

georgia



The ICRC has been present in Georgia since 1992. It visits detainees throughout Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and supports the authorities in bringing tuberculosis in prisons under control. It contributes to efforts to provide answers to families of missing persons and protects and assists displaced people and other vulnerable groups in conflict-affected regions. The ICRC also promotes the integration of IHL into the training of the armed and security forces and into university and school curricula. In cooperation with Movement partners, the ICRC helps to strengthen the capacities of the National Society.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,738
Assistance	5,635
Prevention	1,208
Cooperation with National Societies	239
General	-

► **8,820**

of which: Overheads 538

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	93%
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PERSONNEL

21 expatriates
183 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2007, the ICRC:

- acted as a neutral intermediary between the Abkhaz and Georgian sides to re-establish the dialogue on the issue of missing persons
- continued to share confidentially with the authorities concerned recommendations about the treatment and living conditions of detainees in Georgia proper, Abkhazia and South Ossetia
- ended its relief programme in Abkhazia and western Georgia for destitute residents and IDPs
- undertook rehabilitation work in collective centres for IDPs
- supported the Georgian authorities in improving health care and tackling tuberculosis in prisons
- signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Defence concerning the promotion of IHL

CONTEXT

In Georgia, an internal political crisis sparked by the demotion, resignation and then arrest of defence minister Irakli Okruashvili in September came to a head in November when allegations made against President Mikhail Saakashvili and his government triggered a wave of protests. There followed the imposition of a state of emergency lasting 10 days, the closure of private media and the calling of early presidential elections for January 2008.

The Georgian government accused the Russian Federation of being behind the November crisis, fuelling confrontational rhetoric between the two countries, while the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia also remained a contentious issue.

Georgia's relations with the two regions remained tense as they continued to express the wish to obtain independence. In Abkhazia, armed clashes and security incidents prevented any constructive dialogue between the parties, despite mediation efforts by the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In South Ossetia, the establishment of the Temporary Administrative Unit in Kurta by the Georgian government further complicated prospects for dialogue between the parties. Negotiations in the contexts of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, suspended in mid-2006, thus remained deadlocked.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

	Total		Total	Women	Children	
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			CIVILIANS AND PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM			
Detainees visited	24,009	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>				
Detainees visited and monitored individually	72	Food	Beneficiaries	2,164	60%	11%
<i>of whom females</i>	4	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	2,164	60%	11%
Number of visits carried out	76	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	108	40%	40%
Number of places of detention visited	27	Water, sanitation and habitat projects	Beneficiaries	3,165	44%	17%
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		WOUNDED AND SICK				
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		<i>Physical rehabilitation</i>				
RCMs collected	5,030	Patients receiving services	Patients	1,170	136	348
RCMs distributed	4,905	Prostheses delivered	Units	337	37	23
People reunited with their families	2	Orthoses delivered	Units	718	71	585
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>						
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	47					
<i>of whom females</i>	13					
<i>of whom minors at the time of disappearance</i>	8					
Tracing cases closed positively (persons located)	26					
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2007 (people)	7					
<i>of which for females</i>	2					

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC continued to provide assistance and protection to the civilian population in the conflict zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for which purpose it maintained a permanent presence in Sukhumi, Gali, Zugdidi and Tskhinvali. In light of its observations of the effects of the conflict on the civilian population, it reminded the authorities of their obligations under IHL.

Clarifying the fate of persons unaccounted for in connection with the different conflicts and providing support to their families remained uphill work. After expressing its concern about the lack of progress on this issue in position papers submitted in September 2006 to the highest authorities in Tbilisi and Sukhumi, the ICRC offered in 2007 to act as a neutral intermediary to revive the dialogue between Georgia's Commission on Missing Persons and its equivalent in Abkhazia. The offer was accepted, and the ICRC organized a study trip to Cyprus for both commissions in September. Unfortunately, the planned coordination meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, was cancelled.

With the authorities taking over responsibility for support to the most vulnerable, the ICRC ended its assistance programme for western Georgia's poorest IDP families and residents. Likewise, it phased out its assistance programme in Abkhazia. In partnership with the Red Cross in Abkhazia, the ICRC continued to seek funding support for the home assistance programme for the remaining housebound beneficiaries.

In view of IDPs' need for improved housing, the ICRC made its database of all IDP collective centres available to government authorities to enable them to determine which ones needed rehabilitating as a priority. Meanwhile, the organization continued to undertake repairs on the centres most in need.

The ICRC pursued its visits to people deprived of their freedom. Delegates had access to detainees arrested in relation to the November events, as well as to those detained following armed clashes in Abkhazia. The organization again alerted the authorities to severe overcrowding in Georgia's prisons and to poor prison infrastructure in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Work to upgrade prison buildings and water supply systems continued.

Tuberculosis (TB) screening and treatment in prisons and the gradual handover of the programme to the authorities went ahead. Experience gained through the TB control programme was used to support the authorities in developing penitentiary health care. Prior to the planned prison health reform, a comprehensive health needs assessment was undertaken as from May, conducted in cooperation with the authorities and using methodology proposed by the ICRC, to enable the authorities to prioritize tasks and establish a plan of action.

The ICRC maintained its financial and technical support to the physical rehabilitation services in Tbilisi and Gagra, while preparing for a gradual withdrawal.

The Defence Ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with the ICRC to promote IHL among the armed forces. Work on introducing IHL in secondary school and university teaching continued.

In cooperation with the International Federation, the ICRC continued to support the National Society's statutory reform process.

CIVILIANS

Clarifying the fate of missing persons

More than 13 years on, some 2,000 people remained missing in relation to the conflict in Abkhazia and about 120 in relation to the conflict in South Ossetia.

In April, the minister of refugees and accommodation approached Abkhazia's *de facto* authorities with a proposal to resume talks on the missing persons issue, which had been suspended since July 2006 when Tbilisi deployed security forces in the Kodori Gorge. The ICRC was invited to act as a neutral intermediary between the parties. Work continued towards adopting new statutes for the Abkhaz Commission on Missing Persons. In September, both commissions participated in a study trip to Cyprus organized by the ICRC. In October, Abkhazia's *de facto* authorities suspended talks following an incident between Georgian and Abkhaz troops, and a planned coordination meeting in Geneva was cancelled. In November, they expressed readiness to restart the dialogue, but no cases were resolved during 2007.

With a view to boosting local forensic capacities, 12 Georgian forensic experts were trained in the recovery, analysis and identification of human remains at a one-week workshop organized in April by the ICRC forensic adviser in Tbilisi. In July, one-day workshops on exhumation techniques were organized in Tbilisi and Sukhumi.

The Mothers of Abkhazia association produced a book in memory of missing relatives to coincide with the International Day of the Disappeared (30 August). A Georgian family association, the Molodini Fund, mounted a television and poster campaign to mark the occasion in Georgia. Both projects acknowledged the suffering of the families and were financed by the ICRC.

Restoring family links

Through RCMs, people too poor to afford the telephone service between Georgia and Abkhazia kept in touch with family members living on the other side of the ceasefire line.

- ▶ 3,754 RCMs collected from and 3,477 RCMs distributed to civilians
- ▶ 2 people reunited with their families
- ▶ new tracing requests registered for 47 people (including 13 females and 8 minors at the time of disappearance); 26 people located; 7 people (including 2 females and 2 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 67 official documents relayed between family members

Assistance to the most vulnerable

In Abkhazia, given the improved socio-economic conditions, ICRC assistance programmes were discontinued in August. Local authorities and international NGOs took over where the ICRC left off, providing destitute former ICRC beneficiaries with monthly cash allowances. Prior to that, just over 2,000 beneficiaries – mostly elderly women living alone – received a final distribution of food and essential household items from the ICRC. Vulnerable households received productive assets, mostly livestock, and technical coaching from the ICRC, enabling them to become more self-sufficient. Some 270 housebound elderly people received personal care services through the home assistance programme run by the Red Cross in Abkhazia with ICRC support.

In western Georgia, following the end of a four-year assistance programme to boost income-generation, former ICRC beneficiaries were transferred in March to the State cash assistance programme.

The ICRC database of IDP collective centres, identifying the technical specifications of all 1,271 centres in western and eastern Georgia, was made available to government authorities. In western Georgia and Tbilisi, following the signing of an agreement between the Refugees and Accommodation Ministry and the ICRC, IDPs benefited when collective centres were rehabilitated and shower and latrine blocs installed. In South Ossetia and Shida Kartli, IDPs benefited from similar work in centres.

Assistance in Abkhazia and western Georgia

- ▶ 2,164 people (1,344 households) received food and essential household items
- ▶ 108 people (42 households) benefited from micro-economic initiatives
- ▶ 2,715 people benefited from water and sanitation projects

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

People deprived of their freedom in Georgia proper, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were visited by ICRC delegates, and people arrested for security reasons were monitored individually. Confidential reports with the ICRC's findings and recommendations were submitted to the detaining authorities. Detainees and their relatives were able to keep in touch through RCMs.

Georgia proper

- ▶ 23,508 detainees visited, of whom 61 monitored individually (including 3 females) and 14 newly registered, during 63 visits to 20 places of detention
- ▶ 1,239 RCMs collected from and 1,399 RCMs distributed to detainees

Abkhazia

- ▶ 394 detainees visited, of whom 7 monitored individually (including 1 female) and 3 newly registered, during 8 visits to 5 places of detention
- ▶ 37 RCMs collected from and 29 RCMs distributed to detainees

South Ossetia

- ▶ 107 detainees visited, of whom 4 monitored individually and 4 newly registered, during 5 visits to 2 places of detention
- ▶ 2 detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC support

Improving detainee health

Overcrowding and the resulting poor conditions of detention remained a serious problem in Georgia's prisons, despite new places of detention being built and existing ones enlarged. Following confidential ICRC reports, the authorities implemented several recommendations benefiting the detainee population. The authorities took steps to tackle prison health as a matter of priority and to include it in the national health policy being developed under the auspices of the State Commission for Reform. With the aim of enabling the authorities to set priorities and draft an action plan for improving prison health services, a comprehensive health needs assessment was undertaken in Georgia's prisons as from May, conducted in cooperation with the Ministries of Justice and of Health, Labour and Social Affairs and using methodology proposed by the ICRC.

In South Ossetia, people detained at the Tskhinvali pre-trial facility were provided with easier access to health care and improved hygiene through the construction of a new medical unit, toilets and showers.

In Abkhazia, 400 detainees at the Dranda prison, as well as the community living in the vicinity, were assured of clean water through the rehabilitation of the water supply system.

- ▶ 450 detainees benefited from water and sanitation projects

TB control programme

With a view to bringing the TB epidemic in the penitentiary system under control, the government continued to implement the directly observed treatment, short course (DOTS) strategy for detainees with active TB. Coordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs still needed to be strengthened to ensure that detainees could complete their treatment after release.

The Ministry of Justice conducted mass TB screening in detention facilities, with the technical support of the ICRC and the national TB programme. Plans were made to include the new Gldani prison in the TB control programme, ensuring that all people detained in Georgia had full access to proper diagnosis and treatment of TB.

- ▶ 19,143 detainees screened for TB in 15 detention facilities
- ▶ 705 detainees commenced DOTS treatment
- ▶ 584 patients completed treatment
- ▶ 449 detainees still under treatment

WOUNDED AND SICK

According to official estimates, there were 5,000 amputees in Georgia. In Abkhazia, there were around 600, most of whom were weapon-wounded.

The physical rehabilitation centre in Tbilisi run by the Georgian Foundation for Prosthetic Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (GEFPOR) had about 50% of its costs reimbursed by the ICRC. Aiming to become operationally and financially independent, GEFPOR continued to apply for funding to various potential donors and developed income-generating activities.

Abkhazia's *de facto* health authorities increasingly found the financial resources to purchase raw materials for the Gagra Orthopaedic Centre, intended to be self-sustainable by the end of 2008.

Thanks to a cooperation agreement between the ICRC and South Ossetia's *de facto* health authorities and a contract signed with the Vladikavkaz Orthopaedic Centre, disabled Ossetian patients had the opportunity to be fitted with prosthetic/orthotic appliances.

- ▶ 1,170 patients (including 136 women and 348 children) received services at 2 ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centres
- ▶ 107 new patients (including 15 women and 7 children) fitted with prostheses and 302 (including 35 women and 243 children) fitted with orthoses
- ▶ 337 prostheses (including 37 for women, 23 for children and 66 for mine victims), 718 orthoses (including 71 for women, 585 for children), 489 crutches and 1 wheelchair delivered

AUTHORITIES

As part of the process of Georgia's accession to the Ottawa Convention, the Foreign Affairs Ministry requested the ICRC's assistance in organizing a meeting of the authorities concerned to review the provisions of the treaty and related implementation measures. Consultations were carried out by various ministries in preparation for Georgia's accession to the Hague Convention on Cultural Property.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols were translated into Georgian to facilitate their national implementation.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

With ICRC support, the Defence Ministry pursued its plans to integrate IHL into Georgian armed forces training. In March, the ministry and the ICRC signed a memorandum of understanding on the dissemination of IHL rules, and a working group was set up to oversee IHL integration.

Armed personnel in Abkhazia and South Ossetia enhanced their understanding of the ICRC's mission and the basic rules of IHL through briefings and information sessions.

In Abkhazia, 30 cadets of the Sukhumi Combined Arms Command Institute participated in an IHL competition.

Information sessions on the ICRC and IHL were held for:

- ▶ Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping troops in Abkhazia
- ▶ 36 observers of the Joint Peacekeeping Force in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone
- ▶ 9 UNOMIG officers in Zugdidi
- ▶ 76 army officers in western Georgia

CIVIL SOCIETY

Raising awareness of IHL among the general public

The Georgian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian media were provided with a range of printed and audiovisual materials on the ICRC's mandate and activities. In western Georgia, journalists attended round-tables and briefings, as well as a photo exhibition, organized by the ICRC to encourage greater coverage of IHL issues.

Teaching humanitarian values to schoolchildren

As Georgia's education reform progressed, the Education Ministry introduced IHL-related topics into new curricula and education manuals with ICRC support. The basics of IHL were reflected in the new secondary school standards and featured in 8th grade history, geography and civic education textbooks. Teacher training was organized and a CD-ROM for teachers entitled "Basics of IHL" produced.

- ▶ 270 teachers trained in IHL in 11 regions of Georgia
- ▶ 70 schoolchildren participated in a "Play by the rules!" football tournament in Zugdidi
- ▶ 35 schoolchildren participated in a "What do we know about the basics of IHL?" competition in Sukhumi

Promoting IHL among students

The law faculty of Tbilisi State University organized an essay competition to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1977 Additional Protocols and received IHL-related publications from the ICRC. Zugdidi University held an IHL dissemination event and was provided with IHL-related publications.

- ▶ a team of Georgian students participated in the Jean Pictet IHL competition in El Escorial, Spain, in April
- ▶ 1 student from Tbilisi State University took part in the 1st International Students' Conference on IHL in Yerevan, Armenia, in April
- ▶ 3 student teams participated in a national IHL moot court competition

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Red Cross Society of Georgia, with the support of the ICRC and the International Federation, established new internal regulations and procedures. The National Society's governance, as well as financial and appeal commission members, were elected at a general assembly in conformity with the new statutory provisions. The recommendations of the organizational capacity review, jointly supported by the ICRC and the International Federation in 2006, were integrated into the National Society's strategic development plan for 2007–11.

Georgian Red Cross representatives met their Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts in Tbilisi to discuss dissemination and tracing, share experiences and establish best practices.