

Question #8: Which measures did you take to provide the relief and support to civilian population in the areas affected by hostilities and their aftermath?

Russian aggression created the need for a major relief effort in Georgia. The population directly affected by the hostilities increased daily starting from August 8th as Russian troops advanced deep into Georgia, till October 2008, when the EUMM deployment and return of Georgian police to area at that time referred as “buffer zone” relatively stabilized the situation.

According to the Civil Registry of Georgia in total 138,193 persons were affected (displaced) by war. After the partial de-occupation of Georgia, 31,245 IDPs remain.

Gender	0- 4	5 - 11	12 - 17	18 - 59	60+	Total
Male	4108	7388	7159	38355	5789	62799
Female	3995	6968	7147	47519	9765	75394
Total	8103	14356	14306	85874	15554	138193

During the actual hostilities, efforts of the Government were concentrated on providing:

Medical care to wounded and/or shocked populations in the villages occupied by Russian forces as well as those fleeing from Russian controlled areas. This effort was coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs with the assistance of the Civil Emergency Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Evacuation of civilians as Russian troops advanced, as well as their transportation (first to Gori, after Russian take over, to Khashuri and etc. ultimately, most of the IDPs from east were concentrated in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Mtskheta, Tianeti and IDPs from west - in Kutaisi,.) was handled jointly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry for IDPs and Accommodation, Municipalities (as they provided means of transportation). International organizations also immediately mobilized to assist government of Georgia.

On August 8, an ad hoc committee on coordination of the emergency response was created at the Ministry; heads of 43 clinics of Tbilisi and other regions of the country attended the meeting. MoLHSA responded to the crises in accordance with the action plan for state of emergency situations. These plans, being part of the National Response Plan under the coordination of the Civil Emergency Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, have been worked out with the participation of line ministries and included detailed coordination mechanisms among different state bodies. The action plans were also shared with the key

hospitals, blood banks, pharmaceutical companies and other key constituents in the medical field to ensure proper coordination in the health sector in responding to natural or manmade disasters. A referral system was set up to adequately deal with the flow of people affected by the conflict.

A field hospital was established in the village of Tkviavi on 8th of August. 42 emergency vehicles and 14 reanimobiles were moved from Tbilisi to Tkviavi, all staffed with appropriate personnel. The Tkviavi field hospital served as a triage point during the aggression. Rescue team headquarters were also located in Tkviavi. The Military hospital in Gori, having high quality emergency and intensive care units was the primary recipient of the heavily wounded population from the Tkviavi field hospital. Others wounded and those that could be transported were transferred from Tkviavi to Tbilisi's 2 medical centers – Ghudushauri Clinic and First Republican Emergency center. The Kutaisi Emergency center was designated to receive patients evacuated from the west of Gori as well as from Upper Abkhazeti – Kodori Gorge;

Emergency vehicles were grouped in 3 teams – the 1st group would bring out the wounded from the conflict areas. The 2nd group would transport patients from Tkviavi to Gori Military Hospital and the 3rd group from Gori to Tbilisi; In total 111 emergency vehicles throughout the country were involved in the emergency response.

A 24 hour hotline was established at the Ministry of Health and provided the information to the relatives on the location of the wounded. Hotlines were established at the Ministries of Interior, IDPs and Accommodation and Reintegration Ministry also to receive information about people endangered, held hostage, imprisoned, or hiding in the woods and in need of evacuation.

2,232 individuals were treated in 43 hospitals around the country, no patient has died during the transportation; 3 people died in hospitals during surgeries. The rest were treated and released in appropriate times. 228 civilians were killed during the aggression. 2 doctors and 1 nurse were killed during the Russian bombardment of Gori. The Emergency Medical Center in Gori, with clear signs establishing it as a medical facility (several emergency vehicles parked outside) was hit directly by a rocket fired from an airplane killing one doctor and one nurse and heavily injuring the rest of the staff. The center was totally destroyed. A doctor was killed on the grounds of the hospital, wearing medical uniform, with a direct shot from a helicopter.

14 primary care clinics were affected during the conflict. A brand new state of the art primary care clinic in Karaleti was totally destroyed, the rest were looted and ransacked to various degrees. The Tkviavi primary care clinic was completely looted, with every single furniture piece destroyed. A modern hospital in Kurta was completely destroyed, as well as the one in the Kodori Gorge. Four emergency vehicles, with clear signs were fully or partially destroyed, three more were riddled with bullets.

During the Russian takeover of Gori, doctors and nurses remained in the city. For the first few days no emergency vehicles were allowed to enter or leave the city, which created a great strain on the emergency response, since bombs were still exploding in Gori and those killed and

wounded could not be transported to appropriate clinics. Because of the total blockade of Gori, the emergency crews could not replenish much needed stocks of medical supplies and medicines in the city. After a few days the emergency vehicles were allowed to go into Gori, but they were still refused to access the so called “buffer zones” established by the Russian military. People in those “zones” lacked medicine and medical supplies and Georgian crews could not reach them until after the withdrawal of the Russian troops in October.

Housing, food and medical treatment was provided to thousands of IDPs arriving daily from the western and eastern parts of the country to different relatively more secure cities and villages. This action was coordinated by the Ministry of IDPs and Accommodation with the assistance of the Civil Emergency Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science (as most of the IDPs were temporarily sheltered in schools) as well as international organizations.

Once the population started fleeing the conflict area, the Ministry of Health responded by strengthening the capacity of primary and secondary clinics, adding more doctors when necessary and distributing necessary medicines and medical supplies in those cities where the displaced were settled. In every collective center, where the population affected by the Russian aggression settled, the Ministry, through its network of primary clinics, established medical centers, comprising doctors and nurses, which were given appropriate supply of medicines and medical equipment. The treatment, both in primary and the secondary care facilities, for all the population affected by the conflict was free of charge and paid in full by the Ministry. The medical points in collective centers remained until the local primary clinics located nearby resumed full coverage of the population. During August 2008 – January 2009, 2,000 displaced received free medical care in hospitals.

As noted above, the number of IDPs increased daily during the first week. The arrival of IDPs was not always organized. As Russian forces blocked the roads as well as the main East-West highway of Georgia, many IDPs had to walk for hours and even days to reach a location, from where transportation could be provided by the authorities. Many arrived to Tbilisi and found shelter with friends and relatives. This initially caused registration problems.

The majority of IDPs came from South Ossetia and Upper Abkhazia and were placed in over 700 different locations in Tbilisi by the end of August. Most of these shelters (90%) were schools (public as well as private), kindergartens, VET centers, special schools for the children with disabilities, research institutions, higher education institutions, student dormitories.

Provision of food and water to IDPs in these collective centres was coordinated by MoES. Special care was given to mothers with infants and their special needs.

It has to be underlined, and it has been reflected in observations of international organizations as well, that along with state and international aid provided to new IDPs, a huge burden of support was taken by local communities. Every collective center was “adopted” by local private organizations, individual citizens from the neighborhood providing food (including hot meals), cloth, blankets, toys for children and many other large and small donations. This was welcomed and to facilitate the hundreds of thousands willing to help, special “aid corners” were established throughout the city to register and allocate volunteers, donations, charity.

Rescue operations and evacuations (where still possible) and the maintenance of public order/police visibility to manage panic and provide at least moral support to local population, even in occupied areas and even at the cost of surrendering police service weapons to Russian force, (i.e. Zugdidi) was undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- Rescue brigades assisted medical personnel in retrieving over 100 wounded and dead from the battle field.
- Approximately 300 civilians have been assisted to flee from Zemo Nikozi, Nikozi, Ergneti, Shindisi, Eredvi and Tkviavi on 8th and 9th
- Over 1,000 civilians have been evacuated from Kodori by the ministry of Internal Affairs and then transported to Kutaisi by the Ministry for IDPs and Accommodation
- 200 tones of Humanitarian assistance from 12 countries (33 airplanes) have been mobilized and distributed in 147 IDP collective centres
- 8 civilians were rescued from bombed houses in Gori, 1 dead female and 2 dead children were retrieved from collapsed buildings.

Aftermath:

Starting from September and already by the end December the Government of Georgia focused on providing durable housing and social protection for IDPs that could not have returned in mid and long term.

The principle of volunteerism has been met to the maximum possible extent, during the return of IDPs to areas de-occupied by the Russians. Housing solutions have been also developed to provide alternative choice for those that could not have or chose not to return:

Alternative 1) housing in new or existing settlements near the highway and/or in town (with urban employment opportunity); 2) housing in new or existing settlement in rural area with agricultural land, cattle, per family for farming opportunity; 3) compensation instead of housing for those choosing to make own housing arrangements; and also, houses and flats in the buffer zone, destroyed and/or damaged as a result of Russian aggression have been rehabilitated or compensation provided.

- 3,979 houses were built and 1,542 flats renovated in existing (empty) blocks mainly in Mtskheta-Tianeti; Kaspi; Gori; Kareli; Khashuri Tetrtskaro; Marneuli; Gardabani; Bolnisi districts
- 453 houses purchased by government throughout the country.
- In addition: 9,342 houses and flats have been rehabilitated in so call “buffer zone” villages.
- 200 GEL has been allocated as aid per IDP.
- Each family has been provided with basic furniture and kitchen and other required equipment.
- 1,000 IDP children have been sent for rehabilitation abroad, project will continue in 2009.

More detailed information about housing is provided in Annex 2 (reflecting situation as for December 25th 2008). All of the above has been accomplished with budgetary resources.

Currently 400 families await housing to be built by foreign donors (300 houses provided by Germany and 100 by Turkey).

Police and medical personnel were the first to return into villages and towns as the Russian troops withdrew.

Medical Personnel was (and still is) supplied with free medicines and medical supplies. All medical personnel that lost their place of work remain on the payroll and are being distributed in newly built settlements.

Every new settlement has access to a medical facility. Those primary care facilities that are nearby the settlements were strengthened by increasing their staff with more doctors and nurses, in some cases from the conflict areas. In large settlements, like Tserovani a new clinic was built (donated by the Czech government), the same is planned for Koda and other settlements.

In addition, all displaced that are residing in newly built settlements are entitled to a medical insurance voucher (those that are distributed to the population in poverty) that provides them with full coverage of medical services.

12 police stations have been refurbished and 2 built in Gori, Kareli, Khashuri, Kaspi districts affected by the war where population returned. The police presence was strengthened to deal with the feeling of insecurity within the local population.

51 public schools damaged during the war have been rehabilitated

The children from IDP families have been enrolled in schools near their current settlement. In order to meet the new challenges of increased enrollment, the MoES provided extra help and support for those schools. They were equipped with additional school desks. 1,094 desks were distributed among 32 schools. Average walking distance to the nearest schools for refugee

students is 2,5 km (min: 0,5 km, max: 20 km). To address the transportation problem, several schools were provided with school buses to serve refugee students.

In order to make sure that displaced children were also ready and equipped appropriately for starting the academic year, the MoES provided material support for their families. Each family with a school-age child was given a single-time aid in the amount of GEL 100. The MoES also provided sets of school textbooks free of charge for all displaced children. GEL 258,546 was spent for purchasing textbooks for grades 2 through 12 (textbooks for first-graders are provided for free for all citizens by the MoES) for 6,014 students.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science within the framework of its needs-based grants program awarded grants (tuition waiver) to students affected by the Russian armed intervention. Students both from the conflict zone as well as Gori and nearby areas fell under the category. As a result, the state fully covered tuition cost for 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students. A total amount of GEL 1,845,000 was spent on this program.

In order to respond to the newly emerged need for integrating IDPs into the labor market, the Ministry of Education and Science offered vocational training opportunities. Various training programs are offered at centers located near the IDP settlements. Gori State University is developing educational infrastructure and short and long-term programs to meet training needs of internally displaced persons.

Employment and provision of sustainable livelihood projects to IDPs currently is the biggest priority. Already during the construction of IDP houses, first steps were made a) by choosing such a location that had employment prospect in urban area or farming opportunity, b) employing IDPs on construction sites.

Currently, a number of policy level initiatives as well as more local projects are in pipeline, for instance a project by the Ministry of Agriculture and WB WFP, USAID and other players. Most important state initiatives include:

- 500 livestock (cows) handed over to IDPs, that have chosen housing with farming land.
- 20 ha of land (arable land allocated to IDPs) have been plowed and fertilizer applied.
- 3,000 tones of grain harvested.
- 5,052 IDP families donated with 16 different seed materials (including potato) for steads
- Each IDP families donated with 50 kg of ammonium nitrate.
- Each IDP family received 50 kg wheat flour.
- With the assistance of international organization 1.5 mln has been allocated to families that have returned to “buffer zone”, mainly for livestock feed commodity, as main income of this families is livestock farming.
- A candy (caramel) manufacturing plant is currently being built in Tserovani (largest non agricultural new settlement) that will employ at least 300 IDPs.

- A paper manufacturing plant is also being built in Tserovani that will employ 150 IDPs.
- A school, kindergarten and a supermarket are also being contracted in Tserovani (also in other settlements) employing IDPs.

The Government of Georgia adopted the State Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy on IDPs on 30 July 2008 (Government Decree No. 489). The Georgian-Russian War and subsequent occupation of the Georgian territories by the Russian authorities resulted in the new flow of IDPs (of Georgian origin). This new challenge required adjustment of the existing Action Plan to new realities. Therefore, the Government of Georgia entrusted the Ministry of Refugee and Accommodation with the revision of the existing Action Plan (Decree No. 854 of 4 December 2008). The process is managed by the *Joint Task Force*, represented by the leading governmental agencies and donor organizations.

The new Action Plan, apart from the prior-August 2008 priorities will cover measures aimed to promote IDPs socio-economic integration and stability in course of resettlement. The Action Plan's first draft has been prepared. Having said so, some additional information is required with respect to target groups (beneficiaries), types of needs and necessary financial allocations. Therefore, the Government of Georgia has entrusted relevant governmental institutions to take all necessary measures to finalize the process of drafting in the nearest future (see Decree No. 4 of 12 January 2009).

Persons displaced in August 2008 and subsequent occupation of the Georgian territory by Russian authorities, shall be officially granted the IDP status in the first half of 2009. Having said so, the Government has and continues to treat them as IDPs, providing all necessary aid and assistance.

At the same time, the Government remains cautious that proper assistance and attention should be paid to IDPs displaced in early 1990-ies. That is why, the Government acknowledged the need to meet the new challenges along with the existing commitments towards all IDPs in the territories falling under control of the Georgian authorities.

In relation to steps taken by the Government of Georgia, we would particularly note that the Ministry of Refugee and Accommodation of Georgia just recently (March 10, 2009) signed a project with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regarding capacity-building and provision of durable solution to IDPs.

The Project set forth 4 main objectives encompassing IDPs from 1992/1993 as well as population displaced during the 2008 August conflict and aftermath:

1. To support the Ministry in fulfilling its obligations deriving from the Decree #4 of January 2009 and pertaining to self-privatisation of Collective Centres;
2. To conduct a technical analysis of the remaining Collective Centers Georgia wide;

3. To conduct a survey of privately accommodated IDPs that would facilitate tailor made durable solutions for this group;
4. To conduct IDP status granting exercise for the population that remains displaced with the August 2008 conflict;
5. To facilitate information sharing with the IDPs.