

## 1 Executive Summary

### Background

This external evaluation was carried out by an independent consulting company in November and December 2007 in Georgia (including Abkhazia) and took place during an ongoing intervention. Its objective as per ToR was to “analyse the outcome/impact of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) co-financed United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) programme for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees... and to point out its strengths and weaknesses”. The considered observation period was 2004 to 2007.

Although at a first glance, both, refugees and IDPs were to be treated as equally relevant target groups for SDC, it soon became evident<sup>1</sup> that the main Population of Concern (PoC) for SDC are the IDPs, in particular the IDPs of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. These IDPs represent also the absolute majority of IDPs and refugees in Georgia (about 95%). In line with these considerations, the Evaluation Team concentrated, though not restricted, its project analysis on this group and on the years 2006-2007.

The year 2007 marks the highest relative contribution of SDC to UNHCR for their current prime PoC (IDPs), IDPs in Abkhazia, i.e.74.2%<sup>2</sup>. During the years 2006 and 2007 a combination of important factors for this evaluation occurred: (1) increased emphasis on IDPs culminated in State IDP strategy adoption, (2) strengthened coordination between UNHCR and SDC under the framework of the Strategic Partnership for Abkhazia (SPA), (3) definition of IDPs as a separate population of concern for UNHCR in its Annual Programme Budget (AB 402), and (4) consequently, SDC coded a specific earmarking towards IDPs only for its multilateral contributions to UNHCR.

The projects of the UNHCR sub-project portfolio of AB 402 follow either, in the majority of the projects, a) a *bottom up approach* – i.e. considering the issues arising from the implementation of UNHCR sub-projects in Abkhazia/West Georgia; or b) a *top-down approach* – i.e. reviewing the support provided by UNHCR and by SDC to the Georgian Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation - MRA). Of the 12 projects in the portfolio 6 (one top down and five bottom up projects) have been chosen for interviews and document analysis.

### Evaluation of the Multilateral Contributions

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<sup>1</sup> In interviews conducted and documentation analysed.

<sup>2</sup> See Table 2.

### ***Relevance***

Although the current “caseload” of Chechen Refugees (PoC of some 1,100 persons) is much less than the one of IDPs (approx 235,000 IDPs from Abkhazia) UNHCRs Executive Committee (EXCOM) appropriation for 2007 of 2.1 Mio USD is broken down to refugees (1.3 Mio USD) and IDPs/returnees (0.8 Mio USD). The prioritisation of UNHCR expressed in budget allocations at HQ level does not fully reflect SDC’s priority for IDPs.

A non-earmarked contribution would have likely directed SDC’s multilateral contribution to the overall budget, and proportionally a larger amount to the population of refugees. With the earmarking starting in 2006/2007 this risk has been clearly reduced. In 2007 the contribution of SDC to the initial allocation to AB 402 for IDPs in Abkhazia of 371,000 USD to the overall of 500,000 USD is with about 75% significant.

The needs expressed in the sub-projects are relevant for Abkhazia. Sub-projects are coherent with the SPA signed in 2005 and relate on national level to the State IDP Strategy. The State IDP Strategy puts the IDP theme visibly on the agenda and sets out a twofold approach – return of IDPs to Abkhazia and integration of the PoC (IDP mainstreaming). It appears likely that the IDP issue will not disappear from the Government of Georgia (GoG) agenda again, but it is difficult to anticipate which is its real relevance for the GoG.

### ***Efficiency***

At field level, a project cycle (funding) of typically one year of which 6 to 9 months for planning and implementation sets the frame for Implementing Partners (IPs). Possible prolongation - if foreseen at all - is mostly indicated informally without contract signature. UNHCR country offices can only enter into discussions once funding is available. This has led in several of the randomly interviewed partners to interruption of implementation, in particular of those NGOs which do not have an institutional funding. Typically one year is too short to achieve the set-out objectives, and definitively too short to efficiently engrain a confidence building objective. UNHCR has taken an appropriate step in prolonging the planning cycle from one to two years, as reflected by its bi-annual Country Operations Plan. However, the respective budgeting is still developed on a one-year-basis.

At national level, the process of consultation and cooperation which has led to the State IDP Strategy and IDP Action Plan is without precedence in the IDP discussion in Georgia. In this respect the joint efforts of the inter-ministerial working group, donors and civil society can be seen as a valuable result as such.

However, looking at the cost-benefit aspect, the expenses have to be critically contrasted to the concrete results achieved beyond the State IDP Strategy document and a draft Action Plan.

### ***Effectiveness***

The UNHCR strategy for Georgia aims to contribute to empowerment and self reliance of the PoC. The organisational structures currently in place at UNHCR are more appropriate for “classical” short-term humanitarian relief in acute emergency situations. The portfolio of the subprojects is geared to “development” issues, as income generating activities and active participation in the market.

It can be summarised that in the sample projects visited the goods and services delivered by the small scale sub-projects have at least partly reached the beneficiaries. The use of goods and services remains in some of the observed cases limited, e.g. full use of computers is constrained due to power cuts or non-functioning of the goods delivered.

### ***Impact***

At national level, the State IDP Strategy was developed in close cooperation between the GoG, the group of donors and representatives of the civil society, and then adopted in February 2007. The Action Plan was planned to be presented for approval before the end of 2007. Due to changes of composition of GoG that occurred in late 2007, the process has been put on hold. Currently it cannot be foreseen if and when this process will be reassumed.

The GoG is highly centralised. Local authorities in most cases do not possess financial and human resources as well as required competence. This leads to a missing link between the national level and the population of concern at grassroots level.

At local level the State IDP Strategy does not set out any clear role for the local authorities. The Action Plan, which is only available in draft version of October 2007, also makes only generic mention of the role of local authorities.

At local level, the SPA can potentially contribute to an impact in the region, once the Strategy is translated into a concrete programme approach with sub-projects serving the programme objectives and allocation of funds and capacity building for the local operators.

For the sub-projects geared to IDPs it is generally too early to speak about impact.

### ***Sustainability***

At national level, there is no indication so far that the GoG/MRA will be supporting the IDP Secretariat beyond project end 12/2007. Since its existence the costs have been paid by UNDP and UNHCR, and only premises have been provided by the MRA. At the point of the

evaluation it did not appear likely that MRA will make funds available to support the Secretariat institutionally at the current cost structure. At present, there is not phase-out strategy defined.

The IDP Secretariat is not embedded into institutional structures of the MRA or other entities of the GoG. It has to be seen as a (temporary) structure strongly driven by the international donor group. So far there are no ToR for the IDP Secretariat as such or an elaboration on how it could be integrated into the institutional structures.

In general, apart of some exceptions, the level of institutional and management capacity must be assessed as low. The situation at the MRA at central level is also characterized by high staff turnover and non-competitive salaries.

## Conclusions

- Earmarking of SDC multilateral contributions have been increasingly directed to IDPs as main case load. Through clear allocation of contributions the visibility and “ownership” of SDC has increased over the period of observation. In 2007, SDC contributed almost 75% to the original annual programme budget for this PoC (AB 402).
- The work of UNHCR and thus SDC’s multilateral contribution is highly relevant for the population of concern.
- SDC bilateral funding is used complementary and additionally to multilateral funds, and is in particular important for the SPA.
- SDC financed consultants have generally provided a good value added, in secondments to UNHCR Offices and as facilitator in the development process of the State IDP Strategy and IDP Action Plan.
- Subproject implementation within the SPA started to deliver results. The implementation cycle of one year is too short, in particular for projects which are not geared to acute emergencies.
- SDC and UNHCR have started using a results-based management (RBM) approach, which needs be further emphasised and geared towards results and impact.
- UNHCR considers and calls their annual programme interim report following a RBM matrix format, the system is *de facto* predominantly activity based. The logframe format is not adequate according to technical standards.
- SDC’s initiatives and funds have contributed to advance the IDP discussion at national level.
- There are initiatives on national and grassroots level, but so far little effect in particular on local level.

- At field or project level, there is some impact prospect. Short-term project implementation and sometimes lack of a coordinated implementation of projects by different IP are currently setting limits to the impact.
- Though the GoG's State IDP strategy is clearly a breakthrough, it is not clear in how far there is a buy in to the IDP Action Plan and its implementation.
- The SDC secondments have been generally much welcomed in the Gali field office, most articulated by partners interviewed in case of the last secondment in 2006. The selection of the appropriate profile of the secondees is crucial, in particular the interpersonal skills and previous experience with the target group as well as institutional experience with/within the UN family, i.e. a likeminded person.
- The approach/concept is moving from humanitarian aid towards development interventions, including income generating activities.
- There will not be a sustainable State IDP Strategy and Action Plan without assumed ownership of the GoG. Otherwise it might be a plan according to the values and preferences of the international donor community with a low likelihood that it will be implemented.