

**UN Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia**

**UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in  
Abkhazia, Georgia**

**Final Report**

**March 2008**

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## Executive Summary

The present Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia details 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 provides 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.

The review focuses on the following thematic areas:

**1. Economic issues and micro and small enterprise** – Abkhazia's economy has endured the triple shocks of war, subsequent economic isolation and transition from a Soviet era command economy to a market economy, as well as the ensuing displacement of the population. The modest recovery that has been accomplished is built on weak foundations, as much of the current trade in goods and services is limited by trading restrictions and the main production activities in the north (tourism) and south (agriculture) are seasonal and vulnerable to changes in consumer demand.

Further problems include the finance sector's extremely slow pace of development, lack of a liberal business environment, inadequate worker qualifications in a number of sectors of the economy, and the fact that only a handful of banks can issue loans, usually under prohibitive conditions.

Recommendations include continued support for local farmers, promoting vocational education, and focusing future support on specific sectors by taking a comprehensive value chain approach.

**2. Food security, agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure -**

The conflict and ensuing years of decay have led to significant land abandonment and poor management of natural resources. Against the backdrop of the unsettled conflict, there is no consistent and comprehensive agriculture policy. Technical support for agriculture and animal health is very low and post-harvest management is still rudimentary. Farms have a low level of specialization due to the high level of self consumption, with many people previously engaged in other professions having resorted to backyard farming.

More coherent and targeted interventions aimed at supporting efforts to train labour, reclaim abandoned lands and provide technical advice on agriculture and livestock are recommended.

**3. Health** – The Health Sector is barely functioning and has developed little since the fall of the Soviet Union. There are shortages of supplies, materials and equipment, problems compensating healthcare workers and a poor system of delivering health services at the local level. There is no coherent policy on combating HIV/AIDS and testing capacities are inadequate. Drug use, in particular intravenous drug use, appears to be a widespread problem in the east, though its extent is not fully known.

The Review notes that a comprehensive and coordinated policy is needed, as are vast improvements in infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms.

**4. Education** – The education sector is in urgent need of review, reform and optimizations; despite some positive inputs, the needs in this area are enormous. Lack of equipment and materials, limited preschool education, insufficient teacher training, expensive and often unavailable textbooks and dilapidated school buildings are among the problems faced.

In this area, it has proven feasible to mobilize local communities to plan, participate and contribute to local education solutions such as rehabilitation. A particularly contentious issue in this regard is the language of instruction in the schools of Gali District.

**5. Social protection and child protection** – Social protection mechanisms are inadequate despite the fact that about 25 per cent of the population receives some kind of pension or allowance. There is no clear definition of poverty, no qualified social workers and no special programmes in place to support IDPs returning to the region. There is a lack of knowledge and information on child protection and little attention paid to these issues.

A review of the current pensions and allowances system as well as an assessment of the institutional set up of the delivery of pensions and allowances and their receipt by the population are needed. UN and non-UN organizations should jointly coordinate and support curriculum development and training of social workers with a view to creating qualified social workers.

Psycho-social support programmes are needed, as is education on leading a healthy lifestyle. Awareness of children's health must be promoted and the needs of children with disabilities must be addressed.

**6. Protection for displaced and returnee communities** – Since the conflict, which displaced the vast majority of the ethnic Georgian population, some 45,000 (estimates vary greatly) ethnic Georgians have returned or are in the process of returning to their original places of residence in Gali District. The returnees face a number of problems concerning property rights, military conscription and documentation issues. Aid is nearly non-existent and official data on housing for returnees is very limited and unreliable.

Actors operating in the region should elaborate clear, consolidated and human rights-based activities in this regard. Efforts should be taken to strengthen local capacities, make both the population and local de facto authorities aware of the returnees' rights and build strong partnerships between NGOs and local actors.

**7. Housing assistance** – The armed conflict left many homes damaged, especially in Gali District, and the housing situation in the south is complicated by the fact that many residential buildings were poorly constructed, poorly maintained and vulnerable to flooding and landslides.

Aid from the various regional authorities for targeting the rehabilitation of dwellings is far from adequate and data is limited and unreliable.

An in-depth study into housing problems faced by Georgian returnees in Gali is needed and actors should elaborate a realistic plan of action on joint measures for rehabilitation of houses.

**8. Confidence-building** –The UN agencies, particularly UNHCR, have developed a series of projects geared towards community mobilization, sustainability and confidence-building, in order for the population to begin to rely on their capacity to achieve their own goals without permanently depending and relying on assistance. As for confidence building among different ethnic groups, economic cooperation projects are likely the best means to foster intercommunity links. The report calls for greater continuity in assistance projects and an accompanying education programme focused on conflict resolution, the restoration of intercommunity confidence and contributing to the peace process.

## Introduction

Georgia still faces many challenges related to sustainable peace and development resulting from its two unresolved internal conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. These conflicts erupted in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and led to displacement and trauma. The armed hostilities caused deprivation and devastation in the conflict zones, as well as adjacent areas.

The conflict which took place in Abkhazia, Georgia between 1992-1993 resulted in thousands of deaths, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of citizens and the devastation of this once prosperous region. In August 1993, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) with a specific mandate related to seeking a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in the Abkhazia region. In 1994, the conflicting sides agreed on a cease-fire, the separation of forces, and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States Peacekeeping Force (CIS PKF) in the region, which was deployed in June 1994 under the Moscow Agreement. In May 1998, armed clashes broke out again, resulting in secondary displacement of an estimated 30,000-40,000 people who had spontaneously returned to Abkhazia, Georgia, mostly to Gali District, a region with an overwhelmingly ethnic Georgian population adjacent to ceasefire line. Since then Gali District has remained an area of instability and insecurity. Despite this, at present some 45,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are estimated to have spontaneously returned or, at least, seasonally return to farm their lands in Gali.<sup>1</sup> Insecurity in some areas of Abkhazia and potentials for the escalation of a conflict remain major threats to stability in the region. A number of isolated incidents during 2007, including the use of weapons resulting in deaths and casualties, confirm that the region remains volatile. According to Georgian government data, there were approximately 247,000 IDPs (95% of them from Abkhazia) in the country by the end of 2006.<sup>2</sup> After more than 14 years of displacement, nearly 45% of the IDPs inhabit collective housing facilities, while a large part of the remaining IDPs continue to live in crowded conditions with host families or in rented apartments. The government of Georgia, supported by civil society and the international community, elaborated a National Strategy for IDPs in February 2007. The strategy sets a policy framework for supporting IDPs to improve their living conditions and integrate into society, while creating conditions for their return to their places of origin. An action plan for the implementation of the strategy is expected to be adopted in early 2008.

The socioeconomic situation and living standards in Abkhazia, Georgia are poor. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequences of the ensuing conflicts have devastated local industry and infrastructure and drastically reduced agricultural production and income from tourism. Conflict and the lack of regular external support have led to the disintegration of the social safety net and a general shortage of income-generating opportunities and the collapse of social services have contributed to poor social protection mechanisms for the most vulnerable. The majority of people survive mainly on subsistence farming and small agricultural activities. Infrastructure (water, sewage, roads and electricity) is in a state of collapse and social services (including schools and

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate serves as an established basis for the humanitarian work of the UN related to returnees in Abkhazia, Georgia. The figures are subject to dispute, but cannot be clarified further at this stage in the absence of the implementation of the verification exercise foreseen in the Strategic Directions. In the context of this report the term returnee is used for persons who have either returned to Abkhazia, Georgia or are in the process of returning, irrespective of the individuals' IDP status under the national legislation of Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> See: State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted adopted by the government of Georgia in February 2007, Chapter I, referring further to the Law of Georgia on the State Budget of 2006.

healthcare facilities) barely meet the basic needs of the local population. The existing economic isolation of the region limits possibilities for rehabilitation and development.

The experience of UN agencies working in the region confirms that the needs are enormous. The UN Country Team in Georgia (UNCT) decided to direct more of its efforts there in an effort to elaborate a comprehensive joint programme that will benefit from the UN agencies' diverse mandates and potential to combine humanitarian as well as development work. In this regard the UNCT agreed to carry out a review of the region's socioeconomic needs that will provide tangible recommendations for the development of the joint programme.

In 2004 a UNDP-Led Feasibility Mission investigated the needs of Gali, Ochamchire, and Tkvarcheli districts.<sup>3</sup> According to this study, in the thirteen years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "the GDP has fallen in the region by 80-90%, unemployment [...] has reached] around 95% and per capita incomes have decreased by 90%."<sup>4</sup> The findings of this feasibility mission were used as the starting point for this review. A range of sectors and issues covered by the mission were revisited, updated and, where necessary, new fields of inquiry were added. Despite the lack of joint initiatives, different UN agencies have undertaken and continue to implement a variety of humanitarian, rehabilitation and development projects.

The primary strategic directions of the review were to:<sup>5</sup>

- a) Review ongoing activities of the UN agencies and other partners in Abkhazia, Georgia, and identify existing gaps in terms of unmet needs;
- b) Update and collect data on Gali, Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli in the first phase and possibly other districts later;
- c) Provide recommendations for the development of a comprehensive UNCT Joint Programme encompassing multi-sector rehabilitation, humanitarian as well as development initiatives.

The review was carried out by a research team supported by different UN agencies. The breakdown of the review themes per UN agencies has been as follows: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – economic issues and micro and small enterprise; the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) – food security, agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - health, education, social protection and child protection; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – protection, housing and confidence-building. The members of the Research Team are listed in Annex 2.

In line with the Generic TOR of the Review (Annex 1), specific terms of references have been developed for each of the experts engaged by the UN agencies participating in the review. The Review Research Team worked under direct supervision of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and the overall supervision of the UNCT and in consultation with the authorities, civil society, and the donor community. The UNICEF Emergency Officer and the RC Office managed, coordinated and facilitated the review.

The field work for the mission was carried out in Abkhazia, Georgia, between 18 and 27 September 2007. The field work included Sukhumi, Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli – the three

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<sup>3</sup> Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, *Report of UNDP-Led Feasibility Mission to Gali District and Adjacent Areas of Abkhazia, Georgia*, April 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex 1 for the Generic Terms of Reference for the UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia

south-eastern districts of the region the UNCT decided to concentrate their efforts on – and Zugdidi District, in Georgia proper, adjacent to the ceasefire line, where many internally displaced people (IDPs) from Abkhazia region reside.

The elaboration of the Review consisted of three critical stages; desk review of existing materials, field visit to the districts mentioned above and the writing of the Review report. Due to time and other circumstantial constraints, the methodology of the review was comprised of qualitative methods (predominantly in-depth and subject-based interviews, focus-group discussions). The Human Rights-Based Approach, with special focus on women's and children's rights, guided the elaboration of the review methodology. The methodology of the review aimed to ensure participation of both rights-holders and duty-bearers concerning all specific themes of the review.

The final report, as laid out in the following chapters, consists of two main parts – the first part – subdivided into eight chapters - provides analysis of key issues within the themes identified by the UN agencies participating in the review by identifying a number of conclusions and recommendations for each of the analysed themes; and the second part of the report offers general conclusions and recommendations stemming from the thematic analysis that aim to inform and qualify the UN joint programme.

# PART I

## Thematic Analysis

### I.1 Economic issues and micro and small enterprise;

#### 1. Economic overview

During the last 15 years the region's economy has endured the triple shocks of war, subsequent economic isolation and transition from a Soviet era command economy to a market economy. Unsurprisingly, progress towards full recovery has been slow. Abkhaz sources put the cost of war damage alone (to property, energy production, infrastructure, industrial plants and agriculture) at approximately \$11.3 billion.<sup>6</sup> While this is probably an overestimate, the combined effects of the ceasefire lines with the rest of Georgia and economic isolation have almost certainly done more to thwart the region's future growth prospects, directly through restricting trade and investment flows and indirectly through ossifying pre-existing soviet era attitudes and management practices.

#### Trade and investment

The small size of the economy in this region means that it is heavily reliant on trade across borders in order to meet the basic needs of its population. Officially trade between Abkhazia, Georgia and its neighbours is illegal under the terms of the CIS Agreement signed in April 1996.<sup>7</sup> Unofficially, however, there seems to be widespread agreement not only that such trade is taking place, but that it plays a vital role in maintaining stability in the region.

Despite being outlawed under the 1996 CIS Agreement, and strict ownership controls imposed by the *de facto* authorities<sup>8</sup>, foreign investment in the form of joint ventures (JV) has been steadily increasing in the region since the end of the conflict. The majority of investors are ethnic Abkhaz diaspora returning from Russia, followed by Russians. Several investments have been made in agriculture and food processing, and Russian investors in particular have taken long-term leases on several hotels and tourist complexes in the north of the region. The Russian mobile phone company Megaphone financed Aquaphone, one of the local mobile phone companies, and Turkish investors hold a share of the Tkvarcheli coal mine.<sup>9</sup>

#### Intra-regional disparities

The combined effect of these activities has been to promote a modest recovery of the economy with the GDP per capita rising from just over a dollar a day in the aftermath of the war to an estimated figure of \$970 in 2005<sup>10</sup>, though this figure is still less than half that of Georgia as a whole. It also masks significant intra-regional disparities in the space economy of the region. As a result of asset endowments, variations in the extent of war damage and proximity to markets, poverty levels are generally higher in the south of the region, i.e. three of the districts that were in the focus of this review (Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli) than in north.

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<sup>6</sup> Gumba, Y. and Ketsba, T. *Economic Development Prospects in Abkhazia and the Concept of Regional Cooperation* in *International Alert From War Economies to Peace Economies in the South Caucasus* 2004, Chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Prot&Agreements/russia\\_georgia.html](http://www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Prot&Agreements/russia_georgia.html)

<sup>8</sup> Current investment laws require that no less than 51% of the shares in any JV are owned by residents of Abkhazia, Georgia.

<sup>9</sup> *Abkhazia Today* International Crisis Group, Europe Report No 176, 15 September 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Figure cited in Wilson T, *Assessment of Opportunities for Developing a Microfinance project in Abkhazia, Georgia*, UNDP Georgia March 2005.

In the northern part of region (the Sukhumi, Gagra, Gulripshi and Gudauta Districts) the buoyant Soviet era tourism industry started to revive in 1995. Data on tourism numbers and receipts are not available, but the district authorities for Gagra, for example, claim that in 2006 three million tourists visited the coastal resort areas, mainly from Russia.<sup>11</sup> Witnesses report a large amount of new investment in building and infrastructure and the municipality claims that the Gagra resort is operating at full capacity. Food processing declined rapidly in the aftermath of the civil war with the collapse of a number of meat processing plants and a large factory producing broiler chickens.

By contrast, the economy of south (the Districts of Gali, Oчамchire and Tkvarcheli) is predominantly agricultural. Maize is grown extensively and is the main staple crop. Hazelnuts and citrus are increasingly grown as cash crops. Detailed assessments of the agricultural economy can be found in a study undertaken for UNDP in 2004<sup>12</sup> and in section II.2 of this report.

### Migration, unemployment and poverty

Against this backdrop of gradual economic recovery and intra-regional disparities, there is evidence of continuing population out migration in the economically active age cohort, especially graduates and individuals with technical skills that can find better remunerated employment in Russia. Estimates tend to be played down, but the *de facto* ministry of labour and social affairs (DFMLSA) puts the figure at approximately 15-20,000. Most economic migrants go to Russia, followed by Ukraine and Turkey.

This "hollowing out" of the population has significant consequences for the future economic development prospects of the region. On the one hand, remittances provide a significant source of income, although the usual difficulties inherent in measuring the size of remittance flows are compounded by the fact that money transfers can only be handled through Russian correspondent banks. On the other hand, the disproportionate representation of the elderly in the population, combined with the loss of potential labour force, creates a growing burden for public services (healthcare, social welfare services etc), whilst simultaneously undermining the ability of the *de facto* authorities to pay for them.

Meanwhile unemployment in the region appears to have reached runaway levels. State unemployment benefits, which might otherwise give accurate insight into the scale and scope of the problem, do not exist, but estimates supplied by DFMLSA officials suggest a dire situation, with rates as high as 80% in many rural areas, and 30% in urban areas (where opportunities for self-employment are greater).

In summary, the modest recovery in economic conditions is built on weak foundations. Much of the current trade in goods and services is technically illegal, whilst the main productive activities in the north and south of the region i.e. tourism and agriculture respectively, are seasonal and extremely vulnerable to changes in consumer demand, and, in the case of agriculture, international commodity prices. Meanwhile, investment in key sectors of the domestic economy is weak and economic out-migration continues alongside very high rates of unemployment.

## **2. Progress in transition**

In response to these problems, slow progress was made in implementing key policy reforms, with the result that economic transition in Abkhazia, Georgia is still far from complete.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Includes single day excursions

<sup>12</sup> See Wooster, P. *The Agricultural Sector in Oчамchira, Tkvarcheli and Gali*, Abkhazia, Georgia. UNDP December 2004.

<sup>13</sup> See transition indicators contained in EBRD *Transition Report 2005 – Business in Transition*

Although prices have been fully liberalised, the *de facto* authorities maintain a monopoly over land ownership, offering long-term leases to aspiring domestic and foreign investors that can be inherited and traded on a secondary market. While a number of small scale assets (mostly municipal property) have been privatised under a law passed in 2002, the privatisation of larger assets, including tourist complexes, factories and bigger buildings has barely started. By September 2007, four tourism complexes in Gagra and one hotel in Sukhumi had been privatised while a further 18 remained in state ownership.<sup>14</sup>

Financial sector reform is also proceeding at an extremely slow pace. The so called National Bank of Abkhazia (NBA) is fully controlled by the *de facto* authorities and regulates all commercial banking activity. At present 15 commercial banks operate in the region. Most of them are fully owned by the *de facto* government while a small (undisclosed) number are JVs with Russian banks. The minimum starting capital required for a banking license was recently increased from \$150,000 to \$800,000, but this figure is still miniscule by international standards and most of the banks are undercapitalised and unable to issue loans to businesses.

### **3. The business sector**

Data supplied by the Business Women's Association (BWA) suggests that at the current time there are approximately 3,000 registered businesses in the region, of which only 1,200 are operating. This is broadly consistent with the current situation in the rest of Georgia<sup>15</sup> and places the region firmly in the category of early transition regions that have less than 10 active registered SMEs per thousand residents. No definitive data were available on the proportion of female-headed businesses, although in principal this information could be inferred from BWA records.

According to the BWA, small businesses are concentrated predominantly in the local services sector, i.e. retailers, small hotels, cafes, restaurants and transport. With the exception of some wine and milk producers, very few small businesses are engaged in value-added processing or manufacturing. Similarly, larger businesses in the extractive sectors tend to produce unprocessed raw material inputs for the construction or energy sectors. As mentioned above, the majority of larger businesses are "state"-owned, with the exception of a few JVs with Russian or Turkish partners.

#### Entrepreneurship and human capital

The current low levels of business formation and survival in Abkhazia, Georgia are unsurprising given the region's relative lack of exposure to external markets and less advanced management practices. To date, there have been two main attempts to address these problems head-on, namely an entrepreneurship education programme organised by the BWA, which trained 47 people, and the establishment of a business information centre at the University of Sukhumi with support from the Danish Refugee Council. While these initiatives are well intentioned, their ability to promote a sustainable new "entrepreneurial dynamic" in the region is clearly limited.

In addition to generic entrepreneurship skills, there also appear to be specific skill shortages in certain sectors of the economy. Two of the telecommunications companies interviewed by the mission team, for example, highlighted shortages of graduate level engineers and other skilled technical personnel. This "brain drain" problem is clearly the outcome of a range of factors, most notably negative perceptions of the long term development prospects for the region and the more competitive salaries available for skilled personnel in its neighbourhood, including and most

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<sup>14</sup> International Crisis Group Op cit p.18

<sup>15</sup> See IMF Estimates from cited UNDP Georgia – *Review of Programming Opportunities for Private Sector Development* 2006 p. 6. Georgia as a whole has 5.6 registered SMEs per thousand residents. This compares to 6 in the Ukraine, 7 in Russia and an average of over 40 in EU New Member States.

notably Russia. Prima facie, the lack of a formal vocational education and training policy is of less significance at the "top end" of the labour market at the present time, but will be badly needed to promote competitiveness if the long term outlook improves and the trend towards greater economic openness continues.

### The Business enabling environment

The business enabling environment reflects the partial nature of many of the economic reforms discussed above. Business registration is in theory a simple process, but in reality businesses claim that it may take up to a month.

On paper, the business taxation system compares favourably to that of many other transition economies. Taxes are levied at fixed rates according to a clear and transparent schedule (see table 1 below) and in addition a simplified annual "lump sum" tax was recently introduced for small businesses based on seating (for restaurants, cafes etc) or floor-space.

**Table 1. Current business taxes**

Tax	Standard Rate
Income tax	12%
Profit tax	18%
VAT	10%
Social Insurance (payroll)	14%, of which 10% employer, 4 % employee contribution

In practice however, businesses report that tax inspections are frequent and highly intrusive and that excessive discretion is given to *de facto* officials of the tax administration system.

Arbitration mechanisms are also very weak. A representative of relevant *de facto* authorities says that a special administrative court has been established for dealing with disputes between the local *de facto* government and businesses, but concedes that it has not heard any cases in the last two and a half years. Particular problems are faced by businesses that trade across borders and need to recover payments or enforce contractual obligations in the absence of bilateral agreements with relevant judicial authorities.

### Access to finance

Of the 15 commercial banks in the region, only four are technically able to issue loans to businesses, but even in these cases, lending terms and conditions are often prohibitive. Loans are all short term (maximum six months) and are therefore unsuitable for financing much needed capital investments in new plants and technology. Interest rates are determined individually and appear to vary between approximately 20%-50% annually<sup>16</sup> and all loans must be secured against fixed assets. According to the so-called Abkhaz Chamber of Commerce (ACoC), the commonest method is to take a pledge against 60% of the value of a property, irrespective of loan size.

Notwithstanding the above, banking representatives argue that the availability of capital and the willingness of banks to lend to businesses is only half the equation. There is also a shortage of good business projects seeking financing and many loans applications apparently are made without a business plan. These problems are compounded by the high costs and time-consuming procedures associated with loan recovery.

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<sup>16</sup> Different agencies give different estimates. The CoC claims 20-30% per year, the BWA 24-48% and the DFMF 36%.

The only small exception to this generally bleak picture is in the area of microcredit, where some progress has started to be made, although arguably little has happened to change the fundamental conclusion of the 2005 UNDP microfinance assessment that "the microfinance market in the region is quite unique in its level of underdevelopment".<sup>17</sup>

Current banking regulations require that lending of any kind be carried out only by licensed commercial banks, subject to the \$800,000 minimum capital requirement, or by licensed "non banking credit organisations", which are subject to 25% profit tax.

### Business development services

Business development services providing non-financial support to SMEs in the region are in their infancy. The current institutional face of enterprise is provided by the ACoC and the BWA, both of which provide limited services.

The ACoC was established in 2002 with voluntary membership. It currently has 60 members, although a further 29 were recently expelled on the grounds that they were operating in violation of the ACoC's statutes. Consistent with the practice in many other CIS countries, membership of the ACoC is drawn mainly from larger companies, including state-owned enterprises. The ACoC provides some standard chamber services, including (controversially) the issuing of certificates of origin, information and advisory support, the organisation of trade fairs and the provision of legal services. Member companies pay fixed fees and charges. The president of the chamber claims that it is totally independent from the *de facto* authorities, but given the preponderance of state-owned enterprises in its membership, it is unclear exactly what this means in practice.

The BWA was also established in 2002 at the initiative of 11 local businesswomen. It currently has 400 members in the region, but not all are businesses *strictu sensu*, as some represent state education, banking and tourism sector organisations. The association has branch agencies located in each of the seven administrative districts of Abkhazia, Georgia. Its main functions include the establishment of local entrepreneurship resources centres and the provision of counselling, training and advisory services, including advice on writing business plans.<sup>18</sup> The BWA appears to enjoy strong support from the *de facto* authorities and is consulted on all new legislation that impacts on small business. BWA has received financial support by a number of donor agencies including the EU, UNIFEM, the Italian Embassy in Georgia, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), but the BWA president indicates that membership fees and charges will be introduced in the near future in order to cover operating costs.

In addition to the ACoC and BWA, there are a small number of individual business consultants operating in the region, but the market is clearly very limited and the principle of paying for services, especially in the nascent SME sector, is not yet established. To date there have been no attempts to establish "one stop shops" for business registration, licensing and permits, as in Russia and a number of CIS states, nor have any attempts been made to establish business incubators or other forms of institutional business support. The singular exception to this is the business information centre established by Danish Refugee Council at the University of Sukhumi.

### Access to markets

The problem of access to markets in Abkhazia, Georgia at the present time is predominantly the outcome of continuing trade restrictions that prevent local producers from legally selling their produce in Georgia proper or neighbouring states. As mentioned above, in reality many businesses

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<sup>17</sup> Wilson T *Assessment of Opportunities or Developing a Microfinance Project in Abkhazia*, UNDP March 2005.

<sup>18</sup> The services of the centres are available to prospective business women and men.

manage to circumvent these restrictions, often paying a high price in terms of bribes for the privilege. Aside from the obvious normalisation of trade in the region, these businesses typically require more information about foreign markets, including potential customers, competitors and prices. At the same time, many agricultural businesses that only supply the local market experience difficulties in physically storing and transporting their produce to market, especially in the conflict zone, where roads are often damaged and have not been maintained since before the end of the conflict.

#### Technology and standards

In the absence of significant inward investment outside the tourism, telecommunications and financial services sectors, Abkhazia, Georgia has been unable to invest in new technologies since the end of the war. As a result, much of the economy is reliant on soviet era technologies from the 1970s and 80s, placing Abkhaz businesses at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis potential competitors in other areas of Georgia and neighbouring states. Similarly, there has been no investment in standards, including phyto-sanitary standards and other international and proprietary standards that would be necessary to build longer-term trade capacity of the region.

### **4. Key Challenges**

#### Political status

Without doubt, the overriding challenge to future economic growth, employment and poverty reduction in Abkhazia, Georgia is the continuing status of the region as a "frozen conflict zone". The consequences of this touch every area of economic life, deterring potential (foreign and domestic investors), promoting out-migration of the economically active population (especially the well educated and skilled) and forcing trade underground.

Resolving this issue clearly goes well beyond the scope of the current report, but viewed from an economic development perspective, two particular consequences of the current "impasse" stand out.

The first is that the commonly upheld metaphor of the region as an "economy on-hold" is in many ways dangerous and misleading. While the rest of Georgia and neighbouring states producing many of the goods and services that were once associated with Abkhazia region have moved ahead during the post war era, conditions in the region have deteriorated sharply and have yet to fully recover. As a result, whilst the region can be said to be "frozen" in a political sense, in relative economic terms the picture is of significant and growing decline.<sup>19</sup> As this process continues, the competitive gap facing the region will continue to widen and the investment required to "catch up" will become greater. In this sense, the current policy of doing nothing to resolve the broader structural underpinnings of economic development in the region can be said to violate the "do no harm" principle.

The second is the very real danger that, as the impasse continues, current networks of corruption and criminality in the economy will become increasingly intertwined to the point where the beneficiaries of these activities have a strong vested interest in maintaining the status quo, and thus in blocking many of the reforms that are necessary to achieve sustainable longer-term growth and development.

The combination of both these challenges, i.e. relative economic decline and a tendency towards a "status quo" that undermines the rule of law and excludes the possibility of long term economic

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<sup>19</sup> International Alert Op cit. p.162 "Whilst Abkhazia was fighting, other regions of the former Soviet Union had begun their transition to market economies."

growth, are creating a legacy that becomes more obdurate and difficult to unravel with each passing day. Clearly, however, some of the problems confronting sustainable economic development relate not so much to the unresolved nature of the "status" issue per se, but to the continuing effects of economic isolation that are contingent on it.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

As discussed above, the prevalence of structural constraints to long-term economic growth and poverty reduction in Abkhazia, Georgia militates against the possibility of providing meaningful developmental assistance to the region at the current point in time. How far this implies a continuing commitment to "humanitarian" assistance, however, is open to question, especially since many of the current donor programmes operating in the region are clearly intended to lay the foundations for sustainable economic recovery, even if their principal and immediate objective is to alleviate (some of) the symptoms of rural poverty.

In this context, the mission outlines four principal options for continued programming in this region. Further work, including consultation with key stakeholders "on the ground" will be required in order to translate these options into workable programme documents.

### *- Continued support for local smallholders and farmers*

The lowest cost option is clearly to continue elements of projects designed to provide support for the development of farmers' groups and grant assistance for the purchase of essential agricultural inputs. The rationales for this option are broadly twofold i) to increase the food security of the (predominantly rural) population in the current project area, and ii) to facilitate investment in the production of cash-crops that can be used to supplement household incomes. In addition, by encouraging greater cooperation and collective risk-sharing, the current project foreshadows the formation of the collective arrangements – producer associations, cooperatives etc – that may be necessary in the longer term to assist rural small holders in overcoming diseconomies of scale and facilitate investment in value-adding technologies.

Support should also be continued for the provision of technical assistance to farmers, particularly in relation to crops that have stronger growth potential i.e. vegetables, citrus and hazelnuts. In order to ensure "policy coherence", any redesign of such kinds of projects or project components should be undertaken in close cooperation with other donor organisations that are currently providing assistance for agriculture and food security in the region

The desired outcomes of this option would be with a greater emphasis on longer-term poverty reduction, as distinct from shorter-term poverty alleviation. Thus, in addition to increasing household incomes and reducing poverty, projects following this framework would also seek to contribute directly to the establishment of sustainable local markets for agricultural produce, including a greater degree of interlinkage between producers in the south of the region and potential purchasers in the north.

### *- Vocational education and training (VET)*

Similarly, it is understood that current plans are being made for seeking bilateral donor funding for the extension of a current VET programme to the region. Although there is evidence of skills shortages in the economy at the current time, the labour market as a whole is extremely weak and these appear to be confined to a few high-skill areas that have emerged as a result of ongoing economic out-migration. As discussed, this does not imply that VET is inappropriate, though clearly any efforts in this direction should form part of a longer-term strategy that includes demand-side initiatives for investment and job creation and closely aligns the supply of vocational training to actual emerging skills gaps in the economy.

- *Microfinance*

As discussed, the experience of World Vision and Danish Refugee Council suggests that microfinance, or more specifically micro-credit, can be provided viably in the region; a conclusion broadly supported by the UNDP microfinance assessment undertaken in 2005.<sup>20</sup> It is also clear from the mission that current micro-credit programmes are operating at a very small scale, and are still to address the prospect of long-term sustainability beyond donor project cycles. There is therefore a plausible case to be made for developing a larger-scale programme that lays the foundations for longer term provision. The rationale would be to contribute to the development of "inclusive financial sectors" in the region, i.e. the development and growth of market driven local financial services that are responsive to the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

The desired outcome of the initiative would be to facilitate the development of a broader array of microfinance institutions and institutional modalities, and a wider range of financial products and services. The latter should include term loans and leasing to allow capital investment in value-added manufacturing, processing and packaging technologies.

- *Value chains*

A further alternative to the above would be to focus future programming on support for specific sectors of the rural economy in the project region that demonstrate the potential for growth and significant employment creation. Taking a more comprehensive "value chain" approach within a specific market sector would have a number of benefits over "cross-cutting" support for farmers or BDS as described above. By targeting sectors with growth *and* employment potential, it would have a greater impact on poverty reduction than measures that support growth in general, irrespective of its labour intensity.

Significant opportunities exist to further integrate small-scale hazelnut producers into international value chains. Key bottlenecks remain to be addressed include the lack of appropriate factor inputs (especially fertilisers and seeds), technical planting and growing skills necessary to increase yields, the lack of appropriate storage and collection points, lack of access to timely market information (prices), transportation and ceasefire line (boundaries) management issues.

Opportunities also exist to support spin-off businesses. At present, hazelnut husks are currently used mainly for fuel (they have a significantly higher calorific content than wood), but there are also opportunities to use processed shells for higher value added purposes, including for furniture manufacture.

There is a need to undertake more detailed value chain study, including investigating the possibility of a partnership arrangement with the EBRD and Argonaut Ge. The aim would be the creation of a (relatively) stable market for high quality hazelnuts produced in Abkhazia, Georgia and build the production capacity and income security of small scale producers in Gali and Ochamchire Districts. In order to achieve political balance, producers located in Zugdidi District could also be included in the study and subsequent value chain programme.

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<sup>20</sup> Op cit.

## **I.2 Food security, agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure;**

### **1. Introduction – Food Economy Zones (FEZ)**

In many parts of the region, especially in the southeast part, agriculture is by far the most important economic sector. Between 35,000 and 40,000 households tend ten thousand hectares of arable land. This means an average of one third of a hectare per households. The *de facto* authorities and agencies active in the region have not yet worked on Food Economy Zones (FEZs) or agro-ecological zones (AEZs). Such zoning is envisaged as a tool to ease the analysis and design sound responses to specific needs of different conditions.

The mission did not have the opportunity to carry out a comprehensive survey regarding the various farming systems; the proposed FEZs are based on quality information collected through interviews and other sources.

By definition, the predominant crops and livestock, as well as climate and altitude characterize FEZs. The small size and the morphologic configuration of the region imply that crops and herds structure mostly vary along the gradient from the coastline to the mountain regions. This is why the proposed zoning relies mostly on the altitude above sea level. To a certain extent, local socioeconomic patterns also enter into consideration, especially in relation to the northern part, where non-agriculture activities are more relevant. The traditional understanding is that the southern part is the rural/agricultural region while households in the northern part can also rely on other sectors linked mostly to the tourism industry.

In the districts of Gali, Oчамchire, Tkvarcheli and Zugdidi, three zones can be distinguished: the *low plains*, the *hills* and the *mountain area*. In the northern part, a similar situation exists with reduced land available for agriculture, as the space between the seaside and the mountain is in many areas very limited. Before describing the zones in detail, it should be stressed that farms have a low level of specialization due to the high level of self-consumption pattern of Abkhaz agriculture. Indeed, the vast majority of farming households cultivate maize together with beans, vegetables and fruit trees, and breed one or two cows and a few pigs. In addition, citrus and hazelnuts are planted as a cash crop. The level of diversification correlated to self-consumption, is to a certain extent less important in the northern part of the republic. This explains, for instance, why only 60% of the rural population breeds cattle in Gagra District, while this proportion is between 85% and 90% in the southern part.

Most farming households farm between 0.3 and 0.6 hectares. This corresponds to the land privatized and distributed to the rural population by the *de facto* authorities. Households can also lease publicly owned land against the payment of the land tax. However, only a minority use this opportunity, as they usually do not have enough machinery to crop additional land nor cash to pay for cropping services. This issue is highly critical regarding the publicly owned land, as in many cases, it had been abandoned years ago. Hence, the presence of weeds and bushes requires heavy land preparation before the crops can be sown. In addition to agricultural land they crop, rural households can also access communal pastures.

#### *South-eastern low plains*

The first zone coincides with the plains characterized by significant presence of maize and hazelnuts, plus fruits, including citrus and vegetables grown primarily in gardens surrounding homes. Larger vegetable plots exist in alluvial areas where soil quality and access water ensure favourable conditions. Livestock consist usually of one to two cows per household, buffalos and a

few pigs, plus a few poultry. The dimension of maize plots enable families to market some surpluses.

#### North-western low plains

Though presenting similar climatic and morphologic characteristics than the southeast low plains, these areas have benefited from sizeable investments in infrastructure (irrigation and hedges) and land consolidation. In addition, this region has been less affected by the conflict and natural resources seem better managed than in the southeast part. Therefore, there have recently been investments in large-scale agro-processing, especially in the citrus sector. Vast improved rangeland opens good prospects for cattle breeding.

#### South-eastern hills

This region differs from the low plain by the presence of citrus and somewhat smaller plots of maize. Hazelnuts are also present and provide households (HH) with cash income. Vegetables are mostly grown for self-consumption. Tea plantations are still present but usually non-cropped or being rehabilitated.

#### North-western hills

In many areas north of Sukhumi, where other economic sectors are developed, citrus prevail. In the area just north of Sukhumi, characterised rolling hills facing the sea, farms concentrate on citrus. Vegetable garden and livestock participate to ensure part of the HH food consumption. However, large maize plots are rare, which indicates that staple food is purchased on local markets. Beside the scarcity of low land suitable for cereal production, this can also be explained by the nutritional habits of the population present in this area. Indeed, unlike, the populations of the South-eastern region, the locals here consume more wheat flour that has traditionally been imported.

#### Mountainous areas

As one can expect, livestock play a major role in mountainous community economies. Farms breed flocks that often comprise between five and ten cows, plus a few goats. Hazelnut orchards still provide cash income to many HHs despite harsher production conditions due to steep land plots. Though maize is also cropped for human and animal consumption, grasslands provide the biggest bulk of animal feed. Beekeeping is well developed, offering additional income to mountainous HHs.

## **2. Natural resources management**

Related to the FEZs and the farming systems present in the region a concern of this mission is expressed regarding sustainable natural resources (NR) management. One of the consequences of the conflict has been the disruption of established agricultural production and natural resources management. Since then, population displacement, reduced working means and loss of product outlets due to the conflict and the collapse of the previous system have caused significant land abandonment and NR mismanagement. Former state owned farms have halted their activities and abandoned their land. In particular tea plantations have turned into fallow land and have been invaded by bushes and by Canadian Goldenrod<sup>21</sup>. The rehabilitation of this land through tea plantation recovery or tea uprooting is very costly.

In addition, a significant part of land abandoned by the displaced population turned into fallow land. Indeed, to crop this land again requires heavy ploughing to get rid of the weeds and bushes that have spread over the years. In turn, in some farming communities, farmers adopted slash and burn agriculture. The rationale for this is the fact that it is easier for them to use the fertile forest

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<sup>21</sup> *Solidago canadensis* (*Solidago altissima*), Family: Aster (Compositae or Asteraceae)

land for a couple of years and move to new plots once the fertility decreases. Such practices represent a critical threat to natural resources and cannot be considered a sustainable alternative to the proper farming system. Slash and burn agriculture can be a sustainable farming system only where the demographic pressure is low under tropical conditions. If both these conditions are not present, deforestation, decreased fertility and increased erosion jeopardize the environment and local population livelihood within the time span of one generation.

### 3. Household food security

The loss of livelihood, a stalled economy and limited access to agricultural markets has rendered a majority of the population poor and destitute. Whereas official figures are not available, indirect poverty indicators are abundant. Houses destroyed during the conflict remain in disrepair. Fences, doors and windows are unpainted and in poor condition. Local markets only stock essential items. Machinery for agriculture and transport are decades old and insufficient to meet desired levels of land cultivation. Interviews with farmers reveal a large number had been employed as accountants, engineers and medical professionals and are now tending cows and cabbages for lack of work. Public sector investment is stalled and private sector investors shy away due to political uncertainty.

Households retain small land holdings for agriculture, most averaging half a hectare. A portion of this land, usually 2000 m<sup>2</sup> is dedicated to maize production; a smaller portion to maintain a kitchen garden and the rest for cash crops (hazelnut, citrus), fruit trees and occasionally a small vineyard. Maize production is essentially subsistence farming. The kitchen garden provides vital vegetables. In 2006 preventive actions concerning a potential outbreak of Avian Influenza (AI) included a cull of poultry and the stocks are only gradually recovering. This year's outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) led to the culling of swine, a major asset loss for the majority of rural households.

For comparison, Table 2 shows livestock holdings among beneficiaries of a WFP project. Table 3 captures the dietary diversity of WFP beneficiaries in the summer of 2007. However, this group is not a statistical representation of the general population - it does represent the lower income groups since poverty was a major criterion for beneficiary selection. The presence of cows (and consequently milk and cheese) in every household is significant. Similarly, every rural household maintains a kitchen garden for vegetables. These assets support food security by increasing dietary diversity. Combined with fruits from their own orchards, households maintain good levels of micronutrients and adequate caloric intake from maize production. Consequently, the overall food intake seems fair in spite of the extremely low income levels.

There is mixed information about the presence of significant levels of malnutrition and at least in one district<sup>22</sup>, the local authorities said malnutrition was not an issue. Accurate measures of malnourishment would require a proper nutrition survey including investigating specifically the issue of malnutrition deficiencies, particularly amongst the children.

**Table 2: Average number of livestock among beneficiary households**

Region	Cows	Pigs	Sheep/goat	Poultry
Ochamchire	2.2	2.3	0.3	13
Tkvarcheli	2.7	2.4	0.5	16
Gali	1.6	1.3	0.2	14
Sukhumi	2.1	2.4	0.3	14

Source: WFP Abkhazia, Georgia Food-for-Work Survey (Mar-Apr 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Gali District

**Table 3: Number of days food categories were consumed over a one-week period**

District	Cereals	Pulses	Vegetables	Fruits	Meat/fish	Sugar/sweets	Dairy	Fats (oil, butter)
Ochamchire	7	4	2	2	2	6	4	3
Tkvarcheli	7	4	3	1	2	7	5	4
Gali	7	5	4	1	2	6	4	1
Sukhumi	7	3	2	1	1	6	3	4

Source: WFP Abkhazia, Georgia Food-for-Work Survey (Mar-Apr 2007)

The division between urban and rural is blurred by the fact that most urban dwellers also maintain small land holdings (tended by family and friends) in villages. Urban houses allocate land in their house perimeters for kitchen gardens, the exception being people living in multi-storey community centres with no such land facilities. Although figures are not available, district officials suggest rural people often support their urban families with products from their farms. Residents from Zugdidi District with farms in Gali District commute daily to their farms and carry back produce for consumption and sale in Zugdidi.

#### 4. Vulnerable groups and coping mechanisms

The current state of reliance on backyard farming is essentially a mechanism adopted by households to cope with the loss of regular jobs. These families also seem to be poor and vulnerable to further shocks. Escalation of conflict is a serious potential hazard that may disrupt the movement of people and goods. Poorly functioning markets would worsen. Agriculture production is also affected by the fact that many of today's farmers have adopted this profession out of necessity, with no formal training or apprenticeship. Technical support from agriculture and veterinary services is low. Consequently, choices on seed selection, weeding, and the use of fertilizer and application of water are areas for potential improvement. A shortage of farm power prevents farmers from bringing fallow land into production. Diseases such as African swine fever and the American caterpillar have, as well as threats of AI outbreak, affected poultry, swine and hazelnut production. Farmers are not equipped to dry their hazelnuts properly, resulting in losses due to dampness. Awareness raising and the provision of model storage racks would curtail such losses.

**Table 4: Food prices in Gali market**

Commodity	Roubles per Kg	Dollar equivalent
Wheat flour	15	0.6
Maize	17	0.7
Onion	17	0.7
Tomato	20	0.8
Beef	100	4.0
Chicken	70	2.8
Cheese	100	4.0
Hazelnut	45	1.8

Source: Spot Market Survey 26 Sep 2007

A variety of steps have been taken by households to provide food for their families. **Table 5** is a partial list of predominant coping mechanisms adopted by the population:

**Table 5: Prevalent coping mechanisms**

Coping mechanism	Population	
	Location	Affected
Adopting subsistence farming as a profession	Rural	Majority
Changing diet to consist mainly of self production	Rural	Majority
Reliance on kitchen gardens for food	Rural/Urban	Majority
Children attending school without meals	Rural/urban	Majority
Living in state houses with subsidised utilities	Urban	Minority
Venturing into small businesses	Urban	Minority
Sending family member to Russia for labour	Northern part	Minority
Living in Zugdidi across the ceasefire line	Gali population	undetermined

In conclusion, the majority of the population is very vulnerable to even minor shocks. They have exhausted available coping strategies and any subsequent deterioration in the political situation, prevailing weather, markets, jobs or animal disease would severely affect their food security. Interventions to create jobs, support market integration, agriculture extension services, supply of drinking water, education and health services are required.

## **5. Institutional framework for agriculture**

### Institutions

According to the *de facto* minister of agriculture and food (DFMAF), the *de facto* ministry assumed a coordinating role for the economic operators involved in agriculture, namely single farmers, private farms (larger operations registered as companies) and state enterprises. The DFMAF is not involved in production and trade.

Each district in Abkhazia, Georgia has a department of agriculture (DoA) directly subordinated to the *de facto* ministry of agriculture and food. The DoA structure consists of one head of department, one to three agronomists, an economist (4 in Ochamchire), a head of the veterinary service plus an accountant and a secretary. Salaries come from the district budget, but the staff has dual accountabilities both to the local (district) administration and the central authorities (DFMAF).

As the former function of the department (DoA) related to the management of state farms system is fading, the administration focuses on privatisation fund credits, collection of statistics and land taxes. The department is also participating in the technical appraisals and decision-making related to land rental applications.

The administration of land renting comes under the department of land management. Phyto-sanitary laboratories are under the direct responsibility of the *de facto* ministry, while the veterinary services and the quarantine inspectorate are independent but cooperate with the DFMAF.

### Agriculture Policy

Most transition countries experience difficulties in developing a sound agriculture policy. It usually takes a lot of time and effort to upgrade local capacity and for the political elite to develop a vision for the sector and for the wider issue of rural development. In all EU enlargement countries, international cooperation programmes mostly funded by the European Union made available masses of expertise in order to achieve this.

Due to the stalemate in the process of conflict resolution hardly any consistent and comprehensive agriculture policy has been developed in Abkhazia, Georgia. The DFMAF has developed some measures to assist the sector, though it generally performs inspection and statistics-gathering activities. The mission was informed by relevant representatives of local institutions in the region that an agriculture strategy has been drafted and should be made public in a near future. However, according to key-informants, the current thinking of the agriculture political elite tends to hope for restoring the pre-war situation by focusing on large operations. In other words, the strategy appears not to focus on thousands of farming households that rely solely or mainly on agriculture to ensure their livelihoods. It seems that the local leaders and policy makers aspire to develop again the production of the sub-tropical crops such as citrus and tea that ensured in the past the prosperity of this region as a whole. These export-oriented crops imply long food supply chains in which urban and well-connected traders can play a role and capture a significant portion of the potential margin,

whereas the individual producers remain marginalized. The answer to this misbalance could be to identify which local production could be competitive with imports and adopt a substitution strategy. In such way, the individual producers could in the mid-term integrate short food supply chains through joint marketing and increase their margin share.

#### Agriculture extension services

The agronomists of the agriculture departments at district level should provide advice related to plant protection. However, rarely on the field and virtually never on the farms, veterinarians provide very little services in regard to animal health and animal feeding. One of the rare sources of information that farmers can rely on are commercial companies that provide advice together with the selling of their products. Of course, farmers should be aware of possible biases coming from these "advisors".

Agricultural projects funded by donors provide advisory services and information to the groups of farmers they assist. Support is provided through regular or occasional project staff and in some cases by producers, in the form of farmer-to-farmer training and advice. However, the adopted approaches don't seem to ensure the sustainability of such services because of absence of a local entity able to manage those services once the projects phase down. The other limitation of individual projects implemented by NGOs is that farmers who are not project "selected beneficiaries" do not have sources of information and training.

#### Veterinary services

The veterinary services are coordinated by the veterinary department, with representatives in each district. The lack of material means reduces the services of these local entities that could in case of better financial means serve farmers on the field. In reality, these veterinary stations provide services to farmers who come to their premises and sell them drugs against payment covering the entire cost of the purchased products.

Some international organisations have contracted the state veterinary services as well as the newly established private veterinary association. However, the delivery capacity has proved to be quite weak and the contractors have failed to perform the totality of the planned activities. On the other hand, the ICRC negotiated with the *de facto* government the support of the state veterinary services in support to their agriculture craft and trade programme, and, according to the ICRC delegate, all agreed that the services were performed on-time and free of charge.

## **6. Processing and marketing**

#### Processing agricultural products

Except some wine production primarily on state farms, there is no other developed agro-industry in the region. Soft drinks companies are the only food industries established by few private entrepreneurs in Gali, Ochamchire, Gulripshi and Sukhumi. However, these companies do not offer additional outlet for agriculture producers, as they use chemical ingredients. The large citrus processing industry that intends to produce juice concentrate has not started production yet.

New, smaller processing units are appearing in the north. Thus, because of the inability of local farmers to provide the required quantities and qualities, these small and medium industries prefer to import the primary products<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> A newly established meat processor who plans to produce monthly 15 tons of final meat products uses beef meat imported from Brazil, Russia and United States. The main reason even before the quality issue is the quantity.

In Zugdidi, a strong Georgian group (building the Hyatt Hotel in Tbilisi) completed the construction of a state-of-the-art hazelnut processing plant in early 2007. The group benefited from financial support from European Bank for Reconstruction worth US\$4 million (€2.82 million) consisting of a loan and the acquisition of a 15 per cent equity stake in the company.

The Italian company Ferrero Spa, which makes Ferrero Rocher chocolate, bought 1,200 Ha of hazelnuts orchards in the Zugdidi area and plans to build two plants in order to secure the hazelnut supply. The two plants should be built in 2008.

Food safety standards in the region are regulated by "state food safety standards". Some processors are not familiar with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) standards, but follow the state standards that have elements of HACCP approach. In Zugdidi, HACCP and ISO standards are applied especially in export-oriented companies.

#### Agricultural marketing

Most of the private farms products are channelled through the local green market located in each of the districts' main towns, with the exception of Gulripshi. Grocery stores are present over the whole territory of the region, while the only supermarket has been recently opened in Gagra.

Two wholesale markets exist in Sukhumi and Gudauta. Yet, as in many parts in the Caucasus region, local green markets also perform wholesale activities. Farmers and dealers meet on the market day in the main district town and sell hazelnuts, citrus and livestock to traders.

Post-harvest management is still rudimentary. Farmers and traders sell vegetables and cheese on the green market without any packaging. At the same markets, farming households sell surpluses of fresh milk in plastic soft drink bottles. Despite outstanding organoleptic properties, some of the region's products are discredited because their (i) poor packaging, (ii) lack of grading and sorting, and (iii) short-shelf life of vegetables and fruit.

Transportation means available to local producers are not sufficient and there is a need for modernisation, the current available transportation being reduced to individual cars, horse-drawn carts or public transport. Traders seem to be slightly better equipped and use trucks for the transport of goods to Russia or to Georgia proper.

#### Agriculture trade between south-eastern and north-western Abkhazia, Georgia

As mentioned in the FEZ section, the region's south-eastern parts oriented towards agriculture, while north is oriented towards tourism. With the recovery of the tourism sector, the logic would be to rebuild the linkages that existed before the conflict. However, talking to farmers, the feeling is that if linkages are restored, they will be dominated by traders, who will capture the premium prices. Indeed, it seems that producers from the south are still hesitant to establish direct and wider linkages with clients in Gagra or Novyy Afon.

The tourism niche could be also the chance for small producers to sell traditional quality products at premium prices. The experience of the non-labelled honey shows that tourists appreciate the genuine aspect of local products, such as pickled vegetables, cheese, traditional processed meat products, including sudjuk, bastruma and smoked dry meat.

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations**

Interventions in the agriculture sector should be more coherent. The projects should be simple and targeted, with a limited number of objectives to make sure the impact is substantial. In absence of a real agriculture policy, aid projects can have an impact in terms of introducing new practices. To achieve this, however a minimum level of impact has to be achieved. The current agro activities are certainly impacting at household level but fail to develop new practices in production and farm management terms.

As agriculture practices are still rudimentary, further support should focus on production techniques. Marketing could be addressed, but objectives should be realistic and risks linked to criminality and racketeering taken into account.

The mission determined that projects aiming to support and develop the hazelnut sector would be preferred to other food supply chains. The reasons are the high profitability and the good prospects of the crop; as well as the fact that it is widely spread in all the FEZs.

The region has high unemployment, serious threats to food security and abundant unutilized fertile lands. Under such circumstances, utilization of fertile abandoned land should be a priority. Local organizations are unable to manage the initial labour mobilization and require assistance. Targeting of beneficiaries, support to organize labour, technical advice on agriculture and livestock and support to market the produce, are areas essential to sustaining livelihoods. Land reclamation programmes – such as the WFP-sponsored "food-for-work" project - should continue till either all available potential land has been reclaimed for cultivation or all households have adequate land to farm.

## I.3 Health

### 1. Healthcare system structure, policy and service provision

The health services system in Abkhazia, Georgia is based on the former Soviet system, consisting of a centralized network of health care services with an emphasis on hospitals and specialisations. At central level the main referral hospital is the Republican Hospital in Sukhumi, which falls directly under the *de facto* ministry of health's (MoH) responsibility. In urban areas general polyclinics and (specialised) dispensaries or specialised medical institutions provide primary health care. In Sukhumi, for example, there are institutions for paediatrics, tuberculosis (TB), psychology, oncology, maternity, etc. The recently renovated HIV-AIDS Centre has overall responsibility for HIV-AIDS issues in the region (see also the separate section on HIV/AIDS below).

In districts there is a system of a central district hospital and village health clinics, consisting of:

- Central District Hospital (CDH), rendering primary healthcare out-patient services by doctors for the population of the district centre and in-patient treatment for the population of the district centre and villages.
- Village Doctor Ambulatory (VDA), rendering primary health care services (out-patient and in-patient) by the doctors for the population of the village. Village Doctor Ambulatories exist in larger villages.
- Feldsher-Accoucheur Point (FAP) is rendering primary healthcare out-patient services by feldshers/medical assistants, midwives and nurses for the population of the village. Feldsher-Accoucheur Points exists in small villages.

VDAs provide (in theory) a wider range of services than the FAPs. The VDAs and FAPs refer patients to polyclinics and hospitals. The district hospitals fall under the responsibility of the district authorities, but the district department of health receives funding from the central budget. The director of the central district hospital is responsible for the delivery of primary health care in the district through VDAs and FAPs. In the three districts in the east, the distribution of facilities is currently as follows:

**Table 1: Healthcare facilities in the districts of Ochamchire, Gali and Tkvarcheli, 2007**

	Ochamchire	Gali	Tkvarcheli	Total
Central district hospital	1	1	1	3 CDHs
Number of doctors in in- and out-patient departments	5 doctors	28 doctors	8 doctors	41 doctors
Number of nurses in in- and out-patient departments	26 nurses	41 nurses	63 nurses	130 nurses
Beds in hospital	45 beds	75 beds	150 beds	270 beds
Village doctor Ambulatory	3	4	0	7
Feldsher Accoucheur point	16	0	6	22

(Sources: CBHS project, Sukhumi, and *de facto* MoH of Abkhazia)

Training of medical staff takes place in two institutes in Sukhumi. The medical college has a two-year curriculum for nurses and the biology/chemistry faculty of Abkhaz State University trains medical laboratory staff and medical assistants. Training of doctors and post graduate education

takes place in Russia. In some cases Russian specialists visit the region to provide training locally, through so called "cycles of perfection". Vaccination experts were mentioned to have travelled to districts in order to train health care providers. The *de facto* health authorities do not provide any continuous education, training or skills development for medical staff.<sup>24</sup>

Both the UNDP-led feasibility mission (see footnote 1), as well as the more detailed European Commission (EC)-funded study (December 2004<sup>25</sup>), that describes and analyses the health care structure, the state of public health care facilities and health service delivery in the conflict area, paint a dire picture of a barely functioning public health sector. The mission found that the situation at the local level in the districts as described in these reports does only appear to have marginally improved since 2004. Although the *de facto* authorities prepare plans and budgets and resource allocations are made at the central level to the health sector<sup>26</sup>, only meagre resources are actually available and/or make it to the districts. Funding from the state budget is only sufficient for basic maintenance of the health system, whereas resources for structural or quality improvements are very limited.

There are reported shortages of supplies, materials and equipment throughout the health system and in some cases the mission observed that money to pay the salaries of health care providers and the basic running costs is often received late. And even the latter is sometimes problematic: the hospital in Gali reported having substantial outstanding debts for electricity and water. The focus is very much on efforts to keep providing some level of health services through the existing crippled infrastructure. Overall, the level of care depends very much on availability of funds, goodwill of the staff and external support and supplies. Access and use of health services at the local level is poor. Transport and costs are a major problem for the rural poor. Many people self-medicate and/or wait for health problems to get worse before they seek professional services. The services at district hospitals and in Sukhumi are often also insufficient. Those who can afford it and can travel seek medical assistance elsewhere, outside the region, in the rest of Georgia or Russia.

## **2. Health statistics and information system**

Health statistics play a vital part in health policy development, planning and resource allocation in the health sector. However, obtaining reliable health statistics remains a big problem in Abkhazia, Georgia, a fact which is acknowledged by the *de facto* authorities. Annex 3 contains the 2006 medical data of Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli districts, presented as they were provided by the district hospitals and the *de facto* MoH to the Hospital Support and Capacity Building (HSCB) project. Data on a number of important medical issues is not being recorded and some data appears incongruent. The completeness and usefulness of the available data is further hampered by the fact that many people seek medical services in either Russia or, those from lower Gali, across the ceasefire line in Zugdidi. It seems doubtful the available data accurately reflects the current health situation in the districts.

The department of statistics of the *de facto* MoH and district hospitals make efforts to keep records: the former also produces annual medical statistics reports. Annex 4 contains the statistics on key health indicators made available to the mission by the *de facto* MoH. The authorities attributed the sometimes huge swings in numbers across years and observed negative trends, to improved administration and reporting, resulting in seemingly increasing numbers, whilst in reality

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<sup>24</sup> This is confirmed by the data provided on staff training for the three eastern districts in Annex 3: only three medical staff (out of a total of 171) were reported to have received some medical courses during the last three years.

<sup>25</sup> Stoebel, Isabelle, *Report on the feasibility study for the rehabilitation of the public health sector on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict Zone – EC rehabilitation/ TACIS Action Plan*, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Budget information was not made available to the mission.

this might not be the case. The following key health data were released by the Abkhaz *de facto* authorities for the year 2006:

Population size	215,926 people
Birth rate	0.82%
Maternal Mortality rate	9.8%
Infant Mortality rate	19.7%
Early neonatal mortality rate	6.0%

For children up to 15 year infectious and parasitogenic diseases (40% of reported illnesses), respiratory diseases (29.6%), diseases of digestive organs (5.7%), and diseases of the nervous system (6%) are the main illnesses. Recent information for adults was not made available. All three eastern districts mention cardiovascular diseases as a main cause of death in adults.

As mentioned below in the water and sanitation section of this report, EC and UNDP support the re-establishment and functioning of the Sanitation Epidemiological Station in Ochamchire, which will hopefully contribute to more reliable public health data. Hospital staff in Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli and Gali has been trained in computer use for patient management and routine functioning of the hospital.

In conclusion, the capacity of the health information system to gather and analyse relevant data and produce reliable key health indicators appears to be weak. It makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the data.

### 3. HIV-AIDS

HIV/AIDS was only briefly mentioned by the 2004 feasibility mission, since at the time very little was known and only assumptions could be made. A lot of work has been done since and the situation and needs have become clearer. The Save the Children STI/HIV/AIDS Prevention Project (SHIP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has assisted the *de facto* authorities with the establishment of an HIV/AIDS Centre and undertaken relevant staff training in Sukhumi. The Centre has been put in charge of all activities related to HIV/AIDS, including testing: it has capacity for rapid and ELISA testing and uses World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. As yet, there is no overall policy on HIV/AIDS in Abkhazia, Georgia elaborated and the authorities are only able to contribute very limited resources for diagnosis to the Centre.

The HIV prevalence rate in the region, with 269 registered cases<sup>27</sup> of HIV as of January 2007 for an estimated population of around 220,000 is considered to be low. The main mode of transmission is intravenous drug use (73% in 2006, up from 68.4% in 2005), the remainder is through sexual transmission. In 2005, 68.4% of HIV infections were in men and 31.6% in women. So far, only one child has been confirmed to be infected, according to the HIV/AIDS Centre.<sup>28</sup> There has been a sharp increase in new infections since 2002 (when there were eight cases in total). It is commonly agreed that the number of confirmed cases is much lower than the real infection rate. This is partly due to the still limited testing capacity. There is also a lot of migration and travel between Gali and Zugdidi districts and between Abkhazia region and Russia, including

<sup>27</sup> This official figure for January 2007 was provided by the director of the HIV/AIDS Centre. The coordinator of the STI/HIV Prevention Project of Save the Children in Abkhazia stated the most recent number of confirmed cases is 314 (September 2007).

<sup>28</sup> There are rumours and impressions about HIV/AIDS that are difficult to confirm with official figures: a psychologist working for DRC was told in Tkvarcheli that 15 children had tested positive (interview 14 September 2007), something very much doubted to be true by the SHIP Project Coordinator. The HSCB Project Coordinator lists HIV/AIDS with a number of problems she describes as 'widespread'.

for medical services, so HIV/AIDS cases from the region are likely included in health statistics outside its borders.

A common problem in the eastern part of the region is drug use. Unemployment rates are very high and there is very little for children and youth to do outside school. Stress levels are high and despair common. Drug and alcohol abuse amongst youth and also adults (mainly male) is thought to be high, with cannabis grown in the villages and drugs apparently trafficked through the area, making them relatively easily available. In Gali District intravenous drug use is apparent and was repeatedly reported to the mission. The extent of the problem is not known.

The HIV/AIDS Centre can not cover all areas at the moment. All district hospitals are provided with only 20 rapid tests a year and report monthly to the Centre. Concerns were expressed about the capacity to properly implement rapid tests and referral at the district level, as hospital laboratories apparently received equipment and tests but little training. Pregnant women are currently the only group that undergo free mandatory testing for HIV and six sexually transmitted infections (STIs). All other HIV testing is voluntarily and needs to be paid for privately. So far, a total of 33 women of reproductive age have been diagnosed with HIV. Eight of those were pregnant (resulting in six deliveries, one interrupted pregnancy and one pregnancy kept).

There is currently no treatment available for HIV-infected persons the region. However, the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) confirmed that in 2008, under round six of the programme, it is planned to further equip the HIV/AIDS Centre and start antiretroviral treatment. The Save the Children SHIP Project will start supplying more testing materials later in 2007.

There is some knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the general population, but misconceptions about how one gets infected and how to prevent it are widespread. Some limited (insufficient) HIV prevention, voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and information, education and communication (IEC) programmes are in place. Up to this point, the focus has been on the north part, especially during the tourist season, but there are plans to expand awareness and prevention activities in southern/eastern districts, for example by using an existing mobile HIV team.

The HIV/AIDS Centre, in cooperation with the Narcotics Centre, is currently completing a survey into medical and social problems surrounding drug use that included focus group discussions with IDUs, government staff, politicians, and law enforcement and medical staff that is expected to provide valuable information on their views and behaviours. It will also present recommendations. It is expected to be completed by early 2008. More in-depth research (bio-marker and behaviour as well as knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys) to better understand the behaviour of high risk groups such as intravenous drug users, men who have sex with men (MSMs) and female sex workers (FSWs) and their clients, is urgently needed to determine evidence based prevention interventions. This research, as well as awareness-raising and prevention activities targeting peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia, Georgia and the need to determine social assistance for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, are included as priorities in the UN Joint HIV/AIDS Programme<sup>29</sup>, which unfortunately currently lacks funding.

HIV/AIDS areas in need of urgent support and technical assistance are: policy/strategy development, research into high risk populations, voluntary counselling, testing and tracing, referral mechanism, treatment, education and capacity of medical staff, prevention and data and

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<sup>29</sup> *UN Joint Support Plan to HIV/AIDS National Response Plan, Georgia, 2007-2008 (draft)*. United Nations Joint Programme. UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS Georgia. Tbilisi, October 2006.

information management. It is also necessary to instil a change in mentality with people in the health sector and the general public concerning HIV/AIDS: as in most places in the world, there is a stigma attached to HIV. Without rapid and substantial assistance, the spread of HIV/AIDS could turn into a health crisis in the region.

#### **4. Reproductive health for women and youth**

UNFPA identified the following structures responsible for dealing with reproductive health (RH) in Abkhazia, Georgia:

- Maternity departments/wards of the central district hospitals (4), in Ochamchire, Gagra, Gudauta and Gali, with total number of 126 beds.
- Maternity Hospital (1), in Sukhumi, 100 beds.
- Obstetrics-gynaecology/maternity department/ward (1) of the central district hospital in Tkvarcheli, 30 beds.
- Women's consultations (8, referred to as centres of reproductive health by the *de facto* MoH) in Sukhumi, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchire, Gagra, Gudauta, Gali, Novyy Afon and Gulripshi.

The *de facto* MoH acknowledged that the current RH work, services, methodologies and coordination need to be expanded in order to be better able deal with a wide range of RH issues, including in vitro fertilization. Authorities appear to see RH services as assisting women to have children. The current low birth rate and demographic trends are of concern to authorities, who would like to see the increase of population in the region. Special social benefits have been created to support families with many children, pregnant women and women who delivered (mentioned in the section on social assistance of this report).

There are no reliable RH statistics available for the region. The reproductive health survey carried out in Georgia in 2005 did not include it; however, through UNFPA support it became possible to prepare and conduct a RH survey in the region according to the same methodology. The data are with the US-based Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the report is being prepared with USAID support. Reproductive health and domestic violence issues are both extremely taboo topics. UNIFEM funded an assessment on these two topics in the eastern part in 2006.<sup>30</sup> The assessment found that women have limited understanding of their rights over their bodies in general and about their reproductive health concerns in particular and that there is a lack of access to RH services, information on RH and a high rate of abortion to deal with unwanted pregnancies. The study revealed that instances of domestic violence are also commonplace.

Doctors interviewed for the assessment also mentioned the increasing rate of home births, the lack of appropriate surgical instruments, diagnostic technologies and bad roads as contributing to RH problems of women. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies also negatively affect the health of women. The assessment reported early pregnancy as a result of forced and early marriages of girls, some too young to maintain a pregnancy.

The assessment established that women have limited control over their sex lives, with men making the decisions related to contraception use (reportedly very low condom use), number of children, etc. The report found that 37% of the respondents (300 women of reproductive age visiting gynaecologists) did not use contraceptives, 12% resort to abortion - available and cheap - and 10.3% use the unreliable rhythm method.

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<sup>30</sup> *Understanding Women's Rights over their Bodies – Domestic Violence and Reproductive Health in Abkhazia. Assessment based on a sociological survey conducted in Gali-Tkvarcheli-Ochamchira Districts.* By M. Kvaratskhelia et al. 2006 for UNIFEM.

The interest of women in contraception and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS was found to be high by the assessment, however, 36% of the women who completed a questionnaire, feared a negative reaction from their husband in case the woman's interest in RH became known to him. 20% percent of the surveyed women use an IUD: the majority do so secretly.

The director of the clinic in Nabakevi village of Gali District told the mission that most people do not want to have children for economic reasons (too poor) but that some poor families opt to keep unplanned pregnancies and subsequently are not able to properly care for their children. Women in lower Gali with easy access to Georgia proper go to Zugdidi for abortions, deliveries and health services not available in the region: both the clinic in Nabakevi and the hospital in Gali town provide transport assistance to patients in crossing the ceasefire line.

The current RH situation in eastern part of the region exposes women to the risks of unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases – the HSCB project reports STIs to be common: pregnant women are the only ones who are routinely tested – and the spread of HIV/AIDS. There is no effective system of sex education for youth. Poverty, limited availability of poor quality (RH) health services, and shortages of information materials complicate the situation, increase the risk of medical complications and worsen the overall state of women's RH.

## **5. Immunisation**

The *de facto* MoH reported that, despite support for their immunization programme, there remain issues with the distribution through the primary health service chains, transport and connecting with all districts, where decisions are made on details of their vaccination activities. The data provided by the health authorities related to their immunization programme are included in table 3, Annex 4. By their own measurements the health services fall short of their immunization targets by 30% or more for 10 out of 15 types of vaccinations. The authorities also mentioned having had difficulties in dealing with local outbreaks of German measles in the past two years. The *de facto* authorities did not report any shortages of vaccines to the mission. Abkhaz *de facto* health authorities calculate needs and make direct requests for vaccines to the National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC) in Georgia proper that ensures that these are delivered as requested.

With continued support to immunization efforts, this aspect of the preventative healthcare seems to be functioning adequately for the time being. As and when the level and quality of primary health care (PHC) and mother and child health (MCH) services at the local level is being improved, it needs to be ensured that any immunization issues are identified, included and addressed as necessary.

## **6. Nutrition**

### **Breastfeeding**

The situation concerning breastfeeding does not appear to have noticeably changed since earlier reports and assessments. The SHCB project reported that early initiation of breastfeeding – within an hour after birth – is still not routinely practiced in maternity hospitals and wards. In 2004, a planned UNICEF breastfeeding training for health staff was postponed and later had to be cancelled due to the tense security situation.

The *de facto* MoH acknowledged that this is an area in need of improvement. The last official monitoring on breastfeeding took place in 1996. The *de facto* minister mentioned that observations in clinics report 47% of 4-month-old infants receive (some) breast milk. He blamed the many burdens and bad nutrition for the lack of breast milk in many women. An unbalanced diet of infants, with, according to the *de facto* ministry of health, only 16% of the population able to

afford formula milk and the rest using cow milk, was considered the reason why many children below one year of age get sick. The *de facto* ministry of health felt establishing "milk kitchens" that would enrich cow milk for children to make it more nutritious and available at low cost, was something that could help address this issue.

#### Micronutrients deficiencies

Iodine and iron deficiencies in nutrition can result in iodine deficiency disorders (IDD), goitre and iron deficiency anaemia (IDA), the latter especially problematic in pregnant and lactating women. Using the health data from Gali, Tkvarcheli and Oчамchire, some cases of anaemia (0, 20 and 8 cases respectively) and goitre (10, 20 and 29 cases respectively) were documented in 2006 and, although verbally confirmed by health care providers to be an issue, the extent of the problems is not known and would need a more detailed survey.

In terms of addressing the issues and prevention, the *de facto* MoH could not confirm that salt imported into the region was iodised: there do not appear to be any measures in place to ensure this. The concept of fortified (e.g. with iron) wheat was unfamiliar to the *de facto* health authorities. It must also be noted that maize rather than wheat is the staple food in certain parts of the region.

#### Stunting and wasting

The *de facto* MoH, health care providers and school directors all verbally reported nutrition to be a problem, particularly in remote and relatively poor rural areas, however, the mission had available only anecdotal data from individual interviews and in this respect sees the need for a more systematic study of the situation. Families reportedly struggle with food security and diet diversity issues, mainly in winter, and vulnerable people live "from harvest to harvest". Schools reported short-term hunger to be a problem because children are sent to school without having eaten breakfast, some having to walk long distances to school and not bringing any food or snack for breaks. No data or surveys are available to confirm the occurrence and extent of stunting and/or wasting.

The WFP FFE programme implemented in over 80 schools spread over the entire region (daily bread buns for all school children and dry food take home rations for the 10% most vulnerable families of schoolchildren) of the past years (2006-2007) aimed to improve attendance and concentration and reduce short-term hunger. The programme did an assessment in 52 schools using specific vulnerability indicators, but not a nutritional assessment. Anecdotal evidence suggests it did improve school attendance, but no impact data are available. The programme has entered its last phase, with only just over 1,000 beneficiary families receiving take home rations this school year. WFP reports that, according to participating schools, the regular provision of school meals alleviated short-term hunger and led towards the improvement of the concentration and learning capacity of children. Overall, the attendance rate increased from the baseline 87% (February 2006) up to 94% in 2006 and further to 96% during 2007. Several stakeholders expressed concern about the programme being stopped because of the negative effects it might have on especially vulnerable families.

### **7. Avian Influenza**

The *de facto* minister of health does not consider avian influenza to be a serious risk.. He stated that the region is not located under any of the major routes of migrating birds, has a low bird population, does not have any large poultry factories and has soil with a high drainage capacity, all making infection and transmission not very likely. Although the risk was considered to be low, a special preparedness committee has taken a number of measures in the past two years. This committee collects relevant information and decides on responses to the threat of avian influenza.

Measures include an import ban, suspending hunting for birds and preventative treatment of transport means. The ecological service monitors wild birds and the veterinary services monitor and vaccinate animals against other diseases. No assessment could be made of the actual implementation and effect of these stated measures, nor is there any indication of the awareness of the population on the issue. In some villages in Gali people reported that their chicken had been killed last year, but they were not clear as to why, nor had they received any compensation from the authorities.

## **8. Water and sanitation**

The worrying, dilapidated state of town water supply systems and its continuing decline received considerable attention in previous needs assessment (1998) and feasibility (2004) reports. Widespread damage to water supply and sewage systems deprived many people of access to safe drinking water and resulted in unhygienic conditions, putting them at risk of waterborne diseases and health problems. The system of monitoring water quality and incidence of waterborne diseases by town and district Sanitation Epidemiological Stations (SES) under the *de facto* deputy minister of health was completely dysfunctional for the last 14 years.

The existing problems of access to quality water and sanitation have been addressed by several projects carried out by UNOMIG, UN agencies and their partners. Support to projects aiming to improve the situation has also been a focus of the EC Rehabilitation Programme for Abkhazia, Georgia, Phase I. The activities of the past and ongoing projects include: drinking water systems rehabilitation, community mobilization, restoring capacity and functioning of the water operator bases in three towns in Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli districts, restoring water quality control and monitoring of waterborne diseases at the regional Sanitation Epidemiological Station (SES) in Ochamchire (servicing all three target districts<sup>31</sup>) and hygiene and sanitation campaigns.<sup>32</sup>

With these activities some of the most urgent water supply issues are being addressed. There remains, however, a need to continue monitoring the functioning of the systems and to ensure the fee-based system - a new concept for many water consumers - takes root. Awareness raising and training on hygiene and sanitation issues needs to continue in the villages, where people use natural springs and rivers and have individual water wells and outdoor toilets with septic tanks, often at a close distance from each other. Monitoring of water quality and waterborne disease outbreaks by the regional SES can assist in efficiently focusing these activities. Rehabilitation or construction of sewerage systems and sewage treatment facilities remain necessary.

## **9. Ongoing support activities in health**

The most important recent major support to the health sector is the EC-funded full rehabilitation of the three district hospitals in towns of Gali, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli, implemented by the UNOMIG Trust Fund in 2006-2007. Complementary to this effort, Save the Children implements the EC-funded hospital support project, HSCB, in the rehabilitated hospitals, which includes provision of essential equipment and staff training. This project is only a year long and is an important start in terms of addressing administration and management issues in the hospitals. The programme has also provided training for doctors in three clinical modules, will support development of the referral system and successfully undertakes important health information and advocacy work. It is unclear if the project will be continued and be able to monitor and follow-up with health staff in future or have the opportunity to build on achievements and expand.

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<sup>31</sup> The SES laboratory in Ochamchire is located between Gali and Tkvarcheli districts making it the most appropriate place for the timely delivery and bacteriological analysis of water samples from all three rehabilitated water systems.

<sup>32</sup> A total of 101 teachers and 732 children were trained on hygiene and sanitation issues and 50 women participated in a survey.

The UN joint HIV/AIDS programme combines support to the STI/HIV/AIDS activities (albeit currently short of funding) and coordinates with the ongoing Save the Children SHIP project. UNFPA is supporting some reproductive health activities and UNHCR addresses the issue of RH through their community centres approach with World Vision and Avandgard. UNICEF will continue support to the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) capacity building. UNOMIG is currently also rehabilitating the Dandra psychiatric clinic as well as two village health points in Gali. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) includes rehabilitation of one health point in their community mobilization programme. Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) continues their TB programme support. The *de facto* authorities are currently rehabilitating the maternity clinic in Sukhumi.

## **10. Conclusions and recommendations**

In Abkhazia, Georgia the quality of health care and services requires significant improvements and increase in delivery capacities. This is mainly due to the fact that much infrastructure is still in need of repair and rehabilitation, a lack of equipment, materials and supplies throughout the system and the low capacity of staff that has little opportunity to maintain or upgrade their qualifications and skills. Health statistics and data management require also considerable improvements in order to become complete and reliable.

The *de facto* MoH stated the following priorities in the health sector: rehabilitation of the rural primary health care chain (including materials, supplies and training and capacity building of health practitioners); infant/child nutrition; and breastfeeding. Based on the mission's findings, the following areas are in most need of attention: HIV/AIDs (especially research into and testing of high risk groups, prevention and treatment); maternal and child health care services; RH and family planning services and supplies; promotion of preventative care, healthy lifestyle and health education; and addressing micronutrient deficiencies.

The *de facto* authorities aim to re-build the pre-war health care system, focused on specialist, curative care. Many people the team met expressed they would like to see – and expect – the former health care system and services fully restored. This would be too costly and unsustainable. Despite the clear need for a major health care system review and reform, there is currently no long-term health sector reform policy or strategy in place. A future health sector policy should be based on reliable health information and projections, clearly defined standards and packages of service delivery and staff competencies. The development of a cost-recovery system that will guarantee access to services for the poorest and most vulnerable patients and to ensure a sustainable health services delivery system needs to be included.

Although over time different UN agencies have been involved in supporting various aspects of the health system without any overlap, there is a need for a more comprehensive development strategy or approach for the health sector in the region as a whole, and the UN agencies have capacities to increase their support role. With short-term interventions and limited continuity and follow-up, there is a risk that the positive effects of activities will be short-lived and unsustainable. Follow-up and more consistent monitoring and support are necessary to re-establish and strengthen the referral system and effectively bring services down to the local level. The current rehabilitation of the three district hospitals and capacity building of its staff is necessary, but provides insufficient and incomplete input for improved and sustained delivery of services to rural areas.

### **Recommendations**

A comprehensive survey and in-depth assessment of the actual healthcare structure and service provision is needed to make more detailed recommendations on a future sustainable healthcare system and reform policy for Abkhazia, Georgia. However, even without a detailed health sector

survey it is obvious the current network of health infrastructure and staffing needs to be rationalized and upgraded. In the short term, strategic rehabilitation of rural service delivery, the development/improvement of outreach and mobile service delivery and promoting a system of community health nurses could be considered to improve services to the rural areas, a high priority. Training and introduction of more general practitioners and/or family medicine rather than medical specialists and a stronger focus on preventive care should be pursued. Medical training curricula reviews and updates, training opportunities, continuous education and follow-up programmes for health care providers are also needed.

At the same time, a more receptive environment for reforms needs to be prepared and created. This can be undertaken by assisting senior health care providers and managers at Sukhumi and district levels to analyse the current system's gaps and widening their views and exposing them to alternative systems and methods of healthcare. The general population will also need to be assisted in broadening their views and making a shift in attitude towards more realistic future healthcare availability and delivery systems.

Until the time it is possible for the UN to work closer with the authorities on comprehensive health sector review and reforms, UN short term support activities should prioritize contributions to improving the capacity for delivery of and access to primary and rural healthcare services and improving the quality and access to HIV/AIDS, RH and mother and child healthcare services, with a strong focus on preventive care, awareness raising and information management. Any repair and rehabilitation activities should be strategically selected and support the functioning of a basic referral system. In addition, UN agencies active in health should ensure that all their current and future programmes in Georgia properly and appropriately include Abkhazia region and, where possible, establish linkages between health professionals.

To facilitate a long term reform process, the UN agencies involved in healthcare should consider supporting a more detailed survey of the health sector structure and system in Abkhazia, Georgia, development of a long term health system policy, as well as elaborating a joint UN strategy in support of such a policy.

## I.4 Education

### 1. Education sector structure

The Abkhaz public education system currently consists of:

- Preschools: 21 public preschools throughout the region, mostly in urban centres
- Comprehensive: 11 years or forms, one can graduate after the 9<sup>th</sup> (incomplete secondary) or 11<sup>th</sup> form (secondary), forms 10 and 11 provide academic and specialized education.
- Higher education, consisting of:
  - Elementary vocational education
  - Middle vocational education or colleges
  - University: there are two universities - Abkhaz State University and the Open Institute.

The education system also includes special schools, for example sport schools. In addition there are three so-called internats (boarding schools), in Tamishi, Sukhumi and Khaldakhvara. Some 500 orphans, children of single parents and children from economically and socially vulnerable families receive free education and care during the week in internats and go to family or relatives during the weekends and holidays. Two of the internats have been completely rehabilitated over the past two years and are now being used again. In case the need for internats for current target groups diminishes, the *de facto* ministry of education (MoE) intends to continue using them, for example for special programmes for gifted children. There also exist a number of private education institutions in the region, for example preschools.

Abkhaz educational standards are approved and set by the *de facto* MoE. Every school is to have a parent committee. According to data from the UNICEF school survey in school year 2005-2006 the following totals were recorded for the three eastern districts<sup>33</sup>:

**Table 2: Education data for Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire, 2006**

District	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of teachers
Gali	23	2,908	457
Tkvarcheli	18	2,275	390
Ochamchire	32	3,462	524
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8,645</b>	<b>1,371</b>

Regarding the situation in education and the language of instruction in Gali, where ethnic Georgians account for an overwhelming majority of the population, the *de facto* MoE expressed the view that there are no distinctions between districts and all schools have to work according to *de facto* MoE and district education department regulations: the state language is Abkhaz and the language in state institutions, including schools, is Russian. The *de facto* MoE believes there are "shortcomings" and a "bad situation" in some of the 21 schools in Gali, especially in the lower zone, where schools moved away from the established education system and have been functioning separately and more or less autonomously, and are more oriented towards Georgia proper and receive support from the Tbilisi authorities. It is acknowledged that some schools in Gali teach in Russian and some in Georgian. The *de facto* MoE's position is that instruction should be in Russian, the Abkhaz-approved curricula and study plans need to be followed and the state's language, geography, history and culture curricula are mandatory. It is allowed for schools to teach, for example, Armenian or Georgian languages and literature. At the beginning of the school

<sup>33</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council has started updating the numbers, but has not yet completed the work. For Gali, the education authorities mentioned said there were 3,800 students (which would amount to an increase of 30% in 2 years) and 470 teachers. The school survey also contains an overview of all rehabilitation work undertaken and in previous years and whom it was performed by.

year 2007-2008 all heads of schools in Gali were informed of this position by the *de facto* MoE, which also urged Georgian teachers in Gali to refuse financial assistance from the government of Georgia. There is resentment with the Gali population that children are being forced to learn Russian, especially those that already started their education in Georgian. The Human Rights Office in Gali reports that, according to information from schools, lower Gali schools plan to continue teaching Georgian subjects such as Georgian history, religion and constitutional order.

Many textbooks used were donated as humanitarian aid from Russia in 2006 and there are some Abkhaz curricula textbooks available. In lower Gali, Georgian curricula and textbooks are used. Students are expected to purchase most of their textbooks themselves, but they are considered expensive and not sufficiently available.

## **2. Formal education for pre-school and school teachers**

The Institute of Pedagogy in the *de facto* MoE is responsible for developing methods and standards for education in the region. Teacher training is undertaken at the pedagogical faculty of the Abkhaz State University, offering part time and full time courses. The Norwegian Refugee Council, active in the education sector in the region since 1999, started to work closely with the Abkhaz State University in 2007 and supports their teacher training programme.

There are currently shortages in math and chemistry/science teachers, with 700 vacancies unfilled. In Gali shortages of Abkhaz and Russian language teachers were mentioned. Non-professional teachers are being employed to fill the gaps at the moment.

Besides initial qualification as a teacher, the *de facto* MoE states it implements a qualification improvement programme. Every school should have a methodological department. There are district and municipal associations, where the most experienced education staff looks into education methodologies and issues. Annual methodological seminars are held during the summer break in all districts to update teachers on new methods and manuals produced and introduced. Special subject seminars for selected teachers held in Pitsunda (Bichvinta) provide a more informal environment to share experiences, discuss social issues and provide medical services to education staff. The Abkhaz State University serves as a centre for courses to raise the qualifications of *de facto* MoE employees residing in Sukhumi and nearby areas. Rural teacher programmes, to be funded from local budgets, are to target other municipal and local school teachers. Teachers from Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli and Gali are said to have equal access to upgrading their professional skills as teachers from other areas of the region.

## **3. Current status of pre-school education**

There are currently 21 pre-school institutions under the aegis of the *de facto* MoE in Abkhazia, Georgia for children aged 3-6. All except for one are located in major towns. Preschools are virtually non-existent in rural areas. There apparently exists a pre-school curriculum developed by the *de facto* MoE, although each preschool seems to have considerable freedom in deciding what to work on with the children to prepare them for education and learning. There does not appear to be a comprehensive early childhood development (ECD) approach available. Pre-school teachers receive training from the *de facto* MoE, usually in the summer. Budget constraints make it difficult to invite all teachers, so in order to engage most of them, over time different teachers are invited each year. NRC has worked with the staff of two preschools in Gali District on how to play with young children. They plan to continue this year with training on childcare and are considering some renovation works. Of the other two eastern districts, Ochamchire reportedly has one while Tkvarcheli has no functioning preschools. The UNHCR/World Vision supported Social Community Centres (five to date) establish small informal playgroups for preschool aged children.

#### **4. Informal Education**

There is an active network of youth houses and youth clubs in the region, experienced in providing informal education and activities for children and adolescents in a wide range of topics<sup>34</sup>. As with many local organizations for most youth houses, the type and level of their activities depends to a great extent on the availability of external funding. Some of them also work with volunteers and/or generate some of their own income. There is a recognized need for further capacity building of NGOs. All three districts in the east have one or several organizations capable of working with children and youth, expanding the children's views and stimulating their initiative.

#### **5. Overview of the main indicators concerning access to and quality of education**

Despite substantial efforts, the education system is only slowly recovering from the conflict and subsequent years of neglect. Many school buildings are still in a bad state (some were severely devastated or completely destroyed), lacking decent furniture, basic supplies and educational materials and equipment. Computers are absent in schools. Teachers have only limited opportunities for capacity building, especially for advancing teaching methodologies and lack resources and training opportunities to improve their skills and refresh their knowledge. Rehabilitation and efforts to improve capacity made by the *de facto* MoE are limited due to budget constraints and there is little openness towards more interactive methods of teaching. The textbooks used are a mixture of Russian, Abkhaz and Georgian and insufficiently available and expensive. As a result of the above, the quality of education in the eastern part needs drastic improvement.

Although no recent data are available, enrolment is apparently high throughout the region, but poverty is identified as the major cause of attendance problems and drop-outs. Families lack money for textbooks, proper shoes and clothes. Some children have to walk long distances to school and reportedly many children, particularly in rural areas, are sent to school without breakfast, resulting in hunger and concentration and memory problems. Many schools have little or bad heating (often only from small wood-burning stoves) in winter.

Many students and teachers suffer from high levels of stress caused by the conflict, uncertainty, difficult living conditions and, in some areas, high levels of crime, continued insecurity and violence. This manifests itself in a variety of psycho-social problems, such as anxiety, nervousness, emotional or aggressive behaviour, bedwetting, etc. Teachers are not trained to recognize the signals nor equipped to address the issue.

#### **6. Ongoing support activities and outcomes and impact of the UN-led and other internationally sponsored projects in the education sector**

Over the years the education sector in the three eastern districts has received a good deal of attention and funding. In 2001-2003 many schools had basic repairs (UNHCR funded: windows/doors/roofs/floors/painting) to protect them from further deterioration and enable them to continue to function. In addition, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided funding for firewood for vulnerable schools and UNICEF supplied school kits and later replenishment kits and recreational kits (in 2004 and 2006).

Two education support programmes recently came to an end. The WFP FFE provided daily bread buns to school children up to the end of last school year (June 2007). According to school directors met by the mission, this did improve attendance. They also reported either lower attendance from the start of the new school year or predicted a drop in attendance upon the onset of winter, now the

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<sup>34</sup> Some of the topics included are communication and media, psycho-social rehabilitation, healthy lifestyles and life skills, income generation, computer skills, languages and different creative and interactive activities for children, including peace building summer camps

bread is no longer provided. No monitoring and impact data of the programme were available to verify these statements. Take-home dry food rations for the most vulnerable families under this programme will be continued for one more school year.

The second programme, World Vision's Back to School programme in Ochamchire, was not UN funded, but needs to be mentioned because it developed an interesting approach to school drop-outs. This programme supported socially and economically vulnerable families as a whole to improve their situation and help their children catch up and get back attending school (successful with 59 of the total of 70 targeted children). The methodology proved successful in dealing with very difficult drop-out cases. There are worries that, because these families remain extremely vulnerable, the follow-up period might not have been long enough and some of the children will drop out of school again. However, funding for the project has ended.

Besides the UN and Word Vision, the Norwegian Refugee Council in particular has been consistently providing valuable support to the education sector, gradually rehabilitating a number of schools to a good standard in Gali and Tkvarcheli districts. It also implements a longer term education training programme for teachers and students in the three eastern districts. The programme uses peer education methods and includes the following issues: pedagogy, gender, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, dangers of drug use. The training programme currently covers most of Gali and part of Tkvarcheli District.

The overall impact of activities has been positive in the sense that schools are supported to continue to provide education and most places have received some form of support. Support methods currently used are more participatory, putting the schools at the centre of the communities and instilling a sense of ownership in the population.

However, the needs in education remain enormous. Despite all the inputs, the infrastructure and the quality of education still need major support and improvement. Support should preferably be based on an overall improvement plan. The level and type of activity, however, is very much dependent on the availability of funds. For example, the effect of providing necessary supplies (e.g. school in a box kits) is positive, but only short-lived and also creates a level of expectation with schools. Basic repairs help protect a school building, but often still do not make it ideal for learning and communities and local authorities usually have no means to maintain it properly.

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations**

The education sector is in urgent need of review, reforms and optimisation. This is mainly due to the huge need for repair, rehabilitation and optimization of the infrastructure, the lack of furniture, equipment, materials and supplies throughout the system, very limited pre-school education and the relatively low capacity of staff, who have only limited opportunities to maintain or upgrade their qualifications and skills and work with a mix of Russian-donated, Abkhaz, Georgian and outdated curricula. Although enrolment rates appear to be high, attendance and drop-out problems persist, mainly related to poverty, illiteracy rates are reported to be rising and 6<sup>th</sup> graders increasingly fail to meet minimal knowledge standards. The *de facto* authorities are firmly committed to the system of internats whilst inclusive education is completely lacking. The language of instruction for ethnic Georgian children in lower Gali remains a concern.

The focus of the *de facto* authorities and villagers is still mainly on rehabilitation of school buildings, teacher salaries and education materials and supplies, apparently without much consideration given to the existing constraining circumstances inside the region and developments and progress in education that have taken place outside Abkhazia, Georgia over the past 15 years. The *de facto* MoE wishes to receive external support for rehabilitation only. Expectations that the

former Soviet Union level of infrastructure, services and methodologies can – and should – be revived are prevalent but unrealistic: this would be too costly and unsustainable.

Reforms in the education sector should address and incorporate international developments and lessons learned in education methodologies, capacity development and education management. Investments in school infrastructure rehabilitation and quality of education should be based on realistic projections of student numbers, reviews of curricula, capacity assessments of education staff and plans for optimization of use of existing infrastructure. However, extensive reforms in education are not likely to be considered by the *de facto* authorities in the near future.

### Recommendations

The recommendation of the 2004 feasibility mission to focus primary education in villages and concentrate secondary education in selected, centrally located centres is still valid, as is the recommendation that more appropriate curriculum development and capacity building is needed. Especially conflict resolution and peace building, life skills and healthy lifestyles as well as inclusive education should be included in the curriculum. Inclusion of agricultural education and practical training in school vegetable gardens could assist in addressing useful education as well as food production and security at the local level. Psycho-social rehabilitation of both teachers and children needs special attention. Support to the most vulnerable students at risk of dropping out should be continued and expanded. Pre-school education needs to be strengthened and further promoted and capacitated. Given the small number of pre-school aged children in many villages at the moment and the limited funding and capacity available, informal solutions supporting community initiatives will be the most feasible strategy in rural areas for the time being.

There is a need to widen people's views beyond school buildings and teacher salaries, engaging communities and education authorities to analyse gaps and problems in education and review alternative and local solutions. Exposing education authorities and specialists to alternative curricula, management and interactive and inclusive methods of education will help prepare a more receptive environment for necessary education reforms and planning optimization in the future. Familiarising the authorities with education systems in former Soviet Union countries in the region that successfully adjusted to changed circumstances could inspire.

For the short term it is advised that international organizations, including UN agencies supporting school and education rehabilitation efforts, develop - if necessary, with the help of an experienced education reform expert - a joint longer-term infrastructure rehabilitation and capacity building strategy for education. This could be formulated in line with likely and required future standards and optimisation of the education sector and infrastructure. By implementing strategically selected components of this strategy, current support efforts can already prepare the local level for and contribute to future education reforms.

In terms of informal support to education it has proven feasible to motivate and mobilize local communities to plan, participate and contribute to local education solutions such as rehabilitation. With little support, communities should be encouraged to get involved in other education activities, such as organizing rotating play-groups where a preschool is not feasible/available, organizing and assisting in after school activities for students, support to children from especially vulnerable families to ensure their attendance, and liaising with village and local authorities on education issues to ensure their needs are known.

The issue of language of instruction in Gali remains extremely political and unlikely to be settled soon, but it might be possible, depending on relations with the local education authorities, to discuss this informally in Gali. The UN should consider to what extent it feels it can establish or

stimulate an informal dialogue at the local level in Gali, focusing on finding practical, interim solutions accommodating both sides. The basis for discussion and advocacy by UN must be the best interest of the children and the internationally acknowledged right of children to learn in their own language.

## **I.5 Social protection and child protection**

### **1. Structure of the current social assistance systems**

With respect to social assistance, the *de facto* ministry of labour and social welfare (MoLSW) is responsible for implementing and distributing a range of social assistance measures, mostly in the form of pensions and allowances. The *de facto* ministry is small: headed by a minister, who has two deputies, with an additional leading specialist. It has four main departments: labour, pensions and allowances, social security, and accounting. A personnel specialist, two senior inspectors and a few support staff complete the staff in Sukhumi. Offices in each of the districts have staff dealing with pensions and allowances, social workers, technical personnel and an accountancy department.

The *de facto* MoLSW is currently registering all pensioners and beneficiaries receiving social assistance: an estimated 41,000 have been registered, some 12,000 remain. A total of 53,000 people means that almost 25% of the population receives some kind of pension or allowance.

There are many different categories of pensions, allowances and programmes provided by the *de facto* authorities, mainly using categorical targeting, providing benefits for clearly defined groups such as war veterans, disabled and orphans. Besides these pensions there are a number of other assistance programmes: the Medical Insurance Fund (which includes funding for STI/HIV testing and medication for pregnant women), Health Support Programmes (medical support for children with cerebral palsy, TB, diabetes, funding for specific vaccinations, etc.), and a Social Insurance Fund (which includes postnatal allowances and rest for children). The Gagra Orthopaedic Centre provides, with support from ICRC, free treatment, prostheses and orthoses, but for adult amputees only.

Since early 2007, two new family allowances have been introduced: for unmarried mothers (300 rubles/month/child) and for large families (100 to 300 rubles/month/child, amounts depending on the number of children in the family).

Most cash benefits were substantially increased in 2007. The *de facto* authorities acknowledge that the level of the allowances does not meet the needs of the population, but support is constrained by the limited funding available. An overview of pensions and allowances, including amounts, is attached as Annex 5.

Besides these pensions, the *de facto* authorities plan to restore a shelter for homeless children and children from disadvantaged families, as well as a nursing home for the elderly. Elderly persons in holding Russian passports have started receiving old age pensions from Russia, with pension amounts ranging from 1,500 to 2,000 rubles per month.

The *de facto* MoLSW is in the process of taking on some of the remaining caseload of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In 2005, ICRC decided to phase out their needs-based economic security programmes (food and non-food assistance) to the most destitute and vulnerable persons in the region. At the end of 2006, when the ICRC programmes started closing down, 359 people were still being provided with a daily hot meal through ICRC assistance to local authority canteens, 369 homebound or bedridden elderly received hot meals and care with the assistance of the Red Cross and some 2,200 destitute people in rural areas received monthly dry food rations and essential household items every two months (either full rations for pensioners unable to work or partial rations for those of working age but unable to sustain their family). Beneficiaries no longer meeting the vulnerability criteria, like those elderly receiving pensions from Russia, or those households with able-bodied members that opted for the ICRC Agriculture

Trade and Craft programme (a grants, training and technical support programme designed to limit dependency and increase capacity to generate a regular household income) have been removed from the caseload during the phase-out period. Others received a final one-off donation of three rations.

The *de facto* MoLSW currently has taken on a total of 367 homebound and bedridden people and those who visited the soup kitchens from the former ICRC caseload. They receive a flat rate allowance of 700 rubles/month in lieu of food. The authorities reduced the total number of beneficiaries to 367 (down from an ICRC-provided list with around 500 persons) after monitoring and reviewing the people on the list by using the same criteria as ICRC. ICRC informed that authorities actually added two selection criteria, no support from relatives and proven inability to work, and that the authorities have also committed to continue to pay the salaries of the care workers (amounting to 88% of the programme costs).

Authorities mentioned that they had received a list from ICRC of the 1,800 remaining beneficiaries of the monthly dry food rations. They aim, again after a review and assessment of the people on the ICRC list, to provide around 1,100 of them with an allowance of 450 rubles/month. Some 700, or 40% of the total of the 1,800 listed beneficiaries, are located in Gali. The *de facto* authorities informed the mission of their attempts to review the geographical distribution of future beneficiaries; they expect redistribution away from Gali to other areas of the eastern part, e.g. Sukhumi, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli, areas they feel were more affected by the war. UNHCR in Gali is currently using ICRC lists of vulnerable people identified through their own programmes to interview people and get a better understanding of vulnerability.

There are no special programmes in place to support IDPs returning to Abkhazia, Georgia. UNHCR does not deem the conditions for a safe and dignified return of internally displaced people to be in place, but return is happening spontaneously in Gali District, mainly for economic reasons. At the moment the Georgian government continues to recognize returnees to Gali as IDPs<sup>35</sup> and many returnees in Gali are still registered as IDPs in Georgia and receive an IDP allowance of 11 Georgian lari (GEL) (when registered as living in a collective centre) or 14 GEL (when living in private housing) per month. Elderly IDPs are also entitled to Georgian pensions of 38 GEL/month.

The social assistance system in place is used as a tool to help people survive on a minimum subsistence level. With the economic situation slightly improving, allowances have been increased and new allowances have been added. Most pensions and allowances of the authorities are category-based, but they are gaining some experience, through taking over ICRC beneficiaries, with benefits based on vulnerability criteria.

There is no clear definition of poverty in the region, no knowledge of what the minimum subsistence (poverty) level<sup>36</sup> is and no knowledge of how many people in the region live below this level. There are no policies in place promoting alternative methods to support vulnerable people and people living with a handicap, for example by assisting them to increase their capacity to become economically self-sufficient and generate a regular income, through vocational training or job creation schemes.

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<sup>35</sup> The status of IDP is determined by registration, not by residence. IDP status is lost when: IDPs do not renew their registration; false papers were used to register; in case of simultaneous registration in different places; or when a person gives the Georgian government notification of withdrawal from IDP status.

<sup>36</sup> Persons that did make an estimate of the minimum subsistence level mentioned 1,000 rubles/month/pp and 5,000 rubles/month/average family (4 members). In May 2007, ICRC put it at 700 rubles/month for their, mostly single elderly, beneficiaries. Prices for food and goods have since increased.

Social workers/social work exist in name only: there is no training of social workers and there are no qualified social workers in the region. A number of international NGOs have trained social workers as per their specific programme needs (e.g. ICRC/Red Cross, Premiere Urgence, World Vision). Official referral mechanisms do not exist and there is hardly any specialised care or support for vulnerable people or people living with a handicap.

With authorities and a population that still expect the state to take care of their every need, there are groups of vulnerable people that might unnecessarily become long term state-dependents, because of the lack of alternative support and care mechanisms. Yet simultaneously a number of extremely vulnerable people run the risk of being left without any assistance, left with international support and not being taken into the system of the *de facto* authorities.

## **2. Informal social and support systems, community support systems**

WFP and ICRC are currently phasing out their humanitarian and economic security programmes in Abkhazia, Georgia. Success in ensuring the self-sufficiency of their beneficiaries and sustainability or handing over of their activities has been mixed. A number of initiatives by local and international organizations use community mobilization methods to assist vulnerable people improve their situation by improving their income. UNDP supports agricultural groups to improve the livelihoods of member households and the Danish Refugee Council assists communities to prioritize their needs and support activities. Two recent projects funded by UNHCR, one implemented by PU and the other by World Vision International (with input from local NGOs) are piloting re-establishing community cooperation as a way of improving the lives of people, assisting the most vulnerable in the community and contributing to peace building.

Through the Premiere Urgence project "Home Vegetable Gardens in Support of Vulnerable Families" individuals and groups are provided with start-up kits for gardening activities. Ten percent of the vegetable production is used to assist extremely vulnerable families in the community. World Vision International's Social Community Centres and School Rehabilitation Project (SCC) aims to activate community based coping mechanisms and intra-community assistance for vulnerable groups in the community such as women, children and the elderly. Approaches like this, involving the communities, have been recommended in earlier feasibility and assessment reports, but never systematically put into practice.

The mission visited a number of the pilot communities of the World Vision project and had discussions with different women and youth groups formed under the SCC programme. Although the Social Community Centre programme is still new, the first indications are that the approach is successful in bringing communities together in a safe place, mobilizing community participation and empowering the community. The women groups were very positive about the opportunity to socialize, have access to training and information, let pre-school children play together regularly and elderly having something to do and look forward to. The groups had their own ideas on how they could improve the situation of their community and already talked about how to continue the initiative after the project is completed. One of the groups mentioned how the programme had given them a start and helped them realize the resources they had inside the community.

Once communities are capable of organizing themselves, analyzing their situation and undertaking action to change it, a start is made with rebuilding trust and cooperation, which can be built on. The communities also become capable of identifying priorities and self-help and in so doing become more attractive and accessible for external support. The plan is to create a network of communities that will help build/rebuild trust and cooperation in the area.

This type of community organization is crucial in identifying, monitoring and assisting vulnerable groups and individuals within the communities and linking them up with external support mechanisms when communities cannot cope or the need for specialized assistance is identified.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

Although there are no official definitions of poverty and extreme poverty, communities defined the most vulnerable people in the eastern part as follows: unemployed who have no income or resources and little capacity and skills; lonely elderly without support or pension and often bedridden or with limited mobility; big families with little income; people looking after sick adult dependents; and people or children with a handicap. They mostly live from harvest to harvest, or pension to pension, without reserves, barely having enough to survive with petty trade and home gardens and support from others. With international economic security programmes being phased out and only partly replaced by the *de facto* authorities' financial allowances, a number of vulnerable people run the risk of being left to their own devices.

The *de facto* authorities have put in place a whole range of category-based allowances. The main beneficiaries are old age pensioners, disabled persons, war veterans, orphans, widows/widowers, single parent families and families with many children.

There are gaps in the social protection and welfare system. The amounts of allowances are in many cases not sufficient to live off of and the authorities do not have the experience and capacity to develop and run a system that ensures vulnerable people are identified and supported on a needs basis. There is no capacity to provide alternative forms of assistance and there are no qualified social workers or functioning referral systems. Community structures are still very weak and fragile and trust and cooperation in need of restoration.

#### Recommendations

There is a need to review the current pensions and allowances to assess if they serve the actual needs of the population as well as a need to evaluate the institutional set-up of the delivery of the pensions and allowances and their receipt by the population. This will provide important information and indications on how to improve the current social welfare system. The particular needs of returning IDPs should be included separately in such a review.

Familiarising the *de facto* social welfare authorities with experiences in the region with the transfer from a category-based to means-tested, needs-based benefit systems would help broaden their vision as well as exposure to ways to identify and develop alternative support mechanisms for socially vulnerable.

There is a need to review job descriptions, develop curricula and train qualified social workers. UN and non-UN organisations should jointly coordinate and support curriculum development and training of social workers in the region with a view to creating a pool of qualified social workers, capable of guiding and supporting vulnerable communities as well as individuals. Development of a special training module on IDP and returnee issues and referral mechanisms should be considered for inclusion in the social workers training curriculum.

UN agencies should consider to jointly review, refine and use a community mobilization approach (for example the currently piloted Social Community Centres) to empower communities to define their own population's vulnerability criteria and minimum subsistence level based on income/resources, mobility, disability and support. Communities could subsequently identify the most vulnerable individuals and groups in the community, determine strengths, potential and

available internal resources for support, as well as necessary external support to assist those people with special needs the community they cannot support.

UN agencies should jointly monitor and review the progress and impact of this programme and consider how this approach can be used as a common methodology to organize, mobilize and support vulnerable people at the local level, be it for health, education, social, economic or other purposes.

UN agencies should consider assisting communities and relevant authorities in developing information, support and referral mechanisms and networks. This would help establish linkages between communities, support and development organizations, and public service delivery institutions to ensure inclusion of the vulnerable in existing formal and informal social welfare systems and public services such as education and health.

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations for child protection**

##### Conclusions

Children often run the risk of becoming invisible when the needs and problems surrounding them are enormous and overwhelming. The current situation in Abkhazia, Georgia exposes children to a range of risks and situations that negatively influence their development and future. Because of their dependency on others, they are especially vulnerable and this makes it important that their rights and needs are considered and addressed separately instead of being implied in general measures and programmes. Unfortunately, there is an overall lack of knowledge and reliable information on child protection and little attention paid to these issues.

The international network in place, which includes UN agencies, continues to monitor protection issues, including those affecting children, and work towards finding solutions and improving the situation in the region.

IDP children face a whole range of protection issues specific to their status and situation that needs close monitoring and targeted interventions. Psycho-social support programmes for IDP children are still very much needed to help child IDPs develop life skills and coping mechanisms. Vulnerable IDP children also need to be targeted with healthy living and awareness raising programmes to inform them about risks (drugs, crime, prostitution, STI/HIV infections, early marriage and pregnancy, child labour, begging, trafficking) in their environment.

##### Recommendations

In terms of awareness-raising, the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia (UNHROAG), UNHCR and UNICEF can jointly (continue to) support child rights awareness raising. Where possible and relevant, they should address juvenile justice issues and share information, experiences and expertise on human and child rights. The specialist knowledge in the UNICEF juvenile justice reform programme can also be mobilized, if need be.

UNICEF and Save the Children need to discuss the possibilities for further research and/or a street children support programme in follow up to the point count to take place in late 2007. Programme components, with which Save the Children already has extensive experience in the region, might include: safe places/shelters to play and learn, food/personal care, socialisation and re-integration, family support, education support and psycho-social rehabilitation. Use of peer education has been very effective in the region. Where possible and relevant a proposed programme should coordinate with existing initiatives and *de facto* government plans for street children shelter rehabilitation.

Needs of children living with disabilities, using a rights-based approach with the aim to realize equal rights, participation and opportunities for these children, needs to be included in education and social assistance programmes. Awareness-raising on disability as a social (not a medical) issue is already being undertaken by the existing network of local organisations working on disability issues in the region. Support should focus on improving the capacity of organisations of persons with a disability to promote equality and bring about the necessary adjustments to whatever they themselves identify to be barriers for disabled persons, including children, be it attitudes, ignorance and prejudice, physical structures, policies and systems or conflict. Awareness-raising on the issue of disabilities can also be introduced in community centres, motivating communities to design and implement tailor-made activities for specific needs of disabled individuals or groups in their area. Exposure, introduction or support to alternative ways of care and support could include: mobility improvement, parent support groups, capacity building of service providers, advocacy and lobbying, inclusive education, awareness raising, respite care, psychological care and skills training.

Despite the apparent commitment of the education authorities to the boarding schools (internat) system, UNICEF should assess their interest in de-institutionalisation support. Exposing education and internat staff to alternative and community care, social work to support vulnerable families with children in internats, standards for care, gate keeping, and teacher training, would hopefully broaden their views on alternative care possibilities. Alternatively, the internats could be included in psycho-social rehabilitation efforts and other education programmes to be undertaken.

Regarding child IDPs and their rights, the UN must continue raising awareness and draw attention to the situation of IDP children and ensure child IDP issues are addressed, preferably in a joint UN IDP approach. With the Georgian government, the UN through its Theme Group on IDPs and Conflict Areas has taken and should continue to take every opportunity to advocate for the protection of rights of IDP children and their inclusion in discussions, programmes, and decision-making related to the IDP Strategy and its Action Plan that will directly affect them.

Support to improving access to quality health, education and social services for IDPs and IDP integration need to specifically address the needs, rights and best interests of IDP children, consider the effects the activities might have on them and ensure information is made available to them. IDP child-friendly relocation and integration processes can be developed through participation and contributions of UN agencies in relevant discussions, working groups and monitoring of the IDP Action Plan and its implementation.

A specific training module for social workers on IDP issues needs to be developed in order to ensure capacity to assist vulnerable IDPs, with the aim of achieving a better understanding of their problems and providing a continuum of social and educational assistance available to (child) IDPs, including a referral system.

## I.6 Protection for displaced and returnee communities

### 1. General situation

In 1994, a Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons was signed by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, as well as the Russian Federation and the UNHCR. This agreement, which explicitly upholds the principle of voluntary return in safety and dignity, gives UNHCR the position to act, under the Secretary General's authority, as the international lead agency for the return of the displaced persons to Abkhazia, Georgia and underpins its primary protection function with regard to IDPs and returnees.

Under this Agreement, as well as other agreements signed by the sides, such as the so-called Moscow Agreement<sup>37</sup>, and as described in the report of the Representative of Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs,<sup>38</sup> the international community is acknowledging the role of the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities as a party in the peace process and counts on them to fulfil their responsibilities and obligations to respect and protect the rights of all individuals, including returnees, living in the territory under their *de facto* control.

The Security Council Resolution 1716 of 13 October 2006, further urges both sides to seriously address the need for a dignified return of IDPs and refugees, including their security and human rights concerns, publicly reassure the local population, particularly in Gali District, that their residency rights and identity will be respected, and move without delay to implement past commitments relating to the opening, in Gali, of the United Nations Police Advisors and a sub office of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia (HROAG).

At the onset of the return movement in 1994, the initial area of return was designated to be to the old administrative borders of Gali district. This continues to be the case up to present, providing for the returnee region to be composed of the current Gali district and parts of Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire districts. The flow of return, which has been on a spontaneous basis, has been on a limited scale and has not been seen as stable in light of the precarious situation and the absence of political resolution in sight. Furthermore, despite a significant improvement of the general security situation in Gali over the last 4-year period, the entire region is still suffering from a lack of sufficient law enforcement personnel (for example, there is no effective local police presence in the district) and a lack of awareness among returnees of their own rights and obligations.

The security situation for returnee communities in Abkhazia, Georgia is characterized by a widespread feeling of mutual mistrust, especially at the local level. Although no reports of systematic serious human rights violations or harassment of returnees by the *de facto* authorities have been received in recent years, the ordinary crime rate remains at concerning levels. Most criminal activities and incidents leading to abuse and intimidation of the local population in Gali are believed to have an economic background.

The number of returned population has also become a political issue, with both sides claiming various numbers. Although both sides agreed to a verification exercise to be carried out by UNHCR, this has not been realized, as it was made clear, especially in the July 2006 Working Group II session of the Coordinating Council, that the Georgian government further conditioned the implementation of the verification exercise with the presence of UN police and the opening of the UN Human Rights Sub-Office in Gali. Although the situation moved forward since then as

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<sup>37</sup> S/1994/583

<sup>38</sup> E/CN.4/2006/71/Add.7

UNOMIG has placed UN police in Gali<sup>39</sup> and strengthened its HROAG presence by fielding a Human Rights Officer on a permanent basis to Gali, generally there has been no progress as regards the practical realisation of the verification exercise.

The following agencies that are present in the region have a protection-related mandate: ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF and HROAG, the latter operating on a specific mandate provided for in the 1996 Security Council Resolution 1077. In addition, the OSCE is supporting HROAG office in Sukhumi with one staffer. The Gali-based local NGO Human Rights Centre is also supported by HROAG. The EC supports efforts that aim at awareness raising and promotion of human rights, for example through the NRC legal counselling project realised in cooperation with local NGOs.

Human Rights protection in Abkhazia, Georgia including for returnees, is complicated by the conflictual status of the region and the complex questions as to the nature of *de facto* legislation and the scope and the legal basis of human rights obligations of the *de facto* authorities. This also results in a lack of effective local and international remedy mechanisms. A consolidated approach by all international actors on these questions is essential for each organization to effectively fulfil its protection functions in the exercise of its specific mandate.

## **2. Special concerns**

Among the protection concerns in Abkhazia, Georgia, three main topics<sup>40</sup>, property rights, military conscription and individual documentation issues, can be highlighted and are analysed in the following sections. They are also stressed in the report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs.<sup>41</sup> These sectors are of particular urgency because of their major impact on the quality of life of the populations concerned and implications for the provision of assistance. They also highlight the necessity to continuously verify the claims and available remedies in order to establish a clear and accurate picture of the protection situation in the region of return.

### Property rights issues

Property rights issues and, in particular, the protection of the property rights of IDPs and refugees is high on the agenda of the Georgian government and subject to ongoing controversy between the parties to the conflict. The issue is complicated by the complexity of different forms of collective and individual property and user rights in the USSR and subsequent legal reform processes transforming these rights into new legal regimes, which needs further analysis.

In many domains, the *de facto* Abkhaz authorities base their *de facto* legislation on norms and regulations that prevailed prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union. Inherited from Soviet times are the vague tenancy rights offered by the government for land leases, and citizens' rights to housing and land rental for periods of 45-99 years. In strict terms of property issues and in the absence of specific Abkhaz laws, numerous verbal references are often made to the Soviet law used to justify the occupation of residences, stating that a property is free to be taken after been empty for a minimum of nine months. Additionally, the *de facto* Abkhaz legislation is frequently based on the model and adoption of more recent legislation of the Russian Federation. In this particular context of property rights issues, it is important to highlight the different practices concerning the property-related issues existing in return and non-return areas of Abkhazia, Georgia.

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<sup>39</sup> S/2007/439

<sup>40</sup> The fourth topic, the language of instruction in schools in Abkhazia, particularly in Gali region has been addressed in the section of this Report on Education.

<sup>41</sup> E/CN.4/2006/71/Add.7

While the general observation remains that the situation concerning the property issues, both technically and legally, has been more static in the non-return areas, such issues seem to be of equal concern region-wide, with some particular patterns attached to the status of the returnee population.

In May 2006, the Abkhaz *de facto* parliament took a new step by signing a decree “on regulating residence issues to ensure the right of Abkhaz citizens to residence.” By doing so, it seems that the discrimination against non-Abkhaz “citizens” became officially and legally possible in Abkhazia, Georgia. As an immediate result, the courts in the region declined new claims filed by owners who abandoned their properties due to forced displacement, by declaring such claims inadmissible and discontinuing ongoing proceedings. In addition, previous judgments ruling in favour of property restitution are no longer executed in the region. This issue was portrayed in the Secretary-General's report on 18 July 2007 that:<sup>42</sup>

*31.... [the United Nations Human Rights Office] It also continued to draw the attention of the de facto authorities to the need to discontinue the discriminatory practice of declining as inadmissible property rights claims filed by owners who had fled since 1992 as a result of forced displacement (see S/2007/182, para. 34). On a related issue, the Mission called the attention of the Abkhaz de facto parliament to the fact that draft legislation attempting to restrict the scope and rights of internally displaced persons would be in breach of international law and would undermine the fundamental right of return.*

During the last eight years, it is estimated that around 45,000<sup>43</sup> displaced persons have returned to their old residences in Gali District. Many of them are still not completely settled, moving between both sides of the ceasefire line driven by both or either security concerns or economic considerations. Since it is a relatively homogeneous and well structured community, no credible cases of illegal property occupation have been reported in the returnee areas. Local *de facto* authorities seem to rely on local community recognition and acknowledgment to officially approve the property rights and deliver an administrative statement of registration. There remains the problem of displaced persons who may seek to return to Gali District and who previously lived in rented flats (i.e. those who are usually referred to as “pre-war” subtenants), which are currently destroyed or occupied by other residents as is the case with some communal buildings in the town of Gali.

As far as living conditions and property issues for displaced persons from Abkhazia region in western Georgia are concerned, it has been observed that despite the willingness of the Georgian government to support practical solutions for relocation of such populations, the results in terms of the state's actions to improve their conditions are rather limited. Delay in the development of a general policy regarding privatization and laws governing it, coupled with the general lack of financial resources, tends to generate more problems than solutions for this population.

#### Military conscription issues

Until October 2007, a military conscription system was still in place and is directly linked to the operations of the armed forces of the *de facto* republic of Abkhazia. It is compulsory for all men registered in the region, between the ages of 18 and 27, for a period of two years, without recognition of the right to conscientious objection or the option to substitute service outside the armed forces. In this context, reservist duties apply up to the age of 60. In 2007, the *de facto* government of the region adopted a resolution on the “Organization of Measures for the Military Registration of Citizens” which pertains to the organization of an “effective system” of military registration of the population, provides for biannual conscription periods (fall and spring), and also

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<sup>42</sup> S/2007/439, para 31

<sup>43</sup> see footnote 2

contains exemption provisions for those who previously performed military service in the Georgian armed forces.

In fact, possible military conscription remains one of the major concerns of the population in Gali District and those willing to return as well as a serious concern expressed by Secretary-General in his January 2007 report as stated: “*The Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, urged the Abkhaz authorities to refrain from the practice of drafting Gali residents in circumstances which amounted to arbitrary conscription.*”

As it stands now, there is no systematic conscription of returnees, neither are there specific provisions in legislation/practice foreseen for this part of population. It appears to be a common practice among the young able-bodied males residing in the region to pay bribes in order to avoid conscription.

As far as the situation of the male returnees liable to military conscription is concerned, many of them opt not to register their return officially with the *de facto* authorities in order to avoid the draft. This results in their inability to receive documentation and limited movement only within their own community. This has an adverse effect not only on their livelihood (such as going to sell the agricultural products in Gali or Sukhumi markets) but also on encouraging inter-community confidence-building. These people rely on their livelihood and social services in Zugdidi, so when crossing the ceasefire line is prohibited, they are affected significantly.

Reports are received that men of military service age are heavily pressured and encouraged by both sides to join their respective armies, irrespective of the implications which result from this choice between alternatives. A special status for displaced persons of conscription age could be established in order to avoid discrimination against this population group based on such choices. Service performed under this engagement could relate to civil social support to the returnee community in Gali district, for example. In the mid-term, some of the UN agencies’ interventions may keep such a “social service” in lieu of military service in mind and further pursue understanding on such a scheme between the sides.

#### Individual documentation issue

This issue remains one of the most acute concerns in the area covered by the current study, particularly in view of the *de facto* republic's continued efforts to regularise the status of the population residing within its administrative borders by indirectly linking it to the concept of stand-alone citizenship. The process of active “passportization” of the population which started in the region few years ago is still underway and is regularly brought up at the meetings of executive apparatus and law-enforcement staff. According to recent statements by the *de facto* authorities reflected in media reports, the implementation of the passportization process is proceeding very slowly and should therefore be boosted by awareness campaigns among the population and conditioning access to social services and business opportunities for those who have not obtained Abkhaz passports.

In the given situation, for many residents of the region, the acquisition of Russian Federation passports is perceived to be the most feasible avenue to secure widely recognized documentation and legal status. The Abkhaz *de facto* authorities have on several occasions stated that more than 90% of the Abkhaz population holds a Russian passport, and *ipso facto*, are formally considered citizens of the Russian Federation. Since 2002, an estimated 150,000 people in the region have acquired the new passport, joining those 50,000 who already possessed Russian citizenship. In practical terms, the procedure remains quite simple to follow and in order to get this additional (Russian) citizenship, applicants have to provide the Russian MFA local representation in Sochi

with an Abkhaz passport, which is obtained by (at least formally) renouncing any previous citizenship.

The type of passport one is holding is crucial, as the local authorities attach great symbolic value to it. Holding the “wrong” document can be a cause of discrimination in services, customs and aid provided to the population, and in particular to returnees. It is also a particular concern for those who are born in Abkhazia, Georgia after 1993 and who are not registered anywhere else but in there. With regard to the returnee population of Gali District, it can be observed that so far only a few of the returnees have applied for and managed to obtain either a Russian or an Abkhaz passport or both. The overwhelming majority of them have the so-called Form 9 (temporary ID card issued by *de facto* Abkhaz authorities that replaces an old Soviet internal passport), Georgian internal ID cards or old Soviet passports. The latter is no longer officially recognized but in practice still used for crossing the border with Russian Federation.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

The issues highlighted above provide only a summary overview of protection-related concerns arising across Abkhazia, Georgia in general, as well as in the designated area of return in particular. It is important to note that most of these concerns do not apply exclusively to the returnee population but also affect the local population living in the designated areas of return.

However, although applicable to all people residing in the area, they still have particular relevance to returnees because they substantially affect the sustainability of their return. In general, irrespective of status of Abkhazia region and/or progress of peace talks, both sides must refrain from measures which could be detrimental to the rights of IDPs and returnees, or which stall progress in creating conditions for return and reintegration. Most importantly, both parties have a responsibility to respect and protect the rights of those living in the territories controlled by them, including returnees, as stated in the Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons signed by both parties in 1994.

In order to strengthen the protection, promotion and fulfilment of rights of both returnees and those willing to return to the region, the international community, including the UN agencies and International Non-governmental organizations (INGOs) directly engaged in delivery of humanitarian aid and implementation of development projects, as well as the donor states, may consider the following recommendations:

All international implementing and funding actors interested in the improvement of the situation in the region should elaborate clear, consolidated and to the extent possible common rights-based strategies wherein engagement in assistance activities is seen as a means to enhance protection. Such strategy development should also consider the overall impact of each actor in the support process, but also the specific impact of its own programme’s decisions on partner agencies’ projects. In that sense, it is crucial to incorporate in each programme an element of capacity-building on protection and human rights (awareness and monitoring) of displaced persons and returnees.

More efforts and links should be put in place to make the population aware of their rights in general, but also make the district and local authorities aware of the specific rights of displaced persons and returnees. Different actors, especially the ones working at the grassroots level, such as local NGOs or social services, should be kept informed of the (*de facto*) laws prevailing in their field of work, strengthening their capacity to address the related issues through aid programmes (material, technical and/or financial). Such reinforcement of their capacity should be considered through specific training and courses but also by the availability of official material (legal texts,

books, electronic database etc.) made accessible to everyone. Improved access to and clarity on the applicable *de facto* legislation, will also allow a more informed approach to address possible discriminatory elements or other incompatibilities with international human rights standards

Property issues in the region are complex to understand because of the variety of institutions dealing with property and possession, but also because of the multidimensional transition period affecting such transactions and the property transfer processes which are taking place. It is important to understand the general concept of property by studying more precisely the applicable laws and processes governing the transfer of property, maintenance of cadastres and accepted means of proving property rights.

The main problems of the property issue and its possible restitution in Abkhazia, Georgia are linked to the lack of recognition, from both sides, of a legal property registration body. Any potential land registry mapping should clarify the present situation, reflecting the level of privatization and ownership of the land, industrial estates and housing properties in an unbiased manner.

Partnership should be fostered between the HROAG Office, UNHCR and other UN agencies and international NGOs operational in the return area, as well as representatives of local civil society, with the aim of securing a better understanding and unhindered access of the population to the information concerning their rights. The establishment of the NGO Human Rights Centre in the return area is therefore expected to contribute positively to confidence-building towards the key protection agencies, by serving to facilitate the discussion and analysis of protection-related issues and a search for possible solutions.

## **I.7 Housing assistance**

### **1. General situation**

Housing in the region contains diverse types of dwellings due to climatic factors and traditional economic activities. For a long time, especially during the Soviet period, the northern part, from the Russian border to Sukhumi, was a major tourist centre, and it therefore saw the construction of buildings designed to cater to mass tourism for a clientele drawn exclusively from within the Soviet Union.

Conversely, the economic activities that developed in the southern part of Abkhazia region and parts of western Georgia were essentially agricultural in nature. The extent, availability and fertility of the land in this part of the region, which was partly a result of the artificial draining of the marshes that abound in the zones bordering the Caspian Sea, has contributed to the development of the region and the country as a whole.

As household-based production of citrus fruit and hazelnuts provided a substantial source of additional family income, alongside that derived from official paid work, many families were able to construct their own houses, thereby becoming owners of a dwelling whose standards far exceeded those that prevailed at the time in the Soviet-style blocks provided to ordinary citizens. These constructions date from the 1960-70s, becoming increasingly dense closer to urban boundaries, finally becoming village-style district centres in their own right.

The communal dwelling where people live in apartments can still be found only in the central zones of Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli, Gali as well as in larger towns in Abkhazia region (including Sukhumi) and in Georgia proper's Zugdidi (to a lesser degree). These apartments were originally intended for occupation by bureaucrats or specialist workers sent to the region to work on the construction of housing, infrastructure projects or in the mining industry, particularly in Tkvarcheli.

The predominance of private houses was also greatly facilitated by the construction during the 1960-70s of the massive hydroelectric dam and generating station on the Inguri River. The massive works undertaken at the time resulted in great inflows of construction materials which were then available at low cost to individuals seeking to build their own homes, as well as to local authorities keen to develop their housing, road and economic infrastructures to a level beyond that provided for by centralized state planning.

It was during this period that traditional wooden houses built on stilts, typical of marshy regions, gave way to two-story houses built primarily in concrete to typically Soviet standards. At the time the availability at very low cost of certain materials such as zinc and tin sheeting, which had been recently adopted as roofing materials, led to tiles being abandoned in favour of these new materials. This situation inevitably led to the loss of the traditional construction skills, the closure of local supply sources and, finally, the departure of skilled workers.

In addition, the lack of skilled engineers and labourers, the difficulties in finding, purchasing and transporting construction materials and the recurrent absence of funds, did not allow the *de facto* authorities to undertake substantial rehabilitations of major and vital infrastructures. As a result, erosion is already threatening numerous houses around the Sukhumi airport and natural disaster risks of flooding and landslides is increasing considerably, adding to the already meagre housing situation in that region.

It is therefore evident that humanitarian aid for the reconstruction of housing in the impoverished areas of southern part can occur only through setting up a realistic plan of action and a series of concerted joint measures on the part of the diverse actors and partners involved in assisting the rehabilitation of the houses. Working together with each other as part of a more holistic approach, alternative solutions that are durable and viable can be found, not only for reconstruction aid, but also for the economic support of a section of the region's population.

## **2. Specific situation in the conflict zone**

As far as the condition of housing is concerned, the most damaged are concentrated in the southern part, plus Sukhumi and, to a lesser extent, Gagra. This destruction occurred as a result of the various military movements and actions during the conflict. Traces of the first phase of the war, from 1992-93, are to be found primarily in Sukhumi and in a number of southern districts such as Gulripshi, Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli. The fighting damaged communal and administrative buildings as much as private houses.

The widespread destruction in the Gali region, which focused primarily on private village houses, occurred in 1998. Economic infrastructure, such as tea plantations, farm buildings, factories, energy plants, water and electrical supply systems, among others, were also heavily impacted by the fighting. The study carried out by DRC/ECHO in February 2006 stated that some 25% of all private houses in Gali District, i.e. around 4,500 dwellings, had been damaged to some degree: 77% of them suffering structural damage classified as very significant. Damage rates vary from 25 to 87% depending on the village. The combination of the direct military action, looting and arson dramatically increased the number of houses destroyed.

### *The special case of Gali and Zugdidi Districts*

Of the total displaced population of approximately 300,000 persons from Abkhazia, Georgia during the war, an estimated 51,000 now live in Zugdidi District, with some 45% of them in collective centres. These buildings were provided for their use free of charge in 1992-93 with the intention of offering short-term aid prior to return; today, they remain permanently occupied and are in extremely poor condition.

For the past fourteen years subsequent to their displacement, a significant number of displaced persons from Gali District have spontaneously returned – at least on a seasonal basis - to their homes and taken up their economic activity again, which often involves cultivating the family land plots. These returnees are undertaking some limited attempts to rehabilitate their houses by themselves with their very limited means, indicating improvements in their own revenues, and the security situation, as well as maximizing the availability of humanitarian assistance. There is currently a very small upturn in the number of houses being spontaneously and independently restored in Gali, primarily in the rural areas and in the majority of cases limited to consolidating such dwellings as they remain standing, often in an extremely temporary fashion. These activities are undertaken by a population who lives and works partially, and temporarily, in both Gali and Zugdidi Districts.

As the private houses of Gali are primarily viewed by many of the displaced as a place to stay, but not necessarily as principal residences, restoration works are often not carried out. The absence of construction materials accessible to the population in Gali makes building work both difficult and excessively expensive. Aid from the various regional authorities for targeting the rehabilitation of dwellings remains very infrequent, not to say nonexistent.

The case of the communal buildings in Gali District is also very representative of the current situation insofar as it highlights the large amount of damage inflicted by the war and the lack of

maintenance. It is estimated that around 40% of the communal housing throughout Gali district has been destroyed or damaged. More precisely, in Gali town, which did not witness heavy fighting, before the war there were 19 communal buildings offering 558 apartments. Currently there are only about 350 apartments available; they are in a relatively rudimentary condition but are available rent-free and are inhabited by returnees. Prior to the war, around 20% of Gali's population lived in apartments, with the remaining living in private houses. Their displacement to Zugdidi has meant that almost all of them now live in communal buildings. To keep things in perspective, most of the displaced persons who have returned to Gali District lived in private houses with their own gardening plots prior to the outbreak of war.

### The role of the authorities

The official data currently available from a diverse range of authorities on housing, the condition of the housing stock and housing rights in Abkhazia, Georgia are very limited, extremely sporadic and permanently contradictory. There does not appear to be any effective or trustworthy system in place for the collection and management of this type of information.

Furthermore, even when they are available, these data are only relevant for a short period of time, as no serious effort has been made to analyse the evolution of identified and recorded information over any set period of time. Therefore, the information gathered ten years ago about the level of damage to houses by acts of war or revenge within combat zones, for example, does not provide a true picture of the state of disrepair that prevails today after such a period of abandonment, deterioration caused by lack of maintenance, and subsequent looting. Nor indeed do they reveal what proportion of the restoration and rehabilitation work in conflict zones, particularly in Gali District, has been carried out over the past ten years by returnees themselves and what proportion by humanitarian bodies.

It must be also pointed out that the *de facto* local authorities, despite having enthusiastically welcomed the various rehabilitation projects put forward by numerous humanitarian agencies over the past ten years, are now expressing considerable reservations about the quantity and especially the quality of the aid provided in the region. Indeed, during the course of the Review mission, the *de facto* government has mentioned the possibility of establishing an oversight commission to determine the quality, durability and feasibility of housing aid projects set up by humanitarian bodies.

It would be wrong to say that housing conditions for displaced persons in and around Zugdidi are any more stable. The local governmental structures struggle to provide any assistance for the renovation of most of the collective centres, the majority of which are currently in a lamentable state. The privatization process which is now impacting these buildings has led to some cases of evictions in disregard of the applicable legal safeguards and compensation mechanisms foreseen under Georgian IDP legislation. This may lead to results which are in contrast to the spirit of the State Strategy for Internal Displaced Persons – Persecuted. Self-privatization of collective centres, only foreseen for the so called third category of state-owned buildings, i.e. buildings which are neither of strategic value for the government nor attractive for investors, may also put pressure on displaced persons, sometimes impelling them to purchase their apartments at an elevated price.

Furthermore, if the state becomes the owner of certain collective centres used to house displaced persons, this would entail the occupants becoming obliged to pay rent, with the very real risk that this small amount of money will be the only source of financing reinvested for the rehabilitation of these buildings. An alternative solution considered as a way of offsetting these evictions is the provision of financial compensation, often minimal, or the re-housing of displaced persons. This solution, which would appear to be purely transitional, could lead to the destabilization of some of

these people who would, in the medium term, find themselves in the street, and could even incite some families to attempt to return to Gali District without any guarantee for their safety. The ones not authorized to return could find themselves in the most impoverished situation. A great many legal problems remain unresolved, particularly in terms of taxation on the acquisition of multiple property, which may well be the case for many of the displaced persons who will get a property in the area of displacement and who will at the same time declare ownership of a home in Abkhazia, Georgia through the “My House” project, for example.

Legal questions relating to housing properties have not yet been resolved by mutual agreement between the antagonist parties. The same applies to questions on ownership, on the return of assets and compensation for loss of goods. No consensus on these questions has yet been reached or even accurately discussed between the sides of the conflict. In the absence of clear and precise guidelines and a common legal framework from the parties to conflict, and despite a tacit understanding between local authorities and returnees on the reacquisition of properties, particularly in Gali, the situation is at a complete standstill until a new round of negotiations begins and the peace process progresses further.

#### *The role of international humanitarian organizations*

Over the last few years various NGOs have run a series of programmes for the partial rehabilitation of private houses and apartment buildings in Abkhazia, Georgia. Although these programmes are far from sufficient to fully cover all the needs for restoring housing damaged directly or indirectly by fighting, the organizations have been judicious in targeting the region’s most vulnerable populations. With access to only insufficient material and financial resources, they have nevertheless succeeded in substantially improving the quality of life of a number of their beneficiaries.

Over the last nine years the international NGO Premiere Urgence has undertaken the case-by-case restoration of private houses of extremely vulnerable people (around one hundred apartments or houses per year) as well as the roofs of apartment buildings (around fifteen per year) mainly in the Sukhumi, Gulripshi, Tkvarcheli, Gudauta (Novyy Afon) and Ochamchire Districts. It has focused in particular on the town of Sukhumi where still a significant number of people are in need. It is worth noting that the Sukhumi town council financed 25-30% of the cost of restoring apartment building roofs.

Over the last two years the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has undertaken to assist 220 families in lower Gali District with the partial and provisional rehabilitation of their housing. The options the DRC has chosen are based on delivering materials to beneficiaries (for an amount equivalent to approximately 1,500 euros). These beneficiaries will build their housing units combining their practical knowledge of construction and mobilizing their community to help with the work.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has focused its activities on restoring private houses, mainly in the village of Okumi, where around 200 houses received aid for the total renovation of their roofs over the last three years. The option chosen for this initiative is based on a complete restoration of the main roof in order to provide long-lasting protection for the walls of the original building. The materials required for each repair project having been previously researched, the organization takes charge of purchasing and delivering the materials and assisting in the construction of each operation, whilst insisting on the importance of the community mobilization that is essential to their implementation. These initial stages allow beneficiaries to gradually — in different stages and according to families’ different incomes — rehabilitate different parts of their house, which is thus partially protected.

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

In the very specific context of Abkhazia, Georgia, immured for so long in a context of instability that impacts both security and the economy, it appears very difficult to provide accurate and one-off recommendations that, in isolation, address the possibilities of resolving a specific problem of housing. The complexity of the situation calls for solutions that overlap and reinforce each other in rebuilding the delicate socioeconomic structure that is currently practically nonexistent. These proposals therefore highlight the problems as much as the potential solutions for overcoming them:

Prioritizing Gali District, there is a need to carry out an in-depth study on the housing situation faced by and expecting returnees which forms an integral component of analyzing whether the return is possible in safety and dignity. Such research should look at all possible aspects of the issue, including at the right to property, the extent of damage to property, and the owners' degree of vulnerability and desire to move back to the area parallel with the minimum conditions required for return (e.g. access to schools for children, health and social assistance service). This cross-cutting study would be useful in clarifying the priorities for reconstruction assistance.

In this context, the final data produced by the project called "My House", for registering property in the region owned by displaced persons in Georgia proper could serve as the basis, following an agreement between the parties concerned, for verification on the ground of the recorded data.

After a feasibility study, it would be useful to develop or re-launch, locally and on a small-scale, production activities providing building materials such as limestone, cement, concrete blocks and bricks. This sort of local production, which could be termed mini-enterprises, over and above the generation of income for a number of beneficiaries, could offer building materials at competitive prices whilst making them accessible to a far wider audience.

There is a need for research into the possibilities of developing alternative building materials (fibrocement tiles, roof framing systems, limestone-cement mortar, hazelnut bark insulating plywood, etc.) in order to minimize dependence on the production and supply of standard materials whilst reducing construction or rehabilitation costs. If the feasibility and reliability of the materials is judged to be satisfactory, assistance could be provided in setting up production units for these new materials which could also generate long-term income for the chosen beneficiaries;

There should be more focus on the rehabilitation of communal and public buildings, as well as public infrastructure in the three districts focused on in this review. Services, such as access to water and sewage should be prioritized. Most of these dilapidated communal buildings are currently inhabited by returnees who live in miserably overcrowded conditions.

It is essential to set up mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the various actors and international partners in housing reconstruction, primarily in Gali District. These collaborative tools could encourage a more holistic approach and more efficient management of assistance programmes. This type of inter-agency collaboration could tackle subjects such as consultation on identifying beneficiaries, standardization of building norms and minimum standards as applicable to the houses to be restored, degrees and types of potential community mobilization for private and communal reconstructions, regional coordination of aid actions, and traditional or alternative implementation solutions.

## **I.8 Confidence-building**

### **1. Overview**

In humanitarian assistance, confidence-building is often an abstract notion characterized as being a necessary yet secondary component, subsidiary to a primary objective. In the case of assistance provided in Abkhazia, Georgia, confidence-building was often cited as being the desired outcome of an assistance project, without actually being the ultimate or the primary justification. This is probably related to the fact that for the past ten years, emergency has been the prevailing operational mode for humanitarian interventions.

Only partial progress has been made because of resumptions of armed conflict, and limitations and stagnation in the conflict resolution process which prevented any attempts to make a concerted revision of the type of assistance offered. Nonetheless, since emergency, in the life-saving sense, is no longer relevant to a large majority of the population in the region, one may currently witness a considerable scaling down of activities of some specialist emergency agencies, such as the ICRC and MSF.

This new factor has led to the arrival of other new agencies, especially around Gali District, that offer more contrasting approaches to the types of assistance to be rendered. At the same time, the lack of prospects for reviving political negotiations at the official level renews interest in the concept of confidence-building. Concepts related to confidence-building are begun to be seen as tools in their own right, able to contribute actively to advancing the peace process and ultimately, the resolution of the conflict.

However, in considering decreased suspicion between protagonists as equating to nascent confidence, it is often forgotten that confidence building can be applied to other areas of research, such as those brought to light by this Review, as presented below.

#### *Self-confidence building*

The unpredictable political and security situation which has prevailed for the past 10 years in Abkhazia, Georgia, especially in the so-called conflict zone (i.e. Gali District) created in the population a passive attitude, with increased dependency on humanitarian aid and very few proactive initiatives. Resignation, depression and despondent attitudes are mixed with a strong sense of ethnic identity and pride attached to the practice of specific cultural traditions, to which there is strong social pressure to conform. To motivate, mobilize and reinforce this population trapped in a pessimistic post-war situation and an on-going post-Soviet moroseness is definitely a challenge.

The absence of a resolution to the conflict at the political level and the significant gaps in the welfare system also highlight the need to focus on strengthening existing community structures amongst this population in order to (re)activate community-based coping mechanisms.

In order to strengthen these bonds, UN agencies (particularly UNHCR) have developed a series of projects allowing various actors to come together around sets of values that form the basis of the former social system and of their own culture. Most of the projects have been conceived with a main focus on community mobilization, sustainability and confidence-building, in order for the population to begin to rely on their capacity to achieve their own goals without permanently depending and relying on assistance. Some of the main objectives to be considered, especially at the grass-roots level of actions, were restoring confidence in the future viability of a community,

renewing the sense of solidarity by taking care of the most vulnerable persons among them, and diversifying the actions and sectors of assistance in order to improve social welfare prospects.

Furthermore, there is a real need to develop psychological and social support programmes for the most vulnerable populations, notably children, single women and the elderly. Although some psychological assistance programmes for displaced persons have been launched by local NGOs, notably in Zugdidi, and although northern part of Abkhazia region can claim a few loosely-managed and woefully-funded institutions for the care of mentally impaired children, the fact remains that this region is an absolute desert as far as psychosocial assistance is concerned. As well as an absence of specialist institutions, there is also, and most importantly, the absence of any network of assistants, social workers, teachers and therapists. There are no branches of the authorities that provide training for these professions, and more critically still, there is a total absence of any network or structure to create a bridge between the most deprived section of the population and the society in which this group survives.

#### Intercommunity confidence-building

The Caucasus region is an extraordinary mosaic of ethnicities and cultures. Within the confines of a relatively small area, dozens of ethnic groups lay claim to histories and identities that are sometimes shared, but whose roots are essentially profoundly independent.

The far-reaching competition generated by current economic developments and future prospects for wealth generation in these regions serve to reinforce antagonisms that are but little appeased by calls for tolerance, understanding and respect for others. Nevertheless, powerful underlying interethnic cultural links persist, as witnessed by the respect all groups show for funerals, be they held for a family member or for those of an opposing ethnic group.

It is clear that the reasons behind the conflict are influenced by multiple parameters, including the obvious economic antagonisms, ancient territorial rivalries, and political disputes. If an understanding of the competing strengths and interests in a conflict can serve in the quest for a mixed solution, it must not be forgotten that such antagonisms are often built around opposing lifestyles, beliefs and anxieties.

The ability to understand and accept differences, especially those capable of generating shared and adapted benefits that are unattainable independently, might be one approach to the resolution of certain conflicts.

It is easy to imagine the economic field as a fertile ground for the development of intercommunity links. Despite the fact that, at present, official links between the two parties are minimal, local arrangements do nonetheless exist on the ground that generate revenue for the benefit of both parties. The resurgence of intercommunity links via economic factors to bind these two regions closer together might also be taken into consideration in the design of assistance projects, for the greater mutual benefit of both parties.

#### Confidence building at the political level

Once hostilities had ended, a whole series of institutional mechanisms were set up at the initiative of the United Nations Secretary General. Their goal was to achieve significant progress in the peace process between the Abkhaz and Georgians. Amongst the different tools used to reconcile the conflicting parties, the creation of a coordinating council of the Georgian and Abkhaz sides, initiated by the UN and presided over for the first time in 1997 by the special representative of the UN secretary-general, was the source of much hope. The council consisted of mixed working groups; and brought together the sides in order to resolve problems relating to the return of

displaced persons and refugees, tackling both socioeconomic and security issues. A Joint Fact Finding Group was set up to investigate security problems. Weekly meetings to deal with practical security problems, attended by UNOMIG observers, CIS peacekeepers and the two conflicting parties.

Dialogue and actions aimed at reconciliation have been at a standstill since July 2006. At all the various levels, institutional, political and diplomatic, activities that attempt to bring the two sides together have been reduced to their most basic form. Confidence-building and respect for the opposing parties have also been affected by this.

#### *Role of UN and partner organizations*

The UN, its agencies and NGOs, both international and local, play an essential role in the rebuilding of confidence between the conflicting parties. The effective exercise of their respective mandates and confidence building roles in turn requires the confidence of all parties to the conflict as well as of all of the effected population, whether displaced or not, in the humanitarian and impartial approach. Such confidence is to be anchored in a balanced approach to assistance which allows agencies to, on the one hand, consider each party with its specific problems and aid needs and, on the other hand, justify the intervention of certain agencies in particular regions and towards more specific populations.

This role is also based on the complementarity built up between each UN agency and with the NGOs' partners. Ideally this collaboration should focus on more functional cooperation in the field by establishing synergies capable of stimulating the aid process whilst maximizing available funds. A number of existing projects, such as the social centres developed by UNHCR and World Vision, could provide other UN agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF and WFP with access to the very heart of villages and populations receiving assistance so that they can intervene faster, more effectively and more constructively. Rather than working in isolation on a case-by-case basis, often with insufficient resources, this type of cooperation could become part of a more global and concerted approach providing an example, if not a model, of successful collaborative work.

It is important to accompany the existing and future assistance projects that aim at community mobilization with an educational programme which would highlight or review themes linked to conflict resolution, the restoration of intercommunity confidence and the construction of the peace process. For such projects to work, it is vital to strengthen the skills of teachers, instructors and local NGOs, since their access to and understanding of the population receiving assistance is significant. These local actors could transcribe and amplify local initiatives that encourage confidence building and the positive development of civil society and transfer those initiatives to local governmental structures so they can become institutionalized.

## **2. Conclusions and recommendations**

Support to the region is very much characterized by short-term inputs and support of limited size, scope and duration, based on (sometimes repeated) needs assessments and feasibility studies. This greatly hinders the continuity, follow-through and systematic assessment of results and impact. Turnover of staff in international organizations in the field is high, hampering continuity and resulting in short institutional memory and the need to re-establish information-sharing and coordination mechanisms at regular intervals. Greater continuity of support and longer funding cycles for implementing partners are needed.

There is a need to construct and develop a social and psychological referral system that will take into account problems linked to the traumatic displacement of populations and their uncertain return. For this system to be constructed, it is essential to set up programmes providing specific

training to the future social workers, training that should also benefit teachers, instructors and NGO actors. The training should strengthen the capacity for social interventions among the most vulnerable members of society whilst promoting the development of local initiatives, specificities, production and skills.

It would be useful to design programmes and projects that bring opposing communities together in shared activities that generate benefits, and subsequent enrichment, for both parties. This form of inter-community link might be established by pooling building works across several villages, districts or regions, helping thereby to tie them together through economic, cultural or social activities. In order to organize such projects, community mobilization and sustainability should be kept in mind at all stages of the conception and implementation.

It would also appear to be important to design a project providing general information about the activities of the different UN agencies and various humanitarian bodies, both in terms of their achievements and their future projects. This public-facing information project could defuse confusion, false hopes and disillusionment in a number of areas, factors that lead to resentment towards international actors — as has already occurred on occasion.

## **PART II**

### **Review of socioeconomic needs in Abkhazia, Georgia - general conclusions and recommendations**

The Review of Socioeconomic Needs mission in Abkhazia, Georgia was conducted in the context a complete stalemate of the political process for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Abkhazia region. At the same time, and observing the still existing needs on the ground, assistance and other activities at the grass-roots level carried out by the UN agencies and its partners remain essential tools to help improve living conditions and build confidence between communities.

The thematic analysis of this report clearly indicates that a need for continuous intervention in Abkhazia, Georgia still exists, one which will address both the immediate humanitarian needs and create an environment conducive to recovery and development. The rationale for such intervention is contained in observation within the thematic analysis part of this report, stating that "whilst the rest of Georgia and neighbouring states have moved ahead during the post war era, conditions in practically all spheres in the region have deteriorated sharply and have yet to fully recover". As a result, whilst the region can be said to be "frozen" in a political sense, in relative terms the picture in the entire socioeconomic sphere is of significant and growing decline. As this process carries on, the competitive gap facing the region will continue to widen and the investment required to 'catch up' will become greater.

When working in conflict areas in a situation such as Abkhazia, Georgia where there still does not seem to be a solution in sight and where the political dialogue of the peace process has completely stalled, the premises underlying any humanitarian, rehabilitation and development work need to be made explicit. In this context and taking into account the conclusions and recommendations provided in the previous sections of this report (thematic analysis) some key guiding principles can be identified in relation to the UN's future work in the region:

- Strict maintenance of the neutral character of assistance;
- Understand the conflict, assess the risks and apply conflict-sensitive approaches guided by the best interest of populations of concern, with special attention paid to the most vulnerable, including women and children;
- Taking a human rights-based approach to assistance, keeping in mind perspectives on gender equality, age, vulnerability and diversity;
- Promote informal dialogue between the different sides by creating programme linkages, networks, staffing and targeting a mix of beneficiaries, to help create understanding between parties in the conflict;
- Identify and promote good practices; where possible (re-)build systems and capacity as well as families and local communities and focus on cultural continuity;
- Work within the longer term aims of the UN in Georgia to contribute to confidence building, improvement of the living conditions of the affected communities and the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

#### **Information management and coordination**

Different organizations have collected data and information in the three priority districts and continue to do so. The 2004 feasibility report already pointed out the risk that existing information could be lost and the need to establish a more permanent database at the district level to which data

could be added, with UNOMIG as a central actor that could store data and provide linkage to a mapping system for use by different actors.

At the moment a relatively informal aid coordination mechanism would be possible in Gali and, to a degree, in Sukhumi because of the small number of actors and implementers, their linkages and proximity. If and when more actors enter the field, more structured mechanisms to guarantee coordination and safety will need to be established.

This report has proven that reliable information is hard to get in the region, though it is essentially needed in order to develop evidence-based development programmes and make effective resource allocation decisions. In this context more concerted efforts by the key actors in the region, including UN agencies, should aim for an agreement and commitment to continued data and information collection and sharing within the framework of an information management system. This agreement should address issues such as what data is available and what to collect/update, by whom and how; where and by whom the data will be maintained and kept, how it will be managed, and who can access and use what information. Where possible and relevant, aid activities should include assisting local authorities to improve their capacity to collect and analyse data to improve the availability of reliable statistics and information.

## **Annex 1 – Generic Terms of Reference for the Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia**

### **UN Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia Terms of Reference Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia**

#### **Background**

The conflict, which took place in the Georgian region of Abkhazia between 1992-1993 resulted in several thousand deaths and the displacement of over 250 000 citizens.<sup>1</sup> The armed hostilities caused deprivation and devastation in the conflict as well as adjacent areas. In 2004 a UNDP-Led Feasibility Mission investigated the needs of Gali, Ochamchira, and Tkvarcheli districts in Abkhazia, Georgia.<sup>2</sup> According to this study, in the fifteen years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, “the GDP has fallen in the region by 80-90%, unemployment [...] has reached] around 95% and per capita incomes have decreased by 90%.”<sup>3</sup>

Different UN agencies have been active in Abkhazia, Georgia since the ceasefire agreement has been reached.<sup>4</sup> Their work experience confirms that the needs in the conflict affected region are enormous. To this end, the UN Country Team (UNCT) has decided to direct more of its efforts and resources to Abkhazia, Georgia through a comprehensive joint program that will benefit from the UN agencies’ diverse mandates, and potential to combine humanitarian as well as development work. In this regard the UNCT agreed to commission a review of socio-economic needs in Abkhazia, Georgia<sup>5</sup> that will provide tangible recommendations for the development of the joint program.

In this light, the primary goals of this initiative are to:

- a) Review on-going activities of the UN agencies and other partners in Abkhazia, Georgia and identify existing gaps in terms of unmet needs; During this review, particular attention should be paid to the impact of assistance on confidence building;
- b) Update and collect data in line with the scope of the Review outlined below in this TOR on Gali, Ochamchire, Tkvarcheli in a first phase and possibly other regions of Abkhazia, Georgia later;
- c) Provide recommendations for the development of a comprehensive UNCT Joint Programme encompassing multi-sector rehabilitation, humanitarian as well as development initiatives. Keeping in mind the UN agencies’ mandate the recommendations should identify entry points for the joint work. The Joint Programme

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<sup>1</sup> “More than 250, 000 ethnic Georgians were uprooted in the 1992-1993 Abkhazia war and fled into [other parts of] Georgia. Thousands of Russians, Greeks, Armenians and Jews also left the country.” Ray Wilkinson, Refugees Magazine Issue 117 (IDPs) - A particularly complex problem, UNHCR, 1999, available on-line at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3b83e713b.html>> last visit June 7, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, *Report of UNDP-Led Feasibility Mission to Gali District and Adjacent Areas of Abkhazia, Georgia*, April 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>4</sup> The Georgian and Abkhaz sides agreed on a ceasefire, the separation of forces, and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States Peace Keeping Force in 1994 under the Moscow Agreement.

<sup>5</sup> Please see the generic TOR of the UNCT Facilitated Review of Socio Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia

## **Annex 1 – Generic Terms of Reference for the Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia**

should allow the UNCT to focus on initiatives that build, strengthen, and complement to the on-going humanitarian and development activities in the region as well as address new areas to cover the identified gaps.

The review should be guided by the understanding that the UN cooperation in Abkhazia, Georgia aims to contribute to confidence building, improvement of the living conditions of the affected communities and the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

### **Scope and Organization of the Review**

Due to the lack and fragmented nature of data on the socio-economic needs in the region it will be highly informative for the UN if the review also identifies the data gaps and provides recommendations for addressing them.

The review will be carried out by a team of experts recruited by different UN agencies in consultation with the UNCT. The RC on behalf of the UNCT will identify an international donor organization that will partner with the UNCT on this initiative. UNDP will recruit an expert on micro and small enterprise needs in the region; FAO and WFP will recruit two experts to look at food security, agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure of the region; UNICEF supported expert will work on health, education and social protection needs; UNHCR expert on protection, housing and confidence-building issues;

In line with this generic TOR the specific terms of references will be elaborated for each of the experts. Other UNCT member agencies as well as the participating international organization will be provided with the opportunity to contribute to the elaboration of the expert-specific TORs.

The Team will work under direct supervision of the RC and the overall supervision of the UNCT and in consultation with the authorities, civil society, and donor community. The UNICEF Emergency Officer and the RC Office will manage, coordinate and facilitate the review.

### **Duration, Dates and Stages of the Assignment:**

The Review should be completed in a minimum of 25 work days during a two-month period. The 25 days will include work in the field and at the experts/consultants' duty stations, following the outline as presented below:

1. Desk review of existing documents in order to identify relevant data/information gaps to be filled in. The UNICEF Emergency Officer and the RC office will provide the Team with an electronic package of reading materials for the desk review (a minimum of 4 days – end of August or beginning of September, 2007);
2. The Team develops methodology which will guide the review. The methodology should allow for clear division of tasks and responsibilities between the Team members. The draft methodology should be elaborated by the consultants on-line from their duty stations (a minimum of 2 days - end of August or beginning of September, 2007);

## **Annex 1 – Generic Terms of Reference for the Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia**

3. The initial meeting of the Team with the UNCT in Tbilisi held (September 14). At this meeting the Team finalizes the methodology, and agrees the format of the report (a minimum of 4 days – starting work on 12 September including 15 September);
4. The activities envisioned by this and consultant/expert specific terms of references undertaken in Abkhazia, Georgia. The UNICEF Emergency Officer as well as focal points from agencies involved in the Review will be helping in organization of activities envisioned by the final methodology (a minimum of 9 days – starting work on 17 September including 25 September);
5. The feedback/reflection meeting of the Team with the UNCT held (27 September);
6. The final Review report produced.

### **Methodological Considerations**

Desk research is the first stage of the review. There exist a number of researches/assessments about Abkhazia, Georgia (see Annex #1) that will be provided to the Team. The desk research stage should inform the elaboration of the common research methodology as well as the identification of the data gaps.

Based on this TOR and the findings of the desk research, the Team will be requested to elaborate a detailed methodology for the review. Due to time and other circumstantial constraints the methodology should encompass primarily qualitative methods (in-depth and subject-based interviews, focus-group discussions, etc.). Human Rights Based Approach, with special focus on women's and children's rights, should guide the elaboration of the methodology.

The methodology will describe ways of ensuring participation of both rights holders and duty bearers in undertaking the review. Age, gender and diversity must be taken into consideration and the data collected should also be disaggregated accordingly, as much as possible.

## Annex 1 – Generic Terms of Reference for the Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia

### Annex #1

#### Available Materials on Abkhazia, Georgia

1. Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, *Report of UNDP-led Feasibility Mission to Gali District and Adjacent Areas of Abkhazia*, Georgia, April 2004;
2. International Crisis Group, *Abkhazia Today*, Europe Report N°176 – 15, September 2006;
3. International Crisis Group, *Abkhazia: Ways Forwards*, Europe Report N°179 – 18 January 2007;
4. Wilkinson, Ray Refugees Magazine Issue 117 (IDPs), *A particularly complex problem*, UNHCR, 1999, available on-line at: <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3b83e713b.html>;
5. DRC/ECHO, *Housing Assessment Gali District*, 2006;
6. Stoebel, Isabelle, *Report on the feasibility study for the rehabilitation of the public health sector on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict Zone – EC rehabilitation / TACIS Action Plan*, 2004,;
7. Kvartheliya, Madlena et al., *Understanding Women's Rights over Their Bodies – Domestic Violence and Reproductive Health in Abkhazia*, UNIFEM, 2006;
8. *Abkhaz School Assessment*, EC/UNICEF/UNDP, 2006;
9. *Abkhaz School Survey*, UNICEF, school year 2005-2006;
10. *Basic statistics on 32 schools in Gali*, NRC, 2007;
11. The Ministry of Economy of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Department of Statistics, *Displaced Population and Structures of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, 1993-2005*, Statistical Publication, Tbilisi 2006;
12. Saltmarshe, Douglas, *An Evaluation of The UNV Abkhazia Programme 1996 – 2004*, available on line at: <http://www.undp.org.ge/news/UNVEVALREP.pdf>;
13. Wilson, Tamsin, *Assessment Of Opportunities For Developing A Microfinance Project In Abkhazia*, available on-line at: <http://www.undp.org.ge/news/MFFinalRep.pdf>;
14. Atabaev, Anvar, *Survey on Drinking Water Supply Issues in Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli Districts of Abkhazia, Georgia*, available on-line at: <http://www.undp.org.ge/news/watrep.pdf> >;
15. Wooster, Paul, *The Agricultural Sector In Ochamchira, Tkvarcheli And Gali, Abkhazia, Georgia*, available on-line at: <http://www.undp.org.ge/news/agricabh.pdf>;
16. UNDP, *Abkhazia Briefing Note January 2005*, available on-line at: <http://www.undp.org.ge/news/UNDPBriefNoteAbkhaziaJan2005.pdf>;
17. WFP/WVI Assessment of Schools in Gali, Ochamchira, Tkvarcheli, Gulripshi, Sukhumi Districts (June 2006);
18. G. Loghzhaniidze and Z. Benidze, HDC/NRC, Tbilisi, 2007. *Assessment of prevailing health problems, accessibility to and quality of medical services for IDPs living in collective centers and private accommodations in Georgia*,
19. International Displacement Monitoring Centre, IDMC, September 2006. *Georgia: IDPs' living conditions remain miserable, as national strategy is being developed*
20. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, United Nations, New York, 1998.

## **Annex 1 – Generic Terms of Reference for the Review of Socio-Economic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia**

21. United Nations Resident Coordinator's Humanitarian Affairs Team, November 2006, *Humanitarian Situation and Transition to Development, Georgia, Progress Report 2006*
22. Zoidze, A. and Djibuti, M. for New Approach to IDP Assistance, Tbilisi, 2004. *IDP Health Profile Review in Georgia*,
23. WHO/UNICEF, July 2006. *Immunization Programme Management Review, Abkhazia*
24. UNICEF/NRC, Scarborough, G, Tavartkiladze, T. and Arganashvili, A., October 2006. *Rapid Assessment on the Protection and Livelihoods situation of Internally Displaced Children and Youth Living in Collective Centers in the Republic of Georgia*,
25. Walter Kalin, Mission to Georgia (21-24 December 2005), March 2006. *Report of the Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons*
26. United Nations, Security Council, 18 July 2007 *Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia*,
27. Shrestha, J.M. for UNICEF, February 2007 *Report of Training of Physicians and Nurses on Immunization in Practice, 28 November – 29 December 2006, Abkhazia*,
28. Government of Georgia, 2 February 2007. *State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted*.
29. *UN Joint Support Plan to HIV/AIDS National Response Plan, Georgia, 2007-2008 (draft)*. United Nations Joint Programme. UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS Georgia. Tbilisi, October 2006
30. *US State Department 2006 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Georgia*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, March 6, 2007, available on-line at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78813.htm>
31. UNICEF, Irene Pietersen , Tbilisi, Georgia 2007, *Internally Displaced Children and Vulnerable Children in Conflict Areas* (still in a draft form, available as of September 2007)
32. United Nations Country Team in Georgia (UNCT), March 2005, *United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)*

## **Annex 2 - Review Research Team Members**

The Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia was carried out by a research team supported by different UN agencies. The members of the Research Team are listed as follows:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – economic issues and micro and small enterprise;

**Mr. Jonathan Brooks**, Practice Leader Poverty Reduction and Economic Development

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) – food security, agriculture production and agricultural infrastructure;

**Mr. Pascal Bernardoni**, Consultant (FAO)

**Mr. Asif Niazi**, Regional Assessment Officer (WFP)

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) - health, education, social protection and child protection;

**Ms. Irene Pietersen**, Consultant

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – protection, housing and confidence-building.

**Mr. Louis Rovira**, Research and Evaluation Officer

In line with the Generic TOR of the Review, specific terms of references have been developed for each of the experts engaged by the UN agencies participating in the review. The UNICEF Emergency Officer and the RC Office managed, coordinated and facilitated the review.

Review coordination and management

**Mr. Dragan Markovic**, Emergency Officer, UNICEF (Final Review Report Editor)

**Ms. Tamar Sabedashvili**, UN Coordination Analyst, Office of the UN Resident Coordinator

### Annex 3: 2006 Medical Demography Data for Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire Districts

#	Data	Gali			Tkvarcheli			Ochamchira		
1.	Overall population size	29,222			14,654			25,161		
2.	Number of the urban population	6,583 (22.5%)			4,108 (28%)			4,525 (18%)		
3.	Number of the rural population	22,639 (77.5%)			10,546 (72%)			20,636 (82%)		
4.	Population structure by -	4,398 (15%)	1,730 (6%)	23,135 (79%)	2,310 (16%)	1,015 (7%)	11,452 (77%)	4,704 (19%)	1,890 (7.5%)	18,567 (73.5%)
	- age(<4 yrs, 15-19 yrs, > 20 yrs)	14,332 male (49%)			7,063 male (48%)			11,870 male (47%)		
	- sex (male/female)	14,955 female (51%)			7,714 female (52%)			12,759 female (50%)		
5.	Density of population	56			27			14		
6.	Urbanization	-			-			-		
7.	Movement of population (migration)	-			-			-		
8.	Natural dynamics of population:	60			97			185		
	- birth-rate - mortality-rate	104			83			94		
9.	Life expectancy (men and women)	-			-			-		
10	Number of doctors/nurses in the In-patient and Out-patient Department	28 doctors and 41 nurses			8 doctors and 63 nurses			5 doctors and 26 nurses		
11	Number of patient beds in the hospital	75			150			45		
12	Number of used beds in the hospital	1,998			7,962			1,408		
13	Medical aid appealability	10,283			2,800			17,818		
14	Primary sickness rate	-			36			-		
15	Recurring sickness rate	-			530			-		
16		48			5			15		

	Cardiovascular diseases: Chronic heart failure	213	8	770
	- Hypertension	8		4
	- Angina pectoris	34	10	203
	- Myocardial infarction			
17	Asthma	83	20	140
18	Pneumonia	66	15	38
19	Upper airways diseases	54	22	48
20	Gastrointestinal diseases:			
	- Gastritis	30		250
	- Stomach ulcer	41		120
	- Duodenal ulcer		23	
21	Chronic hepatitis	N/A	N/A	137
22	Intestinal helminthes infestation	N/A	40	N/A
23	Acute infectious diseases	124	48	362
24	Urinary tract infection	4	28	405
25	Gynecological disorders	30	4	30
26	Anemia	-	20	8
27	Rheumatic diseases	35	23	288
28	Allergic diseases	6	23	107
	Endocrine diseases:			
		161	8	

29	- Diabetes mellitus	161	8	81
	- Goitre	10	20	29
	- Thyrotoxicosis			
	- Thyreoid deficiency			
30	Malignant neoplasms	35	75	12
31	Tuberculosis	22	5	18
32	Neuropsychic diseases	87	10	81
33	HIV/AIDS	N/A	2	N/A
34	STD	N/A	N/A	N/A
35	Drug addicts	N/A	N/A	N/A
36	Alcoholics	N/A	N/A	N/A
37	Abortion	48	56	30
38	Miscarriage	1	12	11
39	Stillbirths	0	2	0
40	Trauma	207	N/A	1,315
41	Major causes of adult death: - aged adults	Cardiovascular diseases	Cardiovascular diseases, neoplasmes	Cardiovascular diseases
	- young adults	Trauma	Trauma, AIDS, Hepatitis C	Trauma
42	Child mortality <sup>1</sup>	1	2	1
43	Infant mortality <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0
44	Perinatal mortality <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0

45	Maternal mortality	0	0	0
46	The leading causes of child mortality	Acute infections	Acute infections	Acute infections
47	The leading causes of infant mortality	-	infections	-
48	The leading causes of perinatal mortality	-	asphyxia	-
49	Number of the medical staff received some medical courses during last 3 years	2	0	1
50	Number of staff was transferred from this facility in the past year	0	0	0
51	Number of staff left this facility for reasons dismissal or retirement in the past year	1	1	0
52	Number of new staff joined in the past year	2	0	0
53	Number of patients receive free of charge drugs	420	657	420
54	Number of Doctor Ambulatories	5	1	3
55	Number of FAPs	3	0	16
56	Number of small private clinics	0	0	0
57	IEC Materials availability in the facility	N/A	-	Materials about cardiovascular diseases

1. Child mortality includes deaths within the first five years
2. Infant mortality is the death of infants in the first year of life
3. The perinatal mortality is the sum of the fetal mortality and the neonatal mortality



#### Annex 4: Health Data for Abkhazia, Georgia 2006

All information in this Annex was provided by the *de facto* Ministry of Health

##### Demographic situation

No. of children in the region in 2006: 41,200 under 15 years of age of which 1,791 infants.

Born: 1,815 children

Died: 37 children including 3 infants

**Table 1: Births, mortality and early neo-natal mortality in 2006**

	Live-born		Still-born		Early neonatal mortality
	Total	Of which pre-mature	Total	Of which pre-mature	
Sukhumi maternity home	977	37	6	0	6 + 1 in the in obstetric infant block
Obstetric department of Gagra Central Republican Hospital	313	12	0	0	1
Obstetric department of Gudauta Central Republican Hospital	260				
Obstetric department of Tkvarcheli Central Republican Hospital	137	8	0	0	2
Obstetric department of Ochamchire Central Republican Hospital	49	0	0	0	1 in obstetric infant block
Obstetric department of Gali Central Republican Hospital	139	0	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>

**Table 2: Birth, Early neonatal mortality, Stillborn, Infant and Maternal Mortality in 2004-2006**

	Birth		Early neonatal mortality (in first 7 days after birth)		Stillborn		Infant mortality index (under 1 year old)	Maternal mortality rate
	# births	birth rate	# early neonatal deaths	rate	# of stillborn babies			
<b>2004</b>	2,114	0.96%	10	4.8%	4	1.9%	7.6%	6.6%
<b>2005</b>	1,849	0.84%	13	7.1%	7	3.3%	9.8%	10.7%
<b>2006</b>	1,815	0.82%	9	6.0%	7	3.8%	19.7%	9.8%

These indices are negatively affected by late registration of pregnant women as well as by a non-full volume of laboratory examinations, absence of consultations of a therapist and other specialists. However, it should be mentioned that the early neonatal, stillborn and maternal mortality indices vary within acceptable limits according to the World Health Organisation data.

The sharp increase in infant mortality is explained by better registration of the dead infants in Registrar Offices of the region. However, one can suppose that the infant mortality index is not quite true because one cannot be sure that all the cases of infant death are registered in Registrar Offices.

A census of children population still is not made properly, which is evidenced by the reporting form No.31 (Gudauta, Tkvarcheli and Gali regions). In the present report a children contingent only of a regional center is taken into account. The child population of villages is still unregistered.

**Table 3: Plan and execution of prophylactic inoculations in 2006**

No.	Inoculation	Plan	Execution	% of execution
1	Pertussis vaccination	2,104	1,386	65,8%
2	Pertussis revaccination	1,992	1,223	61,3%
3	Diphtheria vaccination	2,164	1,465	67,6%
4	Diphtheria revaccination	47,959	3,591	7,4%
5	Poliomyelitis vaccination	2,132	2,045	95,9%
6	Poliomyelitis revaccination	4,439	5,912	133,1%
7	Measles vaccination	2,132	1,881	88,2%
8	Measles revaccination	2,374	2,693	109,2%
9	Parotitis vaccination	3,502	2,284	65,2%
10	Parotitis revaccination	3,036	3,590	118,2%
11	Rubella vaccination	5,652	2,821	49,9%
12	Rubella revaccination	3,260	1,593	48,8%
13	Hepatitis B vaccination	6,022	6,094	118,3%
14	Vaccine of Calmette and Guerin	4,419	2,204	49,8%
	including the newborn	1,920	1,726	89,8%
	Tuberculosis revaccination	2,797	478	17%
15	Mantoux revaccination	36,650	25,828	70,4%
16	including positive		1,381	5,3%
17	Influenza inoculation		196	

### Preventive Work

In 2006 a thorough examination of schoolchildren, of specific groups as well as of non-organized children, according to the regulation on prophylactic examinations was carried out. Prophylactic examinations of children from 0-14 years old and their results are given in the table.

**Table 4: Prophylactic examination children 0-14 years in 2006**

Examined		Revealed during examinations				
		With diminished		With speech defects	With posture defects	With scoliosis
		hearing	Vision			
Sukhum	4,942	1	125	447	345	5
Gagra region	5,183	17	38	36	87	17
Gudauta region	3,317	22	19	28	56	50
Gulripshi region	3,300	10	20	5	5	3
Ochamchira region	1,432	1	20	12	45	3
Tkvarcheli region	1,230	2	9	11	23	1
Gali region	2,030	5	5	7	13	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,434</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>83</b>

**Table 5: Incidence (of illness) in infants in 2004-2006**

	2004	2005	2006
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,221</b>	<b>5,142</b>	<b>4,306</b>
Diseases of nervous system and organs of perception	369	354	346
Respiratory diseases	1,216	2,460	2,225
Separate states occurred in the perinatal period	495	582	497
Infectious parasitogenic diseases	582	480	256
Diseases of digestive organs	67	232	273
??	80	315	125
Congenital anomalies	17	32	9

**Table 6: (Illness) Incidence structure in children 0 to 14 years old in 2004-2006**

33	2004	2005	2006
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,711</b>	<b>23,714</b>	<b>24,421</b>
Diseases of nervous system and organs of perception	2,561	354	1,456
Respiratory diseases	6,476	2,460	7,241
Separate states occurred in the perinatal period	363	582	476
Infectious and parasitogenic diseases	6,408	480	9,857
Diseases of digestive organs	1,008	232	1,382
Blood and hemopoiesis diseases	739	430	471
Anemia	531	162	110
Blood circulation diseases	556	156	304
Chronic bronchitis	61	242	153
Bronchial asthma	46	110	191

Psychic disfunctions	99	100	50
Uro-genital system diseases	459	315	645

In the incidence structure in up to 15 year old children the share of infectious and parasitogenic diseases is 40%, respiratory diseases – 29,6%, diseases of digestive organs – 5,7%, diseases of nervous system – 6%.

**Table 7: (Illness) Incidence structure in children-teenagers in 2004-2006**

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>2169</b>	<b>1694</b>
Diseases of nervous system and organs of perception	96	181	119
Respiratory diseases	196	336	375
Blood and hemopoiesis diseases	18/18	47/38	27/6
Diseases of digestive organs among them:	115	259	84
ulcer		21	3
gastroduodenitis		74	47
Uro-genital system diseases	72	269	76
Infectious and parasitogenic diseases	35	101	112

**Table 8: Comparative dynamics of infectious diseases in children under 14 years old in 2005-2006**

No.	Disease	2005	2006	Increase	Decrease1.
1.	Typhoid	0	0	0	0
2.	Paratiphoid	0	0	0	0
3.	Salmonellosis	0	0	0	0
4.	Acute dysentery, confirmed	16	4	0	By 75,0
5.	Amebic Dysentery	8	3	0	0
6.	Acute intestinal infection with established etiology	1	17	17 times	0
7.	Acute intestinal infection with non-established etiology	337	309	0	By 6,0
8.	Total	355	330	0	By 7,1
9.	Virus hepatitis, including hepatitis "A" "B" "C"	7	0	0	0
10.	Virus carrier	0	0	0	0
11.	Virus carrier "C"	0	0	0	0
12.	Diphtheria	0	0	0	0
13.	Pertussis	7	18	By 157	0
14.	Meningococcemia	4	4	0	0
15.	Measles	5	2	0	By 60,0
16.	Scarlatina	9	10	1,0	By 50
17.	Epidemic parotiditis	2	0	0	0
18.	Tuberculosis	0	0	0	0
19.	Influenza	438	79	0	By 82,0
20.	Acute respiratory infections	5322	4901	0	By 8,0
21.	Syphilis	3	0	3	0
22.	Trichinellosis	0	0	0	0
23.	Pediculosis	0	0	0	0
24.	Gonorrhea	0	0	0	0
25.	Itch	55	81	0	By 47,2
26.	Fungus diseases	4	6	By 50,0	0
27.	Rabies	1	0	0	By 1
28.	Bites	588	412	0	By 30,0
29.	Chickenpox	85	57	0	By 33,0
30.	Rubella	33	9	0	By 72,8
31.	Marseilles fever	0	0	0	0
32.	Leptospirosis	0	0	0	0
33.	European typhoid	0	0	0	0
34.	Tetanus	0	0	0	0
35.	Botulism	0	0	0	0
36.	Poliomyelitis	0	0	0	0
37.	Malaria	0	0	0	0

**Annex 5, Pensions, Allowances and Social Insurance provided by the *de facto* Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare**

Pensions	Amounts 2007/per month	Amount before increase
‘Hero of Abkhazia’	1,000 rubles	210 rubles
Decorated with ‘Lenin’ Order	700 rubles	170 rubles
Decorated with ‘Audacity’ Medal	500 rubles	140 rubles
Invalids of the Great Patriotic War of the Abkhazian People:		
1 <sup>st</sup> group	1,500 rubles	700 rubles
2 <sup>nd</sup> group	1,000 rubles	600 rubles
3 <sup>rd</sup> group	700 rubles	400 rubles
Invalids of the Great Patriotic War:		
1 <sup>st</sup> group	700 rubles	280 rubles
2 <sup>nd</sup> group	600 rubles	210 rubles
3 <sup>rd</sup> group	400 rubles	170 rubles
Participants of the Great Patriotic War	400 rubles	170 rubles
Families of the killed in the Great Patriotic War	300 rubles	140 rubles
Families of the killed in the Great Patriotic War – each disabled family member	1,000 rubles	700 rubles
Pensioners engaged in underground work	500 rubles	120 rubles
Loss of a bread-winner – each disabled family member	600 rubles	70 rubles
Orphans (no parents)	1,200 rubles	700 rubles
Invalids:		
- from childhood – 16 yrs	700 rubles	70 rubles
- from childhood 1 <sup>st</sup> group > 16 yrs.	700 rubles	120 rubles
- from childhood 2 <sup>nd</sup> group > 16 yrs.	700 rubles	120 rubles
Children who lost bread winner	600 rubles	70 rubles
Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund	Free testing (STI/hepatitis/HIV) and medication for pregnant women, women in labour and newborn children. Expenses: 2004 – 2.3 million rubles 2005 – 3 million rubles 2006 – 4.2 million rubles 2007 – 5.3 million rubles (planned)	
Health Support Programmes from Republican Budget		
TB programme for children < 17 yrs old		
Cerebral palsy children (297 children) – medication and pension 700 rubles (was 70 rubles). List of disabled children as provided by the <i>de facto</i> Ministry of Health (MoH) follows below.		
Rubella and Hepatitis B vaccinations		
Prevention of neurological dysfunctions in infants		
Medical support to children with diabetes		

<b>Social Insurance Fund</b>	
Postnatal allowance	4,000 rubles for working women (was 2,000 in 2006) 3,500 rubles for non-working women (was 1,500) Total expenditures: 2004 – 2.06 million rubles 2005 – 2.42 million rubles 2007 – 7 million rubles (planned)
Children's rest/holiday 2005 – 285 children 2006 – 371 children 2007	Total expenditures: 951,000 rubles 2.37 million rubles 3.215 million rubles
<b>Family allowances</b>	
Unmarried mothers In 2007: 347 mothers/425 children	300 rubles per child Total expenditures: 127,500 rubles/month
Large families Paid until child reaches 18 yrs or until 23 yrs when in higher education, technical school or military service. In 2007: 1,734 families/6,031 children	3-4 children: 100 rubles/child/month 5-6 children: 150 rubles/child/month 7-8 children: 200 rubles/child/month 9-10 children: 250 rubles/child/month > 10 children: 300 rubles/child/month Total expenditures: 675,400 rubles/month

Disabled children aged 1-15 on record at df MoH	Total	Of which with	
		Cerebral Palsy	Epileptic
<b>Sukhumi</b>	120	32	12
<b>Gagra</b>	60	20	
<b>Gulripsh</b>	34	11	8
<b>Gudauta</b>	90	48	
<b>Ochamchira</b>	29	23	
<b>Gali</b>	36	9	
<b>Tkvarcheli</b>	7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>		

According to the *de facto* Ministry of Health this information is incomplete and there are children not on record. Support from the *de facto* MoH is in the form of medical support. There are some programmes for adults and the orthopedic rehabilitation centre in Gagra is also only for adults. More support programs are needed. *De facto* MoH expressed an interest in cooperation with international programmes in this area.