

UNICEF's Response to Georgia Crisis:

Real Time Evaluation

March 2009

Report by:

**Abhijit Bhattacharjee(Consultant)
Mathew Varghese, Team Leader (UNICEF)**

Abbreviations

ACF:	Action contra le Faim
CAP:	Consolidated Appeal Process
CCC:	Core Commitments for Children
CFS:	Child Friendly Space
CO:	Country Office
CR:	Country Representative
ERW:	Explosives Remnants of War
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GOG:	Government of Georgia
GoRF:	Government of Russian Federation
HO:	Head Office
HQ:	Headquarter
HR:	Human Resources
IASC:	Inter Agency Standing Committee
IDP:	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL:	International Humanitarian Law
IND:	Intermediate Needs Assessment
IRA:	Initial Rapid Assessment
IRC:	International Rescue Committee
JNA:	Joint Needs Assessment
NFI:	Non Food Items
OCHA:	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD/DAC:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development/Development Assistance Committee
RD:	Regional Director
RO:	Regional Office
RTE:	Real Time Evaluation
ToR:	Terms of Reference
ToT:	Training of Trainers
UNCT:	United National Country Team
UNDAF:	United National Development Assistance Framework
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH:	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
WFP:	World Food Programme

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Section 1: Introduction, Objectives and Methodology.....	7
1.1 Introduction:	7
1.2 Purpose, Scope and Objectives of the Evaluation:	7
1.3 Methods Employed:	9
1.4 Constraints:.....	10
1.5 Structure of the Report:.....	11
Section 2: Overview of the Georgia Crisis and UNICEF Response	11
2.1 Background and Scale of the Humanitarian Crisis:.....	11
2.1.1 UNICEF Office in Georgia:	11
2.1.2 Humanitarian Situation arising from the S. Ossetia Crisis:	12
2.1.3 An Overview of Humanitarian Response:	14
2.2 UNICEF Response:.....	14
2.2.1 UNICEF's Expenditure on the Georgia Response:.....	15
Section 3: Key Findings: Assessing UNICEF's Response.....	16
3.1 Mobilisation of Early Response:	16
3.1.1 Mobilisation of Early Response and Rapid Deployment:	16
3.1.2 Relief Supplies and Procurement:	18
3.1.3 Sitreps and Communication:	19
3.2 Needs Assessment and Humanitarian Access:	21
3.3 Cluster Coordination and Leadership:	23
3.3.1 WASH Sector/Cluster:	23
3.3.2 Coordination of Child Protection and Nutrition sub-groups:.....	24
Section 4: OECD/DAC Criteria for Humanitarian Evaluations	25
4.1 Coverage:	25
4.2 Relevance and Appropriateness:	27
4.3 Effectiveness and Efficiency:	29
4.4 Coordination:	30
4.5 Impact:	31
4.6 Connectedness and Coherence:.....	31
4.7 Protection:	33
Section 5: Key Conclusions and Recommendations	35
5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations for Georgia Operations:.....	35
5.2 Conclusions & Recommendations for UNICEF's Global Response:	37

Annexes:

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for Real time Evaluation of UNICEF's Georgia Response

Annex 2: List of People Interviewed

Annex 3: List of Key Documents Studied

Executive Summary

Introduction:

In August 2008, conflict broke in and around South Ossetia, involving the Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian military, leading to both internal and external displacement of large numbers of people, including children. Although a large number of the civilians displaced by the conflict remained within the Georgian territory, there were substantial number of people who fled to the Russian Federation (North Ossetia and beyond) to escape the fighting. Humanitarian aid by UNICEF was provided from both sides. This evaluation, however, has concentrated on the UNICEF response within Georgia where over 80 per cent of displacements occurred.

From the findings of the evaluation six aspects can be concluded: (i) UNICEF, as the leading international children's agency with an ongoing development programme in Georgia and Russia, was quick to respond to the needs of the conflict-affected children and their families, providing supplies to the most vulnerable within the first few days of the crisis. (ii) There was passion, professionalism, commitment and urgency to respond at all levels of staff -- management, programme and administrative (national and international). (iii) The mechanisms, systems and tools were in place and they clicked together from Office of Emergency Programmes in New York, Regional Office and Country office to respond effectively. For example, UNICEF HQ and RO, working in tandem with the CO, were able to recruit and deploy a substantial team for the response fairly rapidly including experienced staff from the region. (iv) UNICEF was a team player within the UN system and was respected by other humanitarian organisation for its leadership and policy dialogue with authorities. (v) A complex crisis caused by international conflict requires sensitive handling and making delicate strategic choices during the management of the response and this report points out the need for refinements and managing a balanced response.

UNICEF Response:

In Georgia, working in concert with other humanitarian agencies and the Government of Georgia, UNICEF launched a substantial response to meet the immediate needs of the affected communities. Among UNICEF's initial concerns were the displaced women and children living without safe water, basic hygiene items and access to sanitary facilities. As IDPs began moving in thousands to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi and other cities, UNICEF delivered safe drinking water and other essential supplies, including emergency hygiene kits, to over 13,000 people in IDP collective centres. As part of the back-to-school campaign, UNICEF distributed school-in-a-box and recreation kits for all conflict-affected school-aged children in Georgia. Another top priority during the first days of the conflict was to identify the most pressing needs of children and ensure that these needs got adequately addressed in the appeals and joint needs assessment. During the first two months of emergency operations, UNICEF provided some US \$ 3 million worth of supplies and services.

In addition, as the organisation having designated lead-role for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster as well as for cluster sub-groups on nutrition, child protection and education, UNICEF also provided leadership to the entire humanitarian community on these issues.

The UNICEF office in the country before the crisis comprised a small team of about fifteen people, with focus on development and policy issues. The Regional Office (RO) and UNICEF HQ provided leadership, mobilised the surge and rapidly put in place systems and procedures to enable the small CO team to scale up its operations in line with the CCC. All the different units and departments in the RO and the HQ worked in tandem to enable the small Georgia CO to scale up its capacity and launch a rapid response. Overall, UNICEF's response went well, led by the RO which declared it a level three 'global' emergency.

The response had to deal with major challenges as well: lack of humanitarian access and political nature of the crisis, including complex international political ramifications of the crisis, made the delivery of humanitarian response highly complicated.

Lessons and Recommendations:

Deployment, Cluster Leadership and Staff Capacity:

Summary Lesson:

Over the past several years, UNICEF has developed its surge capacity for rapid response and was able to deploy staff rapidly in Georgia through internal as well as external recruitments. It needs to further invest in building regional staff capacity as well as in ensuring that all staff deployed in emergencies are well oriented on various new tools and mechanisms for global humanitarian response.

Recommendations:

S. NO	Recommendation	Target
R9	UNICEF should now aim to mobilise self-directed teams who need minimum induction and orientation and are able to become operational within a few hours of arriving in country. They should be aware of IASC modalities, funding mechanisms, field assessments, cluster approach and will be expected to work with minimum supervision.	HQ
R10	One specific area where UNICEF needs to develop expertise, apart from its cluster-focus, is on cash transfers to affected communities which is becoming increasingly important as an emergency response tool in situations with functioning local markets ¹ .	HQ/EMOPS
R7	UNICEF needs to continue investing in enhancing staff capacity, both national and international, by ensuring that emergency response is mainstreamed within COs in the regions and ensure strategic human resource deployment in the regions as part of regional emergency preparedness. Annual regional meetings of sector focal points (as is the case for social policy, health and education specialists for example) to further develop regional	RO

¹ It is understood that EMOPS has recently come up with guidelines for cash programming which is now being rolled out.

	thinking about cash benefits, cluster accountabilities, responses to new areas such as WASH, funding mechanisms such as CERF and Flash appeals and to ensure that all focal points (including the Representatives and Deputy Representatives) are kept abreast of the latest thinking on IHL and emergency response.	
R11	Globally UNICEF needs to have a pool of senior staff with technical as well as cluster-leadership skills in WASH, nutrition and child protection who can be deployed in major emergencies.	HQ

Communication and Humanitarian Access:

Summary Lesson:

Given UNICEF's unique mandate as the custodian of Child rights conventions, it has an obligation to do the best in all its powers to highlight issues of violations of CRC and international humanitarian law as they affect children and women. Given the sensitivities of such complex issues, this requires serious engagement at the senior management level of UNICEF HQ in order to leverage support for any communication and advocacy for humanitarian access.

Recommendation:

S. NO	Recommendation	Target
R12	Streamline and rationalise approach to developing communication messages focusing on child rights and humanitarian needs in complex crises in line with the CRC and CCC, so as to ensure that UNICEF retains its pre-eminent position as the leading child rights organisation and an impartial and neutral humanitarian agency. Broad outline of messages targeted on specific issues such as conflict, natural disaster; displacement etc., could be pre-prepared in advance and be issued with fast fine tuning to specific contexts.	HQ

Partnership, Beneficiary Participation and Accountability to Beneficiaries:

Summary Lesson:

UNICEF could significantly enhance the timeliness and speed of its response if it develops more strategic and programmatic relations with its partners, especially those with whom it has long-established relationships. At the same time, its response could be more effective if its response provided space for beneficiary participation and demonstrated greater accountability to the affected communities.

Recommendations:

S. NO	Recommendation	Target
R13	Move to programme financing from project financing in relation to long term partners.	HQ
R14	Successive evaluations have shown that beneficiary participation and accountability to beneficiaries has remained a weak area for UNICEF (as well as for other UN agencies), and hence a global strategy needs to be developed outlining practical actions and standards that UNICEF will follow in all emergency response.	HQ

Recommendations for the Current Response in Georgia:

Recommendations:

S. NO	Recommendation	Target
R8	Develop framework agreements with suppliers of standard relief items in different regions, and pre-identity logistics solutions (freight and transport) within the regions wherever regional capacity exists.	RO (with support from Copenhagen)
R1	UNICEF, as nutrition sub-group lead, to facilitate quick gathering of empirical evidences to make a case to donors and GOG for complementary nutritional support to children from IDP families who will continue to live as IDPs for much longer than initially anticipated. At the same time, UNICEF may collaborate with WFP which is already initiating a cash transfer system and explore developing the cash transfer as a viable mechanism for the ongoing response.	CO
R2	WASH programming needs to recognise that there is now a second wave of displacement as people are being moved to Government-built settlements, and there are major WASH needs that remain unmet which need significant investment. At the same time, continuing advocacy with the GOG needs to focus on the critical need to pay adequate attention to WASH infrastructure in settlements that are under construction.	CO
R3	While continuing to focus on child poverty nationwide through its normal programming, UNICEF needs to conduct research into the child poverty and effect of social sector reform on women and children among IDPs and design appropriate interventions for medium- to long-term.	CO
R4	UNICEF's programming needs to take into account the continuing humanitarian needs. UNICEF needs to continue to respond and advocate during the transition on the needs of women and children until sustainable normality is restored for women and children to acceptable levels in the settlements or places of return.	CO
R5	Explore mainstreaming and scaling up psychosocial programme as part of UNICEF's nationwide programme working with education authorities.	CO
R6	Strengthen the M & E system to be able to monitor and follow up on post-distribution of relief materials on an ongoing basis.	CO

Section 1:

Introduction, Objectives and Methodology

1.1 Introduction:

In August 2008, conflict broke in and around South Ossetia, involving the Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian military, leading to both internal and external displacement of large numbers of people, including children. UNICEF, as the leading international children's agency with an ongoing development programme in Georgia and Russia, was quick to respond to the needs of the conflict-affected children and their families, providing supplies to the most vulnerable within the first few days of the crisis. Because of the sudden nature of the conflict, many of those who were displaced and those returning to their towns and villages required essential, life-saving support.

UNICEF launched a substantial response in concert with other humanitarian agencies to meet the immediate needs of the affected communities. In addition, as the organisation having designated lead-role for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster as well as for cluster sub-groups on nutrition, child protection and education, UNICEF also provided leadership to the entire humanitarian community on these issues. This real time evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF's evaluation department in consultation with the Regional Office² and Country Office to assess UNICEF's role in the Georgia crisis response as well as to draw lessons for the future. Although the evaluation was conducted when the operation was scaling down and hence can be argued that it was not in real time, this evaluation used the established principles of real-time evaluation.

1.2 Purpose, Scope and Objectives of the Evaluation:

Purpose:

The evaluation will provide the UNICEF regional management and the Country Office (CO) and other departments and Units directly involved in the Georgia response with an objective assessment of the results - intended and unintended - of the operation. The evaluation should provide further recommendations to inform strategic choices in situations of humanitarian crisis caused by conflicts and to facilitate operational improvements aiming at strengthening assistance and protection to women and children in such situations.

² For Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS)

Scope:

The evaluation covered UNICEF's emergency intervention in Georgia from the onset of hostilities on August 8 until the month of December when the field work for the evaluation took place. The Georgia crisis response took place amidst the complexity of an armed conflict which erupted in and around South Ossetia involving Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian military. Although a large number of the civilians displaced by the conflict moved or remained within the Georgian territory, there were substantial number of people who fled to the Russian Federation (North Ossetia and beyond) to escape the fighting. Humanitarian aid, including by UNICEF, were being provided from both sides. However, this evaluation has concentrated on the UNICEF response within Georgia where over 80% of the displacements occurred; UNICEF's response within the Russian Territory was not covered in this evaluation.

Objectives of RTE:

The overall objectives of the real time evaluation (RTE) were to: (a) determine the effectiveness and relevance of UNICEF's evolving response to a humanitarian crisis, (b) provide real-time feed back into the factors and determinants for better results to women and children, (c) explore measures that will help sustain the results, d) provide lessons to improve the continuing programme and recovery and rehabilitation phase, and e) review the transitional context and examine forward planning³.

The following constituted the main focus of the RTE:

1) Results for children (make recommendations for long term results for children): How effective and timely was UNICEF and UN response to the crisis? To what extent the needs of the affected population, and children in particular, have been met?

- What results was the programme aiming for and what was achieved/what were the gaps?
- Effectiveness
- Timeliness
- Relevance
- Needs assessment
- Meeting Core Commitments for Children (CCC)

2) Systems:

- How flexible is UNICEF system to support a small CO to effectively face a major emergency and its ability to shift from regular programmes to ones focused on humanitarian emergency response? how useful/effective was the emergency preparedness plans of the country office in enabling it to launch a rapid response?
- How was the overall surge managed, and comment on the human resource (HR) capacity and the ways of balancing the surge with national capacity?

³ Terms of Reference for the Real Time Evaluation of UNICEF's response to Georgian Crisis, Annex 1.

- How timely and effective was the support provided to the CO in terms of: a) finances, b) personnel, and c) programme implementation and prioritisation?
- What issues and lessons have emerged from the way the resources were deployed on the ground?

3) Clusters:

- How was the Cluster system initiated?
- How effective was UNICEF Cluster leadership in the designated sectors?
- What lessons have emerged in the implementation of the emergency response, including cluster leadership from the CO?
- What lessons can be drawn for improving coordination, responsive systems, and structure?

4) Political complexity and communication:

- What issues and constraints affected UNICEF's ability to mount a wide communication (internal and external communications, particularly in relation to child protection issues) and advocacy strategy?
- What lessons can be drawn regarding the way in which UNICEF can be effective in a principled manner while operating under political complexities? (Application of IHL, humanitarian principles, Child Rights Communication)
- Access: what were the constraints? Could UNICEF/UN have done more to gain better humanitarian access? How were the needs of staff security and humanitarian access balanced?
- Political, cultural and local sensitivities.

5) Fundraising and donor relations (recommendation for strategic donor relations):

- How well was UNICEF able to articulate and negotiate with donors support for the needs of children?
- What challenges and constraints did the CO face with existing and new donors on the ground?
- How effective was the CAP and Flash Appeal process?

6) Partnerships:

- How can UNICEF ensure effective and mutually accountable partnerships?

7) Planning the transition and influencing public policy and legislation for children:

- What role can UNICEF play through the joint UNDAF and national planning framework to influence public policy and legislations for children?

1.3 Methods Employed:

Methodological approach and Data collection:

The evaluation has used internationally accepted OECD/DAC evaluation criteria⁴ and UNICEF Evaluation Standards⁵ to assess the overall response. This evaluation was premised on the fact that evaluations, to be useful, need to focus on lessons that can make a difference to the victims of disasters and bring about systemic improvement, rather than over-emphasis on measurement of discrete outputs and indicators.

The methods employed by the evaluators in gathering and assessing information were the following:

- Detailed briefing, meetings and discussion with staff at the UNICEF Headquarters (HQ), regional office and country office (3 interviews in HQ, 10 in Regional Office and 32 interviews in Georgia including current and former staff, NGOs, government officials and other UN agencies.
- Desk research: Study of flash appeal document, progress reports, monitoring mission reports, End of Mission (EoM) Reports, assessment reports and all relevant documents made available in hard copies as well as electronically⁶.
- Meetings/Telephone discussions with key external stakeholders (20) in Georgia⁷.
- Interviews with individual beneficiaries (about a dozen) in the conflict-affected regions in Georgia visited by the evaluators.
- Field visits to collective centres meant for war-affected population in Gori, Tbilisi and meeting with local authorities and war-affected communities.

Triangulation of information:

A combination of two different approaches was used to triangulate information in various stages:

- i) Information gathered from the interviews was compared against the findings from desk research; and
- ii) A preliminary presentation and testing of initial findings was done to a group of stakeholders including key UNICEF staff and partner-NGOs in Georgia which helped cross-check and validate some of the key findings.

1.4 Constraints:

The evaluation took place at a time when the relief response was tapering off and the response moved into transition and recovery phase. This meant that the evaluators had to rely on the information provided by the interlocutors based on their recollection or understanding of what happened during the earlier period, and from existing internal reports. Secondly, due to restrictions of access, field visit could not take place in South Ossetia, and was only confined to areas in and around Tbilisi and Gori where most of the internally displaced are

⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies, 1999.

⁵ Are based on OECD/DAC criteria (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability); and for humanitarian evaluations, UNICEF includes Coverage, Coordination, Coherence and Protection in addition to the standard OECD/DAC criteria.

⁶ A list of key documents reviewed by the evaluators is attached as Annexe 3.

⁷ A list of all interviews is provided in Annex 2.

now living. Thirdly, given the time constraints, the questions on fundraising and donor relations as stated in the ToR were not covered in-depth during this evaluation. The complex and political nature of the crisis means that the questions regarding fund raising and donor relations will require to be covered by a separate exercise if various stakeholders within UNICEF felt that was important. Finally, due to time constraints, as well as the difficulty in making sound judgement on cost-effectiveness on *timely* life-saving operations immediately following a crisis, this evaluation has not attempted to examine the cost-effectiveness of the relief phase of UNICEF operations.

1.5 Structure of the Report:

The report is presented in five sections. Section 2 provides a context for UNICEF's intervention arising from the Georgia crisis and briefly summarises the programme and its achievements. Section 3 presents the evaluation's findings on key questions outlined in the ToR. In section 4, the evaluation has assessed the findings against the standard evaluation criteria (efficiency, effectiveness / timeliness, connectedness, relevance/ appropriateness, coverage and coherence of the programme) for humanitarian evaluations. Section 5 summarises and distils out the key conclusions from the preceding sections, and provides programmatic recommendations for the ongoing Georgia programme as well as for UNICEF's future emergency response. In sections 3 and 4, Lessons/Conclusions have been summarised in bullet points at the end of relevant sub-sections. Recommendations have been made at the end of section 5, with specific reference to the ongoing response, as well as targeted at UNICEF's future emergency operations globally.

Section 2:

Overview of the Georgia Crisis and UNICEF Response

2.1 Background and Scale of the Humanitarian Crisis:

2.1.1 UNICEF Office in Georgia:

The UNICEF Georgia office was first started in 1993 as an emergency programme to respond to the aftermath of the conflicts that affected the country. Throughout the nineties, both the UN and UNICEF programmes were focusing on the needs of internally displaced persons

(IDPs) and responding to a series of man-made and natural disasters that affected the country. The years following 2000 have witnessed a more concerted move towards development activities and support to government counterparts to tackle issues of child poverty and enhancing social policies to ensure protection of vulnerable children. The UNICEF office in the country before the crisis comprised a small team of about fifteen people, with focus on development and policy issues.

The UN country team (UNCT) similarly had changed their focus to development activities with several of the operational agencies considerably scaling down their emergency activities and personnel. At the time of the crisis there was also a small United Nations Observer mission (UNOMIG) stationed in Abkhazia. The mission's specific mandate is to seek a comprehensive settlement of the protracted Abkhazia conflict. UNICEF had prior to the conflict, access to both Abkhazia and South Ossetia where the country office was supporting health and protection activities through local NGOs.

2.1.2 Humanitarian Situation arising from the S. Ossetia Crisis:

Although tensions had been brewing in the South Ossetia region between the Georgian government and the South Ossetian *de facto* authorities for a long time, the escalation in the situation took most people by surprise. The conflict that started on 7 August 2008 caused heavy damage and destruction in South Ossetia, especially in the capital Tskhinveli, and resulted in large population displacements in and around South Ossetia. It is estimated that the conflict caused the displacement in Georgia of an estimated 127,499 people from South Ossetia and other conflict-affected areas, of which, according to UNICEF estimates, at least 38,610 were children under the age of 18 years, and 5,700 were under two years of age⁸. In addition, some 10-15,000 were displaced within South Ossetia itself. A further 36,000 were displaced from South Ossetia to North Ossetia in the Russian Federation, most of who are now believed to have returned to South Ossetia. On 13 August, a cease-fire agreement was signed between Russia and Georgia, with Russian troops withdrawing between 23-25 August from Gori, Senaki and other locations across Georgia. However, Russian forces remained in the adjacent areas, a zone running along the entire administrative boundary of South Ossetia, but with the most important part being located to the north of Gori, and encompassing a network of villages with an estimated population of 24,000⁹.

This new IDP caseload aggravates the challenges faced by the Government of Georgia in seeking long-term solutions for the approximately 220,000 IDPs from previous conflicts in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. At the start of the crisis, IDPs moved into all possible public buildings (which came to be known as collective centres), including schools and kindergartens as well as with relatives and neighbours. Throughout the period and to this day, IDPs have continually moved from one area to another. This dynamic nature of the displacement and return process, including the daily movement to and from some conflict-affected villages, meant that the estimates of IDPs residing in collective centres kept changing on a daily basis, and this was compounded by the fact that a large number of IDPs also lived with host families making their identification difficult. IDPs in host families presented the greater challenge due to their dispersal in Tbilisi and throughout the Shida Kartli region, and it took substantial time for the government and humanitarian agencies to

⁸ UNICEF Press Release, 02/09: UNICEF Delivers Assistance Throughout Gori

⁹ Source: Revised Flash Appeal

provide assistance to these families as their identification and registration was a time-consuming task.

A major problem for humanitarian agencies in this crisis has been the lack of access to South Ossetia which continues till this day, as well as to war-affected areas in Georgia in the early weeks. Under the ceasefire agreement, Georgian and Russian authorities expressly committed to allow free access to humanitarian aid, but in reality this did not work out for S. Ossetia. Security incidents including lawlessness (in and around Gori) were common after 10 days of the crisis. The flash appeal noted that more than a week after the onset of the crisis, no UN agency was able to carry out assessment missions or assistance operations in S. Ossetia, and access remained sporadic and *ad hoc*. Even four months after the crisis, despite an initial fact finding inter agency mission led by OCHA in September, South Ossetia remained inaccessible to humanitarian agencies. The South Ossetian authorities have banned any access from Georgian side. At the same time, a law was adopted by Georgian Parliament in October 2008 introducing procedures for obtaining special permission by international organisations to enter South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia, equally limiting access.

The following figures compiled by UNHCR provide an overview of total displacement based on data provided by the Government of Georgia (GoG) and Government of Russian Federation (GoRF)¹⁰.

Total displacement caused by the "Georgia crisis"	
Displaced population within Georgia proper (GoG figures)	127,000
Displaced population to Russian Federation (GoRF figures)	35,000
Conflict-affected and displaced population within South Ossetia (UNHCR estimates)	30,000
Total	192,000
Returns among displaced population within Georgia proper (127,000)	
Already returned	68,000
Estimated number of returns before onset of winter	5,000
Total	73,000
Short term and long term displacement	
IDPs in need of shelter during winter	23,000
IDPs from South Ossetia not being able to return in the foreseeable future	22,000
IDPs from buffer zone not being able to return in the foreseeable future	8,000
IDPs from Abkhazia not being able to return in the foreseeable future	1,000
Total	54,000

In late August, the displaced slowly began to return to their homes in the conflict-affected areas. While an estimated 73,000 of the 128,500 persons displaced in Georgia were able to return home during the first two months, a significant proportion (approximately 55,000 individuals) remained displaced during October and November. Out of the remaining IDPs, it was estimated that some 32,000, mostly originating from South Ossetia or Abkhazia, will not be able to return to their homes in the foreseeable future¹¹. In addition, some 220,000 IDPs remain from previous conflicts.

¹⁰ Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. Situation Report No. 23 on the Situation in Georgia, 12 September 2008

¹¹ Protection, Support and Care - UNICEF emergency response in Georgia, August – October 2008

2.1.3 An Overview of Humanitarian Response:

The humanitarian response in the first few weeks focused on provision of essential support to newly displaced populations across the country, including to some 36,600 IDPs in 382 collective centres in Tbilisi, and the setting up of a camp hosting 2,500 IDPs in Gori. Provision of food and non-food items (NFI), health care and psycho-social support was achieved through close coordination with the Government and vital repairs to water and sanitation in collective centres were carried out. The Government postponed the start of the school year in some places to have time to provide solutions for IDPs hosted in kindergartens and schools; many of these IDPs have since moved to Gori to be closer to their place of origin. The formation of cluster working groups to coordinate the activities of the many UN agencies and NGOs has succeeded in engaging the Government as a key actor in the response. The humanitarian response was also focused on ensuring that those who remained displaced were supported over the winter through improvement of their living conditions.

The Georgia Crisis Flash Appeal was issued on 18 August, requesting \$59,653,319. The original Flash Appeal concentrated on immediate life-saving activities in seven sectors namely, food aid, health and nutrition, social protection, WASH, shelter and non-food items, logistics and telecommunication, coordination and support services. UNICEF's portion of the appeal was US\$ 6.45 million, in aid of displaced children and their families. A revised appeal was then launched on 8 October which was drawn up in concert with a joint needs assessment for recovery and reconstruction led by the World Bank. The revised appeal sought a total of US\$109 million to assist at least 127,500 people affected by the crisis, with a particular focus on preparing people living in damaged accommodation or in collective centres for the fast-approaching winter. UNICEF's component in the revised Flash Appeal was US\$ 4.6 million.

2.2 UNICEF Response:

UNICEF launched its response in both Georgia and Russia. In Georgia¹², among UNICEF's initial concerns were the displaced women and children living without safe water, basic hygiene items and access to sanitary facilities. As IDPs began moving in thousands to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi and other cities, UNICEF delivered safe drinking water and other essential supplies, including emergency hygiene kits, to over 13,000 people in IDP collective centres. To respond to the educational and recreational needs of children, UNICEF quickly began preparations for the distribution of school-in-a-box and recreation kits for all conflict-affected school-aged children in Georgia. Another top priority during the first days of the conflict was to identify the most pressing needs of children and ensure that these needs got adequately addressed in the appeals and joint needs assessment. During the first two months of emergency operations, UNICEF provided some US\$ 3 million worth of supplies and services.

In the first eight weeks immediately after the crisis, UNICEF reached the following number of beneficiaries¹³:

¹² As mentioned in section 1, this report concentrates on the response in Georgia alone.

¹³ UNICEF CO Georgia, Situation Report No. 21. Response to the Needs of Children and Women Affected by the Conflict in and Around South Ossetia, Georgia, Thursday, October 9 2008

WASH:

- Family water kits were distributed to 4,800 people.
- Bottled water distributed to 3,400 IDPs.
- Hygiene kits distributed to 21,680 IDPs.
- UNICEF conducted chlorination of the Gori water supply system, benefitting approximately 60,000 people.

Child Protection:

- Child friendly spaces established for about 3,000 children.
- Psychosocial support programme conducted, including training of trainers: estimated beneficiaries of the programme: 5,000 children with 1,000 professionals trained.
- UNICEF's mine awareness campaign reaching approximately 20,000 children.
- School in a box and recreation kits distributed to an estimated 61,680 children in schools and child care centres as well as penitentiary and detention centres.

Health and Nutrition: programmes reached an estimated 28,000 people.

2.2.1 UNICEF's Expenditure on the Georgia Response:

Expenditures against Flash Appeal (\$)	
August-November 2008	
Promotion of Access to Quality Education for All Children	486,783.35
Support for Child and Maternal Feeding	794,516.46
Awareness Raising on Mines & ERW among Children Affected by the Conflict in Georgia	188,481.37
Psychosocial Assistance to Children Affected by Conflict in Georgia	121,194.69
Life-Saving Support to Newly-Displaced to Meet Immediate Shelter, Non-Food and Domestic Needs	144,520.77
Provision of Quality Water	866,367.33
Distribution of Hygiene Kits for Conflict-Affected Populations and Hygiene IEC	
Sanitation Rehabilitation ¹⁴	

¹⁴ Three components of WASH are merged since most of the projects released/PGMs raised are intended to meet the requirements of population under all three components of Flash Appeal

Section 3:

Key Findings: Assessing UNICEF's Response

3.1 Mobilisation of Early Response:

3.1.1 Mobilisation of Early Response and Rapid Deployment:

The rapid escalation and intensity of the crisis took most people by surprise. Most of the UNICEF senior managers in the country, including the Representative and the Deputy, were away when the humanitarian crisis struck Georgia. Even with its full complement of staff, UNICEF's Georgia office is very small, with a core team primarily responsible for maternal and child health (MCH) and child protection work in partnership with the government. Due to it being a major conflict between two states, the regional office (RO) declared it a level three 'global' emergency, meaning that support to the CO would entail both RO and HQ support and that HQ would be involved from the outset. The RO in Geneva took the lead in ensuring support to the office to shift from its long term programme to rapid response, and the Regional Director (RD) established specific task forces within the RO to better coordinate and carry out support to country offices (with two COs, namely Georgia and Russia involved on both sides of the border).

The RO established clear lines of communication with the HQ and the CO, and through regular conference calls attended by all relevant stakeholders from various departments in the HQ, RO and CO, internal communication and decision making mechanisms were streamlined in order to enable faster and well-coordinated decisions, implementation and follow up. Interviews during this evaluation suggest that compared with other emergency response in recent years (namely, Tsunami, Pakistan earthquake, Mozambique floods, hurricane Sidr, etc), the internal communication and coordination systems worked better, indicating that the systems UNICEF has been putting in place for some years now are bearing results.

A number of other staff were also deployed by the RO from other offices in the region namely, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Macedonia and Uzbekistan. During the first 7-10 days, human resource needs were primarily addressed through deployments from within the region, mainly neighbouring countries. This group (at least five staff from neighbouring countries were deployed in the first 4-10 days) represented the most relevant support because of their knowledge and understanding of language, culture, context, location, and ability to travel without visa. By August 13th, the Country Representative (CR) from Armenia and the Dy. Representative of Georgia who was returning from holiday travelled by road to Georgia. They brought along with them some supplies of hygiene kits and a communication staff from the Armenia office. On 16 August, another three staff (including WASH expert) arrived. The Georgia Country Representative who was away arrived on 19 August.

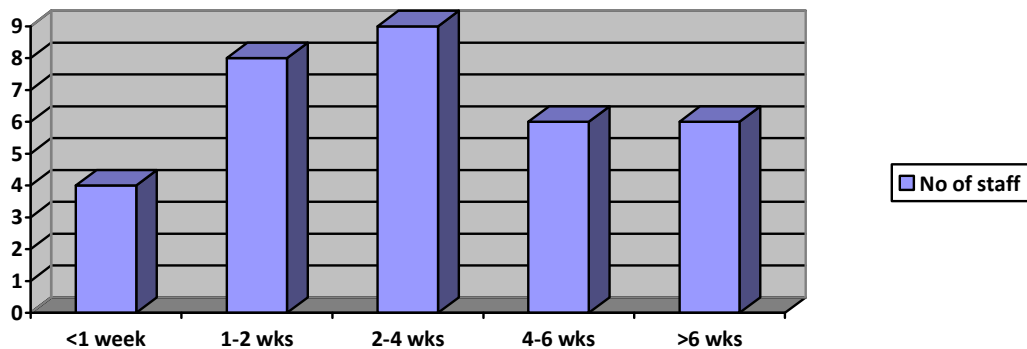
Overall, UNICEF HQ and RO, working in tandem with the CO, were able to recruit and deploy a substantial team for the response fairly rapidly. At the peak of the response between 20 August to mid-September, UNICEF had about more than a dozen (at least 12-15) international staff deployed in the country in addition to its core country staff. As discussed in section 2, the Georgia crisis was a highly complex international conflict. However, the humanitarian needs were far smaller than initially feared. UNICEF's deployment in the first few weeks may have been influenced by the fear of the humanitarian needs escalating which would require opening up sub-offices, and hence a fairly large number of deployments were made at the peak of the response. A full-time HR specialist was assigned to the regional office to assist in the management of a variety of HR mechanisms for recruitment and deployment of personnel. These included: intra-regional deployments, RO/HQ deployments, secondments through Stand-By Partners and external recruitment.

As can be seen from the following data, between 17 August and 15 September, UNICEF made 26 deployments, all but 6 of these lasting for at least two weeks duration.

No. of fresh deployments made by UNICEF in Georgia

<u>10 -16/08</u>	<u>17-23/08</u>	<u>24/08-15/09</u>	<u>16/09-10/10</u>
4	10	16	3

Figure 1: Duration of Deployment (No of weeks)



As can be seen from the above figure, 12 of the 33 deployments were of less than 2 weeks duration, and nearly two-thirds were for less than 4 weeks, with two weeks being the median. Although far from ideal, this usually is a problem in most of the humanitarian organisations. Frequent turnover of staff as well as the fact that some of the deployed external staff did not have adequate orientation on UNICEF's ways of working caused tensions and led to sub-optimal results, as will be discussed in section 3.3. Frequent staff turnover also affected UNICEF's support to its implementing partners. In particular, the frequent turnover in WASH staff made things difficult for UNICEF as it was supposed to be providing leadership to the WASH cluster. The child protection sub-group and nutrition sub-groups under protection and health & nutrition clusters respectively were not so much affected by staff turnover.

Some of the key deployments like an information management staff and proposal writer¹⁵ arrived nearly two weeks after the crisis to assist the CO with the additional needs for information and proposal writing. Having a dedicated senior staff dealing with all communication with national communication offices and providing timely information for proposals was critical, but this was not deployed.

Conclusions:

1. UNICEF was able to fast-track its decision making on rapid response and deployment immediately after the onset of the crisis due to the clear lines of communication and coordination it had developed between the HQ, RO and CO.
2. Ability to deploy staff from neighbouring offices in the region was critical to the initial start up of the emergency operations, and this needs to be institutionalised in the overall emergency preparedness strategy of the region.
3. For some key functions requiring critical dealings with external organisations (partners, clusters, government) involving joint decision or programming, attempt should be made to deploy staff for a minimum of 6-8 weeks.
4. Early deployment of specialised staff for fundraising and proposal development is essential so as to collate relevant information on needs and UNICEF's response and support CO, RO and communication offices in development of proposals.

3.1.2 Relief Supplies and Procurement:

UNICEF's early response (Box 2) needed efficient delivery of supplies and management of the supply chain. UNICEF did not have any pre-positioned supply in the country. 2,600 water kits and 261 hygiene kits arrived from Armenia within 3-4 days by road. These were distributed immediately. In addition, UNICEF re-programmed funds to the tune of US \$100,000 and made a grant to the Save the Children which was able to respond to the immediate needs and organised distribution of hygiene kits and bottled water to 3,600 individuals in collective accommodation in Tbilisi.

While access to West Georgia was limited, UNICEF was considering opening a sub-office and hiring a warehouse in Batumi in order to ensure provision of humanitarian supplies to IDPs in West Georgia. For this purpose a team was deployed to Batumi, which made an agreement with the Mayor Batumi municipality on lending a warehouse. The team also procured 1000 hygiene items locally and provided it to Batumi municipality and Kutaisi branch of MRA.

¹⁵ Georgia CO missed the opportunity to mobilise funds from the first announcement of ECHO funds, as a proposal could not be submitted by the tight deadline. This was mainly due to the lack of staff who could write proposal. However, as soon as a proposal writer arrived, the CO was able to produce proposals in a fairly rapid manner.

Box 2: UNICEF's Early Response¹⁶:

UNICEF Georgia concentrated its response to immediate needs in the following sectors of intervention:

WASH:

- Water trucking from local water supplying companies and purchasing bottled water to IDP collective centres
- Distribution of water purification tablets
- Distribution of locally procured hygiene kits
- Contracting local companies for facilitating safe disposal of excreta and solid waste
- Repairs and construction of water and sanitation facilities

Health and Nutrition:

- Distribution of special food for maternal and child feeding (supplementary feeding) in cooperation with WFP and WHO.
- Distribution of emergency health-kits
- Distribution of family kits and other survival items
- Scale up vaccine-preventable disease control activities for conflict-affected populations and host communities; special attention to vaccination against measles and rubella

Child Protection:

- Establishment of psycho-social support and establishment of recreational spaces in IDP collective centres
- Distribution of recreational and didactic materials
- Awareness on mines and unexploded ordnances.

Relief supplies were a problem and slow in coming. Availability of water bladder and distribution tap stands for providing water to many collective centres and camps were delayed. Some items (hygiene kits) were procured locally - the prices were very high and the supplier took long lead time. The local prices were 3-4 times higher than the price in Turkey/Bulgaria markets. Purchase orders for local procurements of hygiene kits were issued at \$41 per kit. However, after a few days, it was discovered that the same kits were available in Bulgaria for \$14.21 per kit, and so the previous order was cancelled, and procurement done from Bulgaria¹⁷. A better knowledge of the market and pre-existing data on local/regional suppliers would have avoided long delays. During late September and early October, UNICEF did not have any supplies and thus its relief work stalled for about two weeks. This was particularly frustrating for UNICEF's WASH response as it is supposed to be the lead agency in this area. Some of the critical supplies ordered through UNICEF's central emergency warehouse in Copenhagen were delayed. Orders for water bladders and tap stands were placed on 15/08, but these did not arrive in Tbilisi before early October as Copenhagen did not have the items available in stock¹⁸. Some bladders and tap stands arrived as late as November. CO staff needed to have orientation of Copenhagen supply office and the latter's capacity.

The market in Turkey could have been considered for hygiene/NFI kits as well as for school-in-a box and recreation kit¹⁹. The trip report recommends UNICEF to maintain a small stockpile for items that take a long time to procure.

¹⁶ Georgia country office. Situation report. Response to needs of children and women affected by the conflict in Georgia, August 13, 2008

¹⁷ Aubaid A Raman, Mission Report (7-18 September 2008)

¹⁸ Ainga Rafzy, Emergency Supply and Logistics Specialist. Trip Report UNICEF Georgia Mission, Aug 20-Sep 6, 2008

¹⁹ Ainga Rafzy.....*ibid*

Conclusions:

5. The Emergency Preparedness Plan needs to identify suppliers within the region in neighbouring countries. Procurement from countries like Turkey, Bulgaria and Armenia could have been faster and cheaper in terms of transport costs.
6. While stockpiling is always an expensive option especially for countries which do not see regular emergencies, pre-existing agreement with suppliers vetted through the standard procurement procedures could minimise the procurement time after an emergency.

3.1.3 Sitreps and Communication:

In the first few days, regular situation reports were coming from Georgia CO to RO until August 9 when the emergency officer was loaned to the Resident Coordinator's (RC's) office to help prepare UN sitreps on behalf of the newly constituted UN inter-agency Crisis Management team. UNICEF and UNHCR dedicated staff to prepare joint sitreps to ensure that there was a consolidated and coordinated UN approach. This ensured that children were included in the overall UN approach, recognising that in a time of scarce information it was important to consolidate all information available. The other aspect on this was that joint UN press statements were released on behalf of the UNCT. This was critical to have consistency in all data released by the UN system.

In the early days, concrete information was hard to come by. Due to a decision by the UN Security Management Team, no UN personnel were allowed to visit any IDP centre for the first three days of the crisis, thus restricting access to sources of primary information. The sitreps received from the CO were weak on precise information on the ground due to lack of access to the affected areas, thereby creating an information gap for UNICEF-specific information i.e. on children. The RO had to produce sitreps based on very scanty information. The daily UNICEF sitreps resumed once the emergency officer returned to the office and later when special Communications officers were assigned to the CO and to the RO. Apart from the scarcity of information at first from the field, the inadequate quality of the Sitreps from both COs were not deemed by the RO sufficient for dissemination. At the same time due to the political sensitivities and necessity of ensuring that information and activities were being presented in a balanced manner, the RO and HQ instituted mechanism to both oversee and to monitor, and often re-write, the Sitreps

Apart from routine communication about UNICEF response and programme, there was a need for UNICEF, as the leading organisation on child rights and protection, to speak up on issues of CRC and humanitarian access as it related to victims of the conflict. While the evaluation acknowledges that all communication had to be handled highly sensitively in order for the messages not to compromise UNICEF's impartiality, independence and neutrality, the evaluators feel that a considered decision needed to be taken on managing communications during the complex crisis. While the CO and RO may have done whatever they could at the country and regional level to explore communication opportunities, greater institutional leadership at global level to raise the issues of child rights violations and humanitarian situation affecting children, women and civilians was not visible. It needs to be noted here that as UNICEF has been mandated by the General Assembly to act as a custodian of CRC, it

has a strong obligation to do everything in its power to call upon all parties to ensure protection of children, and on this count, UNICEF's role could have been stronger.

UNICEF RO did manage to issue its first message regarding humanitarian access and children victims of the war and their rights as early as 11 August, i.e., three days after the crisis erupted, which were followed up by press releases and programme updates on UNICEF response. The evaluation concluded that having a senior person with background in international humanitarian law (IHL) stationed in Georgia for about two weeks in the early stages could have helped the CO to come up with relevant evidence-based information which could be used as basis for communication messages without compromising the humanitarian principles.

Conclusions:

7. Time is of essence in any communication. Complex emergencies like the Georgia crisis require sensitive handling of communication. However, greater institutional leadership and guidance from the global level to raise the issues of child rights violations and humanitarian situation affecting children, women and civilians is required.
8. In complex emergencies, a senior international communication person with expertise in IHL ought to be deployed at the earliest, as humanitarian response these days is also about timely communication along with providing tangible assistance to affected communities.

3.2 Needs Assessment and Humanitarian Access:

Lack of access has been a major issue in this crisis. First due to the intensity of the fighting and associated security risks during the war, and subsequently due to policies of various parties involved in the conflict, access to South Ossetia and neighbouring districts to the UN agencies have been very limited. During the hostilities, proper assessment of needs of the affected population was unrealistic due to lack of access to the population as well as due to the fact that the affected population was constantly on the move to escape from the war zones. This has had implication for the quality of needs assessments agencies were able to carry out, and hence for the design of emergency response in the relief and rehabilitation phase.

When there is an emergency, UNICEF strives to come up with an Immediate Needs Assessment Document (IND) within 72 hours. IND is an important fund-raising document for national communication offices, and in this case this was produced within four days. The request for EPF was finalised and sent by the CO four days after the outbreak of the conflict. EPF funds were requested in two tranches – first on 12 August and then on 18 August. Once the requests were received in the HQ, both were approved within 24-48 hours, totalling US \$2.7 million.

UNICEF worked closely with the RC/HC in Georgia to make sure that its own plans were in line with the overall UNCT thinking. The UN Crisis Management team was mobilised on August 10 and UNICEF worked closely with the RC/HC to prepare for an inter-agency Flash Appeal which was issued ten days after the outbreak of the crisis on 18 August. Support staff from OCHA were deployed to assist the RC in the preparation of the appeal and project

requests. CO staff worked well with OCHA and UNCT partners at field level. As additional staff from other agencies and numbers of NGOs in country expanded, assessments, information and responses to the needs of the IDPs improved. Areas of response focused on Gori, in and around Tbilisi, and later in the west outside of Abkhazia.

There was no possibility of access to either Abkhazia or South Ossetia during this period until mid-September when an interagency humanitarian assessment was carried out in South Ossetia in which UNICEF also participated. The mission was designed to support the revision of Flash Appeal by providing a more comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian situation. Apart from UNICEF, there were representatives from UNHCR, UNDP, WHO, WFP, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) who participated in the mission. UNHCR and UNICEF covered some of the human rights concerns in the context of displacement and protection of civilians. The mission conducted an overall appraisal of the existing humanitarian situation and advocated for principled access for assistance and protection to South Ossetia. There was no UN presence (except a small UNHCR sub-office with one national staff person) on the ground in South Ossetia and the presence of NGOs was quite limited. The mission found that the most severe need for emergency relief had been covered already (primarily by the Russian Ministry for Emergencies, EMERCOM), and that the most worrying humanitarian issues related to the protection of civilians and especially to the conditions for return and durable solutions for the most vulnerable displaced persons. All these hinged on many factors, including the rule of law, property rights, livelihoods, and broader political developments affecting reconciliation. The greatest protection challenge was the need to control the lawlessness in the security zone south of the administrative boundary of South Ossetia. Among the mission's recommendations were to give precedence to the need for advocacy for humanitarian access and to questions of security; in addition, there was an urgent recommendation concerning the reestablishment of mass vaccination campaigns for polio and measles to protect the health status of children in the region.

A Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) was also conducted in early September at the behest of the Georgian Government by, amongst others, the UN system, the World Bank, and the European Commission. In addition to infrastructural and macro-economic needs, the three-year JNA also identified social needs associated with conflict-affected people (including education and health, agriculture and livelihoods, shelter and protection). Following the JNA, the Flash Appeal was revised. This revised Flash Appeal, in addition to being a planning, fundraising and advocacy document in its own right, is also a part of the JNA and corresponds to the first six months of the JNA's timeframe. For this reason, the revised Appeal has a planning and budgeting horizon of seven and a half months, instead of the usual six, to the end of March 2009. The revised Flash Appeal which sought US\$ 109 million included assistance to communities who remained in conflict-affected areas, in order to promote immediate recovery, secure sustainable return and support the implementation of the three-year JNA. Projects were organised in eight clusters: Early Recovery; Food Security; Health; Logistics; Protection; Shelter and Non-Food Items; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; and Coordination and Support Services.

There is a strong body of opinion within UNICEF that more could be done at the level of UNCT to speak up on humanitarian access and at UNICEF level to articulate its own mandate for responding to children and activate programmes especially in South Ossetia. The evaluation noted that dialogue with the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) of UN, Georgian government and Ossetian authorities at the country level have been ongoing. At this

stage, the issue of access is a highly political one, much more so than during the first phase of the conflict. The evaluation has not seen any evidence of either UNCT or UN at the international level making any substantive public communication on access during the period of hostilities. It is understood that currently there are several dialogues going on with various players at the UN-system level on the access issue, and UNICEF is an active partner in this.

Conclusion:

9. The issue of access is a highly political one and therefore UNICEF needs to advocate with partners at high levels to ensure that all partners are able to always articulate the need for humanitarian access.

3.3 Cluster Coordination and Leadership:

3.3.1 WASH Sector/Cluster²⁰:

Although cluster approach was not formally launched in Georgia until about mid-October, coordination of humanitarian response was undertaken by different UN agencies working in concert with the GOG following patterns previously in place in the UNCT. Prior to the arrival of the OCHA support team, the UNCT agencies had already been organised along sector lines and a division of labour was taking place involving UN agencies, NGOs and donors. UNICEF regional management team identified a potential WASH expert as early as 11th August²¹. By the time, the staff was deployed in Georgia it was another five days when UNICEF started to provide some leadership to the WASH sector. During this early period, discussion on WASH took place in the shelter coordination meetings which were led by UNHCR.

As mentioned earlier, UNICEF's Georgia office had a small team before the crisis and there was no WASH expertise in the CO or the RO. Creating an entirely new team in a new area of expertise wasn't easy. UNICEF's leadership of WASH cluster was considered by key partners as poor and there was lack of continuity as people kept changing frequently. Hygiene kits distributed by different agencies had different items, both in quantity and quality. Although UNICEF had developed standards for the kits, these were not followed up or monitored. Cluster leadership was highly focused on distribution mode, and not enough thinking went into overall strategy or attempt to influence key donors like the USAID and EU to engage with the government on WASH in shelters. Because of weak leadership, donors may not have seen the critical importance of WASH, and in the early discussions WASH got subsumed in the shelter cluster led by UNHCR. The consequence of this has been that when the government built the transition shelters (settlements), the WASH component was ignored with the result that the settlements had no facility for bathing or drainage as IDPs were being moved into these settlements.

²⁰ In this report, sector and cluster have been used inter-changeably; although technically, cluster approach is different from sector coordination, since the UNCT did not formally adopt cluster approach in the early weeks, sector coordination broadly followed some of the key elements of cluster approach.

²¹ Note for the Record. South Ossetia Crisis: CEE/CIS RO CMT Meeting, August 11, 2008.

In the early phase, the WASH sector Coordinator was seconded from a standby partner. Although the incumbent had the right technical expertise, better orientation on and understanding of UNICEF's role and capacity would have strengthened the sector leadership. In order to make up for this gap, UNICEF recruited a Head of WASH section for three weeks who was to provide guidance and UNICEF briefing to the WASH Sector Coordinator. This did cause confusion in the minds of partners – the role differentiation between the WASH sector coordinator and Head of WASH section was not clear.

3.3.2 Coordination of Child Protection and Nutrition sub-groups:

Initially child protection went to mental health sub-group under the health & nutrition sector. Then it moved to child protection sub-group under UNICEF's leadership²². UNICEF is the leading agency in the field of child protection and psychosocial support services among humanitarian agencies in Georgia. UNICEF is coordinating implementation of activities related to psychosocial assistance, child protection services and the provision of child friendly spaces (CFS) for displaced and returnee children. With many international and local NGOs involved, coordination has been crucial to ensure that as many children as possible were reached and that minimum operating standards were implemented and monitored. One of the important actions in the sub-cluster, and a key role of UNICEF, was to ensure that all involved were well grounded in government reform efforts in child protection and education area, and that the cluster members accepted within their programming the standards that had been accepted by government or were under the process of verification. All of these were part of the UNICEF regular programming for the last few years. UNICEF has also, through NGO partners (World Vision, Every Child, IRC and Elizabeth Gast Foundation) established child friendly spaces (CFS), including recreation, informal learning and sports for children in collective centres in Tbilisi and Gori, settlements in Shida Kartli, and conducted training in psychosocial support and psychosocial activities for professionals and for teachers on crisis psychology to enable them to detect symptoms of stress and refer accordingly. UNICEF has distributed school-in-a-box kits and recreation kits benefiting children in CFS implemented by both UNICEF partners and other NGOs in collective centres, conflict-affected schools and institutions, including prisons and residential child care institutions countrywide in Georgia. UNICEF also implemented mine risk education in 180 schools through Halo Trust and the Minister of Education and Science.

The Nutrition sub-group, under UNICEF's leadership, played a major role in disseminating information guidelines on distribution of breast milk substitutes which was being promoted by a few major donor agencies.

²² Under the Protection Sector/cluster. It should be noted that there was an “informal” back-to-school group. This group, with the MoES defined 6 priorities. With the school specific priorities were the same as the child protection priorities. To formalise education within the clusters, the sub-group/cluster became Child Protection and Education sub-cluster, with administrative support is provided by Save the Children.

Conclusions:

10. It needs to be recognised that Cluster leadership requires high level of facilitative leadership skills, and not just technical expertise in an area. Since UNICEF is taking the lead on WASH cluster globally, it needs to ensure that for its cluster leadership roles, it is able to deploy people with the right orientation and leadership skills to be able to facilitate response for the entire humanitarian community. UNICEF needs to ensure that staff who are recruited into cluster leadership or team leadership role have a good grounding on UNICEF's working ethos and culture.
11. The separation of roles between cluster leadership and UNICEF's own operations (section heads) needs to be clear to all stakeholders and communicated clearly to partners and staff.

Section 4:

OECD/DAC Criteria for Humanitarian Evaluations

4.1 Coverage:

Coverage is about the need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are, providing them with assistance and protection proportionate to their need and devoid of extraneous political agendas.

As mentioned in section 3, UNICEF's response focused on meeting the immediate needs of the affected people, especially IDPs, women and children. Apart from providing hygiene kits, complementary food and water for IDPs in collective centres and places that could be reached, one of UNICEF's early interventions was to assist in epidemiological surveillance and response capacity of the public health department in West Georgia for monitoring the health status of the IDPs with special focus on infections and contagious diseases. Early on in the IDP crisis, UNICEF conducted an assessment of child care institutions to determine the needs and status of the children residing in them. The assessment showed that in many centres children were in need of psychological counselling and support. The children were found to be at risk of receiving less care than before the conflict, as some of the centres were partially occupied by IDPs. The assessment of child care institutions located in conflict areas generated a great deal of concern, as the children there had been exposed to severe stress and were in need of urgent psychological assistance. In response, UNICEF provided psychosocial support training for the staff of juvenile justice facilities and distributed educational and

recreational materials to 37 child care institutions, including centres for children with disabilities, benefiting over 2,400 children.

From the trip reports of UNICEF staff, it is obvious that nutrition for children was identified as a major need from the early stages²³ of the response. Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out by UNICEF (2005) even before the war confirmed that there was significant increase in child stunting at the age of 6-18 months. Hence special focus on nutrition of pregnant women (esp. on micronutrients and iron) and children under 2 needed to be of high attention to prevent stunting and growth faltering²⁴. UNICEF's nutrition specialists identified that local, traditional complimentary food would be preferable over the distribution of UNIMIX (CSB) complimentary food to the IDP collective centres, since no severely or moderately undernourished children were identified among the displaced populations. As per the revised Flash Appeal, UNICEF's project on Support for Maternal and Child Feeding was supposed to address the following objective: ensure that the nutritional needs of the targeted IDPs are met in compliance with the internationally recognised principles through provision of traditional complementary and supplementary food supply for children under-two (2,294 children); ongoing assessment of the nutrition status through monitoring and counselling on feeding practices; advocacy and coordination of relevant food supply and distribution targeting pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under-five.

UNICEF supported a local NGO, CLARITAS XXI, in developing and printing educational materials on infant and young child feeding for dissemination to pregnant women and mothers with young children in the IDP and would-be returnee centres. UNICEF supported CLARITAS' mobile network of health professionals who were trained in supporting breastfeeding mothers and conducting breastfeeding advocacy. UNICEF decided to distribute complementary baby food to IDPs as the request came from many collective centres and municipal authorities. Initially 4,200 children in collective centres were to be provided complementary food items by UNICEF²⁵. During the early weeks of the emergency, UNICEF locally procured complementary food items, such as porridge powder and fruits for all children aged 6-24 months residing in IDP centres²⁶.

However, the gap in complementary food for infants has not been met by the humanitarian response adequately. First, it got mixed up with discussion on breast milk substitutes (BMS) which is an issue on which many humanitarian agencies (including UNICEF) already had established policies of not providing formula milk. Second, the donors and the government (for political reasons) refused to acknowledge the growing need for complementary food. The need for this intervention is becoming more acute as people continue to live in IDP centres and new transition settlements, without any source of livelihoods to obtain cash. It is understood that several humanitarian organisations (UNICEF, Save the Children among them) have attempted to raise funds for complementary food without success as donors have yet failed to appreciate the need. At the same time, it is understood that immediately after the crisis, shipments of complementary food were received from donor countries which the government has refused to distribute on the ground that such distribution may undermine the local market forces. The fact that IDPs who have been without any source of livelihood for

²³ Svetlana Stefanet, UNICEF, Trip Report, 5-19 September. Also see UNICEF update dated 1 September, Response to the Needs of the Children and Women Affected by the Conflict in and Around South Ossetia.

²⁴ UNICEF. Outstanding Issues in Mother /Child Nutrition in Georgia, (undated)

²⁵ UN OCHA. Situation Report No. 6 on the Situation in Georgia, 22 August 2008

²⁶ Through Claritas project, UNICEF has distributed: Multiple micronutrients (20,000 package; 30 sachets per package); Oral rehydration salts (1,000 box; 100 sachets per box); Ready to use supplementary food (1,500 cartons; 36 pots per carton).

over four months and hence have no purchasing power to access the local market seem to get lost on the free marketers.

It is worth noting here that even after four months of the crisis, the fundamental situation that existed in September when an Inter-agency Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA) was undertaken has remained unchanged in many respects. The IRA conducted in mid-September revealed that²⁷:

- About 77% of the IDPs report have less than 100 *lari* in savings (1.4 *lari* = 1 USD). This, coupled with little assets available for liquidation and little chance of securing a regular income, signifies a very harsh socio-economic future for IDP families. 57% of IDPs have no income whatsoever.
- All 55,000 IDPs are food insecure and will remain food insecure until their livelihoods are restored.

Conclusions:

12. Greater research and evidence-based documentation of complementary nutritional needs of selected vulnerable groups could have been used for effective advocacy with donors and government to develop appropriate interventions for nutritional needs of infants and pregnant women, which remains a gap even after four months.
13. Given that Georgia has well developed functioning markets and the number of affected families was relatively small, UNICEF and its partners could have used cash transfers as an effective response strategy. This however would have required careful programme design and understanding of how cash transfers work in emergencies.

4.2 Relevance and Appropriateness:

Relevance is concerned with assessing whether projects are in line with local needs and priorities and refers to the overall goal and purpose of a programme. *Appropriateness* is about the need to tailor humanitarian activities and inputs to local needs, and examines the correspondence between input/resources and the intended result.

Although proper needs assessment could not be carried out in parts of East Georgia until about ten days after the crisis, and in South Ossetia almost six weeks after the war broke out, the response provided by UNICEF and its partners answered to the most critical needs of the affected communities. The supply of water, hygiene kits, family kits as well provision of chlorination tablets for local water authorities and winterisation of collective centres where IDPs were located met critical needs.

²⁷ UNICEF CO Georgia. *Response to the Needs Of Children and Women Affected by the Conflict in and around South Ossetia, Georgia*, Situation Report No. 21, Thursday, October 9, 2008. It was also confirmed by another independent research conducted at the same time that lack of access to cash or income was the biggest problem in the perception of the IDPs (*Rapid Needs Assessment of Internally Displaced Women: Institute for Policy Studies; First Findings and Recommendations: DRAFT*, September 30, 2008)

UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Education in a Back To School Campaign which combined a commitment to ensure that every war-affected child (including non-IDPs in Samagrelo and Shida Kartli) had a place in school with stationary and school materials at the start of the school year, that every school had some capacity to respond to the psychological impact of the conflict upon children and that all school children at risk of mines and cluster munitions received basic mine risk education (MRE). UNICEF distributed 976 school-in-a-box kits and 642 recreation kits benefiting children in collective centres, conflict-affected schools and other childcare institutions countrywide in Georgia. These educational and recreational materials stand to benefit up to 78,000 children impacted by the crisis. In order to provide psychosocial support to children traumatised by the war and displacement, UNICEF, in cooperation with Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, trained the teachers from the war-affected areas in Georgia. Overall goal of the training was to train the teachers working with the children affected by the conflict, to notice the traumatised children and to enhance these children's psychosocial well-being through support and counselling. Psychologists, social workers, teachers, IDP teachers, specialists from IDP centres, NGOs, Resource Centres, students of psychology and social work and lecturers from the universities participated in Trainign of Trainers (ToT). Up to 2,000 teachers and social workers from the Tbilisi and Gori regions, as well as for the staff of the Ministry of Education and Science, are being trained as trainers. Up to 40,000 conflict-affected children are being helped in this way, which has the additional benefit of supporting the Back-to-School campaign, inasmuch as the stabilisation of children's psychosocial wellbeing is crucial for their comfort, wellbeing and ability to learn in school.

UNICEF has also undertaken Mine risk education for children living in risk areas. UNICEF is cooperating with HALO Trust and other international and local NGOs on an ERW (explosive remnants of war) and mine awareness project, including the development of mine risk education materials for use in schools, such as posters, booklets, sequence cards and workbooks. A training programme has been developed for teachers, based on a UNICEF teacher training manual and materials endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The UNICEF ERW and Mine awareness campaign will cover the conflict-affected districts of Gori, Kareli, Kaspi and Khashuri, selected according to threat levels assessed by HALO Trust and the Ministry of Education and Science. The campaign will cover 180 schools, with a total of 46,000 enrolled children.

The mobile health teams of Claritas supported by UNICEF have also carried out counselling on safe and proper complementary feeding practices. The mobile teams are conducting a nutritional status assessment among internally displaced children (in the 0-2 year age group), have developed and printed educational materials on infant and young child feeding and are distributing micronutrients to targeted internally displaced children²⁸.

All of these are highly relevant interventions for meeting the immediate and medium term needs of the IDPs.

However, interventions targeted at specific vulnerabilities like the provision of complementary food for infants of IDPs have been inadequate, partly due to the way these were planned – greater appreciation of cash transfers as a way of supporting vulnerable families would have been more appropriate, rather than humanitarian agencies themselves

²⁸ Source: Protection, Support and Care - UNICEF emergency response in Georgia, August – October 2008

trying to procure and provide these. This would have given the families greater control over the resources meant for them.

Conclusion:

14. Use of cash transfers would have been appropriate for individual family targeted interventions, giving the latter greater say over how they wanted to meet their relief needs, and UNICEF needs to develop cash transfer programming as a tool for emergency response.

4.3 Effectiveness and Efficiency:

Effectiveness measures the extent to which the activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Timeliness is generally implicit within the criteria of effectiveness. Efficiency measures how economically inputs (funds, expertise, time) have been converted into outputs.

The Georgia crisis was a fast evolving humanitarian crisis. Despite the fact that it took UNICEF a while to mobilise and deploy staff to effectively deal with the response in the early days, in order to ensure local procurement and availability of hygiene kits, UNICEF provided a cash grant of \$100,000 to Save the Children which procured water bottles and hired plumbers where immediate repairs had to be undertaken in collective centres. Its quick interventions in WASH (distribution of hygiene kits and water kits to families, provision of water and sanitation facilities including shower facilities, quick repairs of water and sanitation facilities in collective centres, and training community health promoters) launched mainly through partner NGOs, was timely and met critical needs of the IDPs moving in to the collective centres and tented camps.

Similarly its interventions in child protection area, establishment of child friendly spaces and distribution of school-in-a-box and recreation kits played a critical part in enabling education authorities to provide access to education to the IDP families and made the government's back-to-school campaign a success. The psychosocial support and mine awareness campaign were two innovative activities which enabled conflict-affected children to deal with their traumatic experience and gain confidence to get on with their lives.

However, in WASH, except for the early interventions undertaken through partners, UNICEF's provision of water bladders and water kits were delayed by several weeks. Had it not been for UNICEF's support to its partners (IRC, Oxfam, ACF and AIC Abkhazintercont), its contribution in the WASH area in terms of effective response would have been weak. This does highlight the critical importance of pre-existing partnership²⁹ with key actors. However, in some cases, proposals from partners submitted to UNICEF CO took up to three weeks for approval, and partner NGOs had to reply to the same queries over and over again since UNICEF staff kept changing rapidly – often 3-4 different individuals were involved in dealing with a proposal and discussing with the partners. This delayed effective response in

²⁹ This was a lesson also drawn from other emergencies, namely, UNICEF's emergency response in Horn of Africa (*Review of the 2006 UNICEF Emergency Response in the Horn of Africa -- Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*, Phase I Report, Final 4 July 2007). The review commented that expanding partnerships in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia have had a significant effect on the emergency response. The issue of partnerships cuts across both strategy development and key preparedness activities.

some cases, and could have been easily avoided, especially in relation to the work carried out by UNICEF's long standing partners with which it already had funding relationships.

In education, better targeting would have made UNICEF's response more efficient. There was a need to ensure that UNICEF supplies were targeted to the most vulnerable communities rather than doing a general distribution. In some cases, it was also found that the same number of kits were supplied to schools which were not affected by conflict (or not hosted any IDPs in the village) as those affected by conflict. The same number of items went to collective centres regardless of the number of IDP families they hosted³⁰. Weak monitoring of the distributions may have contributed to this. During a visit by the evaluation team to Education Resource Centre in Gori, the officials could not give any details of actual number of school-in-a-box³¹.

Conclusions:

15. Pre-existing relationship with partners and ability to work with them holds the key to effective and timely response for UNICEF. Having one focal point for dealing with partnership relations can make UNICEF's response more efficient.
16. In its relationship with partners, especially the ones with whom it has long standing programmatic collaboration, UNICEF needs to move from project financing to strategic programme financing.
17. Putting in place a post-distribution monitoring is critical to ensuring that relief supplies are targeted well.

4.4 Coordination:

Coordination is the degree and quality of collaboration within the UN system and with different local and international partners and stakeholders.

UNICEF envisages both an operational and catalytic role for itself in humanitarian response. The catalytic role has been important in coordination – facilitating and contributing to wider systemic effort³². Working closely with the RC/HC, UNICEF coordinated its response including needs assessments and external communication with the UNCT. In Georgia, coordination was influenced by additional factors, such as the arrival of many external NGOs and donor-led partners who had no previous experience of Georgia or previous relationships with existing humanitarian partners, and a government and UNCT that had had no previous experience of the new humanitarian coordinating mechanism namely the *cluster approach*. In addition there were several kinds of conflicting pressures by both donors and Government agencies to adopt certain approaches to relief and other interventions that were not all agreed on by the current actors.

In the WASH sector, as discussed in section 3.3, the coordination was focused primarily on the operational aspects of provision of WASH facilities in collective centres and tents. The

³⁰ End of Mission Report, Charles Strickland, Emergency Programme Coordinator, August-November 2008

³¹ A very similar experience is narrated in the above-cited End of Mission Report. During a visit by the Emergency Programme Coordinator to Senabki and Kahshuri, the ERC could not find any documentation on actual distribution of schools in carton and recreation kits supplied by UNICEF.

cluster found it difficult to engage with government, donors and the shelter cluster to ensure that minimum standards in WASH were followed in building settlements, with the result that many of the settlements which the government has now come up with do not have even the minimum habitable infrastructure on WASH. This is a serious gap, and needs addressing urgently.

Conclusion:

18. Given that IDPs are now being moved from collective centres to newly created settlements which will be transition shelters for several months to probably a year or two until people can go back to their original homes, UNICEF needs to strengthen its leadership of the WASH cluster to ensure that provisions for adequate WASH facilities are made immediately in these shelters. This would require apart from investment of further resources, high level advocacy with the GOG which has so far failed to appreciate the need for minimum standards in WASH in the settlements it is building.

4.5 Impact:

Impact looks at the wider effects of the project - social, economic, technical, and environmental - on individuals, gender, age-groups, communities, and institutions.

At this stage, the evaluation could only examine the *effectiveness* of the interventions and comment on the potential of these to create meaningful outcomes for the beneficiaries, as has been done above under the 'Effectiveness' criteria. The relief interventions in WASH and child protection enabled affected families and communities to survive the hardships of displacement from homes and villages. The most difficult question to answer at this stage is whether UNICEF programme is leading to better long-term impact for the affected communities. Most of the activities are still ongoing, and people still remain displaced; it is therefore too early to judge whether or not the projects are having impact on individuals, communities and institutions. However, early indications on the outcome of various UNICEF-supported activities like child friendly spaces and psychosocial programme, in particular, are that these have potential for long term impact, and through these programmes UNICEF has built a good reputation for itself among the communities and government.

4.6 Connectedness and Coherence:

*Connectedness is about the need to assure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account and **Coherence** refers to the need to ensure that there is consistency in policies and practices which need to take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations.*

The current Georgia crisis was of a complex political-humanitarian nature, with the scale of the humanitarian needs being relatively smaller than other major international crises humanitarian agencies normally have to deal with. However, Georgia's humanitarian needs cannot be under-estimated. To put it in perspective, before the current caseload of 140,000

³² UNICEF. Review of UNICEF's Evaluation of Humanitarian Action, 2005

IDPs, Georgia already had 220,000 IDPs from the previous conflicts over the past 10-15 years. Taken together, almost 9 per cent of the total population of the country's total population was an IDP in the month of August 2008, and bulk of them still remain so!

On the other hand, Georgia is a country which has witnessed rapid economic growth over the past five years, thanks to the free-market liberalisation the country embarked on. Prior to the conflict of August 2008, the Georgian economy was on a strong growth track, with GDP rising by 10.5 per cent annually. Rising public expenditures, financed by a substantial increase in the tax to GDP ratio, were being directed at improvements in education and health services and in targeted social assistance for the poor as well as infrastructure³³. However, though there may be disagreements over the level of poverty in Georgia, there is general consensus that neither poverty nor extreme poverty has significantly reduced. The discrepancy between strong GDP growth and stagnating poverty estimates suggest that economic reforms are still not impacting on the lives of large majority of the poor of Georgia's society.

UNICEF estimates³⁴ that total child poverty – i.e., children living in families with an income of 67 *lari* per (\$ 1.42) day per person - in the country to be 28 per cent, and extreme child poverty (less than \$1 per day per person) to be 12 per cent. Given this, as well as the fact that nutritional surveys post-conflict indicated need for complementary food for infants, UNICEF needs to coordinate with government and other humanitarian organisations to ensure that until the livelihoods of IDPs return to normal, the vulnerable families with infants either receive adequate supply of complementary food or are supported with cash to buy essential items.

Georgia has embarked on a series of policy and structural reforms since 2003. The process that characterise the reforms in Georgia is the speed and extensive institutional restructuring. The social sector reform agenda has been controversial with frequent changes during its implementation. The central characteristic of reforms in health sector has been privatisation and in the education sector it is decentralisation. There is no evidence that the quality and access to health and education for poorer women and children has improved or will improve in the long term. As a leading organisation on child rights, UNICEF could ratchet up its research, and policy dialogue on the state of women and children in Georgia using vulnerabilities accentuated by this humanitarian crisis as the springboard

As UNICEF plans its long term programme, it will be important to ensure that it continues to target the vulnerable families and children in the new settlements and among the old IDP caseloads, although the latter is a highly dispersed group to target.

UNICEF's psychosocial programme through training of trainers and teachers has potential to be scaled up nationwide for the innovative techniques and the education methodology it promotes.

³³ Georgia Joint Needs Assessment, October 9, 2008, The United Nations — The World Bank

³⁴ UNICEF. Child Poverty in Georgia, undated (power point presentation)

Conclusions:

19. Child poverty across the country and among the IDPs in particular, will continue to remain a major problem requiring ongoing humanitarian interventions as well as long term solutions to addressing vulnerability.
20. UNICEF's psychosocial programme has tremendous potential for being integrated into the national teachers' training curriculum.

4.7 Protection:

As part of its core commitments for children in emergencies, UNICEF commits to the protection of children and women from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

UNICEF supported the establishment of safe environments for children and women, including child-friendly spaces, and integrated psychosocial support in education and protection responses. UNICEF's support to Halo Trust on mine-risk education in high risk areas was key to creating safe environments for families to go back to their villages in many cases. Overall, within the limits imposed by the lack of humanitarian access to many affected communities, UNICEF and its partners have done well in terms of ensuring protection of children of IDP families they had access to. Speculation will always remain whether or not UNICEF or UN system collectively could have done more to gain better humanitarian access.

Linked to protection is UNICEF's commitment to human rights based approach to emergency response. A human rights-based approach requires both the achievement of specific outcomes and good processes. A human rights-based approach is also about holding duty bearers accountable for doing what the claim holder has the right to expect. On this count, the overall humanitarian response by the agencies left much to be desired. This applies to humanitarian agencies in general, and was observed in relation to UNICEF as well³⁵. An inter-sectoral holistic thinking on the humanitarian needs of the communities was missing. A heavy single focus on specific technical aspects of programmes led to unintended consequences: for example while UNICEF-supported activities like child friendly spaces offered children a safe environment in the way a specific room was furnished or equipped, the area it was situated in could be unsafe, with untreated balconies, bad stairs or having no heating and sanitation because these items were the responsibility of another 'programme' or 'sector'.

Even as late as December when the field work for this evaluation was being undertaken, most of the IDPs who had yet not been moved to settlements had no idea how long they would be living in the collective centres or when, if at all, they would be moving to settlements or permanent homes. In some of the settlements visited, the WASH facilities were poor, and people had no idea who to go to get their grievances sorted. In one settlement where people had moved in a week before the evaluators' visit, people had to fetch water from another

³⁵ Similar observations were made with regards to UNICEF's response in other major emergency response as well. The Tsunami Evaluation (*The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster: Evaluation of UNICEF's Response*) stated, "a weakness of the UNICEF response (was) ... almost no consideration given to gauging beneficiary views during the planning and implementation of the response".

village, and had no idea if the government will provide them with any water facility, and if so when.

The IASC has developed guidelines which emphasise the need to ensure the need to consult with the affected people which are not only a matter of fundamental human rights, but also in the interest of good humanitarian practice and accountability. The principles underlying the guidelines (IASC Operational Guidelines, 2006) state that, “Organisations providing protection and assistance in situations of natural disasters³⁶ shall be guided by these Operational Guidelines in all of their activities, in particular when monitoring and assessing the situation and needs of affected persons, when programming and implementing their own activities as well as when entering into a dialogue with governmental authorities on the State’s duties and responsibilities under international human rights and, where applicable, international humanitarian and refugee law. In doing so, they shall remain accountable to all of their relevant stakeholders, *in particular to the persons affected by the natural disaster*”. In other words, accountability to the affected communities (claim holders or ‘beneficiaries’) is paramount in any emergency response.

It was noted that the settlements built by the government were generally in places which were in the middle of nowhere, with no access to employment opportunities or other forms of livelihoods. Families were moved there by the government without their consent, let alone being informed of what was being planned for providing support to their long term settlement. From the perspective of IDPs, they are having to cope with two rounds of displacements – the first when they fled their homes for their lives, and now being forced out of collective centres and taken to settlements with no idea of how long they would remain there. In some sense, the families are more vulnerable now than they were when they moved into collective centres – except for the threat to their lives and property during the war - having seen whatever cash and savings they came with dwindle while living as IDPs, and now having to move to areas where any prospect of livelihoods will remain a distant dream in the near future.

In brief, the evaluation found no evidence of any of the principles of accountability to beneficiaries or respecting their right to information being adhered to in the Georgia response. While UNICEF cannot be held responsible for meeting all the needs, as a child-focused organisation, it has a responsibility to ensure that the collective response of the humanitarian system addressed them all. Towards this end, apart from its role in leading its allocated clusters, its ability to contribute to inter-cluster leadership was also critical.

Conclusion:

21. Humanitarian agencies (and the government) paid very little attention to acknowledging that the victims of conflict have a right to information and participate in decisions that affect their lives, and that the agencies have a duty to be accountable to the communities for their actions and lapses.

³⁶ While the IASC document specifically refers to responses in natural disasters, there is no reason why all or most of these would not also apply in post-conflict context of Georgia.

Section 5:

Key Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations

In this section, the conclusions drawn in sections 3 and 4 have been summarised against key headings and key recommendations coming out of these for UNICEF presented at two levels: (a) Georgia response, and (b) UNICEF's emergency response globally. The conclusions have been numbered using the same reference number as in the sections 3 and 4 above.

Despite being slow to start, as the crisis came suddenly when most staff were away on holiday, UNICEF launched a substantial response in concert with other humanitarian agencies to meet the immediate needs of the affected communities. In addition, as the organisation having designated lead-role for WASH cluster as well as for cluster sub-groups on nutrition and child protection, UNICEF provided leadership to the entire humanitarian community on these issues. Among UNICEF's initial concerns were the displaced women and children living without safe water, basic hygiene items and access to sanitary facilities. Another top priority during the first days of the conflict was to identify the most pressing needs of children and ensure that these needs got adequately addressed in the appeals and joint needs assessment.

Overall, UNICEF's response went well, led by the RO which declared it a level three 'global' emergency. The RO established specific task forces within the RO to better coordinate and carry out support to country offices (with two COs, namely Georgia and Russia involved on both sides of the border). The RO and HQ provided leadership, mobilised the surge and rapidly put in place systems and procedures to enable the small CO team to scale up its operations in line with the CCC. All the different units and departments in the RO and the HQ worked in tandem to enable the small Georgia CO to scale up its capacity and launch a rapid response.

The response had to deal with major challenges as well: lack of humanitarian access and political nature of the crisis, including complex international political ramifications of the crisis, made the delivery of humanitarian response highly complicated. In the following paragraphs, the key lessons coming out of the evaluation have been summarised and specific recommendations made for UNICEF.

5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations for Georgia Operations:

Conclusions and Lessons:

12. Greater research and evidence-based documentation of complementary nutritional needs for selected vulnerable groups could have been used for effective advocacy

with donors and government to develop appropriate interventions for nutritional needs of infants and pregnant women, which remains a gap even after four months.

13. Given that Georgia has well developed functioning markets and the number of affected families was relatively small, UNICEF and its partners could have used cash transfers as an effective response strategy. This however would have required careful programme design and understanding of how cash transfers work in emergencies.
14. Use of cash transfer would have been appropriate for individual family targeted interventions, giving the latter greater say over how they wanted to meet their relief needs.
17. Putting in place a post-distribution monitoring is critical to ensuring that relief supplies are targeted well.
18. Given that IDPs are now being moved from collective centres to newly created settlements which will be transition shelters for several months to probably a year or two until people can go back to their original homes, UNICEF needs to strengthen its leadership of the WASH cluster to ensure that provisions for adequate WASH facilities are made immediately in these shelters. This would require apart from investment of further resources, high level advocacy with the GOG which has so far failed to appreciate the need for minimum standards in WASH in the settlements it is building.
19. Child poverty across the country and among the IDPs in particular, will continue to remain a major problem requiring ongoing humanitarian interventions as well as long term solutions to addressing vulnerability.
20. UNICEF's psychosocial programme has tremendous potential for being integrated into the national teachers' training curriculum.

Recommendations for Georgia CO:

- R1: UNICEF, as nutrition sub-group lead, to facilitate quick gathering of empirical evidences to make a case to donors and GOG for complementary nutritional support to children from IDP families who will continue to live as IDPs for much longer than initially anticipated. At the same time, UNICEF may collaborate with WFP which is already initiating a cash transfer system and explore developing the cash transfer as a viable mechanism for the ongoing response³⁷.
- R2: WASH programming needs to recognise that there is now a second wave of displacement as people are being moved to Government-built settlements, and there are major WASH needs that remain unmet which need significant investment. At the same time, continuing advocacy with the GOG needs to focus on the critical need to

³⁷ In the region, Danish Refugee Council has tried cash transfer on a substantial scale in Chechnya during 2007-08 and their experience may be worthwhile drawing from.

pay adequate attention to WASH infrastructure in settlements that are under construction.

- R3: While continuing to focus on child poverty nationwide through its normal programming, UNICEF needs to conduct research into the child poverty and effect of social sector reform on women and children among IDPs and design appropriate interventions for medium- to long-term.
- R4: UNICEF's programming needs to take into account the continuing humanitarian needs. UNICEF needs to continue to respond and advocate during the transition on the needs of women and children until sustainable normality is restored for women and children to acceptable levels in the settlements or places of return.
- R5: Explore mainstreaming and scaling up psychosocial programme as part of UNICEF's nationwide programme working with education authorities.
- R6: Strengthen the M & E system to be able to monitor and follow up on post-distribution of relief materials on an ongoing basis.

5.2 Conclusions & Recommendations for UNICEF's Global Response:

Conclusions and Lessons:

Deployment and Staff Capacity:

1. UNICEF was able to fast-track its decision making on rapid response and deployment immediately after the onset of the crisis due to the clear lines of communication and coordination it had developed between the HQ, RO and CO.
2. Ability to deploy staff from neighbouring offices in the region was critical to the initial start up of the emergency operations, and this needs to be incorporated into the overall emergency preparedness strategy of the region.
3. For some key functions requiring critical dealings with external organisations (partners, clusters, government) involving joint decision or programming, attempt should be made to deploy staff for a minimum of 6-8 weeks.
4. Early deployment of specialised staff for fundraising and proposal development is essential so as to collate relevant information on needs and UNICEF's response and support CO, RO and communication offices in development of proposals.

Cluster Leadership:

10. It needs to be recognised that Cluster leadership requires high level of facilitative leadership skills, and not just technical expertise in an area. Since UNICEF is taking the lead on WASH cluster globally, it needs to ensure that for its cluster leadership roles, it is able to deploy people with the right orientation and leadership skills to be

able to facilitate response for the entire humanitarian community. UNICEF needs to ensure that staff who are recruited into cluster leadership or team leadership role have a good grounding on UNICEF's working ethos and culture.

11. The separation of roles between cluster leadership and UNICEF's own operations (section heads) needs to be clear to all stakeholders and communicated clearly to partners and staff.

Procurement:

5. The Emergency Preparedness Plan needs to identify suppliers within the region in neighbouring countries. Procurement from countries like Turkey, Bulgaria and Armenia could have been faster and cheaper in terms of transport costs.
6. While stockpiling is always an expensive option especially for countries which do not see regular emergencies, pre-existing agreement with suppliers vetted through the standard procurement procedures could minimise the procurement time after an emergency.

Communication and Humanitarian Access:

7. Time is of essence in any communication. Complex emergencies like the Georgia crisis require sensitive handling of communication. However, greater institutional leadership and guidance from the global level to raise the issues of child rights violations and humanitarian situation affecting children, women and civilians is required.
8. In complex emergencies, a senior international communication person with expertise in IHL ought to be deployed at the earliest, as humanitarian response these days is also about timely communication along with providing tangible assistance to affected communities.
9. The issue of access is a highly political one and therefore there is very little UNICEF can do on its own.

Partnership:

15. Pre-existing relationship with partners and ability to work with them holds the key to effective and timely response for UNICEF. Having one focal point for dealing with partnership relations can make UNICEF's response more efficient.
16. In its relationship with partners, especially the ones with whom it has long standing programmatic collaboration, UNICEF needs to move from project financing to strategic programme financing.

Beneficiary Participation and Accountability to Beneficiaries:

21. Humanitarian agencies (and the government) paid very little attention to acknowledging that the victims of conflict have a right to information and participate

in decisions that affect their lives, and that the agencies have a duty to be accountable to the communities for their actions and lapses³⁸.

Recommendations for Regional Office:

Deployment and Staff Capacity:

- R7: Because COs in CEE/CIS region are small and often the emergency focal point is also focal point for other sectors as well (often at junior level), UNICEF needs to mainstream emergency response in all sectors and keep investing in enhancing staff capacity, for emergency response at both national and international levels. Annual regional meetings of sector focal points (as is the case for social policy, health and education specialists for example) should include time devoted to preparedness and emergency response to further develop region thinking about cash benefits, cluster accountabilities, responses to new areas such as WASH, funding mechanisms such as CERF and Flash appeals and to ensure that all focal points, Deputy Representatives and Representatives are kept abreast of the latest thinking on IHL and emergency response issues and global architecture.

Procurement:

- R8: Develop framework agreements with suppliers of standard relief items in different regions, and pre-identity logistics solutions (freight and transport) within the regions wherever regional capacity exists.

Recommendations for HQ:

Deployment and Staff Capacity:

- R9: Learning from organisations like ICRC, MSF etc., UNICEF should be able to mobilise self-directed teams who need minimum induction and orientation and are able to become operational within a few hours of arriving in country. They should be aware of IASC modalities, funding mechanisms, field assessments, cluster approach and will be expected to work with minimum supervision.
- R10: One specific area where UNICEF needs to develop expertise, apart from its cluster-focus, is on cash transfers to affected communities which is becoming increasingly important as an emergency response tool in situations with functioning local markets. It is understood that EMOPS has recently come up with guidelines for cash programming which is now being rolled out.

Cluster Leadership:

- R11: Globally UNICEF needs to have a pool of senior staff with technical as well as cluster-leadership skills in WASH, nutrition and child protection who can be deployed in major emergencies.

³⁸ UNICEF has acknowledged this as an issue on several instances in the past. In the section on Accountability to Beneficiaries, the *UNICEF's Contributions* report (UNICEF 2004) argues that this has been a weak area for all humanitarian agencies. The UNICEF Tsunami Evaluation (2006) found UNICEF to be weak in this area.

Communication and Humanitarian Access:

- R12: Streamline and rationalise approach to developing communication messages focusing on child rights and humanitarian needs in complex crises in line with the CRC and CCC, so as to ensure that UNICEF retains its pre-eminent position as the leading child rights organisation and an impartial and neutral humanitarian agency. Broad outline of messages targeted on specific issues such as conflict, natural disaster; displacement etc., could be pre-prepared in advance and be issued with fast fine tuning to specific contexts.

Partnership:

- R13: Move to programme financing from project financing in relation to long term partners.

Beneficiary Participation and Accountability to Beneficiaries:

- R14: Successive evaluations have shown that this has remained a weak area for UNICEF (as well as for other UN agencies), and hence a global strategy needs to be developed outlining practical actions and standards that UNICEF will follow in all emergency response.