



Press Release

Website gives voice to people displaced by Georgia's conflicts

GENEVA, 30 April 2008 – People forced from their homes by war in Georgia have a new opportunity to make their voice heard. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) today published the life stories of 29 people displaced by Georgia's conflict at www.idpvoices.org. At this site internally displaced people (IDPs) recount their experiences from before, during and after being driven from their homes by conflict.

13 of these personal accounts have also been brought together in the book *A Heavy Burden - Internally Displaced in Georgia: Stories from Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, published in English, Georgian, and Russian. The book was also unveiled today in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The life stories illustrate the situation of over two hundred thousand IDPs in the country. These people have waited more than a decade for a peaceful solution of the conflict between Georgia and its two breakaway territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, so that they can return to the homes in these regions that they were forced to flee from. Many still endure miserable living conditions, with little chance to access the work, education and healthcare opportunities that the rest of the population enjoy.

The stories at www.idpvoices.org and in *A Heavy Burden* brings the reality behind these facts to life. "We ran away in the clothes we were wearing. We took only our passports, a small sum of money, and a loaf of bread for the children," says one narrator. "We lost everything that my parents and I, along with my husband, had acquired in our life. Since then our life has been divided into two parts: before and after war."

Georgia is the second in a series of countries where IDMC has published "IDP Voices", after Colombia in 2007. In the years to come it aims to publish life stories from more countries around the world. "Listening to people affected, and engaging them in the development of programmes, is essential for the development of realistic durable solutions," said NRC Secretary General Elisabeth Rasmusson. "The stories address universal human experiences and responses rather than specific political issues. By reading and listening to what the displaced people themselves want to tell us, we may learn what is important to them and what issues they are particularly concerned about."

Notes for Editors:

The IDP Voices project has been developed by IDMC, NRC Georgia and Panos London's Oral Testimony Programme. For more information on the IDP Voices project, visit www.idpvoices.org or contact Matthias Thiemig at IDMC, +41 22 795 07 36. For more information about the displacement situation in Georgia, contact Greta Zeender at IDMC, tel: +1 212 316 0494, or visit www.internal-displacement.org/countries/georgia.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council ([NRC](#)), is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide. (www.internal-displacement.org)

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent humanitarian non-governmental organisation which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. (www.nrc.no)

Panos London, established in 1986, promotes the participation of poor and marginalised people in international development debates. Oral testimony is a method of recording and amplifying individual voices which is inclusive and empowering. It allows people to speak for themselves without being interpreted by others. (www.panos.org.uk)