

The run-up to October's Parliamentary elections dominated and affected all developments throughout 2012. Increasing political and social polarisation between the powerful ruling United National Movement (UNM), led by the incumbent President Mikheil Saakashvili, and a coalition of major opposition parties known as the Georgian Dream, led by a billionaire businessman and political newcomer Bidzina Ivanishvili, threatened at times to erupt into social unrest. Despite widespread expectations that the UNM would defeat the Georgian Dream coalition, the latter won a surprising outright majority in Parliament (85 of 150 seats) in October's election. President Saakashvili's prompt concession was instrumental in quickly defusing potential conflict triggers, thus also cementing the first ever peaceful transfer of power in the Southern Caucasus as a result of regularly scheduled elections.

The new Government's programme seeks to reinforce the ideological difference between the GD and the previous UNM Government by prioritizing poverty reduction and social issues over economic growth, welfare over fiscal discipline, and environmental protection over resource exploitation. Decentralization and transparency seem to be key features, including strengthened self-governance, depoliticizing the powerful Ministry of Interior and the civil service, establishing institutional and financial independence of the courts, and civic integration of ethnic minorities. While this creates new opportunities and a more conducive environment for UN's programmatic involvement, difficulties resulting from the reality new of political 'co-habitation' are set to complicate policy-making processes, both in terms of institutional relations between a powerful UNM President and a GD-dominated Parliament, but also between the Government and the UNM-dominated municipal assemblies that will have to locally implement the Government's policies until the 2014 local elections.

With regard to Georgia's foreign policy and conflict-resolution efforts, the anticipated policy changes are expected to create a more conducive environment for progress, albeit within firmly entrenched positions on status-related issues. Prime Minister has made it clear that Georgia's commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration (including seeking membership of NATO and the EU) remains a foreign policy cornerstone, but he has also cited normalisation of relations with Russia as a priority issue and quickly appointed a Special Envoy in this regard. While the exact form of "engagement" remains to be determined, it is clear that the new Government will seek to rebuild the trust deficit, in the process seeking to create new opportunities and negotiation dynamics that may benefit their long-term objectives of peaceful reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Balancing meaningful engagement with adherence to territorial integrity will be a precarious task, but will certainly create new opportunities that UN is best placed to effect and/or support.

Since the mid-1990s United Nations (UN) agencies, funds and programmes have cooperated with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) working in Abkhazia with the aim of improving living conditions and delivering durable solutions for displaced, vulnerable and conflict-affected communities. Delivery of such humanitarian assistance has also included, where feasible, confidence building activities, and has been undertaken with the inclusion and direct participation of local communities. During 2012, the UN and INGO partners continued to address existing needs in identified priority sectors, including housing, food security and food production, health, education, social services and livelihoods support. Activities conducted by other actors, beyond the UN and its INGOs partners, are not covered by this report.

UN agencies, funds and programmes conducted their activities in the frames of their specific humanitarian and development mandates where possible, despite the challenges of the pre-election period. Jointly with INGO partners the UNCT agencies benefit from their co-operation within a strategic partnership and under the overall co-ordination of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The humanitarian efforts undertaken by the UN agencies, funds and programmes and their INGO partners aim at mitigating human suffering, wherever it is found, the improvement of the humanitarian situation and the protection of the rights of conflict affected, including displaced populations. The efforts pursue a human rights based approach build on well established principles governing humanitarian access, but are in its dimension dependent on donor support.

While UN continues working in Abkhazia, the access to South Ossetia is non-existent hindering the humanitarian assistance from being delivered effectively to address the needs of the local population on the ground.

Summary on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

UNDAF Annual Review related work was postponed in January 2012 due to high level missions in UNDP and UNHCR, and introduction of a new financial management system at UNICEF.

In February the RC asked the Country Team to reflect on government's readiness and willingness to participate in UNDAF Annual Review taking into account their preoccupation with the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential elections in 2013. Participants extensively discussed these issues and agreed that the UNDAF TGs will hold three separate expanded meetings [one per TG] involving key high-level interlocutors, including from the government, instead of a joint UNDAF Review meeting.

In March the UNDAF Steering Committee recommended holding all three TG Extended meetings in April

2012. The UNCT members agreed with the aforementioned recommendations. It was also mentioned that the timeframe for the expanded meetings could be widened to April-May, if necessary.

Taking into account the government reshuffle in May, it was decided to postpone the formal review of UNDAF and to ask the theme groups to focus on refining the M&E framework instead. It was suggested to hold the review towards the end of the year once it is clear who the key counterparts in the government are.

The change of the government in October 2012 as a result of Parliamentary elections put these plans on hold and now the Annual Review is scheduled to take place sometime in 2013.

Summary on progress in UN Reform

An extended UNCT meeting was held in February 2012 to review the past year inter-agency activities, finalize 2011 RC Report and plan for the year ahead. The usual annual UNCT Retreat did not take place due to shortage of funds.

UNCT meetings were held regularly to discuss the issues of inter-agency nature. OMT met to discuss such common issues as premises, services and procurement. New common services [office stationary, fuel and taxi] were introduced.

During 2012, the Security Risk Assessment (SRA) was conducted for the entire country and specific areas depending on the prevailing security situation in the area. Based on the SRA mitigation measures were identified and implemented through formal MOSS and MORSS process. Formal update of security plan for Georgia was conducted twice during 2012. Area specific security plan for Abkhazia and Zugdidi district was updated simultaneously with the country wide plan. Security Management Team meetings were held monthly in Tbilisi and Area Security Management Team meetings were held monthly in Gali.

In November 2012 Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environment (SSAFE) training was conducted for 17 UN A/P/F and INGO staff.

The UN has played a critical role in supporting a policy dialogue on a broad range of issues between the donor community and the government of Georgia. The RC Chaired the Abkhazia Strategic Partnership (ASP), the Ambassadorial Working Group (AWG) and the Humanitarian Coordination Group (HCG).

The Ambassadorial Working Group (AWG) closely followed the developments related to the election environment in Georgia. The AWG strongly supported Georgia's democratic development, and in particular the fundamental principles of free and fair elections, a level playing field for all participants, equal access to media, and respect for the rule of law.

Abkhazia Strategic Partnership (ASP) supported the improvement of living conditions and the delivery of durable solutions for displaced, vulnerable and conflict-affected communities. Such humanitarian assistance, where feasible, also included confidence building activities, and has been undertaken directly with local communities.

The HCG met regularly throughout the year focusing its attention primarily on breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The UN has played a critical role in supporting a policy dialogue on a broad range of issues between the donor community and the government of Georgia.

RC led negotiations for operational UN, NGOs, ICRC and donors/member states with the Government Ministries on humanitarian access issues and was also actively involved in Geneva Internal Discussions on behalf of the UNCT. The RC participated in all four meetings in Geneva during 2012.

The Disaster Management Team (DMT) was reestablished in April 2012. Regular meetings plus Inter-Agency Contingency Planning (IACP) Workshop [29 June] led by OCHA-ROCCA were held in 2012. The group among other issues updated the IACP for Georgia, which is now in final stage pending approval from the UNCT.

In response to the hails, wind storm and flash floods in Kakheti in July 2012, the UN and the WB assisted the government with the post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) and development of recovery plan. UN DMT member agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM), were involved in WB/UNDP led PDNA to assess damage and losses and produced the report of this joint needs assessment. UNDP mobilized emergency cash grant in the amount of US\$100,000 to assist with the immediate coordination and early recovery needs, mainly in agriculture and disaster risk management capacity building in disaster-hit Telavi municipality.

2012 was an important year for the UNCT collaboration and cooperation on joint communication initiatives. Public awareness and advocacy raising activities were carried out in specific areas (e.g. human rights, gender equality, sustainable development, etc.) in the format of multimedia, weekly radio talk-shows on human rights, television programs, press briefings and interviews, film screenings, drawing and short film contests, concerts, inmate women's and children's art exhibitions, photo exhibit, public outdoor campaigns, roundtable meetings and conferences, information sessions and lectures for school and university students.

UN agencies operating in Georgia joined forces to put on view some of their latest publications and reports at the Tbilisi International Book Fair for the first time. Over 1400 school children and students attended the UN4U lectures, Model UN sessions, Information sessions and UN House tours. 25 UN and International days were observed. UN Georgia's website received 29,000 visitors, averaging 2,416 visitors per month. The number of visitors of the UN in Georgia YouTube was more than 36,000.

The composition of the Gender Theme Group (GTG) has been expanded to unite the absolute majority of international organizations, donors and local foundations working in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in Georgia. Thus, the GTG has been positioned quite strategically and played key role in ensuring that gender and women's rights are put on the agenda of the new government of Georgia (that came to power after 2012 October Parliamentary Elections). Namely, as a result of the GTG's advocacy and technical support there was re-established the Council for Gender Equality of the Parliament soon after the elections. Since there is no structure in the executive branch, that would be responsible for gender equality and women's rights issues, there was developed a technical paper on the structure and mandate of gender equality machinery in the executive and legislative branches of the government on national and local levels, the GTG has also elaborated advocacy strategy for the promotion of the technical paper that has been successfully implemented.

In addition, the GTG has organized the high-level event in the frameworks of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence and for the promotion of the SG's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign at which the representatives of local and international organizations and diplomatic corps underlined the importance of implementation of Georgia's national and international commitments in the area of gender equality and women's rights, while the new government confirmed its commitments and expressed goodwill to carry the work forward.

In February 2012 the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of Association, Mr. Maina Kiai, visited Georgia on the first-ever visit of this UN special mandate. His visit was organized by the UN OHCHR office in Georgia. Mr. Kiai issued a report that was sharply critical of the UNM's government policies of creating obstacles to activities of labour unions and of opposition political parties. Some of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations were implemented by the UNM government, but a number of them, including those concerning activities of labour unions remain to be implemented by the new Government.

To focus on human rights issues and on reporting by the Government of Georgia to the UN Treaty Bodies, an informal working group was formed. Representatives of OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and UNAIDS met regularly to discuss their work on human rights and the human rights developments in the country and provided advice to the UN RC.

In 2012 the United Nations Joint Team (UNJT) on HIV/AIDS continued to play a crucial role in providing financial and technical assistance for expanding accelerated national HIV/AIDS response in Georgia. Through the inclusive and participatory National Consultations in early 2012, the member agencies of the UNJT identified 2 main priority areas for providing their Joint Support in the period of 2012 – 2013: (1) Key populations access to quality combination prevention services increased; and (2) Domestic resources for HIV response increased and access of PLHIV who are eligible for treatment sustained > 80%.

The Agencies pledged to achieve the above-mentioned through the coordinated UN support to the National AIDS Authority and have harmonized the UN Joint Programme of Support on HIV/AIDS 2012-13 [\$369,092] with the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Action Plan for 2011-16, and the UNDAF 2011-15. This highlights the JPS synergy with the HLM (High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS NY 2011) targets to be achieved by 2015 globally: Eliminate Stigma and Discrimination; Reduce sexual transmission; Prevent HIV among Drug Users; 15 million accessing treatment; Close the resource gap; and Strengthening HIV Integration.

Apart from UN Joint Programme of Support on HIV/AIDS 2012-13, there five more Joint Programmes active in 2012. These were:

Joint Initiative in support of the MDG Parliamentary Group (MDGPG)

The primary purpose of this consultancy is the provision of analytical and technical support to effective functioning and outreach of the MDGPG as well as the collection of data and information on the progress of attaining the Goals in Georgia.

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$16,700), UNFPA (\$13,700), UNICEF (\$16,700) Duration: January 2011 – December 2012, Total Budget: \$50,100

Livelihood Development of Vulnerable Communities in the Shida Kartli Region

The programme assists the displaced and host communities in the Shida Kartli region through promoting small-scale farming and raising household income of farming families. The project will establish a value chain linking up farmers, the farmers' associations, food processing facilities and service providers with each other, and strengthening their capacity thorough trainings, extension support and access to markets.

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$80,000) and UNHCR (TBD)

Duration: 1 November 2011 – 31 October 2013, Total Budget: \$300,000

Integrated Socio-economic development of Pankisi Valley

The initiative is designed to: (1) Assist transitional strategy from direct individual humanitarian assistance to sustainable human development for all communities, including refugees in Pankisi Valley, and (2) Strengthen the national system of protection of refugees in a broader context of democratic governance, addressing poverty and promoting sustainable human development in Pankisi Valley. The immediate objective of the project is to ensure integrated local development and improve the lives of people in the Pankisi Valley through enhanced employment and economic opportunities, better provision of social services, and safe and secure environment.

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$420,000) and UNHCR (\$200,000)

Duration: 1 February 2011 – 31 January 2013, External donor: SDC, Total Budget: \$620,000

UN Joint Programme to Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia

The overall goal of the programme is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through strengthening capacities in the government, civil society and communities. The overall goal will be achieved by realization of the following outcomes: (1) Enhanced women's political and economic empowerment; (2) Creating an enabling environment to eliminate violence against women, especially domestic violence (DV); and (3) Gender Equality advanced by creating enabling environment to realize Sexual and Reproductive Rights of population

The joint programme directly supports further realization of the women's rights and gender equality commitments undertaken by Georgia at international as well as national levels and will upscale results achieved by the country with the support of the international community, including UN agencies, in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment through innovative initiatives. Furthermore, it contributes and responds to United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF's) stated goals on enhanced protection and promotion of human rights, access to justice and gender equality and of improved access to quality health, education, legal aid, justice and other essential social services. The proposed programme is directly linked to national priorities it closely follows and derives from the aims, objectives and priorities of the draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2011-2013).

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$1,913,153), UN Women (\$1,935,679) and UNFPA (\$733,049)

Donor: SIDA, Duration: 2011 – 2014, Total Budget: \$4,581,881

UN Joint Project "Georgia Reproductive Health Survey

A third round population-based household probability survey of women of childbearing age was conducted in 2010 and a preliminary report was disseminated in 2011 within the frames of the UNICEF-UNFPA UN Joint Project through the pooled fund modality with UNFPA as a Managing Agent. The 2010 Reproductive Health Survey in Georgia (GERHS2010) covers a broad array of reproductive health topics, including a pregnancy history, abortion, childbearing, contraceptive use, maternal and child health, health behaviors, attitudes toward contraception. It also includes information on key MDG indicators (Education & Water & Sanitation). In addition, the survey provides data and information needed to evaluate IEC efforts, youth health programs, knowledge on STDs, including HIV/AIDS. In 2012 the full report of the survey was developed through the leadership of the NCDC&PH with involvement of the national and international experts. It was published in Georgian and English languages and widely disseminated, including through the national conference in June 2012.

Participating Agencies: UNFPA (\$147,000) and UNICEF (\$123,426)

Duration: 2010-2012, Total Budget: \$270,426

It is also worth mentioning that the UN Joint Team on HIV/AIDS nominated 2010-2011 UN Joint Project "Implementing UN Cares Minimum Standards in Georgia", for the UN Cares 2012 Award, as an example of the effective and innovative programming directly contributing to strengthened understanding and utilization of human rights among trainee UN staff, equip them with the sound understanding of their rights and to combat stigma and discrimination. The project was implemented under the pooled-fund management modality during with UNFPA as a Managing Agent.

Key aspects of the proposed 2013 workplan

In 2013, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia will focus its efforts on monitoring and evaluation of the 2011-2015 UNDAF. The UNCT will also continue engaging with the Government of Georgia on issues related to the MDG advocacy and is also planning to render support in the area of Justice System reform. For example, UNDP, in collaboration with OHCHR and UNODC, plan to contribute to the ongoing justice system reform in Georgia through:

- Support to the criminal justice reform, with a particular focus on the liberalization of the system, enhancing judicial independence and establishment of the effective mechanism to remedy deficiencies of justice
- Enhancing effectiveness of the reform of the penitentiary, including the improved administration and effective public monitoring of the system to ensure protection of human rights, and
- Enhancing access to justice for marginalized communities;

Recommendations

The UN Country Team in Georgia would like to get clarity on future HQ/DOCO funding for RC Office. It would be good to know in advance what the situation is going to be in the future to ensure smooth implementation of the UN Reform at the country level through effective functioning of the RC Office and adequate coordination support to the RC and the UN Country Team.