

Emergency Operation in Georgia

12 September 2008

Total displacement caused by the recent conflict over South Ossetia	
Displaced population within Georgia excl. South Ossetia (GoG figures)	127,000
Displacement within South Ossetia (UNHCR estimates)	30,000
<i>Sub Total Georgia</i>	<i>157,000</i>
Displaced population to Russian Federation (GoRF figures)	35,000
Total	192,000

Returns within Georgia excluding South Ossetia to date	
Population already returned	68,000
Projected number of returns before onset of winter	5,000
Total	73,000

Projected winterisation needs in Georgia excluding South Ossetia	
<i>IDPs in need of short-term shelter during winter 2008/2009 only</i>	<i>23,000</i>
IDPs originating from South Ossetia	22,000
IDPs from inaccessible parts of "buffer zone"	8,000
IDPs from Abkhazia	1,000
<i>IDPs in need of long-term sub total</i>	<i>31,000</i>
Total	54,000

GoRF Government of the Russian Federation
GoG Government of Georgia

In addition, Georgia has a caseload of 222.000 IDPs from previous conflicts.

Latest statistics on IDP situation

Based on detailed profiling of IDPs in Georgia that was carried out by government authorities in cooperation with UNHCR, displacement statistics have now been revised.

During the recent conflict over South Ossetia August 2008, a total of 192,000 persons were forced to flee their homes. 127,000 were displaced in Georgia proper, 30,000 within South Ossetia and another 35,000 to North Ossetia (Russian Federation).

Out of 127,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Georgia, 68,000 individuals have already been able to return to date. UNHCR and the Georgian Government estimate that another 5,000 will go home before the onset of winter, bringing up the number of returnees to a total of 73,000.

As for the remaining 54,000 IDPs, UNHCR estimates that 23,000 IDPs just need shelter during the winter months and will be able to return in 2009 once their houses have been rehabilitated.

However, 31,000 individuals will not be able to return in the foreseeable future. They originate from South Ossetia (22,000) from the inaccessible parts of the “buffer zone” (8,000) and from Abkhazia (1,000). Given that Georgia is already hosting 223,000 IDPs from previous conflicts, this will leave the country with a total number of 254,000 IDPs in the long term.

UNHCR relief reached 56.000 persons in twelve days

During the emergency period from 13 to 25 August 2008, UNHCR and its partners distributed Non Food Items (NFI) for more than 56,000 individuals (over 15,000 families) in the entire country. The items distributed included blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, mattresses and tents.

Distribution of Non-food Items By UNHCR and Partners 13 – 25 August 2008		
Region	Items distributed	Beneficiaries reached
Tbilisi	Kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets, mattresses	37,510
Gori	Kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets, tents	1,985
Mtskheta	Kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets	205
Eastern Georgia	Kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets	5,360
Western Georgia	Kitchen sets, jerry cans, blankets, mattresses	12,107
Total		57,167

Gori filled to capacity

UNHCR in cooperation with the Georgian Government is now putting an end to spontaneous relocations of IDPs from the capital of Tbilisi to the overcrowded tented camp in Gori. In the week, busloads of IDPs kept coming to the tented camp in Gori every day claiming that they would rather stay in Gori than be relocated within Tbilisi.

In the Georgian capital, authorities are currently vacating schools and sending IDPs to alternative accommodations so the school year can start. However, some IDPs refuse to be relocated and spontaneously leave for Gori where a lot of their relatives and neighbors are placed.

Gori is filled to capacity and UNHCR prefers to reserve remaining tents for IDPs who were placed with host families and cannot stay with them any longer. Families who have an alternative place to stay will not be admitted to the camp any more.

Winterisation has started already

Recent rainfalls and low temperatures during the night served as a strong reminder that winter in Georgia is just around the corner. For those IDPs who cannot return immediately, two types of winter-proof shelter is needed:

- Accommodation for one winter for IDPs who will be able to repair their houses and return home next spring.
- Durable housing for individuals originating from South Ossetia, from Abkhazia and from inaccessible areas of the “buffer zone”, who will not be able to return in the foreseeable future.

The Georgian Government has released two initial lists of buildings assigned as IDP

shelters that need winterisation. One list contains 264 objects in the capital of Tbilisi that will serve as shelters for one winter season. Those include 156 kindergartens, 27 schools and 81 public buildings such as administrative centres, hospitals, sports facilities, institutes etc. Calculations regarding the distribution of funding sources are still in progress.

As for durable housing, the government has provided a list of 51 buildings in 34 municipalities throughout Georgia. Out of those, UNHCR will initially fund the rehabilitation of 12 objects with the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils as implementing partners. Additional rehabilitation projects with other partners are being prepared. Agreements will be signed next week and construction work will start immediately. Other agencies will fund the refurbishments of the remaining buildings.

The greatest challenge for winterising the buildings is the availability of sufficient construction materials as well as the provision of heating and cooking facilities to sustain the harsh winter.

UNHCR monitors return movements to villages

On Thursday, UNHCR conducted a second monitoring mission to the villages of Bershueti, Kirbali, Patara-Mejvriskhevi and Adzvi, all located northeast of Gori in immediate vicinity of the South Ossetian administrative boundary. These were villages that were not directly affected by military operations and have been harassed by Ossetian marauders only on a few occasions.

Talking to the villages UNHCR learned that part of the population has initially fled from their homes staying with relatives in safer regions. However, nearly all of them have returned after two to three weeks to attend to their crop and livestock.

The farmers are very concerned about their subsistence during the upcoming winter months. The irrigation canals to their fields used to be supplied with water from South Ossetia but dried out weeks ago, seriously affecting this year's harvest. Only Patara-Mejvriskhevi does not have water problems as the neighboring South Ossetian village of Didi-Mejvriskhevi did not cut them off water supplies.

All interlocutors reported that they received small amounts of food assistance but could not say exactly by whom. For winter they will need food assistance as well as firewood that they used to collect in Ossetian hills in previous years. Next year, alternative water sources need to be established to enable them to farm again.