

Mobile operator supports Refugees and disabled in Georgia

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საქართველო Georgia



- ▶ Georgia is situated in South Caucasus between Black Sea, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey. Caucasian major Mountain range and other smaller and hillocks capture 80% of Georgian territory. Georgia has been part of *Silk Road* - a trade and transit corridor between Europe and Asia.
- ▶ Georgian history accounts over 4000 years. One of Georgian kingdom's - Kolkheti is mentioned in the myth about Argonauts and Medea, which was Georgian Princess.
- ▶ Unique Georgian alphabet, one of 14 existing in the World, was developed in the 5th century B.C. at King Pharnavaz time.
- ▶ Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church, one of the oldest Christian churches in the World, was founded by Apostle Andrew in the 1st century. In 337 AC Christianity became a state religion in Georgia.
- ▶ The strongest countries and tribes, including Romans, Arabs, Mongols, Turks and Persians, had been trying to conquer Georgia's territories for ages.
- ▶ First successful unification of Georgian Kingdom - in 1008-1010 by Bagrat the 3rd. The great King David the 4th, called the Builder (1089-1125), has liberated Tbilisi from Arabs and united the country in the XIIIth century. His and his granddaughter's - King Tamar's (1184-1213) government became Golden Age of state development and cultural renaissance. In 12th c. Georgian culture has produced its best jewel - the poem "*A Knight in Tiger's Skin*" by Shota Rustaveli.



Georgia and Russia: co-existence and conflicts

After centuries of mainly Turkish and Persian domination, the last conqueror, Russia annexed the country in 1801. Georgia spent 200 years as a part of Russian Empire, at first as a Russian province, then – Soviet Republic. After Russian revolution (1917) Georgia obtained independence for 3 years (1918-1921) only, but without having substantial international support from the League of Nations, it was re-occupied by Soviet Red Army in 1921.

In 1991 Georgia declared independence from the USSR. In 1992 Georgia had become 179th member of the UN.

Collapse of USSR and declaration of independence by Georgia was followed by ethnic conflicts provoked by Russia and de facto loosing of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (1991-93).

In 1993 over 300,000 people were forced to displace to other parts of the country.

New wave of tens of thousands internally displaced persons (IDPs) - mainly from South Ossetia and Shida Kartli, has emerged since recent Russian occupation of Georgian territories in August 2008.



Refugees

- ▶ war started – 07.08.08
- ▶ First wave of refugees – 5,000 (08.08)
- ▶ Major influx of refugees – 131,000 (12-16.08) mainly from Gori and surrounding territories
- ▶ main displacement in Tbilisi – camp city near airport, 202 secondary schools, over 500 kindergartens, abandoned undone buildings, institutes and shelters from soviet time
- ▶ Decrease of IDPs – since Russians left Gori (Aug 23) and most of so-called “buffer zones” (Oct 8)



Refugees (cont'd)

- ▶ 452 IDP shelters are still in operation across the country. The great majority of them, 303, are in Tbilisi. Public schools (now only 38), kindergartens, research institutions, institutes and student dormitories

- ▶ As of 27 October, 32 570 IDPs were still unable to return to their homes. Over two-thirds - 20490 persons - are sheltered in Tbilisi, while the remainder (12080 people) have found shelter in the rest of the country.

- ▶ The process of returning IDPs to their homes started 10th October, when the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation declared 48 villages to be sufficiently safe for them to return.

- ▶ Still over 50 villages inside South Ossetia and about 30 outside it are not opened for Georgians to return to homes. Majority of their homes inside South Ossetia are destroyed



Problems of Refugees

- ▶ financial
- ▶ unemployment
- ▶ living conditions (water/sanitation, safety)
- ▶ food supply
- ▶ transportation
- ▶ children care, toys and education
- ▶ elderly care and home care
- ▶ family separation
- ▶ social network crash
- ▶ lack of communication means
- ▶ depression



what refugees have taken with them (personal observations)

- ▶ TVs - <10%
- ▶ Cars - only 10%
- ▶ some food - 30%
- ▶ money - <50%
- ▶ first need clothes - >60%
- ▶ **mobile phones - >60%**
- ▶ ID documents - <80%

Mobile communication and tariffs in Georgia

- ▶ Cellular subscribers' penetration rate – 59% (2007) similar to CIA country fact book-70% with significant misbalance among capital (>90%) and districts (20-50%)
- ▶ Actual penetration rate – assumed to be 50%, as many users have >1 number subscribed and/or their SIMs are on “pause”
- ▶ Usual tariff – from/to landline phone or another GSM operator – 0,288 GEL (app 0,14€) per min with numerous schemes and club models allowing some users sometimes to have ½ rate.
- ▶ SMS – 0,06 GEL (app. 0,03€) per message (for Skypeout long-distance call – 0,017€/min!)
- ▶ considering GDP/Per Capita – 1870 € (Govt 2007, or \$4400 PPP, CIA-2007), Georgia has one of the highest rates on mobile communication which is barely unaffordable for low income population
- ▶ Average monthly payment has exceeded 100€ in 2007! (GNCC)
- ▶ very high Population-below-poverty-line index (53%-31% by different sources, 2002-2006). That's why poor population is heavily using SMS or only receiving calls (incoming calls are free in Georgia), trying to limit their monthly GSM spending <3-10 €!

Geocell GSM Co.



- ▶ First GSM operator in Georgia (registered – Sept-1996, started – March-1997)
- ▶ Owned by Telia Sonera through Fintur/Turkcell
- ▶ Number of subscribers > 1,5 million (about 49% of market share)
- ▶ Services – GSM, SMS, MMS, GPRS, EDGE, WAP, 3G, Mobile Internet, different information services
- ▶ Low price roaming in Turkey and Central Asia
- ▶ Investing 315 mln GEL (>160 mln. Euros) in infrastructure with more 150 mln. GEL to be invested until 2010
- ▶ Over 4000 employees
- ▶ One of top 10 taxpayers in Georgia
- ▶ www.geocell.com.ge

Geocell's contribution to refugee crisis – GSM call rate 70% reduction

- ▶ Special offer by Geocell Co. for refugees - for 4 months almost 70% tariff reduction - 0,09 GEL (app 0,044€) per min.
- ▶ The service is activated on old SIMs, or new SIMs are given for free to the persons whose personal IDs are in the special list of the Ministry of Displaced Persons and Accommodation.
- ▶ over 46000 internally displaced persons from South Ossetia/Inner Kartli and Abkhazia regions have used the offer.
- ▶ during September there were over 131000 refugees. Currently many returned to homes since Russian forces withdrawal from so-called buffer-zones and subsequently their number went down to 32570. Median number of refugees – 81735
- ▶ that shows that around 56% of refugees have used that Emergency relief measure. As penetration rate stands for 70% this means that >80% of refugee GSM users

Pros and Cons of the action

Pros:

- ▶ Number of newly acquired/activated SIMs – over 12000 (most probably includes subscribers of rival companies switching to Geocell)
- ▶ Approximate increase on talk time – almost 5 min/daily
- ▶ Relief for refugees who lost their phones or stopped their service

Cons

- ▶ Impossible to control if indeed refugees are using the benefits or they given their phones to somebody else
- ▶ overall decrease on company income without state support on rate reduction
- ▶ Possible seizing of contract when the offer is ended

Support for disabled

- Project “We Hear You”

- ▶ Project aims to help people with hearing problems (majority of them do not talk either) for whom SMS represents the main mean of communication.
- ▶ Through the project, the same company Geocell - provides the lowest SMS rate - 0,02 GEL (1/3 of usual rate) for deaf persons.
- ▶ Also a special Help manual has been developed for these persons, and special add on gesture language was prepared.
- ▶ For service activation the individuals should bring the certificate from the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social care, that they are registered in the special disableds' list as persons with hearing problems.

Other support for Deaf Persons – training and employment opportunity

- ▶ Formerly deaf children were educated in special school-pansions, which provided some professional toolkits/skills along with secondary education and after graduation the adults were employed on different jobs.
- ▶ As this system remains not so well organized since Soviet collapse, Geocell started in 2007 a special computer center, at the premises of *Georgian Union of Deaf and Mute Persons*, where it educates such adolescents and adults with future prospects to be employed.
- ▶ Computer center has video attached and skype programme and provides opportunity for social networking through gesture language.
- ▶ 7 individuals have been employed at Geocell after they have passed special training.

thanks for attention!

