

UNICEF Georgia

Mid-year Situation Report

Reporting period: January to June 2013

Highlights

- UNICEF supported local actors to increase immunization coverage of children 0 – 17 in the region of Abkhazia with routine and supplementary immunization by developing immunization registry data base.
- Three specialized day care centres are pioneering inclusive education for children living with disabilities in the region of Abkhazia.
- Network of Social Community Centres in Abkhazia continues to offer increased opportunities for learning and development for 7,792 children in 48 communities in Abkhazia region, including children of pre-school age.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As a result of continuous isolation and the sensitive political context, children in Abkhazia today receive a version of basic services inferior to the one their parents' generation received a few decades ago. The quality of maternal and child health care is low, mainly due to inadequate infrastructure, especially at the primary health-care level, and the inadequate capacity of medical staff. A recent UNICEF-facilitated assessment revealed that one in five mothers never breastfed their child and that three out of five women did not go for a routine health exam for their child or for themselves after delivery. The indicators for returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) are much worse. Immunization coverage is very low, as low as 40 per cent in some districts for the combined diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine (DPT3).

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is particularly problematic in rural schools, exposing children to a high risk of outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Children with disabilities live in isolation within their families, lacking opportunities for integration, social inclusion and inclusive education programmes. There are no programmes or initiatives at any level to detect or respond to violence, abuse or exploitation of children. Reportedly, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in Abkhazia is higher than in the rest of Georgia, whereas the level of information about the issue is very low. The above situation can only be exacerbated by the community's low resilience to shocks such as possible floods, landslides or earthquakes.



Humanitarian leadership and coordination

UNICEF is engaging with de facto authorities in the region of Abkhazia and local civil society partners in a multi-sector, community-based effort to enhance social and health outcomes for an estimated 40,000 Abkhaz children. UNICEF is working with other UN agencies and International organizations active in Abkhazia through the Strategic Partnership for Humanitarian Assistance in Abkhazia (ASP) functioning under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator Office. Within the ASP, UNICEF is chairing the Basic Social Services (BSS) coordination sub-group which focuses on health, education, WASH and child protection.

The ASP mechanism maintains regular communication and coordination with the Government of Georgia, most notably the State Ministry for Reintegration, as well as with wider humanitarian and development community by feeding into a broader Humanitarian Coordination Group chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator.

UNICEF Programme response

UNICEF is implementing a multi-sector intervention in the region of Abkhazia focusing on maternal and child healthcare, including strengthening immunization of children, social protection and community support to women and children in isolated rural poor communities as well as to children living with disabilities. Activities also include social reintegration of young people and public and environmental health promotion activities, including WASH in schools.

In collaboration with its implementing partners – most notably UNDP, World Vision and ACF – UNICEF is providing support to the network of 48 social community centers that offer extracurricular activities for children, including sports, play and healthy lifestyles promotion as well as recreational and learning activities for children of pre-school age. UNICEF is also collaborating with local partners to enhance development and participation of young people through the network of 18 Youth Clubs that is expected to be established by the end of 2013.

During the reporting period UNICEF Georgia didn't receive any new funds related to funding needs projections reflected in the HAC 2013 chapter. UNICEF Georgia has been however able to continue to utilize thematic emergency funding secured in 2012 as well as its other resources (funded by generous contribution from donors, which include Sida, Sweden, EU and USAID) to maintain continued programmatic engagement in addressing the most critical needs identified in the HAC 2013.

The following is an overview of key results achieved in the main areas of intervention as outlined in Georgia's Humanitarian Action for Children 2013.

Health and Nutrition

Results Status

Estimated #	UNICEF	
	UNICEF Target	Cumulative results (#)
# of children immunized for measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis B and tuberculosis.	38,000	37,000*
# of medical professionals receive training in Immunization in Practice (including mid-level and cold store management) and in Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI).	300	276
UNICEF partners contributing to above UNICEF Results: UNDP, healthcare professionals in Maternity Wards in Sukhumi, Gagra and Gali and the network of primary healthcare centers in the region of Abkhazia, including medical points within the network of Social Community Centers. *number of children generated from the Immunization Registry data-base		

Analysis of Results

During the reporting period UNICEF assisted de facto authorities in Abkhazia to improve routine immunization system in the region as well as to increase the overall percentage of immunization coverage for key vaccines. UNICEF also supported supplementary immunization activities (SIA) in response to reported cases of pertussis and measles affecting estimated 500 children at the beginning of 2012, extending the SIA to also allow for catch-up immunization for children previously missing or not completing immunization. UNICEF has also provided assistance to further strengthening of cold-chain in Abkhazia by procuring a walk-in cold-store room for the central vaccine storage in Sukhumi, thus optimizing the conditions for proper storage and management of distribution of vaccines supply in the region. The installation of the cold-store room is expected to be finalized by early September 2013.

The improvements of immunization of children have been supported by developing and launching the Immunization Registry Data-base, which enabled local healthcare authorities to have reliable data on actual levels of immunization coverage and thus better target both the routine immunization of children as well as supplementary / catch-up immunization. Furthermore, the immunization calendar in the region of Abkhazia has been adapted to international (WHO, UNICEF) standards, replacing the outdated immunization practices and strengthening a more systematic approach to immunization, including better planning of needed vaccine supplies

The below table illustrates increase in overall immunization coverage in Abkhazia for children born between 1996 and 2011 (age 2 – 17)

Coverage of children born between January 1, 1996 and December 31st, 2011

Vaccine type	June 30th 2013	June 30th 2012	Difference in %%
Polio3	76,9	69,2	7,7
DTP3	61,4	54,9	6,5
HepB3	60,4	47,9	12,5
BCG	78,1	77,4	0,7
MMR2	49,9	26,7	23,2
DT	61,8	45,6	16,2
Td	34,3	5,0	29,3

UNICEF facilitated continued capacity development and training for medical professionals in Abkhazia reaching over 270 medical workers, focusing on training in effective immunization in practice and effective perinatal care of children and mothers.

The key results of capacity development efforts were introduction of new protocols in maternity wards in the region, introducing improved new practices as recommended by the assessment of situation in key maternal and child healthcare institutions in Abkhazia facilitated by UNICEF external consultants.

At the level of primary healthcare UNICEF continues to support increased access to primary healthcare for women and children by supporting a network of primary healthcare points associated to the network of 48 Social Community Centers by organizing tailor-made training for medical nurses (based on the IMCI training methodology) – involving a total of 181 medical nurses in the training programme - and supporting consultative sessions for young parents focused on prevention and promotion of good parenting practices.

WASH

Results Status

Estimated #/% coverage	UNICEF		Sector / Cluster*	
	UNICEF Target	Cumulative results (#)	Cluster Target	Cumulative results (#)
# of children in most-affected rural schools have access to safe water and adequate sanitation.	6,500	951	N/a	N/a
# of schoolchildren benefiting from hygiene and sanitation promotion messages.	26,000	7,972	N/a	N/a
UNICEF partners contributing to above UNICEF Results: UNDP, ACF, World Vision <i>*Due to a specific context of intervention in Abkhazia no specific Sector / Cluster targets have been established</i>				

Analysis of Results

Based on the joint UNICEF and ACF Assessment of situation with WASH in schools in Abkhazia conducted in 2012, UNICEF and ACF – in collaboration with UNDP – have launched a pilot ‘WASH in schools’ project in 5 communities in Gali district of Abkhazia region during first half of 2013. Joint activities are reaching out to 951 children and over 100 teachers, through community initiative groups gathering representatives of schools and local communities.

To date series of training sessions were organized for members of all 5 community initiative groups, following which local communities identified priority actions aimed at improvement of water and sanitation facilities in the school as well as solid waste management and hygiene practice improvements. By early July 2013 all community projects – including improved waste collection points and enhancement of water supply systems in targeted communities – have received materials and supplies needed for the project realization.

In parallel, network of Social Community Centres operating in 48 communities in Abkhazia jointly supported by UNICEF and World Vision is reaching 7,972 children with basic messages on hygiene and safe use of water as part of healthy lifestyles promotion activities conducted in the centers.

HIV/AIDS

Results Status

Estimated #/% coverage	UNICEF	
	UNICEF Target	Cumulative results #
# of men and women living with HIV, including their families, receive support through the community support centre within the Sukhumi AIDS Centre	100	83
# of women of reproductive age and # of young parents receive counselling on HIV and AIDS	1,200 women 300 young parents	8,406 participants in info sessions (67% women and 34% men)
UNICEF Supported partners contributing to above UNICEF Results: HIV/AIDS Centre, Sukhumi, World Vision, network of SCCs.		

Analysis of Results

In collaboration with Sukhumi based HIV / AIDS Center and Voluntary Testing and Counseling Centers (VTC) outreach to the network of Social Community Centres (SCCs) has been supported by UNICEF and World Vision with an aim to organize educational and awareness raising activities targeting school going adolescents and local youth as well as to provide support to people and their families living with HIV / AIDS.

Thus far, a total of 83 people living with HIV received support from Community Centre located at the HIV / AIDS Center in Sukhumi in the form of psychological and medical counseling advise by the team of local professionals, including psychologist, social workers and medical doctors.

HIV / AIDS Centre and VTC Centers also reach out to targeted local population by awareness raising sessions on HIV/AIDS and risk behavior and by closure of the report a total of 8,406 participants (5657 women and 2749 men) attended these events organized at the SCC / community level.

The community based information and awareness raising activities related to HIV / AIDS and related risk behaviors were also organized by nurses working in primary healthcare facilities associated to Social Community Centers.

Child Protection

Analysis of Results

In collaboration with World Vision and local civil society partners UNICEF is supporting functioning of the network of Social Community Centers (SCCs) established at school premises in 48 communities in Abkhazia. The network of SCCs is providing increased access to social services to 7,970 children and youth in the targeted communities by organizing thematic groups – organized as extracurricular group sessions – focusing on healthy lifestyles promotion and education, pre-school education and life skills development activities including basic computer literacy and different aspects of public and environmental health promotion.

The network of SCCs is also being utilized for identification of vulnerable or excluded children and UNICEF and World Vision are increasing their efforts, in collaboration with local partner, to increase the knowledge of local community based social workers (or group facilitators) on issues related to child protection.

In connection with network of SCCs UNICEF and World Vision continue to support specialized centres for children living with disabilities in Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira in the South East of the region of Abkhazia. The three centres are providing a range of services to children living with disabilities and their parents, including physical rehabilitation, educational and recreational activities for children and family support groups. The centers are also actively engaged in the pioneering work of promoting the social inclusion of children with disabilities in local communities as well as inclusive education. Out of the total of 278 children registered by the three centres, 189 children continuously receive the above mentioned services, while the increased efforts to increase outreach are also under way.

As one of main achievements of the work in this area, initial success has been made in piloting inclusive education of children and their acceptance into regular schools. Thus far, 4 children have been enrolled into regular schools, while more children attend preparatory classes with expectation to be soon enrolled into regular schools.

Communication for Development (C4D)

With emphasis on strengthening the maternal and child healthcare, including immunization of children UNICEF has developed information, education and communication materials tailored to the needs of medical professionals as well as general public (with focus on parents) related to the vaccine preventable illnesses. In addition to that, UNICEF engaged with local media and helped development and airing of 21 specialized radio programmes covering different topics from the broader context of maternal and child healthcare and prevention.

In a collaborative effort of UNICEF Offices in Tbilisi and Sukhumi 'Baby-parent book' – earlier developed and widely disseminated in the rest of Georgia – has been introduced in the region of Abkhazia as well. 3,000 copies of this book have been distributed to young mothers as well as to

medical professionals, thus strengthening the region-wide dissemination of information on positive practices concerning early care for children and good parenting practices related to early childhood development.

The effects of communication activities described in the above are already visible as following the intensive communication and information dissemination campaign a more advanced practices and protocols are being introduced in maternity wards in Abkhazia as well as in other medical institutions that provide maternal and child healthcare.

Human Resources

Currently the UNICEF Zone Office in Sukhumi (which includes a Satellite Office in Gali) has a total of 6 staff members (of which 1 international) and is being supported by Emergency Specialist in Tbilisi in charge of the overall management and supervision of the office and its staff.

From the second part of 2013 this arrangement will be further strengthened by posting a permanently based Head of Office in Abkhazia (IP) to Sukhumi Zone Office.

Security

The overall security situation in the region of Abkhazia continues to be relatively calm, posing no major threats to operations of UNICEF and its partners. However that is an uneasy calm as frequency of local incidents, especially in the Gali district, which include kidnaps for ransom (linked to hazelnut harvest and revenues collected from selling the cash-crops), armed robberies and other incidents resulting in deaths of people keep the local population on constant alert and with high levels of distress. This is particularly the case in the villages of Gali district, where people tend to lock in at homes with the sunset in fear of volatile security situation.

UN DSS on the ground and the Area Security Management Team - gathering UN and international NGOs – have been on occasions advising temporary suspension of movements in areas where major incidents (kidnaps, other incidents causing deaths of people) have been taking place; yet at almost all such instances these measures were of precautionary character and were not lasting more than few days.

For as long as the security situation in the rest of Georgia tends to be stable and improving, UN DSS still keeps its assessment of security for parts of Gali district to be at the level IV (and at the level III in other parts of Abkhazia) with recommendation for use of armoured vehicles in the villages along Enguri river, which marks the administrative boundary line (ABL) between Abkhazia and rest of Georgia.

Funding

Funding Requirements (as defined in HAC for 2013 for a period of 12 months)				
Appeal Sector	Requirements	Funds received*	Funding gap	
			\$	%
Health and Nutrition	890,000	0	890,000	100
HIV / AIDS	230,000	0	230,000	100
WASH	615,000	0	615,000	100
Child Protection	390,000	0	390,000	100
Education	115,000	0	115,000	100
Communication	70,000	0	70,000	100
Total	2,310,000	0	2,310,000	100

* 'Funds received' does not include pledges

Next SitRep: December 2013.

For further information, please contact

Sascha Graumann
Representative
Country Office
Georgia
Tel: +995 32 2232 388
Fax: +995 32 2251 236
E-mail: sgraumann@unicef.org

Nada Marasovic
Deputy Representative
Country Office
Georgia
Tel: +995 32 2232 388
Fax: +995 32 2251 236
E-mail: nmarasovic@unicef.org

Dragan Markovic
Emergency Specialist
Country Office
Georgia
Tel: +995 32 2232 388
Fax: +995 32 2251 236
E-mail:
dmarkovic@unicef.org