

WFP News Release

16 August 2008

WFP SENDS FOOD TO GEORGIAN TOWN OF GORI

TBILISI - In response to an urgent request from the Georgian Government, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today dispatched a truckload of food to the conflict-affected town of Gori, where it has been unable to reach people due to insecurity.

“We understand the food situation in Gori has now become desperate,” said WFP Georgia Country Director, Lola Castro. “We are providing the Government with high energy biscuits (HEB) and sugar to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable displaced people in the town.” She added that World Vision International was sending canned meat, buckwheat, pasta and tea with the same consignment.

Last Wednesday, WFP airlifted 34 metric tons of the highly nutritious HEBs – which require no preparation – into Georgia from the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Brindisi, Italy. The HEBs, donated by the European Union, have already been distributed to some 18,000 people in and around the capital, Tbilisi.

Another flight from Brindisi arrived in Tbilisi today with 58 tons of high energy biscuits, donated by USAID.

WFP has identified bakeries near areas where internally displaced people have concentrated, and the agency is supplying wheat flour to make bread for distribution to the hungry. It is also providing food for soup kitchens, set up to enable people – many of whom have no access to cooking facilities – to eat hot food.

So far WFP has provided food assistance to some 34,000 people displaced by the conflict.

WFP is also playing a leading role in coordinating food assistance and will start offering logistical support to other humanitarian organisations, drawing on capacity from its existing operation in the country. Before the crisis erupted, WFP was providing food to more than 212,000 people, mainly poor rural communities, as well as primary schoolchildren, tuberculosis patients and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Tens of thousands of people have fled South Ossetia since the conflict started a week ago. Some 30,000 of them are estimated to have crossed the border into North Ossetia, part of the Russian Federation. WFP is monitoring the situation from its office in the North Ossetian capital, Vladikavkaz.

The Russian Government is providing the displaced population with humanitarian assistance, including food aid. Through its own on-site visits WFP has witnessed that Russia’s aid effort is coming through

effectively in North Ossetia and that the needs of the displaced population are being met. However, WFP remains ready to offer assistance, if required.

The WFP Country Office in Moscow is in regular contact with the Ministry of Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia) to liaise on the substantial aid effort that is taking place in the Russian Federation to assist the conflict affected population from South Ossetia.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions. This year, WFP plans to feed around 90 million people in 80 countries.

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WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.

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