EMERGENCY REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS IN GEORGIA


Georgia, 19-20 September 2008

Executive Summary

On 19–20 September, the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) led a Fact Finding Mission of European Parliamentarians to Georgia to assess the reproductive health situation of internally displaced persons and to evaluate the health infrastructure needs of the country in the aftermath of the conflict between the Republic of Georgia and the Russian Federation. The mission has been organised on the invitation of Hon. George Tsereteli MP, Vice Chairperson of the Georgian Parliament and Member of EPF Executive Committee in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund in Georgia (UNFPA).

Currently UNFPA estimates that approximately $600,000 is needed in the next few weeks to provide reproductive health services to the 128,000 internally displaced persons. Of the 128,000 IDPs, 20,000 are reproductive age women (15-49), and 2,000-3,000 are estimated to be pregnant. The damage to the reproductive health (RH) infrastructure that was established is not yet calculated, the health infrastructure around Gori is destroyed. UNFPA has been active through mobile units in four regions and is providing emergency obstetric care, counselling, and 'dignity kits' which include basic items for sanitation.

$59 Million will be needed to rehabilitate the country in the long-term (3 years), according to the joint "Flash Appeal" released and revised shortly after the crises by the UN Agencies operating in the country.

The Delegation Members

The delegation included: Hon. Kirsten Brosbøl, MP (Denmark), Chairwoman of the Danish Cross-Party Network for Sexual Health, Hon. Neena Gill, MEP (UK), Member of the Committee on Legal Affairs of the European Parliament, Hon. Carina Hägg, MP (Sweden), Member of Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Swedish Parliament, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and EPF Executive Committee, Hon. Jean Lambert, MEP (UK), Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and EP's Working Group on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Development, Hon. Hilde Vautmans, MP (Belgium), Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian Parliament and EPF Executive Committee Member, Dr. Wolfgang Wodarg, MP (Germany), Member of the Health Committee of the Bundestag Chair of the Health Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Ms. Louise Lee-Jones, (UK), Representative of RAISE Initiative on RH Access, Information and Services in Emergencies of Marie Stopes International.

Tbilisi

In Tbilisi, the Parliamentarians visited the temporary shelters of internally displaced persons living in schools and other public premises. Four UNFPA Mobile RH Teams are attending 22 collective IDPs centres and an additional 5th Mobile Team is urgently needed to meet the needs of the population in this state of emergency. At the office of EC/UNFPA Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in South Caucasus (RHIYC), Parliamentarians witnessed the assembling of UNFPA RH "dignity kits", compiled by
UNFPA staff and youth volunteers. They held meetings with the representatives of Government, Parliament and UN Coordination Unit for Humanitarian Response. Georgia is one of the best examples of the ongoing UN reform of humanitarian crisis response, where 12 UN agencies and 45 NGOs have joined their effort to provide support to the population in need.

Gori

In Gori the mission members visited the tent city, monitored by UN agencies and international organisations, specifically UNHCR, UNFPA and Red Cross. The tent city currently houses 1,200 persons, out of them 800 young people (2-20 years old). UNFPA Mobile Team is providing RH services to IDPs: 7 women have in the mean time delivered babies, 11 are currently pregnant and attended by Mobile Team's doctors and nurses. The Parliamentarians witnessed the distribution of UNFPA RH "dignity kits" to the IDPs. Further Parliamentarians attended the opening ceremony of new Youth Friendly Reproductive Health Centre at the local Gori University, established and launched within the framework of EC/UNFPA Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus. The centre will offer RH information, counselling, services and supplies to young people in the town. The delegation also met with the representatives of the local City Council and learned from doctors and school head masters about the urgent needs of the population after the conflict.
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Background Information

Georgia has been trying to address the issue of its internally displaced persons since the beginning of its territorial tensions in the early 1991-1994. Since that time Georgia was already hosting 223,000 IDPs. Adding up 31,000 most recently internally displaced individuals, which are not expected to return home in the foreseeable futures leaves the country with a total of 254,000 internally displaced population.

The multiethnic region of Caucasus – both North and South has become an epicentre of ethnic clashes and military actions after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Large portion of the population in the neighbouring to Georgia Armenia and Azerbaijan are equally displaced.

To learn more about the Reproductive Health Needs in the South Caucasus:

European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF)
EPF is a Brussels based Parliamentary network that serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination for the 25 all-party parliamentary Groups in Parliaments throughout Europe that focus on improving sexual and reproductive health and rights at home and abroad through national and regional health and foreign aid budgets. Website: www.iepfpd.org

United Nations Population Fund in Georgia - UNFPA
UNFPA Office in Georgia was established in 1999. Since 22 August, UNFPA’s Georgia Country Office has deployed four reproductive health mobile teams to four cities (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Rustavi) to provide IDP women with examinations and counselling, as well as medicines and information, education and communication materials on reproductive health. more at: http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=1179

EC/UNFPA Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus
The Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC) is a partnership led by UNFPA with the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, with the support of the European Union which aims to make sustainable improvements in the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. www.4uth.ge
Main Findings

- The conflict led to the displacement of an additional **128,000** people throughout the country, who have partially returned to their homes in the recent weeks. Although many of them will be able to return to their homes, the Government and international organisations estimated that about **31,000** persons will remain long-term IDPs as their homes are now in South Ossetian controlled territory. This includes displaced people from the villages in South Ossetia and North of Gori.

- The Government and UNFPA estimate that 5,000 persons will be able to return home before winter and an additional 23,000 will be able to return after the winter 2008/2009 following the rehabilitation of destroyed territories.

Health and Reproductive Health Findings

- The region of Shida Kartli (capital Gori) has been mostly affected by military actions, where **13 out of 19 medical facilities** were destroyed.

- Doctors are overloaded and are working under heavy and difficult conditions. 2 doctors were killed during the conflict in Gori. Doctors from Medicines Sans Frontiers and Polish Maltesers arrived and are helping local doctors. Many of the Georgian medical personnel are personally affected by the conflict with family members now displaced.

- UNFPA has redirected its four Mobile Reproductive Health Teams that used to operate throughout the country to meet the needs of newly displaced people. These teams are providing reproductive health services in 22 Collective Centres throughout the affected zones. The services include: ultrasound examinations, family planning counselling and provision of reproductive health supplies. A new 5th Mobile Reproductive Health Team is needed to be able to address the displaced persons’ needs and to serve the rest of the population, not affected by the conflict. Each mobile team includes **1 doctor and 1 nurse**. UNFPA urges to offer psychological and psychosocial counselling (including pre-abortion counselling) to women in distress. UNFPA has been distributing “family dignity kits” (hygiene items, such as soaps, shampoos, toilette paper, razors for men and hygiene pads for women etc.)

- Many families are dispersed: their family members are either still missing or located on the territory of South Ossetia. The deteriorated economic situation and the feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty have led to an increased demand of abortions, even in cases of planned pregnancies. Stress has caused a number of premature deliveries. Many pregnancies are the result of sexual violence.

- Although abortion in Georgia is legal up to 12 weeks, now in case of an abortion request after this date, a doctor can decide to conduct an abortion on the economic grounds upon women’s request.

- Among the Collective Centres supervised by UNFPA, **58 babies** have been born during the conflict. UNFPA registered **12 miscarriages**. The Government and the UN Agencies have been providing infant food and hygiene items for babies.

- As pregnant women do not wish to live in female centres and prefer to stay with their families additional assistance must be offered to the whole family often consisting of 3-4 persons. Often mothers refuse to breastfeed their babies due to the unhygienic situation and the availability of bottle feeding. In reaction to this, Ministry of Health of Georgia launched a programme to re-start breast-feeding.

- Earlier persistent diseases such as anaemia (iron deficiency) have now become more severe.
Tent City in Gori

Immediately after the conflict UNHCR constructed a “Tent city” which currently houses 1200 persons, 800 of which are young people (2-20 years old). The tent city is monitored by UN agencies and international organisations, specifically UNHCR, UNFPA and the Red Cross. UNFPA Mobile Team is providing RH services to IDPs: 7 women have in the meantime delivered babies, 11 are currently pregnant and attended by the Mobile Team’s doctors and nurses. UNFPA Polyclinic is providing reproductive health services to the IDPs in case of deliveries. UNFPA distributes “dignity kits” to the IDPs on a regular basis. Provision of hot meals (10,000 meals a day) has considerably decreased or zeroed the spread of gastroenterological infections.

- The UN agencies operating in the tent have noted the considerable drug use increase amongst young people.
- Due to loss of regular occupation (such as agricultural activities, harvest collection etc.) new income generation activities and occupation for men, women and young people are urgently needed. To create some income generation, UNFPA has been employing young people for assembling the ‘family dignity kits’.
- As a result of bombings, schools were badly damaged in the affected territories (35 villages are currently occupied). There is no heating and no inventory to start the classes. There are not enough textbooks for the IDP children. As winter approaches, children need warm clothes and shoes to be able to attend classes. Transportation from collective centres/tent city to school should be provided as schools are often located far away from the collective centre or the tent city. To help children and young people overcoming the stressful situation, psychological rehabilitation centres should be opened in schools.

The Members of Delegation found necessary:

- To ensure that the reproductive health needs of women, pregnant women and infants are met. This includes family planning services and supplies, hygiene supplies and psychosocial counselling and care for the victims of sexual violence.
- To establish and launch the 5th Reproductive Health Mobile Team to serve the IDPs needs and to be able to still attend the rest of the population. The launch of the 5th Mobile Team will allow to provide more services and supplies as well as medical and psychosocial counselling to the IDPs, including the victims of violence.
- To create the new employment and income generating opportunities to people who have lost their regular occupation, including young people and to avoid the increase of crime or drug use. This includes free time occupation for young people.
- In schools to ensure that the necessary inventory for classes such as school books and other necessary items as well as transportation from collective centres to schools is provided.
- To direct funds to rehabilitation and reconstruction of the health infrastructure in the affected territories to ensure the soonest re-opening and regular functioning of the health care facilities.
- At the upcoming Donors’ Conference in Brussels scheduled to take place in October 2008 to ensure that humanitarian needs of IDPs, notably social, health and reproductive health needs are adequately reflected and addressed in the donor commitments and that donor efforts are well coordinated and not overlapping.
**Programme of the Parliamentary Fact Finding Mission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 18 Sept 08</td>
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<td>Departure from home countries</td>
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| Friday 19 Sept 08 | 04:00 | Arrival to Georgia, Tbilisi, pick-up from the airport, accommodation at the hotel, rest |
| 13:00-14:45 | Lunch Briefing with  
- Hon. George Tsereteli, Vice Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, Member of EPF Executive Committee  
- Mr. Peer Sieben, Country Director UNFPA Georgia  
- Ms. Tamar Khomasuridze, Assistant Representative UNFPA Georgia  
**Venue: Hotel Ambasadori** |
| 15:00-16:30 |  
Staging area for RH Relief to IDPs: visit to UN and RHIYC\(^1\) offices  
**UN Office:**  
- Mr. Robert Watkins, UN Resident Coordinator and UN Humanitarian Relief Coordinator  
- Welcome by Mr. Peer Sieben, UNFPA Country Director for Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey  
- UNFPA programme and humanitarian response  
- Questions and answers  
**Venue: UN Conference Hall, UN House, 9 Eristavi st, Tbilisi**  
**RHIYC\(^1\) Office:**  
- Introduction to the work of youth volunteers, while compiling ‘dignity kits’ and other supplies for IDPs  
**Venue: RHIYC Office: 28 Abashidze st, Tbilisi** |
| 16:45-18:00 | Site Visit:  
Temporary Shelters of Internally Displaced Persons in Tbilisi  
1-2 centres |
| 18:00 – 18:30 | Meeting with Hon. David Bakradze, Speaker of the Parliament |
| 18:45-20:00 | Back to hotel – refreshment break |
| 20:00 | Dinner with representatives of French Embassy (current EU Presidency), EC Delegation to Georgia, Embassy of UK, Germany, Sweden, Parliament and Government representatives, UNFPA representatives  
**Venue: Restaurant “Bread House” 7 Gorgasali St.** |

\(^1\) EC/UNFPA Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus: www.4uth.ge
## Day 2
### Time

#### Saturday
#### 20 Sept 08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>07:00-8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast at the hotel</td>
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<td>08:00</td>
<td>Departure to Gori - region most affected by the military interventions</td>
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<td>09:00-12:00</td>
<td>Arrival to Gori&lt;br&gt;Visiting IDPs tent city in Gori&lt;br&gt;  - Welcome and briefing on humanitarian situation in Gori; UNHCR Staff  &lt;br&gt;  - Familiarisation with the work of UNFPA: RH mobile clinics and their staff  Dignity Kits for families and youth  - Meeting the IDPs  &lt;br&gt;Attending the ceremony of opening the Youth Reproductive Health Centre within the framework of RHIYC²  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Venue: Gori University</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Meeting with local governors and community leaders and youth IDPs of Gori  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Venue: Gori Town Hall</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Departure from Gori</td>
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<td>14:30–16:00</td>
<td>Working Lunch with Mr. Alexander Kvitashvili, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Affairs  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Venue: Old Mill Courtyard located between Gori and Tbilisi</strong>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Right Coast of river Mtkvari, Digomi Massivi, Beliashvili St.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30</td>
<td>Arrival to Tbilisi</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:30-18:00</td>
<td>Press Conference  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Venue: Parliament of Georgia</strong></td>
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<td>20:00</td>
<td>Dinner with representatives of Parliament, French Embassy and UNFPA representatives  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Late night</strong>  &lt;br&gt;Departure from Georgia</td>
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#### Sunday
#### 21 Sept 08

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>Arrival to home countries</td>
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² Establishing youth friendly reproductive Health Centres throughout the country is one of the goals of the EC/UNFPA funded Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in South Caucasus (RHIYC)