



**American Friends of Georgia:
The First Georgian Newsletter**

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This is the first Georgian office newsletter. We will continue to bring you regular updates about our programs and projects on the ground in Georgia, as well as our success stories and future plans.

*Sincerely,
Lena Kiladze
Executive Director / Georgia*

Contact:

American Friends of Georgia
P.O. Box 1200
Truro, MA 02666 U.S.A.
Telephone: (508) 349-2180
Fax: (508) 349-0511
E-mail: afgeorgia@gis.net
www.afgeorgia.org

In Georgia

77, Nutsbidze St., Tbilisi 0177,
(+995 32) 397174
lenakiladze@hotmail.com

Letter from AFG's
Chairman Constantine
Sidamon-Eristoff 2

2008: Helping
Georgians Overcome
Adversity and War 3

AFG on the War Front:
First Response 3

Recreating Home:
AFG Helps IDPs Adjust
to Post War Life 4

Creating a Safe
Environment: AFG
Helps IDP Children
Return to Innocence 4

Creating a Secure
Today: AFG Helps
IDP Women Support
Their Families 5

Creating a Viable
Future: AFG's Plans
to Help IDPs
Reintegrate 5

Creating A Healthy
Tomorrow, Today 6

AFG Needs You! 6



*Photos: Molly Corso
Editors: Molly Corso, Lena Kiladze
Layout: Levan Baratashvili*

About the Georgian office

Our programs focus on finding efficient and innovative ways Georgians can help themselves. In order to finance our programs, the Georgian office raises money in Tbilisi and also receives funds from AFG in the United States. The office directs money to Georgian hospitals, orphanages and new non-profits which might otherwise be overlooked by large donors. The office works with international humanitarian organizations based in Georgia and the U.S., as well as with Georgian institutions and corporations known for their honesty and professionalism.

The Georgian office is run by our Executive Director Lena Kiladze, an architectural historian who has developed art therapy and art education programs for children as part of AFG's projects. Prior to the opening of the Georgian office, Lena acted as a liaison between AFG's U.S. office and its local partners in Georgia. Lena's excellent community relationships positioned her well for continuing AFG's existing efforts and spearheading new programs. Those nominated for the Advisory Board of the Georgian office include Georgians and Americans of the highest integrity who are doing business or practicing law in Georgia.



Dear American Friends of Georgia Supporters!

Last year was a dramatic and tragic year for Georgians. I am sure most of you are aware of the immense human suffering created by the August war between Russia and Georgia. An estimated 30,000 Georgians were forced from their homes as Russian soldiers and Ossetian irregulars pushed through Georgian villages in the contested territory of South Ossetia and into parts of the country fully under Tbilisi's control.

AFG responded quickly, mobilizing \$81,000 through the generous donations of people like you. The funds were used to provide support and basic aid for the thousands left homeless and adrift in the Tbilisi's abandoned government buildings, schools and kindergartens. In addition to addressing immediate needs, AFG began creating a database of information about the needs of the displaced [IDP] families and started sustainable programs designed to meet those needs.

However much remains to be done and I ask you again to support us as we work to improve the lives of Georgians. Without your support, there is little we can do. Together, however, we can make a real, positive difference. Just ask Tamuna and Rose, two of the 22 IDP women we employed to sew blankets for the IDP community.

As always, I am – we all are – incredibly grateful for your generosity. Please continue to visit our site for regular updates on our projects at www.afgeorgia.org.

*Sincerely,
Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff*

Letter from AFG's Chairman Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff



AFG was very active throughout 2008 although all of our projects and programs operating prior to August were overshadowed by the war with Russia. The conflict led to immense human suffering: according to official figures, an estimated 30,000 Georgians were forced from their homes due to fighting, rape and pillaging in villages during the conflict. The Georgian office of the American Friends of Georgia (AFG) worked exceptionally hard to assess needs and deliver assistance to those displaced persons living in temporary housing in Tbilisi.

The U.S. office of AFG created a War Relief Fund to finance the new needs of the war's victims, raising \$81,000 to support the organization's immediate response to the humanitarian crisis created by the conflict – and begin to fund long term projects designed to help displaced Georgians rebuild their lives.



2008: Helping Georgians Overcome Adversity and War

AFG on the War Front: First Response



With the outbreak of Georgia's military conflict with Russia, the Georgian office of AFG sent bulletins and photos for posting on AFG's website to provide an immediate and intimate portrait of Georgian suffering and reaction to the crisis. As refugees flooded into Tbilisi the Georgian office organized a group of volunteers to meet with internally displaced persons (IDPs), identifying needs and listing names and ages. The office spent \$35,000 on emergency needs, such as food, medicines, clothes, mattresses, bedding and cooking utensils to six temporary housing centers in Tbilisi.

Those funds were also used to make the temporary housing centers more livable. During the first hectic days of the war, Georgians escaping from the fighting fled to any available buildings, which were often abandoned government structures or kindergartens closed for the summer holidays. AFG Georgia also spent part of the initial funding to entertain IDP children: the office organized trips to McDonalds, and a marionette performance for 100 children.

In total, the office was able to assist nearly 1000 IDPs, including financing cesarean operations for expecting mothers caught in the conflict.

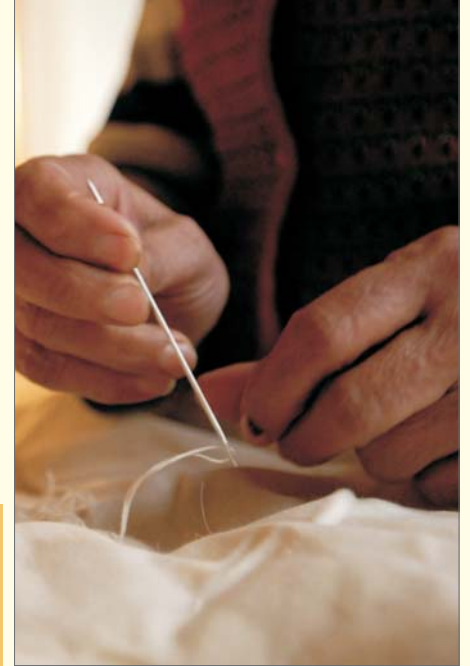


While AFG Tbilisi was busy responding to the IDPs immediate humanitarian needs, it became clear that, in addition to food and other staples, the people desperately needed to regain a sense of normalcy and dignity.

Working together with our good friend and long time partner Mother Mariam of the Transfiguration Convent in Tbilisi, the Georgian office conceived two important rehabilitation programs in response to two basic needs: employment and child care.

With the remaining funds from the initial \$35,000 from the War Relief Fund, the office began converting a room in one IDP center (Isani) into a sewing workshop to employ 22 women. In addition, a separate room was renovated to create a kindergarten day care facility for 46 children at the center.

A sewing workshop was also created for IDP women at the Bagebi center, outside of Tbilisi.



Recreating Home: AFG Helps IDPs Adjust to Post War Life

Creating a Safe Environment: AFG Helps IDP Children Return to Innocence

To address children's post traumatic stress symptoms of anxiety and depression, the Georgian office helped establish a kindergarten at the Isani temporary housing center. It provides nutritious meals and a nurturing educational environment for 46 children and employs several IDPs as well. This project is cosponsored by an anonymous corporate foundation from Great Britain, as well as a German foundation which provides art therapy classes to older children in the afternoon and by AFG (\$7,905) which initially provided funds for classroom and kitchen renovation. AFG also uses the facility to feed elderly IDPs in the evenings.





To provide employment to IDP women and needed supplies to displaced families, the Georgian office helped establish two workshops –Isani and Bagebi -- where felt from the village of Alvani and raw wool are made into warm winter quilts. The workshops were equipped by AFG's War Relief Fund while salaries and raw materials are covered by quilt sales purchased by individuals and humanitarian organizations for donation to IDP families. To date, the workshop has created 3,000 quilts that have been distributed to IDP families at more than six IDP centers.

According to Rosa Bitarova and Tamara Chipchiuri, two of the 22 women employed by the Isani sewing workshop, the program has given them the chance to recover some of the normalcy robbed from them when they lost their homes during the war. Neither woman can return to their homes because their village is now under the control of the separatist Ossetian government.

"It means we have money in our pockets," Tamara said. "It means we are not just waiting for a handout."

For Rosa and her family, her salary from the quilts is the only income the family receives.

AFG has spent \$29,000 on the program to date and is currently looking for new sponsors so it can continue. In a bid to raise awareness of the IDPs plight and funds to continue the program, the Georgian office hosted a charity Christmas cocktail reception and exhibition. The event took place at the Tbilisi Marriott and was attended by distinguished guests, including: the Ambassadors to Georgia from the United Kingdom and France, the

Director of the British Council in Georgia, U.S. Embassy representatives, USAID staff, members of AmCham, TBC Bank (and Foundation), DLA Piper, Geocell, and Marriott Tbilisi. We would like to thank the main sponsors of the event Kavkaz Cement, AmCham Georgia, DLA Piper and Shumi, as well as our other partner NGOs, including the Taso Foundation.

Nevertheless, the sewing workshop is in danger of closing as there is no more financing from the War Relief Fund to cover the cost of materials.

AFG estimates that \$10,000 is needed to continue the sewing workshop for the next several months and make it sustainable by expanding the goods prepared by the women and locating long-term paying clients.



Creating a Secure Today: AFG Helps IDP Women Support Their Families

Creating a Viable Future: AFG's Plans to Help IDPs Reintegrate

Over the past two months, Lena has traveled extensively among the IDP centers and newly built IDP villages to assess the long term needs of the IDPs. It is apparent that one of the biggest concerns is helping the families

reintegrate into society by finding jobs and long term employment.

The Georgian office has conceived an ambitious educational and vocational training program "Skills for life" for IDP children aged 7-18 by offering its own expertise in art therapy and enlisting partners such as the Community College in Gori, as well as the Mercy Center Nursing School and the Institute Decorative Gardening in Tbilisi. As of late 2008 the Georgian office was applying for funding for this program which will help prevent the August war from taking new

victims: the innocent youth caught in its wake.

Skills for Life's principal goal is to support economic and social reintegration of the war affected population back into the local community through education and vocational training. The project's implementation will help IDP youth and adults to obtain skills and knowledge necessary for becoming self sufficient in the future, encourage their entrepreneurial initiative and decrease the number of unemployed people in the country. AFG will match funds for vocational education.



AFG on the Home Front: Non-War related projects in 2008

Creating A Healthy Tomorrow, Today



Project Hope

During a trip to Washington DC, the Georgian office agreed to a memorandum of understanding with Project Hope for delivery of medical supplies to Tbilisi. Packing and receiving costs for two containers were covered by AFG. The Georgian office arranged distribution of \$1,400,000 worth of pharmaceuticals, computers and equipment to five referral hospitals in Tbilisi with which it had trusted relationships: the Children's Republican Hospital, the Children's TB Hospital, the Mercy Center Hospice, the Cancer

Prevention Center and the Children's Department at the National Cancer Center. Supplies were also given to Akhalkalaki Georgian school N3. Due to the fact that the containers arrived in Poti just before the war, the office also distributed supplies to two IDP centers in Tbilisi as well.



Freiburg Transportation Fund

The Georgian office arranged for two children with leukemia to travel to Freiburg for radiation therapy. By December, doctors pronounced Nasib Samedov, 8, cured and he has returned to his school and normal activities. With information and encouragement from the Georgian office, Americans contributed 8,000 euro to enable these children to travel and receive the necessary treatment.

Education

AFG spent \$17,870 for its educational projects in Georgia. The Georgian office oversaw the distribution of AFG funds to the New Life School for handicapped children in Telavi, a kindergarten for children of homeless single mothers in Bediani, a bursary fund for university students from the Dzegvi Orphanage and to a nursing school at the Mercy Center Hospice in Tbilisi.

Georgian Art and Culture

The Georgian office continued its fruitful partnership with the Georgian Textile Group. It directed AFG funds for the transport of a large rug making loom to Akhalsikhe in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Moreover, the office also arranged for GTG's director to travel twice to the U.S. for the exhibition and sale of textiles made by women and children primarily from the Tusheti and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.



AFG Needs You!

In the wake of the August war, it is easy to overlook the many non-conflict related needs that remain in the country. The Georgian office is currently seeking funding for the following two projects.

Orphanage for Young Adults in Dzegvi

AFG's good friend and partner, Mother Mariam of the Transfiguration Convent in Tbilisi, is working to continue her invaluable work assisting the vulnerable. She and her associates are in the process of reopening the Dzegvi Orphanage to house and educate homeless young people. The Dzegvi Orphanage has been one of AFG's most successful projects: 120 homeless children were rescued from the street and raised at the orphanage. Now several are attending college and technical schools.

Her experienced staff has already begun the process of identifying vulnerable youth who would be willing to move to the orphanage and receive vocational training and apprenticeships in wood work, bread baking and other needed professions



Construction of the Parents House for Leukemia Children

In cooperation with Project Hope, the Georgian Office started to raise money to complete the construction of the Parents House. The project is also aided by existing grants provided by Cordaid foundation. So far, 5,000 euro has been raised and fundraising efforts continue; an estimated \$30,000 is needed to complete the project. There is also a real need for more medication to help support the children's medical treatment.

