

GEORGIA



Operational highlights

- The August conflict over the territory of South Ossetia resulted in the displacement of 134,000 individuals, of whom some 102,800 had returned by the end of November. That left some 21,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of humanitarian assistance. UNHCR provided the displaced with emergency aid, such as non-food items, and helped them cope with the winter.
- The conflict also drew attention to the need to address more comprehensively the situation of another 222,000 IDPs in protracted displacement within Georgia since the early 1990s.
- Through a comprehensive protection gap analysis, UNHCR assessed local integration to be the most viable durable solution for Chechen refugees in Georgia.
- A Global Needs Assessment pilot project was launched in March 2008 to highlight unmet needs and establish a consensus on common strategies for each population of concern.
- With UNHCR support, a national IDP strategy focussed on improving living conditions and furthering local integration was adopted by the Government just before the conflict in August. However, the strategy is under review in light of the new situation.
- The rehabilitation of an asylum reception centre in Tbilisi marked the beginning of a three-year project to develop an asylum system in line with international and European standards.

Persons of concern

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Russian Federation	1,000	1,000	50	45
	Various	20	20	53	33
Asylum-seekers	Various	20	10	21	11
IDPs		243,900	243,900	55	23
IDP-like situations		49,200	49,200	-	-
Returnees (IDPs)		102,800	102,800	-	-
Stateless	Stateless	1,500	1,500	-	-
Total		398,440	398,430		



Distribution of winter items in Karaleti in the buffer zone between Gori, Georgia and the South Ossetian administrative border

UNHCR / M. SUNJIC

| Working environment |

UNHCR's operation in Georgia is complex, addressing a variety of situations and people of concern. The latter include *prima facie* refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people and IDPs linked to the ongoing conflicts over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as returnees and Meshketian Turks deported during the Soviet era and only recently able to return to Georgia.

The conflict over South Ossetia affected UNHCR operations in Georgia, requiring the office to place new emphasis on protection and humanitarian assistance. Lack of humanitarian access to some 10,000 displaced persons in South Ossetia remains a matter of concern.

| Achievements and impact |

● *Main objectives*

UNHCR's goals for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people were to pursue durable solutions, particularly local integration, and seek resettlement for a small number of people of concern with specific protection needs. UNHCR also promoted self-reliance and advocated that people of concern be included in poverty-reduction strategies. The Office lobbied for Georgia's accession to international statelessness instruments.

UNHCR worked to improve IDPs' legal status and livelihoods through protection, humanitarian assistance and self-reliance activities. Under its Strategic Directions programme, the Office contributed to the Abkhazia peace process. UNHCR promoted sustainable solutions to help the reintegration of returnee families

Following the granting of temporary resident status to Chechen refugees in 2007, the Government planned to issue

Convention Travel Documents allowing refugees to travel outside the country. However, the plan was delayed by the August conflict. The refugee protection strategy geared towards local integration in Georgia continued to bear fruit, with Chechen children joining the state school system and studying the Georgian curriculum. UNHCR is working with the Government to sustain local integration so that it can wind down its operations in the Pankisi Valley, where most Chechen refugees reside.

A statelessness gap analysis was completed and will serve as a basis for developing recommendations on amending the Georgian Law on Citizenship. The State is now granting birth certificates to children born in the Kvemo Kartli region, preventing statelessness. UNHCR regularly observed Government RSD procedures and offered its advice.

The adoption of a National IDP Action Plan by the Government in July 2008 was a major step towards resolving the situation for long-term IDPs. It also provided a legal basis for UNHCR's planned interventions for durable solutions. Although the Plan was subsequently suspended due to the August events, the Government is working on reviewing and adapting it to the new situation. Georgia has expressed a strong commitment to integrating people in protracted displacement and finding a durable solution for them.

● *Activities and assistance*

Domestic needs and household support: Assistance to the newly displaced included the provision of blankets, kitchen sets and jerry cans for some 65,000 people at the beginning of the August conflict, as well as winterization packages (quilts, bedding, mattresses, hot water bottles, hot water flasks and electric heaters) for some 4,500 families residing in the various collective centres in the capital, Tbilisi.

A supplement of 2.7 cubic meters of firewood per household was given to some 5,400 households, and some 1,700 wood stoves were distributed in 18 villages in the Gori region. Another 2,170 IDPs received gas stoves, kitchen equipment and storage units, and 19 collective centres received communal cooking facilities and equipment.

Education: The Ministry of Education permitted Chechen children to be taught the Georgian curriculum in state schools. The performance of refugee school pupils improved markedly, and eight school graduates passed the national examinations. Three schools in Gali attended by returnee children were renovated and sanitation conditions improved.

Health and nutrition: All refugees and asylum-seekers had access to health care. Children under five were monitored regularly and women had access to specialized services.

Income generation: All refugees have access to a grant application system to develop proposals for income-generating projects. Twelve business projects were registered as individual enterprises, while 29 others (involving 72 beneficiaries) received UNHCR support—with victims of sexual and gender-based violence given special attention.

Legal assistance: Legal counselling and advice concerning property and social rights was provided to 390 displaced individuals. Women's Rehabilitation Clubs in Tbilisi and Gori provided psychosocial aid to 83 newly displaced women and 26 children. Some 234 IDPs were counselled following incidents of sexual and gender-based violence and 50 received legal advice. Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance Centres in Western Georgia managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council registered some 3,100 new legal requests, of which more than 66 per cent were successfully concluded in favour of the beneficiaries.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR increased its partnerships with civil society actors to include a total of 11 international and 17 national NGOs.

Shelter and infrastructure: Some 370 IDP families were able to spend the winter in one "warm room" while rebuilding their destroyed homes, and almost 2,400 IDPs benefited from winterization and emergency repairs to their dwellings in collective centres. A temporary accommodation facility for asylum-seekers was opened. Housing was built for eight IDP families in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia in the first half of 2008, but destroyed during the August conflict.

● *Constraints*

The August conflict affected UNHCR's protection and humanitarian activities in Georgia, had a major adverse effect on Georgia's economy and, with the additional burden of a large number of new IDPs, made the support of the international community essential. Lack of humanitarian access to some 10,000 IDPs in South Ossetia remains a concern.

Through the promulgation of a Law on Occupied Territories, Georgia has regulated access to the two break-away regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Difficulties in UNHCR's access to the territories and no access to South Ossetia are complicating and preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need.

Planned activities relating to the local integration of refugees were delayed by the August conflict, as the Government gave priority to those who were newly displaced. The conflict also resulted in the postponement of UNHCR's plans to scale down and phase out its activities in the Pankisi Valley.

Difficulties in UNHCR's access to the territories and no access to South Ossetia are complicating and preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need

| Financial information |

UNHCR received sufficient funding to implement its programme in Georgia successfully, despite human-resource limitations. In 2008, UNHCR continued to assist and protect those previously displaced using supplementary funds where available. Following the August events, UNHCR received additional funds to deal with the new IDP emergency and concentrated on the provision of shelter, non-food items and winterization assistance.

| Organization and implementation |

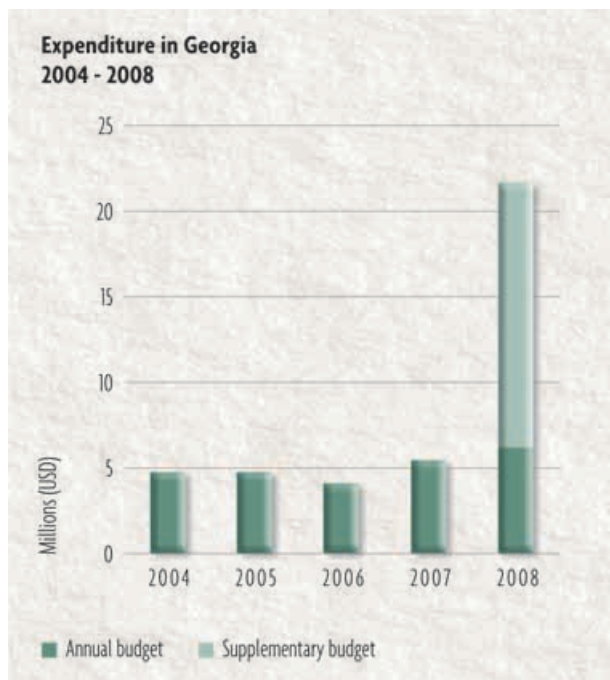
UNHCR's Representation in Tbilisi oversees three field offices (Akhmeta, supporting refugees; Gali and Zugdidi, supporting the IDP operation in western Georgia), as well as two field units: Tskhinvali, South Ossetia (temporarily suspended) and Sukhumi, Abkhazia.

The close working relationship already established with the UN Country Team in Georgia facilitated a successful application of the cluster approach for those newly displaced by the August 2008 crisis. UNHCR also participated in joint UN cross-sectoral programmes dealing with HIV and AIDS. Following the conflict, two joint UN projects related to gender issues were initiated in Gori with the participation of UNFPA, UNDP and UNHCR. Another project provided cash grants to IDPs linked to winterization (UNHCR), complementary food (WFP) and children's clothing (UNICEF).

At a bilateral level UNHCR strengthened its planning and collaboration with WFP using the annual Joint Plan of Action, and continued its close collaboration with the Council of Europe and the European Union. In Abkhazia, UNHCR and UNICEF collaborate in advocacy with the local authorities.

| Working with others |

Prior to the August crisis, UNHCR had partnership agreements with 16 local agencies, including three governmental and seven international partners working in different parts of Georgia. Following the crisis, this increased to 17 local NGOs and 11 international partners.



Before August 2008, there was an already established coordination mechanism between the UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs, donors and other actors working in Georgia on the issues pertaining to the IDP population. A Joint Abkhazia programme was partly implemented, but put on hold during the crisis.

The response to the crisis was coordinated initially using sectoral groups, which then developed into the full inter-agency cluster approach being used.

UNHCR has been working closely with its implementing partners to respond to changing circumstances to help stabilize the living conditions of IDPs and returnees through the provision of protection and shelter. UNHCR's partnership extended to the World Bank after the conflict. The Office also participated in the post-conflict Georgia Joint Needs Assessment, together with the UN Country Team, the World Bank and other experts during September and October 2008.

Overall assessment

The adoption of the IDP Action Plan by the Government of Georgia at the end of July 2008 provided the legal basis for UNHCR's planned interventions for durable solutions for this population, including adequate housing, access to basic services such as health and education, and entry into the labour market through vocational training, re-training of skilled labour and the establishment of income-generating projects.

The August emergency considerably changed UNHCR's programme, requiring a focus on the new IDP population during the remaining four months of 2008. At the same time it opened up new opportunities to garner international support for attempts to solve the protracted IDP situation.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government:	The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, Civil Registry Agency
NGOs:	Action Against Hunger, Atinati, Avangard, CARE, Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti", Chechen Refugee Coordination Council, Civic Initiative and Human Being of the Future, Counterpart International, Danish Refugee Council, <i>Gaenati</i> , Georgian Center for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, Grassroots Support Center, International Relief and Development, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Rescue Committee, Kakhetian Regional Development Foundation, Norwegian Refugee Council, <i>Première Urgence</i> , Sakhli, Save the Children, Technical Assistance in Georgia, United Nations Association in Georgia, World Vision, World without Violence
Others:	The apparatus of the JCC, Co-chairman from the South Ossetian side
Operational partners	
NGOs:	Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council

Budget, income and expenditure in Georgia (USD)					
	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available ¹	Total expenditure
Annual budget	6,223,971	1,676,002	4,485,678	6,161,679	6,163,689
Caucasus Crisis SB	39,437,073	17,334,305	-505,579	16,828,727	15,542,423
Total	45,661,044	19,010,307	3,980,099	22,990,406	21,706,112

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

¹ Total funds available include currency adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Georgia (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,698,757	1,108,398	2,807,155	0
Community services	394,910	61,951	456,861	19,319
Domestic needs and household support	581,239	4,046,923	4,628,162	0
Education	157,997	0	157,997	21,765
Health and nutrition	163,796	0	163,796	80,730
Income generation	117,028	0	117,028	8,860
Legal assistance	370,323	299,210	669,533	47,040
Operational support (to agencies)	287,152	71,467	358,619	47,296
Shelter and infrastructure	37,383	0	37,383	0
Transport and logistics	45,104	834,768	879,872	20,640
Water	0	0	0	1,544
Instalments to implementing partners	833,458	8,920,031	9,753,489	(247,194)
Subtotal operational activities	4,687,147	15,342,748	20,029,895	0
Programme support	1,476,542	199,675	1,676,217	0
Total expenditure	6,163,689	15,542,423	21,706,112	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(200)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	2,111,577	8,920,031	11,031,608	
Reporting received	(1,278,119)	-	(1,278,119)	
Balance	833,458	8,920,031	9,753,489	
Outstanding 1st January				271,500
Reporting received				(247,194)
Refunded to UNHCR				(24,949)
Currency adjustment				(113)
Outstanding 31st December				(756)