

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION

SEPTEMBER 2014

## Evaluation of ACF's Livelihood Projects in Abkhazia funded by UNHCR in 2011-2013



Funded by  
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## **Abbreviations**

ACF – Action Contre la Faim

ATC – Agricultural Training Centre

DAC – Development Assistance Committee (see OECD)

DL – Dividing Line

DV – Domestic Violence

GA – Grant assistance

IDP – Internally Displaced Person (s)

IGA – Income Generating Activity

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation

SGBV – Sexualised and Gender Based Violence

TOT – Training of Trainers

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

VTC – Vocational Training Centre

## 1 Executive Summary

This project presents the findings of an independent evaluation of three livelihoods projects funded by UNHCR and implemented by ACF in Abkhazia in 2011, 2012 and 2013. These projects were aimed at improving the livelihoods and self-reliance of beneficiaries via vocational and business training opportunities and via the distribution of grants to support the start-up and development of small business. Although these are three separate projects in terms of planning and budget, they share the same approach and delivery modality, with variations in terms of targeting of beneficiaries and activities supported via grant assistance.

This evaluation uses the OECD DAC guidelines and principles to assess the performance of the projects according to a set of standardised criteria. Based on the findings, this report presents a set of recommendations and best practices to guide the implementation of future projects.

The evaluation found the projects to be highly relevant in the context of high unemployment, lack of economic opportunities and vulnerability faced by people living in the projects' area, given the focus on improving skills, confidence, livelihoods and self-reliance of beneficiaries. The projects have been highly effective in conducting and delivering a range of training programmes and in supporting the start-up and expansion of small businesses on a range of activities. The projects have made effective use of the experience and the assets developed by ACF under previous projects.

At individual and household level, the projects have been moderately effective in improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries in terms of increased income and self-reliance. The projects have been more effective in supporting trade and service related activities taking place in urban and peri-urban areas and less effective with supporting seasonal and livestock related activities.

The projects have been moderately efficient in the implementation of training activities and in the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of start-up grants. Some projects' activities are more time and cost intensive than others, such as selection, verification and monitoring of beneficiaries. Efficiency is also affected by the cost per capita of delivering business, vocational and confidence building training in relation to the number of people trained and beneficiaries receiving grants.

The projects had a positive impact in increasing the self-confidence and capacity of beneficiaries via training and provision of technical skills. Beneficiaries have increased their knowledge on business practices, acquired new vocational skills and received specialized training that they have been able to put into practice.

On the other hand, the projects had an overall moderate impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries receiving grants, although there are individual cases where the impact was high. Findings suggest that activities related to trade and services have had a higher impact on livelihoods, while others such as livestock and seasonal activities had less. Findings also suggest that grants had less impact on the livelihoods of more vulnerable people, which are less resilient in the event of a crisis and more prone to sell assets received via in grant assistance. Motivation and ownership have also proved to be important factors behind the successful use of grants for income generating activities.

While the projects have successfully put in place the required infrastructure and delivered the required inputs to beneficiaries, the long term sustainability of the businesses supported via income generating activity depends on the capacity of beneficiaries to maintain those inputs. This is a critical factor for the sustainability of results achieved by beneficiaries because, in general, they have little or no capital while access to loans or credit is not a viable opportunity in Abkhazia. In terms of replication, the projects' modality is moderately sustainable given that it is based on a short term strategic approach that does not allow focusing on longer term impact and sustainability of results.

The projects are coherent with ACF's strategy in Abkhazia and have a high degree of complementarity with the strategies and interventions of other partners. The coherence with de-facto authorities' policies and strategies cannot be measured, because adequate local strategies and plans are not in place.

The projects' coverage in terms of targeting identified persons of concern and needs is satisfactory and in line with UNHCR strategy<sup>1</sup>, which focuses on returnee population and vulnerable individuals residing in Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts. Also due to limitations imposed by Abkhaz authorities, the geographical coverage of the projects has decreased since 2011. Within the populations of concern, the 2013 project predominantly focuses on Gali district (where ethnic Georgians are 90% of population), while persons of concerns in the other two districts are less covered, particularly Tkvarcheli (where ethnic Georgians are 60% of population).

Based on the findings and in relation to the design of future projects, this report recommends assessing alternatives for interventions beyond Gali district and the feasibility to shift from individual to community based assistance with a longer term perspective, in line with UNHCR strategy, geographical coverage and populations of concern. This could include working with different types of support for different groups – such as small groups or associations – to increase impact and the benefits for communities.

In relation to income generating activities and disbursement of grants, it recommends asking grant beneficiaries to contribute with a small percentage of co-financing to increase their ownership and reduce the risk of businesses not starting. These contributions could be pooled and reinvested in community activities within the project. The report also recommends increasing the size of individual grants to support effective and sound business proposals and consider the possibility to disburse grants to successful businesses that have been already supported.

In terms of project design, indicators could be introduced in the projects' results matrix to more accurately measure outcomes, also in qualitative terms. In relation to project implementation it recommends to optimise the involvement of UNHCR in the implementation of the project, such as in the selection, verification and monitoring of grantees.

Finally the report recommends putting in place ACF stakeholders' feedback mechanism. Once the system is operational, it could be a useful information source to assess project activities and plan future ones.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Georgia Strategy 2014-2015, UNHCR Tbilisi, February 2014 ( update)

## 2 Introduction

This report presents and discusses the findings of the evaluation of three livelihoods projects funded by UNHCR and implemented by ACF in Abkhazia in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The aim of the evaluation is to assess the relevance of the projects in relation to a set of predefined criteria as specified by OECD DAC<sup>2</sup>. As required by the TOR, the geographic focus of the evaluation is on Abkhazia<sup>3</sup> only.

Based on the findings, the report presents a set of recommendations aimed at improving future design and implementation of similar projects by ACF. The report also presents best practices from each project that can be potentially replicated by ACF elsewhere.

The evaluation mission started on August 8, 2014 with a debriefing with ACF representatives in Tbilisi. Field work was carried out in Abkhazia during August 11-15. The evaluation was conducted by an external independent evaluator in accordance with the requirements of the TOR (included in the Annex).

## 3 Background and Context

In 1992-93, Abkhazia fought a separatist war resulting in the massive displacement of people, the great majority ethnic Georgians, who mostly fled to western Georgia and Tbilisi. After two decades, the majority of this people are still in Georgia living as IDPs (Internally Displaced People), while many others have spontaneously returned to Abkhazia<sup>4</sup>. In 2008, tensions between Georgia and Russia escalated once again into conflict, resulting in the break-away of Abkhazia from Georgia, the establishment of a de-facto Government, and a dividing line between the two territories with official crossings similar to a border.

The destruction brought by the conflict and the prolonged unresolved status of Abkhazia – after two decades it is still considered a breakaway region of Georgia by the international community, while it has only been recognised by few countries<sup>5</sup> – have contributed to the critical deterioration of the socio-economic situation. A meaningful economic recovery has not yet materialised. Although official figures are not available, a dated assessment<sup>6</sup> by the UN indicates high levels of unemployment, poor food security, pockets of extreme poverty and highly vulnerable population groups.

The situation is further compounded by the lack of security, particularly in the Gali district and adjacent areas, where criminal and flash kidnappings, robberies and aggressions are a serious concern and have implications for the economic recovery of local communities, mainly ethnic Georgians. However,

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<sup>2</sup> Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

<sup>3</sup> The 2011 and 2012 projects targeted both Abkhazia and West Georgia (Samegrelo and Imereti regions), while the 2013 project was intended for Abkhazia only.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that return is only possible and permitted to the district of Gali and partially to Tkvarcheli and parts of Oчамchira mainly those areas which used to be part of the 'old' district of Gali.

<sup>5</sup> Including Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru, and also by the partially recognised state of South Ossetia, and the unrecognised Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Final Report, March 2008. This assessment was released more than six years ago and a new one is required to reflect the current situation.



according to UNHCR staff's observations, it should be mentioned that the security situation over the past 3-5 years has stabilized if not improved.

The introduction of a new law aimed at reviewing and possibly withdrawing passports previously issued to the ethnic Georgian population, threatens to further undermine their status and equality in comparison to the Abkhaz and other ethnic groups. Recent elections in Abkhazia and changes in the political scenario may introduce new uncertainties for the people and their future.

#### 4 Projects description

The evaluation has assessed three projects funded by UNHCR and implemented by ACF in 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. The projects are the following:

1. Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti - January-December 2011;
2. Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development - January-December 2012;
3. Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants -January-December 2013;

The overall aim of the three projects is to increase the livelihoods and self-reliance of vulnerable individuals and related communities in the three districts of Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira, in south-eastern Abkhazia, in the proximity Dividing Line (DL), which is the de-facto border with government controlled Georgia (see map below).

Fig. 1: Map of Abkhazia



The projects activities focus on providing training opportunities and support for small business development via income generating activities (IGA) to returnees, local families and other vulnerable individuals.

Each of the three projects has been designed separately on a year-by-year basis because UNHCR's budget allocations are planned and decided each year for the next calendar year. Still, the projects can be seen as continuum in terms of programming, where each successive design has evolved from the previous. The biggest departure between the 2012 and 2013 projects is the absence of the western Georgia component, based on UNHCR change of strategy for Georgia.

*Table 1: 2011-2013, projects objectives and outputs*

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment/labour insertion activities organised</li> <li>2. Small Business Support Provided</li> <li>3. Targeted training provided</li> </ol>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development”:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to training and learning enabled</li> <li>2. Access to agricultural / livestock / fisheries production enabled</li> <li>3. Assessment and analysis undertaken</li> <li>4. Access to self employment / business facilitated</li> </ol>
<b>2013</b>	<b>Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to self-employment/business facilitated for 65 vulnerable households in 3 districts of Abkhazia, through distribution of income generation grants in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and skills/capacity building through joint inter-community business-skills and confidence-building trainings</li> </ol>

#### **4.1 2011 project**

The 2011 project builds upon previous interventions implemented by ACF in 2008 and 2009 with UNHCR and EC funding, under which nine (9) vocational training centres (VTCs) were established in the target area. The 2011 project called the VTCs to submit proposals for expansion and diversification, including infrastructure, equipment and training capacity (i.e. additional training modules addressing market gaps and needs). Following competitive selection, 5 VTCs were selected for expansions: inputs and materials were procured by ACF and additional trainers recruited to design and conduct vocational training.

According to the different vocational training required, the project organized training of trainers (TOT) for instructor and assistants on different trades. These VTCs are located in Gali, Saberio, Ochamchira, Gup, Dikhazurga and Atara. Vocational training courses were advertised by the project, inviting candidates to apply. Selection criteria included motivation and interest, age between 18-40, low educational background and economic vulnerability.

Via the 5 VTCs, the 2011 project, delivered a 4-month training programme to 50 individuals on these topics:

- Vocational training including practical apprenticeship on joinery and small furniture making, sewing, knitting, advanced agricultural techniques (e.g. greenhouse) and livestock keeping;
- Business training – how to write a business plan, business management, income calculation loss/profit and cash flow sheet;
- Confidence building (writing resume, prepare for interview, leadership, teamwork, etc.);

The project disbursed grants to 23 training graduates (12 to women and 11 to men), following a launch call for submission of applications for small business start-ups, and competitive selection. The proposals were evaluated in relation to criteria such as soundness, sustainability and effectiveness of the business idea, existing market gaps and utilisation of VTCs skills. Following the award of grants, grantees also received additional training on more specific aspects of business management.

Grants were disbursed via in grant-assistance modality, where the required inputs and materials were procured by ACF and distributed to the grantees. The average size of the grant was approximately 2,600 USD (smallest 2,067 USD and highest 3,150 USD). The 2011 project activities also included monitoring of the additional income of VTCs – as a result of the expansion and diversification –and grantees – as a result of the new business they started or expanded.

The total project budget was 232,485 USD. Later the number of business grants increased from 14 to 23, for a total of 31 individuals, including in-kind contribution from ACF.

## 4.2 2012 project

The 2012 project targets returnees and local households in Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira. Compared to 2011, targeting criteria in this project are more focused on economic vulnerability including female headed households, households with elderly or disabled and/or with low income, and potential access to land. Criteria also integrate gender considerations at design level, with 25% of beneficiaries set to be women (increased to 34% during implementation).

The 2012 project builds also upon the experience developed by an ACF SIDA-funded project that in 2011 established three agricultural training centres (ATCs) in Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts. Another main adjustment to the project approach is the focus on providing agricultural-related training (with cattle breeding and green house among others). For this purpose, 3 ATCs were diversified with the addition of training modules on agronomic skills for greenhouse vegetable growing and small livestock management. Forty (40) beneficiaries were trained via a 5-month training course focusing on theoretical and practical aspects of vegetable growing, livestock management, veterinary care, beekeeping and other subjects. In addition to the vocational course, the trainees also attended business and confidence building trainings similar to those delivered during the 2011 project. Trainees that were able to successfully completed the course received a certificate and became " ATC graduates".

Following advertisement of grants and a launch call at village level, agricultural business ideas were competitively selected on the basis of the proposal submitted – criteria included feasibility, market viability, and vulnerability of beneficiaries. Ten grantees were awarded with grants (5 to men and 5 to women) via IGA modality. The project then procured and distributed the required inputs and materials to the grantees. As in the 2011 project, this project included activities related to the monitoring of income of ATCs centres and grantees. The average size of the grant was approximately 2,000 USD (min 1,700 USD, max 2,386 USD). The total budget for the 2012 project was 122,938.17 USD, excluding in-kind contribution from ACF.

### 4.3 2013 project

As mentioned earlier, the 2013 project focuses exclusively on Abkhazia and the districts of Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira (areas of these districts that were previously under Gali, before the district area was reduced) and no longer has a western Georgia component, due to a UNHCR change of strategy for Georgia. The project aim is on improving the self-reliance of vulnerable returnee families via the provision of IGA grants. The emphasis on vulnerability is reflected in the selection criteria used to select beneficiaries, which include: extremely low or no income, specific vulnerabilities (e.g. large families), women-headed households, beneficiaries of previous UNHCR shelter assistance, survivors of SGBV and DV. While age group and other criteria remain the same, the gender ratio is greatly increased, with 80% of beneficiaries set to be women. In addition, the project uses a number of ways to identify beneficiaries: identification by ACF, referrals by UNHCR among beneficiaries of shelter assistance, referrals from other implementing partners such as Avangard, a local NGO based in Gali supporting survivors of SGBV (more details under the results and best practices section).

As with the other projects, the activities follow the same sequence: launch call, announcement of grants via meetings at village level and advertising – information about the grants is delivered to interested beneficiaries by ACF, UNHCR and implementing partners; selection of beneficiaries for distribution of IGA grants to support small business start-up or expansion; delivery of business training and confidence building training; procurement of grant inputs and disbursement to beneficiaries; monitoring of income generated through the activities and follow-up.

The size of the grant varies according to the proposal submitted by each beneficiary. The minimum individual grant awarded is 1,875 USD while the maximum grant is 3,500 USD, with an average amount of approximately 2,600 USD, for a total of 64 individuals and 63 businesses. There are instance where two beneficiaries have presented a joint business proposal (i.e. a truck service in Tkvarcheli) receiving a total combined grant of 7,000 USD. The total budget for the 2013 project was 299,990.03 USD, excluding in-kind contribution from ACF. See table in the results sections for more details and comparison about projects

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 Data and information sources

In order to gather the necessary quantitative and qualitative data and information, the evaluation used a range of direct and indirect information gathering techniques. These are:

- Consultation of relevant project documents and data, indicators, existing assessment, studies, and reports;
- Semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries and households on a pre-determined set of questions;
- Interviews and focus group discussions with ACF and UNHCR staff;
- Discussion with international and local NGOs;

Interviews and discourse analysis were used to gather qualitative data and uncover relevant aspects via a set of questions tailored according to the profile of the interviewee (i.e. beneficiaries, project staff, etc.). The interviews were semi-structured, so that respondents could actively contribute with their knowledge and feedback. The design of the interviews and focus group discussion also took into account the evaluation criteria and cross cutting issues, including gender, to gather the required information.

### 5.2 Selection of interviewees

In order to assess a relevant sample of beneficiaries, interviewees were selected according to these main criteria:

- Project year of assistance;
- Geographic distribution (by district, rural, semi-urban, urban);
- Gender;
- Progress of small businesses that received grants;

In total, 22 beneficiaries were interviewed, 13 women and 9 men. Two VTCs were also visited where interviews and group discussions were held. These are the VTCs located in Gup and Nabakevi. Some of the beneficiaries that we previously agreed to visit were not available due to late minute commitments. We also selected the beneficiaries that received support for solar drier activities but these were travelling out of Gali and not available.

Table 2: List of interviewed beneficiaries

#	Year	Name / Surname	Location	District	Activity	Grant (USD)	Gender	notes
1	2011	Ekhvaia Eteri	Nabakevi	Gali	Knitting workshop	2,400.00	F	
2	2011	Korishvili Naira	Nabakevi	Gali	Cattle breeding	2,800.00	F	
3	2011	Beraia Data	Nabakevi	Gali	Bakery	2,529.00	M	
4	2011	Koba Shamugia (VTC Manager Assistant)	Nabakevi	Gali	Joinery		M	
5	2012	Skhulukhia Nino	Zemo Bargebi	Gali	Vegetable-growing	2,368.00	F	
6	2013	Zaria Gedevan	Zemo Bargebi	Gali	Viticulture	2,000.00	M	
7	2013	Gogokhia Nura	Zemo Bargebi	Gali	Ceremonial service	2,600.00	F	
8	2013	Sondzia Madona	Zemo Bargebi	Gali	Greenhouse	3,000.00	F	
9	2011	Kikalishvili Diso	Dikhazurga	Gali	Auto service	3,000.00	M	
10	2011	Zakaraia Dato	Dikhazurga	Gali	Ice-cream production	2,992.00	M	
11	2011	Sabulua Khatuna	Saberio	Gali	Knitting workshop	2,400.00	F	
12	2011	Otar Kogonia (VTC Manager)	, Gup	Ochamchira	Auto service		M	
13	2012	Ubiria Temur	Beslakhuba	Ochamchira	Beekeeping	1,875.00	M	
14	2013	Chkadua Nona	Reka	Ochamchira	Grocery shop	3,440.00	F	
15	2013	Ismelia Inga	Ochamchira town	Ochamchira	Confectionary	2,850.00	F	
16	2013	Shoua Aida	Ochamchira town	Ochamchira	Cafeteria	2,500.00	F	
17	2013	Tarbaia Vakhtang	Pirveli Gali	Tkvarcheli	Truck service	7,000.00	M	
18	2013	Vardania Inver	Pirveli Gali	Tkvarcheli	Truck service		M	
19	2012	Tarbaia Demur	Pirveli Gali	Tkvarcheli	Cattle breeding	1,875.00	M	
20	2013	Danelia Nino	Pirveli Gali	Tkvarcheli	Cattle breeding	2,540.00	F	
X	2013	Papaskiri Tamriko	Pirveli Gali	Tkvarcheli	Cattle breeding	2,730.00	F	Visited but n/a
21	2013	Rodonaia Flora	Gali town	Gali	Greenhouse	2,500.00	F	
X	2013	Basaria Ramaz	Gali town	Gali	Internet café	3,600.00	M	Visited but n/a
22	2013	Ketsbaia Dali	Gali town	Gali	Cosmetology	2,230.00	F	
X	2013	Ashba Zurab	Gali town	Gali	Fitness club	2,600.00	M	Visited but n/a

\*n/a: not available

### 5.3 Evaluation criteria

As required by the TOR, this evaluation is based on the principles and criteria for evaluation of development assistance of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC<sup>7</sup>). These principles for evaluation are based on main criteria that should be used when conducting the evaluation of a project. These are:

- **Relevance:** the extent to which the project is consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and the policies of partners and donors;
- **Effectiveness:** a measure of the extent to which project outcomes/objectives have been achieved;
- **Efficiency:** cost and time efficiency in the implementation of activities and delivery of project services and use of project resources in order to achieve objectives and outcomes;
- **Impact:** the positive and negative changes produced as a result of the interventions carried out by the project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended;
- **Sustainability:** whether beyond the duration of the project and in the medium and long term the results achieved by the project can be sustained;
- **Coherence/complementarity:** whether coherence and/or complementarity exists between the project and existing policies and interventions to ensure harmonization and avoid duplication;
- **Coverage**<sup>8</sup>: whether the projects adequately covered different populations and needs;

On the bases of the information gathered from direct and indirect sources, the above criteria were ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being very low and 5 being very high. For instance, in relation to impact, relevant responses and information were matched to this criterion, allowing determining its rating and, as a result, the extent to which the project has had a very high, high, medium, low or no impact. In addition to the scoring, for each criterion a rationale is provided, based on the responses, information and data gathered by the evaluation. Rating and scoring of criteria is presented in the findings and results section.

In addition, as required by the TOR, the evaluation focused on lesson learnt during the implementation of the project, both in terms of positive outcomes and best practices and also in terms of negative and unexpected outcomes. Lesson learnt are useful in order to inform and address future project implementation and replication of projects in contexts requiring a similar response.

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<sup>7</sup> OECD, The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, 1991

<sup>8</sup> In 2000, coherence and coverage were added to the five criteria originally specified in OECD/DAC's Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (1991). There is no accepted standardized definition of coherence among aid organization and evaluation practitioners. Evaluations of humanitarian and conflict programming also apply the criteria of coverage, which is defined as "The need to reach major population groups facing life threatening suffering wherever there are." In the context of this evaluation assessing development-related interventions, it was decided to use the above definition focusing on geographic coverage.

## 6 Scope and limitations of the evaluation

### 6.1 Scope of the evaluation

For each project, the TO provided a set of questions related to a number of relevant areas to be assessed by the evaluation. These are:

- Project design;
- Targeting of beneficiaries;
- Project Implementation;
- Impact;
- Project sustainability;
- Project Monitoring;
- Cross cutting issues;

For each area, specific questions guiding the evaluation were provided by the TOR. For each criterion, these questions are addressed in the results section.

### 6.2 Limitations of the evaluation

Limited time was available for interviewing the beneficiaries and other relevant actors in Abkhazia. The overall duration of the field mission was five days. Interviews with beneficiaries took place over a period of three and half days, while in the remaining time the evaluator had discussions and interviews with ACF project staff, UNHCR staff and other international and local NGOs (see agenda in Annex).

Due to the limited time available, a sample of beneficiaries was selected for interviews (see the criteria previously outlined in the methodology section). It is assumed that the selected sample of beneficiaries is representative of the overall pool of individuals and households targeted by the projects.

Other limitations were due to concurrence of the field mission with the harvest season in Abkhazia. Due to agriculture activities, some of the interviewees that we selected and visited were not available.

## 7 Results

The results are presented in groups according the DAC and other evaluation criteria previously outlined. For clearer use and understanding of this section, the criteria are repeated. For each criterion, we added the specific questions provided by the TOR to which this evaluation sought to find answers.

### 7.1 Relevance

*The extent to which the project is consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and the policies of partners and donors*

- Was the project design, including selection of objectives, results and activities relevant to the beneficiaries?
- Were the identified needs and priorities relevant to the beneficiaries?
- Were the livelihoods activities relevant considering the geographical, climatic and other relevant characteristics of the project area?



**The projects are highly relevant in the context of high-unemployment, lack of economic opportunities and vulnerability faced by returnees and vulnerable people living in the projects' area, given the projects' focus on decreasing vulnerability by improving skills, increasing confidence, livelihoods and self-reliance of beneficiaries.**

ACF has been working in Abkhazia since 1994, in the aftermath of the Abkhazia-Georgia conflict, delivering humanitarian assistance. ACF has a long-term working experience and knowledge of the region, the needs of beneficiaries and the operational challenges. Likewise, UNHCR has been present in Gali with a field office since 1993 and has extensive experience of directly working with beneficiaries on its protection and humanitarian mandate.

ACF has previous experience in identifying needs in Abkhazia, also via participatory processes. ACF conducted a number of assessments and studies to inform the development of its livelihoods and agriculture development projects<sup>9</sup>. These assessments are based on quantitative and qualitative analysis via household surveys, food security, socio-economic indicators, focus group discussions with communities, participatory appraisals and interviews with stakeholders.

In addition, before implementing the 2011-12-13 projects, ACF had already previous experience of working with communities in the three project districts of Abkhazia, via the establishment of 9 VTCs. Also, under the EC funded project, ACF carried out a business and market assessment to guide the development of the VTCs' training modules.

Similarly, the 2012 project builds upon the recommendation of UNHCR 2011 social assessment<sup>10</sup> and on previous ACF experience in delivering vocational training and implementing agriculture activities under a SIDA funded project that established three ATCs in the districts of Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira in 2011. In addition, the 2012 project takes into consideration the needs and gaps identified together with communities in the development of the agricultural training topics. These training modules are then further developed and delivered also under the 2013 project.

In Abkhazia, due to the stagnating economic situation and the lack of employment and business opportunities, most of the people rely on self-subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. Discussions with interviewees highlighted that vocational training on vegetable and fruit growing, development and management of greenhouses, livestock management, veterinary care and beekeeping as relevant topics for beneficiaries.

Overall, the majority of the respondents found the trainings very relevant for their needs. They pointed out that they were able to provide feedback before and during the training, and receive training on skills they were interested in. Graduates of the VTC in Nabakevi pointed out that they found the vocational training on joinery and small furniture making very relevant, also because there are no other learning opportunities for young people in the district or in Gali.

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<sup>9</sup> ACF/FAO, Rural Agricultural Production and Livelihood Improvement Possibilities Assessment in Georgia, March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, *Analysis of Social Assessment Results under 2010-2011 Abkhazia Durable Housing Project*, September 2011; and UNDP, *UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Final Report*, March 2008.

Similarly, beneficiaries found the training on business and legal aspects very useful, particularly on developing a business plan, business management, marketing, income calculation, keeping track of profits and expenses, etc. For instance, one respondent that received a grant to start a small grocery shop and another to expand a confectionary business, found very useful to learn how to deal with legal issues, how to manage the business and how to deal with customers.

All respondent also highlighted that the training provided a venue and the opportunity to meet and exchange views and ideas with other people from different villages, ethnic groups and backgrounds, especially during vocational training or in the confidence building groups. Respondents pointed out that the found this very relevant after the conflict, as these opportunities rarely happen and people tend to gather mainly with relatives and families on special occasions, or funerals, as one respondent put it.

Among respondents, women considered the training as an important opportunity to learn new skills, do new things rather than the being constantly engaged in daily household work, and focus on the possibility to start a business - the latter also being considered important by male respondents. Also, women and men in general, found that the training gave them the opportunity to get some relief from the stress and the concerns they have on an everyday basis because of the negative economic and security situation.

Overall the projects are highly relevant in relation to UNHCR's strategy for Georgia<sup>11</sup> in providing support to livelihoods via IGA for persons of concern in Abkhazia.

It is not possible to assess the relevance of the projects in relation to the existing strategies and policies of Abkhaz authorities, because of the lack of such plans, particularly at local level. In addition, engagement of duty bearers at policy and strategy level by ACF, and in general by other INGOs and NGOs, has proven to be challenging.

## 7.2 Effectiveness

*A measure of the extent to which project outcomes, objectives and results have been achieved*

- How effective have been the projects in achieving the intended results and objectives?
- Did the project strike an effective balance between hard (grants) and soft inputs (training and support)?
- What were the main constraints faced by the project?
- Were constraints related to project design and implementation or due to external factors?

**The projects have been highly effective in conducting and delivering a range of training programmes and in supporting the start-up and expansion of small businesses on a range of activities.**

**At individual and household level, the projects have been moderately effective in improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries in terms of increased income and self-reliance.**

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<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Georgia Strategy 2014-2015, UNHCR Tbilisi, February 2014 ( update)

Table 3: Overview of projects results

Project	Selection criteria	Gender Ratio (women/men%)	No. of people trained - % graduated	No. of grantees	Average size of grant (USD)	Total budget (USD)
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Returnee and local families</li> <li>• Young adults</li> <li>• Age18-40</li> <li>• Motivation</li> </ul>	27	50 - 96%	23 busin.  31 indiv.	2,623	232,485.45
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living in IDP-like conditions (returnees and local households)</li> <li>• Age20-59</li> <li>• Economic vulnerability (female headed households, households with elderly or disabled, low income)</li> <li>• Potential access to land for IGA grantees</li> </ul>	34	40 - 100%	10	1,984	122,938.17
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living in IDP-like conditions (returnees, vulnerable resident population)</li> <li>• Age18-59</li> <li>• Extremely low or no other income</li> <li>• People with specific vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Women-headed households</li> <li>• UNHCR shelter beneficiaries</li> <li>• SGBV / domestic violence survivor</li> <li>• ATC/VTC graduates</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Ownership of land/buildings for IGA grantees</li> </ul>	80	65 - 100%	63 busin.  64 Indiv.	2,597  1,875 to 3,500 max	299,990.03

The projects have been highly effective in making use the experience and the infrastructure developed in previous interventions. Under the 2011 project, 5 VTCs previously established by ACF project were expanded and diversifying, both in terms of infrastructure and equipment, and training capacity (modules, curricula, contents and training of trainers), see table below. Likewise, the 2012 project successfully expanded and diversified 3 ATCs established by ACF. This included both the strengthening the training and business capacity of ATC staff and the expansion via the provision of inputs (e.g. seedlings and small livestock). The approach was highly effective because it allowed building upon the previous work and the existing relationship with communities.

*Table 4: Diversification and expansion of VTCs in the 2011 project*

VTC	2010	2011
Saberio (Gali)	Handicraft	Sewing
Nabakevi (Gali)	Joinery	Joinery
Dikhazurga (Gali)	Joinery	Joinery
Gup (Ochamchira)	Joinery	Auto-service
Atara (Ochamchira)	Joinery	Joinery

The evaluator visited the VTCs located in Gup and Nabakevi. The Gup VTC expanded from joinery, where doors and windows are made, to auto-service. The VTC further expanded to include a wheel repair and balancing, a car-wash and a bar. This is the only auto-service in the village and community members can have access to tools in case they decide to make small repairs themselves. The VTC now employs four people from the village and the manager pointed out that there no other job opportunities in the village.

The Nabakevi VTC employs four people and produces doors, windows and small furniture. Some of the VTCs graduates were able to start their own small activities after the training without grant assistance, like home-run joineries. Others got together and used their own capital - from hazelnut crops -to start an auto-service business. Overall, VTCs graduates in Nabakevi pointed out that the establishment of the centre contributed to raise the profile of the village and it is very relevant for the community because it provided opportunity for training and employment for young people.

#### *Selection of beneficiaries*

The projects have been highly effective in identifying and selecting the beneficiaries receiving training. Courses were advertised in each village with posters and via community meetings. All respondents said that communities were aware of training opportunities. The 2012 project introduced more specific criteria in relation to economic vulnerability, while in 2013 greater emphasis was placed on social vulnerability and gender, including SGBV survivors (see table above with comparative analysis of criteria).

#### *Training*

Via five VTCs, the 2011 project delivered training to 50 beneficiaries, out of which 48 were able to complete the course and receive a certificate. Via the three ATCs, the 2012 project provided training to 40 beneficiaries who were all able to complete the course and receive a certificate. The 2013 project provided business planning and confidence building training to the 65 beneficiaries receiving grants. The ratio of women increased from 27% in 2011 to 80% 2013. In terms of effectiveness in relation to number of beneficiaries trained, the 2012 project has trained less people than the 2011 and 2013 projects, although it must be noted that, overall, the overall budget for the 2012 project was smaller than 2011 and 2013.

The graduation rates indicate that the projects were highly effective in ensuring attendance to the training courses by arranging free transport to beneficiaries and flexible course hours. Due to security

concerns, some of the beneficiaries were afraid to travel to the VTCs in Gup and in Atara, while others could not afford the travel because they were far. The courses also had flexible course hours to allow participation of trainees involved in daily economic activities or household duties, particularly women.

Respondents indicated that during the training they were able to ask for clarification and specific advice. The training was delivered in Russian, including books and reading materials, as required by Abkhaz authorities, while the majority of the beneficiaries speak Georgian as first language. Some beneficiaries indicated that they received additional explanations in case the language or some of the topics were not clear. Only some of the respondents found that the language was a barrier and that they would have preferred receiving reading materials in Georgian, although they also indicated that this did not represent a problem as they were assisted by the trainers with translations when needed.

Based on the responses of the beneficiaries, the training was highly effective in increasing their vocational skills, business management skills, knowledge of legal aspects and self-confidence. The majority of the respondents found that the training provided with new skills and that they still use these skills, for instance to manage the business, keep track of expenses, establish the price of goods to be sold among others.

Respondents found that their technical knowledge has increased as a result of the training they received. Other beneficiaries that received small grants to start a greenhouse business for vegetable growing, with previous experience or with an agronomic background, found the vocational training very relevant to learn more advanced and productive agricultural techniques. In comparison to the way they do things before and after the projects, respondents said “we believed that we knew everything but during the training we realised we knew little”. Other beneficiaries pointed out that they learned how to reduce or stop using chemical fertilisers and use organic alternatives.

During the development of business proposals grantees were able to ask for additional advice and individual consultations were provided to improve business ideas. In relation to agricultural activities and start-up of greenhouse activities, beneficiaries found very useful that they were able to receive regular advice from the ACF agronomist during his follow-up visits or by calling him.

From a vocational perspective, the 2013 project was also highly effective in providing specialised training not available in Gali and out of the regular curricula. This included on greenhouse management technology (in Anaklia), on joinery/woodworking (in Zugdidi) and to a cosmetologist (in Tbilisi) who is successfully running her business and undergoing expansion.

One of the beneficiaries that received training to expand his wine making business, pointed out that not only he learned new skills in addition to what he already knew (on improving soil conservation and use of organic fertilisers), but he is now able to provide advice to other people in the community who come to him with questions on harvesting and post-harvesting aspects of wine production. In addition he is transferring this knowledge to his daughter which is also involved in wine-making and whom, one day, will hopefully take over the activity.

### *Selection of grantees, award and distribution of IGA*

The award of grants involves a (i) launch call, where applicants are invited to submit their business proposal via a standard application form, and (ii) a selection and verification process after which the grants are finally awarded. In 2011, ACF alone was in charge of the selection process, while in 2012 UNHCR representatives were also involved. In 2013, a selection committee formed by ACF and UNHCR, with referrals from implementing partners (Avangard) was responsible for the selection process, including a pre-selection stage. Applications are scored and ranked according to quality of proposal, feasibility, type of activity and market viability. The 2013 project was more effective in setting strict selection criteria and in delivering grants than the other two projects. In 2013 beneficiaries are first awarded grants and then receive training, while in 2011-12 grantees are selected among course graduates.

One of the challenges of the projects was the poor quality of the business plans submitted by beneficiaries, with few original ideas and unrealistic expectation in terms of inputs and expected profits. There were also good ideas that required a bigger capital investment and were somehow limited by the maximum size of the grant.

### *Improvement of livelihoods and self-reliance*

There are cases where the projects have been highly effective in improving the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. Grants for trade and services-related businesses have been more successful in terms of enhancement of livelihoods and self-reliance. Respondents with small shops, confectionary business, cosmetologist, ceremonial services, truck service, bakery, auto repair have done comparatively better than other categories of business. They can now afford to pay for medicines and medical care, school, home repairs and improvements. Vegetable growing activities via greenhouse have also been effective but to a lesser extent.

For instance, with the extra savings one respondent can afford the university fees of the daughter in Sukhumi, while others could afford specialist medical care in Tbilisi. In general, these beneficiaries feel more confident and hopeful for the future. Some are even planning or thinking on expanding the business or move the business from home to more central locations, like the cosmetologist, one confectionary business and an auto service. In general, though, if they were able to get credit at decent rates, they could do this more quickly and effectively.

On the other hand, grants related to farming and livestock activities have been less effective. Cattle breeding and small livestock activities have registered losses due to disease. One respondent pointed out that after an initial improvement in their livelihoods, after the loss and reduction of livestock they now keep cheese and milk for personal consumption and they are no longer able to sell it on the market. Also, in addition to being seasonal, these activities are affected the poor quality of livestock available in Gali, and there is lack of general prophylaxis and veterinary care.

Although they are less prone to risk, other activities such as knitting and sewing also suffer from seasonality and they are only viable during the winter months when there is demand. Diversification is not possible due to limited savings: respondents pointed out that knitting material is expensive and they can afford to buy it after the savings of the harvest season. Another instance reflecting poor business

planning is the case of two grantees that wanted to start an ice cream business: after the equipment was procured and specific training was provided in Tbilisi, they were not able to import the required ingredients and the business could not start.

Overall, trade and services activities have higher returns and are prone to less risk. They take place in urban and peri-urban areas and are more easily connected to market and clients. People engaged in these activities tend to have a more proactive attitude and a higher level of education. On the other hand, farming and livestock activities, are more prone to risk and take place in rural remote areas, and are badly connected via dilapidated roads. These beneficiaries live via subsistence farming and agriculture and use old practices on animal husbandry and health. One respondent that lost livestock due to a virus, pointed out that veterinary assistance is expensive, not readily available and ineffective.

There are factors that are out of control of the project such as motivation, commitment, ownership, family and financial crisis. Before receiving the grant, beneficiaries sign an informal written agreement that is not legally binding and does not imply restitution of grant in total or in part if the business fails to start due to negligence. The project staff reported that some of the beneficiaries had to be visited repeatedly to ensure that they were doing the required tasks required by the business plan to start-up the activities. Some of the 2013 grantees did not yet start their business at time of visit, for instance an internet café, a fitness club and a pasta production business in Gali. Although we planned to visit these beneficiaries, we were not able to interview them, but we learned that the problems they face are related to lack financial resources or due to family crisis (health of family members).

Businesses are also affected by the high-cost of registering the business – official and “unofficial” cost as pointed out by one respondent. High taxes also represent a problem for small businesses in Gali. One beneficiary involved in catering activities had to close the shop in the market and continue to work from home because taxes were negatively affecting the viability of the business.

#### *Procurement for implementation*

The three projects rely on the procurement of required inputs and material. Overall, the projects have been highly effective in procuring the required inputs. Sometimes external factors out of control of ACF have delayed procurement activities and hampered the timely implementation of the projects. Some of the required goods are generally not available on the local market and need to be imported from Russia. Until 2011, Abkhaz authorities tacitly allowed ACF to informally bring goods from Georgia across the DL. In some cases UNHCR supported ACF to transport goods across the DL following ad hoc and well justified requests. Since 2012, Abkhaz authorities no longer allow this and the only procurement option is importing goods from Russia at a much higher cost (see next section also for details on this). Other difficulties encountered by procurement include the difficulties of receiving formal bids from suppliers that are used to conduct business informally via verbal agreements.

### 7.3 Efficiency

*Cost and time efficiency in the implementation of activities and delivery of project services and use of project resources in order to achieve objectives and outcomes*

- Were the project resources used efficiently to achieve the intended results?
- Were the beneficiaries targeted efficiently?

#### **The projects have been moderately efficient in the implementation of training activities and in the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of start-up grants**

Overall the three projects trained 155 beneficiaries and distributed 97 grants to a total of 105 individual grantees between 2011 and 2013. In order to determine the cost-benefit ratio of the projects, it would be necessary to perform a cost benefit analysis. This requires a quantitative assessment that is beyond the scope of the evaluation and is usually undertaken as a separate study. Therefore, the efficiency of training activities has been evaluated in qualitative terms and on an overall analysis of costs.

*Table 5: Overview of projects budgets and costs*

Project	Total budget (USD)	No. of people trained	No. of grants	Average grant size (USD)	Total grants' budget (USD) A	Total budget excl. grants (USD) B	Comparison with 2013 budget (%)
2011	232,485.45	50	23	2,623	60,329	172,156.45	-29%
2012	122,938.17	40	10	1,984	19,840	103,098.17	-144%
2013	299,990.03	65	63	2,597	163,311	136,679.03	0

Findings suggest that the activities for the identification, selection, verification and monitoring of beneficiaries are less time and cost-efficient than others. These activities require considerable ACF staff time, field work and several site visits before and after beneficiaries are selected and grants are assigned. UNHCR is also involved to some extent in the selection, verification and monitoring of beneficiaries in relation to the projects' activities. Although the costs sustained by UNHCR to carry out these activities are not factored under the project budget, they add up on the donor side in terms of staff time and other costs and further decrease the overall efficiency of projects.

In relation to the delivery of training activities, the projects incurred direct costs such as development of training modules and training capacity, and indirect costs such as the expansion and diversification of existing facilities, procurement of necessary equipment, logistics, admin, transport and other relevant costs. Considering the overall budgets of the projects and excluding the grants (i.e. resources allocated for the delivery of training and GA such as selection, monitoring, verification, specialised training and other required support during start-up of small businesses), a preliminary consideration is that it would be more cost efficient to train more beneficiaries and increase the number of graduates receiving grants under one project. This would allow reducing the per capita training costs and per capita costs related to the delivery of GA activities. Overall, this would increase the cost efficiency of projects, as in the case of



2013, where all beneficiaries received training and subsequently grant assistance, allowing spreading the cost of training and IGA over a bigger pool of beneficiaries, with an overall bigger budget.

On the other hand, the 2011 project trained 50 beneficiaries and disbursed 23 grants, while in 2012, out of 40 trained beneficiaries, while only 10 received grants. A comparison of cost efficiency between the three projects can be devised by looking at the resources used for implementation (A) and resources directly disbursed in the form of grants (B), see Table 5. Overall, the 2013 project' resources used for implementation are less than the total budget for grants indicating that less resources per capita have been used in relation to a bigger number of beneficiaries. The 2011 and 2012 projects show that comparatively more resources have been used per capita for implementation, particularly for the implementation and support to GA activities (with 23 and 10 beneficiaries respectively). To further establish the cost efficiency of the project, these estimates could be compared with other projects delivering trainings in similar contexts, by ACF or other organisations.

There are also external factors that affected the time and cost efficiency of the projects. As discussed earlier some specific inputs and materials cannot be procured directly in Abkhazia and need to be imported from Russia. In 2011, some of the small businesses were delayed by procurement. In addition, when goods are available on the market their cost is higher – sometimes even 100-200% – than in Georgia. This has also implications on the number of beneficiaries that can be assisted at the design stage. Another external factor that affects the efficiency of the projects is that, given the unresolved status of Abkhazia and the difficulties in engaging at central authority level, due to the lack of trust from duty bearers to civil society organizations, there are limited options for delivering development assistance to communities and that the benefits might balance the costs.

## 7.4 Impact

***The positive and negative changes produced as a result of the interventions carried out by the project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended***

- What was the impact of training on graduates and grant beneficiaries?
- Are they better prepared to manage their businesses?
- What is the level of improvement of self-reliance?
- How does the income compare before and after the project?

**The project had a positive impact on the self-confidence and capacity of beneficiaries via training and provision of technical skills. Overall, the project had a moderate impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries receiving grants, although there are individual cases where the impact was high.**

The majority of beneficiaries pointed out that the training had a positive impact on their lives. It provided them with opportunity to learn new skills and learn about the legal and management aspects of running a business. In relation to vocational training, respondents had the opportunity to increase their technical knowledge on specific activities, exchange ideas and learn new ways to do things. As a result of the training some respondents were able to find employment or start some small businesses.

The VTCs also had a positive impact on the communities because they provide training resources and employment opportunities and can be used for future engagement and development of the communities.

In terms of self-reliance, the projects also had a positive impact on some of the beneficiaries that received grants and now have profitable small businesses. Their self-reliance has increased and they are able to better provide and support their families. Grants provided for trade, services and agricultural-related activities such as greenhouses had more impact than on livestock activities. Geographically impact has been more significant in urban and peri-urban areas than in rural.

Grant assistance had less impact on some of the most vulnerable beneficiaries. These are more difficult to support because they are less resilient in the event of a crisis (e.g. personal problems, health of a family member, etc.) For some beneficiaries the only option is to sell assets received from the project like livestock. In other instances, resources destined to start the business were no longer available due to job or financial crisis.

In terms of measuring the impact on the income of beneficiaries, the projects have monitoring activities to measure income variations before and after the project. This data is registered in a database by ACF project staff. The income sheets confirm that the projects had in average a moderate impact on raising the income and livelihoods of beneficiaries. The trends confirm what was previously outlined: trade and services activities had higher positive income variation, agriculture/ greenhouses activities also positive variations but less, livestock keeping, beekeeping and other seasonal activities have little variations.

Some activities did not register income because businesses were not able to start, or as in the case of the 2013 project, where some of the grantees received grants toward the end of the year and their income has not yet been monitored.

To understand if the projects had a meaningful impact on livelihoods, monitoring should be done in the medium and long term. These projects have a 1-year programme cycle and ACF is required to report to UNHCR only on the year of implementation of the project. For instance, at the beginning of 2012 ACF reported on the 2011 project, and so forth. When a new project starts, UNHCR does not require ACF to continue to monitor the previous project<sup>12</sup>. As a result of this modality, it is not possible to adequately measure impact on income and livelihoods.

Grantees receive grants typically halfway through the project and activities only start to generate income towards the second half or towards the end of the year. Also, seasonal and agricultural activities only start to generate results in the following year.

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<sup>12</sup> While not required by UNHCR, ACF internally monitors the project beneficiaries of the previous year.

## 7.5 Sustainability

***Whether beyond the duration of the project and in the medium and long term the results achieved by the project can be sustained.***

- Were inputs, materials and techniques applied properly?
- To what extent grant beneficiaries were able to ensure maintenance and development of equipment, structures and other inputs as part of start-up grants?
- What components of the project have been effective and sustainable and can be replicated in the future?
- Were the projects built towards sustainability, with a replication perspective?

**While the projects have properly put in place infrastructure and required inputs, their long term sustainability can be affected by the beneficiaries' lack of capacity to maintain and develop inputs in the future.**

**The replication of projects is moderately sustainable given that the project design and implementation are based on a short-term strategic approach and limited availability of resources.**

The majority of the respondents that have received equipment, material and other inputs via grant assistance still hold, maintain and productively use these assets. Beneficiaries pointed out that they received from the project better quality materials than those normally available on the market in Gali (for instance plastic sheeting, seedlings, hoist for car service in Dikhazurga, plates for ceremonial services in Zemo Bargebi, knitting machine in Nabakevi among others).

In general, the sustainability of livelihoods generated via grant assistance depends on the capacity of beneficiary to buy inputs and materials and pay for repairs and maintenance. This is a critical factor for the sustainability of results achieved by beneficiaries because, in general, they have little or no capital available while access to affordable loans and credit is not a viable opportunity in Abkhazia. There are cases related to livestock and farming where beneficiaries no longer have IGA assets due to disease or sale. As expected, some equipment deteriorated with use, like in the case of the auto-service in VTC Gup, where they need new tools but limited capital is available. As previously outlined, some of the factors negatively affecting the sustainability of IGA are out of control of the beneficiaries, such as the economy and security situation and a non conducive environment. On the other hand, during the selection and award of grants, business assumption should be carefully assessed against these factors, in order to mitigate their impact on sustainability.

In terms of replication, this modality is moderately sustainable. The initial 2011 project approach has been replicated by ACF in 2012 and 2013 with variations and adjustments within the same project area. ACF is also implementing in 2014 a follow-up project with a similar modality focusing on improving livelihoods in the same districts. Overall, ACF has been working with this project modality for 4 years (2011-14). This type of modality is based on 1-year cycle and, due to the donor's requirements and funding allocation, does not allow focusing on a longer term planning both in terms of strategy and resources. This approach has also limitations in terms of economic scale of assistance and overall impact. Also, considering their humanitarian mandate, UNHCR and ACF might have strategic limitations when working with livelihoods that require a development perspective and expertise. In addition to

these constraints, existing limitations imposed by Abkhaz and Georgian authorities must be taken into consideration, as they pose barriers to the provision of development support to the area.

A longer term strategy would allow more comprehensive monitoring of impact and sustainability, while working with beneficiaries on an incremental path of support. Also, in terms of economy of scale, longer term strategy and higher budgets would allow reducing costs in relation to the number of beneficiaries trained and further increase efficiency. For instance, in a multi-year project more beneficiaries can be trained at the same time. The same facilities, equipment and capacity can be used the following year to deliver similar training to other beneficiaries, thus reducing costs. Following the trainings, each batch of graduates will be able to receive grant assistance under the same project, while monitoring of impact can take place over a 2-3 year time frame. A multi-year strategy could also include different paths of support for different persons of concern. For instance, most vulnerable individuals might require a different approach during the first year to overcome critical needs (e.g. shelter, food security, other), while on the following year they could be involved with more confidence and with a better standing in livelihoods activities, thus minimising the potential risk of failure of IGA.

With a view to shift from humanitarian to development assistance in Abkhazia, the results achieved by the projects could be further replicated and sustained in the future by integrating interventions into local or community development strategies, focusing on strengthening the capacity and service delivery of local authorities, rather than providing direct assistance to beneficiaries. Yet, findings indicate that adequate local strategies are not in place while, in the dialogue with international partners, Abkhaz authorities are more inclined to focus on big budgets and infrastructure rather than on capacity support and development at local community level. Still, there are encouraging signs of positive work at technical level, such as the good relationship of ACF with de-facto Ministry of Agriculture officials.

The uncertainties surrounding the security situation and the current political development in Abkhazia – political changes due to recent elections and a law on passports and citizenship – can also impact the sustainability of the results and reverse the gains achieved. For instance, most of the respondents that are successfully running their small businesses point out that they keep a low profile instead of expanding their business and improve their house and living conditions, because they are afraid of robberies and kidnappings of family members in exchange of ransom. Also, ethnic Georgians are concerned about the outcome of the 24<sup>th</sup> of August presidential elections and their future status regarding their administrative rights and passport cancellation<sup>13</sup>.

## 7.6 Complementarity/coherence

*Degree of coherence and complementarity existing between the project and existing policies and interventions, to ensure harmonization and avoid duplication;*

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<sup>13</sup> Thousands of ethnic Georgians, residing in eastern parts of Abkhazia, were removed from voters' lists. Figures available on [www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

**The projects are coherent with ACF's strategy in Abkhazia and have a high degree of complementarity with the existing strategies and interventions of other partners. The projects are coherent with ACF's strategy in Abkhazia, while there are moderately coherent with the global ACF humanitarian mandate.**

**Coherence with de-facto authorities' policies and strategies cannot be measured, because of the lack of such strategies.**

The three projects have a high degree of complementarity with ACF's other projects in the region. The 2011 and 2012 projects build upon existing resources and experience of ACF of working with communities in establishing VTCs and ATCs and delivering training. The 2013 is also highly coherent with previous two projects in terms of strategy and activities.

There is high complementarity between the work of ACF and the interventions of other partners as highlighted by the following facts:

- ACF and UNHCR are part of the Abkhaz Strategic Partnership, a platform coordinated by the UN Resident Coordinator where humanitarian and development actors come together to share information on projects and activities, sometimes also with Abkhaz authorities' officials up to the ministerial level;
- ACF attends monthly coordination meetings with other international and national NGOs as well as UN agencies working in Abkhazia (ACF, DRC, PU AMI, WV, Avangard, AWA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR) where respective activities and future strategies are discussed to seek complementarity and increase harmonisation;
- ACF and DRC keep a joint database of the beneficiaries assisted by their respective projects in order to avoid duplication and overlap;
- ACF participates to a referral system through which local NGOs and other partners assist vulnerable beneficiaries and increase effectiveness of support;

## **7.7 Coverage**

***Whether the projects adequately covered different persons of concern and needs***

- Have population groups been adequately targeted by the activities in terms of identification, selection and provision of assistance via project activities?
- Was the geographic and population coverage adequate in terms of needs;

**The projects' coverage in terms of targeting identified persons of concern and needs is satisfactory. On the other hand, geographic coverage of the projects has decreased since 2011, also due to limitations imposed by Abkhaz authorities, with the 2013 project where persons of concerns in Gali district are more proportionally covered than the other two districts, in particular Tkvarcheli.**

As outlined earlier, from 2011 to 2013 the criteria for targeting persons of concern (or population planning group, as referred to in the project documents) has become more specific. The project target

group has become narrower, starting from returnees in 2011 to a much clearer focus on social vulnerability, gender, and highly vulnerable individuals in 2013.

In reaching and covering vulnerable persons of concern, the 2013 has effectively used a referral system where survivors of SGBV and domestic violence are referred by the Avangard NGO to ACF for assistance. This system, explained in detail under best practice, has improved the coverage to include also socially vulnerable groups. In addition, UNHCR refers individuals identified through protection monitoring.

The projects have also been effective in covering the needs of different persons of concern by using a participatory approach involving local authorities and community leaders in the design of training courses, particularly in the identification of vocational needs in relation to community needs and market gaps.

Since 2013, Abkhaz authorities have limited to Gali district the area where international organisations can work. The projects have been specifically designed to assist returnees in Gali, and parts of Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira districts, where return was possible. The limits imposed by the authorities have even threatened to suspend ongoing activities. ACF was able to overcome this challenge by engaging in discussion with de-facto authorities to directly access intervention areas beyond Gali, while also reinforcing the partnerships with local NGOs, notably Avangard, as previously planned in ACF's strategy; this helped ensure unrestricted access to UNHCR funded beneficiaries beyond Gali in latter 2013.

The imposed limits greatly affect the coverage of persons of concern. Out of 65 beneficiaries supported by the 2013 project, 54 are located in Gali district, 8 Tkvarcheli and 3 in Ochamchira. Considering that ethnic Georgians are respectively 90%, 60% and 10% of the population of these districts, Gali district is proportionally more covered than the other two and in particular Tkvarcheli. Effectively, coverage of the project in 2013 is predominantly limited to Gali district.

## **7.8 DAC results' matrix and overall performance of projects**

The results outlined in the previous section have been ranked on a scale from 1 to 5:

- 1- Poor- Highly non satisfactory
- 2- Fair- Non satisfactory
- 3- Good - Moderately satisfactory
- 4- Very good - Satisfactory
- 5- Excellent - Highly satisfactory

In addition to the scoring, for each criterion a rationale is provided, based on the results and findings of the evaluation.

Table 6: DAC results' matrix of the projects

Criteria	Rating (1 Low, 5 High)					Rationale
	1	2	3	4	5	
Relevance					X	The projects are highly relevant in the context of high-unemployment, lack of economic opportunities and vulnerability faced by returnees and vulnerable people living in the projects' area, given the projects' focus on decreasing vulnerability by improving skills, increasing confidence, livelihoods and self-reliance of beneficiaries.
Effectiveness				X		The projects have been highly effective in conducting and delivering a range of training programmes and in supporting the start-up and expansion of small businesses on a range of activities. At individual and household level, the projects have been moderately effective in improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries in terms of increased income and self-reliance.
Efficiency			X			The projects have been moderately efficient in the implementation of training activities and in the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of start-up grants.
Impact				X		The project had a positive impact on the self-confidence and capacity of beneficiaries via training and provision of technical skills. Overall, the project had a moderate impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries receiving grants, although there are individual cases where the impact was high.
Sustainability			X			Structures and inputs were properly put in place by the project and have been sustainable in the short term. On the other hand, the lack of capital of beneficiaries to maintain and develop these inputs has implication for long term sustainability. The replication of projects is moderately sustainable given that that the project design and implementation are based on a short term strategic approach and limited availability of resources.
Coherence/ complemen- tarity					X	The projects have a high degree of complementarity with the existing strategies and interventions of other partners. The projects are coherent with ACF's strategy in Abkhazia, while there are moderately coherent with the global ACF humanitarian mandate. Coherence with de-facto authorities' policies and strategies cannot be measured, because of the lack of such strategies.
Coverage				X		The projects' coverage in terms of targeting identified persons of concern and needs is satisfactory. On the other hand, geographic coverage of the projects has decreased since 2011, also due to limitations imposed by Abkhaz authorities, with the 2013 project where persons of concerns in Gali district are more proportionally covered than the other two districts, in particular Tkvarcheli.

## 8 Best practices

### 8.1 Best practice 1 – Using previous project expertise and achievements

By using and expanding 5 existing VTCs, the 2011 project successfully utilised the infrastructure and experience developed in a previous project. This allowed maximising results by quickly delivering training courses to a number of beneficiaries, using previous training capacity and experience. Likewise, the 2012 was able to expand and diversify three ATCs established under a previous project.

These practices can be replicated elsewhere by taking a strategic look at the overall portfolio of projects when planning activities and seeking funding. In addition, this can be used as potential source of co-financing.

### 8.2 Best practice 2 - Referral of beneficiaries

In the 2013 project, ACF has effectively used a joint referral system to support vulnerable beneficiaries. Through partnership with the local NGO Avangard, ACF was able to assist women survivors of domestic violence and SGBV. While the NGO Avangard provides medical and psycho-social support to these women, it is important that they are also economically independent so that they can support themselves and their children, instead of being forced to return to the household where they have experienced violence. In this regard, ACF has been able to support these beneficiaries with training and grants which has increased their economic independence and prospects<sup>14</sup>. The referral system is also used to refer potential beneficiaries not just to ACF but other partners that are better placed to provide assistance in relation to their existing interventions. Partners are satisfied with the results of the referral system and would like to expand it in the future. Also, the referral system is effective because it allows complementarity of effort among partners.

These practices can be replicated elsewhere by holding regular meeting with implementing partners to share information on current and future projects, seeking to establish complementarities between respective projects and activities.

### 8.3 Best practice 3 – Specialized training

In relation to special vocational needs, the projects were able to make use of existing local and regional expertise to deliver specialist training to grant beneficiaries, such as in the case of training on greenhouse techniques in Anaklia, joinery training in Zugdidi and cosmetology in Tbilisi. This approach allowed delivering specific technical skills to some beneficiaries and increasing their knowledge and maximise their capacity to run their activities. In addition, it also allowed linking-up beneficiaries to existing economic realities, including the private sector and increase efficiency by sourcing existing expertise from outside the project.

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<sup>14</sup>The evaluator was able to speak to some of these beneficiaries supported by ACF and referred by Avangard (who also partakes in grant selection) and was able to witness the positive impact on their lives.



These practices can be replicated elsewhere during the development of training modules by assessing specific training needs in relation to existing available expertise and integrate in the delivery of vocational training.

## 9 Conclusions

ACF and UNHCR have been present in Abkhazia since the aftermath of the 1992-93 war, providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations. What has started as humanitarian relief operation has evolved over the course of two decades into livelihoods interventions that are essentially development-related.

The projects have been highly relevant for the beneficiaries living in the three districts of Gali, Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira. They have provided important opportunities for people for learning new skills and new ways of doing things. The VTCs are important resources for the communities and have provided employment opportunities. At individual level, the provision of grants had a positive impact on beneficiaries. Some of the small businesses supported via grant are quite successful and are planning to expand.

Yet, a transition from humanitarian to development assistance has not yet materialised. After two decades the status of Abkhazia is still unresolved. Uncertainties about the political and economic future still persist. In addition to the lack of strategic planning by authorities aimed at improving the critical social and economic situation, current political developments threaten to reverse the progress achieved so far.

It is against this backdrop that ACF and other partners need to balance their future strategy and assess the potential to further transition to a development focus, with a longer term strategy and with a stronger political engagement of the Abkhaz authorities. This represents a challenge and not just for humanitarian organisation.

## 10 Recommendations

### ***PROGRAMMATIC***

- **Asses the feasibility to shift from individual to community based assistance with a longer term perspective**

Explore the feasibility of working with different type of support with different population groups. In relation to UNHCR requirements, ACF and UNHCR could jointly assess the possibility to work with small groups or associations to increase social responsibility, impact and benefits for communities. In addition, UNHCR and ACF could also consider shifting to community based assistance on a longer term strategy, taking into consideration UNHCR's strategy and requirements of Abkhazia

- **Consider asking grant beneficiaries to contribute with a small percentage of co-financing**

Introducing a small amount of co-financing (5%) would increase the ownership and responsibility of grantees. At the same time it would discourage less motivated beneficiaries and decrease the risk of

business not starting, by shifting the perception from “gift” to investment. These contributions could be pooled in a trust fund and reinvested to support local communities.

➤ **Increase the size of grant to support sound, effective and viable business proposals**

The current size of grants being disbursed represents a limitation for some business ideas that require more capital. Business proposals that require more initial investment have more potential in terms of economy of scale and possibility to generate some employment opportunities. The 2013 project has already introduced the possibility for grantees to jointly apply for a bigger grant. This could be expanded further to support associations of farmers for instance that require more start-up capital for tools, tractors, etc. Overall, bigger grants are needed in relation to the rising costs of procuring inputs and materials in Abkhazia, including the cost of registering a business.

➤ **Consider the possibility to disburse grants to successful businesses that have been previously supported**

Some grantees have been effective in managing their activities and would be ready to expand but lack capital. The banking market is very limited in Abkhazia, loans are very difficult to obtain and have prohibitive rates (30-50%). Providing successful beneficiaries with a second grant could be seen as an investment by the project. A share of the return could be reinvested in project activities, or conditions could be attached to the grant in terms of employing or providing apprenticeships to young people.

#### ***COVERAGE AND GEOGRAPHIC REACH***

➤ **Assess the possibility of interventions beyond Gali district**

The capacity of Gali district to receive new interventions should be assessed against UNHCR’s strategy and mandate and the share of ethnic Georgians present in Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira, vis-à-vis their needs and priorities. Based on this assessment, there might be the possibility to work in other areas of Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira districts (only in communities with returnees), with motivated villages and community leaders. Since 2013, Abkhaz authorities have limited the geographic scope of international organisations to the district of Gali only. This is a small area where in addition to ACF and UNHCR, also DRC, WV, PU AMI and local NGOs operate. ACF has already started working in this direction by partnering with local NGOs not just to overcome the restrictions imposed by authorities but as a strategic direction for future projects, seeking to build capacity of civil society. This could be expanded further.

#### ***IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING***

➤ **Optimise the involvement of UNHCR in the selection, verification and monitoring of grantees**

UNHCR could consider setting-up a monitoring plan to reduce potential overlap during project implementation, with a view to increase efficiency and avoid excessive monitoring. This should also take into consideration existing implementation arrangements: regular narrative and financial reports and meetings between ACF and UNHCR to discuss progress and share feedback.

➤ **Introduce indicators to more accurately measure outcomes, also in qualitative terms, in the projects' results matrix**

Currently, the indicators used in the projects' results matrix are focused on the delivery of specific activities, such as number of people that received grants, number of people trained, inputs procured, and income variations. These do not provide information of how livelihoods have improved and if this can be sustained beyond the project.

➤ **Put in place ACF stakeholders' feedback mechanism**

From 2013 ACF is required to introduce a formal stakeholders' feedback mechanism in all projects. Via this mechanism stakeholders and beneficiaries have a direct form of communication with the ACF office and express their views and complaints. Once the system is operational, it could be a useful information source to assess project activities and plan future ones.

## 11 Annexes

### 11.1 Agenda of field work

Time	Action
Monday 11 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train travel from Tbilisi to Senaki</li> <li>• Discussion with ACF Technical Coordinator, planning of field work schedule, meetings and interviews</li> <li>• Meeting with ACF staff in Gali (Technical Deputy Programme Officer, Facilitator, Agronomist, Mobiliser).</li> <li>• Finalisation of field visits and list of beneficiaries to be interviewed</li> <li>• Interview with ACF Deputy Programme Officer</li> </ul>
Tuesday 12 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites visits and interviews in Upper Gali and Ochamchira district</li> <li>• Informal meeting with DRC, PU MI and WV staff based in Gali</li> </ul>
Wednesday 13 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites visits and interviews with beneficiaries in Lower Gali district, Nabakevi and Zemo Bargebi</li> <li>• Meeting/discussion with DRC representative</li> </ul>
Thursday 13 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field work, site visits and interviews with beneficiaries in Saberio and Gali Town</li> <li>• Meeting with UNHCR Head of Office and UNHCR Field Associate in Gali</li> </ul>
Friday 13 August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with ACF Logistics Officer</li> <li>• Debriefing with ACF staff on preliminary findings after site visits</li> <li>• Focus group discussion with ACF staff</li> <li>• Meeting with NGO Avangard</li> </ul> <p>Focus group discussion with UNHCR staff (Head of Office, National Senior Programme Officer, , Senior Field Assistant and Field Associate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to Zugdidi ACF office</li> <li>• Discussion with ACF staff</li> <li>• Return to Tbilisi by train</li> </ul>

## 11.2 List of persons interviewed

### *Projects' beneficiaries and graduates*

Ekhvaia Eteri - Nabakevi, Gali

Korishvili Naira, Nabakevi, Gali

Beraia Data, Nabakevi, Gali

Koba Shamugia, Manager Assistant, VTC Nabakevi, Gali

Skhulukhia Nino, Zemo Bargebi, Gali

Zaria Gedevan, Zemo Bargebi, Gali

Gogokhia Nura, Zemo Bargebi, Gali

Sondzia Madona, Zemo Bargebi, Gali

Kikalishvili Diso, Dikhazurga, Gali

Zakaraia Dato, Dikhazurga, Gali

Sabulua Khatuna, Saberio, Gali

Otar Kogonia, Manager, VTC Gup

Ubiria Temur, Beslakhuba, Ochamchira

Chkadua Nona, Reka, Ochamchira

Ismelia Inga, Ochamchira town, Ochamchira

Shoua Aida, Ochamchira town, Ochamchira

Tarbaia Vakhtang, Gali I, Tkvarcheli

Vardania Inver, Gali I, Tkvarcheli

Tarbaia Demur, I Gali, Tkvarcheli

Danelia Nino, I Gali, Tkvarcheli

Papaskiri Tamriko, I Gali, Tkvarcheli, visited but not available

Rodonaia Flora, Gali town, Gali

Basaria Ramaz, Gali town, Gali, visited but not available

Ketsbaia Dali, Gali town, Gali

Ashba Zurab, Gali town, Gali, visited but not available

***ACF***

Celine Carré, ACF regional director

Anika Krstic, ACF Technical Coordinator

Nino Ketsbaia, ACF Deputy Programme Officer (Gali)

Otar Mania, Base Logistician (Gali)

Guram Rezesidze, ACF Agronomist

Beso Chikvatia, ACF Facilitator

Tea Chilachava, ACF Mobiliser

Zurab Kardava, Business trainer

***Avangard***

Anjela Torua - SGBV Project Coordinator

Natia Bokuchava - Assistant of SGBV Project Coordinator

***DRC***

Vincent Dontot, Head of Office, Gali

***UNHCR***

John McKissick, Head of Office, Gali

Zurab Jgerenaia, Senior Field Assistant

Levan Ketsbaia, Field Associate

Anne-Kirsten Garbe, Senior Programme Officer (Tbilisi)

### 11.3 List of documents consulted

ACF project documents and progress narrative report, 2011

ACF project documents and progress narrative report, 2012

ACF project documents and progress narrative report, 2013

ACF, Promoting self reliance and improving the welfare of IDPs and returnees in Eastern Georgia and Abkhazia, Sharon Truelove, Risk Consulting, May 2011

ACF, Evaluation Policy & Guideline, Enhancing Organisational Practice through an Integrated Evaluations, Learning & Accountability Framework, 2010

OECD, The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, 1991

OECD, Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation, in 'Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation', 1986

OECD, Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms, 2000

UNDP, *UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Final Report*, March 2008

UNDP/Abkhaz Strategic Partners, Supporting Livelihoods in Abkhazia – Strategy Paper for Discussion, 2011

UNHCR, *Analysis of Social Assessment Results under 2010-2011 Abkhazia Durable Housing Project*, September 2011

UNHCR Georgia Strategy 2014-2015, UNHCR Tbilisi, February 2014 (update)

World Bank, Supporting the Livelihoods of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia, A Review of Current Practices and Lessons Learned, May 2013

WV, *Labour Market Assessment for EC funded Vocational and Business Skills Project in Abkhazia*, May 2009

## 11.4 Terms of reference of the evaluation



### TERMS OF REFERENCE

For the External Evaluation of ACF's

#### Livelihood projects in Abkhazia from 2011 to 2013:

*“Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti” (January-December 2011)*

*“Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development” (January-December 2012)*

*“Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants” (January- December 2013)*

Projects Funded by  
**UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES - UNHCR**

#### Contract Reference

Partner Agreement No.: 0000000186 (2011)

Partner Agreement No.: 0000000193 (2012)

Partner Agreement No.: 0000000215 (2013)

15/05/2014



## 1. CONTRACTUAL DETAILS OF THE EVALUATION

### 1.1. Key Evaluation Dates

Expected Start Date:	15/06/2014
End Date:	10/07/2014
Submission of Draft Report	30/06/2014
Submission of Final Report	15/07/2014

### 1.2. Language of the Evaluation

Language Requirements for the Evaluation:	English is essential and mandatory; Russian is strongly preferred and Georgian is desirable
Language of the Report:	English

### 1.3. Work-plan & Timetable

Activities	Working Days
Desk review of the projects' documentation	2
Travel to Georgia	
Briefing in ACF and UNHCR in Tbilisi	1
Travel to Abkhazia	
Field Work - Abkhazia	7
Workshop and presentation of preliminary findings in ACF office in Tbilisi	1
Travel back	
Data Analysis and preparation of the first draft report	4
Finalization of the report after comments from field, ACF Spain (coordination and HQ), ACF-UK and UNHCR	9
<b>Total (without travel days)</b>	<b>24</b>

### 1.4. Budget for the Evaluation

	[USD]
<b>Total Amount Available</b>	<b>7,000</b>

**Comments:** The consultant will be asked to provide a quote for the evaluation exercise based on the work-plan and timetable, as well as indicate unit price per day. The table for consultant’s costing will follow the format of the internal budget table presented above and consist of the following:

Consultant’s quotation		No. of Days / units	Unit Price (USD)	Sub-Total (USD)
Consultant’s Fees (daily rate, gross)		[number]	[amount]	[amount]
International Travel			[amount]	[amount]
Visas				[amount]
Daily Subsistence Allowance (incl. accommodation)		[number]	[amount]	[amount]
Translator/Assistant		[number]	[amount]	[amount]
Local Transport	Vehicle	[number]	[amount]	[amount]
	Driver	[number]	[amount]	[amount]
Total				

**The consultant is responsible for personal insurance during the evaluation.** The consultant will also provide any necessary materials (including laptops) required for the evaluation.

## 2. DETAILS OF THE PROGRAMME

<b>Name of the Programme:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti”</li> <li>“Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development”</li> <li>“Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants”</li> </ol>
<b>Location:</b>	[Abkhazia, Georgia]
<b>Starting Date:</b>	[January 2011; January 2012; January 2013]
<b>End Date:</b>	[December 2011; December 2012; December 2013]

### 2.1. Map of Programme Area



### 2.2. Programme Overview

ACF International has been working in Georgia since 1994, delivering humanitarian assistance in the

aftermath of the Abkhazian conflict.

The mission has transitioned to a more development focused approach, although always ready to respond in case of emergency or conflict as in August 2008. ACF works from a coordination office in Tbilisi, with field offices for East Georgia, West Georgia / Abkhazia and with representation in Armenia. Strategic objectives of the mission 2015 strategy: 1) Strengthen sustainable integrated approaches to improve the welfare of vulnerable populations and 2) Strengthen the culture of innovation. The cross cutting issues for the mission are: DRM, Gender, Governance, Confidence Building and Advocacy. ACF aims to address the vulnerability of communities through the sustainable livelihoods approach, analyzing and understanding the different factors that impact upon people's livelihoods. ACF uses a participatory, community-based approach to identify areas for intervention and strengthen community ownership of interventions. ACF has adapted M4P practices to the post-Soviet South Caucasus context to focus on creating and facilitating *linkages* between different actors, so that initiatives can be scaled up without continued external assistance.

Programmes aim to combine technical expertise and innovation: low input agriculture to improve nutrition in schools; community-based development and livelihood support as an instrument for stability in social and ethnic tensions (notably with UNHCR funding through several programme cycles); confidence building through participatory natural resource management; involving gender and DRR in Making Markets Work for the Poor; supporting local authorities and technical assistance and policy development at the ministerial level. ACF South Caucasus bases actions upon the capacity building of key stakeholders to ensure sustainability of its development actions: technical assistance to the Georgian Ministry Of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) on developing policy and supporting regional government to identify local development projects; establishing and supporting CBOs, youth groups, and local NGOs to design, implement and take ownership of community projects in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti; trainings and study visits for private water management companies and Water User Associations; strengthening LINGOs in Abkhazia and other regions; supporting municipalities to establish community dialogue mechanisms and build human and technical resources; training pastoralists in sustainable pasture management as a DRR measure; establishing self-sustaining vocational and agricultural training centres in Abkhazia. ACF South Caucasus also has strong expertise in WaSH: delivering drinking water infrastructure in remote mountain areas, household and community-level WASH projects in IDP settlements, and the 2012 assessment of WASH conditions in all schools in Abkhazia, with UNICEF and the de facto Ministry of Environment, after which a pilot WASH in Schools project was done in schools of Gali district. With support from UNICEF. The mission strategy reflects the ACF International 2015 strategy which commits to respond to *humanitarian crisis, address vulnerability and reinforce longer-term resilience to food, water and nutritional crises.*

Several field studies have informed ACF livelihoods and agriculture development projects: *Baseline Study for the ACF project "Promoting Self-reliance and Improving the Welfare of IDPs and Returnees in East Georgia and Abkhazia"*, May 2011 (Sharon Truelove, International Consultancy Services, commissioned by ACF), *Supporting Livelihoods in Abkhazia - Strategy Paper for Discussion*, December 2011 (UNDP/Abkhaz Strategic Partners), *Rural Agricultural Production and Livelihood Improvement Possibilities Assessment in Georgia*, March 2010 (ACF for FAO), *Identification and assessment of the sub-sectors gearing the economic growth in Samegrelo-Zemo-Svaneti*, December 2009 (ACT, commissioned by ACF), *Labour Market Assessment in Abkhazia*, May 2009 (Rink-Consult, Germany, commissioned by WV/ACF), as well as UNHCR, *Analysis of Social Assessment Results under 2010-2011 Abkhazia Durable Housing Project*, conducted by WV, September 2011.

These ACF assessments used quantitative and qualitative approaches, namely: Household surveys to assess livelihood assets, food security, and socio-economic indicators; Semi-structured and informal interviews with key stakeholders, including local authorities and representatives from NGOs; Focus Group Discussions with community members (mixed and women's groups); Oral testimonies from community representatives; Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, such as seasonal calendars, timeline/trend line, wealth ranking, hazard analysis and risk evaluation, direct observations, resource mapping exercises; Market surveys: to assess food availability and access, livestock price, and seasonal trends.

#### **Problem statement and stakeholder analysis**

Since the conflict in Abkhazia, chronic poverty, poor food security, and high unemployment have significantly affected the living conditions of the population in the region. The continuation of Abkhazia's 'unresolved status' continues to have an adverse influence on the region's economic situation, which in turn exacerbates tension among the local population and raises the likelihood of renewed conflict. There are still large pockets of extreme poverty and many households live in very poor social and economic conditions. Over ½ of former agricultural land now lies unused and there is a large market for local produce, as fresh food is currently imported from Russia and Turkey at prices unaffordable for large segments of the population. A number of protection issues persist, notably with the most recent problems around identity documents and passports for the Mingrelian and Georgian population of eastern Abkhazia.

UNHCR has been assisting the population of concern in Abkhazia, to improve living conditions and support an informed and voluntary return of displaced persons. Apart from ACF, a number of other actors are working in the livelihoods and agriculture development sectors, as well as shelter – such as Danish Refugee Council, Premiere Urgence – AMI, World Vision, local organizations such as Alert, Association of Women of Abkhazia, Avangard, Raduga, Sukhumi Youth House, and others. UN agencies (notably UNICEF and UNDP) are also present with a number of programmes aimed at economic recovery (ranging from small grants to SME development, shelter rehabilitation and youth mobilization).

Since May 2013, the de facto authorities in Abkhazia have restricted the operational areas for international NGOs to Gali district only, as concerns direct implementation of projects. However, working with and through local organizations and partners, as well as receiving applications and serving beneficiaries able to come to Gali, allows the INGOs to continue delivering assistance in the areas of concern. Security concerns involve crimes of opportunity, kidnappings, car-jacking and robbery.

### **Specificities of direct beneficiaries**

Direct beneficiaries for all three projects were the persons of concern, notably returnees and local population in eastern Abkhazia (Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts). Beneficiaries included men and women in rural and peri-urban areas, who are either unemployed or rely on subsistence agriculture for livelihoods. All projects aimed at improving the household livelihoods through provision of trainings and income generating opportunities for HH heads or members.

### **Direct beneficiary identification mechanisms and criteria**

Direct beneficiaries were selected through participatory and competitive procedures, involving communities through public meetings announcing project objectives and opportunities that would be provided. Additional efforts were invested in making available the information for women and in adapting the meeting and training times to best suit all trainees, notably women, given their multiple tasks within the household. As a rule, women-headed households were prioritized, especially if all other criteria were fulfilled.

Selection criteria were the following, across projects: age (initially 18-40, later extended to 59, given the experience from one project to the other), large family, extremely low or no other income, high unemployment in the family, poor living conditions, willingness/motivation to engage in livelihood activities, opportunity to have flexible time of learning, to gain new skills.

Additionally, when finalizing the selection of projects that would be granted, additional criteria were used: past experience in the sector of proposed business and ownership of essential resources (land, buildings, financial or other input) for the IGA.

In the most recent project, a special focus was made on vulnerability and support to previous project beneficiaries; hence the following criteria were added: people with specific vulnerabilities (large families with insufficient resources, etc.); UNHCR shelter beneficiaries; SGBV / domestic violence survivor; ATC/VTC graduates.

The grants were delivered based on a competitive procedure through a criteria-based decision making process of a committee consisting of ACF, UNHCR and other members as relevant (in the past two years, this included LINGO Avangard).

### 2.3. General Objective

**Project 2011:** “Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti”:

General Objective: - level of self reliance and livelihoods improved (Intended impact: Increase in employment opportunities, income and knowledge/skills amongst IDPs, persons in an IDP-like situation and local population)

**Project 2012:** “Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development”

General Objective: Self reliance and livelihoods improved (Intended impact: Increase in livelihood opportunities, income and knowledge/skills amongst IDPs, persons in an IDP-like situation and the local population)

**Project 2013:** “Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants”:

General Objective: Self reliance and livelihoods improved (Intended impact: increase in livelihood opportunities, incomes amongst persons in IDP-like situation in eastern districts of Abkhazia)

### 2.4. Specific Objectives/Results

**Project 2011:** “Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti”:

1. Employment/labour insertion activities organised
2. Small Business Support Provided
3. Targeted training provided

**Project 2012:** “Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development”:

1. Access to training and learning enabled
2. Access to agricultural / livestock / fisheries production enabled
3. Assessment and analysis undertaken
4. Access to self employment / business facilitated

**Project 2013:** “Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants”:

1. Access to self-employment/business facilitated for 54 vulnerable households in 3 districts of Abkhazia, through distribution of income generation grants in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and skills/capacity building through joint inter-community business-skills and confidence-building trainings

### 2.5. Programme Activities

**Project 2011:** “Vocational Training, Small Business start-up opportunities and promotion of Small-Holders' Association in Abkhazia, Samegrelo and Imereti”:

- Identification and establishment/strengthening of Vocational Training Centre in Abkhazia, renovation of premises
- Conducting VTC training programmes for trainees selected through application process
- Selection of small business groups, provision of trainings and business plan development for the groups and delivery of small start up business grants, monitoring of income
- Implementation of business/confidence building training programme

**Project 2012:** “Support to livelihoods through agriculture and small business development”:

- ATC (Agriculture Training Centre) institutional strengthening/diversification and development of training programme
- Selection of trainees and implementation of training programme in ATC
- Conduct business/confidence building training programme
- Deliver agricultural development grants through competitive process

**Project 2013:** “Improving self-reliance of vulnerable families through provision of IGA grants”:

- Training of ACF project staff in gender-based programming
- Selection of households for IGA grants, delivery of grant inputs
- Provision of trainings, follow up and business plan development
- Coordination of referrals

### 3. AIM OF THE EVALUATION

#### 3.1. Target User(s) of the Evaluation

<b>ACF</b>	Technical Coordinator; Programme Officer; Deputy Programme Officer; Regional Director; Head of Base Abkhazia/WG
<b>Implementing HQ</b>	Spain
<b>Field Level</b>	ACF field teams; UNHCR FO Gali
<b>Other</b>	UNHCR

#### 3.2. Objective(s) of the Evaluation

*To evaluate the impact and approach of ACF's livelihood projects in Abkhazia funded by UNHCR from 2011 to 2013, to draw lessons learned and provide recommendations for future programming.*

#### 3.3. Scope of the Evaluation

For each evaluated project, the following questions will be applied when assessing its overall design, implementation and sustainability, after which a meta-analysis of conclusions should be drawn by the evaluator on the cumulative impact of the projects on target population and area.

The evaluator will also reflect on how these lessons learned and experiences have been integrated into the ongoing livelihood project and draw on initial achievements of the 2014 project.

##### 1. Project Design

- Was the overall project design (including selection of objectives, results and activities) appropriate and based on the relevant identified needs of the population and the context? If not, what were the shortcomings and how could the planning of future livelihood interventions be improved?
- What systems were in place to ensure that outputs provided were of the highest quality possible and were acceptable to beneficiaries? How useful were these systems?
- What kind of balance did the project strike between hardware (grant inputs) and software (training and support)? If not satisfactory, define what the balance should have been?

##### 2. Targeting

- Were the beneficiaries targeted effectively and efficiently? Explain in detail why or why not.
- How relevant were the targeting criteria and what mechanisms were in place to adhere to them? What could have been improved - and how?
- Was the participatory approach used appropriately and effectively in identifying and selecting beneficiaries and VTC / ATC locations?

##### 3. Project Implementation

- Did the program reach the intended results and objectives? If not, what were the main constraints faced by the organization? Were these constraints a consequence of poor quality of the initial assessment, poor project design or poor implementation, or an external factor outside the control of implementing agency?
- What are the main problems (negative or unexpected impacts from the interventions) that the population identified when it comes to the implementation of activities? What solutions were identified by the project team to solve these problems?

- Were the livelihoods activities appropriate considering the geographical, climatic and other relevant characteristics of the project implementation area?
- Were the small businesses / grantees well selected in terms of impact, effectiveness and relevance for households / communities and socio-economic context?

#### **4. Impact**

- Evaluate the impact of the business trainings for grant beneficiaries on their capacity: in what way have they better prepared and managed their small businesses?
- Evaluate the impact of confidence building, life skills, VTC and ATC and other relevant technical training delivered to project beneficiaries. What were the main issues/weaknesses and how could this have been improved?
- What evidence exists that the programme improved the situation of persons of concern?
- What were the main changes brought by the project(s) at household level and at community level?
- What is the level of improvements in the self-reliance of beneficiaries? How does the new income due to project compare to the overall HH income pre and post?
- What are the beneficiaries' perceptions of the impact of the programme?

#### **5. Project Sustainability**

- What are the key components that have been effective and sustainable, that would be recommended to be replicated in the future?
- Were the input materials (including construction and repairs) and techniques applied appropriate and how? What alternatives would have been better, if any?
- Evaluate to what extent the grant beneficiaries are able to ensure the maintenance and development of equipment, structures and other input that has been distributed as a part of start-up grants. Could ACF have done better or differently to reinforce their technical capacities?
- Was the current project built towards sustainability/replication perspective? Which measures have been taken into account?
- Have any project initiatives been replicated within the intervention area? Which ones, in what way and by whom? What makes them relevant?

#### **6. Project Monitoring**

- How suitable and effective were the M&E systems in place through the duration of the project and how could these have been improved?

#### **7. Cross cutting**

- What was the cost-benefit ration of the project?
- What measures were taken to ensure a gender balance at all stages of the project (assessment, design and implementation)? How could this process have been improved?
- What was the added value to the project brought by the partnership with local NGOs?
- To what extent was the cost ratio per beneficiary effective and efficient?
- Evaluate how the project has integrated gender specific elements in the implementation; propose what could have been done differently and how.
- Was the inclusion of women, girls, men and boys sufficient within the scope of the components of the project? If not, how could the gender balance have been improved?
- What are the lessons learned from the project?

### **3.4. Evaluation Criteria**

ACF subscribes to the **Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria** for evaluation: Impact, Sustainability, Coherence, Coverage, Relevance / Appropriateness, Effectiveness and Efficiency. ACF also

promotes systematic analysis of the monitoring system and cross cutting issues (gender, HIV/AIDS etc). ***All external evaluations are expected to use DAC criteria*** in data analysis and reporting. In particular, the evaluation must complete the following table and include it as part of the final report.

The evaluator will be expected to use the following table to rank the performance of the overall intervention using the DAC criteria. **The table should be included** either in the Executive Summary and/or the Main Body of the report.

Criteria	Rating (1 low, 5 high)					Rationale
	1	2	3	4	5	
Impact						
Sustainability						
Coherence						
Coverage						
Relevance/Appropriateness						
Effectiveness						
Efficiency						

### 3.5. Best Practices

The evaluation is expected to provide at least one (1) key example of Best Practice from each project. These examples should relate to the technical area of intervention, either in terms of processes or systems, and should be potentially applicable to other contexts where ACF operates. This example of Best Practice should be presented in the Executive Summary and/or the Main Body of the report.

The evaluation will also provide examples (if any) of the approaches and activities that did not work well and should be avoided in the future.

### 3.6. Evaluation Outputs

The result of this evaluation should be presented in a written report and through an oral presentation at ACF mission level, for ACF and UNHCR staff (in Tbilisi):

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### 3.7. Methodology

#### 3.7.1. Briefing

Prior to the evaluation taking place, the evaluator is expected to attend a briefing at ACF mission level the Regional Director and the Technical Coordinator and the representatives of UNHCR. Briefings by telephone/skype must be agreed in advance.

#### 3.7.2. Field activities

The consultant is expected to adopt a mixed methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to collect an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative data that will form a solid evidence base for conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report.

This includes but is not limited to:

- **Direct information:** Interviews with beneficiaries - Visit to project sites and to the facilities provided to the beneficiaries (qualitative data); questionnaires for quantitative data where needed



- Indirect information: Interviews with local representatives; interviews with project staff (expatriate and national); meeting with local authorities, groups of beneficiaries, humanitarian agencies, donor representatives and other stakeholders. For indirect data collection, standard and participatory evaluation methods are expected to be used (HH interviews and FGDs with beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, key informants – health workers, teachers and leaders)
- Secondary information analysis: including review and analysis of project documentation and project monitoring data or of any other relevant statistical data.

### 3.7.3. Report

The report shall follow the following format.

- Cover Page
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary: must be a standalone summary, describing the programme, main findings of the evaluation, and conclusions and recommendations. This will be no more than 2 pages in length.
- Main Body: The main body of the report shall elaborate the points listed in the Executive Summary. It will include references to the methodology used for the evaluation and the context of the action. In particular, for each key conclusion there should be a corresponding recommendation. Recommendations should be as realistic, operational and pragmatic as possible; that is, they should take careful account of the circumstances currently prevailing in the context of the action, and of the resources available to implement it both locally and in the Commission. Annexes: Listed and correctly numbered. Format for the main body of the report is:
  - Background Information
  - Methodology
  - Findings & Discussions
  - Conclusions Recommendations
  - Annex I (Best Practice)
  - Annex II (DAC-based Rating Table)

The report should be submitted in the language specified in the ToR. The report should not be longer than 30 pages excluding annexes. The draft report should be submitted no later than 7 calendar days after departure from the field. The final report will be submitted no later than the end date of the consultancy contract. Annexes to the report will be accepted in the working language of the country and programme subject to the evaluation.

### 3.7.4. Debriefing & Learning Workshop

The evaluator should facilitate a learning workshop:

- To present the draft report and the findings of the evaluation to ACF and UNHCR.
- To gather feedback on the findings and build consensus on recommendations.
- To develop action-oriented workshop statements on lessons learned and proposed improvements for the future.

### 3.7.5. Debriefing with ACF HQ

The evaluator should provide a debriefing with the relevant ACF HQ on her/his draft report, and on the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. Briefings by telephone/Skype must be agreed in advance. Relevant comments should be incorporated in the final report.

## 4. PROFILE OF THE EVALUATOR

- Proven knowledge and experience in food security, livelihoods, income generation programme evaluation or programming (self reliance, small business development, SME, etc.), with focus on rural and peri-urban contexts in Eastern Europe
- Significant field experience in the coordination, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian / development projects
- Proven track record in the use of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods
- Relevant degree / equivalent experience related to the evaluation to be undertaken
- Understanding of gender considerations and mainstreaming and ability to integrate gender lens in the evaluation
- Understanding of conflict dynamics and its impact on economic development (preferably knowledge of the Georgia/Abkhazia and Caucasus context)
- Good communications skills
- Excellent writing skills and ability to produce clear actionable reports (may be required to produce examples of previous work)
- Fluency in English is mandatory; Russian is strongly preferred
- Understanding of UNHCR mandate and requirements
- Ability to manage available time and resources and to work within tight deadlines
- Independence from the parties involved
- **NOTE: Candidates from the Caucasus region are particularly encouraged to apply**

## 5. RIGHTS

The ownership of the draft and final documentation belong to the agency and the funding donor exclusively. The document, or publication related to it, will not be shared with anybody except ACF before the delivery by ACF of the final document to the donor.

ACF is to be the main addressee of the evaluation and its results might impact on both operational and technical strategies. This being said, ACF is likely to share the results of the evaluation with the following groups:

- Donor(s)
- Governmental partners
- Various co-ordination bodies

### **Intellectual Property Rights**

All documentation related to the Assignment (whether or not in the course of your duties) shall remain the sole and exclusive property of ACF.