

USAID/CAUCASUS 2011 CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

RESPONSE RECOMMENDATIONS

**Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation**

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INTRODUCTION

USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework is based on the assumption that countries are at risk for conflict when societal grievances have increased to such a level that key actors are motivated to mobilize large groups to engage in violence. Yet, in any civil society or political system, there are simultaneously social and institutional resiliencies, which mitigate the potential outbreak of violent conflict. Grievances and resiliencies can emerge from government policies and practices, as well as popular perceptions. To be effective and minimize the potential outbreak of violent conflict, programmatic responses need to be designed to address the grievances identified and/or bolster those resiliencies that mitigate conflict. These response recommendations follow a robust conflict assessment and analysis conducted in the summer of 2011 in Georgia, and are formulated against the trends which are most prevalent in society towards violence or peace building. The trends may combine with triggers to foment potential violence or an opening for peace.

Specifically, the responses provided in this paper are designed with the intention of shifting the political, social, or economic dynamics at the local level towards positive development trajectories. The team has attempted to make these recommendations flexible enough to account for any potential triggers that could result in the shift of current trends. Given the sensitive nature of the latent conflict in Georgia and its sovereign territory, immense care and attention needs to be given to the possibility of development interventions to exacerbate tensions. USAID/Caucasus' current and future programming should be mindful of these unintended impacts no matter what the goals of well-intentioned activities are.

KEY PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

The following general recommendations can be applied to all programs in conflict-affected regions of Georgia. The USAID/Caucasus portfolio will need to balance the need to serve the region's population most vulnerable to violent conflict while remaining sensitive to external political dynamics. There are several key considerations that USAID/Caucasus has developed when working in conflict prone areas which should be taken into account when programming in Georgia. Some considerations are intended for specific types of programming for Georgia.

Unintended Consequences

All existing and future USAID/Caucasus programs need to be sensitive to unintended consequences of programming in the conflict-affected regions of Georgia and be flexible in programming so as to mitigate potential negative perceptions. Programs should not give the appearance of favoring certain ethnic groups or regions over others and maintain as inclusive an environment as possible. Disrupting current status quo arrangements in the black market/shadow economies should be fully taken into account before activities with a livelihood or economic opportunity focus are considered.

Gender and Youth Considerations

Many of the proposed interventions seek to integrate youth, recognizing the important role they play – and will play – in the future as Georgia evolves. The proposed recommendations also bear in mind and are sensitive to the unique and differing roles men and women play in a

conflict-affected setting. As such, in designing new programs and/or augmenting existing programs, special attention should be given to the role of gender and youth in developing activities aimed at reconciliation and conflict prevention and mitigation. These groups can often play the role of lynchpins to any reconciliation or track II peace processes. Where possible, ensuring their involvement to a maximum extent possible, elevating their roles as equal partners in charting Georgia's future will go a long way in mitigating any potential reoccurrence or outbreak of conflict.

Economic Development Programming in Conflict-Affected Regions of Georgia

Demand and Client Profiles Differ – many people will have turned to entrepreneurship out of need, not because they are naturally suited to it. With this in mind, the demand for services could be very high but the quality of the services and their adequate delivery could be low. Therefore, it is important to remain cognizant of and support, where appropriate, the entrepreneurial spirit that is organic in Georgia, particularly along ABLs. At the same time, it is necessary to recognize limitations of such support – both political and structural - when designing programs.

Furthermore, there is likely to be a high cost when implementing economic development programs. Due to heightened security issues, USAID/Caucasus should consider in advance the sustainability of institutions or programs and undertake a cost-benefit analysis of potential projects to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness. Innovative models for delivering financial opportunities in the conflict-affected regions should be explored and considered. Community-based micro-finance institutions allow organizations to reach remote, rural areas at lower costs without the need to establish offices.

Shadow Economies

Many vulnerable populations in and around the conflict-affected regions have learned to rely on the shadow economy as an alternative for income-generation. USAID/Caucasus should take into account these mechanisms and make a thorough analysis of how they are intertwined. In these settings, the shadow economy should be harnessed and transformed rather than ignored or criminalized. There is an opportunity to capitalize on and strengthen a strong tradition of entrepreneurialism in Georgia. Creating an enabling business environment and building on the positive reforms of the GOG will generate vested interests in peace and stability.

Coordination with USAID and other Donor programs

USAID/Caucasus should determine where its core competencies and comparative advantages lie with regard to peacebuilding programs in Georgia. All programs can be and should be conflict-sensitive and, at a minimum, adhere to the programmatic considerations outlined above. USAID/Caucasus is in a strong position in terms of its close working relationship with the GOG and its ability to offer support for more robust people-to-people programming, which can translate into positive changes in economic opportunities, service provision, and civic engagement.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMMING OPTIONS FOR USAID/CAUCASUS

The following program options are segmented along time horizons of contextual change in the political and social environment for peace and/or violence. The most immediate or short-term interventions target the current status quo, post-2008 war situation whereby the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the rest of Georgia and the Russian Federation coexist along a tense but workable status quo. These recommendations are intended to assist the Mission in building the case for the Georgia Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and potentially incorporate additional concepts in out years based on the medium and longer-term recommendations for USAID/Caucasus programming. Programmatic recommendations that can be followed up on in the immediate term target current USAID/Caucasus programs and their ability to address the context, including mid-course corrections, new peace building programs, or new sector-specific programs designed through a conflict lens.

In general terms, CMM believes that supporting and increasing low-level interactions will provide the space for a potential change at the higher levels and among key actors. Mary Anderson and her work in the Reflecting on Peace Project through the Collaborative Development Alliance (CDA) demonstrates that working with key actors is an important entry point towards influencing the greater population; however, unless there are significant changes in the context of the crisis, many of these interventions will not be sustained. Furthermore, CDA's research shows that targeting the underlying grievances/resiliencies is the best intervention for long-term impact in preserving peace and democratic consolidation. Therefore, CMM recommends that the USG routinely inform implementing partners of the ongoing status of state-level peace process negotiations to ensure there are connections between the people-to-people programming at the local and regional level and diplomatic interventions at the top levels. These recommendations reflect these findings and apply them to the Georgian context.

Recommendations in this paper are provided along a spectrum:

- Interventions in the immediate or short-term;
- Interventions that can be done in the medium term; and
- Interventions that might be feasible in the long-term should a window of opportunity present itself, which would change the status quo.

The interventions proposed in the short term are based upon what is immediately feasible – namely supporting and/or building upon current programs as this is where USAID/Caucasus is best positioned to engage. Recommended interventions for the medium term are based on where USAID/Caucasus has a comparative advantage or where there is already a foundation in place to build upon programs. This would include augmenting existing programs so that they are oriented toward minimizing conflict or leveraging relationships that are already established, and to facilitate new conflict-sensitive programs. Finally, this paper also identified additional possibilities that might exist in the long-term. Programming opportunities going forward may enable USAID/Caucasus to engage directly in the breakaway regions rather than through the UN as is currently the case.

Some of the responses provided are direct conflict programs while others are cross-sectoral and apply a conflict-sensitive approach toward implementation. Additionally, these

recommendations take into account constraints related to absorptive capacity of the Mission, existing implementing partners, and the ability of the host government to be involved and or support these programs in the longer-term. Clearly, many interventions should be coordinated with the State Ministry for Reintegration of Georgia (SMR) and other Georgian and de facto entities as needed, as well as with the international donor community so as not to duplicate efforts. As such, while some are new initiatives, several are built upon or expand current programs.

IMMEDIATE/SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support Track II Dialog Processes

While relations between the GOG and the de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain difficult, throughout the assessment the team heard that there is distinct interest in engaging “the other” at the local level. The Mission should consider directly and/or indirectly supporting key actors working to mitigate against drivers of conflict in Georgia.

While those at the Track I level are primarily government officials, the Track II actors are the business leaders, key CSOs engaged in peace building, technical experts from universities and think tanks, and religious communities. They are often viewed by the population as trusted institutions, which have broad appeal across social-economic, ethnic, and national lines. Track II actors are an integral part of a multi-track process as they are often able to amplify the concerns of grassroots communities (Track III) and help to communicate these concerns to government (Track I). Furthermore, those at the Track II level are able to provide a back channel where points of impasse can be identified and potential solutions can be vetted and tested between parties prior to being proposed at the formal negotiation table.

Track II actors often tend to be the next generation of government officials and political leaders, and are uniquely positioned to develop relationships internally and across divides. By promoting Track II dialog processes, discussion will likely filter up to the Track I level through connections between the members. This initiative would dovetail nicely with the current USAID/Caucasus G-PAC program implemented by the East-West Institute to support the development of civic leaders to become effective advocates for civil society and to provide viable policy options for government officials based on the needs of the society.

Suggested development initiatives to support Track II peace processes:

- USAID/Caucasus should continue to support The University of California/Irvine and George Mason University dialogues for civil society representatives from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and other parts of Georgia building off of these dialogues and expanding them in creative and innovative directions for further civil society engagement. USAID/Caucasus could provide a platform for the dialogue partners to convey their recommendations to government stakeholders.
- While perhaps not wanting to be seen as a direct supporter to the peace process at the formal level, USAID/Caucasus could support building websites, webinars and other media outreach providing a voice for those that are tangentially attached to the civil society leaders engaged in the Track II dialogs thereby broadening the base for peace.
- USAID/Caucasus could support a grants competition for outreach of the dialogue process to further the impact on a broader swath of society, thereby building a constituency for the dialogues and elevating some of the agreements to the Track 1 level.
- When and where appropriate, USAID/Caucasus could support the dialogue process by bringing in representatives from civil society in the Russian Federation (perhaps North

Caucasian groups) and/or Southern Caucasian groups who can play a mediating role in bringing identity groups to the conflict closer together.

- Support Track II dialogues along specific sectoral interests, for example, bring together religious leaders (i.e. Georgian, Abkhaz and Armenian church leaders) for interfaith dialogues.
- Couple the dialogue processes with informal early warning systems for violence and/or an escalation of tensions (this could be linked into the early warning/prevention systems outlined later). As noted earlier, given the critical role of youth and women in bringing about reconciliation, it may be useful to foster dialog processes between these groups so that they can serve in that early warning role.

2. *Support and strengthen Early Warning capabilities through enhanced communications technology*

USAID/Caucasus has an opportunity to leverage cross-Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) related programs to support early warning efforts to guard against an actual outbreak of violence and or the potential for conflict. Through existing programs in health-care delivery and economic growth interventions, any contact between professional groups can be augmented to include ongoing communications after exchanges have taken place. These trust relationships, which are built around joint programming, can be translated into information sharing about tensions and flare-ups and assist in mitigating violence before it breaks out. During the course of the assessment, the team unearthed important facts about the Abkhazian ABL, which could serve as a basis for early warning capabilities, such as the use of cell phone telephony and dissemination of information as to which unofficial crossing is open or closed (see text box on page 12).

Early warning programs could concentrate along the following lines:

- Work directly with the civil society leaders who are part of the Track II process in promoting real-time analysis of tensions on the ABLs and transmit that information back to a trusted group of inter-ethnic senior civil society actors to help defuse potential violence.
- Add on to current health, education, or economic growth programs, which bring professionals together under a broader program activity.
- Equip local individuals or groups (such as journalists, youth, or women's groups) active in USAID programming with Ushahidi type crowd-sourcing technology if a specific event is forthcoming (i.e. election, Sochi Olympics) which may be a trigger for increased tensions and violence. In real-time, Ushahidi (primarily a humanitarian relief communications technology) can be used to aggregate inputs and measure where tensions and security needs should be addressed immediately.

- Monitor the web for increased blogging activity by all sides of the Georgian conflict and triangulate information to determine the credibility of tensions easing or increasing around an event or a trend (see globalvoices.org).
- Train and equip individuals in villages and towns near the ABL to call in on a dedicated cell phone over a period of time with information related to tensions and triangulate over time to measure the amplitude of tensions.
- Consider conducting ongoing polling and survey activities to help monitor attitudes and perceptions on all sides of the Georgian conflict. One possibility may be to develop a similar tool as the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perception Survey (KAPS) that has been used in other conflicts to gain a deeper and richer understanding of dynamics at play and to help programs to shift accordingly. Routine monitoring of shifts in attitude and perceptions would also inform the Mission of any negative trends in the conflict dynamics. Consideration should be given as to who would conduct the surveys in order to ensure the information provided is not compromised and/or participants feel that they can speak openly and honestly about the situation.

Encouraging early warning programs, the use of Information Communication Technology, and polling are potentially very useful but these efforts need to take into account the Soviet legacy of using informants to gather intelligence and conduct internal monitoring. Careful consideration should be given to the extent to which early warning efforts could jeopardize the safety and integrity of the individuals, groups, and/or programs involved.

3. Enhanced Youth Dialogue

Bringing youth from different sides of a conflict together can bolster understanding, reconciliation, and ultimately feed into peace building practices. Furthermore, youth who understand and are sympathetic to “the other” and are provided ways to stay in touch with each other can create a foundation for closer ties among future political and economic leaders. In a conflict-affected zone, youth are more susceptible to risky behavior and to exhibiting it through criminality and violence, poor health decisions, and/or dropping out of the education system. Many youth acknowledged the fact that their perceptions of Georgians, Abkhaz, or South Ossetians were informed by what they had heard, as few we spoke to had ever met with those from across the ABLs. Therefore, engaging youth in sector-specific programs or cross-sectorally can have multiple positive outcomes and increase the resource base for productivity in a community or region.

Some suggestions for youth programming in Georgia include:

- Continued support to FLEX and Muskie scholars returning from the United States to establish dialogue among differing ethnic groups in Georgia and across the ABLs; support for small grants, electronic media platforms, and other communication technologies should be considered as follow-on activities.
- Exchange programs or youth camps can focus on developing skills of the youth to serve as future leaders. At first, youth may have to be segmented along the ABL, so

USAID/Caucasus could work with established youth centers to solicit ideas and participants. For instance, in Abkhazia there is a well-established existing network of youth houses and the Sokhumi Youth Center, which can serve as a support for the Abkhaz taking part in the program. Youth camps or exchange programs would need to take place in a neutral location such as Turkey, and it is recommended that there is involvement of participants from the greater Caucasus region rather than simply participants from South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and other parts of Georgia. Follow-up programs during the school year could bring students together on special projects in and around their school focused on tolerance, peace building and conflict resolution. SMS technology is a credible, low-cost way to allow young people to communicate with each other.

- Life skills and healthy lifestyles - Fostering opportunities for Georgian, Abkhaz, and Ossetian youth to receive mentoring from parents, communities, and young leaders will build their ability to make the right decisions and transition into adulthood with greater ease and success. USAID/Caucasus could support youth-led and youth-oriented organizations having a dialogue with different ethnic groups in Georgia through supporting life skills and health-related transitions. Programs should provide for safe spaces and meet youth on their own terms in the places where they are most comfortable. An additional concern that was raised with the team regarding youth was the increased level of drug abuse and HIV infection. Drug abuse, particularly among young people, is a growing problem in Abkhazia. USAID/Caucasus could support sports programs and sports leagues as a way to bring different ethnic groups together (changing as the ABL context shifts) and build life skills training as ancillary activities on health, drug abuse, and tolerance.

4. Seize on Economic Opportunities from Unofficial ABL Crossings

When the team was in Zugdidi it was clear that there is ongoing economic trade taking place across the ABL. The current engagement between Abkhaz and Georgians is organic and can be supported indirectly through the market in Zugdidi. One interviewee noted that “Gali is like a box of matches. It opens both ways”, an indication of the freedom of movement that is afforded to them due to the possession of two passports (Russian and Georgian), as well as their Abkhaz citizenship paperwork. Many ethnically Georgian residents of Abkhazia have chosen to accept Abkhazia “citizenship” as a means to obtain Russian Federation passports, while retaining their own; a conscious decision not only to afford them greater breadth of opportunity but to preserve their property rights status in Abkhazia. Working with the ethnically Georgian population as a bridge across the ABL, USAID/Caucasus should consider ways in which to support and further develop options for linking markets in Zugdidi and Gali to promote greater trade moving from the grey market to one that is legalized. This would also fit well into the SMR’s efforts to highlight Zugdidi and the rest of Georgia as a place Abkhaz traders would like to be a part of, leading towards greater reintegration and reconciliation. USAID/Caucasus could work on a number of levels in economic exchange depending on the Mission’s risk assessments, noting that there should be some acceptance on both sides of a grey economy in order to preserve livelihoods, trade and peace building opportunities in the short term. For example:

- There is a clear demand for Georgian products in Sokhumi and elsewhere in Abkhazia, and USAID/Caucasus could offer to support the facilitation of trade through enhancing the market in Zugdidi and/or Gali and on small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation; and, improving the “marshrutka lines”, which transport people back and forth to trade in the market.
- In Zugdidi, USAID/Caucasus could work with local business associations and civil society to offer trade fairs highlighting specific Georgian goods and facilitating business meetings on the sidelines of the market place; those that take part in the discussions could be eligible for a study tour in a third country on a key economic issue or product, thereby facilitating Track II exchange between business people.
- USAID/Caucasus could offer joint trainings to business people coming from Gali on marketing, accounting and management; tying them into potential future joint ventures and value-chain opportunities if the context takes a positive turn.

5. Educational opportunities and vocational training for livelihoods development

Unemployment was a common theme that was heard throughout the assessment, in particular among the IDPs and those we interviewed in Samtskhe-Javakheti. USAID/Caucasus has a unique opportunity under the new Education Strategy to consider expanding the education portfolio to include workforce development and vocational training opportunities for young people throughout Georgia including Abkhazia. Those groups that have been marginalized due to the conflict – as well as those who do not reside in Tbilisi – are at a significant disadvantage in terms of finding full-time employment without having some of these critical technical and vocational skills. One of the greatest and most common challenges we heard in ethnic Azeri and Armenian areas of Georgia was the requirement to be able to speak Georgian in order to secure a job. Yet, within the same breath, many noted the lack of Georgian courses available. Programs geared toward strengthening the workforce at the local level would also improve the delivery of key social services and provide greater economic opportunities for the community as a whole.

Potential training and education programs include:

- USAID/Caucasus could provide greater support to develop more Georgian language courses in Samtskhe-Javakheti (as well as provide Armenian and Russian courses) through community centers or schools. This could be supported by a “tutoring” program, which would provide a forum for greater interaction and linkages between ethnic Georgians and Armenians. Importantly, providing language training will lay the groundwork for Armenians to have increased economic and political opportunities in Georgia, and could weaken the dependence on Russia and Armenia that currently exists.
- Another area USAID/Caucasus should consider programming is developing a conflict resolution curriculum that could be taught in the Universities. Such programs will allow students to analyze and learn about other conflicts, how those conflicts were resolved and ways in which to apply those lessons to conflicts they experience day to day.

- USAID/Caucasus should consider developing vocational trainings and/or workforce development trainings for those outside of Tbilisi. The IDP settlements as well as some of the other remote areas have a deficit in terms of educational opportunities. Providing basic vocational training will equip those in the rural areas with the skills necessary to compete in the job market.

6. *Journalism and TV Media*

As in most conflict-affected zones, information is a commodity and generally shared by word of mouth and innuendo. Throughout Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, television remains the most popular choice for news and information with radio being used primarily in motor transport. That said, there are very few television stations throughout the country. In Abkhazia most, if not all of the TV stations were Russian. In most of the other parts of Georgia, there were only a few channels available without a satellite. Those available were seen as mostly being state-controlled and had lessening degrees of inclusive viewpoints. However, there were several regional TV and radio stations, which may be good starting points for joint peace building activities. In the Gali and Ochamchira districts, a small TV station provides a strong enough frequency that it could be seen on the other side of the ABL.

Several media and journalism projects that would promote peace building across communities include:

- Exploring the opportunities for engaging with local NGOs on building youth programs around radio and TV reportage utilizing several languages in reportage. Young people are often more trusted and can report on issues that adults often cannot because of the sensitivities. Helping to train young people from all sides of the ABL and working with authorities to support broad-based peace building dialogues and themes through youth groups can assist in breaking down stereotypes.
- Encourage local radio stations and TV stations to broadcast information and interviews from Track II peace processes with civil society leaders. Interviews could be conducted by young people and used to encourage discussion groups in youth centers and other community gathering points.
- USAID/Caucasus could provide support for a joint study tour where journalists from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and other regions of Georgia could study responsible journalism in a third country perhaps bringing in South Caucasian participants as well. The goal of the study tour would be professional development, not only in television but also in other forms of media, such as blogging. The participants would take part in developing a joint media project. The media project would serve as a vehicle for disseminating information as to what is happening in different parts and regions of Georgia and providing different viewpoints on particular issues taking place either internally or internationally. The overall goal of the joint media project would serve to understand the competing narratives of the conflict and break down the stereotypes that have perpetuated for years.

MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support community development/empowerment programs in Abkhazia

Consideration should be given to providing support to nascent CSOs in Abkhazia in the areas most affected by conflict dynamics. During the assessment, individuals, groups, and government officials were interested in how USAID/Caucasus could assist CSOs and communities in Abkhazia. Depending on political sensitivities with the GOG, USAID/Caucasus could establish inclusive community empowerment groups, utilizing community participatory appraisal processes to build small-scale community infrastructure. Furthermore, these community empowerment groups could be linked with groups on the other side of the ABL to promote unofficial, knowledge exchange and build people-to-people credibility. The ancillary benefit would be to improve government/citizen dialogue, provide short-term job creation for youth, and open gateways for communications.

Suggestions for potential community development programs in Abkhazia could be:

- Trainings to civil society leaders in capacity building; trainings in conflict resolution and youth workforce development based on accurate labor market surveys;
- Work establishing resident associations in multi-unit apartment dwellings in the Gali district to build cohesion around communal property issues perhaps linking with a similar effort in Zugdidi;
- Media opportunities with youth radio programming in the Ochamchira and Gali districts, which may provide opportunities for information dissemination, reconciliation and early warning;
- Initiate revolving credit schemes to provide microfinance to targeted women's groups in Abkhazia and generate household livelihoods.

2. Collaboration on Sector-specific Initiatives

In Zugdidi, there is currently informal interaction taking place and between both the medical professionals and teachers based in Abkhazia and Zugdidi. Specifically, health care practitioners routinely consult with and collaborate with one another in order to provide treatment to those individuals with severe health issues. It is not uncommon for Abkhaz doctors to arrange with Georgian doctors the delivery of a patient requiring medical attention across the ABL and facilitate the provision of health care services, especially given that all residents in Abkhazia may access healthcare facilities in other regions of Georgia, if feasible. The primary reason for this is the weak healthcare system in Abkhazia, which constrains the abilities of doctors and health care practitioners to treat complex health cases. Further, the team learned from speaking with some of the medical professionals in Zugdidi that consultations take place routinely when doctors in Abkhazia seek Georgian advice when presented with unique or challenging health cases. Similarly, teachers and education practitioners have developed informal relationships. Teachers in various parts of Georgia often arrange for schoolbooks to be transferred to education professionals across the ABL.

In both cases, it was clear there is a desire to receive greater professional development (in particular within the breakaway region of Abkhazia) as well as increased access to resources. USAID/Caucasus should look to promote increased interaction around concrete initiatives in different social sectors. Both of these examples provide an opportunity for greater professional collaboration and integration across the regions. Towards the medium term, we recommend engaging professionals from different sectors through joint activities that provide tangible benefits to populations in effected regions of Georgia with improved service delivery. This could be facilitated through bringing groups together from across the ABL to provide joint trainings or conferences focused on particular topics. Further, USAID/Caucasus may want to consider increasing the delivery resources or medical services to Abkhazia in an effort to advance the development of the professional sectors that are non-political.

Health and social workers from Abkhazia should be integrated into trainings on new methodologies and best international practices in treatment and prevention. Trainings should be complemented by support to these health and social workers when they return to Abkhazia, as well as limited follow up training on site as needed. Programs should also create web portals to allow health workers in Abkhazia to consult with their colleagues from other regions of Georgia, as well as project staff and other health workers in the South Caucasus on critical problems they face in their daily practice. These web portals will also help maintain the connections established by joint trainings.

USAID/Caucasus should also encourage larger joint projects, particularly a possible “water for gas” deal between South Ossetia’s de facto authorities and the GOG. USAID/Caucasus could support the rehabilitation of irrigation systems around and across the South Ossetia related ABL as well as the restoration of gas supply to the Akhagori district and potentially the rest of South Ossetia should discussion advance on both sides and make this effort possible.

3. Support to IDPs

The team found that IDPs from both caseloads are lacking in the services that could make them productive citizens in Georgia whatever the prognosis on return. While it has been the intent of preparing IDPs to return to their homes in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, they should be offered training on rights, workforce development and civic participation especially if tensions were to ease – however many of these types of interventions could be addressed under current conditions:

- Youth workforce development and civic education – USAID/Caucasus could work directly with young people in the settlements on a number of life skills enhancing programs and help prepare them for productive lives; workforce development linked with vocational skills training could help them find work in areas along the ABL and civil education will encourage them to be included beyond their IDP identity in the reforms Georgia is expanding.
- USAID may consider providing socio-psychological services for IDPs from both caseloads especially for women and youth/children; this would also lead to healthier lifestyle choices and support by communities and mentors in assisting youth in making the right decisions.

- With regards to rights protection, the mission could establish mobile legal clinics to monitor and protect the rights of IDPs in settlements and help them advocate for their rights vis-a-vis the authorities. One consideration may be to have law school students staff the legal clinics and give presentations in schools as Street Law outreach from the mobile clinics.

4. *Enhanced microfinance and small business development opportunities*

Building off of the economic development and livelihoods programs that USAID/Caucasus is currently funding near the ABLs, consideration could be given to establishment and expansion of microcredit institutions beyond revolving credit schemes. These institutions could be established on both sides of the ABL if feasible and link entrepreneurs through trade facilitation. Additional microcredit schemes could include the following activities:

- Business association development which have inclusive make-up from members of all sides of the conflict; if feasible third country study tours may help to foment interest in establishing these organizations.
- Micro leasing – facilitate cross-ABL traders ability to obtain basic equipment like refrigerators, nut drying machinery, and tools to expand their trade into service and small-scale manufacturing.
- Greenhouses – USAID/Caucasus should encourage cooperatives and business associations to provide greenhouses for produce which can be traded across the ABL; greenhouses would also be a logical step in working towards value-added production in key agricultural areas
- School-based extracurricular, entrepreneurship programs – USAID/Caucasus, working through Junior Achievement and other implementers, has worked successfully in schools on business plan development and seed financing; as a peace building program, these programs could bring together different groups in competition and provide small grants for projects that bridge the conflict divide.

LONGER-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the longer-term, the following conflict mitigation and management efforts may be become possible:

1. Robust economic and social activity support across ABLs

Subject to the easing of restrictions across the ABLs, the flow of trade and people could expand, creating opportunities and potential challenges. USAID/Caucasus could assist with facilitating areas in which civil society and business interests translate into peace building opportunities by bringing people together in partnerships. Some illustrative examples include the following:

- Joint trade tours and exchanges – USAID/Caucasus could sponsor regional trade exchanges, bringing businesses and associations to Turkey and other local countries to forge alliances and joint ventures.
- Agriculture value chain management – building on former community-based endeavors, USAID/Caucasus could couple local economic development strategic planning with small-scale investment in agriculture to bring in more stakeholders for value chain management. Furthermore, USAID Development Credit Authority and public private partnerships could be encouraged to spur local investment.
- Support towards regional civil society support centers – bringing capacity from well-developed NGOs in Georgia (and perhaps in North Caucasus) to local NGOs in the Abkhazia and possibly South Ossetia regions in the form of regional NGO support centers will help grow civil society to support government, advocate for citizens needs and serve as a watchdog function for better accountability and transparency.

2. Joint US-Georgia Capacity building for local authorities in Abkhazia

Subject to progress toward conflict resolution, and contingent on U.S. policy priorities, there could be an opportunity to build the capacity of the local authorities in the breakaway region of Abkhazia to serve local citizens more effectively. The reforms that the GOG has initiated in the past eight years would serve as excellent models for sharing the experience and expertise.

- Resource City/Town Partnerships – USAID/Caucasus could replicate a program that has been established in many post-conflict countries, which would involve towns in Abkhazia and U.S. towns sharing best practices in administration. Similarly, in this context a town in some other region of Georgia could pair with a town in Abkhazia to share practices, facilitate trade, investment, and cultural exchanges
- Exchanges and study tours on key Georgian reform models – immediate know-how exchanges should be facilitated on police and customs reform in Georgia and reforms following business enabling environment to allow for more investment and reconstruction in Georgia's Abkhazia region.

3. Protecting Rights in Georgia and the Region

Within Georgia, if there progress toward conflict resolution with Georgia's occupied territories, there may be opportunities to build democratic accountability mechanisms. The following programs could be considered but are not exclusive or prescriptive:

- Support to peace process mediation and negotiation – USAID/Caucasus could provide general support to the negotiating process as many of the outcomes will have developmental impact; USAID/Caucasus can provide capacity building assistance to all sides in the processes when and where appropriate.
- Support to inter-denominational dialog with local religious leaders – USAID/Caucasus has experience bringing religious leaders together for interdenominational dialogs, which could support solidifying Georgia's road to a more pluralistic society. This would include the Georgian (including Abkhaz) and Armenian orthodox churches, the Azeri mufti, and possibly reaching out to Russian religious authorities.
- Property and land arbitration and restitution – working with judicial systems in all regions, USAID/Caucasus can provide support to localized arbitration systems and land registration from the pre-war era and assist in the negotiation for right to return or appropriate restitution if this is what is mediated.

It is worth noting that the longer term offers an opportunity to reach out to the Russian authorities and national governments in South Caucasus, and/or civil society actors in joint assistance to transform the conflict in Georgia to a lasting peace. Depending on current political will, joint activities can span a variety of sectors that USAID/Caucasus would help design and manage.

WAY FORWARD

The responses to the 2011 Georgia conflict assessment need to be taken into consideration within the framework of current U.S. foreign policy priorities, the general context for carrying out assistance programs and USAID/Caucasus forward thinking strategic planning process.

DCHA/CMM is in a position to continue to advise USAID/Caucasus on mid-course changes to existing programming, strategic decisions for the CDCS and design with new or follow-on programming. Each new program is best situated to gain from this report through adhering to the following three key takeaways:

***Analysis:** New and existing programs need to take into account the conflict assessment and base their programming assumptions on a nuanced understanding of those dynamics.*

***Theories of change:** From a thorough analysis, programs should be steeped in a peace building or conflict-sensitive theory of change or development hypothesis, derived from several years of the Reflecting Peace Practice project from CDA and in collaboration with DCHA/CMM¹. A strong theory of change will flow into a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation plan and help ensure the success of the programs.*

***Coordinated Response:** Communications with donors, host country partners, and associated USAID/Caucasus implementers on the fluid, changing course of the conflict in Georgia will ensure programs meet targets and results are more sustainable.*

¹ Materials on theories of change and monitoring and evaluation can be obtained from DCHA/CMM when designing and building conflict and conflict sensitive programming