"In the Gali region, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Halo Trust, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins sans frontières France continue to undertake humanitarian activities. These activities, however, are limited because of security concerns, in particular the activities of criminal organizations. In addition, humanitarian agencies are reluctant to undertake programmes that may encourage the return of displaced persons to unsafe areas. Efforts by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides continue to implement the concrete measures for the improvement of the security climate agreed on during the bilateral meetings of 3 February (See S/2000/345, paras. 6, 16 and 18) and 3 May 2000 [...]" (UN SC 17 July 2000, para. 23)

See also *"Where IDPs Would Want to Live If There is no Resolution to the Abkhazeti Situation in the Next Three Years"*, GAI Survey [Internet]

UN Special Representative conducts bilateral consultations on key issues, including return to Abkhazia (2000)

- Disagreement persists between the two sides to finalize a draft protocol on the return of refugees to the Gali (August 2000)

"During the reporting period, my Special Representative, in cooperation with the Russian Federation as facilitator, the members of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Georgia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), continued his efforts in pursuit of a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia. He worked on the issue of the future political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia, the improvement of the security situation, the return of refugees to the Gali district as a first step towards the return of all refugees, the economic rehabilitation of Abkhazia and confidence-building. As a result, the Coordinating Council mechanism was improved and the network of security arrangements in the Mission's area of responsibility was strengthened.
[...]

The eleventh session of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides was held on 24 October in Tbilisi under the chairmanship of my Special Representative. The session confirmed the reactivation of the Council's Working Group I on security matters, whose recommendations were adopted. The Working Group subsequently met in its sixth session on 13 December in Sukhumi [...]. After an interruption of almost three years, Working Group III on social and economic questions held its third session on 5 December in Tbilisi. Agreement was reached on a number of specific projects aimed at rehabilitating the communications systems in the zone of conflict and adjacent areas. These projects will be submitted for consideration to the Coordinating Council at its twelfth session. Efforts to convene Working Group II on refugees are continuing. (UN SC 18 January 2001, paras 3-6)

"On 6 and 7 August 2000 in Tbilisi, and again on 20 August in Sukhumi, my Special Representative chaired consultations between the Georgian Minister for Special Affairs, Malkhaz Kakabadze and Anri Jergenia, the personal representative of Abkhaz leader Vladislav Ardzinba, on the basis of the Protocol signed on 11 July 2000 at the tenth session of the Coordinating Council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides in Sukhumi (see S/2000/697, para. 8). The Protocol called upon the two sides to finalize the draft protocol on the return of refugees to the Gali district and measures for economic rehabilitation and the draft Agreement on peace and guarantees for the prevention of hostilities. Although the Georgian side put forward new versions of both draft documents, which have been on the negotiating table in some form since June 1998, disagreement between the two sides persisted. The consultations also included broader discussions of central aspects of a comprehensive political settlement. During the visit to Tbilisi, President Shevardnadze received Mr. Jergenia and both sides gave assurances of their commitment to resolve the outstanding issues constructively and exclusively through peaceful means.

On the basis of the Protocol, both sides submitted to my Special Representative proposals concerning further work in the field of confidence-building measures, with a view to preparing for the third Meeting on Confidence-building Measures to be convened in Yalta at the end of November 2000, at the invitation of the Government of Ukraine." (UN SC 25 October 2000, paras. 4-6)

See also "Joint assessment mission to the Gali district evaluates conditions for the return of the displaced (November 2000)" [Internal link]

Some internally displaced have opted for resettlement (2000)

- Ossets have often opted to resettle in South out of fear for their safety
- Persons who participated in the hostilities, or have relatives who did, consider themselves to be at particular risk of reprisals should they return

"While the right of displaced persons to return to their previous areas of permanent residence must be ensured, it is also imperative that return not be viewed as the only possible durable solution for the displaced, who also have a right to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country. Although government policy, especially with regard to ethnic Georgians displaced from Abkhazia, appears to have been powerfully guided by the political priority placed on return of the displaced, resettlement in other parts of the country also must be supported for those internally displaced persons who desire it. The Guiding Principles, to which Georgian government officials responded so positively, affirm that the authorities have a duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily to their homes or places of habitual residence or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.

Already, and despite the overriding emphasis on return, it is beginning to be recognized that certain internally displaced persons are unlikely to want to return, out of fear for their safety. The case, noted above, of the Osset man who had opted to resettle in South Ossetia rather than return to his previous residence in government-controlled Georgia, where he feared his safety could not be guaranteed, is one example. Persons who participated in the hostilities, or have relatives who did, consider themselves to be at particular risk of reprisals should they return and thus are likely to prefer resettlement.

An IRC pilot project is providing shelter construction assistance (roofing material, paint, windows, etc.) to some 30 families displaced from Abkhazia who have indicated that they will not return. An additional criterion for participation in the programme is that the prospective beneficiaries own land - a condition which, as detailed above, requires registering as a permanent resident in the area concerned and, under existing legislation, losing one's status as an internally displaced person and the benefits that this entails." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 105-107)

De facto Abkhaz authorities take unilateral initiative to promote return to the Gali region (January 1999)

- Possible economic interests behind the Abkhaz unilateral return initiative
- Returnees must be approved and registered by the Abkhaz Authorities
- The objective may be to keep the level of return to the amount necessary to cultivate crops in order to maintain the current ethnic balance

"The *de facto* president of Abkhazia declared in January 1999 a unilateral return of IDPs to the Gali region beginning on 1 March 1999. Several analysts have suggested that economic reasons contributed to this

sudden policy as the Gali region is primarily agricultural and people were needed to plant and then harvest the crops. However, neither the *de jure* Georgian authorities nor the international community supported the call for a return as the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities refused security guarantees for the returnees. Furthermore, returnees must be approved and registered by the "Commission on the Return of Refugees and the Economic and Social Rehabilitation of the Gali Region." The IDP Committee is able to accept or refuse an individual's application to return, with little opportunity to appeal. Refusal to return is reportedly determined by the person's activities during the conflict, which is based on records left behind by the retreating Georgian military and authorities. Persons accused of participation in the conflict are detained and then delivered to the Military Tribunal in Ochamchira for investigation and trial." [...]

"The document checks and the inability to thoroughly investigate and arrest Abkhazian and Georgian criminal gang members clearly intimidate the local population in the Gali district, which is primarily Mingrelian/Georgian. The consequences of such policies effectively limit the number of IDPs willing to permanently return to the Gali region. It is the opinion of the author that these policies are directed to minimize the number of Mingrelian/Georgian returnees to only the amount necessary to cultivate crops in order to maintain the current ethnic balance – a complete return would significantly tip the population balance in favor of Georgians/Mingrelians. A representative of the European Community Humanitarian Office recently stated at a conference that ECHO estimates 150,000 persons to be residing in Abkhazia, although the figures are open to some dispute. Thus, the balance between ethnic Abkhazians and ethnic Georgians is roughly equal." (Kathleen 1999, p.2-4)

Return movements

Return to Abkhazia continues despite insecurity (2003)

- An estimated 40,000-60,000 IDPs have spontaneously returned to the Gali district, at least on a seasonal basis
- Between 30,000 and 40,000 of them are now residing almost permanently there
- Donors have shown an increasing interest in supporting projects in the Gali district

"Specific to Abkhazia, there are additional concerns of the international community such as the high-level of criminality and insecurity in some areas. Moreover, an estimated 15,000 landmines are spread throughout Abkhazia, which endangers humans and livestock, and restrict access to peoples' land. The most complex security situation is in Gali District where an estimated 40,000-60,000 IDPs have spontaneously returned or at least seasonally returned to farm their lands, but where the implementation of relief assistance or rehabilitative programming is limited by these security concerns. Unfortunately, partly because of the lack of rehabilitation on the most basic of infrastructure (i.e. schools, health centres, houses, water, sanitation) and security concerns a good number of these IDPs remain after the end of the summer. However, as a number of returnees, between 30,000 and 40,000 are now residing almost permanently in Gali district, and there is a broad understanding that socio-economic conditions in Abkhazia are not improving, but rather degrading for the most vulnerable strata of the population, some donors have indicated more willingness to support infrastructure and small community building projects. In late 2002 and throughout 2003, a somewhat greater interest by donors to support projects in Abkhazia has been noted, which resulted in launching or re-starting some important new programmes and initiatives, most importantly, this resulted in the reopening of the office of *Première Urgence* in November 2002, which *Accion contra el Hambre* reactivated its programme in January 2003, subsequently introducing two other projects, one funded by SDC and another implementing partner to WFP." (UN OCHA November 2003, pp. 17-18)

UNHCR facilitates return to South Ossetia (2003)

- UNHCR continued to advocate for the return of the population displaced during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict
- In addition to returning refugees, UNHCR also assisted IDPs willing to return
- The number of returning IDPs assisted by UNHCR increased significantly in 2003
- Assistance provided includes shelter rehabilitation, support to the health care and education system
- UNHCR hired a local consultant on legal issues to assist returnees with solution of their property restitution issues
- Other agencies implemented rehabilitation projects in return communities

"In 2003, UNHCR Georgia continued to support the conflict resolution process for the returnee caseload from the Georgian - Ossetian conflict of 1989 - 1992, under the aegis of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Being an observer to the Joint Control Commission (JCC), UNHCR advocated for the right of the displaced to return to their home in both secure and dignified conditions.

In 2003, UNHCR continued to facilitate voluntary repatriation of refugees from North Ossetia to the places of their former residence in South Ossetia and Georgia Proper. Four Voluntary Repatriation convoys have been organized and a total of 39 families (117 individuals) have returned to the places of their former residence and have been assisted by UNHCR with standard block houses or shelter rehabilitation kits (roof repair kits, room repair kits, doors & windows). It is worthwhile to note that the number of refugee returnees in 2003 is more than twice as many as in 2002. UNHCR in the zone of the Georgian - Ossetian conflict has also assisted the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who chose to return to the places of their former residence. UNHCR implementing partner and counterparts in South Ossetia and Georgia Proper registered 531 IDP families (approx. 2,000 persons) who wished to return. In 2003, the office assisted 106 IDP families (377 individuals) in South Ossetia with shelter in terms of standard block houses, roof repair kits, room repair kits, doors & windows. Here again the number of IDP returnees increased tremendously in 2003 (more than 3 times) if compared to the number assisted in 2002. As such, in 2003, a total of 145 families (494 individuals) including both refugees and IDPs who have expressed their wish to return to their places of former permanent residence were assisted with shelter by UNHCR upon their return to their formal place of residence. In order to meet the local standards and requests from beneficiaries and the local authorities, the size of UNHCR standard block house constructed in the year 2003 was increased to 44.4 m² (instead of 38.4 m² in the previous years).

Apart from shelter assistance to returnees, UNHCR provided shelter assistance for establishment of a medical point in the biggest collective center in Tskhinvali (Turbaza) which will provide medical assistance to IDPs and returnees in the area. UNHCR also supported a doctor and 2 nurses in this collective centre with allowance while ADRA provided medical equipment and medicines. In April 2003, UNHCR provided 30 doors and 46 windows for rehabilitation of schools in South Ossetia. UNHCR has also funded jointly with OSCE and UNICEF the summer camp project for 20 children from the conflict zone including IDP and returnee children. In co-ordination with SO Vladikavkaz, UNHCR continues to discuss the conduction of an information campaign targeting refugees in North Ossetia in order to make them more aware of the situation in the area of potential return in South Ossetia and Georgia Proper. UNHCR hired a local Consultant on legal issues to assist returnees with solution of their property restitution issues. UNHCR will continue to assist repatriation and continue to provide shelter for refugees and IDPs willing to return to the places of their former permanent residence in 2004.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided financial support for urgent repair work for schools in the villages of Khelcho and Teregvan. Secours Populaire Francaise (SPF), in collaboration with the local NGO ADA, completed the rehabilitation of the drinking water supply system in

September 2002 in Khokhat-Sarabukh village in which some 120 returnee families reside. The rehabilitation improved living conditions and was expected to support the return process. (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

Seasonal nature of return to the Gali district (2000)

- Hazelnut crops draw displaced persons back to Abkhazia for the harvest in the summer
- Another factor influencing the seasonal nature of return is the issue of education
- The 'seasonal returnees' often go back and forth between Georgia proper and their home areas several times a season
- Movement back to Georgia proper also corresponds to times when internally displaced persons are scheduled to receive humanitarian assistance in Georgian proper

"There is indeed a clear seasonal pattern to return, connected with the cultivating season and taking advantage of the fertile land in the Gali district. Hazelnuts are one of the more lucrative crops, drawing displaced persons back to Abkhazia for the harvest in the summer who then return to Georgia proper for the fall and winter months. It was noted that, in the absence of access to land or to adequate opportunities for employment and income-generation in Georgian proper, economic desperation is a driving force in the decision of the displaced to return, if only temporarily.

Another factor influencing the seasonal nature of return is the issue of education, in particular the language of instruction. According to the curriculum developed by the de facto Abkhaz 'Ministry of Education', elementary education, from grades one to five, is provided only in Russian. This is true even in what are designated as Georgian language (as opposed to Russian or mixed Russian/Georgian) schools. Though instruction is provided in the Georgian language from grade six onwards, the prohibition on instruction in Georgian in elementary education was pointed out as being a powerful deterrent to durable return of displaced ethnic Georgians as it threatens to impede the possibility for higher education elsewhere in Georgia. Though some language and cultural instruction is provided on the margins of the core material, Georgian history reportedly is not taught at all.

[...]

It should be noted that the 'seasonal' nature of the return relates to the general timing of return as opposed to its duration. The 'seasonal returnees' often go back and forth between Georgia proper and their home areas several times a season. International observers noted that there is regular traffic of internally displaced persons, especially across the bridge near Zugdidi that connects southern Gali with Georgia proper. In the case of persons whose homes are in southernmost Gali (it was said that some displaced could see their homes across the Inguri river), the actual period of return may be as little as a few hours. Typically, it is several days or weeks, with displaced persons then going back to Georgia proper, in particular once they have harvested produce to sell. Movement back to Georgia proper have also been noted to correspond to times when internally displaced persons are scheduled to receive humanitarian assistance, which in Abkhazia, where the activities of international humanitarian organizations are limited, is inadequate to meet the actual needs of the population there." (UNCHR 25 January 2000, paras. 79-82)

Report of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (13 July 2000)

"To survive, [IDPs in Zugdidi], who live in frightful poverty, depend entirely on family support, ie other courageous family members who infiltrate the Abkhazian border region of Gali at night or with the help of 'gifts' to work for a few days or longer in order to make a living and pick up and bring back to Zugdidi whatever they can find for their families. It is said that 7 to 8,000 illegal workers (including more than one

quarter of the IDPs registered in Zugdidi) leave and return every week! The 'cruel' question here of course has yet to receive an official answer: whether not only the electricity is in the process of being 'cut', but also food and financial aid to the IDPs near and along the border on the Georgian side in order to prompt them to return sporadically to Abkhazia and to try to ensure their material survival there and thus maintain international political pressure on the Abkhazian authorities. This is the actual opinion of many officials whom we met, who spoke of "attempts to instrumentalise the Georgian IDPs", but I can neither confirm nor invalidate this hypothesis without additional reliable facts on the subject." (Council of Europe 13 July 2000, III - Refugees and displaced persons wishing to return to their place of origin)

De facto Abkhaz authorities allegedly exaggerate number of Georgian returnees in Gali (1999)

- Some IDPs return gradually to tend crops and look after property
- Environment of general insecurity impede stable return of IDPs

"Despite the lack of security, an estimated 17,000 of those expelled in May [1999] returned again to Gali soon after the fighting abated. Although some internally displaced persons from Gali reportedly traveled back and forth between their property in Gali and Georgia proper during 1999, no significant returns took place." (USCR 2000, p. 239)

"The *de facto* Abkhaz authorities report that 35,000 IDPs have registered in the Gali region between 1 March and 1 October 1999. In June, only 4000 IDPs had been registered according to local press reports. They also estimate that there are a further 25,000 returnees who remain unregistered as of 1 October. [Footnote: "UNOMIG has obtained data from the CIS peace-keeping force stationed at the Inguri Main Bridge – the only official crossing point – and other unofficial crossing points which indicate that the number of people entering into Abkhazia is not high enough to generate the numbers of returnees claimed by the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities.] IDPs initially returned to the Gali region on a temporary basis. Typically, older male heads of the household, and perhaps a couple of male relatives, would be the first to cross the cease-fire line. IDPs usually stated that personal security was one of their greatest concerns during the early spring period, and typically came only for short periods of time (the farther away from the cease-fire line, the longer these initial periods were) before going back to the Zugdidi side of the cease-fire line. The situation remained very fluid – IDPs were returning to the Gali region and then departing to the Zugdidi region only to return again. Once they deemed the situation safe enough, they would send for other family members, eventually bringing the women and children members closer to summer. Gradually, the periods of time spent in Abkhazia have grown longer, although still very fluid.[...]

In spite of predictions that there would be a widespread departure of returnees for the Zugdidi side of the cease-fire line with the onset of winter, most prefer to remain in Abkhazia. Returnees were (and still are) concerned about four issues: 1) their living conditions as many buildings are not habitable; 2) they would no longer be able to even minimally support themselves after the harvest; 3) the language of instruction in schools would not be in Georgian; and 4) their security situation. However, when interviewed, the returnees state that conditions are no better on the Georgian side; at least they can be marginally self-sufficient in their homes. The returnees still live in a state of fear and uncertainty, but their attachment to their land bears a greater significance in the decision to remain.[...]

While most returnees to the Gali region currently prefer to remain there throughout the winter, any deterioration of the situation will likely cause them to depart again for the Georgian side of the cease-fire line. Harassment by law enforcement officials (usually militia men), as well as the lack investigations and

criminal proceedings against perpetrators, generates an environment of fear and instability, which has the potential to escalate and contribute once more to displacement."(Samuel, 1999, p.2-6)

UNHCR 1994 return plan fails (1995)

- Abkhaz representatives paid only lip-service to UNHCR's return plan
- UNHCR moved ahead despite reports on violence against Georgian returnees in Abkhazia
- Abkhaz "authorities" sought to implement the plan in a discriminatory manner
- The UNHCR plan was designed for the return of 80,000 IDPs, but only 311 people finally opted to repatriate under the plan

"From the outset, the Abkhaz government has officially supported the UNHCR-supervised repatriation plan as defined in the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons signed in Moscow on April 4, 1994, by Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia and the UNHCR.

In practice, however, official support for the repatriation plan was consistently contradicted by the statements and actions of Abkhaz representatives both in Sukhumi and the Gali region. International NGOs report that in preliminary meetings in Sukhumi in May 1994, Abkhaz officials, notably Deputy Prime Minister Enver Kanba, expressed open hostility toward ethnic Georgians. Officials in the Gali region did the same. While fighting continued around Gali, there were almost daily reports of violent attacks on ethnic Georgians who had tried to return from Gali to check on their homes and gardens. The Abkhaz authorities attributed these deaths to landmines and bandits, taking no responsibility for the ethnic targeting that was in fact taking place.(OSI 1995, pp.19-20)

"The plan endorsed in April 1994 by Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia and the UNHCR called for the repatriation of the displaced population in stages, starting with some 80,000 people who fled the Gali region in southeastern Abkhazia as defeated Georgian troops retreated in September 1993. Most of these people abandoned their homes before Abkhaz troops reached the region, seeking refuge with the local population in and around the Georgian town of Zugdidi across the Inguri river. Non governmental organizations working in Sukhumi believe that about 30,000 have already returned to the Gali region.

According to the UNHCR plan, some 80,000 IDPs were to be repatriated before the end of October 1994. The plan included, among other features, a computerized inventory of all potential returnees; provision of materials to the returnees for reconstruction of homes; a media campaign to inform and prepare the populations on both sides of the border; and a controversial prior review process whereby Abkhaz authorities reserved the right to screen potential returnees, excluding anyone who had taken up arms on the Georgian side (the majority of able-bodied men), or who intended to take up arms in the future. Abkhaz authorities later extended the exclusion criteria to persons having sent money out of Abkhazia. By autumn 1994, the NGO community believed Abkhaz officials had compiled a list of 14,000 to 25,000 Georgians not permitted to return to their homes.

Critics of the UNHCR repatriation program, including the NGO community in Tbilisi, faulted the plan for its hasty preparation, particularly for ignoring some of the refugee organization's own standard procedures in assessing community attitudes on both sides of the border before promoting a mass repatriation. Following are the main criticisms of the plan cited by leading NGOs working in Georgia:

An exclusionary clause included in the Quadripartite Agreement allows authorities to exclude former Georgian combatants from repatriating to their Abkhaz homes. But it also casts a wide net over all men of fighting age, excluding them for past as well as possible future activity; moreover, the time-frame for the screening process is open-ended, allowing the authorities to assess someone at any time. While the women and children related to excluded men would be allowed to return, critics point to the destabilizing effect of

long-term family separation, and the massing of a restive male exile population on the Zugdidi side of the border.

The UNHCR headquarters staff in Geneva was aware of this program, and delegations were dispatched to Georgia to perform assessments. Geneva also deployed one of the most experienced field officers from its ex-Yugoslavia program to run the operation from Zugdidi. To the NGOs in Georgia it seemed inconceivable that the headquarters would proceed with a \$4 million plan without considering the physical risks to the returnees and the potential for the program to end in disaster. By September 1994, many NGOs were even more adamantly opposed to proceeding under the terms of the plan, citing the above criticisms and underscoring the UN's own weekly reports of rampant criminality in Abkhazia and daily assaults, abductions, rapes and house-burnings in the Gali region when Georgians tried to return from Zugdidi.

Despite repeated appeals by the groups that were to serve as implementing partners in the repatriation plan, UNHCR did not sufficiently survey either the displaced population in Georgia or the resident population in Abkhazia into which the IDPs would have to be reintegrated. While thousands trickled home on their own, only 311 people finally opted to repatriate under the UNHCR plan."(Open Society Institute 1995, pp.27-31)

Since then, UNHCR has taken a more cautious stand on the issue of return: "The adoption of two essential protocols concerning the return of IDPs and the rehabilitation of Abkhazia, is still awaited. In March [1999], the Abkhaz side unilaterally initiated the registration and repatriation of IDPs in Gali district. It is estimated that the current population in Gali region is around 30,000. However, the sustainability of return is questionable since there are still no security guarantees from either side." (UNHCR 1999, Mid-Year Progress Report-Georgia)

See the full text of the Moscow Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons, Signed on 4 April 1994 [Internal link]

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Security constraints affects delivery of humanitarian assistance to Abkhazia and western Georgia (2001-2002)

- The volatile security in the Gali district and the Kodori Valley complicates the provision of humanitarian assistance
- Patrols in the Kodori valley have been suspended since an hostage incident in June 2003
- Criminality also affects the work of humanitarian agencies in western Georgia (Imereti)
- Road access to Abkhazia are also frequently blocked by protesting IDPs

Abkhazia

"In certain parts of Abkhazia, most notably Gali District and the Kodori Valley, the volatile security environment complicates even the provision of humanitarian assistance. The lack of safe and dignified conditions for returnees in Gali District remains as one of the biggest challenges faced by international humanitarian agencies. Acute humanitarian and basic rehabilitation needs continue to be a problem and the difficult economic situation encourages criminality. Many returnees often migrate between Georgia proper and Abkhazia based on harvest seasons, while continuing to receive IDP allowances in Zugdidi. After assessing the conditions in Gali District, UNHCR has resumed certain types of assistance including support for the rehabilitation of schools to address the needs of persons who have already returned. Recognising that the security threat in certain parts of Gali District precludes regular programming visits by humanitarian actors, UNOMIG, in consultation with UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, has been exploring ways in which it can contribute to the alleviation of human suffering in regions in which the UNOMIG patrols constitute the only regular international presence." (UN OCHA 20 January 2004)

"Patrols to the Kodori Valley remained suspended in the wake of the kidnapping of four UNOMIG personnel on 5 June 2003 (see S/2003/1019, para. 18). Following the completion of UNOMIG's inquiry into the hostage incident, which recommended additional security measures for the safety and security of the military observers, the Mission has begun working with the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, as well as with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force, to formulate an appropriate operational plan for the resumption of patrolling in the spring of 2004. Patrols will resume only when more robust security measures have been finalized and implemented, and following a demonstrable commitment by both sides, in particular the Georgian authorities, to ensure the security of UNOMIG staff. Helicopter patrols also remain suspended due to ongoing concerns about security; administrative flights have continued along specially designated routes over the Black Sea." (UN SG 14 January 2004, para. 15)

Imereti

"The frequency of criminality in Imereti, appears to be increasing. The threat of burglaries of international and local organisations' offices and their staff members' houses still remains.

Since November there have been four documented crimes committed against international organisations working in Kutaisi, two of them with firearms. In response to the deteriorating state of security conditions, senior representatives of international humanitarian organisations who are working in the region have been in dialogue with Mr. Nugzar Paliani, Kutaisi Mayor, to discuss the situation. Currently, both international and local non-governmental organisations (NGO) acknowledge the need for security coordination in the

region and express their common commitment to improving the security situation in order to enable the effective use of humanitarian and development resources." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

"Popular demonstrations are a common feature of the region, primarily by the politicised or disaffected local population or IDPs demanding improvement of their social-economic conditions, timely payment of benefits, and progress in the negotiations on return and settlement. From the beginning of January until present time the Inguri River bridge has been blocked by IDP protestors complaining about the Government and demanding of the withdrawal of the CISPKE or for their mandate that expired in December 2002, not to be renewed. The blockade prevents any vehicular movement. According to UNOMIG's assessment, the renewal of the CISPKE mandate may make the situation in the region more unstable and tense." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

NGOs denounce corruption (2002)

- Government imposes import taxes on humanitarian goods

"Another problem is corruption. 'It's too hard to find anyone honest in government,' RI was told repeatedly. For fear of companies importing products duty free under the guise of humanitarian aid, the Georgian government has imposed an import tax. Also, the Georgian government has found other ways to profit from NGOs. RI learned that international organizations have to buy data from the Ministry of Statistics even though foreign aid constitutes 25 percent of the economy. One NGO requested RI, 'Tell the world to wake up and push the Georgian government to allow NGOs to work freely.'" (RI 13 November 2002)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

National response

Georgian government response to the IDP situation -structures and legal framework (1992-2003)

- The Minister for Refugees and Accommodation acts as the government focal point for issues of internal displacement
- Since 1992, about 200 legal documents have been adopted in relation to IDPs in Georgia
- The 1996 "Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted" provides for the status of IDPs in Georgia
- The national IDP status does not include victims of natural or human-made disasters
- For most IDPs, the main source of income is the IDP state allowance funded from the central budget
- IDPs are also entitled to other benefits, such as discounts on utilities, telephone communication and transportation

Structures

"To be sure, there exists a certain solidarity between the Government and the internally displaced, at least the ethnic Georgians who constitute the majority of the displaced, which can be attributed in particular to shared ethnic kinship. Accordingly, and unlike in many cases of internal displacement, the displaced are not associated with the 'enemy', nor are they subject to attacks on their physical security on that basis. The Government readily acknowledged the problem of internal displacement and invited the international community to assist it in meeting the emergency needs of the displaced.

Years on, the Government continues to give emphasis to the plight of the internally displaced. The Minister for Refugees and Accommodation, who acts as the government focal point for issues of internal displacement, pointed out that 15 per cent of the State budget is devoted to providing internally displaced persons with assistance to meet their basic needs. And yet, given the current conditions of deprivation in which the displaced find themselves and the delays of months on end in the payment of their subsidy, questions arise as to the diversion of funds. It was difficult, for instance, to obtain a clear answer to the question whether all funds for displaced persons from Abkhazia were channelled through the Abkhaz Government in Exile, which, in addition to describing the humanitarian activities that it undertakes through the system of parallel structures, also informed the mission delegation in considerable detail of the defence capabilities that it maintains." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, paras. 109-110)

Legal framework

"According to the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia, over 260,000 IDPs are registered in Georgia as a result of ethnic conflicts in South Ossetia (beginning in November 1989) and Abkhazia (beginning in August 1992). Since the country had no previous experience with IDPs and the legislative basis regulating their protection did not exist, the Georgian Government had to develop IDP-related legislation and protective mechanisms on an ad hoc basis. This explains the shortcomings in the current IDP-related Georgian legislation and the necessity for its further improvement to approximate to the relevant international norms.

[...]

Citizens of Georgia displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who found a temporary shelter within the territory of Georgia, are referred to as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The term 'persecuted' has the same meaning in the Georgian legislation.

Since 1992 approximately 200 enactments and bylaws (both general and specific) have been adopted. This indicates that addressing IDPs' problems and taking care of IDPs is a priority issue for Georgia.

Georgian legislation regulates IDPs' rights by means of two types of legal acts, namely:

- a. Legal acts that are limited to IDPs only and do not apply to other citizens of Georgia. These acts regulate issues related to the specific state of IDPs;
- b. Legal acts that are not limited only to IDPs. These acts apply to the entire population of Georgia, including IDPs.

The principal legal act that directly regulates IDPs' rights is the 'Law of Georgia On Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted' as of June 28, 1996. According to the Preamble, the Law 'defines the legal status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia, establishes their legal, economic and social guarantees, and ensures the respect and realization of their rights and legal interests.' This law though has no general provision for the equality and non-discrimination of IDPs. As for the enactments and bylaws of Georgia, which regulate IDPs' rights and legal status, they provide almost no differences between IDPs and the rest of the population. Concrete examples of violations of IDPs' rights [...] could be explained either by IDPs' ignorance of their own rights, or by the ignorance of IDPs' rights on the part of representatives of local authorities or relevant agencies, or by the abuse of IDP rights." (UN OCHA June 2003, pp. 5-6)

An unofficial English translation of the "Law on Internally Displaced Persons - Persecuted", as amended on 18 December 2001 is available in Annex B of the Study on IDP Rights, UNOCHA Tbilisi, June 2003 [Internet]

National IDP definition

"At present, IDPs' rights on the territory of Georgia are being regulated in accordance with the 'Law of Georgia On Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted', which states that 'a citizen of Georgia or a stateless person permanently residing in Georgia can be considered as an Internally Displaced Person, if he/she was forced to leave his/her place of residence and has been displaced (within the territory of Georgia) on the grounds of threat to life, health or freedom of his/her family members as a result of aggression from a foreign state, internal conflict or mass violation of human rights.'

At the same time, according to the 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement', 'internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border'. These two definitions differ from each other, because according to the Georgian legislation, victims of natural or artificial disasters are not considered to be IDPs. This inconsistency may be explained by the fact that the Georgian Committee on Migration and Accommodation (the present Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia) was then being advised by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR's mandate had no provisions for this category of IDPs. Besides, by 1996, persons displaced as a result of armed conflict experienced the most serious problems." (UN OCHA June 2003, p. 7)

Social rights and benefits of IDPs

"IDPs are entitled to state allowances from the central budget that represent the main source of income for the majority of them. The sum is much less than the subsistence minimum and it is paid to all IDPs even if they work and receive a salary meeting the subsistence minimum.
[...]

As from September 1, 1998, because of Presidential Decree #469, IDPs are entitled to the following range of allowances: IDPs living in private accommodation – GEL 14 per person per month, for residents in collective centres – GEL 11. The 2003 state budget envisages GEL 39,564,400 for IDP allowances.

[...]

Apart from the state allowances, IDPs are entitled to certain benefits funded by the central government, such as discounts on community utilities, electricity, water supply, telephone communication and transportation. In addition, IDPs of the pension age and those who fought for the territorial integrity of Georgia receive pensions." (UN OCHA June 2003, pp. 17-18)

"IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia found asylum in almost all Georgian regions. Many of them reside in collective centres, while the rest stay either with relatives and friends or in private apartments. Local authorities hosting IDPs are obliged to provide so-called 'civil service' to displaced persons, as well as other benefits envisaged by the local budget for local residents.

[...]

Since the aid depends on the extent of the regional budget, assistance provided varies from place to place." (UN OCHA June 2003, p. 20)

Examples of rights and exemptions granted by the Georgian law:

The right to have agricultural land plots for temporary use (Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted", Article 5, paragraph h)

The right to be exempted from paying the land tax on agricultural land plots (Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted, article 5, paragraph h)

Exemptions of IDPs from fees payable for getting certificates with official stamp issued by registry offices; persons recognized as IDPs according to the rule established by legislation shall be exempt from state duties. (Decree # 201 of the President of Georgia of March 4, 1996; Law of Georgia on State Duties, article 5, para. 3d)

Right to free education in public schools (Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted)

Right to free passage of IDPs in Tbilisi in Public Electric Transport (Resolution # 264 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Georgia of May 10, 1995)

Right to preferential travel by railway transport (barring commercial train) on the territory of Georgia (50% discount) (Resolution of the Railway Department of Georgia, 1997; Order #1 of the Minister of Transport and Communications of Georgia on Railway Transportation Preferences for IDPs of January 3, 2001)

Discounts for electricity payment for IDPs residing in collective centres (Order #481 of the President of Georgia of November 26, 2001, Article 13, para. B)

Right to preserve his/her status after marriage (Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted)

Right to grant an IDP status to a child upon the parents' consent if one of them is not an IDP (Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted) (UN OCHA June 2003, annex A)

For a comprehensive review on the actual implementation of these rights, consult the Study on IDP Rights, UN OCHA, June 2003 [Internet]

See also "Monitoring of Legal and Actual Status of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia", Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, 1999 [Internal link]

See also "IDPs stage demonstrations against national authorities and international organizations (2001-2002)" [Internal link]

New Approach to IDP Assistance: an advocacy initiative to promote self-reliance of IDPs (1999-2003)

- The New Approach to IDP Assistance was launched in 1999 by the government and UN agencies

- It aims at engaging IDPs within their present communities without prejudice to the right to return
- A joint UNDP/OCHA Support Unit undertakes assessments of IDP needs and evaluate implementation of projects funded by the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund

"The New Approach to IDP Assistance initiative, launched jointly by the Government of Georgia, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Bank and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 1999, aimed to improve the lives of displaced persons in Georgia, as well as the conditions of host communities by reforming the government policy and by developing more appropriate assistance programs." (UN OCHA October 2002)

"In light of the hard conditions faced by IDPs, UNDP, UNHCR, OCHA and the World Bank have forged an innovative partnership to substantially improve the lives of IDPs in Georgia and their host communities by reforming government policy and supporting the transition from humanitarian assistance to development centred activities. The 'New Approach' recognizes the inviolable right of IDPs to return to their homes in secure conditions, as well as the right of IDPs to be treated in the same manner as all citizens. Categorisation as an IDP need not result in social, political and economic marginalisation. The New Approach, therefore, favours the provision of humanitarian aid to IDPs only within the overall context of vulnerability in Georgia; raising awareness within the Government, the IDP community and society at large regarding possibilities to more fully engage IDPs within the life of their present communities without prejudice to their right to return; giving IDPs an opportunity to build skills and a level of self-reliance that will enable them to take advantage of opportunities to utilize their full range of rights.

The New Approach, guided by emphasis on sustainable development, aims at facilitating progress in each of the above priorities by: overcoming legislative obstacles to the participation of IDPs in civil society; creating capacity building programmes for IDPs; rationalising subsidies to IDPs; implementing a comprehensive assessment of vulnerability, and opening development-oriented assistance to the displaced. Joint UNDP/OCHA Support Unit (SU), created by the decision of the New Approach donor community, is undertaking monitoring and evaluation of activities of project implementation processes of the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund, a component of the New Approach joined by SDC and USAID; elaborating of the public participation and awareness strategy for the New Approach to increase the awareness of the society on its objectives and mechanisms, as well as to ensure active involvement of various groups in the transparent consultative processes; carrying out additional studies, surveys and reports on educational profile of IDPs, financial instruments for self-reliance (e.g. Study on IDP Rights; Working Paper on IDP Vulnerability and Self-Reliance; etc.)." (UN OCHA November 2003, pp. 14-15)

See also "The Georgia Self-Reliance Fund (GRSF): support to innovative strategies for IDPs' integration (1999-2003)" [Internet]

For more information see following documents by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

"Georgia: New Approach to IDP Assistance", 1 October 2000 [Internet]

"Georgia Self Reliance Fund seeking proposals for small-scale pilot programs", 1 October 2000 [Internet]

"The Georgia Self Reliance Fund: Announcement for the second round of the New Approach to IDP assistance", 6 June 2001 [Internet]

"The Georgia Self Reliance Fund announces the completion of the Fund's First Grant Competition", 27 April 2001 [Internet]

See also the presentation of the New Approach by Mr. Brian Keane, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), in Refugee #7, 2000 (15), a bi-monthly newsletter published by the United Nations Association of Georgia [Internet]

For more information, consult Assistance Georgia, a web site administered by Save the Children, which provides information in support of humanitarian and development aid activities in Georgia [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/>]

IDPs protest against the slow payment of allowances (2003-2004)

- In January 2004, IDPs held Minister hostage in protest of authorities' failure to pay IDP allowances
- IDPs staged a demonstration outside UNOMIG headquarters in Zugdidi (December 2003)

"Internally displaced persons from Abkhazia blocked on January 20 [2004] the regional administrative building in the western town of Zugdidi holding inside newly appointed Minister for Refugees and Accommodation Eter Astemirova.

IDPs from Abkhazia have not received their allowances for several months.

The IDPs said they would not release the Minister, until the authorities pay the debt on allowances for three months. (UNAG 20 January 2004)

"Minister for Refugees and Accommodation Eter Astemirova who was taken hostage by internally displaced persons from Abkhazia in Zugdidi, was released as a result of involvement of the riot police. [...]

Displaced persons keep protesting in outside the administrative building in Zugdidi, claiming that the local authorities misappropriated IDPs' allowances." (UNAG 20 January 2004)

"On 4 December [2003], approximately 65 internally displaced persons staged a peaceful protest outside the [UNOMIG] Zugdidi sector headquarters against the Government's non-payment of monthly allowances. The matter was resolved with the assistance of local civilian and police authorities, who assured UNOMIG of appropriate measures for the safety and security of UNOMIG personnel, including on patrols." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 23)

See also "IDPs stage demonstrations against national authorities and international organisations (2001-2002)" [Internal link]

International response

UNHCR scales down direct assistance to IDPs (2004)

- Objectives remain to promote the right of IDPs to return and to ensure that IDPs can exercise rights as citizens of Georgia
- UNHCR will continue to urge development agencies to include IDPs in national poverty alleviation strategies
- Basic shelter assistance will continue to be provided to refugee and IDP returnee families

"In Georgia, UNHCR's goal for 2004 is to find and implement durable solutions for refugees, returnees, and IDPs, while further scaling down direct assistance to IDPs. The operation's main objectives will remain: 1) to provide life-sustaining assistance to Chechen refugees, and ensure that they enjoy the rights granted under the 1951 Refugee Convention; 2) to promote the right of refugees and IDPs to return to their place of former residence, in support of the conflict resolution processes led by the UN and by the OSCE in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respectively; 3) to ensure that IDPs exercise their rights as citizens of Georgia; 4) to encourage Georgia to adopt legislation on the voluntary return of formerly deported Meskhetians, and promote accession to the Conventions on statelessness.

UNHCR will endeavour to strengthen the capacity of authorities and civil society to ensure that the protection afforded to refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR is in accordance with international standards. UNHCR will continue to identify the most viable durable solutions for the Chechen refugees, such as local integration, voluntary repatriation or resettlement. UNHCR will continue to urge development agencies to include IDPs in national poverty alleviation strategies. The Office will promote legislation that would enable IDPs to exercise their rights fully as citizens of Georgia. As part of recent diplomatic efforts to revive the conflict resolution process, UNHCR will help to prepare for potential returns to the Gali district. Basic shelter assistance will continue to be provided to refugee and IDP returnee families. Protection monitoring will continue in returnee villages, particularly in minority villages. UNHCR will also continue to work with NGOs. The precarious security situation in some of the operational areas remains a concern. UNHCR will close its office in Sukhumi but will maintain its offices in Gali and Zugdidi." (UNHCR November 2003, p. 218)

Financial requirements (in US\$)

Appeal for 2002 (UNHCR November 2001)	5,365,825
Appeal for 2003 (UNHCR December 2002)	4,826,025
Appeal for 2004 (UNHCR November 2003)	3,824,802

For examples of UNHCR activities on behalf of IDPs in Georgia, you can consult:

- *OCHA Georgia: South Ossetia Briefing Note January 2004 [Internet]*
- *OCHA Georgia: Abkhazia Briefing Note January 2004 [Internet]*

UNOMIG's presence contributes to the return of the displaced to the Gali district (1993-2004)

- UNOMIG was originally established in August 1993 to verify compliance with the 1993 ceasefire agreement
- From 1994, UNOMIG monitors the security zone between Abkhazia and Georgia proper and the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the Kodori Valley
- UNOMIG contributes to the creation of conditions conducive to the return of refugees and displaced persons
- A civilian police component of 20 officers was added to UNOMIG in July 2003 to that effect
- The Missions also implements a series of small-scale quick-impact projects to alleviate the plight of IDPs and returnees

"UNOMIG was originally established on 24 August 1993 by Security Council resolution 858 (1993) to verify compliance with the 27 July 1993 ceasefire agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities in Georgia with special attention to the situation in the city of Sukhumi; to investigate reports of ceasefire violations and to attempt to resolve such incidents with the parties involved; and to

report to the Secretary-General on the implementation of its mandate, including, in particular, violations of the ceasefire agreement. The authorized strength of the Mission was 88 military observers.

After UNOMIG's original mandate had been invalidated by the resumed fighting in Abkhazia in September 1993, the Mission was given an interim mandate, by Security Council resolution 881 (1993) of 4 November 1993, to maintain contacts with both sides to the conflict and with Russian military contingent, and to monitor and report on the situation, with particular reference to developments relevant to United Nations efforts to promote a comprehensive political settlement. Following the signing, in May 1994, by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, the Security Council, by its resolution 937 (1994) of 27 July 1994, authorized the increase in UNOMIG's strength to up to 136 military observers and decided that the mandate of an expanded Mission shall be as follows:

To monitor and verify the implementation by the parties of the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May 1994;

To observe the operation of the peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) within the framework of the implementation of the Agreement;

To verify, through observation and patrolling, that troops of the parties do not remain in or re-enter the security zone and that heavy military equipment does not remain or is not reintroduced in the security zone or the restricted weapons zone;

To monitor the storage areas for heavy military equipment withdrawn from the security zone and the restricted weapons zone in cooperation with the CIS peacekeeping force as appropriate;

To monitor the withdrawal of troops of the Republic of Georgia from the Kodori Valley to places beyond the boundaries of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia;

To patrol regularly the Kodori Valley;

To investigate, at the request of either party or the CIS peacekeeping force or on its own initiative, reported or alleged violations of the Agreement and to attempt to resolve or contribute to the resolution of such incidents;

To report regularly to the Secretary-General within its mandate, in particular on the implementation of the Agreement, any violations and their investigation by UNOMIG, as well as other relevant developments;

To maintain close contacts with both parties to the conflict and to cooperate with the CIS peacekeeping force and, by its presence in the area, to contribute to conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons.

A United Nations office for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, Georgia, was established on 10 December 1996 in accordance with Security Council resolution 1077 (1996) of 22 October 1996. It is jointly staffed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Human Rights Office forms part of UNOMIG and reports to the High Commissioner for Human Rights through the Head of Mission of UNOMIG.

By resolution 1494 (2003) of 30 July 2003, the Council endorsed the recommendations by the Secretary-General that 'a civilian police component of 20 officers be added to UNOMIG, to strengthen its capacity to carry out its mandate and in particular contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees'.

Most recently the mandate of UNOMIG was extended until 31 July 2004 by Security Council 1524 (2004) of 30 January 2004." (UN DPI 2004)

"UNOMIG continued to provide timely and targeted assistance for the improvement of living conditions for internally displaced persons and access for its military patrols by repairing roads and bridges, with the completion of a further two quick-impact projects, bringing the total of completed quick-impact projects in 2003 to 16. Another 21 projects are at an advanced or intermediate stage and 10 others are awaiting the release of funds by donors." (UN SC 14 January 2003, para. 29)

For more information, consult the website of UNOMIG (<http://www.unomig.org>) [Internet]

See also "UN supports confidence building measures to improve security in return areas (2003)" [Internal link]

Expanding humanitarian activities in Abkhazia (2003)

- The humanitarian situation has deteriorated for many people in the area since 1998
- There is a need to encourage community development and mobilization initiatives in Abkhazia
- UNHCR has resumed certain types of assistance including support for the rehabilitation of schools to address the needs of returnees in the Gali district
- Despite insecurity, some donors, such as ECHO, are indicating willingness to support infrastructure and community building projects in the Gali district

"The civil war in Abkhazia led to a displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and subsequent economic collapse. This has severely impoverished much of the population in Abkhazia and left large segments of the population vulnerable. International humanitarian agencies have continued with provision targeting the most acute food and medical needs among the most vulnerable segments of the population. However, international aid has been steadily decreasing since 1998, while the humanitarian situation has not significantly improved and, according to most humanitarian organisations present in the region, has been aggravated for many people.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the humanitarian aid is still required for some groups, most specifically for the elderly without family support and those with major disease, it is a commonly-shared view of the international community active in Abkhazia that it is time the emphasis should be shifted towards addressing the underlying causes of humanitarian needs more proactively. There is, for example, much scope for local-level, participatory community mobilisation projects designed to increase opportunities for self-help and community building, thus preventing further de-capitalisation and destitution. Even through the political status of Abkhazia remains unresolved and the peace process is in a deadlock, more concerted efforts by the international community should be directed towards low-scale rehabilitation activities aiming at improved basic living conditions and creating more income. There is still a need to encourage community development and mobilization initiatives in Abkhazia.

In certain part of Abkhazia, most notably Gali district and the Kodori Valley, the volatile security environment complicates even the provision of humanitarian assistance. The lack of safe and dignified conditions for returnees in Gali District remains as one of the biggest challenges faced by international humanitarian agencies. Acute humanitarian and basic rehabilitation needs continue to be a problem and the difficult economic situation encourages criminality. Many returnees often migrate between Georgia proper and Abkhazia based on harvest seasons, while continuing to receive IDP allowances in Zugdidi. After assessing the conditions in Gali District, UNHCR has resumed certain types of assistance including support for the rehabilitation of schools to address the needs of persons who have already returned. Recognizing that the security threat in certain parts of Gali District precludes regular programming visits by

humanitarian actors, has been exploring ways in which it can contribute to the alleviation of human suffering in regions in which the UNOMIG patrols contribute the only regular international presence.

In 2003, UNHCR, UNV, ICRC, MSF, and the HALO Trust continued their programmes, while some others started, resumed or considered resuming their work in Abkhazia. Nevertheless, donor organisations are still by and large reluctant to intervene, mainly due to precarious security conditions and lack of progress in peace-process negotiations. But as a number of returnees, between 30,000 and 40,000, are now residing in Gali District, and there is a broad understanding that socio-economic conditions in Abkhazia are not improving, but rather further degrade the living conditions for the majority of the population, some donors are indicating willingness to support infrastructure and small community building projects. By end 2002, and throughout 2003, a somewhat greater interest by donors to support projects in Abkhazia was noted. This resulted in the reopening of the office of *Première Urgence* in November 2002, while *Accion contra el Hambre* (ACH) reactivated its programme in January 2003, subsequently introducing two other projects, one funded by SDC and another as implementing partner to the UN World Food Programme (WFP). By end 2002, UNIFEM and AED also opened their respective offices in Sukhumi. Notably, ECHO in early 2003 announced the allocation of 1.3 million Euro to support humanitarian programming in Abkhazia and western Georgia in 2003, which was to be effected through ICRC and ACH programmes. ECHO mission took place in May 2003 and visited ECHO-funded projects in Samegrelo and Abkhazia. ECHO thereafter confirmed that it intended to continue and even expand its humanitarian programmes in the region. A new funding decision of 2.2 Million Euro was adopted in September 2003, which will allow to continue funding food security programmes implemented by the ICRC and ACH.

On 18 November 2003, OCHA convened a conference in Tbilisi to present the Georgia Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 to the Government of Georgia, donors and other assistance community. The objectives were similar to the Conference convened earlier for the 2003 Strategy Document and Conference (held in February 2003). The Strategy 2004 aims at assisting the humanitarian and related players in their strategic planning, fundraising, advocacy and other efforts on behalf of the vulnerable population in Georgia. It is also expected to spur further debate, discussion, and action on the issues contained therein. Four prioritised areas, as identified earlier by participants in the process, were discussed at the Conference: IDPs, Food Security, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Special Populations (Elderly, Children, Persons with Disabilities). The prioritised panel group Abkhazia and South Ossetia concluded that there is no humanitarian emergency in Abkhazia at present, as compared to the situation in early years following the armed conflict in early 1990s. However, the panel also identified gaps in humanitarian and related rehabilitation needs in Abkhazia. The panel group's recommendations for Abkhazia (as for South Ossetia) were the following: continue to facilitate international and local efforts to bring a peaceful settlement of the conflict; review the humanitarian situation and address the existing gaps, with priority given to the health sector; support, to a much larger extent, rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and private dwellings; increase income and employment generating activities; consider more labour-based infrastructure and community mobilisation / development projects; encourage support to psycho-socially oriented projects aimed at addressing the various long-standing psychological problems related to the conflicts and their aftermath; coordinated support to civil society and local NGO development and sustainability. It should be noted that upon the February 2003 Humanitarian Conference there has been noticeably more interest by the international community in considering support to various programmes in Abkhazia, and some new projects have actually been materialised. It is expected that the November 2003 Conference will also prompt more international organisations to consider additional or new programming in Abkhazia as per the Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 Document recommendations." (UN OCHA 20 January 2004)

Recommendations of the humanitarian community regarding Abkhazia can be found in the Georgia Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 [Internet]

For details on activities by sector, consult the Abkhazia Briefing Note January 2004 [Internet]

Low international presence in South Ossetia (2003)

- International aid has markedly decreased in recent years, while the humanitarian situation has actually slightly deteriorated
- Most international NGOs have completely closed down their presence in the area
- UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF maintain only a low-level presence
- EU has granted 1,2 million to support IDPs and returnees in the area in 2004
- The level of humanitarian aid in South Ossetia in 2003 was considered inadequate for the well-being of the most vulnerable segments of the population

"During the time of the Soviet Union, the region was a relatively prosperous one. Its mines, factories, and farms supplied raw materials to markets across the Soviet Union, and the mountainous regions of Java were dotted with resorts and tourist bases. Since 1989, however, the collapse of the Soviet Union, compounded with effects of the ensuing civil war and the powerful earthquake that hit the region, all contributed to a grim economic climate. Poverty has become widespread across the region and is growing.

The humanitarian situation in South Ossetia cannot be described as critical, but remains precarious and certainly requires more attention by international community. The Georgian-South Ossetian peace-process is practically in a deadlock, and the conflict in South Ossetia is at times described as a forgotten one. International aid has markedly decreased in recent years, while the humanitarian situation has actually slightly deteriorated, and some basic rehabilitation needs have grown. Local authorities have no external support to their budget for social security programmes and objectively cannot provide more than a minimal and irregular assistance to their own needy population. There is a widely-perceived need for continuing, and possibly increasing humanitarian aid, especially in the medical sector, as well as basic infrastructure rehabilitation in the fields of electricity, water, sanitation, etc.

There has been, for quite some time, a consensus amongst international humanitarian actors on the ground that properly designed transitional assistance programmes could spur confidence building, support and encourage return of IDPs/refugees, and promote rapprochement at the political level. It is, therefore, essential, to further raise awareness amongst donors to encourage appropriate assistance to the region. Throughout 2002 and 2003, the trend has, however, been quite the opposite. The deadlock in political negotiations, overall donor fatigue in a wider, regional frame, as well as some misunderstandings between the local authorities and international NGOs, have resulted in complete closure of most international NGOs and a prolonged delay in implementation of planned projects by others. While OSCE supports a range of activities in South Ossetia, and UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF maintain their low-level presence, it is noteworthy to point out that there is only international NGO, i.e. ADRA, currently operational in the area and dealing with health matters relevant to humanitarian situation. Possible implementation of the rehabilitation activities through EU's EUR 2.5. million grant, [EUR 1,2 million will be allocated to projects supporting returnees and IDPs. For more information see also envelop on developments in 2003 [Internal link]] would be a major project in the region in years.

A large majority of South Ossetia's population lives on extremely low salaries or pensions. Some are involved in petty trade or the 'transit' goods trade. Some have obtained the right of Russian pensions, which are considerably higher than the South Ossetian ones. Many working age people are economic migrants and increasingly emigrants to Russia, who then provide remittances that support their relatives. The majority of the population, however, survives on subsistence agriculture. Due to the gloomy overall socio-economic situation, unprecedented level of crime and related manifestations, such as increased drug addiction and suicide rates, have become a huge concern to all. Furthermore, South Ossetia faces demographic erosion as ever larger number of working-age people migrate, or rather emigrate, primarily to the Russian Federation, in search of better employment and income opportunities. Lack of income and employment opportunities is the central issue in addressing the dismal socio-economic situation in the region.

In the absence of adequate programmes to stimulate the economy, the local population, especially the most vulnerable groups, such as single elderly without family support, will remain dependent on humanitarian assistance, for which funding has been low and decreasing. It should be highlighted that the current situation is not conducive to potential returnees. The lack of potential for improvement in the immediate future is a crucial factor in the low number of returnees into South Ossetia, even for the Ossetian ethnic group. Due to the low level of return, UNHCR and its implementing partners have scaled down their presence in the region.

On 18 November 2003, OCHA convened a conference to present the Georgia Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 to the Government, donors and other assistance community. The objectives were similar to the Conference convened earlier for the 2003 Strategy Document and Conference (held in February 2003). The Strategy 2004 aims at assisting the humanitarian and related players in their strategic planning, fundraising, advocacy and other efforts on behalf of the vulnerable population in Georgia. It is also expected to spur further debate, discussion, and action on the issues contained therein. Four prioritised areas, as identified earlier by participants in the process, were discussed at the Conference: IDPs, Food Security, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Special Populations (Elderly, Children, Persons with Disabilities). The prioritised panel group Abkhazia and South Ossetia concluded that there is no humanitarian emergency in South Ossetia at present, as compared to the situation in early years following the armed conflict in early 1990s. However, the current level of humanitarian aid in South Ossetia is considered inadequate for the well-being of the most vulnerable segments of the population. The panel group's recommendations for South Ossetia (as for Abkhazia) were the following: continue to facilitate international and local efforts to bring a peaceful settlement of the conflict; review the humanitarian situation and address the existing gaps, with priority given to the health sector; support, to a much larger extent, rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and private dwellings; increase income and employment generating activities; consider more labour-based infrastructure and community mobilisation / development projects; encourage support to psycho-socially oriented projects aimed at addressing the various long-standing psychological problems related to the conflicts and their aftermath; coordinated support to civil society and local NGO development and sustainability." (UN OCHA 15 January 2004)

Recommendations of the humanitarian community regarding Abkhazia can be found in the Georgia Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 [Internet]

For details on the programmes by sector in South Ossetia, consult UN OCHA's South Ossetia Briefing Note January 2004 [Internet]

UN sponsors review of IDP rights (2003)

- The UN supported a review of IDP rights within the framework of the New Approach in 2003
- The study reviews and analyses all normative acts related to IDPs' rights
- Shortcomings in the IDP-related legislation and mechanisms hampering the enjoyment of IDPs' rights were identified
- Steps to follow-up on the survey include public awareness campaign on IDP rights and legal reforms, particularly regarding voting rights

"The New Approach Support Unit (consisting of staff from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UN Development Programme (UNDP)), created to strengthen the New Approach work, and in particular, to support the Government to better undertake the leading role, developed the Study on IDP Rights together with the Governmental Working Group (including the State

Chancellery, the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) within the framework of the New Approach to IDP Assistance Initiative. The work on this study was preceded by its authors' field trips to the regions of Georgia that host a large number of IDPs or where the problems pertaining to IDPs have not been fully investigated. The joint group members visited Samegrelo, Imereti, Borjomi and Bolnisi regions and Rustavi city. Meetings and consultations with the Georgian government, as well as international and local NGO representatives, working on IDP issues, were also conducted.

The present study is the first attempt to review and analyse all normative acts related to IDPs' rights. The authors aimed at studying all existing rights, benefits and restrictions pertaining to IDPs in Georgia. They also looked into the actual extent to which IDPs enjoy their rights and benefits, and examined how informed IDPs are on their rights. Shortcomings in the IDP-related Georgian legislation and mechanisms hampering the enjoyment of IDPs' rights were identified. To address these, a set of recommendations was also worked out.

Authors of the study believe that the study itself will prove helpful not only for the New Approach Initiative and donor organizations involved, but also for IDPs themselves and all governmental, international and local agencies, as well as private persons concerned with IDP issues.

The main subject of the Study on IDP Rights is to investigate the juridical status of IDPs residing in Georgia. The paper consists of three basic chapters, fourteen subchapters, and a section of recommendations. In order to facilitate understanding of laws and evidence considered in the Study, the paper is furnished with two normative acts that are fundamental as regards regulation of IDPs' juridical status in Georgia. Attached also is a list of the Georgian governmental structures responsible for IDPs, and IDP rights/exemptions envisaged by the Georgian legislation and reviewed in the study." (UN OCHA September 2003, p. 1)

Follow-up Steps To Implement the Recommendations of the Study on IDP Rights

"Several steps have already been undertaken by the New Approach Support Unit and UNDP Program Analyst to implement the recommendations of the Study on IDP Rights, presented to the society at large in June 2003:

- Public Awareness campaign for IDP Voting Rights was launched and implemented to promote and stimulate IDPs' participation in Parliamentary elections of 2 November (a video clip featuring former Public Defender, Central Electoral Commission Chairperson, Nana Devdariani was shot; 3,000 posters with key information on elections were distributed throughout Georgia in collective centres, Post-Bank branches, Precinct and District Election Commissions).
- The Information/Public Awareness Working Group was created. Comprehensive Public Awareness Strategy has already been prepared.
- Recommendations of the Study on IDP Rights, concerning IDPs' voting rights and procedures of IDP participation in elections conducted through majoritarian election system have been implemented during the recent elections through special provisions, included in the Electoral Code, approved in August 2003.
- The Support Unit and UNDP are making efforts to support the recommendation concerning creation of information base of IDPs through capacity building of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia.
- The Legal Working Group was created. The Legal Working Group, which consists of representatives from governmental agencies, working with IDPs, international and local NGOs, experts prepared the draft revisions to the Tax Code of Georgia and the "Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons-Persecuted" as recommended by the Study. The Legal Working Group, managed by the Legal Expert, plans to introduce these revisions for the ratification of the Parliament of the new convocation.

In addition, the Legal Working Group launched a comprehensive policy discussion on IDP Rights, challenges to their enforcement, as well as lack of public awareness." (UN OCHA December 2003, p. 1)

UNHCR: scale of operations in respect with IDPs will continue to decrease in 2003

- UNCR will continue to facilitate voluntary return and local integration of IDPs to their places of original residence
- School rehabilitation projects in the Gali district and other areas in Abkhazia have been implemented in support to returnees
- In Western Georgia, activities to promote the mobilization of the community and the building of civil society continued in partnership with NGOs
- A small-scale humanitarian programme in Sukhumi aimed at ensuring basic food and medical needs of vulnerable war-affected elderly persons in 2002

"While the scale of UNHCR operations in **Georgia** will continue to diminish in 2003, particularly in respect of IDPs, the objectives remain: 1) to provide protection and life-sustaining assistance to Chechen refugees while durable solutions are being identified; 2) to facilitate the voluntary return and local integration of refugees and IDPs to their places of former residence, while supporting the UN and OSCE-led conflict resolution processes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, respectively, and promoting the full exercise by IDPs of their rights as citizens of Georgia; 3) to reinforce the protection of the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers through implementation of the 1951 Convention, bringing national instruments into line with international standards; and 4) to encourage Georgia to adopt legislation on property restitution and on the voluntary return of formerly deported Meshkhetians and the restoration of their citizenship rights, while promoting accession to the conventions on statelessness.

UNHCR's operations will focus on protection, capacity-building for the authorities and implementing partners, repatriation of Ossetian refugees and life-sustaining assistance to destitute Chechen refugees. In so doing, UNHCR will work with WFP, UNICEF, national and international NGOs, as well as the authorities. In its assistance activities, UNHCR will prioritise the most needy groups and continue to advocate the relocation of Chechen refugees outside the Pankisi Valley to ensure better security and delivery of basic assistance. The Office will continue to promote other durable solutions, such as resettlement. Individual shelter assistance will be provided to returnee families of both refugees and IDPs. Protection monitoring in returnee villages will continue, particularly in minority villages. Refugees and IDPs will receive individual legal assistance on a variety of problems, including property restitution, through local implementing partners throughout Georgia. UNHCR will also work to promote legislation that will uphold all the rights of the IDPs. Training is planned for local NGOs, authorities, border guards and parliamentarians, including a course on refugee law. The security situation in certain parts of the country is a major cause for concern as it renders working conditions precarious." (UNHCR December 2002, p. 230)

"Returnees to Gali district

By early 2002, 24 schools had been rehabilitated in Gali and Ochamchira areas, providing schooling to some 4,342 pupils. In April 2002, UNHCR began a new scheme for the rehabilitation of schools focusing on the areas beyond Gali. The technical assessment of 49 schools (including eight in the Gali district) where 9,756 students are enrolled, was completed in May and rehabilitation of these schools is in progress. Following a community-based approach, school committees were established to organize and supervise the renovation of school buildings of a self-help basis. UNHCR has also succeeded in retrieving two barracks in Gali district from the military forces operating in the area, to return them to their original use of schools. UNHCR maintains regular contacts with the SRSG, UNOMIG, the Friends of Georgia of the Secretary-General and other partners to share information and ensure a balanced approach to support the return of refugees. Security of the returnees and UNHCR staff remains of paramount concern.

Internally Displaced Persons from the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict

In Western Georgia, activities to promote the mobilization of the community and the building of civil society continued in partnership with NGOs. 500 vulnerable IDP and local families, who are participating in a livestock and food-security scheme received training on agricultural activities and management issues from UNHCR implementing partner. Unfortunately, recent flooding has affected pastures and crops and consequently their income-generation capacity. Highly motivated vulnerable IDPs and local adolescents participated regularly in 25 youth development clubs. Training of Civic Education, the English language and computers were provided. The clubs implemented 12 community projects, 16 projects for club members and eight small business projects. Basic needs of a multi-ethnic group of 270 war-affected vulnerable elderly persons in Sukhumi were met and hot meals were served at an old-age home and a nearby hospital." (UNHCR September 2002, pp. 177-178)

"Schools in Abkhazia

By December 2002, the implementation of the school rehabilitation project has essentially been completed, with reconstruction works in a few locations remaining to be finished by the local communities. UNICEF supported this effort by the provision of 22 school-in-a-box kits for children at the primary education level (about 1,700 beneficiaries), which will be distributed through UNHCR channels." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

"Food aid to vulnerable in Sukhumi

UNHCR conducts a small-scale humanitarian programme aimed at ensuring that the basic food and medical needs of a group of vulnerable war-affected elderly in Sukhumi are met. ICRC runs several programmes to address the food security needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population throughout Abkhazia. Nearly 20,000 persons receive food and non-food items, which covers their basic nutritional needs and helps them to live a more dignified life. The food assistance consists of either daily meals in 21 canteens, or of a dry food ration, distributed to targeted beneficiaries on a monthly or bi-monthly basis." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

Financial requirements (US\$)

2002 (UNHCR November 2001)	5,365,825
2003 (UNHCR December 2002)	4,826,025 [1]

[Footnote 1: This includes USD 1.15 million for activities in respect of IDPs.]

The Human Right Office in Abkhazia: a component of the UN observer mission (1996-2003)

- The Office's mandate is to monitor the human rights situation in Abkhazia and to contribute to the safe return of IDPs and refugees
- Main activities include human rights training, monitoring of human rights development, and dialogue with all relevant actors
- The Office supported the translation of key human rights instruments into the Abkhaz language, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

"Terms of reference/legal authority

The Office was established on 10 December 1996 following Security Council Resolution 1077 (1996) of 22 October 1996. The Office is jointly staffed by OHCHR and the OSCE, in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two organizations on 25 April 1997, and mandated by Security Council resolution 1077 (1996). The Human Rights Office form part of, and is funded by the DPKO United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), under the authority of the Head of Mission of UNOMIG.

Functions/mandate

HROAG carries out its activities within the framework of the mandate, approved by the UN Security Council and designated in the program for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights in Abkhazia (supplement 1 to the Secretary - General, Report to the Security Council regarding the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia dated 15 April 1999 S/ 1996/284).

The mandate of the Human Rights Office is to monitor human rights situation in Abkhazia and to protect the human rights of the population of Abkhazia, Georgia, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to promote the respect for human rights and to contribute to a safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons, to establish direct contacts in Abkhazia so as to advise the competent authorities in Tbilisi and Sukhumi (Abkhazia) on how best to improve the human rights situation and to report on human rights developments (S/1996/284 of 15 April 1996).

The important work of the Office has also included implementation of the OHCHR technical co-operation project for Georgia which has now been completed (February 2002).

The objectives of the project were:

1. To provide access to UN human rights information and capacity development in human rights for authorities, institutions of higher learning and all sectors of society;
2. To develop the legal community's capacity to teach human rights in the administration of justice and improve effectiveness;
3. Human rights capacity development for NGOs and mass media to strengthen civil society.

Main activities

- The above-mentioned objectives were accomplished primarily through training sessions for trainers. Teaching materials were developed, refined, and tested locally, and published in sufficient quantities for future long-term local use. UN human rights reference materials have been distributed to established permanent human rights depository libraries. Activities planned under the project included the translation of the International Bill of Human Rights into the Abkhaz language; training courses on UN human rights teaching in higher education; establishment of two human rights depository libraries; training courses on teaching in the area of administration of justice; training courses on human rights and capacity development for NGOs mass media; scholarships for officials, educators, NGO and mass media representatives for further in depth study of human rights.
- In addition, the Human Rights Office carries out monitoring of human rights in order to help strengthen the rule of law in Abkhazia, Georgia, and to support the return of internally displaced persons under safe and dignified conditions. Monitoring done by the Office includes collection of first-hand information directly from witnesses and other reliable sources, analysis of the development of the legal system, and key institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights.
- Monitoring of the human rights situation is carried out through HROAG's city of Sukhumi office and through regular visits of the HROAG staff to the area along the cease-fire line. The office addresses the competent authorities in order to redress the violations as it is deemed appropriate.
- Donations of HR publications were made to libraries through Abkhazia, Georgia, as was distribution of publications identified for the HR depository libraries.
- Numerous meetings are held with the authorities in Tbilisi, and regular meetings are held with the de facto authorities in Abkhazia, Georgia, related to the human rights situation in the region.
- Regular HR training sessions are provided for the groups of newly arrived UN military observers." (UNHCHR 2003)

"The human rights situation in Abkhazia remained fragile, particularly in the security zone at the Gali side of the ceasefire line. The Mission's Human Rights Office continued to promote human rights awareness

through a specialized programme on a district television station and the publication of two United Nations human rights documents in the Abkhaz language, 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement' and 'Minority Rights'. It also started to participate in the weekly quadripartite meetings, following the decision by Working Group II that returnee issues would be discussed regularly in that forum." (UN SC 14 October 2002, para. 23)

"The human rights situation remained precarious, particularly in the Gali district. Monitoring by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Sukhumi of several murders and abduction cases in the Gali district confirmed that the rule of law remains too weak to ensure the protection of the basic human rights – to life, physical integrity and security – of its residents. The Human Rights Office also noted that many children in the Gali district still do not have the right to education in their mother tongue. The ability of the Human Rights Office to raise awareness of, and encourage adherence to, international human rights norms will remain limited until it is permitted to establish a full-time presence in the Gali district, as recommended by the November 2000 assessment mission (see S/2001/59, annex II)." (UN SC 14 January 2004, para. 27)

The Georgia Self-Reliance Fund (GRSF): support to innovative strategies for IDPs' integration (1999-2003)

- New Approach partners created the Fund to support assistance programmes that enhance self-reliance of IDPs and host communities
- Through a series of grants competitions, GSRF grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 are awarded
- Two rounds of competition have been organized, resulting in the selection of at least 7 projects
- Lessons learned from these projects will provide opportunities for enlargement or replication of similar programmes in the future

"In order to determine more appropriate assistance programs that will help displaced people and host communities take care of themselves, the New Approach partners (the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Bank) established the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund (GRSF) to test potential projects and strategies for modalities that could be utilized at a latter stage. This was done in cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Fund is currently capitalized by contributions from these agencies, totaling approximately US\$1.3 million. The participation of additional donors is welcome.

Through a series of grants competitions, GSRF grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 are awarded. The Fund will award a maximum of 20 grants per year. Each grant will range from US\$25,000 to US\$100,000. Projects supported by the Fund should be completed within one to two years.

The first round of competition was held from October 2000 to April 2001. Out of totally received 267 proposals, three applications were selected for the final consideration. One of these projects has been rejected and one has been approved. The approved project from an Individual Entrepreneur and IDP, Otar Khvistani, utilizes abandoned houses in Tsalka region for IDPs to live and work on agricultural activities for income. Its implementation is underway.

The remaining project from the first round, from JSC 'Orgteknika', proposes to provide housing and jobs for IDPs at a rehabilitated tea factory in Kutaisi. This project was to be considered as a pilot project for a possible loan for certain business components, however the partners have been unable to find a local bank that could provide the required services within the UN and other partner requirements. The nature of the project prevented it to be considered solely as a grant, nor was it feasible to only review the grant-eligible

components. However, after being encouraged to look for alternative ways of funding business components of the proposal, the applicant secured the credit from a local bank and resubmitted his proposal as recommended by the Steering Committee. Currently the proposal is under the Steering Committee review.

The second round was announced in June 2001 and was finished in May 2002. Based on lessons learned during the first round, the eligibility criteria were modified to allow only non-governmental organizations with sufficient programming experience to participate in this round. A total of 85 proposals were received. Five applicants – Accion Contra el Hambre (ACH), Charity Humanitarian Center 'Abkhazeti' (CHCA), Counterpart International and Lazarus – were approved and started their activities during the summer of 2002. The approval of the fifth proposal, submitted by HVA International Worldwide Agricultural Development, is contingent on several preconditions to be met by the applicant. These negotiations remain underway.

In brief, the applicants selected by the Steering Committee will carry out following activities:

ACH - to increase incomes of 140 families through the development of profitable agricultural income generation activities proposed by themselves; to strengthen the community by promoting self-reliance in management of communal installations in areas of IDP settlement and support cooperation between IDPs and local host populations; to actively explore potential larger scale replicability of the strategies pursued in the pilot and learn lessons for activities which promote self-reliance of IDPs and partnership between IDPs and local communities in areas of settlement.

CHCA - to strengthen the participation in decision-making in IDP communities and host populations in Tskaltubo concerning key issues of social exclusion; to increase the self-reliance of the IDP population; and to support IDPs' integration within the local community.

Counterpart International - to increase the employability of IDP families by providing on the job apprenticeships and employment support and training in skill/trade areas in order to improve young, married IDPs' income generation capacity while contributing to overall economic improvement in the community and the business sector; and

Lazarus - to pilot a strategy of training and employing IDP women through the development of beauty salons in collective centres on the outskirts of the city of Tbilisi.

To help reform the government policy and support more appropriate assistance programs, a Presidential Commission was established and is chaired by the State Minister. The Commission is composed of Ministers, as well as technical experts, including many from the IDP community. The technical experts will help GSRF choose new programs by providing specialist comments on proposals. The experts will also help the assessments by providing access to government sources of information.

A technical support unit has been established to handle the daily management of the GSRF programme in the future. The Georgian Social Investment Fund (GSIF) has been selected to provide this technical support. The existence of this unit enables OCHA to devote more time to the advocacy, policy development and coordination of the New Approach in Georgia.

The main objective of all rounds of the GSRF remains to identify proposals that will develop and employ innovative strategies for sustainable improvement of IDPs' self-reliance and also provide opportunities for enlargement or replication of projects in future. These projects also demonstrate valuable lessons regarding IDP 'integration,' self-reliance, and policy issues for future advocacy. It is envisaged to analyse these lessons and projects more fully as they continue." (UN OCHA October 2002, pp. 7-8)

WFP extends its food assistance to vulnerable groups (2003)

- WFP continues to assist most vulnerable groups through food distribution
- An three-extension of WFP programmes from April 2003 have been approved
- Soup kitchens which include IDPs as their beneficiaries will be supported
- A total of 160,000 persons in six of the poorest districts in Georgia will benefit food-for-work assistance

"WFP continues its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), which started in summer 2001 and will end in March 2003. The main part of the PRRO is recovery, which is currently implemented in Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi, Kakheti, and Samtskhe-Javakheti. The programme envisages a total of 1,264,000 workdays. The food ration for one workday is: 3kg of wheat flour, 100gr of vegetable oil, and 120gr of beans. Most of the recovery operations (87%) are agriculture-oriented (rehabilitation of irrigation and drainage channels, land reclamation, rehabilitation of cash crops and gabions), and the rest are social infrastructure rehabilitation in the regions (schools and roads). The relief part of the PRRO includes food assistance to the most vulnerable people in institutions (soup kitchens, boarding schools and houses for the disabled and chronically ill), with a total of 2,419 beneficiaries in Imereti and 685 in Samegrelo receiving this assistance. In total 273 tons were used between January and June 2002. The daily food ration is 350gr. of wheat flour, 25gr. of oil, 30gr of beans and 35gr of canned fish.

WFP's Executive Board approved a new three-year PRRO for Georgia that is proposed to start in April 2003. The overall objective is to contribute to the national recovery and transition process through selected relief and Food For Work (FFW) activities that maintain or improve human and productive capital. The relief assistance will be provided to: 6,000 Chechen refugees, in collaboration with UNHCR; 8,000 elderly persons and other most vulnerable categories through soup kitchens in the urban and semi-urban areas of Georgia (WFP will encourage local authorities to extend soup kitchen coverage to include 5,000 IDPs); 29,000 members of vulnerable households who have no potential source of labor in the FFW communities; and 1,500 persons in the institutions under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for one year. The recovery part will be built around community-based FFW activities in the six poorest regions of Georgia: Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi, Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Samegrelo. Twenty thousand workers will be engaged daily in FFW activities and will receive a family food ration for four. Each community will be eligible for several phases of FFW assistance over a two or three year period. Priority will be given to FFW activities that have a positive impact on household food security, principally through improvement of agricultural yields on privately owned or leased plots. A total of 160,000 persons will be the beneficiaries of recovery part." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

"Donors and United Nations agencies (World Bank, USAID, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOCHA) are working with the Government towards the goal of integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs) into Georgian society. IDPs are not specifically targeted for assistance based simply on their displaced status. A certain number of them are extremely vulnerable, among them the elderly and other most vulnerable people living in collective centres. IDPs targeted under the relief component will be elderly vulnerable pensioners, without family support or any other source of income, who have been living in collective centres for the last eight years. Although in principle these people are eligible to benefit from the soup kitchens, given the limited resources available and the fact that responsibility for IDPs continues to fall under the Ministry of Refugees, in practice this does not occur. Beneficiaries will include 5,000 IDPs. In order to encourage the move towards integration of IDPs into society, this expansion will be contingent upon the local authorities providing the same support that is given to soup kitchens serving the non-IDP population." (WFP 2 September 2002, para. 19)

See WFP, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation Georgia 10211.0 (1 April 2003-31 March 2006), 2 September 2002 [Internet]

Permanent housing solutions for IDPs: a swiss-sponsored programme (2002-2003)

- International Rescue Committee (IRC) received funds from the Swiss government to promote integration of IDPs into local communities
- The objective is to create permanent housing solutions for displaced families
- Education facilities will also be rehabilitated
- IRC will also help to provide potable water and adequate sanitation facilities to displaced and local households

"IRC was awarded funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to implement a project to promote the integration of IDPs into local communities in the Samegrelo region. The project will accomplish dual goals of creating permanent housing solutions for 19 families residing in three kindergartens/collective centers in the Samegrelo region, as well as restoring the kindergartens to their intended use. By rehabilitating and furnishing the kindergartens, educational opportunities for 225 IDP and local children will be improved. 95 individuals will move into new residences." (UN OCHA 31 July 2002)

IRC Implements Shelter, Water and Sanitation Project for IDPs

"IRC's newly approved Shelter, Water, and Sanitation Project for IDPs in Samegrelo region, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), aims to promote and improve the integration of IDPs into the host community of Anaklia in the Samegrelo region, improve their living conditions and improve access to economic, educational and social opportunities. In addition, a self-identified community project will benefit the local residents and the IDP beneficiaries. All this will be accomplished through the construction of 26 houses for 26 families (118 people) currently occupying dilapidated summer cottages located close to Black Sea.

The implementation of the self-identified and designed community development project by members of a newly formed Community-Based Organisation (CBO), comprised of local Anaklia and IDP families, will benefit approximately 644 people. This jointly implemented project will serve dual purposes, that of further ensuring the integration of the IDPs into the host community while providing a necessary service to all residents.

A third component of this project aims to provide potable water and adequate sanitation facilities to 364 IDP and local families (1,884 individuals) residing at the former Ingiri Tea Agro-Industrial complex in the Samegrelo region. Raw sewage, overflowing toilets and garbage bins, and damaged water pipes and wells characterise the current situation in this village, contributing to waterborne hosts of bacterial illnesses.

To address these problems, project interventions will include rehabilitation of the current water supply system, construction of new latrines and sewage system, and provision of garbage bins." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

Donors do no longer explicitly target IDPs as a separate group (2002-2003)

- Support is increasingly given to the community-based approach to involve both IDPs and local communities
- There have been fears that integration of IDPs would imply acceptance to the secession of Abkhazia

"It is important to note a significant trend regarding earmarked assistance for IDPs. A significant portion of humanitarian assistance was earmarked for IDPs in the 1990s; however since 2000 most donors began to mainstream IDPs into regular programming through community-based programming and attempts at local integration. The protracted nature of displacement in Georgia obliged national authorities and others to find alternatives to the levels of decreasing humanitarian aid, especially by strengthening the capacity of the displaced to sustain them-selves. However, the depressed economic situation and evolving legal regime limited the chances for IDPs to be fully able to achieve self-reliance. Their ability to temporarily integrate locally has had mixed success.

Temporary integration is a very political and psychological issue: some believe it could affect the eventual return of IDPs or cause IDPs to lose their status should they attempt to settle temporarily. It has been argued that integration would also lessen pressure on the Government and international community to continue negotiations with separatist leaders to seek resolution to the conflict, or imply tacit acceptance of the current demarcations within the conflict areas.

[...]

Currently, most internationally funded programming does not explicitly target IDPs as a separate group but instead uses community-based approaches to involve both the local population and IDPs. The range of these activities includes basic recovery (income generation, for example) to full-scale development (community infrastructure and micro finance). There continue to be some programs such as psychosocial rehabilitation, legal services, or small-scale shelter rehabilitation that do involve IDPs as a specific target group, but these are much less common than the community development approaches." (UN 13 February 2003, sect. IV)

Community mobilization: selected programmes benefiting IDPs (2002-2003)

- Georgian NGOs and UN Volunteers conduct community mobilisation training for IDP groups
- UNHCR continues to support to youth development club projects, with the objective to empower young people from vulnerable groups including IDPs

"On 20-21 September 2002, the United Nations Association (UNA) - Georgia conducted a two-day training for IDP community based organisations (CBOs) in Gori. It included the following themes: characteristics of organisational activities, volunteer work, project development, leadership and effective communication. Seventeen representatives from approximately 10 CBOs attended the training.

This training is a part of a small regional project supported by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The project promotes the development of CBOs working on IDP-related issues in Georgia and Azerbaijan. A second training is scheduled in Kutaisi. Due to the regional character of project, similar trainings are conducted in Azerbaijan as well. At the final stage, a regional conference will be held in Sheki, Azerbaijan, where the outcomes of trainings and future CBOs development prospects will be discussed." (UN OCHA 20 October 2002)

"The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) continues its capacity building activities, which is part of its overall programme of NGO and community based organisations (CBO) capacity building. The organisation provides small grants from the UNV Confidence Building Fund for local NGOs that work mainly in the area of conflict transformation and human rights, as well as on IDP issues." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

"UNHCR continues to provide funding to CHCA and their youth development club project in Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Senaki, Poti and Tskhaltubo. The main objective of the programme is to empower young people, to ensure their full involvement in economical and social life, and to promote their participation in solving local problems. Currently the programme works with almost 700 adolescents from economically poor and vulnerable families. The programme provides opportunities to youth with leadership potential who are unable to fully meet their personal and social needs due to the socio-economical vulnerability of their

families. CHCA works with youth to fill the gap in their education and skills development, which is crucial for their future as well as for achieving self-reliance in the IDP community. Youth, out of which 75% are IDPs and 45% are female, are actively engaged in the programme activities, developing their personal and social skills, deepening their knowledge of civic education, organisational development and business management. English and computer skills are taught through a specially tailored training format. Adolescents participate in the implementation of micro community grants and micro loan projects as well as volunteering to address local community problems." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

"The project Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) has been jointly initiated by CHCA and a group of four partner NGOs in Tskhaltubo. The project is funded by the GSRF. The goal of the SIP project is to empower the IDP community to strengthen the participation in decision-making concerning the issues of social exclusion, to increase the self-reliance of the IDP population and to support their integration within local society. The objectives of the SIP are to: increase the number of IDPs and locals active in community work to identify and solve societal problems; develop a partnership between the representatives of community and various actors to tackle social exclusion more effectively; increase the confidence and understanding between the local and IDP populations; encourage a wide participation of volunteers in the process, which will contribute to the strengthening of civil society in Tskhaltubo." (UN OCHA 31 January 2003)

Selected self-reliance programmes (2002-2003)

- Spanish NGO implements pilot project on food security of IDPs through income generating activities
- Other project seeks to improve "employability" of IDPs by providing job apprenticeships, employment support and training in skill trade area
- Various micro-credit programme include IDPs among their beneficiaries

"In May, Accion Contra el Hambre (ACH) began implementation of the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund-financed (GSRF) Community Based Self Reliance Project in the Tsalengika Region. The pilot project seeks to ensure the food security of 140 IDP and host families through income generating activities (cattle and goat dairies, and hazelnut production) while contributing to local communities through the organisation of several local CBOs [Community-based organizations]. Capacity building activities in accounting, organisational management, business planning, and technical issues are ongoing, and farm construction is underway." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

"In June [2002] Counterpart International launched a one-year pilot programme 'Skill Trades and Re-employment Training (START),' funded by the Georgia Self Reliance Fund (GSRF). It is intended to increase the employability of IDP families in Samegrelo by providing on the job apprenticeships and employment support and training in skill trade areas in order to improve IDPs' income generation capacity while contributing to the overall economic development of the community and the business sector. The START project will target young IDP heads of household (men and women) currently unemployed and residing in collective centres to apprentice with local businesses. This specific group has been selected because it has limited access to land and has had inadequate education opportunities. This group has been described as the 'lost generation' and is made up of the children who were displaced and have now reached adulthood and started their own families but due to interrupted education they have limited employment options. During the data collection process, about 70 potential apprentices' data was collected. Among them, 42 apprentices were selected instead of 30 as initially proposed. Some projects required 3 months of training, which gave the organisation an opportunity to involve additional apprentices. Data was gathered from 23 employers. Twenty, instead of original 30, were selected due to the difficult socio-economic conditions in the region. To compensate for the selection of less than 30 employers, many firms agreed to take on more than one apprentice. The selected employers represent various skill areas and the apprentices will have an opportunity to improve their skills in 17 different trades." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

"Oxfam GB continues its micro-finance programme in Samegrelo with the support of NOVIB. The programme is currently working with approximately 130 client groups with a total membership of more than 1,000 people. Their experience shows that borrowers use their business profit partly to pay for living, rent, educational fees for children, medical fees, etc., and partly for the growth of their business. The programme targets both rural and urban communities. The direct beneficiaries are members of the local and IDP population who have lost livelihood opportunities but also have insufficient access to credit to start a business. In the long run, the programme intends to promote the establishment and legalisation of the micro-finance institutions that operate on pro-poor policies.

The Union of Trust implements a micro-credit programme to develop small business and promote economical standards in the population with financial support from USAID through IRC and Stichting Vluchteling (SV). The programme envisages giving out loans without collateral and with a low interest rate. Group loans are focused on groups of 5-10 clients who collectively guarantee each other's loans. Other types of collateral are not required. The minimum loan amount for each group member is GEL200 with an opportunity to increase the amount during five cycles. The duration of the loan is 2-15 months, depending on the amount received. The monthly interest rate equals 4% calculated on a declining balance basis. The repayment schedule is bi-weekly during the first three cycles and monthly thereafter. The processing fee for all loan cycles is 1%. The local population and IDPs who are involved in business or trade, service or production (except agriculture) can become clients of the programme. Potential clients should have at least a year of experience working in a business." (UN OCHA 31 December 2002)

See also "The Georgia Self-Reliance Fund (GRSF): support to innovative strategies for IDPs' integration (1999-2003)" [Internal link]

German government funds telecommunication rehabilitation programme between Abkhazia and Georgia proper (2001-2002)

- The programme will serve displaced persons and returnees on both sides of the ceasefire line

"In November [2001], the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the German Government, in the presence of my Special Representative, signed an agreement whereby UNDP will implement, as part of the peace process, a telecommunications rehabilitation programme. This programme will serve displaced persons and returnees on both sides of the ceasefire line, extend links to Sukhumi and connect Tbilisi and the upper Kodori Valley. The Georgian and Abkhaz sides jointly identified the programme needs under the auspices of Working Group III of the Coordinating Council, which deals with socio-economic issues. The initial grant contribution from the German Government is \$150,000." (UN SC 18 January 2002, para. 21)

"Phase I of the telecommunication rehabilitation programme, financed by the German Government and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the auspices of Working Group III of the Coordinating Council, on socio-economic matters, was completed (see S/2002/88, para. 21). One of the concrete outputs was the reestablishment of the reception of Georgian television channels in the upper Kodori Valley. The second phase is expected to begin in early spring." (UN SC 19 April 2002, para. 26)

International assistance in Abkhazia address needs of the vulnerable (2001)

- Volatile situation in the Gali district have obliged several international agencies to suspend activities in remote and dangerous areas
- UNOMIG is preparing a proposal for limited relief projects in these areas (October 2001)

"During the reporting period [July-October 2001], international humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued programmes to meet the acute needs of the most vulnerable in Abkhazia, Georgia. However, due to the fighting in the Kodori Valley area and the volatile situation in Gali, many NGOs suspended their activities after 8 October.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expanded its school rehabilitation programme to 22 schools in the Gali district, 12 in upper Gali and 10 in lower Gali, as well as three schools in Ochamchira district on a "self-help" basis. UNHCR provided material and village communities contributed their labour. However, UNHCR still could not operate in more remote and dangerous areas, such as Primorsk, where humanitarian needs were particularly urgent and only UNOMIG patrols had access. My Special Representative is preparing a proposal for limited relief projects in such areas, where the need is great but humanitarian agencies cannot operate, to be implemented with funds provided to UNOMIG.

United Nations Volunteers resumed programmes to develop the capacity of local NGOs.

The International Committee of the Red Cross continued to distribute food to vulnerable parts of the population and worked on rehabilitating the water and sanitation systems in Sukhumi and Ochamchira. Médecins sans frontières expanded its tuberculosis treatment and health access programme with mobile teams. The British HALO Trust's mine clearance and mine awareness operations continued from three operational bases in Sukhumi, Ochamchira and Gali.

International non-governmental organizations continued to be hampered by restrictions on border crossings between Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Russian Federation at the Psou River. This complicated the provision of assistance and the planning of emergency evacuations (see S/2001/713, para. 26)." (UN SC 24 October 2001, paras. 32-36)

UN Representative on internally displaced persons dialogues with authorities in Georgia (May 2000)

- The Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis Deng, undertook an official visit to Georgia from 13 to 17 May 2000
- The programme included visits to Abkhazia where the Representative also met with the de facto authorities
- The Representative expressed its support to the "New Approach" policy whose aim is to improve the current conditions of the displaced
- The Representative recommended the authorities to ensure for the internally displaced equitable access to social services and the right to fully participate in public affairs

"At the invitation of the Government of Georgia, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis Deng, undertook an official visit to Georgia from 13 to 17 May. The mission of the Representative followed his participation in a workshop on internal displacement in the South Caucasus, held in Tbilisi from 10 to 12 May, which was co-sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement (of which the Representative is Co-Director) and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

The objectives of the Representative's official mission were to study the situation of internal displacement in the country and to dialogue with the Government, international agencies, non-governmental

organizations and other relevant actors towards ensuring effective responses to the current conditions of the more than 250,000 internally displaced persons in Georgia.

In Tbilisi, the Representative was received by His Excellency of the Republic, Eduard Shevardnadze, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Refugees and Accommodation, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and the Chairman of the Abkhaz Government in Exile. He also met with representatives of United Nations and other international humanitarian, human rights and development agencies, the donor and diplomatic community, the Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and civil society. The programme included visits to Tskhinvali, Tskhaltubo, Kutaisi, Tsaishi, Zugdidi, Ingiri and Sukhumi, in the course of which meetings were held with local authorities, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, representatives of civil society and internally displaced persons themselves. In Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, the Representative also met with the de facto authorities in the regions and, in Sukhumi, with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

[...]

Over the course of the mission, the Representative has concluded that with several years having passed since the emergency phase of the displacement crises, the challenge now is one of assisting the internally displaced to rebuild their lives in dignity in a humane transition from relief to development and in accordance with the full range of their rights as citizens. This means a return to normal conditions of life in terms of decent accommodation, education, health care and psychosocial assistance, access to land, gainful means of employment and income-generation and equitable participation in public affairs. Indeed, internally displaced persons with whom the Representative met expressed a strong desire to become self-reliant and contribute to society. In so doing they stand to improve not only their own conditions but to become agents for the development of the country as a whole. Moreover, building the capacity of the displaced now means that they will be better prepared to return, as many indicated they wished to do, and engage in the reconstruction of their areas of origin. The right of the internally displaced to voluntary return to their homes in safety and dignity, which has been consistently articulated by the international community, remains uncompromised.

Improving the current conditions of the displaced while continuing to support their right to return in safety and dignity is the thrust of the 'New Approach' to internal displacement in Georgia that has been developed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Bank and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and endorsed by the Government. The Representative is encouraged by the commitment of the Government and the international community towards ensuring a rapid and effective implementation of the New Approach, including through the convening of coordinating mechanisms and the mobilization of resources. Recognizing the critical role of civil society in Georgia in promoting better conditions for the internally displaced, the Representative welcomes the emphasis in the New Approach on partnership with local non-governmental organizations and encourages their active involvement.

The Representative is also encouraged by the commitment of the authorities to ensure realisation of the full rights of the internally displaced as citizens in compliance with international standards. In this connection, particular attention must be paid to ensuring for the internally displaced equitable access to social services, including education and health care, access to land, opportunities for income-generation and the right to fully participate in the civil and political decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Notwithstanding the importance of progress on assistance and response to the plight of the internally displaced, it must be underscored that the root causes of internal displacement in Georgia are inherently political in nature and call for the intensification of efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflicts.

The Representative will elaborate upon the findings of his mission in a report which will be presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its next session and made publicly available. He will also share the findings of the mission with the Secretary-General and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is composed of the main international humanitarian and development agencies and non-governmental organizations, and of which he is a member." (UN 17 May 2000)

See the full text of the report presented the UN Commission on Human Rights, at its 57th session (2001) [Internet]

NGOs

International and national NGOs provide protection and assistance to IDPs in Georgia (2003-2004)

Information on NGO activities on behalf of internally displaced persons in Georgian can be found in the UN OCHA Georgia Information Bulletin;

Period February 2004 [Internet]

Period January 2004 [Internet]

Period December 2004 [Internet]

Older bulletins can be found in Reliefweb [Internet]

The UN in Georgia also publishes the IDP Newsletter, which highlights NGOs' IDP-related activities. Direct links to the IDP Newsletter can be found in the bibliographic list.

You can also consult Assistance Georgian, a web site initiated by the Save the Children's Georgian Assistance Initiative (GAI) which provides information in support of humanitarian and development aid activities in Georgia [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge>]

Strong mobilization of displaced women in the civil society (2000)

- Increasing numbers of women's organizations concentrating on internally displaced person have been founded in recent years
- Many organizations have evolved into advocacy organizations for displaced people on a national level
- Other organizations have been effective partners for donors both in providing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable displaced persons and for developing microcredit and small and medium-size enterprise programs
- Those organizations however see others as rivals, especially in the context of competing for donor funding
- NGO programming itself tends to be almost entirely donor driven, and few NGOs have sought or been able to find alternative sources of funding

"Displaced women have increasingly made a difference in one sector: civil society. Increasing numbers of women's organizations concentrating on internally displaced persons and issues pertaining to them have been founded in recent years, paralleling a general flourishing of civil society throughout post-Soviet and postconflict Georgia. In cities and regions throughout the country, displaced women have begun to mobilize to take charge and find solutions to pressing economic and social issues burdening their communities. Many organizations have evolved into advocacy organizations for displaced people on a national level. They have helped bring the government, donor, and even general public's attention to issues such as collective center degradation and psychosocial trauma. Other organizations have been effective partners for donors both in providing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable displaced persons and

for developing microcredit and small and medium-size enterprise programs. Still more groups first developed as small, community-based organizations of women desperate to improve conditions for their families.

Despite the growing number of success stories among organizations for internally displaced women, the sector overall is affected by various limitations. A relatively small number of women's organizations is concerned with issues concerning displaced women. Those organizations considered successful often see others as rivals, especially in the context of competing for donor funding. Little networking with one another is encouraged. NGO programming itself tends to be almost entirely donor driven, and few NGOs have sought or been able to find alternative sources of funding. Despite these limitations, displaced-women's organizations have continued to push forward to address critical social issues such as deteriorating health and living conditions as well as the growing importance of microcredit and training for women in the market place. Local non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations with strong community links will remain valuable partners for donors as they shift their efforts away from humanitarian assistance and more toward development-oriented programming. Support for activities of displaced-women's organization remains strong within displaced communities. NGO activity is now a firmly established part of social life within the displaced-persons community." (Buck September 2000, p. 10)

See also USAID Research Paper "Aftermath: Women's Organizations in Postconflict Georgia", September 2000 [Internet]

For more information on NGO activities in Georgia, consult Assistance Georgia, a web site initiated by the Save the Children's Georgian Assistance Initiative (GAI) which provides information in support of humanitarian and development aid activities in Georgia [Internet: <http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge>]

Legal aid: Initiatives taken by local NGOs (1999-2002)

- Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) provides individual IDPs with legal aid
- NGO-run "Legal Counseling Center" has been opened in Gali in June 2002

"GYLA [Georgian Young Lawyers' Association] is one of the most developed and influential NGOs in Georgia. Refugees and IDPs are among the various target groups the Association works with and the activities connected with them are mainly carried out in cooperation with UNHCR. GYLA/UNHCR IDP and Refugee Legal Assistance Project is being carried out for the second year already. Its main objective is to work on legal problems of the refugees and IDPs through participation of NGOs." (UNA, November 1999)

"The 'Association of young lawyers' carried out the program 'Legal aid to refugees and displaced persons' with support of the UNHCR in 1998. The program had several trends:

telephone and personal consultations for refugees and displaced persons.

concentration and interpretation of the laws related to refugees and displaced persons; a brochure was issued as a result. (Issues of registration, revision of the laws about refugees, legal acts, orders of the President, issues of land renting).

The 'Association of young lawyers' served the refugees with telephone consultations, provided them with the brochures in Zugdidi through its department there. Their activity has visible results as the refugees try to make use of their rights. But, some instances ignored their rights as the law was not attached to the information in the brochure. And, the 'Association' had to elaborate it and attach the corresponding laws.

They produced Georgian and Russian computer versions."(The Horizonti Foundation, 29 January 1999, sect.3)

"The Legal Counseling Center started its activities in Gali on 9 June 2002. This is a pilot project of the 'Human Rights and Civil Society' local NGO based in Sukhumi, that has been quite active in human rights promotion.

The Center will deliver legal service for the local population in Gali district, which suffers from high criminality, poor law enforcement and lack of lawyers. Nine lawyers are already working in two weekly shifts, and the office is open daily. UNOMIG and the Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, see the opening as a step forward to reestablishing the Gali juridical structures by developing advocates assigned to assist the defense." (UN OCHA 28 June 2002)

Selected activities of the Red Cross Movement

ICRC monitors the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (2003)

- In 2004, ICRC is planning to increase income-generating projects in Western Georgia and Abkhazia and improve IDPs' housing conditions
- The ICRC plans a sharp reduction in its economic assistance by 2005, primarily in western Georgia and to a lesser degree in Abkhazia
- In 2003, food assistance was provided to more than 40,000 of the most vulnerable residents and displaced people in western Georgia and Abkhazia

"Georgia still needs humanitarian assistance, as well as support for development and structural reform. In view of the unresolved conflict and the possibility of violence elsewhere, the ICRC's main concern is to monitor the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is also keeping an eye on the consequences of events in Chechnya, which are felt in Georgia.

In terms of protection, the ICRC gives priority to issues concerning missing persons and the plight of minorities in Abkhazia and civilians in areas plagued by unrest. It also seeks to tackle problems faced by vulnerable detainees, including people imprisoned for conflict- or security-related reasons. The TB control programme in prisons, covering water and shelter projects, is carried out in cooperation with other humanitarian organizations and donors.

Seeking more sustainable answers

As one of a handful of organizations working in western Georgia and Abkhazia, the ICRC has been running substantial economic assistance programmes for the neediest there for a number of years. The ICRC is now seeking to provide more sustainable answers. In 2004, it will use income-generating projects – covering agriculture, trade or crafts – as well as direct economic support, to restore a measure of self-sufficiency to the beneficiaries, and improve housing conditions in collective centres for IDPs.

The ICRC plans a sharp reduction in its economic assistance by 2005, primarily in western Georgia and to a lesser degree in Abkhazia. At the same time it will make every effort to encourage the authorities to shoulder their responsibilities towards the destitute, and will continue to urge donors to help provide a coordinated response to the many urgent needs.

In and around the conflict-prone Gali area, the ICRC maintains support to emergency surgical and blood transfusion services. It will continue to give backing to the two physical rehabilitation projects in Tbilisi and Gagra with a view to helping them support themselves.

The ICRC is also working to have international humanitarian law (IHL) included in national legislation, armed forces training and school and university education. The aim is to enable local partners to carry on this work independently.

In 2004, the ICRC will continue to support the Georgian Red Cross in the areas of management training, first-aid and health-care and dissemination of IHL.

Highlights – during 2003 the ICRC:

- provided regular food assistance to more than 40,000 of the most vulnerable residents and displaced people in western Georgia and Abkhazia; supported seven hospitals and polyclinics and five bloodbanks across the cease-fire line in Abkhazia and in western Georgia, and continued repair work on tumbledown buildings in 15 centres housing 2,200 IDPs in western Georgia
- gave technical support to the Georgian and Abkhaz commissions for missing persons, and called on the authorities to provide families with reliable information concerning the more than 1,500 persons still unaccounted for
- collected and distributed more than 20,000 Red Cross messages between members of separated families
- promoted the teaching of IHL in the military and other security forces, as well as in secondary schools and universities throughout the country." (ICRC 16 January 2004)

New agreement on aid in Abkhazia

"The ICRC has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Abkhaz health authorities on the continuation of food aid throughout the region in 2003.

The memorandum establishes a comprehensive framework for joint efforts to ensure that nearly 20,000 of the most destitute and otherwise vulnerable residents of Abkhazia are provided with food and other basic items. It also provides for the gradual transfer of responsibilities from the ICRC to the Abkhaz authorities.

On the basis of the agreement, the ICRC will continue its support for programmes enabling some 5,000 mostly elderly destitute persons to receive freshly cooked meals every day at 19 fixed and eight mobile canteens. In addition, 1,450 homebound and often bedridden elderly people receive ready-made meals daily from 480 social workers who also monitor their living conditions in terms of basic hygiene. Meanwhile, some 2,700 particularly vulnerable people living in rural areas will continue to receive parcels of dry food once a month covering 100% of their nutritional needs, while nearly 11,500 residents only partially able to fend for themselves will receive food parcels covering 50% of their nutritional needs every two months.

The ICRC has had a constant presence in Georgia/Abkhazia since 1992, where it has endeavoured to protect and assist the victims of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Since 1994, the organization has distributed food and other basic necessities and provided medical and other care for the residents and displaced people most in need." (ICRC 16 June 2003)

Policy and recommendations

Assistance to IDPs in 2004: recommendations from the humanitarian community in Georgia

- More information on the situation of IDPs in South Ossetia and Abkhazia are needed
- Georgian IDP legislation should be brought in line with the Guiding Principles
- Support to the integration of IDPs should be pursued until they are able to return in safety and dignity
- Support to the Ministry in charge of IDPs should be strengthened
- Awareness raising on IDP rights should be done among IDPs, authorities and international agencies
- IDP benefits should be based on vulnerability and not the IDP status

On 18 November 2003, UN OCHA convened a conference to present the Georgia Humanitarian Situation and Strategy 2004 to the Government, donors and other assistance community. Four prioritized areas were discussed at the Conference: IDPs, food security, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and special populations (elderly, children, persons with disabilities). The recommendations from the panel on IDPs were the following:

"The prioritised recommendations for addressing the current IDP situation in Georgia are the following:

- **Effectively proceed with efforts to expedite and advance a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia:** Actively involve conflicting sides in confidence building and conflict resolution programmes. The protracted displacement and ensuing consequences will only be completely resolved after the displaced population starts to return to the places of origin.

- **Study in detail the legal and social situation of IDPs in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the response of local authorities and the unattended needs:** There are almost no legal/social data on IDPs in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Having information on their needs and responses undertaken so far to cover these needs will help key actors to better design programmes.

- **Improve the 'Law of Georgia on IDPs – Persecuted' and approximate it to the 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement':** The Law should include also ecological migrants, displaced as a result of natural or human-made disasters; IDP status should not be identified with the IDP state allowances, but with their legal right to return, etc.

- **Support various income generation activities for unemployed IDPs:** Since majority of IDPs are either solely dependent on the state allowance or are underpaid, various employment programs utilizing their skills and capacities, as well as envisaging their re-qualification, should be designed and supported. These activities should lead toward more self-reliance and self-sufficiency for the IDP community in Georgia.

- **Find long-term and durable solutions to IDPs' living conditions before they are able to return in safety and dignity:** Different approaches could be studied and tested to further address IDPs' accommodation problems, such as rehabilitation of collective centres, or assisting IDPs in privatising those after appropriate lobbying on the government level. More emphasis should be put on the maintenance of renovated buildings by active inclusion of collective centre residents in planning (i.e. pre-rehabilitation) and implementation (i.e. rehabilitation) of rehabilitation projects.

- **Plan and undertake concrete steps to improve IDPs' access to affordable and quality healthcare and education; study psycho-social needs of IDPs and introduce psychological counselling for IDPs:** Since medical treatment is connected with high expenses for all vulnerable and few health programmes explicitly target IDPs, health facilities of the Abkhaz Government in Exile (polyclinics, hospitals) could be better equipped and provided with relevant diagnostic means and medicines throughout Georgia; opening small medical points for IDPs at big collective centres and building capacity of IDP doctors/nurses who will be working there is also necessary. Programmes for IDPs suffering from psychological difficulties and related illnesses should be designed. Integrated approach could be used to improve IDPs' access to education – starting from programmes providing IDP children with textbooks/clothes/footwear, including physical rehabilitation of school buildings, setting up libraries, organizing different circles for pupils, providing advanced trainings for IDP teachers.

- **Ensure food provision to pre-school aged IDP children:** Majority of pre-school IDP children suffer from chronic malnutrition. Special programmes should be launched to assist such children.

- **Enhance support to the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation:** This would improve the quality and accuracy of data processing, refine the state allowance distribution mechanism and obtain comprehensive demographic data on IDPs. Various data processed by the Ministry are widely used and quoted by international organizations in different publications or while planning future interventions. Thus, provision of accurate data should be of great importance for those who benefit from such service.

- **Raise awareness on IDP rights among IDPs themselves, Governmental offices and international community; enforce and promote the implementation of existing IDP rights:** Awareness raising campaign could be exercised through dissemination of various booklets/brochures, arrangement of workshops/seminars for IDPs and persons dealing with IDP caseload. Special enforcement mechanisms for rights implementation should also be in place, including measures to increase public servants' and other relevant persons' responsibility to honestly and fairly perform their duties with regard to IDPs.

- **Introduce vulnerability criteria and consider them while designing effective assistance programmes for IDPs:** This would differentiate IDP status from IDP benefit eligibilities and might generate some savings to the Government. Not receiving benefits should not mean relinquishing IDP status and hope to return." (UN OCHA November 2003, pp. 15-16)

Poverty reduction programme in Georgia includes IDPs in the priority objectives (2003)

- Government of Georgia plans to strengthen socio-economic rehabilitation of post-conflict zones and improvement of standard of living of IDPs
- The programme confirms that Georgia will need substantial material and financial aid from the international community for these objectives
- Prior to the resolution of the conflict, programmes to ensure the social support of refugees and IDPs and their integration into society will be undertaken
- This policy should be implemented with the implication of IDPs and civil society

"The issue of post-conflict zones and internally displaced persons (IDPs) is especially problematic for Georgia. As a result of inspired and yet politically unresolved conflicts on the territory of Georgia, the country has more than three hundred thousand refugees and devastated infrastructure. After political resolution of the conflicts, the country will face the issues of repatriation of refugees and IDPs, as well as rehabilitation of post-conflict regions. To this end, preparatory works for rehabilitation of post-conflict zones is to be undertaken. Therefore, one of the priority objectives of the given Program is socio-economic

rehabilitation of post-conflict zones and improvement of standard of living of IDPs. This objective includes:

- Measures for social adaptation and integration of IDPs;
- Elaboration of rehabilitation strategy;
- Spreading the scope of the projects implemented by Georgian Social Investment Fund (GSIF), Municipal Development Fund (MDF) and other programs to cover the territories of the post-conflict zones." (Government of Georgia June 2003, p. 27)

"As a result of armed conflicts inspired by the separatist forces in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region (South Ossetia), more than 300 000 persons (mostly Georgians) were compelled to leave their homes and find temporary shelter in various regions of the country. The issue of social protection of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) has become a long-term problem. The above mentioned territories are *de facto* outside the jurisdiction of Georgia and managed by separatist regimes. No entity of international law acknowledges their legitimacy.

In the event of the progress made in the process of settlement of political problems, the Government of Georgia will face the objective of social and economic rehabilitation of these regions. This objective implies for:

- Repatriation of the refugees and IDPs and transferring back of their property;
- Restoration of their houses and devastated infrastructure;
- Settlement of the issue of social assistance and employment of the repatriates.

Georgia will need substantial material and financial aid from the international community to fulfill these most difficult objectives. The first step to this end will be adequate informational provision. It is necessary to conduct researches and collect information about the existing and pre-conflict situation and work out the optimal model of socio-economic development of the regions on this basis.

Prior to political resolution of the conflicts:

- The programs will be implemented that will ensure social support of the refugees and IDPs via their employment and integration into the society;
- Special programs for rehabilitation of the post-conflict zones will be prepared. The basic mechanisms for implementation of these programs are Georgian Social Investment Fund and Municipal Development Fund.

The mechanism will be worked out to implement special programs of rehabilitation of the post-conflict regions. This mechanism should ensure agreed and coordinated operation of central and regional authorities, international organizations and donor countries.

Participation of the international organizations and donors in preparation of special programs of rehabilitation of the post-conflict zones will provide additional stimulus to the political resolution of the conflicts.

The aforesaid programs will be practically implemented only after political resolution of the conflicts.

An important factor to regularize this process would be to prepare the IDPs and those residing in conflict zones to participate in designing and implementation of these programs. No social guarantees can be secured unless the mutual confidence and sense of cooperation is restored between Abkhazian and Ossetian people and the IDPs.

This policy can be implemented through close cooperation between the government agencies and civil society. Setting up and preparation of the groups of national diplomacy, especially the groups comprised of women will enable us to conduct a proper campaign among the population residing in conflict zones on ensuring the rehabilitation and social security of these regions.

In the course of implementation of the communication strategy of this process, the telephone of confidence, audio and video materials, correspondence, special bulletins and booklets, meetings on neutral territories, workshops, dialogues and other means of communication can be used in addition to the mass media active involvement.

Application of these types of communication strategy between the conflicting parties will help them realize the need for implementing the social security program of these regions and prepare them to take part in designing and implementation of this program.

Political resolution of the conflicts will facilitate considerably the economic recovery of the country, restoration of international communications, attraction of more investments after regaining international prestige of and confidence in the country, restoration of normal economic links between the regions, fast development of small and medium businesses in the post-conflict zones, etc. (Government of Georgia June 2003, p. 57)

Plan of activities (excerpts)

Improvement of Socio-Economic Conditions in Post-Conflict Zones

ACTIVITIES	IMPLEM. DATE	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
104 Preparation of program for repatriation of internally displaced persons, restoration of destroyed houses and infrastructure, social assistance, employment and development by the time conflicts are resolved politically	2003	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, Ministry of Labor, Healthcare and Social Protection; Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade; other ministries
105 Preparation of the IDPs and those residing in conflict zones to participate in designing and implementation of the above-mentioned programs through national diplomacy and other effective means; development of special	2003	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, Ministry of Labor, Healthcare and Social Protection; Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade; Other Ministries

(Government of Georgia June 2003, p. 86)

Council of Europe expresses concerns about the situation of displaced persons (2002)

- The Parliamentary Assembly urges Georgian to refrain from instrumental use of the displaced population for political aims
- Support should be given to the integration of IDPs and refugees in host communities
- Donor States should also ensure that humanitarian aid is not phased out before it is replaced by development assistance

Resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly, 27 June 2002

"The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. urge the member states of the Council of Europe:

a. to continue providing humanitarian aid to the countries in the region, and to ensure that it will not be phased out before it is replaced by development assistance;

b. to contribute generously to the funding of the programmes and projects relating to housing, education and job-creation for refugees and IDPs;

c. to give their financial and technical support as well as their expertise to the elaboration of vocational training schemes, in particular for women and young people;

d. to offer necessary expertise and man-power for de-mining of the region.

ii. urge the three republics concerned:

a. to continue their sincere efforts aimed at peaceful settlements of the conflicts in the area with a view to return of all refugees and displaced persons who wish so to their places of origin;

b. to refrain from instrumental use of refugees and displaced persons for political aims;

c. to elaborate and implement, in cooperation with the international community, overall strategies for durable solutions;

d. to provide refugees and IDPs with comprehensive and clear information on their rights and choice between return and integration;

e. to provide every refugee with a possibility of integration, and to take measures facilitating this process;

f. to review domestic law with a view to amending all provisions which could jeopardise the process of integration;

g. to seek international funding for the implementation of concrete projects in the field of housing and income-generating activities for refugees and internally displaced;

h. to ensure access to health care and transparency and exercise better control over the distribution of the international aid and medicaments.

[...]

v. urge the Georgian authorities:

a. to refrain from any hasty repatriation of the Chechen refugees before the security conditions in Chechnya allow for safe returns in dignity;

b. to grant the right to vote in national and local elections to the displaced Georgian citizens avoiding changes of their status and right of return to home areas;

c. to ensure the access of the displaced population to land under the same conditions as the local population;

d. to adopt and implement the law on the return of Meshketian Turks in compliance with the commitment undertaken by Georgia upon its accession to the Council of Europe;

e. to enforce the property rights of potential returnees of Osset origin." (COE 27 June 2002)

See also the report prepared by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Report on the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, 4 June 2002 [Internet]

See also Recommendation 1305 (1996) on the humanitarian situation of the displaced persons in Georgia, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly on 24 September 1996 [Internet]

Increased attention is needed to guarantee sustained involvement of Georgian local civil society in IDP issues (1999)

- International donors and national institutions are based in Tbilisi while much of the IDP problematic takes place in the regions.
- National NGOs in the regions have important experience and knowledge of the issues but lack sustained support.
- Georgian state sector needs to be convinced of the complementarity between local/regional NGOs and local authorities
- Local NGOs need more information on the activities and mandates of international organizations

"In January-August 1999 the United Nations Association of Georgia in cooperation with UNHCR NGO Fund implemented the assessment project. The aim of the program was to evaluate the potential of the non-governmental organizations in various regions of Georgia to deal with IDP and migration-related issues and facilitate recommendations for enhancement of their role. The program was carried out in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi and Gori and also involved the NGOs dealing with the issues of Meskhetians.

The rationale behind the program was quite simple. It is obvious that the main offices of both international and official organizations participating in decision-making on IDP and migration-related issues are located in the capital. Hence the main non-governmental partners of these organizations are also Tbilisi-based. On the other hand the whole humanitarian aspect of IDP problems lies within the regions. As the situation in the regions of Georgia in terms of social environment varies considerably, the program was geared towards on-the-spot observation and analysis of the existent civil potential.

Interviews, meetings and the roundtables organized in framework of the program allowed us to identify several issues that necessitate closer attention of the international donors.

First of all, the assessment has demonstrated that the civil potential in all of the regions exists notwithstanding the problems of the social or legal character. NGOs have sufficient experience of operation and their leaders possess quite good vision of the issue at hand and their role. The main threat for civil involvement in this field is the sustainability of NGO effort. The assessment showed that the main partners of international organizations possess the scope of activities wider than just IDP or migration-related issues. The share of the direct assistance to the NGOs based in the regions and having the narrow scope of activities is minimal. This picture could be quite disturbing if we will take into account the possible decrease in international assistance.

If and when this will finally happen we could be observing the picture of the wider-scope organizations more or less easily shifting their priorities and the local lower-profile organizations being left without any serious foundation for continuation of activities.

The option of shifting the policies for avoiding this scenarios should, in our opinion be considered at this very stage. The shift could involve - at one hand devoting more attention to local, problem oriented non-governmental organizations and on the other encouraging current partners of international donors (wider scope NGOs) to share their experience with local partners. This would help to form the strong group of local NGOs with certain credibility to international donors and, at the same time, to use the lobbying and policy-development potential of bigger NGOs drawing on a strong constituency of the regional partners.

The second process that demands closer attention of the international organizations is recognition of NGO role in this particular field. As it was noted numerous times the CIS Conference process connoted in itself the active role of civil sector and this occurred not by chance but taking into account primarily social,

humanitarian nature of the problems of IDP and migration. It is now necessary to translate this vision to the Georgian state sector, to accent that it is exactly the complementarity of the mandates of international, official and non-governmental organizations that allows for efficient solutions. As a declaration this idea was maybe already heard but the necessity is to translate these declarations in specific policies foreseeing joint activities and cooperation in planning and implementation. Special attention in this sense should be devoted to the cooperation among local NGOs and the local governance.

The analysis has showed that the lack of information on activities and the mandate of various international and official organizations remains the problem for NGOs. It is we think possible to solve this problem in a good partnership spirit. The international or non-governmental organizations best represented in given region could take on the role of the resource centers and thus create the diversified pools of information. This also would in part alleviate the problem of transparency frequently causing the frustration and the feeling of being sidelined from general processes on behalf of the regional NGOs."(UNA, November 1999)

Recommendations by the UN Representative on IDPs (2000)

- These recommendations were formulated following the Representative's visit to Georgia in May 2000
- The Representative appeals on all relevant actors to acknowledge the vulnerability of the internally displaced
- While the right to return in safety and dignity should be upheld, the right of internally displaced persons to pursue alternatives to return should also be recognized

"The Commission of Human Rights, as well as the General Assembly, has invited Governments of countries to which the Representative has undertaken an official mission to give due consideration to his recommendations and suggestions and to make available information on measures taken thereon. The Representative looks forward to further cooperation with all those involved in implementing the following recommendations, intended for the Government of Georgia, other authorities, the international community and local NGOs, towards enhancing response to the plight of internally displaced persons on Georgia.

(i) **Acknowledge the vulnerability and special needs of the internally displaced and their rights to protection, assistance, reintegration and development aid.** The findings of the Representative's mission challenge the prevailing impression that internally displaced persons in Georgia are a privileged group, by identifying a number of particular problems and disadvantages that they face. International organizations, NGOs and government authorities should make known their special needs and take steps to address them.

(ii) **Disseminate and promote the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, especially in local languages.** Dissemination of the Principles to internally displaced persons is critical, as a means of countering the politically motivated misinformation concerning their rights that is being propagated. Translation of the Principles into local languages, in particular Abkhaz and Osset, would be important in this regard. The Principles also should be promoted among the authorities, agencies and NGOs and among local communities, so as to sensitize the population at large to the particular plight of internally displaced persons.

(iii) **The Government should design national policies and legislation, and international and local programmes in accordance with the Guiding Principles.** The Government's positive response to the Principles should be reflected in national legislation and policy. Among the initiatives which should facilitate this is the study of Georgian legislation relating to internally displaced persons to be undertaken by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, with the support of the Brookings Institution project on internal displacement and OSCE/ODIHR.

(iv) **The Government should ensure the full rights of internally displaced persons as citizens.** Though this recommendation is implicit in the previous recommendation, it merits express statement and the undertaking of specific measures, in particular with regard with equitable access to public services such as education and health, access to land, opportunities for income-generation and the right of internally displaced persons to participate fully in the civil and political decision-making processes that affect their lives. Legislation governing land ownership and entitlement to vote in elections needs to be revised so as to respect the rights of the internally displaced. the Government is encouraged to seek assistance from OHCHR, in the context of its technical cooperation and advisory services programme, to support initiatives to promote and protect the rights of internally displaced persons.

(v) **Improve the living conditions of displaced persons.** The Government, the international community and civil society should work together to improve the current living conditions of the displaced, especially those in collective centres. In particular, efforts should be made to encourage the relocation of internally displaced persons, especially those living in hospitals and dilapidated hotels, so that their lives and those of their children can be improved.

(vi) **The Government should ensure payment of the stipend to which internally displaced persons are entitled.** The 12 lari monthly stipend to which internally displaced persons are entitled is certainly not sufficient for their survival but it is critical. Moreover, it is provided for by law. At the time of the mission, internally displaced persons had not received this stipend for six month.

(vii) **Support comprehensive and countrywide efforts to improve the current conditions of internally displaced persons.** Too much of the humanitarian focus is on certain groups and areas, to the neglect of others. Support programmes, such as the New Approach, should seek to become more comprehensive, encompassing internally displaced persons from the Georgian-Osset conflict, as well as those displaced by conflict in Abkhazia, and targeting rural as well as urban areas. In particular, they should be based on an objective assessment of vulnerability, and there should be rapid disbursement of funds from the international community and prompt implementation of projects to improve the lives of the displaced, especially in terms of their living conditions, opportunities for income-generation and access to land.

(viii) **Given special attention to the particular needs of women and women-headed households.** Skills training, business development and credit support initiatives targeting internally displaced women are required, as is strengthened support for organizations of internally displaced women. Towards ensuring that projects undertaken as part of the New Approach address the particular needs of women and women headed-households, as well as involve women in the planning and implementation, a gender component should be introduced as criteria for funding by the Georgia Self-Reliance Fund.

(ix) **Support programmes to address psychosocial needs.** The high incidence of mental health problems among the internally displaced and the impact that these have on the pursuit of possibilities to improve their living conditions and on the preservation of the family unit call for comprehensive programmes addressing psychosocial needs, and paying special attention to those of internally displaced children.

(x) **Uphold the right of internally displaced persons to return in safety and dignity.** The emphasis in the New Approach on improving the current conditions of internally displaced persons must in no way be misconstrued as abandoning the right to return, which is imprescriptible and must continue to be advocated and actively pursued by the Government, local NGOs and civil society, and the international community.

(xi) **End obstructions to the right to return in safety and dignity.** The national and de facto authorities must take concrete measures to ensure respect of this right and create the conditions for its realization. The Abkhaz authorities in particular are called upon to cease the laying of mines as a deterrent to return, to support de-mining efforts in areas of return, to make concerted efforts to establish law and order in areas of return and to revise, in accordance with international standards, the language of instruction policy in Georgian schools, which also works to obstruct return. The Government of Georgia is called upon to ensure a fair and transparent process for property restitution or compensation and, together with the Government in

Exile, to make concerted efforts to stem the incursion of armed partisan groups into the security zone established as part of the cease-fire agreement regarding the conflict in Abkhazia. The authorities in South Ossetia also are called upon to establish effective mechanisms of law and order and, in particular, to prevent ethnically motivated violence, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators when this does occur.

(xii) **Recognize the right of internally displaced persons to pursue alternatives to return, that is resettlement in another part of the country.** Given the politicization of the plight of internally displaced persons in Georgia, it is essential to ensure that the overriding emphasis on return, which indeed appears to be the preferred option of many of the displaced, does not come at the expense of alternative durable solutions, specifically resettlement, to which internally displaced persons are also entitled.

(xiii) **Support those supporting the displaced.** This support must take a number of forms. Host families who have generously taken in internally displaced persons but may also be suffering poor socioeconomic conditions require support in shouldering this extra burden. Human rights and humanitarian personnel, local as well as international, must be able to operate with unrestricted access to populations in need and have their safety assured. Moreover, the important work of local NGOs with the internally displaced must be supported and strengthened, in particular outside of the capital and in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, especially as civil society is one of Georgia's greatest assets and NGOs can make an important contribution to depoliticizing the plight of the displaced. Special attention should be given to supporting the active involvement of local NGOs and civil society in the implementation of the New Approach.

(xiv) **Intensify efforts to resolve the conflicts.** While undertaking measures to improve the current conditions of the displaced, durable solutions to their plight of course require that the root causes of their displacement, which are inherently political in nature, be effectively addressed. Though conflict negotiation processes have been in place for both conflicts for several years now, there is a need for intensification by all parties of efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the conflicts causing displacement. The Government of the Russian Federation has a particularly important role to play in facilitating the resolution of both conflicts, especially that in Abkhazia.

(xv) **Advance planning for post-conflict reconstruction.** Following a peace agreement, a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programme that addresses the particular needs of returnees as well as of the local population will be required as an essential component of a durable peace. Advance planning for this by the Government and other authorities, in cooperation with the international community, is important for ensuring a smooth transition to peace, and to support the return and reintegration of displaced persons.

(xvi) **Support efforts promoting peaceful co-existence.** Even in the event of political agreements ending the conflicts, the legacy of bitterness left by the ethnic conflicts must also be addressed and overcome in order to ensure the safe and durable return and reintegration of displaced persons into their pre-war communities. A number of initiatives to this end have begun, but local NGOs, on both sides of the Abkhaz conflict in particular, noted the need for more concerted efforts to enable dialogue and establish other links between the civilian population caught up in the conflicts. The Government, de facto authorities and the international community should also invest in these grassroots peace-building initiatives." (UNCHR 25 January 2001)

World Bank study: IDPs likely to face lower risk of extreme poverty than the population at large (1999)

- IDPs receive a large share of State and international humanitarian assistance
- Need to improve the targeting of assistance to most vulnerable IDPs
- Important to ensure equitable distribution of assistance in order to avoid tension between IDPs and other citizens

[State benefits received by IDPs]

"In 1996 a UNHCR-sponsored survey registered 282 000 people as IDPs. Contrary to commonly held perceptions, the analysis of the SDS household survey suggests that IDPs that have resettled on their own or have integrated themselves into local communities (the refugee population that does not remain institutionalized) face a lower risk of poverty than the average Georgian household (4 percent of them are poor as opposed to 10 percent of the total population). And they face the lowest risk of extreme poverty of almost any population group. The surveys show, moreover, that one out of four refugees families have left the country.

The fact that IDPs face a relatively lower risk of being poor contrasts sharply with the fact that they receive a large share of State and humanitarian assistance. The IDP program is one of Georgia's largest safety net programs, ranking second only to old age and invalidity pensions. In 1997, Republican budget expenditures for this program totaled some 53 million lari; the planned allocation for 1998 was 62 million lari. The program comprises a diversity of cash and non-cash benefits (Table 3). The major component is the monthly stipend of 11 lari per refugee for those IDPs living in hotels or Government institutions; and of 12 lari per refugee for families living in their own accommodations or with other families. In addition, for each of the 160,000 IDPs that have settled on their own, the budget transfers 1.8 lari per month directly to Sakerngo to pay for their electricity; another 3.8 lari per refugee are transferred for each of the 124,000 IDPs estimated to be living in hotels or refugee centers. An additional 7 lari per person per month is paid to those families that have resettled on their own to cover housing costs and other utilities. IDPs also receive public transit subsidies, including free subway tickets for those living in Tbilisi, and passes for ground transports such as buses. The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation maintains a special assistance fund for the destitute. In addition to benefits paid out through the Ministry of Refugees, IDPs who are also old-age or invalidity pensioners receive a 20 percent pension supplement. IDPs also receive free education and are exempt of fees. And the Basic Benefit Package of health care services provided free to the population has integrated in its calculation free health services for 140,000 IDPs in 1998. The costs of these free or subsidized education and health services are born by the Ministries of Education and Health respectively. Not counted in the budget is the value of the rent of the buildings occupied for free by the IDPs, but that would be probably high, especially in the case of hotels in city centers.

IDPs have also benefited from a large proportion of the humanitarian assistance in food, medical, and other aid provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations to Georgia. Although the magnitude of humanitarian assistance has decreased since 1994, it remains substantial. Total humanitarian assistance received between April, 1994 and March, 1995 was estimated at US\$62.7 million; between April, 1995 and May, 1996 at US\$60.4 million; and between June, 1996 and May, 1997 at US\$30.6 million. In 1996, some 800,000 beneficiaries received humanitarian assistance; in 1997, beneficiaries amounted to 340,000 people (a large fraction were IDPs)

Table 3. IDP program 1997 and 1998 (In million lari)

Category	1997
Monthly benefit	34.9
Utilities for people housed by the state	12.4
Free metro fare (Tbilisi)	3.0
Ground transport	0.6
Special repairs of dwellings	1.5
Special assistance fund for destitute families and children	0.2
Interest paid for banking service	0.3
Total	52.9

Not included: value of free education; BBP.

[Need to improve targeting of assistance to IDPs]

IDP benefits are high in comparison with family allowances, unemployment benefits and even pensions. Not including benefits in kind, in 1998 an IDP family of four would receive a monthly cash benefit of 38.8 lari per month, above the average budgetary monthly wage of 35 lari. In contrast, a non-IDP family of four would normally not be eligible to receive any state support since eligibility for the family allowance has been limited to legally single pensioners. If the non-IDP family were to comprise a pensioner or an unemployed person, they would be eligible for a pension of 11.8 lari or an unemployment benefit of 13 lari—still well below the level of IDP benefits. *Even if IDP benefits are not by themselves sufficient to lift a family completely out of poverty, they still provide non negligible support in comparison to that received by other Georgians.* Moreover, IDPs are eligible for benefits regardless of other income or asset ownership. And as discussed above, in many cases, IDPs are better off than other groups of the population.

The contrast between benefits received by IDPs and those received by other, often more needy, families highlights the need to improve the targeting of assistance to IDPs' to limit eligibility only to those who truly need it. This is important from a social equity point of view. It also is pressing because of the open-ended character of the IDP program. In the absence of a solution to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, there is no clear horizon for the phasing out of the IDP program; the burden on the state's meager resources could continue indefinitely. Mechanisms of *self-targeting* could be usefully employed to select the most needy. Linking payment of the monthly stipend to participation in public works, for example, could serve to weed out those with alternative, more lucrative sources of income from work. This could function as a self-contained program or as part of a broader public works scheme designed to target resources to those able to work. Alternatively, registration requirements could be increased significantly, so as to impose a sufficiently high cost on recipients, to again weed out those who do not truly need the benefit.

In addition to improving the targeting of cash benefits to IDPs, in-kind benefits should be phased out. Most of the burden of financing these benefits is born by providers of the services, or by other users. The government should assess carefully the cost of maintaining them, and if these in-kind benefits to IDPs are to be kept, the budget should fully cover the costs.

The authorities should continue their efforts to integrate remaining IDPs housed in institutions into local communities, as the evidence from the household survey suggests that once this happens, IDPs are able on their own to dramatically improve their living conditions. This integration is made difficult by the awkward legal status of many IDPs.

The collapse of transfers to poor groups of the population is correlated with the fact that the Government has given priority to protecting the level of transfers to IDPs. In the current context, this may ultimately create tensions between IDPs and other members of Georgian society. And it does raise questions of equity and allocation of resources. Some of these choices may need to be re-evaluated. It is also urgent that the status of IDP be clarified, and that they benefit from the same ownership rights than any other citizen of Georgia."(WB May 27, 1999, paras.136-143)

Socio-political impact of international support to IDPs in Georgia (1997)

- Displacement is not neutral - the work of international organizations is read, interpreted and used by political elites on both sides
- Humanitarian intervention must be "depoliticized", while acknowledging that ethnically-directed violence took place
- International humanitarian assistance can isolate an IDP population and make integration more difficult

"When international organizations enter the picture, they face a bitter dilemma between the desire to return the displaced immediately, which may be problematic politically or may produce violence at the local level, and the desire to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to IDPs while they are still displaced. The critical lesson from the Georgian case is that displacement itself is not neutral. It is not merely uncomfortable and undesirable, it also works actively to construct new realities, which in turn constrain the options for lasting, if not formal juridical, solutions. In this context, any humanitarian assistance that works to bound communities, by providing housing, for example, or schools for IDPs, or income generation projects that do not reach outside the IDP population, also contribute toward isolating a population and providing a closed forum in which individual wartime accounts easily merge to form shared narratives of ethnic violence.

Should organizations simply refuse to intervene? Or alternatively, should they insist on immediate repatriation whatever its consequences? Neither of these options is desirable. Constructive steps in the interim might include income generation projects that are both transferable after repatriation, and explicitly include members of the local population as partners or buyers; psychological rehabilitation, especially for children for whom war and its consequences have been the only reality, to reframe and provide an outlet for experienced and remembered violence; in short, measures that work in both the material and ideational realms to create open-ended, not bounded, possibilities. The primary lesson of this first challenge is thus that displacement in itself is not neutral, that the decision to implement stopgap measures while waiting for repatriation is also a proactive decision to allow and even facilitate the construction of a new, mobilized population.

The Challenge of Intervention

The interventions of international organizations become part of the causal chain not only at the local level, among IDPs, but also at the elite political level. In the Georgian case, in which IDP repatriation has been a central issue for political resolution since the beginning, the work of international organizations is read, interpreted and used by political elites on both sides, whatever the organizations' stated intentions.

The Georgian Ministry for Refugees states that it has documented every IDP case in Georgia, and the results, which include the name of every IDP with place of origin and place of current residence, can be found in its huge database. Organizations have at times drawn on this information to plan projects. Unfortunately, however, Georgian authorities have tended to exaggerate the extent of the displacement problem, in order to emphasize both the magnitude of the Abkhaz officials' ongoing violation of the human rights of the displaced, and the need in light of the enormity of the problem for concerted and possibly forceful Georgian intervention. When international organizations draw on these sources, Georgian officials cast this as affirmation that the figures are correct, and further, that the corresponding political claims made on the basis of these numbers are justified. Furthermore, Georgian officials argue, the failure of international organizations to date to repatriate the displaced is not a reflection of moderation in the face of political difficulties, but rather a deliberate unwillingness to recognize a clear case of ethnic cleansing. Thus, non-action by international organizations is not neutral, but subject to free interpretation.

Abkhaz officials on the other hand, have long claimed that international organizations, particularly UNHCR, have as their sole purpose to return all of the displaced to Abkhazia, with no concern for the social, economic or political consequences. Human rights activist Natella Akaba notes, "everyone knows the UN has a specific agenda", and Foreign Minister Shamba warns that UNHCR has the "wrong approach", because allowing a mass return would "bring about another war".

The on-going Regional Conference on migration processes in the CIS, a joint dialogue among international organizations, governments and NGOs begun in May 1996, has stressed the de-coupling of humanitarian and political issues and the need to assert that humanitarian concerns are issues in their own right. The goal is to depoliticize humanitarian intervention. The problem in the Georgian case is not simply the failure

of authorities on both sides to understand, but rather their wilful manipulation of international intervention to serve political ends.

The most stubborn challenge, however, remains: how to acknowledge that brutal ethnically-directed violence took place, while claiming the right to address practical humanitarian concerns rather than pass ultimate judgement." (Dale, 1997, sect.8.1-8.2)

Reference to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Known references to the Guiding Principles (as of March 2003)

- Reference to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation
- Other References to the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)
- Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages
- Training on the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)

Reference to the Guiding Principles in the national legislation

None

Other References to the Guiding Principles (in chronological order)

~~Review of national legal framework: Analysis of the extent to which national legislation relevant to the needs of internally displaced persons in Georgia accords with the Guiding Principles is being carried out by the Georgian Young Lawyers Association, with the support of the Brookings Institution project on internal displacement and OSCE/ODIHR.~~

~~Source: National/local NGOs~~

~~Date: 2000/2001~~

~~Documents:~~

- ~~• OSCE, Implementation Calendar of ODIHR projects, 14 September 2001 [Internet]~~

~~Large dissemination of the Guiding Principles: During his visit to Georgia, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis Deng, observed that the Guiding Principles had been received most positively and were actively being promoted as a useful tool for protecting the rights of the internally displaced persons. The UN Representative on IDPs was pleased to find that the Principles were well known among government officials, local NGOs and representative of the international community and broadly accepted as a useful basis for dialogue about the situation of the internally displaced in Georgia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs suggested that the GP "should acquire, step by step, an obligatory character." (UN CHR 25 January 2001, para.)~~

~~Sources: Georgian government, national/local NGOs, regional organisation, academic institution~~

~~Date: 2000~~

~~Documents:~~

- ~~• Report of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on IDPs to the Commission of Human Rights, Profiles in displacement: Georgia, 17 January 2001 (see § 6) [Internet]~~

Regional workshop on internal displacement: To promote more effective solutions to the plight of internally displaced persons in the South Caucasus, a high level gathering was convened on May 10-12, 2000 in Tbilisi, Georgia at the invitation of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis M. Deng. Participants included officials of the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia responsible for displaced populations; NGOs, academic institutions and displaced communities from the three countries; representatives of regional organizations, international organizations, and international NGOs; and international experts. Workshop participants welcomed the GP as a useful restatement of hard international law as well as an instrument providing clear guidance in cases where existing international law contains grey areas.
Sources: Georgian government, national/local NGOs
Date: 10-12 May 2000
Documents:
Summary report of the Regional Workshop on Internal Displacement in the South Caucasus, 3 July 2000 [Internet]

Initiative by national NGOs: A group of NGOs at the regional workshop on internal displacement in the South Caucasus (May 2000) made a series of proposals. These included the intention to develop a common framework for disseminating and promoting the Guiding Principles in the South Caucasus; the translation of the GP into local languages and in a format best suited to target groups; the initiation of regional consultations on issues relating to the internally displaced; the creation of country-specific monitoring mechanisms based on the GP to assess the region's displacement situations; the opening of a dialogue among governments, NGOs and international organizations about the issues raised and their potential policy implications.
Sources: National/local NGOs
Date: 10-12 May 2000
Documents:
Summary report of the Regional Workshop on Internal Displacement in the South Caucasus, 3 July 2000 (see annex I) [Internet]

Availability of the Guiding Principles in local languages

The Guiding Principles have been translated into the Georgian language by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and published by OCHA in the form of a booklet that is being disseminated throughout the country.
Date: 2000
Documents:
GP in Georgian [Internet]

The Guiding Principles have been translated into the Abkhaz language by the UN Human Rights Office in Abkhazia.
Sources: Report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2002/1141, 14 October 2002
Date: 2002
Documents:
GP in Abkhaz [Internal link]

Training on the Guiding Principles

~~NRC training workshop: The Global IDP Project of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) together with NRC Georgia held a training workshop on the Guiding Principles in Borjomi, Georgia. The workshop was part of a global NRC effort to disseminate and explain the Guiding Principles to representatives of governments, NGOs, the UN agencies and the displaced themselves, in order to ensure better protection and assistance to internally displaced persons. Participants in the NRC workshop were selected from local NGOs and authorities in the Kutaisi and Zugdidi regions, where many of the IDPs currently reside. Many of them were so called "community mobilizers" working directly with the displaced population on rights awareness and self-help issues.~~

Sources: Local/national NGOs, local and national authorities

Date: 13-15 November 2000

Documents:

- Report of the Workshop on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Borjomi, Georgia, 13-15 November 2000 [Internal link]

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACH	Accion Contra el Hambre
AI	Amnesty International
CDIE	Center for Development Information and Evaluation
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFW	Food for Work
FINCA	Foundation for International Community Assistance
HRW	Human Rights Watch
GRCS	Georgian Red Cross Society
GSRF	Georgian Self-Reliance Fund
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
HROAG	Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSI	Open Society Institute
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
SCF	Save the Children Fund
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNAG	United Nations Association of Georgia
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNCESCR	United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNDHA	United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Committee
UNOMIG	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNA	United Nations Association of Georgia
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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