

# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## GEORGIAN CONFLICT ZONES: ABKHAZIA & SOUTH OSSETIA

DONOR UPDATE 15 SEPT 2005

- With no progress made towards settling the conflicts, women and children in Abkhazia and South Ossetia live in an ongoing emergency.
- Funds are urgently needed to provide supply and technical assistance to the collapsed health and education sectors, child protection and social development.
- UNICEF's requirements for its humanitarian programme in 2005 amount to \$1.6 million; less than 25% of these requirements have been met to date.



## 1. EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Among the countries of the CIS, Georgia remains one of the most vulnerable from a humanitarian perspective. Within Georgian territory, two areas deserve particular attention as those highly affected by the consequences of unresolved conflicts: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Within these conflict-affected areas, it's the most vulnerable groups among the population who are paying the highest price for the prolonged, endemic crises.

The consistent lack of regular external support to these areas is clearly reflected in the collapse of the welfare system and the decay of basic services. Although formally in place, health services are deprived of any means to assist the population. Given the disintegration of the health care systems and poor water and sanitation, there is a strong need for emergency life-saving interventions.

The low quality of education for children in the conflict zones is also a constant concern. Most schools lack any basic or advanced educational equipment. Many children whose parents are overwhelmed with the task of basic survival are left to cope on their own, and there has been a reported increase in violence and abuse within families.

Both territories have a number of common features: the overall collapse of the social safety net - affecting all facilities in the conflict affected areas – and a failure to provide a prompt and effective response to the needs of the population; the persistent and tense atmosphere of volatility related to the unresolved conflicts and the general feeling of hopelessness for the future; the emergence of new and disruptive social behaviours; an increase in criminality; and a general lack of income generating opportunities.

### Security and access constraints

While the UN is granted access to Abkhazia, the de facto authorities frequently deny NGOs and humanitarian aid groups. This compounds the lack of regular external aid and support to the territory. South Ossetia is less complicated to enter than Abkhazia, but the security situation is more tense and unpredictable. The activities of international organizations were suspended in June 2005 after four Georgians were kidnapped following a shootout in which one Georgian policeman and four South Ossetians were killed. As recently as August 2005, an 11 year old Georgian boy was kidnapped just west of the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali. Random shootings also fuel tensions and indiscriminate rocket and grenade shelling are common. It's a widely held view that Tskhinvali is a base for criminal gangs, kidnapers, illegal armed groups and the drug trade.

## 2. UNICEF'S RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF Georgia has a strong working relationship with the other UN Agencies operating in the conflict zones, the government of Georgia, the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and local and international NGOs. Despite limited financial resources and international staff (national staff is unable to travel to the conflict areas due to security concerns), UNICEF has pushed ahead with its agenda and made a number of key achievements and interventions in the areas of health, water and sanitation and education.

### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

For the past 10 years, UNICEF has provided Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) vaccines and supplies for the annual state immunization plan in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. By ensuring that the Georgian immunization plan covers the conflict-affected areas, the Georgian Ministry of Health and the de facto Abkhaz Ministry of Health now work together in the transport, distribution and reporting of EPI vaccines. In order to strengthen the cold chain, UNICEF provided vaccine refrigerators to the desperately under-equipped vaccine storage areas of Abkhazia in the summer of 2005. Complementing the supply side of UNICEF's interventions in the conflict zones, close to 30 health care workers at maternity facilities in all regions of Abkhazia have been trained in proper breastfeeding practices.

Subject to available funds, UNICEF intends to move forward with a number of activities in Abkhaz and South Ossetian health care facilities. These include the provision of obstetric and midwifery kits to the main maternity facilities in South Ossetia; support for strengthening the immunization programme through skills upgrading of professional staff; upgrading competencies and skills of relevant health care staff to implement IMCI in maternity facilities and children's polyclinics; support to exclusive breastfeeding and nutrition programmes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; support for an international consultancy to conduct further investigations of the health and nutritional status of women and children in the conflict zones; and distribution of iron, iodine and Vitamin A tablets to children and pregnant women through existing immunization programme chains in both regions.

In the area of HIV/AIDS, UNICEF intends to support the development of life skills and health education curricula, the training of teachers and the production of advocacy materials. Schools have the potential of reaching large

numbers of children and are crucial settings for learning about HIV/AIDS prevention. UNICEF's AIDS education programme will emphasize: developing life skills to enable children to make healthy choices and adopt safer behavior; promoting the rights of children with HIV/AIDS and children from families affected by HIV/AIDS to education and a safe non-discriminatory school environment; and protecting the right of pregnant schoolgirls to education.

The Health component of UNICEF's Emergency Programme for the conflict affected areas of Georgia totals **\$350,000**.

## **EDUCATION**

UNICEF continues to supply schools in the conflict zones with much needed material resources. UNICEF has procured recreation kits for a number of Abkhaz schools for the 2005/2006 school year, to complement school supplies and help ensure the 'Right to Play'.

Depending on available funds, UNICEF plans to train elementary and secondary school teachers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in interactive learning methods with an emphasis on life skills and child development. Also subject to available funds, UNICEF plans to restock Abkhaz schools with supply replenishment kits, as well as full school-in-box and recreation kits for South Ossetia. Peace education and peer mediation training in both conflict zones is also planned, focused on promoting new teaching methodologies, life skills, human rights (with a focus on child rights), tolerance and conflict resolution skills.

The Education component of UNICEF's Emergency Plan for the conflict affected areas of Georgia totals **\$300,000**.

## **WATER AND SANITATION**

Depending on available funds, UNICEF plans to distribute safe water tanks and calcium hypochlorite to all schools and health centers in the region of South Ossetia. UNICEF also intends to promote health and hygiene education in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia to prevent water-related diseases, and reverse the general lack of sanitation. By educating the population on safe water skills for drinking and cooking, as well as maintaining good personal, child and domestic hygiene, UNICEF can significantly reduce disease risks to women and children in the conflict zones.

The Water and Sanitation component of UNICEF's Emergency Plan for the conflict affected areas of Georgia totals **\$300,000**.

## **CHILD PROTECTION & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

UNICEF has a number of initiatives planned for the conflict zones in the areas of child protection and social development. These include supporting the 'Right to Play' in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – promotion of organized sport, recreation and healthy lifestyles through schools; support to youth centres in Tskhinvali and Sukhumi to develop projects aimed at confidence building, leadership skills, conflict resolution and empowerment among the youth population; training of community based social service providers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the field of psychosocial support and counselling for children and youth; programme support to HALO Trust in developing culturally appropriate and accessible mine risk education (MRE) communication materials for HALO's interactive MRE initiatives for children and their families in Abkhazia and Zugdidi; and a survivor assistance programme for landmine survivors, supporting reintegration and the further development and expansion of the annual UNICEF-funded summer camp.

The Child Protection & Social Development component of UNICEF's Emergency Plan for the conflict affected areas of Georgia totals **\$430,000**.

## **UNICEF RESPONSE TO GEORGIA FLOODS - MAY 2005**

In May 2005, Georgia experienced country-wide flooding that destroyed bridges, damaged power stations and forced residents to move in with friends, family and neighbors. UNICEF played an active inter-agency role and was a key member of the UN's Disaster Management Team. Coordinating with other UN Agencies and NGOs, UNICEF conducted a rapid assessment and developed an action plan to assist the flood-affected areas.

UNICEF gratefully received a contribution of \$90,200 from the UK National Committee, and the funds continue to go to the most severely affected regions of Georgia. Seven regions are being given assistance with basic hygiene kits, emergency health kits and school-in-a-box kits; the latter to ensure that the education system is not disrupted.

As Georgia is prone to natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, etc.), UNICEF needs to be able to respond in a timely fashion to assist the affected population(s). Depending on additional funding, UNICEF intends to stockpile a reserve of emergency supplies for immediate distribution in the event of another natural disaster.

The Emergency Preparedness component of UNICEF's Emergency Plan for Georgia totals **\$192,000**.

### 3. 2005 APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

Current UNICEF funding requirements total \$1,602,000. Since UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report (HAR) in 2005, additions have been made to the Emergency Programme which account for an increase in total funding requirements. In the Health and Nutrition sector, HIV/AIDS education, life skills development and health education curricula have been added. Due to the May 2005 floods, an Emergency sector has also been added. It comprises the original response to the floods, as well as an Emergency Preparedness component designed to provide immediate relief in the event of another natural disaster.

The response from the donor community has been limited thus far, with only US \$387,700 received. As of 1 September 2005, only one donor government (the United States), together with the Dutch and British National Committees for UNICEF, has provided the much needed contributions to UNICEF Georgia's Emergency Programme.

Donor	Income (US\$)	Sector
Dutch National Committee	153,500	Education
USAID	144,000	Health Care (vaccine related)
UK National Committee	90,200	Emergency
<b>Total</b>	<b>387,700</b>	

Sector	Target (US\$)	Funds received (US\$)	Unfunded (US\$)
Health	350,000	144,000	206,000
Education	300,000	153,500	146,500
Water and Sanitation	300,000	-	300,000
Child Protection & Social Development	430,000	-	430,000
Emergency	192,000	90,200	101,800
Programme Support	30,000	-	30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,602,000</b>	<b>387,700</b>	<b>1,214,300</b>

### 4. IMPACT OF UNDER-FUNDING

The vast majority of UNICEF's financial requirements for the conflict zones are unmet. At the moment, key projects are on hold and remain unimplemented due to the shortage of funds. Should additional contributions fail to materialize soon, UNICEF may be forced to revise the size and scope of its planned activities.

UNICEF expresses its gratitude to the donors who have thus far contributed to the Georgian conflict zones' and emergency interventions and hopes that other donors will soon extend their support to its Emergency Programmes. The timely provision of resources will allow the organisation to avoid any critical disruption in the provision of essential services and supplies across its five sectors of intervention, as well as to launch new important projects.

Further details of the Conflict Zones Emergency Programme can be obtained from:

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