

Brief Description

In early January 2008, President Saakashvili had decided to resign one year before his five-year term had expired and hold snap presidential elections because influential international human rights groups as well as many Georgians, had criticized the president for imposing a state of emergency the previous November. Saakashvili won a definitive first-round victory 53 percent of the vote, while the second-place finisher received 27 percent.

In May 2008, Georgia held parliamentary elections against a backdrop of Russian military threats and economic and transport blockades. Saakashvili's United National Movement won about 120 out of the 150 parliament seats. Large numbers of demonstrators marched across Georgia's capital on Monday to protest parliamentary election results they said were rigged in favor of the ruling party.

In August 2008, the conflict flared up in Georgia causing the displacement of an estimated 127,499 people from South Ossetia region and other conflict-affected areas. In addition, some 10-15,000 were displaced within South Ossetia itself. A further 36,000 were displaced from South Ossetia to North Ossetia in the Russian Federation, most of whom are now believed to have returned. On August 13, a cease-fire agreement that triggered a staged withdrawal of troops from the territory of Georgia was signed between the parties. Monitors from the European Union are patrolling an area north of Gori and adjacent to the administrative border with South Ossetia, Georgia, which contains some 50 villages with an estimated population of 24,000, and is known as the "adjacent areas".

Highlights on progress in UN reform

UNCT Retreat was held in January 2008 to review the past year inter-agency activities, finalize 2007 RC Report and plan for the year ahead. UNDAF mid-term review methodology and 2008 Communication/Advocacy strategy were discussed and agreed upon among other things.

UNCT meetings were held twice a month to discuss the issues of inter-agency nature. The UNCT was converted into Humanitarian Coordination Team and was meeting on a daily basis for some time after the August crisis. The normal UNCT operation was resumed in November 2008.

In February 2008 the UNCT drafted the UN Position Paper to be presented to the government. The paper was prepared with the aim of improving coordination and operational coherence, providing an opportunity for the UN to play a more strategic role in Georgia and make a greater difference. The paper was discussed with the Prime Minister and approved by the government in early April 2008.

The following 4 intervention areas appeared to have a good degree of alignment between the government priorities, the perception of the UNCT's comparative advantages, and the support of key partners necessary for sustained action according to the Position Paper:

1. Supporting the government in achieving the MDGs with a special emphasis on Goal 1 – Eradicate Poverty.
2. An expanded, more coherent programme of UN development assistance in the conflict areas and support in elaboration and implementation of IDP action plan.
3. Capacity development for judicial system reform, the rule of law and governance.

4. More active and wide-ranging donor coordination – and a common platform for constructive dialogue with government

The Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia was finalized in March 2008 and shared with the government. The review detailed the assessments made by a research team that visited the Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli and Gali Districts as well as the neighbouring Zugdidi District in September 2007. The document provided an assessment of the rehabilitation, humanitarian and development efforts of the UN agencies and other partner organizations, as well as recommendations for improving and expanding assistance projects in the area.

Working towards enhanced aid coordination, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office continued the responsibility of serving as the Secretariat for the Donor Coordination Group (DCG). The UN has played a critical role in supporting a policy dialogue between the donor community and the government of Georgia, especially in the post August crisis situation. The DCG supported the government in the issue of aid management and coordination following the Brussels Donor conference and 5 DCG members (UN, WB, EC, EBRD and US government) became permanent members of the joint Government/Donor Task Force (JTF). These developments strengthened the strategic positioning of the UN Country Team vis-à-vis donor organizations as well as government partners.

Pandemic Influenza simulation exercise was held at the UN House in July 2008 and was conducted by Mr. Allan Bell, Regional Officer for Europe and Central Asia Pandemic Influenza Contingency.

Regular SMT meetings were held to exchange information about security incidents and take decisions and actions to strengthen the security of UNCT staff members. OMT met to discuss such common issues as premises, service, procurements, and HACT. The HACT is fully implemented in Georgia and most of the agencies are using FACE.

This year has been important from the viewpoint of the UN Country Team's enhanced collaboration and joint communication initiatives. A UN system-wide advocacy campaign throughout 2008 focused on the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A number of awareness raising initiatives targeting youth and population of Georgia at large (radio ads, UDHR60 booklets in Georgian, and an outdoor advertisement campaign) was organized. To contribute to educating future generations about the rights contained in the UDHR, the UN Country Team organized the Youth Essay Writing Contest "Dignity and Justice for All of Us" in cooperation with the Public Defender's Office, a school conference on human rights, and an information tour for university students. Three-day media training and UN Media Club meetings were organized to expose media practitioners to the interconnections between media and human rights, as well as to international human rights standards, and media ethics. Over 1,000 IDP and refugee children, orphans, street children and disabled children attended a charity ballet performance for vulnerable children kindly hosted by Mrs. Nino Ananiashvili, the National UN Goodwill Ambassador. To raise awareness about the UN's work that the UN agencies are carrying out along with government and civil society partners in the country, "UN in Georgia" Bulletin, as well as the UNCT 2009 wall calendars and 2009 MDG calendars were produced.

UN/EC film highlighting the way that the partnership between the EU and the UN can contribute to stability and reform in Georgia was finalised in July 2008. UNFPA, UNHCR and UNDP projects were filmed. The film was a joint effort of UN and EC offices in Brussels and Georgia and was filmed by a German company CinePlus.

The UNCT agencies cost shared the renovation and equipment of UN Auditorium at the Tbilisi State University (TSU). The project will facilitate wider access to the UN information and networking by the students and provide a future platform for increased information sharing and cooperation between the UNCT Agencies and TSU.

Two Model UN Sessions were organized by the UN Association of Georgia and funded from the coordination funds in 2008. The first session was held at the Parliament around the theme of environmental sustainability and the second session dedicated to the 60th anniversary of UDHR was held at the Tbilisi State University. Approximately 435 students from universities of 4 different cities took part in these sessions. UNAIDS Social Mobilisation Adviser post was established and filled in November 2008 to work with the National HIV/AIDS authorities and the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS as well as to strengthen the UNAIDS's contribution to effective national leadership and strategic management of HIV/AIDS country programmes.

Highlights on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

Major effort was undertaken by the UNCT to alleviate the results of August crisis in Georgia. The humanitarian response has focused on provision of essential support to newly displaced populations across the country, including to some 36,600 IDPs in 382 collective centres in Tbilisi, and the setting up of a camp hosting 2,500 IDPs in Gori. Provision of food and non-food items (NFI), health care and psycho-social support has been achieved through close coordination with the Government and vital repairs to water and sanitation in collective centres have been carried out.

The Cluster Approach for humanitarian response was applied, clarifying the division of labour among international organizations, defining their roles and responsibilities and building partnerships within the different sectors of the humanitarian response. This approach ensured the effectiveness of the response, making the international humanitarian community structured, predictable and accountable, and a valuable partner for the Government of Georgia, local authorities and local civil society. The Clusters and Sub-Clusters are all led by UN agencies mandated, specialized and experienced in crisis response and development.

The United Nations prepared a Flash Appeal [\$59.7 m] in close coordination with the Georgian government, non-governmental organizations and other United Nations partners to cover identified and estimated needs of 128,600 displaced persons for six months. The Flash Appeal sought to meet the immediate needs of the displaced people. Funding was urgently required for food aid, and for assistance in health and nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and non-food items. The Appeal was launched on 19 August 2008 and the revised version [\$109.3] was prepared in October 2008.

On August 20, the Government of Georgia requested the World Bank to lead a post conflict needs assessment of the damage and economic loss resulting from the conflict and to develop estimates of the financial assistance required to address the losses and re-establish the conditions for a return to sustained growth. The needs assessment mission comprised of WB, UN and EC worked on the basis of UNDG and WB joint methodology for post-conflict needs assessments (PCNA) and examined (i) the macro-economic and banking impact of the conflict; (ii) the impact on the social sectors and on the directly and indirectly affected population and (iii) infrastructure and environment.

The Joint Needs Assessment Report for Economic Recovery (JNA) prepared by the mission examines the overall impact of the conflict, assesses the needs for early and medium-term recovery based on losses and damages resulting from the conflict, and presents an overall strategy for recovery as well as priority actions and investments based on this strategy. The sector-specific assessments and financial needs [\$3.28 billion] are presented sector-by sector in the annexes to this report.

Donor conference on Georgia reconstruction was held in Brussels on 21-22 October 2008. The conference was attended by delegations of 38 countries and 15 international organizations. The pledge session was extremely successful, with a total of \$4.5 billion in pledges, thus exceeding the request presented to donors (of \$3.28 billion for the 08-10 period).

The Concept Paper for Donors detailing the planned support to the Government of Georgia by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), for which it seeks donor funding was prepared in December 2008. This support is in line with the JNA strategy for recovery and sustained growth. It utilizes the expertise, experience and capacity of each United Nations agency in Georgia in a coordinated and complementary manner.

UNCT hosted a number of important missions in 2008. Ms. Louise Arbour, then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Georgia in February, Mr. Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees shortly after the crisis in August and Mr. Walter Kälin, SRSG for Human Rights of IDPs in October.

An important development within the Joint Initiative in Support of Greater Gender Equality was its reorientation to respond to the August crisis in Georgia. Capacity of UN and NGOs on gender aspects of Humanitarian response was built and the consultation center for women "Sakhli" was co-funded within this framework. "Sakhli" provides survivors of sexual and gender based violence with free psycho-social, legal, medical and hot line services. At the same time, the participating agencies agreed to contribute to the establishment and functioning of the Gender Resource Center in Gori to be opened in early 2009.

The key aspects of the proposed 2009 workplan

In 2009, the UN Country Team in Georgia will focus its efforts on putting all systems together for the production of UNDAF document. The RC Office will continue functioning as the Secretariat of the Donor Coordination Group and a donor meeting will be held in February to identify potential sources of funding in response to the August 2008 crisis in Georgia. The UNCT will also strengthen its public information/advocacy efforts with the support from the UN Communications Group.

Recommendations

The UN Country Team in Georgia would recommend updating the UNDAF-Good examples section of the www.undg.org by displaying there the best UNDAF's produced in the recent years [2006-2008] and especially those that are well costed.