

Emergency Operation in Georgia

Daily Report for 23 August 2008

Displacements caused by recent conflict over South Ossetia	
<i>Displacement within Georgia excl. South Ossetia</i>	98,600
<i>Displacement within South Ossetia</i>	30,000
<i>Sub Total Georgia</i>	128,600
<i>Displacement to Russian Federation</i>	30,000
Displacements Total	158,600

In addition, Georgia has a caseload of 220,000 IDPs from previous crises.

UNHCR assessment team in Gori and Atheni Valley

UNHCR assessment team visited today the city of Gori, now under Georgian control, and reported that the situation is stabilizing. They also visited the Atheni Valley area where many new IDPs from Gori and war affected villages further north still reside.

There was a firm sense of security in the town with the Georgian police very much visible. The general impression of the UNHCR team was that Gori is slowly coming back to life with more people out on the streets and many shops re-opening their doors. Banks remain closed.

UNHCR interviewed a group of newly arrived IDPs from the Georgian villages of South Ossetia and provided them with non-food items. These 70 new IDPs are now in a collective center in Gori. The key protection concern for UNHCR with regard to this group is that there are a lot of split families, mainly children separated from their parents, although often with some members of the extended family, and very vulnerable elderly people separated from their families. In its assessment the UNHCR team also noted that the psychological recovery has not happened yet as the people are still clearly in a state of shock.

The team also estimated that some 100 spontaneous returnees have come back to their homes in Gori. The small number of returnees is likely to be linked to President Saakashvili's announcement asking IDPs to wait until the possible mines and unexploded shells have been identified and the area cleared.

When meeting with the Deputy Governor of Gori, the team learned that a special telephone hotline has been set up by the local authorities for the IDPs from Gori to find out about the conditions for return. UNHCR offered to support the call center. The team learned that the local authorities have started a systematic collection of data on the damage caused to buildings. Authorities are ready to share their findings with UNHCR as the organization is preparing to address rapidly the shelter and reparation issues.

UNHCR also met with the local representatives of the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) who agreed to UNHCR's request for office space in the Ministry's premises until a permanent location for a UNHCR office will be ready. The Ministry also promised to assist UNHCR in identifying warehouse space in the town. MRA is issuing food vouchers for both, IDPs and returnees.

UNHCR welcomed MRA's announcement of a preliminary registration process organized by the Ministry planned to continue until the opening of a local branch of the Georgian Civil Registry Agency's (CRA), expected early next week.

In the Ateini Valley, the UNHCR team learned that a limited spontaneous return has started but for the moment the numbers of people in move remain unclear. Many IDPs still reside in the area, waiting for further stabilization of the security situation.

According to the local police chief, the security situation has improved to an extent which will soon allow for a return on a larger scale. UNHCR promoted the idea of a phased return in order not to overstretch the reception capacities and to allow for putting in place the necessary resources. As far as the villages around the city of Gori are concerned, the local authorities are in discussions with the Russian military leadership and hope to resolve the remaining, mainly security related, issues as soon as possible.

Special center set up for pregnant IDPs opens in Tbilisi

A center for pregnant women has been set up and opened today in the school number 51, in the center of Tbilisi, with the capacity to accommodate 42 people. Following a request from the Georgian authorities, UNHCR today distributed bed sheets and blankets for 42 pregnant IDPs. UNHCR will continue assisting the center in the coming days by delivering mattresses to all 42 women in the center by next Monday.

Distribution updates

The distribution in **Western Georgia** continues full steam. All sites are assessed one day prior to distributions, either by UNHCR or by its partners (ACF/DRC) and based on the results of the needs assessment and daily updated figures of number and location of IDPs, relief items are released to the authorities who organize the distributions both in favor of IDPs accommodated in collective centers as well as IDPs living in private houses. The monitoring of distribution is organized by UNHCR, in close collaboration with its partners both onsite and after distribution day (in collective centers and private accommodation, randomly). As of today, the team has distributed blankets, kitchen sets and jerry-cans to 8413 beneficiaries in 2431 households.

In **Eastern Georgia**, UNHCR is today distributing in the Lagodekhi area where some 1000 IDPs will receive blankets, kitchen sets and jerry-cans.

In the **Atheni Valley**, the UNHCR distribution, which started on Thursday August 22, has been completed by WFP, with whom UNHCR shared a warehouse in the area. In total, UNHCR provided the IDPs in the area with 1000 blankets, 110 tents and 300 jerry-cans.