



## **2013 Resident Coordinator Annual Report (RCAR)**

### **Introduction**

The Georgian political landscape in 2013 was marked by a Presidential election in October which saw for the first time a presidential transition as the result of a peaceful, democratic election. The election ended the uneasy political co-habitation between the Government consisting of the “Georgian Dream” (GD) coalition and the President and majority of local authorities representing the previous ruling party United National Movement (UNM).

The October 2013 Presidential Elections were seen by international and local observers to be efficiently administered, transparent and took place in an amicable and constructive environment. Media coverage was overall less polarized and more balanced with greater diversity in coverage and sources of information. The election also marked the introduction of constitutional amendments passed three years ago which transferred key prerogatives from the president to the prime minister and effectively transformed the country to a parliamentary democracy.

Following the presidential inauguration, the Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili kept his promise to leave politics and nominated 31 year old Minister of Interior Irakli Garibashvili as his successor, who was later endorsed by the Parliament. This nomination did not, however, result in a change of the current Government

The Government retained its strong Euro-Atlantic orientation with EU Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) being initialed at the Vilnius Summit in November and intention to sign the Association Agreement as early as August 2014. ).

Protection of human rights and restoration of justice remained a topical issue for the Government and a major expectation for the public. The Government promised to de-politicize the justice sector, release those unfairly imprisoned and punish those responsible for abuse of power. These and other human rights related challenges were also pointed out in the report “Georgia in Transition” by Thomas Hammarberg, the EU Special Adviser on Constitutional and Legal Reform and Human Rights in Georgia, and encouraged the government to initiate development of a National Strategy and Action Plan for Human Rights.

The government, notwithstanding numerous challenges, has made a tangible progress in increasing independence of judiciary, liberalizing criminal procedures, reducing reliance the previously abused plea-bargaining procedures. More than 50% of the prisoners were released through a parliamentary amnesty and pardons granted by the President.

The Labour Code was thoroughly amended in consultations with ILO and other stakeholders and now better protects the rights of employees.

Political uncertainties matched with rigorous scrutiny of the previously approved public investment projects, thus suppressing government spending and reduced growth in the leading economies of the region caused economic slowdown. The IMF estimates 2.5%-3% annual GDP growth rate in 2013

(6.2% in 2012). Inflation was -0.5%, with GEL depreciating towards the end of the year by 5.3%. Unemployment and poverty remain problematic with no significant improvements (unemployment: 15.1% in '11 and 15.0% in '12; relative poverty: 23% -'11 to 22.4%-'12).

Economic slowdown was blamed for estimated budget deficit of Gel 900 mln and increased foreign debt (83.7% of III Qs GDP).

However, it should also be noted that the key sector of agriculture saw output increased by 11.5% in 2013 and tourism was also a fast growing sector of the Georgian economy accounting for an estimated 7.3% of the GDP and with a reported increase of 23% in international visitors during 2013. The World Bank estimates economic growth for Georgia of between 6 and 7% in 2014-2015. Other international financial institutions have published fairly similar forecasts

The 2014 State Budget will maintain a social focus, with significant allocations for education, healthcare and social protection.

During 2013 the United Nations (UN) agencies, funds and programmes continued working in Abkhazia with the aim of improving living conditions and delivering durable solutions for displaced, vulnerable and conflict-affected communities. Delivery of such assistance included, where feasible, confidence building activities, and has been undertaken with the inclusion and direct participation of local communities. During 2013, the UN and INGO partners continued to address existing needs in identified priority sectors in Abkhazia, including housing, food production, health, education, social services and livelihoods support.

The increasing installation by Russian Border Guards of fences, observation towers, surveillance cameras and the presence of armed personnel adversely affected the livelihoods of local population by restricting access to agricultural lands, potable and irrigation water, pastures and other natural resources, and further restricted freedom of movement.

While UN continues working in Abkhazia, a lack of access by humanitarian and development agencies to South Ossetia continues to be of concern.

### **Summary on Progress in UN Reform**

UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Jamie McGoldrick left Georgia in August 2013 and was succeeded by Mr. Niels Scott in October 2013.

The UN Country Team (UNCT) met regularly to discuss inter-agency issues. The Operations Management Team (OMT) met to discuss issues such as common premises, services and procurement. During 2013 OMT established new LTAs for the procurement of petrol and stationary as well for hotels, printing, express courier, audit and event management. A new roster of translators was established as well.

During 2013, a 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 a formal MOSS and MORSS process. A formal update of security plan for Georgia was also conducted in 2013. An 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.

Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environment (SSAFE) training was conducted for 16 UN A/P/F and INGO staff in January 2013.

The UN 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 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 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 two meetings in Geneva during 2013. The RC also and led a donor's visit to Abkhazia, comprising representatives from the EU Delegation, Germany, Switzerland, UK and US in December 2013.

2013 was an important year for the UNCT collaboration and cooperation on Joint Communication initiatives. Communications Strategy and Workplan were developed by the UN Communications Group in the beginning of the year. Throughout 2013, communication to internal and external stakeholders continued. Public awareness and advocacy raising activities were carried out with the special focus on MDG priority areas through social media, weekly radio talk-shows on human rights, television programs, press briefings and interviews, film screenings, drawing, essay and short film contests, photo/art exhibitions, public outdoor campaigns, conferences, information sessions and lectures for over 1,500 school and university students. More than 20 UN and international days were observed through the aforementioned activities.

UN survey My World was launched by the United Nations in Georgia in August 2013 in close partnership with the Government, civil society and academic institutions. The UN agencies in Georgia have run a national consultation MY World to collect people's ideas about development priorities in the coming decade in Tbilisi as well as in the regions. MY World in Georgia was part of a global survey which brought together over 190 countries worldwide. The voices of over 3,000 people in Georgia have been captured since the survey kicked off in August 2013. The data was acquired through in-depth focus groups, the online platform and SMS voting.

The Gender Theme Group (GTG) held eleven joint meetings during the year. Out of the 17 activities planned under the four key result areas of the GTG 2013 work-plan, 11 (i.e. 65%) have been implemented. One of the major achievements of the GTG's work in February 2013 (initiated in 2012) was the establishment of a special position in PM apparatus tasked with gender equality and women's empowerment issues. GTG devoted special meeting to the needs and priorities of LGBT community and organizations working in this field on 25 April, 2013. Members of the GTG managed to undertake very successful advocacy work together with civil society organizations towards developing gender sensitive recommendations to inform the Labor Code review process. The GTG has partnered with women's NGOs throughout the year and they have been active participants on both 17 December 2012 and 6 December 2013 high-level advocacy meetings with the government voicing their concerns and priorities in relation to gender equality policymaking and implementation.

The UNCT provided joint report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for their pre-sessional working group meeting in Geneva on 21-25 October 2013, that feeds in the CEDAW Committee's 58<sup>th</sup> session (July 2014), when the government of Georgia's will present it's combined fourth and fifth periodic report.

The UNCT provided substantial support to relevant Government agencies leading to the ratification by parliament of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities following on the adoption in December 2013 of the first ever strategy on the Mental Health in Georgia.

In 2013 UNCT supported the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to Georgia. In addition, UNCT significantly contributed to the process of development of the National Human Rights Action Plan, which reflects recommendations of UN Human Rights Mechanisms. UNCT also organized a number of meetings during the process of national consultations

Global Fund (GF) proposal for Georgian Renewal request was prepared with UNAIDS support and approved by the GF in September 2013. UNAIDS Country Office in Georgia was closed in September 2013.

With regard to Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), the Heads of ExCom agencies agreed to use 2012 World Bank Public expenditure review as the macro-assessment. The assurance matrix was also prepared and approved.

The following Joint Programmes were implemented during 2013:

#### 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 through trainings, extension support and access to markets.

Phase 1 - Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$140,000) and UNHCR (\$220,000)

Duration: 1 November 2011 – 31 Dec, 2013, Total Budget: \$360,000

Phase 2 - Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$40,000) and UNHCR (\$325,000)

Duration: 1 Jan 2014 – 31 Dec 2015, Total Budget: \$365,000

TOTAL:

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$180,000) and UNHCR (\$545,000)

Duration: 1 Nov 2011 – 31 Dec 2015, Total Budget: \$725,000

#### Support to Vulnerable Communities' Livelihood Development in Samegerlo-Zemo Svaneti region

The overall goal of the programme is to develop rural livelihoods of vulnerable IDP and host communities through increasing the productivity of and returns to small-scale farming in Samegerlo-Zemo Svaneti region, thereby raising income of farming families and increasing their food security at the household level. The programme envisages the establishment of a value chain linking the farmers/farmers' groups, low cost agricultural processing facilities and service providers, as well as strengthening their capacity through training, extension support and access to markets.

Participating Agencies: UNDP (\$20,000), UNHCR (\$270,000)

Donor: UNHCR, UNDP; Duration: 2013-2015, Total Budget: \$290,000

#### 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

#### **Summary on Progress Towards UNDAF Outcomes**

UNDAF Theme Groups [Poverty Reduction, Democratic Development and Disaster Risk Reduction] worked throughout the year and prepared inputs for the UNDAF Progress Report to put together by an outside Consultant. Poverty Reduction Group is led by UNICEF, whereas Poverty Reduction and Disaster Risk Reduction are led by UNDP.

The UNDAF Progress Report will form the basis for the preparation of new 2016-2020 UNDAF, the preparation of which will start in 2014.

UNDAF Progress Report Consultant was hired at the end of September 2013 and the report preparation is underway.

### **Key Aspects of the Proposed 2014 Workplan**

In 2014, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia will focus its efforts on finalizing the UNDAF Progress Report and starting the preparation of a new UNDAF for 2016-2020 cycle. The UNCT will also continue engaging with the Government of Georgia on issues related to the MDG advocacy and reporting.