Understanding and responding to security needs in conflict-affected areas

Lessons learnt from working with communities in Shida Kartli

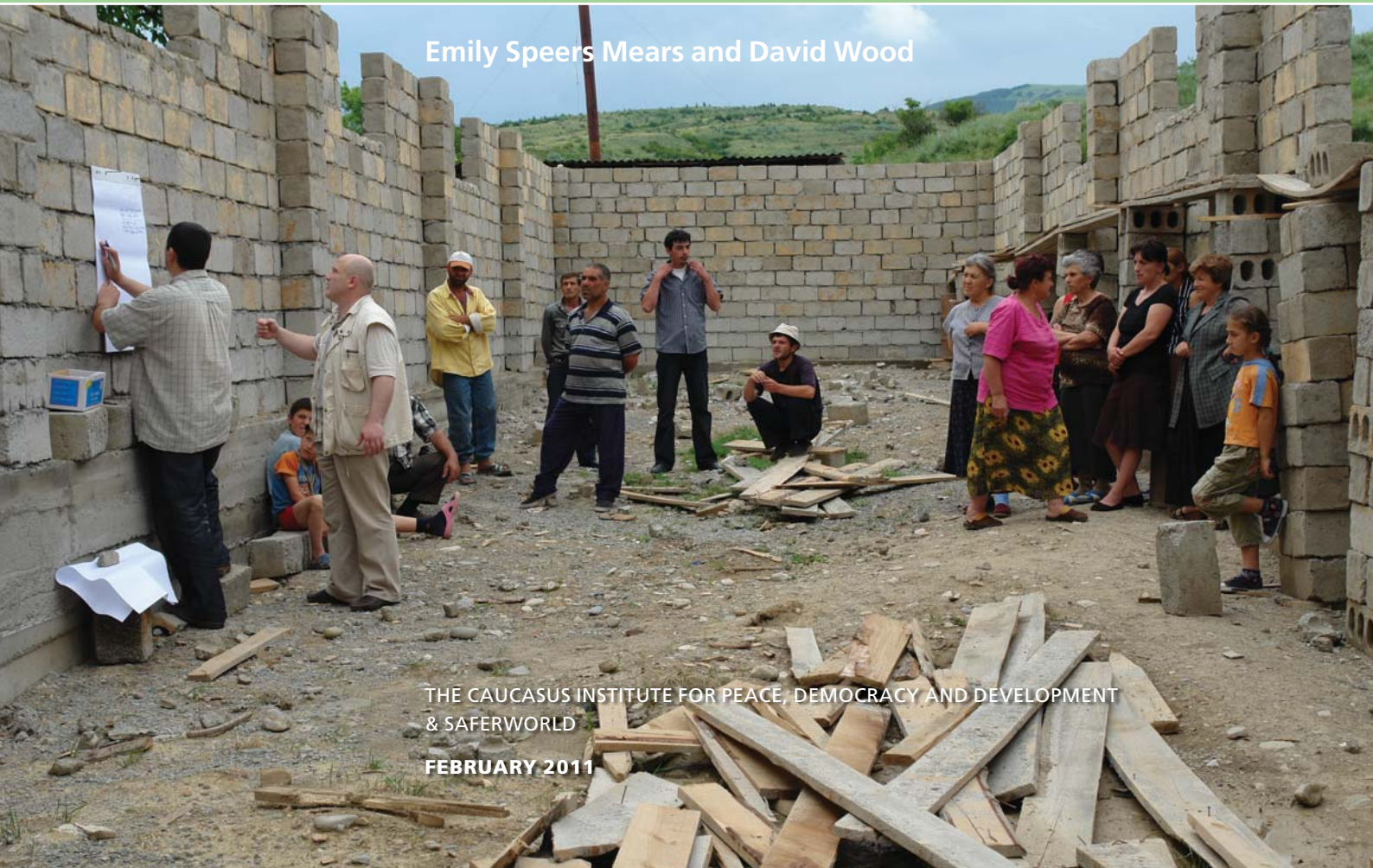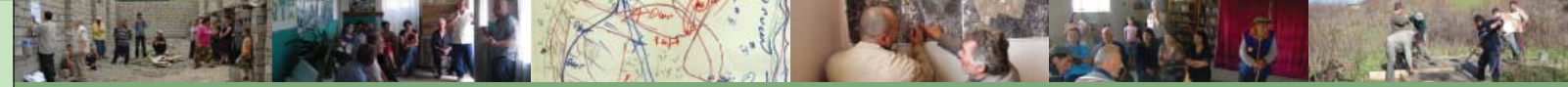**Emily Speers Mears and David Wood**

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Applying community-based approaches to security in Shida Kartli

Security challenges in Shida Kartli The communities described in this report are situated along an ill-defined line of control – the 'ABL' – between Georgian and Russian/South Ossetian forces. As a result, they face a range of security challenges, including shooting incidents, robbery of agricultural products, and detentions, when going about their day-to-day life. An Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), established under the Geneva Process, is the only formalised means for managing these challenges. However, there are no structured processes for communities to access it.

Introduction

On the face of it, life along the administrative boundary line (ABL) between Shida Kartli and South Ossetia has improved substantially since the August 2008 War.[1] The intervening period has seen the return of a large proportion of those displaced from the Georgian-controlled side of the ABL. Security actors – the Georgian military and police, the Russian and South Ossetian forces and the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) – have been successful in reducing tensions and preventing major incidents, in spite of failure by the parties to the conflict to agree on a security mechanism for the region in the official negotiations (the Geneva Process).[2] Indeed, at the time of writing, the threat of an escalation or a return to violence is low.

Nevertheless, communities continue to suffer from a range of security challenges on an everyday basis. These challenges are difficult to manage because of the slow progress in agreeing a security mechanism for the region, limited information on how they affect communities and the absence of proven processes for responding to them. At the same time, the willingness and ability of communities to rebuild bridges across the conflict divide has been further curtailed by increased restrictions on movement and contact across the ABL – often with the aim of improving security. This badly affects those dependent on such cross-border interaction for their economic and social well-being.

Saferworld and the Caucasus Institute for Peace Democracy and Development (CIPDD), with support from the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) and the Gori Information Centre (GIC), and in partnership with people living along the ABL, have since February 2010 tested (1) ways that a range of actors can better understand what makes communities feel insecure, and (2) locally appropriate ways of responding to the causes of insecurity. This publication summarises the lessons learned from this period of testing and outlines a vision for how further development of a community-based approach to security could make an important contribution towards the prevention of future violence, and even conflict transformation. It is informed by a participatory evaluation conducted with community representatives in January 2011.

The present section provides further explanation of what a 'community-based' approach to security means and how we have tried to apply it in Shida Kartli. The following three sections summarise the lessons from the three core components of our work: (1) increasing access to information on community security concerns, through tracker surveys and an Early Warning Network (EWN); (2) increasing community-level capacity on security issues, through a 'Community Reference Group' (CRG); and (3) developing community-led responses to security threats. The final section outlines the future vision agreed by the partners and communities engaged in the project.

Lessons from the August 2008 War

Resumption of hostilities
Following a period of increased tensions and escalating security incidents, a full-scale war broke out in South Ossetia in August 2008. This happened despite the work of an internationally-mandated mission to monitor the ceasefire agreed in the early 1990s and the presence of peacekeepers on the ground. Indeed, the August war demonstrated that international and regional security mechanisms had stopped being relevant to the task of preventing violence.

While typically described as 'frozen', the conflicts[3] affecting Georgia had never really stood still since the ceasefires signed in the early 1990s – with incidents and tensions on the ground fluctuating over time. Rather, it was the overall system for managing the conflicts that failed to keep up with evolving needs – especially the security needs of affected communities. This was partly because the parties to the conflicts felt that local security needs could not be dealt with until a political solution was achieved. As a result, these mechanisms faced the challenge of diminished legitimacy among the parties – and especially among the communities they were supposed to protect. This contributed to an environment in which a return to violence was possible. It is against this background that the partners looked to demonstrate 'non-political' ways of providing security that are more focused on communities' needs.

A community-based approach to security

A community-based approach to security places greater emphasis on understanding what makes communities feel insecure and finding locally appropriate ways of responding to the causes of insecurity. This approach to security entails: 1) gathering local perceptions of security and analysing how they are influenced by security incidents and other dynamics; 2) supporting security actors to develop the internal systems and tools necessary for

responding to the causes of insecurity; and 3) increasing the capacity of communities to articulate their concerns, to have more confidence in requesting responses to what makes them feel insecure, and to play a role in developing solutions. It also emphasises preventing threats from occurring, rather than responding to them after the event. This approach can have a positive impact on security dynamics, especially in conflict-affected environments, by changing three sets of relationships (box 1).[4]

This approach empowers communities to manage security issues affecting them, by support-ing them to analyse their security environment, identify local priorities, plan solutions and work in partnership with relevant security actors to implement these solutions. It also strengthens relationships between communities and security actors by encouraging security actors to prioritise local needs and by demonstrating their responsiveness to communities, which in turn increases levels of trust. It does this through increasing access to information on local perspectives on security, encouraging the adaption of internal procedures by relevant security actors, information sharing, and enabling joint planning between communities and actors. Finally this approach reinforces relations between different communities, including across conflict divides, as it involves them supporting each other to manage shared security threats. It does this through providing shared resources for managing insecurity, facilitating experience exchange on the local drivers of insecurity and how they are managed, and by identifying and planning preventative solutions to shared threats.

Understanding 'security'
Security is often understood to refer to the protection of national or state interests, rather than the protection of ordinary people. As a result, since the 1990s the international community has attempted to focus on 'human security'. This has proved difficult, and there is no fixed definition of what 'human security' encompasses. The approach articulated in this report allows communities to themselves define 'security'. As such, it can encompass different issues in different contexts.

Box 1: The impact of community-based approaches on relationships

Change target	Within communities	Between communities and security actors	Between communities (including across divides)
Nature of the change	People are better able to manage security issues affecting their communities.	Security actors prioritise local needs, and communities have more trust in them.	Communities support each other to manage security threats.
Methods	■ Processes for communities to analyse their security environment and identify local drivers of insecurity. ■ Capacity support for communities to plan preventative solutions. ■ Opportunity to work in partnership with security actors.	■ Quantitative/qualitative research into community perceptions of insecurity and the performance of security actors. ■ Support for adaption of internal procedures by security actors and dedication of resources to community priorities. ■ Processes for information sharing, joint planning and accountability between communities and actors.	■ Shared resources for managing insecurity. ■ Processes for communities to exchange experiences on local drivers of insecurity and how they are managed. ■ Capacity support for identifying and planning preventative solutions to shared threats.
Impact	Community initiatives positively change the security environment.	The actions of security actors positively change the security environment.	Reduced tensions through greater understanding.

Applying this approach in Shida Kartli – goal, objectives and methods

Community-based approaches to security have been applied widely around the world, whether in police reform programmes, wider security sector reform programmes or in separate community initiatives. Saferworld, together with local partners, has looked to apply this approach in a range of countries in Africa, Asia and South Eastern Europe.[5] However, each context is different and requires the approach to be tailored to local dynamics, including existing security practices, the level of development, the level of stability, and the political, social and cultural environment. To this end, Saferworld undertook two assessments of the context along the ABL in Shida Kartli – an initial assessment in November 2008, when the context was still relatively unstable, and a follow-up assessment six months later in August 2009, in order to monitor developments. The following project outline (box 2) was agreed by the partners on the basis of these assessments.

Box 2: Project outline

Goal	Objectives	Methods
Improved **security** at the community level and increased **confidence** to interact across the divide... ... *both as an end in itself and as a contribution to conflict prevention/transformation.*	(1) A range of actors better **understand** what makes communities feel insecure. (2) Identify locally appropriate ways of **responding** to the causes of insecurity... ...*at the same time a third objective was also identified; but its achievement was thought to be unrealistic in the initial stage of the intervention...* (3) Security actors **adapt** policies and ways of working so they are more 'community-orientated'.	(1) **Increased access to information on communities' security concerns** – through community security surveys and a mobile phone-based Early Warning Network. (2) **Increased community-level capacity on security** – through the establishment of and support to a Community Reference Group comprised of representatives from communities along the ABL. (3) **Community-led responses to security threats** – through community-specific initiatives selected on the basis of community 'mapping' meetings and planned jointly by communities and relevant security actors.

The ultimate goal of the initiative was to improve security at the community level and increase the confidence of communities to interact across the divide. While we did not expect to achieve this goal within the initial 12-month period of implementation, we did expect to have some impact on perceptions of security. Most importantly, by demonstrating ways of better understanding what makes communities feel insecure, and how the causes of insecurity can be better responded to, we were looking to create the foundations for action to improve security in the long-term – including security actors reviewing their policies and ways of working so that they are more 'community-orientated'.

We believed that achieving this goal was an end in itself – because people in conflict-affected areas deserve the same levels of security and confidence as anyone else – and would also contribute to conflict prevention and transformation. It contributes to conflict prevention, as increased access to information about security concerns provides early warning of security risks in communities affected by the conflict, which in turn informs more prompt and accountable responses. It contributes towards conflict transformation, as greater security and confidence would provide an environment in which underlying issues can be addressed. The methods for obtaining the project's objectives are outlined below and explained in more detail in the following three sections.

1. Increased access to information on communities' security concerns

A key finding from the assessments in November 2008 and August 2009 was that all actors lack access to information on local security issues. This is partly because of the challenges in tracking security threats, given the highly localised fashion in which they occur and the relative remoteness of the communities in which they take place. It is also due to the absence of mechanisms to share information – both among communities, and between communities and relevant security actors. As a result, communities are not well informed of events affecting their own and neighbouring communities, relying instead on rumour for their information. This can reinforce feelings of insecurity and reduce communities' capacity to manage security threats. It also means that security actors do not have access to local information on security issues, resulting in responses that are not always informed by local perceptions of security. This in turn means that their actions may not be the most appropriate given the context in each community and trends over time (box 3, overleaf).

In response to these findings, the partners planned to undertake regular community security surveys and to establish a mobile phone-based EWN. Two household surveys, conducted by CRRC, would provide quantitative information on perceptions of security. The EWN, jointly established by CRRC and Saferworld, would allow communities to share information on security issues on a weekly basis and to flag emergency incidents to security actors. As such, it would reinforce the information sharing function of the CRG (see below).

Key finding 1 All actors lack access to information on local security issues. This is partly because of the challenges in tracking security threats, given the highly localised fashion in which they occur and the relative remoteness of the communities in which they take place, and partly because of the absence of mechanisms to share information.

Box 3: Lack of access to information on security issues

	Problem	Result	Impact
Communities	Communities do not have access to information on security issues.	➡ Communities are reliant on rumour for information.	➡ Feelings of insecurity reinforced; reduced capacity to manage security threats.
Security actors	Security actors do not have access to local information on security.	➡ Responses are not always informed by local perceptions of security.	➡ Actions may not be the most appropriate for the context in communities and trends over time.

Key finding 2 Communities affected by the conflict have weak capacity to address the security issues affecting them. This is due to a lack of knowledge about how individuals and communities could engage on security issues, combined with the relative absence of skills to do so.

2. Increased community-level capacity on security

The assessments also found that communities affected by the conflict have weak capacity to address the security issues affecting them. This is due to a lack of knowledge about how individuals and communities could engage on security issues, combined with the relative absence of skills to do so. As a result, these communities lack the confidence to analyse and articulate their security needs. In response, the partners planned to establish and support a CRG comprised of representatives from all communities living along the ABL, and managed by CIPDD and GIC. This involved the six steps outlined in box 4. The purpose of the CRG was to provide a format whereby communities can support and learn from each other, as well as a resource for individual communities to assist them to manage security threats.
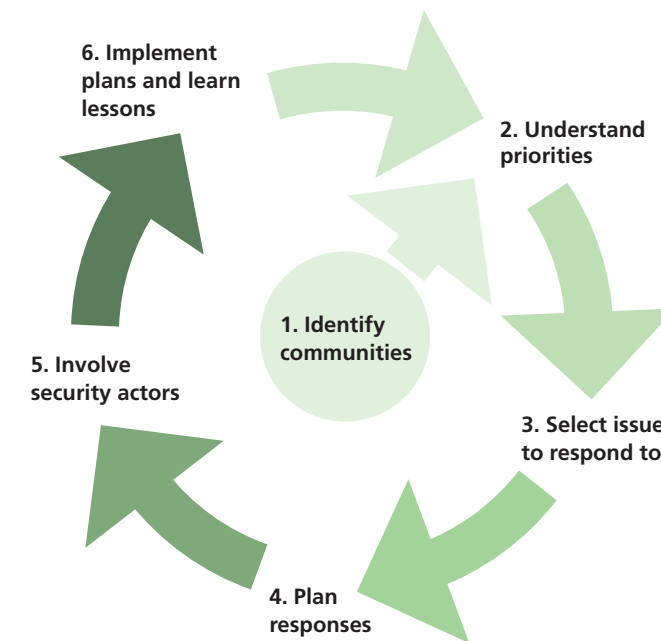
Box 4: Steps in establishing the Community Reference Group

1. 'Map'/identify the different communities along the ABL.

⬇

2. Select community representatives from each community (according to agreed criteria).

⬇

3. Train the representatives in community-based approaches to security.

⬇

4. Test the methodology and agree ways of working with the reference group.

⬇

5. Support each representative to 'map' the security context and priorities in their community.

⬇

6. Hold regular meetings of the representatives to share analysis and lessons, and to plan together.

Key finding 3 There were no credible processes for communities to influence responses to local security problems – especially those related to the conflict. Security actors were sceptical that communities could make useful contributions to the planning of such responses, while communities were doubtful that they would be treated as equal partners.

3. Community-led responses to security threats

Finally, the assessments demonstrated that there were no credible processes for communities to influence responses to local security problems – especially those related to the conflict. Indeed, there was widespread scepticism on the part of security actors that communities could make useful contributions to the planning of such responses, or that they would be constructive partners. At the same time, communities were doubtful that their thoughts would be listened to and that engagement with security actors would be of benefit to them. As a result, the CRG with support from GIC provided a vehicle for developing a number of community-specific initiatives through a six-step process (box 5).

Box 5: Six-step process for developing community-led responses

1. Identify communities
2. Understand priorities
3. Select issues to respond to
4. Plan responses
5. Involve security actors
6. Implement plans and learn lessons

As well as improving the situation in specific communities, these initiatives were designed to: (1) provide examples to all communities of how they can respond to local security threats; and (2) demonstrate to security actors that, given the right tools and environment, communities can make a constructive contribution to the management of security issues.

Guiding principles

The approach taken by the partners in the delivery of the project, and that advocated to actors looking to replicate or build upon it, is guided by the following principles:

- **Community ownership ('participatory approach')** – the project will focus on building sustainable ways of involving communities in security processes. As such, it will be developed, monitored and evaluated jointly with target communities.

- **Giving a voice to all** – the partners will work to ensure that the project does not prioritise some community voices over others. As such, it will look to ensure wide representation in all activities.

- **Collaborative** – the project will achieve greatest impact if, as well as communities, a wide range of regional (e.g. police forces and local government structures) and international stakeholders (e.g. United Nations Development Programme; EU Monitoring Mission) are included in its design and delivery, and benefit from its outcomes.

- **Responsiveness to local concepts of security** – the project activities will seek to identify, track and respond to security concerns as they are understood and articulated by communities, rather than according to predetermined categories and priorities.

- **Impact and change-focused** – a good deal of research has been conducted in the region on conflict and security issues. However, policy-oriented research has rarely focused on tangible community-level changes. This project's credibility depends on achieving improvements to people's lives.

- **Public availability of results** – the resumption of violent conflict in August 2008 demonstrated that closed and non-transparent monitoring and early warning mechanisms are not effective for conflict prevention as they do not provide the evidence for holding stakeholders at the regional and international level to account over their actions.

- **'Do no harm'** – the programme will touch on sensitive topics in a difficult region. There is a danger that our actions could make the context worse rather than improving it. As such, at each stage of the process the partners will monitor and manage potential risks.

- **Security of participants** – there is potential for ordinary community members to be put at risk through their involvement in the programme. The partners commit to properly identifying and managing risks associated with their participation, and will not knowingly put anyone at risk.

2

Increased access to information on communities' security concerns

In order for security actors and communities to be able to respond more effectively to communities' security concerns, it is essential that they have access to information on local security issues. While many actors have substantial information about 'what' incidents are occurring, they tend to lack understanding of 'how' these incidents impact on community perceptions of (in)security and of community priorities. At the same time, community members very rarely understand what is happening beyond their own community, or how different actors are responding to security issues.

The partners looked to increase the amount of information available on local security issues. We wanted to ensure that information was both provided by communities themselves – through the mobile telephone-based EWN – and gathered by external actors – through the community security trackers surveys.

Community security tracker surveys

The partners used household surveys, supported by focus group discussions, to measure community perceptions of security. The surveys, conducted by CRRC, provide detailed information on the following four themes: (1) the developing situation and needs in communities affected by conflict; (2) security incidents and perceptions of security actors; (3) the potential for increased tension and a return to violence; and (4) the longer term opportunities for conflict transformation. Two tracker surveys were conducted in July–

August 2010[6] and November–December 2010[7]. The results reveal the ongoing impact of the conflict on communities along the ABL in terms of physical insecurity, depopulation and poverty. They also highlight the divergent vulnerabilities of conflict-affected communities living along the boundary line.

The results of both surveys have been presented to regional security actors in Tbilisi, and to local security actors and communities in Gori. The information gathered from the surveys was used as the basis for discussion and reflection with the CRG. It was also used to open up discussion with security actors on how to meet communities' security needs. The first survey also acted as an informal 'baseline', allowing for analysis of how perceptions of security had changed in the intervening period, compared to the second survey.

The Early Warning Network

The EWN, set up jointly by Saferworld and CRRC in December 2010, connects the 15 community representatives participating in the CRG (see next section for more on the role of the CRG) through a mobile telephone network. The purpose of the Network is to provide a durable and cost-effective way for communities living along the ABL to communicate both with each other and with relevant security actors – whether the police, local authorities, other service actors or international organisations. As such, the Network is a means of giving a voice to people living in isolated areas with whom it would otherwise be hard to keep in regular contact. The four main functions of the EWN are as follows:

Emergency incident function: Community representatives can use the EWN to notify their peers and security actors of emergency situations – typically detentions, robberies or violence – by using an emergency code. This information is then passed on to relevant security actors who are also asked for any information they have on the incident and how they intend to respond. Information on the incident and how it is being responded to is then sent back to all community representatives.

Weekly analysis of the situation in each community: The community representatives are asked to provide a weekly update message on the context in their communities. As a result of this process, it is possible to compare the level of security in different communities on a week-by-week basis, and how feelings of security are influenced by incidents, interactions with different actors, and contact across the ABL.

Tracking security and conflict trends over time: The weekly update messages provided by each community, as well as use of the emergency incident function, allow us to study trends in security dynamics over time. Information on trends is captured in posters for each community providing week-by-week information on incidents through a set of easily recognisable icons (see box 6). These posters are shown to the CRG in their regular meetings, so that they can analyse changes to security dynamics. A more detailed statistical overview of the weekly and monthly trends and incidents is also available to relevant security actors.

Box 6: Visual presentation of incidents

Detention	Actions by Russians that cause concern
	Actions by S. Ossetians that cause concern
	Injuries caused by unexploded ordinance
Shooting in the distance	Shooting directed at the community
	Shooting near the community
	Theft or robbery
Livestock crossing the ABL	Movement of armed groups near the ABL
	Movement of the ABL
	Restricted movement of agricultural goods
Livestock attacked by wild animals	People attacked by wild animals

Sharing information, ideas and experiences: The EWN is also used for more general information sharing, both to the CRG as a whole and between community representatives. For example, information has been sent through the EWN to notify community representatives about opportunities for communities to apply for micro-financing for agricultural activities. At the time of writing, the use of the EWN for 'horizontal' information sharing between community representatives was limited.

Results and challenges

Results (and factors contributing to success)

■ **Strong and objective evidence of communities' needs.** The two community tracker surveys provide a detailed breakdown of what is happening in communities, and of what is of most concern to them. This base of objective evidence provided the credibility for the partners to request the involvement of security actors in the community-led security responses (outlined later in the report).

■ **Greater understanding and support between different communities.** Previously, if there were no personal contacts between communities (such as family ties), villagers from (e.g.) Kareli municipality were unable to find out what was happening in Gori or Kaspi municipality. The EWN has increased both understanding of the context in other communities and willingness to support them during difficult periods.

■ **Increased communication with security actors on emergency issues.** The EWN has increased communication on emergency issues between communities and security actors. Most importantly, information on emergency issues is being fed back to communities for the first time. However, at the time of writing, there was still no structured communication on the results of the weekly updated messages.

■ **A simple, accessible and relevant model with the capacity to use it.** The EWN is thought to be easy to use as it avoids technical language; does not demand that representatives be 'communication literate'; and fits with how they live their lives. As a result, each community member has provided an update message each week since the EWN was established, and an average of 1–2 emergency incidents are reported every week. Similarly, the visual methods used for presenting information back to communities are thought to be engaging and understandable.

"When somebody was detained by Russian border guards, relatives did not always know what had happened and were worried. But since the mobile system started functioning, we can give updated information to them."

Community representative from Dvani

■ **Increased sense of security in participating communities.** The opportunity to share information through the EWN enhances community members' feelings of security. The CRG representatives say this is because the information provided through the EWN can help to dispel false rumours, and because people feel that security actors have greater access to information on their needs and priorities.

Challenges encountered

■ **Ensuring equitable access to the Network.** Each community representative decides how to gather information for the EWN and how to distribute information received through it – including whom to talk to, when, and in what format. As such, there is a risk that the EWN is not accessible to all – in effect privileging the voices of some community members. To try and avoid this, the partners use the regular CRG meetings to share experiences of how the CRG members communicate with their communities, and to explore how this can be done in the most equitable way.

■ **Avoiding mishandling information.** At the same time, the EWN is the fastest way of spreading information along the ABL. Depending on the nature of the information, and whether it is mishandled by community representatives, there is a real risk of adding to rumours and increasing fear in communities. This is especially the case with regard to emergency incidents. Similarly to the previous point, this challenge is managed through experience exchange in the regular CRG meetings.

■ **Managing risks to the community representatives.** There is potential for tension and confusion about the role of the CRG as a focal point for the EWN, which could put them at risk. This challenge, and how the partners are managing it, is discussed in more detail in the next section.

■ **Managing internal use of the Network.** The EWN can become blocked by community representatives attempting to contact each other in cases of emergencies. This presents a threat when GIC is trying to trying to contact relevant community representatives to find out more information. In response, community representatives agreed to not use the EWN for 30 minutes after receiving an emergency notification.

3

Increased community-level capacity on security

The CRG is the main vehicle for increasing the capacity of communities along the ABL. It does so by providing a format whereby communities can support and learn from each other, as well as a resource for individual communities to assist them to manage security threats. As such, the community representatives that make up the CRG play an important linking role – gathering information and perspectives from communities and providing information and support back to them. The community representatives also provide an important link to relevant security actors – both through the group as a whole and individually.

The design of the CRG format is based on two lessons from previous initiatives. Firstly, individual community-specific responses to security threats are unlikely to have a sustainable impact (unless constituting a 'pilot' in a specific reform process). While a response may improve the situation in the short term, it is unlikely to increase the capacity of that community to deal with future issues of concern. At the same time, the impact is limited to the target community, as others are not able to learn from and replicate success. The CRG provides a format for communities to share lessons on how they have dealt with security threats and also provides an ongoing resource to communities in the future. Secondly, to be successful, initiatives should be developed by communities, rather than externally 'thought up' and imposed. This means that the target communities should have a substantial role in designing, monitoring and managing the project. In addition, the true value of a process to improve security at the community level can be measured by how willing people are to participate in and drive it – people will participate because it is important, whether they are paid or not. As such, the partners decided that no payments would be made to the community representatives, other than to cover travel and communication costs.

'Map'/identify communities along the ABL

The success of the CRG depended on proper identification of the different communities along the ABL. Rather than restricting project activities to specific villages or administrative units as defined by Georgian legislation, it was decided to direct activities towards groups of people united by shared features that make them a distinct 'community'. The project team used three principal measures to identify communities along the ABL: 1) shared geography – people who are physically connected to each other; 2) shared needs – such as economic opportunities, levels of physical insecurity, or basic livelihood needs (e.g. access to water); and 3) shared views and interests – such as religion, habits, traditions, schools, and relatives/friends.

To this end, the November 2008 and August 2009 assessments were also used to undertake an initial 'mapping' of communities along the ABL. This mapping was subsequently revised by the partners and tested by the CRG in its first meeting. The mapping divided the ABL into four general groups, which were thought to have distinct characteristics – Atotsi-Dirbi, Nikozi-Mereti, Plavismani-Bershueti and Tsitelubani-Lamiskana. The villages in these groups were then divided into 15 communities that were thought to share geography, needs and views. Box 7 (overleaf) outlines the detailed mapping agreed by the partners and with the CRG at the beginning of the project. A map of the target communities can be found on the inside back cover.

Select community representatives

The CRG, made up of volunteer community representatives, was selected on the basis of fact-finding missions to each community at the start of 2010, and in consultation with local and international NGOs who have a history of implementing activities in the area. Potential community representatives were shortlisted and then interviewed, before one representative was selected for each community. Before starting this process, the partners agreed on the following selection criteria: 1) an overall age and gender balance in the group; 2) a mix of professional experience relevant for life along the ABL, but no public sector workers – e.g. people who cultivate land or trade in agricultural products, rather than nurses and teachers; 3) authority within their respective communities – each community representative should be someone who is listened to and can mobilise other members; 4) perceived to be apolitical in the local community; and 5) do not work in other civil society processes.

Train the Community Reference Group

Once selected, the partners organised two mixed training/planning sessions on community-based approaches to security and how to apply them in Shida Kartli. In these sessions, the

Box 7: Detailed mapping of communities along the ABL with South Ossetia

Research groups	Target communities/constituent villages				
Atotsi-Dirbi was not as affected by the violence of 2008 or the early 1990s as neighbouring communities. Prior to August 2008 there were good levels of interaction with South Ossetian communities. At the same time, the area suffers from economic isolation, in part due to its remote location.	1. *Atotsi* Chvirinisi; Gulikaantubani; Koda; Abano; Satsikhuri; Bredza; Atotsi	2. *Tseronisi* Knolevi; Avlevi; Tseronisi	3. *Dvani* Dirbi; Takhtisdziri; Dvani		
Nikozi-Mereti was at the centre of the 2008 violence, sustaining greater casualties and physical damage than the other areas. It is closest to the most populated areas in South Ossetia, experiences regular incidents and has received significant aid.	4. *Nikozi* Kvemo Nikozi; Zemo Nikozi; Kvemo Khviti; Zemo Khviti	5. *Ergneti* Ergneti; Meghvrekisi; Brotsleti; Tirdznisi	6. *Ditsi* Arbo; Ditsi; Kordi	7. *Mereti* Gugutiantkari; Koshka; Kere; Zardiaantkari; Karbi; Mereti	
Plavismani-Bershueti also suffered during the August war, but to a lesser extent than Nikozi-Mereti. It is more difficult to access and has been only a secondary target for relief activities. There appeared to be varying levels of contact with South Ossetians across the ABL.	8. *Plavi* Plavi; Plavismani	9. *Kveshi* Kveshi; Kvemo Artsevi	10. *Akhrisi* Akhrisi; Tsitsagiantkari	11. *Mejvriskhevi* Jariasheni; Adzvi; Akhalubani; Mejvriskhevi	12. *Kirbali* Kirbali; Zerti
Tsitelubani-Lamiskana did not previously border territories under the control of Tskhinvali, only becoming affected when the Akhalgori region came under South Ossetian/Russian control during the August 2008 war. Many villages are ethnically mixed, with people maintaining contact across the ABL.	13. *Khuravleti* Tsitelubani; Patara Khurvaleti; Didi Khurvaleti	14. *Kodistskaro* Karafila; Zadiaantkari; Saribari; Kodistskaro	15. *Lamiskana* Tvaurebi; Khviti; Lamiskana		

community representatives developed a shared understanding of: 1) what 'community' means and the different communities situated along the ABL with South Ossetia (i.e. a review of the mapping developed by the partners); 2) the principles of a 'community-based approach to security' and the main security threats facing communities along the ABL; 3) lessons learned from previous initiatives around the world; 4) how to respond to security threats and the role of different actors; 5) the specific roles of communities, including the principles of 'local ownership'; 6) the role of the CRG in Shida Kartli; 7) how the CRG will engage with external security actors in Shida Kartli; 8) how to 'map' communities' security needs; 9) the criteria for selecting problems that the CRG will respond to ; and 10) the process for analysing problems, and developing and implementing community-led responses. The training pack used in the two sessions is available in English, Georgian and Russian at: www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/566.

Test the methodology and agree ways of working

Part of the purpose of the initial training/planning sessions was to test the methodology proposed by the partners and to agree how the CRG will work – in terms of responsibilities, function, potential risks and how to manage them. The CRG representatives agreed to the following roles:

■ **Provide a knowledge resource to communities.** Community representatives are the primary focus for the training, support and advice offered by the partners. The CRG will actively look to share this learning with their communities, including lessons and experience from the present process in Shida Kartli and learning from other contexts.

■ **Provide a knowledge resource to relevant security actors.** The CRG will also provide a resource on local perspectives on security to relevant actors (such as the police or health authorities), by working closely with their communities to collect information about local needs. This will entail identifying appropriate people in their communities to communicate with and involve in project activities.

■ **Act as a contact point on community security issues.** CRG representatives will be the contact point between their communities and the project partners; between different communities; and between their communities and relevant security actors. For example, they will help to organise and lead community meetings, including those involving security actors.

■ **Contribute to the programme's quality assurance.** The CRG will have a central role in monitoring and evaluating of the process, and in ensuring that the process is transparent to and understood by the target communities. In addition, the representatives will communicate the programme and its successes/lessons to other actors.

Villagers are introduced to the 'mapping exercise' by the project co-ordinator in Akhrisi, Shida Kartli, June 2010.
NINO VADAKARIA

Map the security context and priorities in each community

In order to understand the security problems facing local populations, each community representative (with assistance from the partners) organised a meeting in his/her respective community to draw a 'community security map'.

The results from these meetings were captured in a separate 'community profile' for each of the 15 target communities. These are summarised in the next section. The main challenges identified were: ambiguity of the ABL (leading for example to the risk of detention), land cultivation, the presence of unexploded ordinance (UXO), perceived threats from Russians and South Ossetians, cultural and religious issues, movement of cattle across the ABL, access to water and firewood, restrictions on trade across the ABL and displacement of the local population.

Hold regular CRG meetings to share analysis and lessons

The project partners also organised a series of six meetings between CRG representatives so that they could share analysis and lessons. In these meetings, the representatives were asked to feed back on recent activities and to monitor the overall progress of the project. Key to this was ongoing analysis of potential risks to the community, the CRG representatives, and the process itself, as well as planning for their management. The meetings also provided an opportunity for the community representatives to discuss larger-scale security issues that were shared along the ABL, and how they could be responded to. Finally, external actors were invited to these meetings so that they could understand local perspectives and explain the relevance of their work for communities situated along the ABL. For example, representatives from the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) participated in different CRG meetings.

Box 8: Example community security map from Nikozi

The mapping process provides an entry point for analysing local security dynamics, and identifying priorities and their potential resolution. As such, after drawing their map, community members were asked to describe the community's recent history (including incidents related to security and the conflict). They were then encouraged to identify their main security concerns, how they and security actors respond to these concerns, and what they would like to be done differently.

Security maps A community security map provides a visual representation of where people live, where they fear for their security, and where they feel safe. Communities were asked to mark on the map the ABL, their houses, roads, important buildings, pastures and agricultural land. They were then asked to indicate where incidents have happened, where they feel unsafe or threatened, where there are any infrastructure issues, or anything else of note in the life of the community. Since there is no 'correct' way of drawing a map, community members were encouraged to draw their community in a creative way.
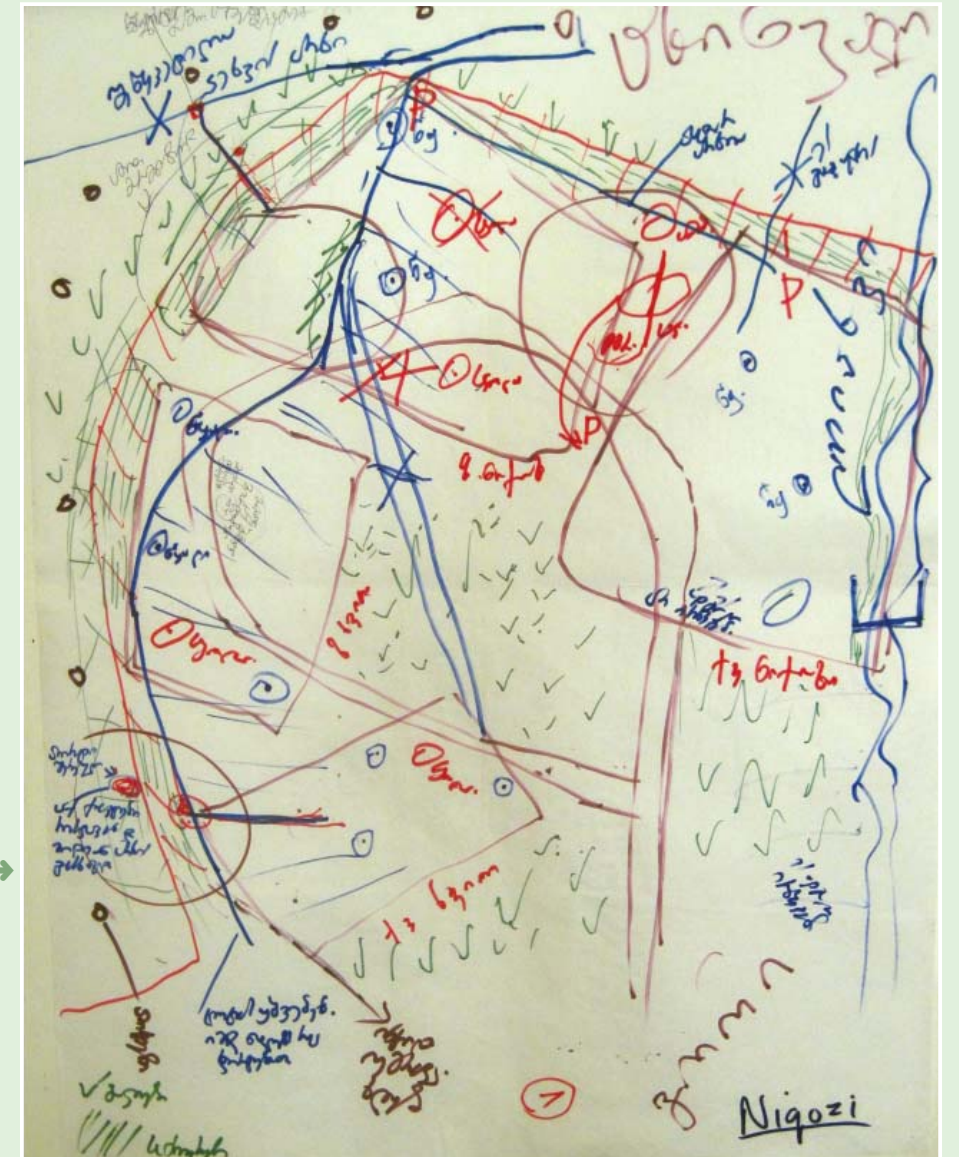
Villagers responded enthusiastically to the task of drawing a map of their community. They used different means to creatively describe the environment they live in, employing symbols and colours to express themselves. This example shows the map produced by the Nikozi community, July 2010.

Results and challenges

Results (and factors contributing to success)

■ **Creation of a functioning 'volunteer' Community Reference Group.** By the end of the first phase of the project only one CRG member had stopped participating – and that was for personal reasons. The fact that the CRG representatives had to dedicate a significant amount of their time for free is a testament to how entrenched local ownership is of the project and to the value that the participants place in it.

■ **The CRG is an appreciated vehicle for learning.** At the outset of the project, each representative was most interested in the potential of the project to improve the situation in his/her community. However, at the end-of-project evaluation, the CRG members said that the most valuable aspect of the work was the information sharing that takes place between communities. This occurred in the regular CRG meetings and in community exchanges. For example, the Ditsi CRG member attended a meeting in Nikozi to talk about de-mining in his community.

■ **Community representatives represent important focal points for communities.** During the project, the CRG members developed a high degree of credibility in their communities and were frequently used as focal points to raise concerns with security actors. For example, in one community a CRG member was asked to inform the EUMM about a bullet which landed in a child's bed; in another community the CRG was asked for advice on what to do when UXO were discovered.

■ **Proven ability to lead and mobilise.** The CRG representatives were generally able to encourage people to become involved in project activities. It is apparent that the experience has also increased their leadership role within communities, which some representatives are keen to expand further. This could include: a) possible representation of communities in formal consultations at *Sakrebulo* (local municipal councils) and regional government levels; and b) organising information meetings with donors for fundraising or to draw attention to problems within their communities.

■ **Increased feeling of security in target communities.** The end-of-project evaluation meeting established that there was an increased feeling of security within the target communities as a result of the work of the community representatives. As noted in the previous section, this is because communities felt more empowered and informed on security-related issues, thanks to the information shared in community meetings and the availability of CRG members as focal points for sharing and articulating security issues.

■ **Better and more participatory analysis of local security needs.** The mapping process in the community meetings proved to be a useful tool for aiding participation by a wide range of people. It generated a lot of information and helped people to analyse their security environment, including sensitive issues.

■ **Genuine community ownership.** Systematic consultations were held between the partners and the CRG, in which they were encouraged to provide feedback on the project. The project was then modified on the basis of their input. It was important for communities to be aware that all aspects of the project could be adapted, so that they could feel in control of the process and its outcomes.

Challenges encountered

■ **Managing expectations of humanitarian assistance and 'service delivery'.** Some communities expected that the project would deliver humanitarian aid or ready-made services. This is largely due to communities' experiences of how international and local civil society organisations operated after the August 2008 war. Aid efforts rarely involved communities in their design and delivery, and there was little bottom-up community mobilisation. This underlines the need to keep communities well informed about the project and its progress, so as to avoid misperceptions.

■ **Misunderstandings about the role of CRG members.** As noted in the previous section, there was potential for tension and confusion about the role of the CRG representatives. This means: a) people venting frustration at the CRG representatives if their expectations of the project are not met; b) suspicion over who the CRG members 'represent' (e.g. that they are 'informers', or work for local government); c) suspicion that they receive payment; and d) the perception that their actions undermine certain interest groups, and hence pressure being put on them. The role of the project team in providing strong support and counselling to the CRG representatives was essential for managing such misunderstandings.

■ **Ensuring equal community participation.** Many target communities encompassed more than one village, and people living in the same village as the CRG member were sometimes more involved than those in other villages. Gender balance was also an issue at the beginning. We found that at first, more men would turn up to meetings when the CRG member was a man and *vice versa* when the CRG member was a woman. This meant that it could be difficult to get a balanced idea of the sometimes different security needs of both men and women. We addressed this throughout the project by actively encouraging more balanced gender and village participation at meetings (see discussion of the community security process in Kirbali, below).

■ **The risk of Saferworld/CIPDD becoming 'gatekeepers'.** At the beginning of the project, the CRG members were overly reliant on Saferworld and CIPDD to manage relations with relevant security actors. If this reliance persisted it would further undermine the capacity of communities to directly engage with security actors. As such the partners have encouraged the CRG representatives to take responsibility for managing relations with security actors as much as possible.

"Villagers were concerned about unexploded ordinance, but did not prioritise this problem because they thought that lack of access to irrigation water would prevent them from cultivating their land [even if the threat of unexploded ordinance was removed]. But the representative from Ditsi was able to explain how de-mining had helped his community to use their pastures, even without systematic irrigation."

Community representative from Nikozi

"Despite the closeness, I would never imagine that a lot of villages in this area suffer from the same problems as my village."

A villager from Plavismani

4

Community-led responses to security threats

The partners acknowledged that it would not be possible to significantly impact on perceptions of security in the target communities within a 12-month period. Nevertheless, it was deemed important to support responses to a small number of concrete issues in specific communities. By doing so, the project would build up positive examples that could be used to stimulate future community-led responses. At the same time, successful initiatives would help demonstrate to relevant security actors that, given the right tools and environment, communities can make a constructive contribution to the management of security issues.

The six-step process for developing responses to security threats builds on experience in other contexts. In the first step, communities along the ABL were identified. In the second step, each community representative worked with his/her respective community to map local security needs and identify priorities. In the third step, the CRG decided, against set criteria, which communities to work in and which priorities to respond to. In the fourth step, the CRG supported the selected communities to analyse their priorities more deeply and to develop plans to respond to them. In the fifth step, these plans were presented to relevant security actors and adapted in accordance with their advice. The final step involved implementation of the plans and monitoring of their impact by the CRG.

This process differs from past projects in three important ways. Firstly, there was substantial investment in 'mapping'/identifying different communities in a consolidated target area. Secondly, the CRG provided a link between these different communities. Thirdly, the representative group had the lead role in selecting communities to work in and issues to work on. The previous section explained the process for 'mapping' communities and understanding priorities. This section will focus on the selection, development and implementation of the community-led responses.

Community profiles
The community meetings to 'map' local security needs, resulted in a 'community profile' being developed for each community. The profiles include a description of the community (e.g. geography and demography); its recent history – including the impact of the conflict; local security priorities; how the community already responds to these priorities; and how external actors respond to them.

Understanding communities' priorities

A summary of the security priorities expressed by each community is provided in box 9.

Box 9: Communities' priorities

Atotsi-Dirbi group

Atotsi
- **UXO:** Concern that community lands have not been fully de-mined, especially near the ABL.
- **Land cultivation:** Unwillingness to cultivate orchards and agricultural lands due to fear of UXO and proximity to the ABL. This is linked to the perception that orchards are not properly protected by the police.
- **The ABL and detentions:** Threat of detentions by Russian border guards.
- **Movement of cattle:** South Ossetian cattle cross the ABL and spoil harvests in Atotsi, Chvirinisi and Koda. People cannot drive them away as they are afraid of repercussions.
- **Displacement:** Only Atotsi is affected – the number of families has reduced from 300 to approx 120.

Tseronisi
- **UXO:** Worries about the presence of UXO in orchards.
- **Perceived threats:** The entire community is clearly seen from the other side and is illuminated at night with searchlights.
- **Land cultivation:** As a result, people are unwilling to cultivate most agricultural land.
- **Economic/trade issues:** People do not have sufficient financial income to purchase fuel.
- **Displacement:** Knolevi (137 families before war; approx 50 after), Avlevi (180 before war; 80 after) and Tseronisi (210 before war; 100 after).

Dvani
- **The ABL and detentions:** Proximity to the ABL results in: a) perceived risks to school children attending school; b) concerns over the safety of the potable water source; c) inability to access some gardens; and d) confusion over the placement of the ABL.
- **Perceived threats:** People are worried about a Russian military base being constructed on the upper side of Dvani village, some 300m from the house of a Dvani resident.
- **Cultural/religious issues:** Inability to access the cemetery at St George's church, due to barbed wire.
- **Access to water:** Limited access to irrigation water.
- **Depopulation:** Estimated that 10–15% of families left Dirbi (3000 families remain) and 10–20% left Dvani (365 families remain).

Nikozi-Mereti group

Nikozi

- **The ABL and detentions:** The position of the ABL is unclear, resulting in detentions by Russian border guards – especially in fields.
- **Land cultivation:** Unwillingness to cultivate land left on Georgian-controlled side due to the belief that de-mining was not conducted properly. Inability to access land on the other side of the ABL.
- **Access to water:** Insufficient supply of irrigation and potable water.
- **Depopulation:** Estimated that 25% of families left Zemo Nikozi (300 families remain); 30% left Kvemo Nikozi (200 families remain); 2% left Zemo Khviti (250 families remain); and 20% left Kvemo Khviti (350–400 families remain).

Ergneti

- **UXO:** People feel that de-mining works have not been conducted properly.
- **The ABL and detentions:** People lack information on where is safe and where unsafe. People also feel that the ABL is not properly controlled on the Georgian side. The location of the school is of particular concern (only 500m from ABL).
- **Perceived threats:** a) military exercises conducted by Russians on the other side; b) shootings heard from the other side; and c) fear that Russian forces tap phone lines and maintain a record for each individual villager.
- **Movement of cattle:** Cattle cross the ABL and villagers are unable to have them returned.
- **Displacement:** It is estimated that around only 50% of the population remains.
- **External actors:** People think that the change in status from 'conflict zone' has led to a reduction in needed assistance.

Ditsi

- **UXO:** De-mining has been conducted; however, UXO continue to be found during work in orchards.
- **The ABL and detentions:** Detentions occur several times a month, especially when people attempt to open up/repair the closed/damaged irrigation canal.
- **Land cultivation:** Inability to cultivate land due to close proximity to the ABL; or that on other side of ABL.
- **Perceived threats:** Regular shootings heard from the other side. BUT feeling that the criminal situation has improved, as the Russian presence stops looting by armed South Ossetians.
- **Movement of cattle:** Cattle cross the ABL and villagers are unable to have them returned.
- **External actors:** Lack of awareness of the EUMM's mandate.

Mereti

- **Land cultivation:** Inability to cultivate land due to close proximity to the ABL; or that on the other side.
- **Movement of cattle:** Cattle cross the ABL and villagers are unable to have them returned.
- **Perceived threats:** Shootings are heard from other side. BUT there has been a decrease in incidences in the six months preceding the meeting. People also feel the criminal situation has improved since movement across the ABL has become more restricted.

- **Access to water:** Fear for the security of potable water – the source of the Vanati canal is located on the South Ossetian side. Lack of access to irrigation and potable water (especially in Gugutiantkari).
- **Access to firewood:** Inability to access forests (located on the other side of the ABL) to gather firewood.
- **Displacement:** The whole village of Zardiantkari is now on the other side of the ABL and is deserted.

Plavismani-Bershueti

Plavi

- **Perceived threats:** The police advise the community not to enter the area along the ABL between Plavismani and Kveshi. At the same time, people are worried by the lack of a police presence in Plavismani.
- **Economic/trade issues:** Police restrictions on bringing agricultural products into the village, due to fear of smuggling; traders from outside the village are also not permitted to enter the village for the same reason.
- **External actors:** Due to security concerns, one NGO was discouraged by the police from providing assistance to the community.

Kveshi

- **The ABL and detentions:** Ongoing detentions by Russian security forces.
- **Perceived threats:** Threat of theft of harvest.
- **Land cultivation:** Inability to use agricultural machinery to cultivate and harvest land. Only 50% of land is cultivated; but even this part is not secure as it is not controlled by the police. The most insecure places are the fields that directly border the ABL.
- **Economic/trade issues:** Inability to bring unsold products from the market back to the village.
- **External actors:** Feeling that aid has been distributed unfairly.

Mejvriskhevi

- **Land cultivation:** Lack of access to pastures (approx 100 ha) on the other side of the ABL.
- **Economic/trade issues:** Inability of South Ossetians to trade in the market in Mejvriskhevi because of restrictions in movement across the ABL.
- **Access to water:** Insufficient water supply in Mejvriskhevi. Also, limited access to irrigation water as the source is on the other side of the ABL (near the village Gromi).
- **Access to firewood:** Inability to access Khmalaant forest (located on the other side of the ABL) to gather firewood.

Kirbali

- **The ABL and detentions:** People are unsure where they can move safely. At the same time, people feel that 'dangerous zones' (places close to the ABL) are not controlled by the police.
- **Perceived threats:** Problem with wolves from across the ABL attacking livestock.
- **Access to firewood:** Inability to access forests (located on the other side of the ABL) to gather firewood. This is leading to cases of detentions.
- **External actors:** Lack of information about projects implemented by NGOs.

Akhrisi

■ **Access to water:** Insufficient potable water supply. In Tsitsagiantkari, water is accessed through recently drilled wells equipped with old pumps. However, they use substantial electricity and the village has difficulties covering the cost. In Akhrisi, water is supplied to everyone via an irrigation canal, but it is polluted and there are wastages due to disrepair.

■ **Insufficient water in main irrigation water pipelines, due to:** (a) use of water by villages located close to the source; and (b) the fact that the canal runs through South Ossetian villages across the ABL.

■ **Displacement:** Tsitsagiantkari (80 families, decreased by 5% after war) and Akhrisi (200 families, by 3%).

Tsitelubani-Lamiskana

Lamiskana

■ **The ABL and detentions:** Confusion about the placement of the ABL, especially in forest areas. This is leading to cases of detentions.

■ **Economic/trade issues:** Poor road infrastructure from the central highway to the villages.

■ **Cultural/religious issues:** Inability to access a Georgian cemetery left on the other side of the ABL.

■ **Access to water:** Lack of access to irrigation water. The source canal, located on the other side of the ABL, is closed.

■ **Access to firewood:** Inability to access forests (on the other side of the ABL) to collect firewood.

Kodistskaro

■ **Land cultivation:** Fear of cultivating land near the ABL.

■ **Cultural/religious issues:** Inability to maintain contacts with relatives (especially for 1 mixed and 3 South Ossetian villages) due to Russian restrictions on crossings and Georgian police warnings.

■ **Access to water:** Inefficient water supply. Although the canals are full, villages located closer to the source use water before it reaches the community. The canal from Nadarbazevi Lake does not work due to low water levels.

■ **Access to firewood:** Inability to access forests (located on the other side of the ABL) to collect firewood.

Khurvaleti

■ **Land cultivation:** Inability to access pastures now on the other side of the ABL and to feed cattle. As a result, land on the Gori side of the line that used to be cultivated is now used as pasture land.

■ **Cultural/religious issues:** Inability to keep in touch with South Ossetian relatives on the other side due to Russian military presence.

■ **Access to water:** Insufficient potable water, specifically in Akhali Khurvaleti, where the source is on the other side. There is also limited access to irrigation water as it is the last point on the Tirifoni canal, and water is used up by upstream villages.

■ **Access to firewood:** Inability to access forests (on the other side of the ABL) to collect firewood.

Community selection and setting priorities

After the community profiles had been written up, a CRG meeting was organised to compare the situation in communities along the ABL and to select specific communities and priorities to which the CRG would support responses. The selection process took place against a set of pre-agreed criteria, including: 1) that the problem is common to, and its solution would benefit, all members of the target community, and hence its solution would benefit all members; 2) community members are willing and able to themselves contribute to resolution of the problem (rather than relying on external actors); 3) the project will not exacerbate under-lying tensions; and 4) that other communities encompassed by the CRG suffer from similar problems – so that learning from the responses could be quickly replicated.

On the basis of the meeting, a shortlist of five possible communities and issues was presented to all 15 communities, to update them on progress and get their agreement on the recommended places and issues. Additional discussions were held in the five communities that had been shortlisted, to check if the selected problem was still relevant, and whether it would be possible to develop a feasible plan to address it. As a result of these consultations, two of the five communities and issues that had been initially chosen were removed from the list. The following communities and issues were selected for responses:

■ **Nikozi** – farmers believe it is unsafe to access and cultivate their farmland because of mines.

■ **Kirbali** – people are concerned for the security of their family and livestock due to attacks by wild animals.

■ **Dvani** – villagers do not have access to clean drinking water and are afraid to maintain the water source due to its proximity to the ABL.

Planning responses

The response-planning process involved a series of meetings in each of the target communities facilitated by the CRG. In these meetings, each community developed a more detailed 'problem statement' to explain the challenge at hand and then, on the basis of the problem statement, developed a 'solution strategy' for how to resolve it.

Problem statements

In order to develop its problem statement, each community was asked (1) to analyse the driving factors behind the problem – that is, what causes the problem and who is responsible and (2) to describe the impact of the problem – that is, who suffers and how they suffer. Drawing on the identified impacts, each community was then asked to clearly articulate (3) why the issue is of importance for the community's security. Please see box 10 for an example problem analysis from Nikozi.

Box 10: Example problem analysis from Nikozi

1. Importance of the problem for the community's security

The sustainability of the community is at risk as people are dependent on farming for their livelihoods. At the same time there is a potential physical risk to farmers if they decide to cultivate their lands.

2. The impact (who suffers and how they suffer)

Farmers do not cultivate their lands, which in turn impacts on livelihoods as agriculture is the main source of income.	Villagers feel that their concerns are not taken seriously by relevant actors, and hence feel 'abandoned'.
⬆	⬆

Problem to be addressed: farmers believe it is unsafe to access and cultivate their farm land.

3. Key causal factors (and who is responsible)

⬆	⬆
■ Farmers are concerned that de-mining was not properly conducted in fields marked 'unsafe' during surveying. ■ Farmers think that some areas marked 'safe' during surveying contain UXO. ■ People report finding UXO both in areas that have been de-mined and in those marked as 'safe'.	■ Villagers lack information about which areas were demined. ■ Villagers do not know whom to address if they find UXO. ■ Villagers have requested that local and central authorities review de-mining activities; but have not received responses.

Solution strategies

To develop the solution strategy, each community was first asked to (4) identify the overall change that they would like to see in relation to the security threat. They were then asked to (5) identify the key preconditions necessary to achieve this change. Finally, each community was asked to (6) list the steps needed to bring about each pre-condition (box 11).

Box 11: Example solution strategy from Nikozi

4. Vision (overall change wanted)

Villagers are able to cultivate their lands without fear of injury from UXO.

⬆

5. Objectives (Key preconditions) that need to be met in order to achieve the overall vision

1. The local population knows (a) which areas were cleaned of UXO and (b) those that need to be avoided.	2. Relevant actors take steps to respond to the community's security concerns, especially regarding UXO.

6. Steps needed to bring about the key preconditions

⬆	⬆
■ A joint community letter to relevant institutions (EUMM, MoD, MIA, Gori Governor's office, Halo Trust) explaining the community's concerns and asking for a review of de-mining activities undertaken. ■ Information meeting in the community, facilitated by the CRG, so that relevant institutions directly inform villagers of past de-mining activities.	■ The open information meeting will be used by villagers to explore the possibility for further de-mining work; and to raise other issues of concern. ■ The CRG will then monitor steps taken in response; and provide support to relevant security actors if required.

Security actors

Who constitutes a 'relevant security actor' depends on the issue at hand, while the manner in which they are engaged depends on how the community decides to respond to it. For example, in Nikozi, where the population was concerned about the presence of UXO on their farmland, relevant security actors included the MoD, MIA and Halo Trust – all of whom had experience of de-mining and the capacity and mandate to address the issue.

Involvement of security actors

A key objective of a community-based approach to security is to strengthen relations between communities and security actors, so that security actors prioritise local needs and communities have more trust in them. Accordingly, while it was envisaged that communities would be at the forefront of developing and implementing responses to local security threats, it was important that they did so in partnership with relevant security actors. There was a good deal of flexibility in how security actors were involved, including: (a) introductory meetings by project partners in order to ensure understanding and support; (b) ongoing liaison by the CRG members; (c) information sharing and planning meetings in the communities; and (d) official requests for assistance. The one standard involvement required was that after implementation of a response, the relevant CRG representative organised a joint community-security actor evaluation meeting in order to review the impact of the initiative, learn lessons, and give the community an opportunity to raise other security concerns.

Implementing plans and learning lessons

A villager indicates an area where he suspects UXO remain during a meeting with stakeholders, Nikozi, November 2010.
NINO VADAKARIA

Nikozi community security plan

'Making comprehensive information about mines available to the community'

Vision: Villagers are able to cultivate their lands without fear of injury from UXO.

Objectives

1. The local population knows (a) the areas that were cleaned of UXO and (b) those that need to be avoided.
2. Relevant actors take steps to respond to the community's security concerns, especially regarding UXO.

Concrete steps

- A joint community letter to relevant institutions (EUMM, MoD, MIA, Gori Governor's office, Halo Trust) explaining the community's concerns and asking for a review of de-mining activities undertaken.
- An information meeting in the community, facilitated by the CRG, so that relevant institutions directly inform villagers of past de-mining activities.
- The open information meeting will be used by villagers to explore the possibility for further de-mining work; and to raise other issues of concern.
- The CRG will then monitor steps taken in response; and provide support to relevant security actors if required.

Nikozi community
The community borders the town of Tskhinvali. It was directly damaged during the August 2008 conflict by air and artillery fire. As a result, a substantial amount of UXO was left in the community.

The problem: Although some de-mining had been carried out, people did not know where the land is 'safe' and where it is still contaminated. People also feared that in those areas where de-mining operations had taken place, they had not been done properly. This was partly due to ongoing discoveries of UXO. As a result, farmers were afraid to cultivate all their fields, which in turn negatively affects farmers' income and the overall socio-economic situation in the community.

Steps taken: Community members decided to write a joint letter signed by villagers from all four villages, addressed to multiple stakeholders including the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Gori office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Governor of Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality, the EUMM and the Halo Trust in Georgia. The purpose of the letter was to outline the community's concerns and to request a review of de-mining activities undertaken.

The community also decided to convene a joint community-security actors meeting. This meeting took place at the end of November 2010, and was attended by community members from the four villages covered by Nikozi community, representatives from the Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Centre (ERWCC) and the Halo Trust. ERWCC represented both MIA and MoD.

At the meeting, community members were informed about mine awareness as well as where de-mining operations had already been conducted, and Halo Trust and ERWCC representatives provided community members with their contact information so that they could notify them if they came across suspected UXO in the future. ERWCC also agreed to print maps indicating which areas had been de-mined, and to distribute them to all the villages in Nikozi community before the start of agricultural work.

At the end of January 2011, detailed A0 size maps were printed and delivered to Gori Municipality, indicating which areas had been cleared and where quality control had been conducted. They have been put up in public administrative buildings in the villages. Furthermore, the initiative has led to ongoing communication between the communities and relevant security actors. For example, de-mining organisations visited the community several times on their own initiative, and when UXO have occasionally been discovered, villagers have contacted relevant agencies.

Villagers discussing how to prevent attacks by wild animals, Kirbali, November 2010.

NINO VADAKARIA

Kirbali community security plan

'Protecting humans and livestock from attacks by wild animals'

Vision: People are confident that their families and livestock will not be attacked by wild animals crossing the ABL.

Objectives

1. Attacks from wild animals are prevented.
2. While protecting themselves and their livestock, the villagers do not violate laws on wild animal protection.
3. Activities to prevent animal attacks do not increase tensions across the ABL.

Concrete steps

- The Ministry for Environment Protection and Natural Resources provides community members with information about how to legally deal with wild animal attacks.
- The CRG representative works with relevant stakeholders to agree a process for villagers to prevent animal attacks, including: a) formation of a hunting group; b) the timing of hunting activities.
- Community meeting to consult with security actors on how to ensure that preventative actions are not misunderstood by Russian and Ossetian forces across the ABL.
- The security actors inform the Russian and Ossetian forces about planned activities, indicating their time and place.

Kirbali community
The first wild animal attack in Kirbali was reported at the beginning of September 2010, with more following throughout the autumn. Wild animals, such as wolves and jackals, started coming to the area after the August 2008 war and the displacement of ethnic Georgian families on the other side of the ABL.

The problem: Attacks on livestock can be catastrophic, as a cow may be a family's only source of income. The community would like to shoot wild animals that pose a threat, but they were unsure whether this would violate national laws on the protection of wild animals. Even if they were allowed to shoot the animals, shootings could be interpreted as aggressive by Russian guards patrolling the ABL, and result in increased tensions and even an exchange of fire.

Steps taken: At the first community planning meeting, community members decided that they wanted to meet with all competent agencies to discuss their concerns and to identify how to prevent wild animal attacks in a manner that would neither violate Georgian law, nor increase tensions across the ABL. This meeting took place in December 2010 and was attended by law enforcement and local government representatives, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia.

At the meeting, it was decided to sign a memorandum of co-operation between Gori Municipality and the local agency of the Ministry of Environment on the formation of a group of hunters who could shoot wolves without violating national laws. Furthermore, community members and law enforcement representatives agreed that Russian/South Ossetian interlocutors would be made aware of planned hunting campaigns, so that they would not misunderstand their intention.

While a memorandum of co-operation was signed in early January 2011, it was decided to delay hunting activities until the autumn, when the problem is more acute (wild animal attacks are rare in the spring and summer).

Villagers constructing a cover for a water source situated close to the ABL, Dvani, November 2010.
NINO VADAKARIA

Dvani community security plan

'Renovating a community drinking water source situated along the ABL'

Vision: Villagers are able to access clean drinking water and are not afraid to maintain the water source.

Objectives

1. The drinking water source is clean and its quality is controlled periodically.

2. A permanent cover is constructed for the drinking water source.

3. The villagers' security is guaranteed during construction work by security actors on both sides of the ABL.

Concrete steps

■ The quality of drinking water is examined in a laboratory: a) before construction of the cover; and b) after two months.

■ The reservoir is disinfected with solid chloride on the same day as the cover is constructed.

■ Community members buy materials for the cover, transport it to the site and build the cover *in situ*.

■ Russian/South Ossetian forces are warned in advance, so that they do not misinterpret the process.

■ Representatives from the police and EUMM attend the construction process.

Dvani community
The community's source of potable water is a water collector, in which several springs gather before feeding a pipe to the village. It is situated 50 metres from the ABL and South Ossetian/Russian armed personnel. The collector was only covered by a light makeshift tin board which easily became dislodged.

The problem: People living in Dvani community were concerned that the water collector was becoming polluted, due to the makeshift nature of its cover, making the water unsafe to drink. While the community had been able to conduct minor inconspicuous repairs, they were fearful of conducting more substantial renovations due to the water collector's proximity to the ABL, as: (a) this would mean spending more time in the area; (b) the work would be evident to the other side; and (c) renovations might be perceived suspiciously and might endanger the workers.

Steps taken: At the first community planning meeting, the community decided to renovate the water collector by constructing a cover for it *in situ* and to disinfect the water tube with solid chloride. After consultation with the MIA and the EUMM, it was decided that security guarantees for the construction phase would need to be arranged in advance with Russian/South Ossetian forces. This was important advice, as the community was considering renovating the well at night time, because they did not want the South Ossetian side to become aware of its presence.

On an agreed date in November 2010 and following notification of the Russian side, security actors and EUMM monitors attended construction activities carried out by community members. The presence of EUMM monitors meant that a family felt secure enough to put its cattle out to graze in the pasture near the ABL. Furthermore, while some villagers worked on construction, other villagers collected firewood in the same area, which they would not have otherwise done because the area is not considered safe.

Before constructing the cover, the water had been chlorinated on the initiative of a local government official (a further positive outcome of consultations with security actors). Since the chlorination process did not take a lot of time, it did not require a security guarantee from the other side. A water sample from the collector was subsequently tested in a laboratory in Gori and the water quality was found to be of drinking quality. Consequently there was no need to conduct further chlorination.

In December 2010, an evaluation meeting was held between security actors and the community. At this meeting, the community raised other concerns with the police, who generally expressed their willingness to assist. The villagers discussed the possibility of renovating an alternative irrigation water source that was also situated very close to the ABL. The police representative expressed willingness to help by providing security guarantees at any stage of the work. At the time of writing, the CRG representative had started to explore the possibility of renovating the alternative water source.

Results and challenges

Results (and factors contributing to success)

■ **Successful responses.** All three community initiatives have been successfully implemented and have resulted in positive changes at the local level. In Nikozi, people living in the villages have been informed about which areas are safe to enter. In Kirbali, the community knows how to protect itself from wild animals and has a memorandum of co-operation for hunting wolves. In Dvani, the community now has a protected source of drinking water.

■ **Unexpected positive impacts.** In some cases, the initiatives gave communities the space to address other needs. For example, in Dvani local community members also took advantage of the presence of security actors to perform activities that they would not have otherwise undertaken – putting cattle out to pasture and collecting firewood in areas considered insecure.

■ **Increased transparency/reduced tension across the ABL.** In Dvani, the agreement with the Russian and South Ossetian forces enabled the community to work in close proximity to the ABL to construct a cover for the water source. This incidence of co-operation and positive contact across the ABL provides an example for future initiatives.

"There is a sealed well [close to the ABL] with enough water to irrigate our community's lands. We did not think that it was possible to re-open it; but after we fixed the cover of the potable water source, we decided to start working on that as well."

A villager from Dvani

■ **Increased capacity within the target communities.** The results-orientated and practical approach taken by the project partners instilled within communities the idea that they could mobilise to address problems. Key to this was the community planning meetings, which provided an important opportunity for a wide range of people to jointly analyse problems and plan solutions to them.

■ **Community ownership of the projects.** The fact that communities designed and shaped the security responses contributed to their commitment to and pride in their accomplishments. For example, in Dvani, the community's sense of ownership and involvement in the process was increased by the fact that the community members themselves worked on the construction of the cover for the water source without any financial incentive (the sole external financial contribution was towards the cost of cement for the water cover).

■ **More constructive relations with security actors.** Rather than communities complaining about issues and demanding a response from security actors, communities actively developed plans for addressing their problems. As a result, communities were able to better inform security actors of how their needs could be responded to, and security actors responded positively to community requests, building the foundations for future co-operation:

☐ The MoD and MIA, and subsequently ERWCC, responded to the request from Nikozi community for support on UXO issues by producing maps indicating past de-mining activities. Communication between the communities and relevant actors has continued.

☐ The villagers of Kirbali met with representatives of the police, local government and the Ministry of the Environment in a co-operative atmosphere to discuss concrete steps for dealing with wild animal attacks without increasing tension across the ABL. This was despite a high risk that the meeting would be undermined by what was at that time the most urgent and political issue for villagers – distribution of firewood.

☐ The local government representative was present during construction of the cover in Dvani to provide support. The police and the EUMM both observed and periodically came to talk with villagers. At the subsequent evaluation meeting in Dvani, the local police representative expressed his readiness to engage more actively and offer assistance to the villagers on other security-related matters.

■ **Communities empowered by learning from the initiatives.** CRG representatives from other communities participated in the development of the three initiatives. For example, the CRG member from Tseronisi attended the community security plan follow-up meeting in Dvani. Their participation ensures that success stories will serve as incentive for other communities to respond to their own concerns.

Challenges encountered

■ **Setting realistic timeframes.** The community security process takes a long time and requires substantial investment both in terms of human resources and patience. This is due to the fact that the process does not depend on one particular actor, but involves extensive co-operation between numerous actors. As a result, original project deadlines had to be pushed back.

■ **Ensuring full involvement and equal participation of all community members.** At the beginning of the project, only men came to the meetings in Kirbali. We encouraged female participation by reiterating the importance of their involvement to the CRG member, and by asking community members to call their wives and mothers to attend. In Dvani the sensitivity of the issue meant that the response was implemented by only a few villagers, which may have limited the feeling of ownership over the work among other villagers. At subsequent meetings, the project team underlined the role played by the broader community and stressed that without their involvement in the planning phase, the initiative could not have been accomplished.

■ **Potential for mistrust between security actors and communities.** There still remains potential for tension between communities and security actors unless they both understand each other's functions, roles, intentions and scope of competence. For example, some local actors did not fully support the de-mining initiative in Nikozi, as they believed it ran contrary to their interests. Support and mentoring by the partners to the relevant CRG representative was essential for managing this.

■ **Avoiding hardening of divides across the ABL.** When talking about security, the natural tendency for communities (with some important exceptions) is to explore how to increase physical protection, rather than resume communications and rebuild relationships across

the ABL. As a result, the partners looked to encourage alternative ways of ensuring security, while still reaching across the ABL. For example, Russian and South Ossetian forces stationed on the other side of the ABL were informed about activities undertaken within the framework of the project. Community discussions about security also presented opportunities for the project partners to encourage a vision of how relations could be established with the other side.

5

Vision for the future

Overall evaluation of the programme

The project aimed to increase access to information on communities' security needs, increase community-level capacity and deliver a limited number of community-led responses. The activities explained in this publication have to date created a wealth of evidence on local understandings of security issues – both developed internally through the EWN and externally through the surveys. The CRG has proved to be a very valuable vehicle for promoting community capacity. The three community-led initiatives have also demonstrated a viable way of responding to local security threats.

As a result of the work of CRG members and project activities, communities feel more informed about security-related issues. This helps mitigate exaggerated perceptions of insecurity. CRG members feel better able to share information with security actors and other communities, and to jointly plan for threats. This enhances the feeling of security within communities, as they believe their concerns will 'be voiced', 'get to the right people' and be responded to. At the same time, security actors have a better understanding of communities' concerns, and as a result are better placed to make informed decisions on how to respond to local needs. Security actors are also more likely to view communities as credible partners and are more willing to engage with them.

As such, the first stage of the project provided a strong foundation for improved security at the community level and increased confidence to interact across the divide in the future.

Future objectives for the project

A project evaluation meeting involving CRG members was held at the end of January 2011. At this meeting, CRG members were asked to identify objectives for the next stage of the project to build on achievements to date. At this meeting, they agreed the following objectives:

■ Enable the prevention of threats to communities through advance planning.

■ Respond to problems shared by communities, rather than just community-specific issues.

■ Foster greater confidence with South Ossetians and greater ability to solve cross-ABL problems(s at the community level.

■ Make sure that the EWN is more useful and used for communicating between communities.

■ Make sure that the EWN provides reliable information and informs the actions of security actors in a sensitive manner.

■ Enable the CRG to influence local authorities and international organisations by developing sustainable relationships with them.

The community representatives recognised the potential for the CRG to have an even bigger impact. Most importantly, they thought it important to: (a) respond collectively to shared threats and to do so in a preventative manner – rather than responding to community-specific issues after the event; and (b) to look to engage with communities across the ABL on shared security issues – so as to increase confidence across the divide.

For their part, the partners are committed to using the evidence from the project to date as the basis for a discussion with relevant security actors on how institutional policies and ways of working can be adapted to be more 'community-orientated'. This includes exploring the potential for community-based approaches to security to be tested within the Geneva Process discussions and its mechanisms, such as the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

"It would be much better if there was a similar group like us on the other side [of the ABL]. We could establish contact with them, and if a minor problem – such as somebody's cow going to the other side – occurs, we could solve it together."

Community representative from Ditsi

Endotes

1 The parties to the conflicts disagree on the use of terminology for the disputed area ('South Ossetia' or the 'Tskhinvali Region') and the line of control ('Administrative Boundary Line' or 'Border'). Use of terminology in this report reflects that most commonly used by the international community.

2 The EUMM was designed as a temporary measure until agreement by the parties to a permanent security mechanism. In addition, it is important to note that the EUMM is only mandated to 'monitor' rather than to protect or intervene – e.g. it does not have a peacekeeping or policing mandate.

3 'Conflicts' refers to the various disagreements that resulted in the initial violence in the 1990s and the war in August 2008. These disagreements are between the Georgian Government and the Russian Government, between Tbilisi and Sukhum/i and Tskhinval/i, and even between Russia and the Western international community.

4 *Making Community Security Programmes more Effective:* Synthesis Report, (Saferworld, 2010). Research paper produced for the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

5 See for examples, *Creating Safer Communities: Lessons from South Eastern Europe*, (Saferworld, 2006).

6 Malte Viefhues and David Wood, *Life on the boundary line: The future of security in Shida Kartli* (Saferworld, October 2010).

7 Tamara Pataria and David Wood, *Moving beyond insecurity? A survey of community security in Shida Kartli* (Saferworld, March 2011)

Profiles of implementing partners

Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practices through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others. Saferworld has programmes in Africa, Asia and Europe. In the present project, Saferworld provides the 'community-based approach to security', and is responsible for overall project management, including analysis of impact.

For more information visit: **www.saferworld.org.uk**

The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)

CIPDD is a public policy think-tank specialising in the broad area of democracy development. It advocates policy goals such as the development of a vibrant and diverse civil society, effective and accountable public institutions based on the rule of law and an integrated political community, which respects and preserves the identities of different ethnic and religious communities. CIPDD's main activities include public policy research and publishing and disseminating its results, and organising different forms of debate – professional, political or public – about this work. CIPDD has primary responsibility for implementing the project and leads on liaison with representatives of relevant security actors.

For more information visit: **www.cipdd.org**
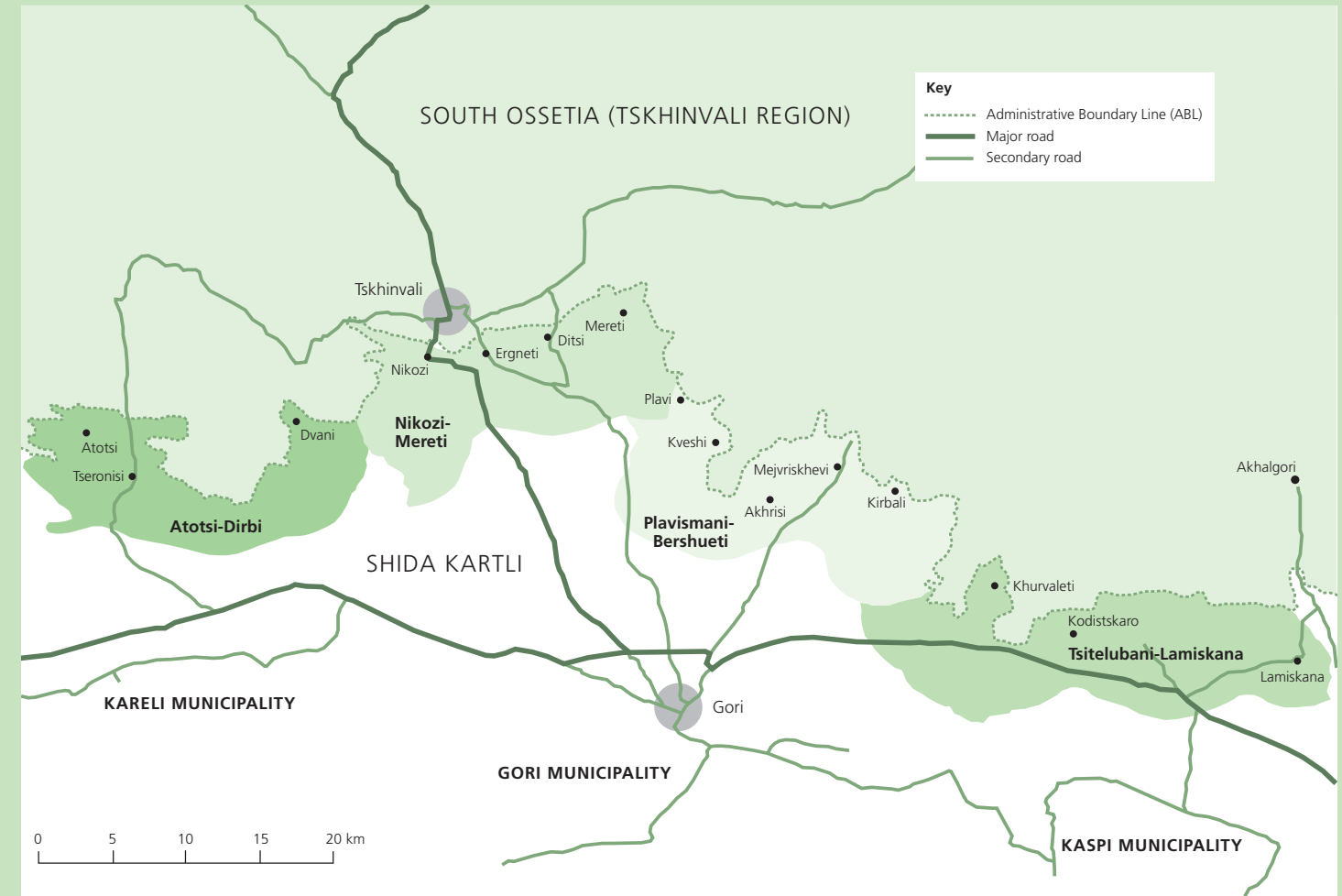
The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC)

CRRC is a network of resource, research and training centers in the capital cities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with the goal of strengthening social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus. Established in 2003 with the support of Carnegie Corporation of New York, CRRC regularly undertakes surveys and focus groups on social and political issues. For this project, CRRC provides the community security tracker surveys, and designs and runs the technical platform for the Early Warning Network.

For more information visit: **www.crrc.ge**

The Gori Information Centre (GIC)

GIC is an NGO based in Gori (Shida Kartli). GIC was founded in 1997. It aims to support the development of democratic institutions and to stimulate civil participation in decision-making processes. GIC provides the primary point of contact for the Community Reference Group, including ongoing mentoring and support.

SOUTH OSSETIA (TSKHINVALI REGION)

Key
.... Administrative Boundary Line (ABL)
▬▬▬ Major road
▬▬▬ Secondary road

Tskhinvali

Mereti
Ditsi
Ergneti
Nikozi

Nikozi-
Mereti

Plavi

Atotsi
Dvani
Kveshi

Tseronisi
Mejvriskhevi
Akhalgori

Atotsi-Dirbi
Akhrisi
Kirbali

Plavismani-
Bershueti

SHIDA KARTLI

Khurvaleti

Kodistskaro

Tsitelubani-Lamiskana

Lamiskana

KARELI MUNICIPALITY

Gori

GORI MUNICIPALITY

0   5   10   15   20 km

KASPI MUNICIPALITY

The security challenges affecting conflict-affected communities often prove difficult to manage. This is partly due to the inadequacies of peacekeeping and monitoring mechanisms, partly because of limited information about how security incidents impact on communities, and partly due to the absence of proven processes for responding to such challenges. All of these problems have resonance for those communities living along the Administrative Boundary Line between Shida Kartli and South Ossetia. Saferworld and its local partner, CIPDD, have since February 2010 looked to test ways that a range of actors (including communities themselves) can better understand what makes communities feel insecure, and to find locally appropriate ways of responding to the causes of insecurity. This publication summarises the lessons learned and outlines a vision for how 'community-based approaches' to security could make an important contribution towards the prevention of future violence, and even conflict transformation.

Cover photo: Community meeting in Plavi, Shida Kartli, June 2010. © Giorgi Makhniashvili