



**RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF INTERNALLY
DISPLACED WOMEN AS A RESULT
OF AUGUST 2008 EVENTS IN GEORGIA**



**Rapid Needs
Assessment of Internally
Displaced Women:
Findings and
Recommendations**

Institute for Policy Studies

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***The findings and recommendations expressed in
this Assessment are solely those of Institute for
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Findings of the Needs Assessment

Following an increase in the number of military actions in early August 2008, the situation in the conflict zone of South Ossetia in Georgia escalated into a full-scale combat between the Georgian Army and armed formations under control of the de facto authorities of Tskhinvali region and Russian Armed Forces. The situation deteriorated further with the renewed fighting in another breakaway region of Georgia, Abkhazia, and the establishment of Russian positions outside the two conflict zones.

The fighting led to the displacement of large numbers of people. Whilst some 68,000 of the estimated 127,499 persons displaced in August have now been able to return home, still, a significant proportion remains internally displaced within Georgia and over 50 percent of them are women.¹ The newly displaced citizens add to the before existing IDPs in Georgia (over 220 000 individuals) from South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts of early 1990s.

UNIFEM supported a research organization Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) to carry out the Rapid Needs Assessment of Internally Displaced Women with an aim of obtaining an accurate understanding of the needs of internally displaced persons for planning a better targeted assistance, capable of producing equal outcomes for women, girls, boys, and men.

The study was carried out through 5-29 September, 2008, using a mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methodology among the IDPs residing in Collective Centres in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Gori.

Overall, 1144 persons were surveyed, of which 47.1 percent were males and 52.9 percent females

97 percent of respondents were Georgians, 2.2 percent were Ossetians, and 0.8 percent of other ethnicity

9.3 percent have multiethnic families, mostly Georgian and Ossetian

Most often, families comprise of 4 members (range 1-15)

The assessment found out that the biggest share of the surveyed (88.2 percent) is registered with the authorities as displaced. However, registration is only the first step and it does not give them legal status of IDPs along with respective social benefit package. Monetary support from the state is available for merely limited number of respondents (13.7 percent), while the majority (86.3 percent) of respondents do not receive such support.

¹ United Nations, *Georgia Crises Flash Appeal: Revision, 2008*, 1, 19.

The Assessment found that women and men of all ages and ethnicities from the conflict-affected areas have been extremely traumatized by the conflict and displacement, especially those who witnessed military clashes, were taken as hostage, witnessed or experienced sexual violence or other forms of torture and inhuman treatment, including those who heard bombings, shooting, and explosions.

89.6% of respondents have been exposed to bombing (92% of men and 87% of women)

67.8% of respondents have been exposed to military actions (70% of men and 66% of women)

50% of respondents have witnessed death or wounding (66% of men and 34% of women)

Twenty percent of respondents reported of having information about kidnapping, 9 percent of the kidnapped were women. The age of the kidnapped varied from 15 to 81 years old. In addition, 12.1 percent of the surveyed indicated that they were aware about cases of torture. Among the alleged victims of torture, women comprised 18.3 percent, and 1.6 percent of the respondents reported witnessing torture. It is obvious that both women and men (and in many instances more men than women) have been traumatized by the conflict. On this background, it is striking that only 24.5 percent of men and 35.3 percent of women have consulted a psychologist at least once.

More men (10.2 percent and 16 percent) than women (4.7 percent and 7.9 percent) experienced physical and verbal abuse. Due to stigma attached to sexual abuse it is likely that in general many women simply do not admit that they have been exposed to any physical or verbal abuse.

It is noteworthy that 41.7 percent of IDPs evaluated the behaviour of Ossetian civilians as friendly, 24.3 percent as neutral and 34 percent as hostile. The fact that the majority of the IDPs assessed the behaviour of Ossetian civilians as either friendly or neutral, provides solid ground for future confidence building and people-to-people diplomacy initiatives.

The conflict and displacement had an immense negative impact on women's health and well-being. From the onset of the conflict, UNIFEM has been collecting information about women's conditions as well as different forms of gender based violence suffered by young girls, matured, and elderly women. Unfortunately, there have been reports and allegations of sexual violence, especially in ethnically Georgian villages that have been attacked by Ossetian and Cossack informal military outfits. The absolute majority of interviewers and researchers who took part in this Needs Assessment were women, who were respectively instructed on the sensitivity of posing even indirect questions in relation to experiences of sexual violence. The survey revealed that 6.3 percent of respondents had information about sexual violence committed against women, out of this 6.3 percent (70 respondents), 21.4 percent said they had information about cases of rape, 32.8 percent about group rape, 14.3 percent about attempt of rape and 31 percent did not specify the kind of abuse. Only 1 percent of respondents reported witnessing rape. The age of abused women and girls varied from 12 to 77, with 25-35 age group mentioned most frequently.

² IASC, *Guidelines for Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Setting: Focusing on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, September, 2005 and WHO, *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, 2007, were used while developing the GBV section of the questionnaire.

Taking into consideration the taboo associated with the issue of sexual violence in the Georgian society, we may assume that the findings of the survey shed light only on the tip of the iceberg, clearly signalling the need for having respective psycho-social and medical services in place for women who have faced sexual and gender based violence.

- 17.8 % - there are cockroaches, mice or rats in the building
- 47.3 % - there is insufficient number of functioning water taps
- 74.6 % - has permanent water supply
- 27.3 % - consider access to water as a priority need
- 87.7 % - do not have a possibility to take a shower
- 51.6 % - point out that the number of restrooms is not enough
- 46.8 % - assess conditions of the restrooms as bad
- 67.8 % - complain there are no separate restrooms for men and women
- 71.0 % - lock inside restrooms are functioning, electricity is provided
- 10.1 % - (14.2 % - women, 6.0 %- men), feel insecure going to restrooms after dark
- 21.9 % - mention improvement of conditions/increase in the number of restrooms as a priority need
- 85.7 % - lack private space to get dressed
- 18.0 % - names having a private room per family a top priority

Living conditions in the Collective Centres is mostly assessed by the respondents as moderate (58.8 percent); only 7.4 percent assess these as good, while more than a third (33.9 percent) considers the housing conditions to be poor. Living conditions in Gori is evaluated as the most (16.7 percent) and in Tbilisi the least (4.1 percent) positive.

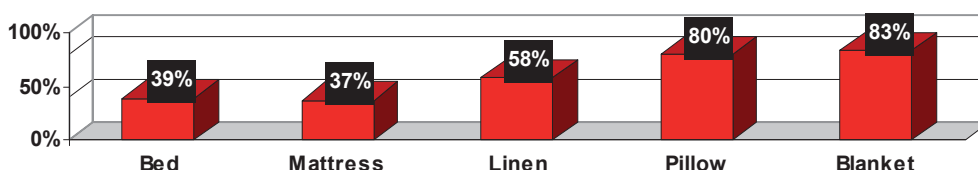
Potable water is seen as a problem for many. Close to half (47.3 percent) points out on the insufficient number of functioning water taps. Warm water is not available for most of the respondents (84.9 percent), and 87.7 percent of IDPs do not have the possibility to take a shower. In discussions many women pointed at the need of having private washbowl for laundry and bathing children.

Problem also exists with the number and condition of restrooms. 51.6 percent of the respondents point that the number of restrooms is not enough. The restrooms are mostly located inside the building (84 percent) and therefore, they are near the respondents' room/tent (63.9 percent). Among the 15.9 percent who pointed that restrooms are located outside the buildings, 24.5 percent estimated them to be moderately and 11.5 percent as far from their rooms. **In addition, 67.8 percent complain that there are not separate restrooms for men and women** (in Tbilisi 42.3 percent, in Gori 19.1 percent and in Kutaisi 19.4 percent). Going to restrooms after dark in 10.4 percent of the respondents is associated with a feeling of insecurity, women feel more insecure (14.2 percent) than men (6 percent).

Deficiency in food is acknowledged by the majority (61.7 percent) as a problem, while 38.3 percent claim to have enough food. Quality of food is evaluated as moderate by the majority of respondents (55.8 percent). 17.5 percent evaluate it as bad and 16.6 percent as good. The highest satisfaction with food quality was again in Gori and the lowest in Kutaisi. During the week before the survey, relatively limited number of respondents had the opportunity to take any dairy product or fruits, more respondents had a possibility to get vegetable and meat. Yet again the situation was better in Gori than in Tbilisi or Kutaisi.

Among the respondents, 20.4 percent do not have access to cooking facilities. 66.7 percent of respondents (91.1 percent in Tbilisi, 31.4 percent in Gori and 41.1 percent in Kutaisi) do not have an access to a refrigerator.

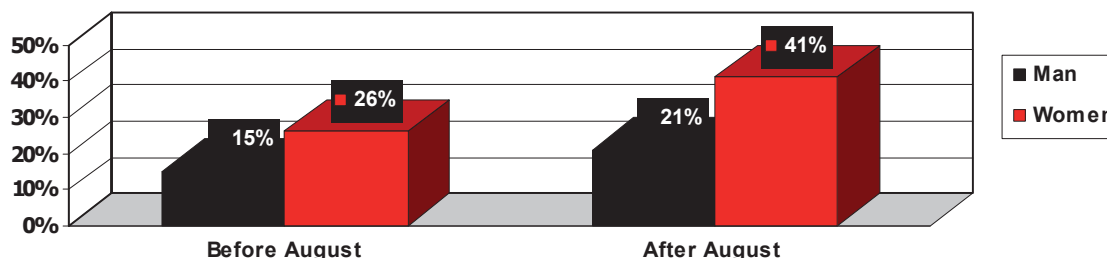
The most available possessions to IDPs are mattresses (62.9 percent) and beds (61.0). Less than a fifth of the respondents (19.7 percent and 16.8 percent) have pillows and blankets. Displaced persons point to the shortage of linen as a serious problem. At the best, linen was provided to them only once and they do not have a possibility to change linen.



Graph 1
Shortage of Beds, Mattresses, Linen, Blankets, and Pillows

The main shortage is indicated in regard to footwear, 87.9 percent points that they do not have footwear and clothes, as 80.7 percent complain on its scarcity.

Men and women differ in the evaluation of their health, both before August and in September. Men evaluate it more positively than women, but the deterioration after August events is evident and almost similar for both. Share of persons evaluating their health as bad doubled, both among men as well as among women. Hence, health along with the psychological well-being are significant problems that assistance should deal with.



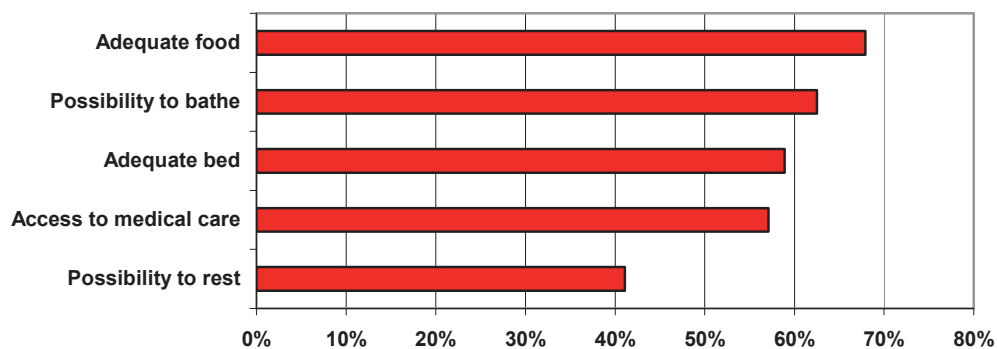
Graph 2
Share of Men and Women Who Evaluated their Health Conditions as Bad

The results of the survey once again demonstrated greater concern of women compared to men, on health related matters. More women (87.8 percent) than men (79.5 percent) indicate that their families require medication, and far more women (62.7 percent) than men (46.1 percent) were examined by doctors. Furthermore, women (61.8 percent against 48.7 percent of men) were more knowledgeable about where to appeal for health services, in addition, more women (35.3 percent) than men (24.5 percent) consulted psychologist.

Both, women (53.7 percent) and men (49.3 percent) prefer the doctors to visit them at their place of residence, rather than visiting clinics. Women and men also differ in their opinions on the pattern of alcoholic consumption among men after displacement, while women consider that after displacement men consume more (30.4 percent), men (34.1 percent) on the contrary think that they consume less alcohol.

About seven percent of the respondents stated having a lactating mother in the family. Among these 69 persons named, 32.1 percent did not have a bed, 96 percent did not eat fruits, vegetables and dairy products on a daily basis.

Furthermore, 5.8 percent of respondents reported having a pregnant family member. **Among the mentioned 56 pregnant women, 67.9 percent pointed at not having adequate food, 62.5 percent at not having a possibility to bathe, 58.9 percent at inadequate bed, 57.1 percent at poor medical service, and 41.1 percent at the lack of opportunity to rest during the day.**



Graph 3
Needs of Pregnant Women

According to the survey, 13.4 percent of respondents pointed that they had a disabled person as a family member. In all respondents named 175 disabled persons as family members, among them, 67.6 percent were men and 32.4 percent women. 22.2 percent of the disabled IDPs did not have a bed, 83.6 percent lacked wheelchairs, and 26.5 percent were without disability pension.

The majority of IDPs (56.5 percent) pointed that they got information on assistance, shelter or return mostly from other IDPs, 37.4 percent pointed at media as one of the sources of information. Only 15.1 percent mentioned that they have received the relevant information directly from officials (Administrators of Collective Centres, central or local authorities).

There is a low level of participation of IDPs in the distribution of assistance in all regions alike. Only 18.9 percent states that their household members have ever participated in the distribution. A very small number of IDPs (12.2 percent) were consulted on aid distribution. A similar pattern like above emerges with the best situation in Kutaisi by way of 30.1 percent consulted, the worst in Tbilisi with 5.2 percent, and Gori in between with 17.7 percent. In addition, 67.1 percent of respondents pointed that they had an elected representative. The best situation among geographic locations in this regard is in Tbilisi, where 73.8 percent indicated at having an elected representative, while Gori (58.3 percent) and Kutaisi (57.9 percent) have a much similar situation.

68.4% - presumes that the distribution of the assistance is mostly fair. Respondents in Kutaisi point to least injustice (6.2%) and Gori respondents the most (16.1%), followed closely by Tbilisi (15.6%).

81.1% - states that their family members have never participated in the distribution of assistance. Participation of IDPs in the distribution of assistance is low in all regions.

10.9% - pointed that they were consulted on their relocation preferences (30% Kutaisi, 34.9% in Gori, and 5.2 percent in Tbilisi).

12.0% - of IDPs were consulted on aid distribution. Best situation is in Kutaisi with 30% being consulted, the worst in Tbilisi with 5%, and Gori in between with 18%.

67.1% - of respondents had one elected representative. Among those elected 62.6% were male and 37.4% - female.

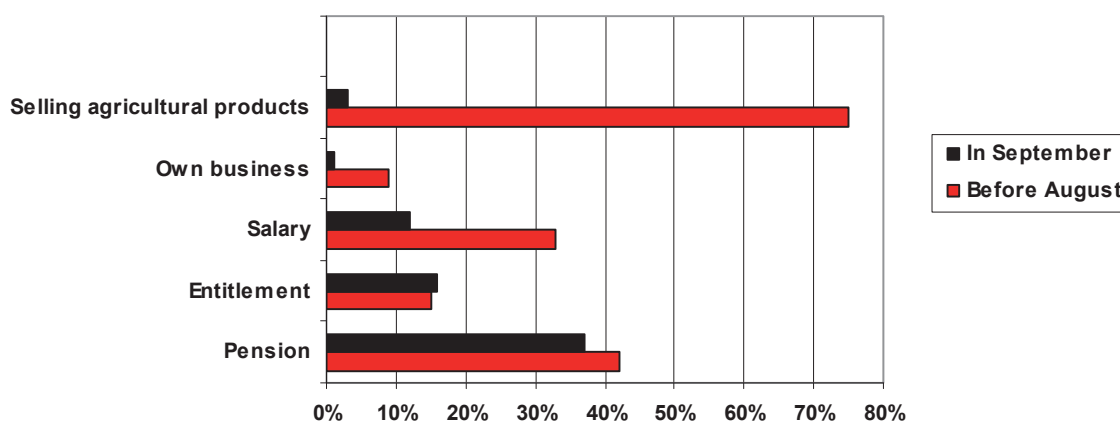
5.2% - of respondents reported having a Committee of IDPs

Among those 761 elected, 62.6 percent were males, 37.4 percent were females. Having committee was reported by 5.2 percent of respondents, and a big difference was found across regions again. If in Kutaisi 25.4 percent reported having committees, the corresponding number was 4.3 percent in Gori and only 1.4 percent in Tbilisi. Among those who did not have committees, an overwhelming majority (80.2 percent) expressed desire to form them. The condition of getting assistance only if present in Collective Center during distribution process, and not having information about the schedule of these distributions restricts IDPs mobility, and attendance of schools by IDP children.

14.7% - of the respondents pointed at having no income at all;
 60.8% - of men and 39.2% of women want to go abroad for work;
 92.1% - of respondent wants to continue the activities they pursued before displacement, while 38.3% expressed their desire to be retrained, and 39.3% wants to acquire a new profession;
 56% - of men and 44% of women have shown interest in taking loans to start/develop small businesses;

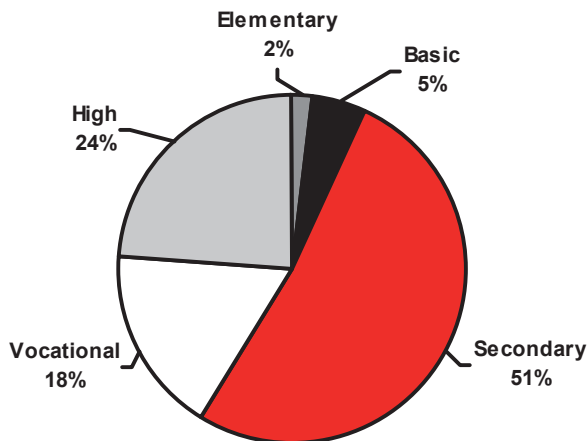
The impoverishment of displaced persons is obvious. The majority lost their property and main source of income and subsistence – harvest and domestic animals. Consequently, the portion of households with monthly income of more than GEL 200 decreased from 59.1 percent to 13 percent.

Farming was the major occupation for the majority of respondents (68.5 percent) before displacement. The respondents could mark as many occupations as needed, thus, some 15 percent stated they were employed in agricultural sector, while only 4.2 percent stated owning business and 2.4 percent being involved in trade. From the surveyed 3.1 percent were studying, 12.4 percent pensioners and 9.5 percent characterized themselves as unemployed. On this background it is not surprising that selling agricultural products constituted the main income of the population.



Graph 4
Main Sources of IDPs Income

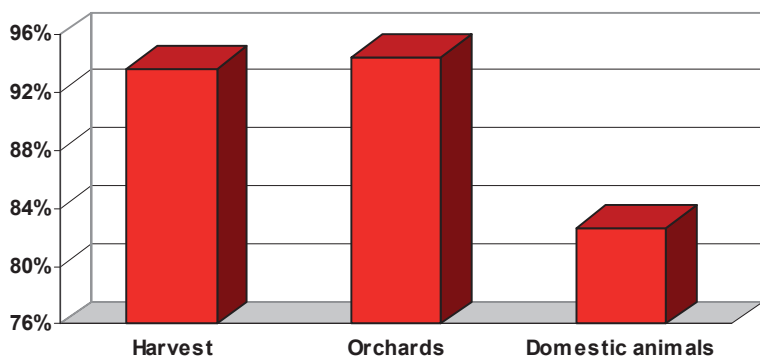
The adaptability to new realities, especially caused by traumatic events to a great extent depends on human capital. Majority of the respondents (52.1 percent) have secondary education.



Graph 5
Education Status of Respondents

Women have higher education than men, 18.8 percent of women compared to 15.8 percent of men have vocational education, and 25.8 percent of women, compared to 21.6 percent of men have University education. 38.3 percent expressed their desire to be retrained, while 39.3 percent wants to acquire a new profession, at the same time 56 percent of men and 44 percent of women have shown interest in taking loans to start/develop small businesses.

Large number of displaced persons lost almost all of their property, including house, land and crops, domestic animals, poultry, and their source of income. To make things worse, many do not possess reliable information about the condition of their property.



Graph 6
Percentage of IDPs Who Lost Harvest, Orchards, and Domestic Animals

Recommended Actions

These recommended actions target a broad spectrum of actors, especially, the Government of Georgia and humanitarian/development organizations, including UN agencies. Overcoming the crises and meeting the identified needs requires a collective effort and collaboration of multiple stakeholders including IDPs themselves, as they know the best solutions to their problems. Democratic governance foresees enabling environment for participatory decision-making, enhanced protection of human rights, and social justice.³ In this line, striving for greater gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the key aspects of democratic governance.

We have used a holistic approach while elaborating the recommendations; as along with multiple stakeholders, meeting the identified needs require complexity of long-term and short-term measures on the level of laws and policies, institutions and grassroots/communities. It is our firm belief that executing these recommendations increases the probability that crises response and recovery interventions produce equality of outcomes for both women and men, challenging rather than reinforcing existing gender inequalities.

1. Policy Measures

- Advocate with the government for speeding up the process of granting legal status to all IDPs who cannot return to their respective homes, which will be paired with relevant entitlements and benefits. It is critical that the assistance is bound to individual IDPs and rather than their presence in the Collective Centres during the distribution process;
- As the main source of income was selling of agricultural products that the big majority of IDPs lost due to August events, it is critical to provide them with one-time compensations;
- Advocate with the government and provide support to the government to implement Domestic Violence Law of 2006 and Action Plan providing victims/survivors of domestic violence (including sexual violence suffered during the conflict), with shelters, crises and rehabilitation centres and a hotline;
- Start a dialogue with the government for the elaboration of the Gender Equality Law providing for the establishment of a sustainable national gender equality mechanism responsible for mainstreaming gender equality principles in state programmes, as well as national coordination of gender equality policies;
- Advocate with the National Bank of Georgia to appeal to private banks for considering writing off loans and/or suspending accrual of the interest on the loans disbursed to the IDPs; The National Bank may encourage private banks through certain incentives e.g. offer beneficial provision levels for such non-performing loans;
- Follow up on the commitment made by the Ministry of Education and Science in relation to cancellation of tuition fees for displaced students;
- Study the needs of IDPs living in private dwelling, also study the needs of their host families to design and provide relevant support.

³ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*, 2008, 2.

2. Measures on the Level of Institutions

Shelter / space arrangements in Collective Centres

- To aim at locating only one family per room to meet minimal privacy needs of IDPs;
- In each medium and big size collective centre, allocate a space for: 1. pupils to do their homework; 2. kindergarten run by IDPs; 3. help/information desk officer; 4. cooking.

Water and sanitation

- Increase the number and improve the conditions of restrooms, make sure that there are separate restrooms for women and men in every collective centre;
- Ensure that access to water is provided in every collective centre;
- Provide possibilities for washing and bathing.

Food

- Provide balanced diet for children under the age of 5, and nutritious diets for pregnant women and lactating mothers;
- Provide vegetables, fruits and dairy products especially to children, pregnant, and lactating women and elderly;
- Provide food to returnees in the buffer zone;
- In planning rehabilitation and finding durable solutions provide IDP families with land for cultivation.

Non-food items

- Expedite the provision of beds to everyone, including mattresses, pillows, blankets, and linens;
- Speed up the provision of winter clothes and shoes. In addition to the provision of undergarments, socks, tights, and slippers;
- Provide with minimal facilities for cooking in the collective centres.
- Provide families having small children with baby carriages, diapers, chamber pots, and toys;
- Supply returnees with firewood for winter.

Health

- Organize sufficient number of mobile teams of doctors and psychologists (family doctors, gynaecologists, and psychologists) visiting the collective centres, buffer zone and other conflict affected villages (as soon as security situation allows);
- Attend to the psychological state of displaced persons through various outreach strategies: e.g. create a helpline with anonymous psychological counselling service; in cooperation with local NGOs, establish and support functioning of various groups for psychological rehabilitation, separately targeting women, girls, men, and boys;
- Promote healthy life-style, provide information on nutrition of children, people with special needs (pregnant and lactating mothers, chronically ill) and adults;
- Provide regularly and in prescribed quantities medication to chronically ill;
- Provide with wheel-chairs the disabled persons.

Protection

- Organize and support functioning of interagency (including NGOs) mobile teams of three/four persons that will visit collective centres, buffer zone and other conflict affected areas to observe human rights situation in the camps and report back to relevant government structures;
- Ensure recruitment of women among the deployed security forces in the buffer zone and other conflict affected areas, in addition ensure that police officers, both women and men, receive trainings in effective response to gender based violence (including domestic violence);
- Ensure that gender balance is observed while selecting persons serving as providers of information or other services to IDPs;
- Provide IDPs with legal counselling in relation to their liabilities towards banks, in cases of domestic violence, property restitution issues, etc;
- Return should be encouraged only after warranting high security conditions, including operation of Georgian police and demining of the territory.

Access to Information

- Support creation of an information bank on central level in the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation on the existing / planned assistance initiatives;
- Create information/help desks in all collective centres, working in close collaboration with the MRA information bank, and having at least one information officer (desirably an IDP) who would be equipped with relevant information on type, amount, timing, and criteria for receiving assistance, including the names of contact persons for respective assistance or services for IDPs to refer further;
- Strengthen national gender equality mechanism (Gender Equality Council under the Speaker of the Parliament) through supporting its newly established Gender Resource Centre in Gori (GRCG), aimed at the provision of information pertaining to relevant services offered by state and non-state actors (through hotline, which will be based on information database), gender mainstreaming and coordination of gender-related initiatives in humanitarian and recovery activities;
- Advocate with the government that IDPs are provided with information regarding realistic prospects of return and resettlement, as well as the amount and type of compensation, including other material aid that they can expect;
- Provide information to the population of affected zones, with special programs aimed at children as well as women and men on threats of landmines;
- Develop communication strategy in a way to ensure that messages are understandable for the majority of people who have only secondary education.

Economic conditions

- Support establishment of a kindergarten type facilities in the collective centres employing predominantly IDPs, which would allow IDP women to take part in capacity building initiatives that will be offered at an early recovery stage, as well as to engage in economic activities;
- Provide the possibility of generating income, especially to longer term IDPs targeting both women and men through their capacity building and vocational trainings as well as provision of micro credit;
- Advocate with the government that IDPs located in Tbilisi are provided with monthly tickets for transportation;
- Involve IDPs in rehabilitation process to avoid creating in them feeling of helplessness, dependence and to generate income.

3. Community Level Measures

- Inform IDPs about available health, psychological, legal and other services;
- Increase awareness of families on health-related risks and hygiene, targeting both women and men;
- Raise the awareness of IDPs with regard to domestic violence and respective protection measures as foreseen by the Domestic Violence Law, as well as on the exacerbated potential for human trafficking;
- Strengthen the capacities of women to voice their priorities, enhance the empowerment and economic reintegration of IDPs and other conflict affected women (heads of households, single mothers, and widows) through small-scale business, including agri-business and skills building;
- Support initiatives of displaced and conflict affected women to track funds allocated for meeting their needs and participate in the post-conflict recovery;
- Support peace activism, confidence building and people-to-people diplomacy initiatives through joint projects across ceasefire lines for youngsters, women and men on detrimental effects of conflicts, conflict prevention, resolution skills, and women's rights drawing on CEDAW, SCR 1325 and 1820;
- Strengthen women's groups to continuously monitor and document human rights concerns of displaced and other conflict affected women, as well as of women living in the conflict zones, thereby creating an effective mechanism for dialogue between women across ceasefire lines and relevant decision-makers to address documented human rights concerns.

Management of Collective Centres

- Advocate and support increased participation of IDP women and men in the management of collective centres through elected IDP committees (having quotas of at least 40 percent representation of one sex);
- Strengthen the capacity of elected committees jointly with a group of IDPs, and develop their general Terms of Reference to ensure that these committees:
 - advocates for increased transparency and fairness in aid distribution;
 - ensures the communication flow between IDPs and state structures;
 - Increases participation of IDPs in decision making concerning return, resettlement, and assistance issues.