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Assessment of IDP Livelihoods
in Georgia:
Facts and Policies



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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Acknowledgements	6
Executive Summary	7
BACKGROUND	8
PROFILES OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT	13
PROBLEMS AND POLICY CHALLENGES	21
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	38
Bibliography	46
ANNEX	51

List of Abbreviations

ACH	Accion Contre el Hambre
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRINGO	Caucasian Refugee and IDP NGO Network
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRD	International Relief and Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IOCC	International Orthodox Christian Charities
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRD	International Relief and Development
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment
MERLIN	Medical Emergency Relief International
MoLHSA	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
MRA	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation
MSF	Medicine Sans Frontiers
MRA	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OXFAM	OXFAM
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PU	Premiere Urgence
SDC	Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TdH	Terre des Hommes
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHROAG	United Nations Human Rights Office Abkhazia Georgia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOMIG	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WVI	World Vision International

Introduction

This report sums up the situation, as at the beginning of 2009, with regards to internal displacement and related livelihood and vulnerabilities in Georgia, in the wake of the brief war of August 2008. It outlines the challenges ahead for the Government of Georgia, Georgian civil society, international organisations and the donor community.

For almost two decades the plight of IDPs remains one of the most painful aspects of the Georgian reality. Constituting above 5% of the whole society, internal displacement also posed significant and multifaceted challenges to socio-economic development and stabilisation of the country, while many IDPs continue to live in the same dire conditions as fifteen years ago. The majority of IDPs remained, and still remains, poor and vulnerable, their housing conditions are often still abominable, they do not have regular and adequate sources of income, they are not sufficiently integrated into the host societies, and there is little hope of return to their homes. While Georgia could be considered an example of an extended humanitarian emergency, due to large numbers of IDPs from the conflicts of 1992-1993, the situation was further complicated by the new conflict in August 2008, which created additional displacement added to the dimensions of vulnerability of the displaced population, and new challenges that the Georgian society needs to deal with.

The events of August 2008, with many casualties, suffering, devastation, and a major new wave of displacement, not only added to the numbers of IDPs, but also had other implication to the situation of IDPs in Georgia. As a result of the August war, the government plans with regards to improvement of the livelihood of IDPs had to be revised. The “Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy for IDPs-Persecuted”, which was adopted in July 2008 after a long process of negotiation between government agencies and donors, has lost much of its relevance, and preconditions for the implementation of the Action Plan have changed, in particular with regards to return.

As the immediate displacement situation has more or less shifted into a return and stabilization phase, there is a need for coordination and planning for meeting the previously unmet needs of the displaced population, in order to provide IDPs opportunities to take their future in their own hands. While it is important not to reduce direct support during this transitory period while IDPs and returnees are not yet adapted to the new conditions of life, it is also necessary to think beyond immediate tasks and start planning for long-term, durable solutions, even while involved in providing emergency relief and addressing basic needs such as housing and heating.

Currently, both the government of Georgia and the international community are directing significant efforts and resources toward making the livelihoods of all IDPs easier, particularly as the option of return seems to be suspended for the time being. After years of hesitation, the current government is willing to create the necessary preconditions for IDP integration into the Georgian society. All stakeholders aim to offer relevant levels of health care, education, employment, and, equally important, provide every displaced citizen of Georgia with an opportunity to participate in the public policy debate on their future.

The present report attempts to assess the existing reality with regards to displacement, and to describe the prospects for, and the potential directions of development. However, the objective is not to comprehensively cover all issues of IDP livelihood, but to make an attempt to pinpoint the key policy issues and facilitate discussion of new approaches and ideas. The recommendations offered in the report are addressed to the governmental agencies in the first place, but will hopefully also be useful to international actors which are making efforts to help Georgia’s population start living a peaceful, safe and dignified life.

The present work is subject to a number of limitations. It mainly draws from existing data sources, though much information and understanding came from a number of trips to areas with high concentration of IDPs – Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Gori, numerous visits to collective centres and institutions working on the issue, and interviews with IDPs, officials, experts, and other individuals dealing with IDP-related questions.

It is obvious that this assessment could not cover the whole range of problems encountered both by IDPs themselves and the main actors. At least partly this is related to insufficient or unreliable information reflecting the livelihoods of IDPs, and scarcity of quality field research. There also does not exist a common understanding of the priority problems and the policy objectives with regards to IDPs. So, some decision-makers would narrow down the challenge to creating adequate housing for IDPs, while others would demand a more comprehensive and holistic approach to be applied.

If this report activates the debate on this and other issues, while at least a few of its recommendations are considered useful, that would mean that a little step forward has been made.

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Executive Summary

The issue of IDP livelihood is among the most important policy challenges in Georgia, particularly after the August war of 2008.

The Assessment considers the actual reality in which IDPs exist today, their key problems and the policies of the Georgian government in relation to displacement. The key problems are identified as related to housing, poverty, employment, health, education, and security.

The following key challenges for the government in addressing IDP issues effectively are identified:

- First of all, the political will of the government to address the needs and the concerns of IDPs, and to prioritise their wellbeing. But also:
- Thoughtful and qualified strategic planning;
- Effective implementation of strategic plans which depends on the effective allocation of responsibilities and coordination between different governmental and international agencies;
- Effective decision making which is only possible if it is based on reliable and relevant information gathering mechanisms.
- Provision of relevant information which should be shared between agencies and with the public, in accordance with a consistent communications strategy.
- Measures aimed at raising public awareness which are necessary in order to enhance public participation in decision making and popular support for planned policies.
- And a comprehensive, holistic approach to IDP integration, including targeted interventions to livelihoods and particularly vulnerable people.

Key Findings:

- Continuous instability along the administrative borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as essential unpredictability of external actors, may still lead to a resumption of hostilities and new displacement.
- The current system of administering the IDP issues is marred by inefficiency, overlap and vague delimitation of responsibilities, centralization of power and responsibilities, frequent rotation of leadership that erodes institutional memory, and problem of a clear strategic vision.
- The majority of IDPs still live in collective centres and are much more vulnerable than the general population.
- The current tendency of resettling ‘new’ IDPs in settlements located in economically underdeveloped rural area may lead to a perpetuation of the state of vulnerability and poverty of the IDPs.
- Currently, there is little probability that IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia will be able to return en mass to their homes any time soon, therefore they need durable solutions, including to improve livelihood and housing conditions.
- In the long term, the most vulnerable groups of IDPs are children, adolescents, elderly and the disabled, lacking reliable care and living in inadequate conditions.
- The population of the Gali region are living under psychologically stressful conditions because of the uncertainty of their future and the security situation in the region.
- One-for-all solutions may not be helpful to afford durable solutions for particularly vulnerable households, especially the elderly and the disabled.

Recommendations

In the area of IDP livelihoods, five priorities should be considered:

- ❖ Reforming management of IDP issues;
- ❖ Securing adequate housing for IDPs;
- ❖ Securing adequate livelihoods for IDPs;
- ❖ Meeting special needs of the particularly vulnerable persons among IDPs;
- ❖ Increasing the emergency preparedness of the state.

In relation to the strategic framework underpinning these priority areas, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The Government should take measures to increase the feeling of ownership or participation of IDPs themselves in decisions or policies that directly concern the IDP's livelihood and future;
- Special attention should be paid to achieving full transparency with regards to disbursement of international aid;
- Whenever possible, international assistance should use resources, goods and services locally available, in order to support IDP livelihoods and economic development in general;
- The existing system of managing IDP related issues should be streamlined and decentralised, including abolishing the duplication of functions and ambiguity in the distribution of responsibilities between agencies.

BACKGROUND

Socio-economic conditions before August 2008

Since the early 1990s, Georgia has been in a process of prolonged post-communist transformation, undergoing systemic changes of institutions, productive structures, and political and economic behaviour. As a result of this protracted political-economic situation, the ethno-territorial conflicts and the weakness of the state, the quality of life in Georgia remains poor, and a significant portion of the population remains extremely disadvantaged.

During the last years Georgia has experienced certain achievements in its development, such as strengthened fiscal discipline, rapidly growing FDI, stable GDP and budget growth¹, as well as a radical reduction in low-level corruption. Over the period between 2000 and 2008, the average monthly per capita income followed an upward trend, as the budget grew six-fold. Monetary income and transfers almost tripled in the same period and the average household income grew significantly². Georgia maintained a strong economic performance until August 2008, when the conflict with Russia led to severe shocks to macroeconomic stability and a sharp deterioration in investor and consumer confidence. GDP growth had averaged above 12 percent in 2007 and 8.6 percent in the first half of 2008³.

However, notwithstanding significant macroeconomic success until August 2008, mass poverty was not alleviated⁴ and unemployment rates and social inequality remained high⁵. The majority of the population did not feel

¹ Government tax revenue has risen from GEL 1.2 billion (USD 558 million) in 2003 to GEL 4.4 billion (USD 2.6 billion) in 2007, a 172 percent increase in absolute terms (Georgian Economic Trends, February 2008, p. 26). Respectively, total central Government spending rose from GEL 897 million (USD 417 million) in 2003 to GEL 5.2 billion (USD 3.1 billion) in 2007. (State Budgets for 2003-2007, Ministry of Finance, Tbilisi, 2008. http://www.mof.ge/Default.aspx?sec_id=1482&lang=1)

² Household Disposable Income Continues to Grow. Department of Statistics of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2 July 2008. http://www.eugbc.net/files/13_47_558311_HouseholdIncomeContinuestoGrow.pdf

³ Georgia: First Review under the Stand-By Arrangement. International Monetary Fund, IMF Country Report No. 09/1. January 2009 <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2009/cr0901.pdf>

⁴ See, e.g. Georgia Human Development Report, UNDP, Tbilisi, 2008. (pp. 34, 63): "In 2003, Government figures show that 54 percent of families were living in poverty. This went down to 52 percent in 2004 (Government of Georgia. Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Program: Progress Report, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2005. p. 4) ... The Government has not released this figure since 2005, instead releasing a 'relative poverty' figure which is probably more accurately described as a measure of income distribution than poverty... As an alternative indicator, initial estimates published by the IMF (using World Bank figures) suggests that absolute poverty has increased marginally, from 27 percent in 2004 to 31 percent in 2007 (International Monetary Fund, Sixth Review Under the Three-Year Arrangement Under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and Request for Waiver of Performance Criterion, March 2007. p.15). Slightly higher than this, about 1.5 million people, or

that they had benefited much from the economic recovery.⁶ The monetary income of more than half of the population remained low and amounted to just half of the subsistence minimum for an average person. Although during 2000-2007, combined monetary and non-monetary per capita income increased almost two and a half times, it still remained below the minimum subsistence level, and was growing partly due to inflation. In 2004 the minimum subsistence level of a working age male was calculated to sum up to GEL 84.3, but it already totalled GEL 118.6 in 2007.⁷

Poverty is to a great extent correlated with inadequate employment opportunities.⁸ Notwithstanding economic growth, most of the population remain self-employed, mainly in agriculture, and due to its low productivity, have little prospect for improving their economic and social status. Though the share of employment in private enterprises and agriculture has somewhat increased, employment in public sector and self-employment in rural non-agriculture sector decreased, partly due to privatisation of state enterprises and disruption of external (Russian) markets.

The labour force participation rate was characterised by an annual fall, a trend observed since 2003, although during the first half of 2008 this trend was dramatically reversed, and grew by 5% to reach almost 65% of the working age population (though this partially due to the decrease of the working-age population). Respectively, the total employment rate grew to 86.5 % of the total labour force. During the last year, the labour force participation rate also grew in absolute numbers.

Importantly, hired-employment opportunities seem to have been falling behind those of self-employment during the last years, as the share of self-employment grew. While some sectors of economy (construction, finance, communications, tourism, mining) registered the highest rates of growth in output and real earnings, they accounted for only 8% of the total employment.⁹

Having comprised by early 2008 some 64.6 percent of the total employment, mainly in the agricultural and subsistence components of self-employment, the latter remains an important input into the household budgets for many, and still is for some Georgians the only way of earning a living. This also reflects the difficulties in starting up small businesses despite a favourable regulatory environment.¹⁰

Against the background of unabated poverty, the national system of social security has acquired particular importance.¹¹ Social protection - including pensions and pension supplements for particular groups, child benefits, disability benefits and, more recently, targeted social assistance - traditionally absorbs a significant share of the state budget. Government spending on social protection increased from GEL 101 million (USD 47 million) in 2003, or 11 percent of overall expenditure, to GEL 778 million (USD 466 million) or 15 percent of the overall budget in 2007. Moreover, in 2008 the Government decided to make the budget more 'social' by further increasing spending on social assistance to GEL 1.1 billion (USD 724 million) or 23 percent of the overall budget. It is, however, too early to assess the actual budget spending on the social sphere after the August events.

Social aid programmes in Georgia have traditionally been status-based, rather than needs-driven, targeting rigid categories of the population such as pensioners, veterans, disabled persons, orphans and IDPs. The share of state transfers in the average household income structure remains rather low but the size of pensions and social allowances

slightly over one third of the population, classify themselves poor by registering in the database of socially vulnerable families. (Ministry of Labor Health and Social Affairs: Social Subsidies Agency. Report on the Recipients of Social Assistance, Tbilisi, Georgia, Government of Georgia. Sept 2007)... Finally, by the UNDP's two dollars a day estimate, 25 percent of the population lives in poverty." (accessed at: <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/02060DFC-F203-1EE9-B8EEBC823D615E62>)

⁵ According to the UNDP published global Human Development Report 2007-2008, Gini index for Georgia was alarming 40.4, while the percentage of the population living below two dollars a day – 25.3%. See: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/147.html> and <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/24.html>

⁶ In September 2007, 8 % of respondents said their economic situation had improved while 46 % said that it had worsened (International Republican Institute, Georgian National Voter Survey, Tbilisi, Sept 2007. p. 10). According to the Caucasus Research Resource Centers Data Initiative, having polled nationwide a representative sample of 3,300 people, only 18 % reported their financial position to have improved between 2005 and 2006 (Caucasus Research Resource Centres, Data Initiative. Tbilisi 2008) (Quoted from Georgia Human Development Report 2008, UNDP, Tbilisi)

⁷ Iakob Meskhia. Living Standards and Poverty in Georgia. *Georgian Economic Trends*, May 2008. pp. 53-61 <http://www.geplac.org/eng/trends.php>

⁸ *Georgian Economic Trends*, October 2008; Department of Statistics of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2 July 2008. http://www.eugbc.net/files/13_47_558311_HouseholdIncomeContinuestoGrow.pdf

⁹ Georgia: Economy, Poverty and Environment. Poverty and Environment Initiative Inception Workshop. Bratislava, 9 December 2008. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/uploads/public1/files/PEI%20Inception%20Workshop/Georgian%20Economy.ppt>

¹⁰ Ivan Samson. Medium-Term Prospects for the Georgian Economy. *Georgian Economic Trends*, February 2008. pp. 63-77

¹¹ Georgia Human Development Report 2008: The Reforms and Beyond. UNDP, Tbilisi, 2008 <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/02060DFC-F203-1EE9-B8EEBC823D615E62>

is gradually increasing, and are of decisive importance for the survival of the vulnerable groups of population. Solidarity-based pension payments remain the largest subsection of the budget for social assistance. By 2008 there were ca. 839,000 pensioners in Georgia, and the total budget for pensions in 2007 added up to around GEL 500 million (USD 299 million). The pensions further increased to GEL 70 (USD 46.1) per month in the spring of 2008, and the Government has set as an objective to increase pensions to an equivalent of USD 100 (GEL 160) by 2009, though these plans had now to be postponed.

Moreover, since 2005 the Government has developed the institutional infrastructure necessary to provide targeted social assistance. The Social Services Agency (SSA) put together a database of socially vulnerable families that includes ca. 470,000 households or 1.5 million people (about a third of the population), who have applied to be included in the database and have their status assessed. A Government assessor (social agent) would then visit the family to assign each family a score of vulnerability, based on a certain set of poverty 'indicators'. In April 2008, 135,000 families (360,000 people), or about 12 % of families (8% of the population) received cash social assistance this way. The social assistance currently totals a maximum of GEL 30 for the first family member and GEL 12 for each family member thereafter. In addition, a wider group from the same list (ca. 700,000), receive medical insurance policies entitling them to largely free access to medical treatment (as of April 2008).¹² Some people are currently receiving social transfers under both the category-based and targeted systems (though this does not include IDP benefits).

Apart from income poverty, other factors contribute to the low quality of life in Georgia. For example, the provision of comfortable housing for the population remains unsatisfactory. Countrywide, ten percent of residential buildings were constructed before 1941 and only four percent were built after 1990. 98 % of the dwellings are supplied with electricity, 46 % with natural or liquid gas, 58 % have a water supply, 46 % are connected to sewage, and 29 % are equipped with a bath or shower.¹³ New residential development in Georgia is almost entirely managed by the private sector, and there is only a very limited supply of public housing which is being constructed by international actors such as the SDC. Since the large scale and hurried privatization of housing stock of early 1990s, the state rarely interferes with residential development even to meet the housing needs of the poorest section of the population (the specific case of IDP housing will be discussed below).

Migration has become an increasingly popular way to solve economic and social problems. Traditionally, Georgians have avoided emigration and there have been only small diaspora groups abroad. However, since the early 1990s the incessant economic crisis and political instability have driven hundreds of thousands of Georgia's productive citizens abroad in search of security, livelihood, better opportunities for self-realisation, or better education. To date, Georgia has lost about one fifth of its population to emigration,¹⁴ and according to estimates by expert up to 10 percent of the households have at least one member who has migrated to work.

While Russia and CIS were initially the main destination of migrants, lately Europe has become an increasingly popular destination for labour migrants,¹⁵ in part due to higher remuneration and lifestyle preference, but also due to the worsening conditions in Russia. Migrants tend to be highly educated, married and of working-age, and women have increasingly joined men in migration flows, though each gender has different geographic preferences. Labour migrants who return have a high potential for re-migration due to the lack of viable employment. High emigration causes a loss of highly-skilled Georgians. Remittances, however, have been vital to the economic livelihood of many Georgians, officially constituting up to 6.5% of GDP (as of 2005).¹⁶

¹² Georgia Human Development Report 2008: The Reforms and Beyond. UNDP, Tbilisi, 2008. pp. 38-39

¹³ Iakob Meskhia, *op.cit.*

¹⁴ M.O. Katz et al. Migration and Return in Georgia: Trends, Assessments, and Potential. Danish Refugee Council and Caucasus Research Resource Centres – Georgia. Tbilisi, November 2007; *Labour Migration from Georgia*, 2003, International Organisation of Migration and the Association for Economic Education. Available at: <http://www.iom.ge/index.php?publications&Labour> ; N. Chelidze, *Labour Migration from Post-Soviet Georgia*, Tbilisi: Lega Publishing House, 2006. M. Tukhashvili (ed.). *Migration*, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, 2007; N. Chelidze, *Labour Migration from Post-Soviet Georgia*, Tbilisi: Lega Publishing House, 2006.

¹⁵ Regarding the geographic source of remittances from Georgian labour migrants abroad, the largest flows come from Russia (63.1 %), the USA (13.6 %), Greece (3.3 %), Spain (3 %), Ukraine (2.1 %), Turkey (2.1 %) and Austria (1.7 %). See: Kakulia, Merab. Labour Migrants' Remittances to Georgia: Volume, Structure and Socio-Economic Effect. *Georgian Economic Trends*, October 2007. pp. 49-57; Badurashvili, I., *Illegal Migrants from Georgia: Labour Market Experiences and Remittance Behaviour*, Georgian Centre for Population Research <http://iussp2005.princeton.edu/abstractViewer.aspx?submissionId=51259>

¹⁶ According to 2006 estimate by the UN Global Commission on International Migration the figure of remittances to Georgia equals ca. USD 1 billion annually. www.gcim.org/attachements/RS3.pdf

Conflicts

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Georgia's declaration of independence in 1991, conflicts broke out in two of Georgia's regions, South Ossetia (1991-2) and Abkhazia (1992-3). These conflicts displaced about 300,000 people (both IDPs and refugees) or about 7 percent of Georgia's total population. Ceasefires were signed by

the parties to the conflicts and peacekeeping forces were deployed to monitor these agreements, but peace remained elusive.



An elderly Georgian couple escapes from a house set on fire in Kvemo-Achebeti. ©Yuri Kozyrev NOOR for TIME
<http://www.russia-georgia.ru/?p=2076>

In August 2008, the conflicts erupted again, causing a new wave of displacement from the areas involved in military action. Ethnic Georgians were mainly displaced from Gori and villages along the border of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and also the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia and Didi Liakhvi valley and Akhagori district in South Ossetia.

On August 12, the so-called Medvedev-Sarkozy ceasefire agreement was signed by the parties, stipulating a withdrawal of all troops to their positions as of August 7, an end to military actions, and free access for humanitarian aid. By mid-October, Russian troops had withdrawn from all

areas outside the former autonomies of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while continuing to control Georgian-populated territories within the respective former administrative borders of these entities, including the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia and the Akhagori district and Perevi village in South Ossetia.

While the first two rounds of the UN-OSCE-EU facilitated Geneva talks between parties in conflict were leading nowhere and blocked by procedural disagreements, the third and fourth round held on December 2008 and February 2009, moved to address some substantive issues and focused on conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. Participants agreed in principle on broad terms of issues and implementation mechanisms, and eventually achieved certain progress, on February 17, 2009, agreeing on "Proposals for joint incident prevention and response mechanisms."¹⁸



Tent camp in Gori, September 2008, Photo: InterPresNews
<http://www.civil.ge/geo/category.php?id=87&gallery=33&phot>

¹⁷ The August war will not be further elaborated on here. For more information, see, for example,

Russia vs. Georgia: The Fallout. International Crisis Group. Europe Report 195, 22 August 2008

<http://se1.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=ISN&fileid=3BEDCCEB-6652-BB5E-0128-C80A5699CADD&lng=en> Svante E. Cornell, Johanna Popjanevski, Niklas Nilsson. Russia's War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World. Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, SAIS. August 2008 <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0808Georgia-PP.pdf>

¹⁸ Highlights of Press Conference By Co-Chairs Of Geneva Discussions. UN Office in Geneva, 18 February 2009

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/64FD12F05BEEE7C5C125756100611B78?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/64FD12F05BEEE7C5C125756100611B78?OpenDocument) ; Russia and

In spite of such developments, expectations regarding any breakthrough in conflict resolution are minimal, and the existing facts indicate that there is little hope for either agreeing on the status issue for the breakaway regions of Abkhazia or South Ossetia, or the mass return of IDPs in the near future. At the same time, international observation missions, particularly those of OSCE and UN, are encountering fundamental difficulties with the continuation of their activities.¹⁹

General impact of the August war and of the global economic crisis

Although the Georgian economy is still weakly integrated into the world economic system, the global economic crisis has unavoidably added pressure to the already fragile Georgian economy. In addition to the negative impact of the post-conflict security situation on the business environment, investment capital generally tends to withdraw from development economies in times of crisis in order to minimise risks. Annual inflation rose sharply to 12.75 % in August due to major transportation and supply disruptions, but fell to 7 percent in October. The economic downturn in neighbouring countries has further damaged the Georgian economy, whose wellbeing strongly depends on its transit capacity, as well as on the price of the transported commodities. Revisions of the balance of payments point to decreasing private FDI, remittances and other capital flows in 2009. Most investors have either withdrawn or remain in a wait-and-see mode, with only ongoing projects being implemented. Even though the envisaged donor support is expected to help counteract these negative impacts, experts assume that the economy would be subject to (i) balance of payments pressures; (ii) higher risk of financial stress from a weakening bank loan portfolio; and (iii) risk of downward trends in economic growth.²⁰

While as a result of poor performance in the second half of 2008 the annual GDP growth is expected to make about 3.5%, in 2009 the authorities expect a real GDP growth of 4 percent, as higher public spending, the main contributor to growth in 2009, may offset subdued private investment. GDP growth is however subject to downward risks as it would largely rely on the effectiveness of public spending and the timeliness of donor funding.

As a consequence of the August events, the Georgian society has experienced a major shock, and the war will have far-reaching political, social, and economic implications, further aggravated by the global crisis.²¹ Among other things, the new wave of displacement needs to be urgently addressed, along with the long-standing needs of IDPs from the previous stages of the conflicts. According to preliminary estimates by the World Bank,²² between 100 000 and 280 000 Georgians may fall into poverty by the end of 2009, depending on the severity of the economic impact of the crisis. This would increase the overall poverty level from 23.6 percent of the population in 2007 to between 25.9 and 30.0 percent, and the extreme poverty incidence from 9.3 percent to between 11.3 and 13.4 percent (see Tables 1 and 2 below). Moreover, projections indicate that unemployment may increase from 13.3% in 2007 to 15.1% by 2010. All these factors will probably have a significant impact on the livelihood and life quality of IDPs and other vulnerable groups of the population.

Georgia agree on “Joint Incident Prevention Mechanism”. European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity.

19 February 2009 <http://www.europeanforum.net/news/568> ; See the document at:

<http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/mechanismENG.pdf>

¹⁹ Joanna Zeber. Impasse in Georgia As International Missions May Withdraw. SAIS, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 28 January 2009. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/>

²⁰ Georgia: First Review under the Stand-By Arrangement. International Monetary Fund, IMF Country Report No. 09/1. January 2009 <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2009/cr0901.pdf>

²¹ See, e.g.: After August 2008: Consequences of the Russian-Georgian War. CIPDD, Tbilisi, 2008; S. E. Cornell, J. Popjanevski, N. Nilsson. *Op.cit.*; Aleksandra Posarac, Nino Moroshkina, Satoshi Ishihara and Joanna De Berry. Poverty and Social Impact of the Crisis. The World Bank, Tbilisi. *Draft*, October 2006.

²² The World Bank. *Op.cit.* The estimate combines the impact on the employment/livelihood of the displaced population, as well as on the population elsewhere in Georgia. It however does not assume any arrears in the payment of wages in the public sector and social transfers (pensions, social assistance and others). An alternative estimate of the poverty impact of the crisis was simulated using the 2007 Living Standard Measurement Survey data set and assuming that the purchasing power of the population clustered above the poverty lines would decline by 5, 10 and 20 percent. If the purchasing power declines by 5 percent, the extreme and overall poverty rates would increase to 10.4 and 26.3 percent respectively. If the decline is 10 percent, these rates would increase to 11.8 percent of the population in the case of the extreme poverty and to 28.9 percent in the case of the overall poverty. A 20 percent decline in the purchasing power would increase the overall poverty rate by 43 percent – to 33.8 percent. Similarly, the extreme poverty rate would jump by 53 percent affecting 14.3 percent of Georgia population.

Table 1. Social impact of the crisis: preliminary estimates

	2007	Baseline scenario	impact	Substantial impact	Severe impact
New, crisis-related unemployed	-	35,000		55,000	80,000
Unemployed (total)	261,000	296,000		316,000	341,000
Unemployment rate (%)	13.3	15.1		16.1	17.4
New, crisis-related poor	-	100,000		180,000	280,000
Poor population (000)	1,037	1,137		1,217	1,317
Overall poverty incidence (%)	23.6	25.9		27.7	30.0
New, crisis-related extreme poverty	-	90,000		130,000	180,000
Population in extreme poverty	409,000	499,000		539,000	589,000
Extreme poverty incidence (%)	9.3	11.3		12.3	13.4

Source: World Bank²³

On the positive side, while the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA)²⁴ carried out by the World Bank and the UN concluded that Georgia would require \$3.75 billion over three years in reconstruction and stabilisation funding, 38 countries and fifteen international organisations at the donors conference in Brussels on 22 October 2008 pledged more than \$4.5 billion over a three-year period – \$2 billion in direct aid, the rest via low-interest loans. Although the detailed disbursement schedule is uncertain, \$450 million were to be granted immediately for the urgent social needs of IDPs.²⁵ Some \$1.3 billion were expected in 2008–09 to support budgetary needs and capital projects, and about \$500 million for lending and equity injections in commercial banks, to help them meet the external obligations due in 2009. The pledges included \$2.6 billion for “core investments” – energy, transportation and civil infrastructure.²⁶

PROFILES OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

As a result of the August war, a new caseload of IDPs was added to the plight of the IDPs originating from the conflicts of early 1990s. Although the ‘new’ IDPs were in some cases accommodated in collective centres with the ‘old’ IDPs, and although some of the displaced were actually experiencing displacement for a second time, there are differences between these two groups and they were subject of different policy responses.

Table 2 indicates that the new displacement never reached the same numbers as in 1991-1993. In addition, the absolute majority of the ‘new’ IDPs were soon able to return to their homes – mainly in the area adjacent to South Ossetia, and the city of Gori. Moreover, those who are unable to return in the foreseeable future were given the opportunity to obtain individual housing. Unlike the ‘old’ IDPs, they did not have to settle for decades in collective centres, but only stayed there for a few months. In addition, while the first wave of IDPs was mainly constituted by persons displaced from Abkhazia, this time the absolute majority of IDPs were from South Ossetia and adjacent regions. Only a couple of thousands came from Abkhazia, the majority of them from the Kodori Gorge and about 5,000 were temporarily displaced from adjacent areas.

²³ Aleksandra Posarac, Nino Moroshkina, Satoshi Ishihara and Joanna De Berry. Poverty and Social Impact of the Crisis. The World Bank, Tbilisi. Draft, October 2006

²⁴ A Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) was prepared for the World Bank and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) on the request from the Government of Georgia. The purpose of the JNA was to assess damages and economic losses resulting from the conflict and to develop estimates of the financial assistance required to address the losses and re-establish the conditions for sustained growth. *Georgia: Summary of Joint Needs Assessment Findings. Prepared for the Donors' Conference of October 22, 2008 in Brussels*. World Bank & UN, Tbilisi, October 2008

²⁵ Overall, while donor pledges or assistance to Georgia exceeded the funding requirements calculated by the JNA team, donor commitment to support for IDPs fell below the JNA estimates. Donor support to UN Flash Appeal was also far below the funding requirements estimated by UN agencies. In core areas, such as shelter, UNHCR’s funding requirements for live-saving projects were met only at the level of one third, by the end of December 2008 when harsh winter conditions prevailed. Source: Private communication

²⁶ Georgia: First Review under the Stand-By Arrangement. International Monetary Fund, IMF Country Report No. 09/1. 2009

New Displacement and Vulnerability

During the first days of the August war, about 30,000 inhabitants of South Ossetia reportedly moved to Russia's North Ossetia, while more than 127,000 persons were displaced within the territorial borders of the Republic of Georgia at that earlier stage.²⁷ The latter mainly originated from Gori and villages along the border of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as from the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia. According to available information, about 30,000 refugees had returned to South Ossetia from Russia already by September 2008.²⁸ The fate of those displaced within Georgia will be discussed below. Many of those who are or were actually displaced were registered by the state authorities (Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation), but have not yet acquired official IDP status, as their future status is dependent on the security situation along the Abkhazian/South Ossetian borders. Acquiring a legal IDP status is relevant in Georgia because of the respective allowances and other benefits that registered IDPs are entitled to receive. Additionally there is the perception that the status is a sort of confirmation of the right to return and own property in conflict zones. The decision on the registration issue is pending until the process has been stabilised and it becomes clear how many of the affected population remain IDPs. There is yet no officially publicised strategy regarding this group of people, though the government was rather responsive to their needs and considers it a priority to meet them.

Table 2. Breakdown of 'new' displacement by temporary location.²⁹
(excl. South Ossetia and Abkhazia)

Regions	IDPs from the August war, 2008 [peak of 3 October 2008]	
Adjara	1 980	
Guria	1 130	
Imereti	5 716	
Kakheti	4 350	
Kvemo Kartli	6 523	
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	3 344	
Racha-Lechkhumi & Kvemo Svaneti	182	
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	178	
Samtskhe-Javakheti	6 297	
Shida Kartli	14 601	
Tbilisi	86 995	
Not identified	1 760	
TOTAL	133 056	
	Collective Centres	Private Accommodation
	64 374	68 682

(Source: OCHA, 2008, Civil Registry Agency and the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, with estimated +/- 3000 persons margin of errors)³⁰

It is clear from the above table that the bulk of displaced people were taken in either in Tbilisi, where there were available facilities in the form of government buildings belonging to schools, kindergartens or research institutions all of whose activities were temporarily suspended, or Shida Kartli, the areas immediately adjacent to South Ossetia. This is on one hand natural given the emergency situation and logistical considerations, but on the other hand, this also indicates that authorities appeared unprepared for such emergency, and had to make quick decisions.

By the late fall 2008, the majority of the displaced population went back to their homes in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia (and to less extent to Abkhazia).³¹

²⁷ Situation Report No. 5 on the Situation in Georgia. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 20 August 2008 http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/retrieveattachments?openagent&shortid=MYAI-7JF7YZ&file=Full_Report.pdf

²⁸ Emergency Operation in Georgia. UNHCR, Tbilisi. 12 September 2008. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf>

²⁹ The numbers slightly differ from those presented in the JNA and other sources, probably due to the somewhat ambiguous definition of displacement and multiple registration, but also due to accounting for the later waves of displacement. According to UN estimates as of 11 November 2008, the total number of people affected by the August events is 134,798. *Cnf: Displacement Figures & Estimates – "August 2008 Conflict"* - UN Georgia, 11 November 2008. <http://www.relief.migration.ge/intranet/>

³⁰ Quoted in: Georgia Health Cluster, Bulletin No. 1, 13 October 2008 http://www.euro.who.int/Document/EHA/GEO_HC_sitrep_1.pdf

The so called 'adjacent' area encompasses some 50 villages with an estimated population of 24,000. Notwithstanding the presence of international observers, the population continues to feel unsafe. In some areas (most notably the village of Perevi³² on the western border of South Ossetia, in the Akhagori district in the east of South Ossetia³³), the ethnic Georgian population is reported to be under pressure from non-Georgian authorities, a pressure which causes additional and continuing displacement.³⁴

Since early October 2008, the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to Georgia is patrolling the area north of Gori and adjacent to the administrative border of South Ossetia, providing, together with police, a sense of security. However, as the mandate of the OSCE mission to Georgia expired on 31 December 2008 and has not been renewed due to the veto imposed by Russian diplomats,³⁵ the presence of unarmed military monitoring officers was only prolonged until the end of June, 2009.³⁶

There are several different groups of 'new' IDPs and vulnerable individuals and households, which posed different policy challenges:

- *IDPs from Gori and from villages in the 'adjacent' area.* These (ca. 100,000 displaced individuals) in most cases have already returned and the rest will be able to go back soon provided that the condition of their homes allow and that there is no deterioration in the security situation. Though some of those with destroyed housing will still need short term shelter before spring, UNHCR with its partners implemented projects in Shida Kartli providing 400 one-room cottages built in the IDPs own yards, thereby supporting their return to their place of origin. The project targeted the population whose property was severely damaged during the conflict and is not expected to be rehabilitated in the near future (or the rehabilitation is not feasible due to essential damage). Still, for many rural families, the harvest was disrupted by the conflict and their fields have been mined or are otherwise become dangerous due to unexploded ordnance, and this has caused a shortage of food. In addition to this, there are also problems relating to heating and a need for the rehabilitation of infrastructure, damaged as a result of military action or looting. During the last winter returned people in the adjacent area depended on firewood and war cloths distributed by UNHCR and its partners. Since most villages have no access to forests and markets, beyond the administrative border, and since most villages have not restored their livelihoods this need will remain during the next winter. There is also an urgent need to assess the potential risks related to the unexploded ordnance in the areas of return, and to assess the need for mine risk education and clearance activities in the affected areas.
- *Population temporarily displaced from adjacent areas who were expected to return to their homes by the coming spring.* These (estimated to number just a few thousand) households were forced to stay displaced not only due to security considerations, but also because their houses were fully or partially destroyed and their crops and essential assets damaged during the war. These IDPs live in temporary shelter either in collective centres or with host families for the winter before they can go back and repair their homes in the spring. This group of IDPs needs support in terms of food, heating, income generating activities, social services, psycho-social rehabilitation and restored access to healthcare and education. They will also need assistance in repairing their houses and

³¹ See e.g. International Crisis Group. Georgia: The Risks of Winter. Europe Briefing N°51, Tbilisi/Brussels, 26 November 2008. p. 4

³² Perevi is a small village (population ca. 1000) in Sachkhere district in Imereti/Western Georgia, on most part outside the administrative borders of South Ossetia. There was prolonged presence and movement of the Russian military since October 2008, notwithstanding a number of protests from EU observers to the region. See, e.g. Russian Military Retakes Georgia Border Village. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 December 2008. http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_Military_Retakes_Georgia_Border_Village/1359379.html

³³ The Akhagori district had the population of 7,700, with approximately 2,000 living in the town of Akhagori (Leningor in Ossetian sources) itself, located along the river Ksani valley. The largest villages are Ikorta, Korinta, Qanchaveti, Kvemo Zakhori, Largvisi, Doretkari, and Karchokhi. The population before the conflict was primarily Georgian (6,520) and Ossetian (1,110) with good relations between the two communities. While in Soviet times it was a part of South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, but until August 2008 was since a part of Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. Currently there are stationed Russian and Ossetian military units, while above 5,000 of its population have moved to Georgia proper.

³⁴ See, e.g.: Luc van den Brande, Mátyás Eörsi (Co-rapporteurs). The implementation of Resolution 1633 (2008) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia: Preliminary draft explanatory memorandum. PACE Monitoring Committee. 17 December 2008, Strasbourg http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/retrieveattachments?openagent&shortid=YSAR-7METR5&file=Full_Report.pdf

³⁵ Russia Blocks Georgia OSCE Mission Extension. Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 22 December 2008 <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20171>; Joanna Žeber. Impasse in Georgia As International Missions May Withdraw. SAIS, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 28 January 2009.

³⁶ On 12 February, 2009, the 56 OSCE participating States agreed today to extend until 30 June the presence of the Organization's unarmed military monitoring officers in Georgia. The decision states: "The Permanent Council decides to extend until 30 June 2009, its decision No. 861 of 19 August 2008, without prejudice to any further PC decisions on the future OSCE presence." http://www.osce.org/georgia/item_1_36252.html

assets and in restoring livelihoods once they return. In some cases IDPs are waiting for more security, particularly when returning to areas in the immediate proximity of the administrative borders;

- *Newly displaced IDPs originating from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.* It is expected that the majority of the IDPs originating from South Ossetia and Abkhazia will not be able to return in the foreseeable future. Moreover, approximately 5300 people were recently displaced from the Akhagori district, and the process reportedly continues³⁷, possibly involving also Perevi village on the western border of South Ossetia. Equally unclear is the fate of the Georgian population from the Kodori Gorge.³⁸ Some 37,000 people are hence expected to be middle- or long-term displaced³⁹. It is clear that durable housing could not be immediately provided for a segment of the population, entailing that some would have to move into temporary accommodation first and will only be provided with long-term accommodation at a later stage. However, the majority of newly displaced households did receive permanent accommodation relatively soon due to ongoing massive construction work (by late December 2008, up to four thousand new houses were built, while almost ten thousand were rehabilitated in territories adjacent to South Ossetia),⁴⁰ mainly in the Shida Kartli, but also in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kvemo Kartli regions. These households have the same need for income generation, food, healthcare and education, and other forms of assistance, as the IDP households mentioned previously, with the difference being that assistance to these households should be planned in relation to the longer term. However, as observed in the JNA document,⁴¹ resettlement will not be sustainable without livelihood support and the full-fledged integration of IDPs. Constructed without proper planning and appropriate consideration of livelihoods and essential services, there is a risk that these settlements will become slum areas or that they will be deserted for urban areas in the short term.
- *The remaining population in the settlements in the Akhagori district.* As mentioned above, the future is unclear for the remaining population in the settlements in the Akhagori district.⁴² The same is true for the ethnic Georgians in the Perevi village in western South Ossetia. The South Ossetian administration and the Russian army, which have established a presence in these formally undisputed areas were reportedly pressing the population to adopt Russian citizenship if they want to stay.⁴³ As a result of various pressures, some additional displacement is still possible from this area.⁴⁴ In any case, stabilisation of the situation of people in these areas is not in sight.

³⁷ "At this stage [November 2008], the Civil Registry Agency at the Ministry of Justice of Georgia reported to have registered 5368 IDPs from Akhagori. Military commander of the Russian troops in South Ossetia, Colonel A. V. Tarasov in his conversation with the representatives of Russian NGO "Memorial" did not hide that there was in fact the desire among the South Ossetian troops to expel ethnic Georgians from the region". Ethnic Cleansing of Georgians Resulted from Russian Invasion and Occupation since August 8, 2008. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.GEO.CO.3.Add.1.AnnexIII.doc>

³⁸ Kodori Gorge Refugees in Limbo. Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), 22 January 2009 http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=349387&apc_state=henh

³⁹ "...according to government estimates, some 37,605 IDPs will not return in the foreseeable future. This figure includes 19,111 IDPs from the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, 1,821 IDPs from the upper Kodori Valley, as well as those IDPs who will spend the winter in displacement, namely 11,500 who cannot return to the area adjacent to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia for reasons such as security or destruction of property, and some 5,173 IDPs from Akhagori." Mission to Georgia. Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin. Addendum. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.13.Add.2.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ministers Brief on IDP Housing Project. Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 24 December 2008 <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20189>

⁴¹ *Georgia: Summary of Joint Needs Assessment Findings. Prepared for the Donors' Conference.* World Bank & UN, October 2008. Please pay attention to the discrepancies between statistical data presented in different documents and reflected in subsequent tables, appearing due to the different timing of data collection and other factors. Still, they provide useful approximation and demonstrate general trends.

⁴² Before the conflict, Akhagori district had a population of 7,700, with approximately 2,000 living in the Akhagori town itself. The largest villages are Ikorta, Korinta, Qanchaveti, Kvemo Zakhori, Largvisi, Doretkari, and Karchokhi. The population was primarily Georgian (6,520) and Ossetian (1,110), with good relations between the two communities.

⁴³ Border Villages Being 'Russified'. EurasiaNet, 8/30/08 <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp083007.shtml> Damien McElroy. South Ossetian police tell Georgians to take a Russian passport, or leave their homes. Telegraph. 31 Aug 2008 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/2651836/South-Ossetian-police-tell-Georgians-to-take-a-Russian-passport-or-leave-their-homes.html>; See also: Humanitarian consequences of the armed conflict in the South Caucasus: The "buffer zone" after the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Special Press Release of Human Rights Centre "Memorial" and Demos Centre, Moscow, 5 November 2008. <http://www.memo.ru/2008/11/05/0511081.htm>

⁴⁴ Russian Units Return to Perevi Checkpoint. EUMM Press Release Number 09/08. 16 November 2008 <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/161108%20Russians%20return%20to%20Perevi.pdf>; Georgia: The Risks of Winter. International Crisis Group, Europe Briefing N°51. Tbilisi/Brussels, 26 November 2008; Tatiana Kasatkina: Georgian population leaves South-Ossetian Akhagori District. Caucasian Knot, 29/10/2008 <http://eng.kavkaz.memo.ru/newstext/engnews/id/1232314.html>; Dan Catchpole. Talks, Russian forces pause in Georgia. The Washington Times. Thursday, October 16, 2008 <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/oct/16/talks-russian-forces-going-nowhere/?page=2> ;

- *IDPs from the Gali region in Abkhazia.* Part of the spontaneous returnees to the Gali region of Abkhazia (estimated to a total of ca. 45,000) are unable today to easily move across the administrative border, although the situation has improved since October 2008. It is probable that at least part of them will not return, even if they need to, back to their areas of origin, within a foreseeable future. There may also be an outflow of ethnic Georgians from Gali region, if crossings are possible, depending on the policies of the de facto Abkhaz government and the Russian military, and on potential outbursts of violence. Many of these people are registered as IDPs since the conflicts of the early 1990s.⁴⁵ They retained their IDP status as their return was considered as not being sustainable due to security and livelihoods considerations.
- *Vulnerable non-displaced population.* In addition to IDPs, there are other groups who have experienced additional vulnerability as a direct consequence of the August events. The group included most notably the households that have stayed behind, but had their homes and crops, or relevant economic and social infrastructure (schools, healthcare, irrigation, etc.), damaged. It is obvious that these groups will need the same type of assistance as the IDPs/returnees. Equally in need of assistance are households of small means that have sheltered IDPs or other vulnerable families (during and after the conflict). The August war has generally deteriorated the economic situation for the population residing in the conflict affected areas (estimated at 31,000 in immediately adjacent territories), many of whom were already poor (Shida Kartli is considered among the poorest regions of Georgia by recent estimates).⁴⁶

‘Old’ IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia

While the newly displaced persons are still the most vulnerable group of the population, it is important not to neglect the IDPs who have been displaced since the early 1990’s.⁴⁷ It is an astonishing fact that during more than 15 years of displacement, the livelihoods of the great part of IDPs have not actually improved, and in some cases deteriorated. In many such cases, this has led to frustration, hopelessness, fatalism, and passivity.

There are about 13,000 IDPs from South Ossetia, and 209,000 IDPs from Abkhazia, adding up to 222,248 (78,486 households⁴⁸) officially registered IDPs in Georgia. Out of these, according to common estimates, ca. 45,000 have in reality been living in the Gali region of Abkhazia,⁴⁹ but are considered to be IDPs due to the volatility of their situation, although they strictly speaking, from the viewpoint of the Georgian legislation, do not fit into this category.⁵⁰ It should be added that during recent years the Georgian officials were against any measures to register the

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5787>; Luc van den Brande, Mátyás Eörsi (Co-rapporteurs). The implementation of Resolution 1633 (2008) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia. PACE. 17 December 2008, Strasbourg

⁴⁵ JNA estimates that 73,640 persons have spontaneously re-settled (returned), obviously the majority of these – in Gali. Joint Needs Assessment, October 2008. (p. 5). See also: Report on Information and Legal Counselling to IDPs with Regards to the “Verification Exercise”. Norwegian Refugee Council, Tbilisi, August 2005 [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/00C43E919DC64C09C125713E004DEB06/\\$file/Report+on+verification.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/00C43E919DC64C09C125713E004DEB06/$file/Report+on+verification.pdf); Abkhazia: Ways Forward. International Crisis Group. Europe Report N°179 – 18 January 2007 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4619> ; JNA estimates that 73,640 persons have spontaneously settled, obviously the majority of these – in Gali. Joint Needs Assessment, October 2008. (p. 5)

⁴⁶ “Poverty in Georgia is predominantly rural – 59 % of total poor, and 62% of extreme poor. The highest incidence of poverty in Georgia occurs in Shida Kartli (59.4%), with households self-employed in agriculture facing the highest poverty risk.” Georgia Joint Needs Assessment. Sector Annex: Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods. October 2008 (draft); “Poor areas in regional terms are those of Samtskhe-Javakheti, to a certain extent also Shida Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and the mountainous part of Ajara.” Iakob Meskhia. Living Standards and Poverty in Georgia. *Georgian Economic Trends*, May 2008. pp. 53-61 <http://www.geplac.org/eng/trends.php>. See also: Child Poverty in Georgia, UNICEF, (upcoming.) Quoted from: Educational Needs of Conflict-Affected Children in Georgia: Rapid Assessment. A joint document produced by UNICEF, IRC, CHCA, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, Halo Trust. Tbilisi, December 2008

⁴⁷ Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gaps Analysis (Draft). UNHCR, 2008; N. Sumbadze, G. Tarkhan-Mouravi. Working Paper on IDP Vulnerability and Economic Self-Reliance. UNDP, Tbilisi, July 2003.

⁴⁸ This is according to the MRA data, received in December 2008. According to the Joint Needs Assessment of October 2008, while the overall number of IDPs is the same, the number of households was assessed to be ca. 55,000 households, which would give the average size of a household to make 4 persons (while according to the MRA data it is 2.8). Such discrepancy is one more illustration of how unreliable statistics of IDP is, making planning difficult.

⁴⁹ “A special case is presented by Abkhazia, where through the process of spontaneous return thousands of IDPs live permanently or on seasonal basis (to conduct agricultural work on their land plots); they retain their formal status of IDPs due to physical insecurity that characterizes their situation and the uncertainty of their future.” State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Government of Georgia, Tbilisi, February 2, 2007. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/0860F04B3162B38CC12572950056DBED/\\$file/State+Strategy+for+IDP+-+ENG.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/0860F04B3162B38CC12572950056DBED/$file/State+Strategy+for+IDP+-+ENG.pdf)

⁵⁰ The question when people cease to be displaced is somewhat controversial. UNHCR prefers the term “returned IDPs” to refer to the group. For discussion on this issue, see: Erin Mooney. An IDP No More? Exploring the Issue of When Internal Displacement Ends. Discussion Paper, Brookings-CUNY Project on Internal Displacement. Washington, 22 April 2002 http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/conferences/ends_background_paper.pdf

spontaneous returnees to Gali, and therefore any statistical data referring to them is imprecise. Some inhabitants of Gali are currently unable to easily move in and out of Abkhazia and to receive assistance, as the border is more or less closed. It should also be mentioned that several thousand inhabitants of the Kodori Gorge, who used to enjoy the same benefits as IDPs without being displaced, are actually IDPs now.



Nino, 59, stands in one of her family's rooms in one of the annexed buildings for IDPs in the Zugdidi Hospital Centre's Collective Centre, on Sept. 29, 2008. Nino's husband died in the Abkhazian conflict from which she fled. Living conditions within the Centre are deplorable with collapsing ceilings, a flooded basement that seeps water into the floor boards and unsanitary shared bathroom facilities. Twenty-two families live in the CC behind the Zugdidi Hospital.
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<http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0811/taggart-bp.html>

Amirani, 64 and Radion, 60 stand in the basement storage room at the rundown Khobi Swimming Complex which has been the home to families of IDPs for nearly two decades in Khobi, Georgia. Ten families live in the Khobi Swimming Complex today, which has been a Collective Centre (CC) for IDPs from Abkhazia since the conflict in the 90s. The building is structurally unsound, has no running water, and no functioning heating during the winter.

Source: UNHCR / P. Taggart / October 2008

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/unhcr/3047099321/>



⁵¹ "In 2006, the decision was made to change the state approach to IDPs; the process of development of the IDP State Strategy was announced, and in early 2007 the Strategy was approved. Two main goals stated in the Strategy reflected the inherent right of IDPs to return to their native lands or habitual residences, and to improve significantly their living conditions before such return becomes possible..." Presentation of the Minister of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia, Tamar Martiashvili, at 10th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Oslo, 16-17 October 2008. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles/11F176EB457B3F39C12574EA004266C5/\\$file/GP10_speech_Tamar%20Martiashvili.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles/11F176EB457B3F39C12574EA004266C5/$file/GP10_speech_Tamar%20Martiashvili.pdf)

Table 3. Number of ‘old’ IDPs and IDP households by region

Region	households	persons
Tbilisi	32,057	88,276
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	27,728	80,859
Imereti	8,823	24,829
Shida KharTli	2,814	9,650
Kvemo Kartli	2828	8,136
Achara	1819	4,402
Samtskhe-Javakheti	964	2,237
Mtsketa-Mtianeti	449	1213
Kakheti	406	1129
Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti	390	943
Guria	208	575
Total	78,486	222,249

Source: MRA database, accessed December 2009

During the last 15 years many IDPs have experienced significant geographical and social mobility, with a general trend to move to the capital, Tbilisi, where there are more opportunities for improving their livelihood, or to the Gali region (Abkhazia), where there is some access to own land and property, notwithstanding insecurity and a volatile political situation. It is hard to precisely locate many of the IDPs and to gather social statistics about them, even those registered in collective centres. These difficulties are due to a number of factor, such as:

- Labour migration within and outside of Georgia, while preserving the registration in the previous place of domicile;
- Seasonal migration to the Gali region of Abkhazia, though it is unclear how much of this will remain possible;
- Motivation to preserve registration (and premises, even if locked or given out for rent) in collective centres, and whenever possible as smaller households,⁵² presumably to increase control over living space and access to any potential compensation;
- Insecurity in and restricted access to the Gali region impedes the gathering of social statistics;
- Frequent change of address by many IDP-households, particularly those living in private housing;
- Wrong reporting or inadequate methodology addressing the issues of unemployment, income, expenditures, property, and living conditions.

While the above-mentioned factors make it difficult to understand the actual patterns of IDP livelihood, the ‘old’ IDPs can nevertheless be categorised as the following:⁵³

- *Returned IDPs* are frequently registered officially as IDPs in the adjacent areas of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti province in Western Georgia. The majority of the returnees own land and other real estate, and their vulnerability originates from insecurity, high criminality, the volatility of the political situation, and the underdeveloped or destroyed social and economic infrastructure, and additional problems (e.g. some IDP children are not provided education in their native language, male adolescents risk forcible conscription, there are pressures adopt Abkhaz passports and give up Georgian citizenship);⁵⁴

⁵² Se, e.g. Mamuka Nadareishvili, Vasil Tsakadze. Survey about Housing and Social-Economical Conditions of Internally Displaced People: Study of conditions of IDPs from private settlements and comparing them to conditions of IDPs from collective centers. Tbilisi, 2008. According to this important survey, the actual average size of IDP households equals to 3.47 (of those HHs that include at least one IDP member is - 3.90), while according to the official database the average size of HH is 2.82. JNA data indicate that the average household size is 4. One of the reasons for this may be the regressive scale of the Targeted Social Assistance, which would allocate smaller per capita sum in case of bigger families; another is the possibility to claim a separate living space for each part of the divided households.

⁵³ Apart from this categorization based on housing type (private accommodation/collective centres/Gali), there are many other ways to categorize IDPs, referring to certain policies that are to be implemented, or resources to be disbursed (e.g. by types of vulnerability, health status, income, social assistance received, household structure, etc).

⁵⁴ Already back in 2005 Walter Kälin observed, that: “The ‘Law of the Republic of Abkhazia on Citizenship of the Republic of Abkhazia’ of October 2005 potentially creates important difficulties and administrative hurdles for returnees who do not want to accept Abkhaz citizenship even if it were not imposed on them and has no international significance. ... Its article 6 restricts the possibility of acquiring or maintaining dual citizenship to persons of Abkhaz ethnicity, while non-Abkhaz “citizens” “have a right to obtain citizenship of the Russian Federation only”, thus clearly excluding the option of returnees to the Gali district to keep their Georgian passport when acquiring Abkhaz “citizenship”. ... [possible]

- *IDPs living in so called collective centres (CCs) throughout Georgia*, i.e. compactly settled in state- or private-owned buildings such as enterprises, kindergartens, sanatoria, hospitals, etc. that are by no means designed to accommodate permanent residents. There are 33,868 households, or slightly above 43% of all IDP households (78,486), registered as living in CCs, though the real number is believed to be less. Geographically, the largest concentration of CCs can be found in Tbilisi, Zugdidi and the rest of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, and Kutaisi/Tskaltubo in Imereti.
- *IDPs living in private accommodation* represent still another big group of IDP households. According to the December 2008 official statistics (MRA database), 44,618 households of ‘old’ IDPs (or 57% of the total number of households in protracted displacement) are currently registered as living in the private sector. However, if we subtract those in the Gali region as a special group, the proportion will be much smaller.⁵⁵ It should also be noted that while JNA refers to these IDPs as living with host families, some of the IDPs in private accommodation (outside Gali) actually own their housing, even though some of them remain as IDPs in need of assistance. According to MRA and the State Registry, about 4,000 households have registered some kind of real estate, mainly housing and/or land.

The August 2008 war has severely impeded the prospects for the large-scale return of the long-term displaced population in the near future, and somewhat shifted attention away from their cases. Both donors and international agencies as well as the Government largely confirmed their assistance to Shida Kartli region bordering South Ossetia. However, the increase in humanitarian funding from states seeking to support the Georgian state could also result in improved local integration prospects for IDPs and the overdue implementation of the State Strategy on Internally Displaced Persons⁵⁶. Moreover, in several ways the August 2008 events specifically affected the ‘old’ IDPs:

- Less public and international attention is paid to this group of IDPs, as the focus has moved to the newly displaced (though allowances are paid regularly), and some resources are overstretched. Some projects involving ‘old’ IDPs were suspended or disrupted due to the emergency situation. However, most of these seem to have been resumed, and the scope of operations may even have broadened. Moreover, the events have highlighted the needs of both ‘new’ and ‘old’ IDPs, changed attitudes made the population more sensitive about IDPs, and have attracted resources that may eventually benefit also the ‘old’ IDPs; At the same time, the hopes of IDPs in protracted displacement have also been revived by international and government assistance to newly displaced persons.
- Some IDPs suffered during bombardment, e.g. in Senaki (ca. 500 affected) and Gori (limited number affected). Either their dwelling was destroyed, or they had to temporarily move elsewhere. Moreover, some IDPs, mainly from South Ossetia, as well as from the Kodori Gorge, have been displaced for a second time (ca. 3,000, according to MRA data).
- Some people with IDP-status, who still have land plots in the Gali region or South Ossetia and who used to move there on a seasonal basis or stay there continuously, are currently deprived of the possibility to move across the administrative border.
- Some 45, 000 of spontaneously returned IDPs in Gali region remained within the borders of Abkhazia, which also restricts their ability to receive IDP allowances.
- Many forced migrants from the two conflicts, frequently also holders of IDP-status, have repatriated to Georgia from Russia during and after the mass forced deportations of 2006,⁵⁷ and this process is expected to accelerate with the economic crisis and growing unemployment in Russia.
- There is little hope now that the conflicts will be resolved any time soon, or that any of these ‘old’ IDPs will be able to return to their homes, other than the possibility that a small number of IDPs from the Gali region who in

consequences for non-Abkhaz citizens would range from an exclusion from the right to vote and the obligation to perform military service, over the possible non-acknowledgement of their legal identity by administrative authorities, to their treatment as foreigners including the possibility of expulsion”. Mission o Georgia (21 to 24 December 2005). Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin. UN Commission on Human Rights, Doc. E/CN.4/2006/71/Add.7. 24 March 2006
<http://www.universalhumanrightsindex.org/documents/851/800/document/en/doc/text.doc>

⁵⁵ JNA estimates the number of IDPs in private accommodation (not taking into account those spontaneously resettled) as 55,000. Joint Needs Assessment, October 2008. (p. 5).

⁵⁶ The State Strategy on IDPs was approved on 2 February 2007. Decree # 47 of the Government of Georgia. (For the text of the Strategy, see Annex 5)

⁵⁷ See the respective statements of the Georgian Parliament of October 2006:
http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=98&info_id=13401&date=2006-10-10&new_month=10&new_year=2006

the best scenario, will be allowed to return to their homes. The IDPs' frustration over the new situation might also lead to a weakening of their political support for the government.

- As the August events have resulted in increased economic deterioration, which has led to a significant loss of employment and income, 'old' IDPs, together with other groups of the Georgian population, may expect deteriorated livelihoods and might be pushed into poverty.

PROBLEMS AND POLICY CHALLENGES

In order to better plan interventions to improve the life of IDPs, it is important to understand how their livelihood relates to that of the general population. It is also important to understand, why so little has changed for so many IDPs during the last 15 years, and what the obstacles to their effective integration are.

While it could be argued that IDPs in Georgia, as a group, cannot be considered as more vulnerable than some other general categories of population (e.g. ethnic minorities, inhabitants of isolated regions, etc.), deeper analysis is needed in order to understand the specific vulnerabilities of IDPs. However, some of the available data would unequivocally support the understanding that on average IDPs, and particularly those in CCs, are much more vulnerable than the general population. However, it can also be argued that instead of trying to elaborate on why IDPs need livelihood support and why they need it more than other vulnerable people – it seems more reasonable to consider IDP status as an additional dimension of vulnerability of an individual or a household, and to design special programmes that would deal with the specific characteristic of the problems faced by displaced individuals and link this programmes to how and why they are IDPs.

The key dimensions of the vulnerability of IDPs, i.e. the risks posed to their wellbeing, are: diminished household capacities to develop and sustain positive coping strategies; uncertainty with respect to their future; commonly poor housing conditions; low income/unemployment; disruption of social and economic networks; and, traumatisation.

Although, according to the WB 2002 report,⁵⁸ the rates of unemployment may be the same for IDPs and the general population, the incomes earned and positions held by IDPs are generally lower.⁵⁹ Employment statistics may be misleading, however,⁶⁰ as for example those working on their own land plots are not considered unemployed. Therefore, IDPs living in rural areas, due to the lack of sufficient agricultural land or its or lower fertility, may experience much higher food insecurity than other rural dwellers involved in subsistence or commercial agriculture, due to insufficient access to fertile land, even if they are not considered unemployed.

The population in returnee areas should also be considered as highly vulnerable, although they are formally not considered IDPs any more. Those of newly displaced persons who have returned to their original dwellings are also under risk of impoverishment, as agricultural activities in which they have been traditionally involved in bringing insufficient income due to problems of irrigation, marketing their produce, and the lack of investment. There is a further risk that IDP returnees will be forced to give up on agriculture activities and resort to alternatives, including migration for urban based work, should insufficient support be provided to restarting their livelihood.

Lack of proper attention can foster some negative developments as returnees may move back from the former buffer zones, thus adding vagueness as to whether they are IDPs or returnees. According to MRA if they leave the returnee areas they will be considered as IDPs, even though it is more related to economic concerns rather than security issues. While the UNHCR generally uses the term – returned displaced people – in such cases their legal status should be identified.⁶¹

Housing

⁵⁸ "Since 2002 the rate of employment for IDPs has been increasing and has surpassed the employment rate for the GP." Gocha Tskitishvili, Larry Dershem, and Vano Kechakmadze. Social Capital and Employment Opportunities Among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Georgia. The World Bank, Tbilisi, May 2005 [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/603354B80DBB2ACCC12571CC0067CC26/\\$file/IDPs+Employment+Georgia.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/603354B80DBB2ACCC12571CC0067CC26/$file/IDPs+Employment+Georgia.pdf)

⁵⁹ "Concerning monthly income from employment, the GP did have significantly higher rates of return than IDPs." *Ibid.*

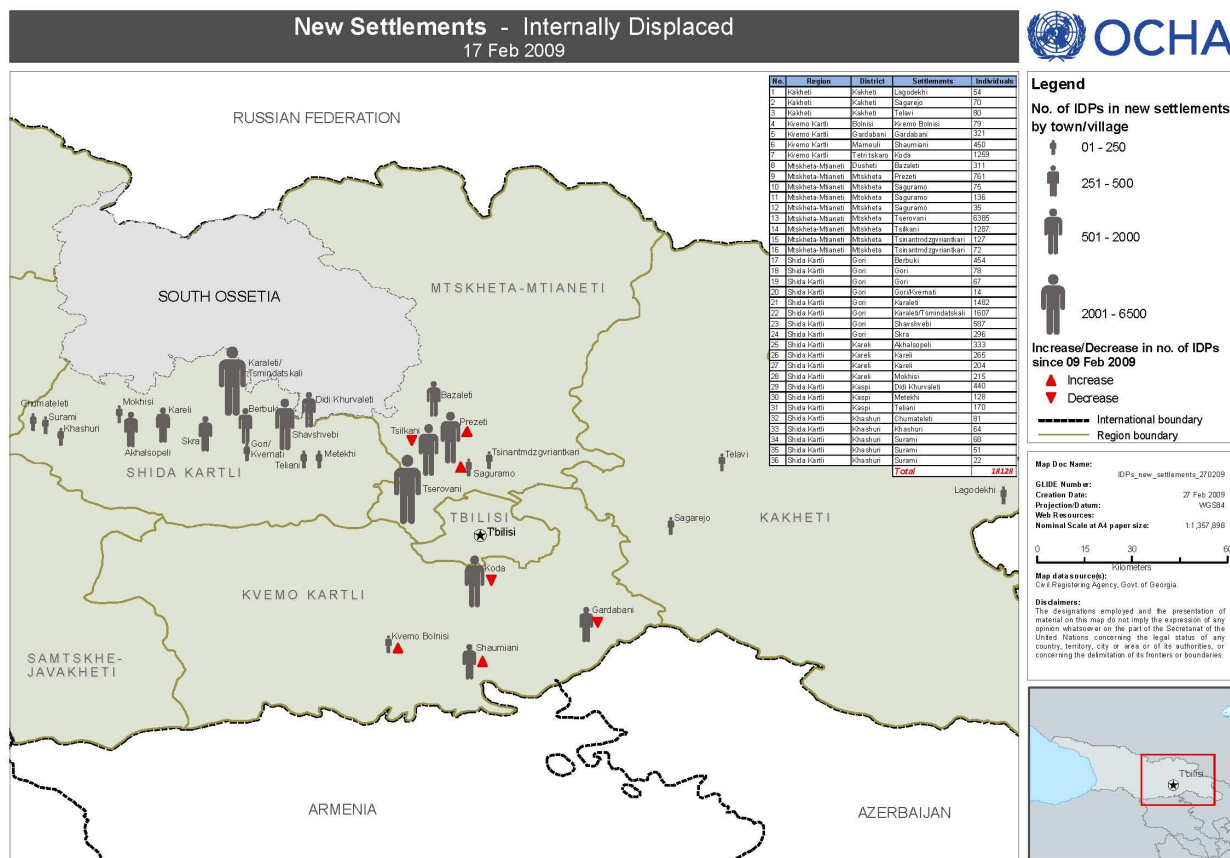
⁶⁰ E.g. according to the latest poverty assessment by the World Bank, in Tbilisi the highest rate of unemployment (28% in 2006 as compared to 13.3% overall) combines with the lowest incidence of poverty (12.9%). The same is true for rural areas where formal unemployment is low due to access to land: "Rural population was poorer than urban: 29.7 percent vs. 18.3 percent for overall poverty and 12.4 percent vs. 6.7 percent in the case of extreme poverty... Among employed, households headed by self-employed in agriculture face the highest poverty risk." Poverty and Social Impact of the Crisis. Draft report prepared by Aleksandra Posarac, Nino Moroshkina, Satoshi Ishihara and Joanna De Berry. WB, Tbilisi

⁶¹ We thank FAO and WFP Tbilisi offices for attracting our attention to this issue.

The issue of shelter is somewhat different for the newly displaced group as compared with the IDPs in protracted displacement. In case of the new displacement, the majority of those unable to return to their homes, i.e. the inhabitants of South Ossetia, have been provided with permanent housing.⁶² In late autumn 2008, UNHCR estimated that 3,000 to 5,000 IDPs were still unable to return to the area adjacent to South Ossetia by December 2008 and would have to spend the winter in displacement, while the MRA estimated that 27,805 IDPs had returned before the winter.

According to the Government, 95% of the newly displaced from South Ossetia had been accommodated by December 24, 2008, i.e. a total of 16,528 people, have been provided with 3,963 new houses (with an average cost of GEL 27,933), while 9,342 houses were rehabilitated in territories adjacent to South Ossetia (average cost of rehabilitation - GEL 2,000).⁶³ Part of the new group of IDPs were given other opportunities to find permanent dwelling in more urban environments, mainly in Gori.

Those who refused to move into newly built houses – mainly located in the Shida Kartli and Kvemo Kartli, and to a less extent the Mtskheta-Mtianeti, regions – were entitled to be granted USD 10,000, while those families who moved into newly built houses were given a one-time allowance of GEL 200. While this is definitely a positive development, special attention is needed to evaluate the sustainability and the quality of life in these new settlements, against the prospect of living there for a long time period. The houses, though equipped to meet all basic needs, do not give the impression of being very convenient dwellings. The artificial environment created is far from attractive and the durability of the houses is still to be tested. In particular, without comprehensively addressing livelihood concerns, provisions of this housing solution cannot be considered as a durable solution to displacement.



Map of new IDP settlements. UN OCHA <http://www.relief.migration.ge/intranet/>

⁶² Ministers Brief on IDP Housing Project. Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 24 December 2008 <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=20189>

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

New IDP settlements provide virtually no social infrastructure, and access to essential services is not offered yet to the population resettled in these areas. There are no pharmacies, health facilities or grocery stores nearby, though schools are planned to be built on the settlement premises. Some of the settlements (Koda) have no hospital, dispensary, drug store or ambulance station. Others have outside wooden latrines which are to be shared by several households - an issue particularly problematic in the winter season, to say nothing of the sanitary considerations.



Georgia Health Cluster. WHO Bulletin No. 4, 9 December 2008.
(photo by Sintija Smite).

Lack of adequate living conditions remains one of the biggest concerns also in the case of 'old' IDPs. This is particularly the case for the approximately 43% of IDP households who live in the 1,600 plus collective centres.⁶⁴ Another special case is that the returnees to the Gali region of Abkhazia, who remain registered as IDPs. The 2005 DRC housing assessment⁶⁵ concluded that ca. 25 % of pre-war houses were damaged and 45% of the damaged houses were inhabited by people, even though they needed structural rehabilitation. Returnees were reluctant to rehabilitate their houses in the absence of a political settlement of the conflict and the weak rule of law.

Living conditions in most of the collective centres are extremely poor, and the residents of the CCs are considered as the most vulnerable IDPs.⁶⁶ The collective centres, which were originally non-residential buildings - hospitals, factories, schools, hotels and kindergartens, were only meant to provide temporary shelter but have become permanent homes. Many of the CCs have broken windows, leaking roofs and cement floors, disrupted sewerage systems, they may be damp, cold in winter (but hot in summer), and structurally unsound. These dwellings frequently would not provide even the minimum standards of living: they lack adequate access to water (families often have to share a common tap, which may be indoors or outdoors, and supply may be irregular), bathing facilities, proper insulation, functional sewage systems, safe electrical wiring, and proper communication means. Some of the collective centres are also remotely located and quite isolated from settlement areas and social infrastructure.

The majority of these centres are overcrowded with an average living space at least two times smaller than that of the general population.⁶⁷ From a sanitary viewpoint the worst situation is found in the rural collective centres, where (according to data from the year 2000, though little has changed since) only 6 % had unshared access to toilets and only 30 percent to kitchens.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ During his visit in December 2005 to Georgia, after having seen some of the collective centres with IDPs, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs, Walter Kälin was "shocked by the misery in which thousands of IDPs are still living, more than a decade after the violent fighting that caused them to flee their homes". Walter Kälin. Georgia must act on promises to end displacement crisis.. Date: 31 May 2006 Accessed at: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/KHII-6QW4XL?OpenDocument> Not much has changed since for the majority of IDPs residing in collective centers.

⁶⁵ Housing Assessment: Gali District. DRC/ECHO. 13 February 2006. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/CB7F31BB6E4E78EDC12571CC005ADC63/\\$file/Final+Housing+Assesment+Gali+eb+13+2006.doc](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/CB7F31BB6E4E78EDC12571CC005ADC63/$file/Final+Housing+Assesment+Gali+eb+13+2006.doc)

⁶⁶ Detailed study and the preparation of the database on CCs have been conducted by ICRC in 2005-2006. Important information is also possessed by MRA, Abkhaz Government in Exile, NRC, and some other organisations. According to UNHCR assessment of mid-2008, an estimated 70% of collective centers "do not meet minimum shelter standards, [are] lacking adequate privacy, access to water, proper insulation and functional sewage systems". Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gaps Analysis (DRAFT). UNHCR, Tbilisi, July 2008

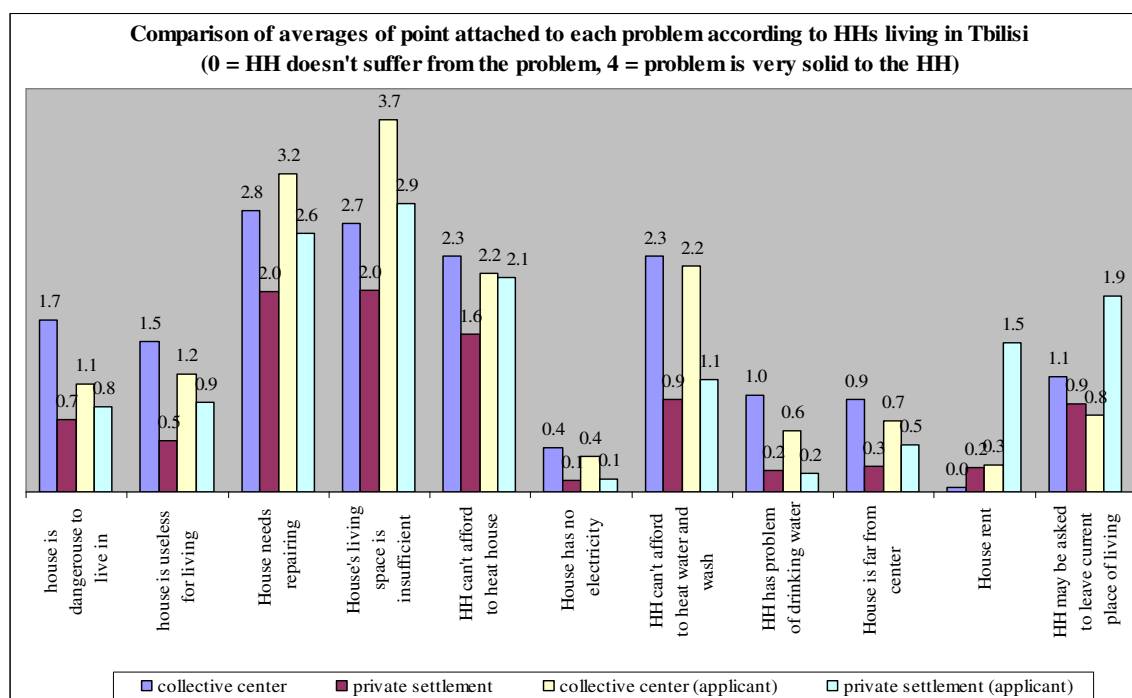
⁶⁷ "Small number of rooms and lack of living space is the main problem for IDPs. Three or more HH members live in one room in almost every fourth HH. Every member has his/her own room (at least one) in 24.5% of HHs, but these are mainly HHs consisting of 1 or 2 members (83.4% of cases). Nadareishvili, Tasakadze." *Op.cit.*

⁶⁸ Scott, Wolf and Jill Thompson. Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey, Georgia. International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). 30 November 2000. See also: Larry Dershem, Nana Gurgeniidze and Steven Holtzman. *Poverty and Vulnerability Among Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: An Update of Their Current Status and Circumstances*, The World Bank. November 2002;

Not all premises where IDPs live collectively are officially considered as ‘collective centres’, but only those belonging to the government or privatised after IDPs already have been admitted there, and registered at MRA as such.⁶⁹ In other cases, if IDPs do not hold a tenure arrangement validating their residence in a given building, their position is much more precarious. In some cases, buildings were privatized after being rehabilitated by international agencies aiming to improve IDP conditions. In any case, IDPs have frequently been under the threat of eviction, and in the past there have been notorious cases of forcible eviction. For example, in 2007 hundreds of IDPs were evicted from collective centres in Georgia as a result of the government’s sweeping privatisation policy, the most infamous cases taking place in Ajara. In some of these cases, IDPs were not provided with alternative housing or adequate compensation.⁷⁰

Even when eviction cannot be enforced, the owners of the building may apply certain measures to force IDPs out of their dwelling. The importance of eviction fears is well illustrated by the diagram below presenting the list of concerns as prioritized by survey respondents in Tbilisi, though the highest priorities still are insufficient space and the need for repairs. However, given the current approach of the government regarding the privatisation of collective centres, these fears may gradually get mitigated.

Diagram 1.



Source: M. Nadareishvili, V. Tsakadze. Survey about housing and social-economic conditions of IDPs. Tbilisi, 2008

There also remains the very sensitive issue of those IDPs who until now lived in private sector but without any rights for own housing. The situation of many of these IDPs is extremely volatile, as they may become homeless any time, as frequently their host families do not want or can not have them any more. Unfortunately, until now there has been little effort to address this type of vulnerability, and the state has not developed any policy to deal with such issues.

⁶⁹ “‘Collective center’ is a state-owned or private building where groups of IDPs were accommodated and where they have lived for a long period of time.” State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Tbilisi, February 2, 2007 (footnote 4)

⁷⁰ The Ombudsman in his report for 2007 raised the problems with IDP re-registration and eviction, although has not attracted much attention on the part of the Government See *Parliament’s shuns Public Defender’s report*, Civil Georgia, March 17, 2008 at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17372>; and also *Parliament to hear Ombudsman’s report*, Civil Georgia, July 14, 2008 at <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18771&search=public%20defender%20report>

Poverty

Poverty is the biggest scourge of the IDPs, as well as of a significant portion of Georgia's population in general. However, there are certain factors that make the poverty of IDPs both more severe and more difficult to mitigate, such as the above-described housing issue as well as the fact of displacement and erosion of social assets during protracted displacement. The most disadvantaged seem to be IDPs in collective centres. One also should keep in mind that the majority of 'new' IDPs from South Ossetia actually come from, and are settled in, the most economically depressed areas of Georgia, and therefore became even poorer after displacement.

In the case of the IDPs in protracted displacement, both those in CCs and in private accommodation experience poverty. There is, however, very little information on IDPs residing in private accommodation and very few recent comparative analyses of IDPs in CCs and in private accommodation are available⁷¹. One useful indicator is the comparison between IDPs under the social assistance programme: out of 19,565 IDPs in the social assistance (SA) programme (8,975 households) as many as 15,409 IDPs (6,710 HHs) or almost 80% are living in collective centres.⁷² Hence, even if one assumes that IDPs in private accommodation on average do not live either better or worse than the general population⁷³, the conclusion is that IDPs in collective centres are much more vulnerable than the privately accommodated IDPs, and therefore also than the general population. In addition, many of those living in collective centres located in remote areas have little opportunity whatsoever for income generation.

One more important indicator of the economic status of a household is the possession of durable items, such as TV sets, fridges, mobile phones, etc. Households living in collective centres again appear to be in much worse condition than those in private accommodation. In addition, there are significant regional differences, indicating that IDPs in Samegrelo experience more hardship than others, particularly in comparison with those living in Tbilisi, where there are more opportunities for income generation.⁷⁴

One could speak about poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon, including such factors as human capital, nutritional deficiency and access to utilities and social services, as well as available property and income, but also the degree of (dis)satisfaction with one's own living conditions. However, all of these are to a great extent linked to two interrelated main factors: whether the members of a household are employed or not, and to the human capital in a household (education, health, capacity to work). Indeed, when the categories of the most vulnerable IDPs are singled out for analysis, experts commonly refer to: the elderly living alone or with small children and/or disabled, single mothers, and households in which nobody is gainfully occupied.⁷⁵

According to the most recent survey⁷⁶, the situation is highly alarming. Every sixth IDP household regards itself as extremely poor, claiming to be constantly starving, while approximately the same number of households would consider their economical conditions as so hard that they hardly manage to feed themselves. Almost one half (48.1%) of IDP households state that their income (or their harvest) is enough only for nutrition, while only 17.3% of households are more or less satisfied with their economical conditions. As could be expected, the situation is better in Tbilisi, where only 6.1% of IDP households regard themselves as extremely poor, while Samegrelo shows the worst situation - here every third household regards itself as extremely poor and only 11.3% would see their economical situation as average or above average.

Nutritional deficiency is a primary expression of extreme poverty, though no recent data exists to compare this among different groups of IDPs and the general population. Still, practitioners often observe a level of poverty among IDPs that would not allow them to purchase all the food they need in terms of quantity or of variety. WFP and ICRC, as well as other organisations, provide large-scale food assistance to IDPs, both the victims of the recent displacement

⁷¹ Also several somewhat outdated sources: Wolf Scott and Jill Thompson. *Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey, Georgia*. International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). 30 November 2000; Larry Dershem, Nana Gurgenidze and Steven Holtzman. *Poverty and Vulnerability Among Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: An Update of Their Current Status and Circumstances*, paper prepared for the World Bank. November 2002; Scott, Wolf and Jill Thompson. *Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey, Georgia*. International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). 30 November 2000;

⁷² Even though only the minority of vulnerable IDP families (actually those from smaller families) choose to receive social assistance instead of the IDP allowance, still the evidence is compelling.

⁷³ A comparison with the total number of TSA beneficiaries among the Georgia's population (on average offering approximately GEL 50 per family to 135,000 families, according to the 2008 Georgia Human Development Report) is unfortunately not too helpful, as a significant proportion of IDPs prefer to receive IDP allowance rather than TSA.

⁷⁴ M. Nadareishvili, V. Tsakadze. *Op.cit.*

⁷⁵ Wolf Scott, *Op.cit.*

⁷⁶ M. Nadareishvili, V. Tsakadze. *Op.cit.*

and the old ones. Previously, IDPs also benefited, along with other vulnerable groups, from WFP's food-for-work and food-for-education programmes that appeared quite effective⁷⁷.

Another sensitive issue is that of adequate heating, which is either frequently unavailable (in the case of firewood and gas), or expensive (in the case of electricity). While the government pays for a set amount per person for communal expenses, such as electricity and water consumption, waste disposal, etc., this money is not enough to cover the costs of electricity consumption, if it is used for heating. In case of collective centres, they either have a common electricity meter or no meter at all, which leads to frequent abuse and give the energy companies a reason to cut off electricity when the bills are higher than the government subsidy and debts have accrued. In its turn, waste disposal, especially in the countryside, is irregular causing unsanitary conditions and health hazards, demonstrating the failure to develop condominium management practices, which needs to be addressed.

In general, poverty, which for IDPs is often aggravated by poor housing, leads to many deficiencies that have a negative impact on a person's wellbeing. For example IDPs have limited access to adequate sanitary materials, which particularly affect women and girls. Lack of clothing may often de-motivate children to study or preclude them from attending classes, while lack of adequate conditions for preparing homework might harm their achievements. Lack of opportunity for self-realisation and satisfying leisure activities, at a period of human life most critical for the development of personality, may lead to passivity, assistance dependency, delinquency and depression. This implies that poverty can be a self-perpetuating condition, leading to preservation of a miserable status quo.

One additional aspect of IDP vulnerability is the frequent division of families due to labour migration/emigration. While a migrant family member may help improve the economic situation of a household, those left behind often acquire additional vulnerability due to a lack of physical capacity in the family. The respective fact that can illuminate the difference of the social situation of IDPs from that of the general population is the gender balance in IDP families. Out of 222,248 registered IDPs only 100,317 or 45% are males, while 55% are females, which make a difference of 10%. If one takes into account that for general population females do not make more than 52% (difference – 4%), and that on the other hand it is natural to expect that among children and older generation the distributions should be similar, that means that gender misbalance among the adults of active age is even more significant. This fact could be explained by higher labour emigration rate of adult males, caused by the necessity to survive and support families through remittances. But at the same time this would also mean much higher number of households with women as breadwinners, single mothers and family heads, which is an explicit illustration of an additional gender-related vulnerability dimension of IDPs.⁷⁸

Livelihood

The main cause of poverty both among IDPs and the general population is unemployment, or in some cases what can be called underemployment. Many IDPs continuously struggle to secure a livelihood, because job opportunities are scarce in the depressed economic environments of the country, and also because they face additional difficulties compared with the host population in lacking social capital, overcoming administrative obstacles or adapting to unfamiliar job markets.

The lack of adequate income-generating opportunities means that many IDPs rely on small-scale petty trading, remittances and assistance from family and friends, subsistence agriculture in kitchen-gardens and the sale of home-grown agricultural products. As time passed, IDPs' dependency on external assistance, even if minimal, has increased along with their passivity, and the selling of whatever assets they still possessed. In general, their protracted despair would lead to further degradation of their coping skills and productive assets.

There are few reliable sources of information on employment statistics among IDPs, however there is a widespread understanding that unemployment is significantly higher among IDPs than among the general population. For instance, a recent UNHCR draft report observed that unemployment among IDPs is higher for the following reasons: "IDPs have less access to formal sector employment than the local population due to lack [of] information, established networks and marginalization. Given their lack of collateral, IDPs have limited access to bank loans and

⁷⁷ WFP implements small Food-for-Education projects to address short-term hunger and micro-nutrient deficiencies of school children; also - Food-for-Work programme to help small-scale rural landholders strengthen their agricultural assets, thereby increasing local food production, self-reliance and income. WFP will soon launch pilot cash-for-work projects in which 1,700 households will participate. http://wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=268

⁷⁸ Additional research is needed to estimate the correspondence between the age and gender structure of IDP families, labour migration of their members, and their self-reliance.

can not afford the high interest rates, which prevents them from starting their own businesses.⁷⁹ Other sources also argue that unemployment is particularly high among IDPs in collective centres.⁸⁰

This line of argumentation is, however, disputed by other sources. The latest (2004-2005) comprehensive survey by G. Tskitishvili et al.⁸¹ would even state that though previously the situation was different⁸², by mid-2000s employment among IDPs was even higher than among the general population (GP): “Now almost 10 years since displacement, the socio-economic environment has somewhat stabilized. As the general employment situation started to recover and assimilation became acceptable, the rate of employment for IDPs improved and, in fact, was greater than that of the GP... IDPs reported as high a level of social capital as the GP and it contributed as much to their employment as the GP. Furthermore, IDPs did not have a significantly higher rate of employment in the informal sphere than the GP. The rates of employment for IDPs in formal employment, dominated by the government and private enterprises, were no different than the GP.” However, as the authors of the survey found: “As for monthly income from employment, the GP did have significantly higher rates of return than IDPs. However, this was primarily due to the GP having a higher rate of employment in the private sphere, whereas IDPs are predominately employed in the lower paying⁸³ government sphere.”

Whatever the actual rate of unemployment of IDPs compared to that of the general population (all of the above referred solely to the ‘old’ IDPs), all sources agree that even when employed, IDPs earn less.

Another important issue to take into account is access to land. As already noted above, the households that have access to land are not considered as unemployed. However, the livelihoods opportunity of the IDPs settled on infertile land is low, and even if there is some land at the disposal of an IDP family this would not provide adequate livelihood opportunities (as land plots are frequently of low fertility, remotely located and small). However, many IDPs are unable to at all participate in the special auctions held for the sale of agricultural land, either because of the lack of funds, or because they are only registered with a temporary address and not in the community registries. While local authorities may temporarily allocate land plots to IDPs on their request, in accordance with the Law on IDPs, selecting the plots and actually allocating them is usually the matter left to their discretion. If IDPs stop using such land plots, these are transferred back to the local administration. In order to have a harvest and to produce food, IDPs need additional help, such as fertilizers, equipment for cultivating land, transport, and fuel; - without which such allocation of plots will be just a formality, as IDPs couldn’t effectively cultivate land. And finally, an acute problem is the lack of any real estate that could serve as collateral when credit is needed.

‘New’ IDPs are expected to encounter similar problems regarding agricultural activities on allocated land plots, as in addition to general scarcity of fertile arable land in Kartli, there is an additional problem of irrigation, significant portion of which used to come from South Ossetia. Although the government plans to spend in 2009 about 30 mln lari on irrigation and amelioration, announced on February 5, 2009, by Prime Minister Gilauri during the presentation of his programme ‘United Georgia without Poverty’, it is still unclear whether irrigation needs will be fully satisfied.

One of the biggest obstacles to the IDPs’ involvement in small business is low availability of credits against the background of sparse own resources, to a significant extent aggravated by the lack of information. There are several organizations that are allocating grants or giving loans for income generation activities, and some of the local banks would provide credits with certain guarantees and collaterals. However, IDPs rarely address these opportunities as either they do not know about the existence of such possibilities or there is a (mis)perception that credits and grants are allocated unfairly, and in addition many potential applicants lack skills of writing business plans or project proposals. Also, as some experts would observe⁸⁴, IDPs generally lack access to the credits either due to the high level of interest (as, for instance, credits provided by the micro credit companies or banks) or the limited capacity of such state programs (state credits in favourable conditions).

⁷⁹ Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gaps Analysis. UNHCR Report (draft). Tbilisi, 2008

⁸⁰ “Employment rate is higher in IDPs living in private settlements (34.3%) compared to IDPs from collective centers (27.1%)”. M. Nadareishvili, V. Tsakadze. *Op.cit.*

⁸¹ G. Tskitishvili, L. Dershem, V. Kechakmadze. Georgia: Social Capital and Employment Opportunities among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Georgia. World Bank, May 2005

⁸² So, the earlier IFRC survey observed that IDPs living in collective centers are three times more likely to be unemployed than the local population, while the unemployment rate of IDPs in the private sector is twice as high as that of the local population. (Scott, Wolf and Jill Thompson. Internally Displaced Persons: A Socio-Economic Survey, Georgia. International Federation of the Red Cross. 30 November 2000)

⁸³ Currently, the minimum wage in public sector is 115 GEL (subsistence minimum for working age male – 118.6 GEL), but no minimum wage regulation in private sector (Georgia: Economy, Poverty and Environment. Poverty and Environment Initiative Inception Workshop. Bratislava, 9 December 2008). See also: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Georgia, March 11, 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100560.htm>

⁸⁴ E.g. representatives of the Fund “Sukhumi”, an NGO created by IDPs from Abkhazia.

Nevertheless, there do exist certain examples of successful implementation of microcredit schemes (without collaterals), in the framework of both individual and family or group based projects, usually of a relatively small scale (as a rule, no more than a few hundred USD per person). However, if this approach is to be duplicated at a much higher scale, experts expect lower effectiveness and return of credits, as it would not be possible to apply the same selection standards⁸⁵. At the same time, there remains an essential dilemma of selection criteria for such projects, as the most vulnerable households are commonly the least reliable partners, even if they should be considered as main targets for assistance.

In addition, many IDPs do not have relevant skills and experience with entrepreneurial activities, lack necessary social capital, or may need support to adjust to a new economic environment. However, some experts (e.g. at ACH) observe that IDPs still frequently refuse to participate in vocational and business trainings, most probably due to general mistrust toward the usefulness of such activities, which puts under scrutiny the effectiveness of existing approaches. Indeed, sometimes the problem arises with the IDPs who have already participated in vocational training and refuse to participate in another, as such training is not usually linked with assistance to find a job and apply acquired skills, which are therefore rendered useless and not worth wasting time and effort. In some cases, IDPs who have undergone vocational training, would not receive certificates or diplomas that could facilitate finding a job.

Of course, unemployment is not a problem specific only of IDPs but it is a grave problem for all of the Georgian society. This is aggravated by the fact that there is no consistent state policy for job creation, vocational education and retraining, as there are no employment agencies – so there is no broader institutional framework that could meet the needs of the jobless IDPs, and with current economic crisis this process will hardly develop with the needed speed.

At the same time, in rural areas where about a half of IDPs live, there are no policies that would safeguard IDP income-generating from agriculture and other activities that could be envisaged in order to ensure IDP self-reliance: support with the respective facilities and equipments to successfully cultivate land and process crops, as well as assisting in marketing their production, providing seeds, fertilisers, credits, and relevant trainings in both agricultural production and non-farming activities.



Alu Gamakharia, an internally displaced person from Abkhazia, has been living in the Tskaltubo district of Georgia for more than a decade. In an effort to survive, he set up a mini tea-processing factory called Ternali-Tea Ltd. in the village of Ternali. His efforts made a difference not only for his family but also for 42 households whose members are employed either as full-time workers at the factory or as seasonal workers in the tea plantations.

ACDI/VOCA's AgVANTAGE project has helped Ternali-Tea obtain new equipment to sort, spin and dry tea leaves, enabling it to shift from low-quality tea production to producing premium green tea. As a result, the factory has now the capacity to produce annually over 10 tons of high-quality green tea, which is currently being shipped in bulk.

In addition to economic activity, Gamakharia is actively involved in efforts to achieve reconciliation between Georgians and Abkhaz through business cooperation. Having launched a non-governmental organization Mission of People's Diplomacy, he expects that strengthening business relations with Turkey through organized business trips and meetings, and working with Georgian and Abkhaz diasporas in Turkey, will help him in achieving his goals.

Photo: Peter Kabachnik

⁸⁵ Interview with the staff of Action Contra la Hambre office in Tbilisi.

Although what was said above referred mainly to the IDPs in protracted situation, and therefore have had some time to adjust to their condition and acquired social capital, the prospect for income generation for 'new' IDPs, particularly those from South Ossetia, is another sensitive issue. The majority of these are settled in rural areas adjacent to South Ossetia with little and less fertile land, problems with irrigation (much of the irrigation water originates in South Ossetia, and is therefore unreliable), and the over-competitive small local market for agricultural produce. In addition, Shida Kartli is an economically depressed region, with little prospect of feeding all the new inhabitants who are therefore destined to remain in dire poverty for years to come. Indeed, according to the UNICEF's Child Poverty Report - Shida Kartli, the region most affected by the conflict, has the highest child poverty rate in Georgia. 68% of the population in this region are below the poverty line (compared to 17% in Tbilisi), and the poverty gap⁸⁶ of 26% is by far the highest in the country. This is likely to make it more difficult for IDP families to overcome the challenges they are currently facing.⁸⁷

Health

Health is one of the most important aspects of IDP lives and is closely related to human capital. While good health is an important asset, poor health or disability of a family member could move a household into destitution and vulnerability.

There is no entirely reliable and consistent information on morbidity of IDPs. However, considering unhealthy life style, low quality of life, continuous stress caused by an uncertain future, and the impact of traumatic memories among IDPs, aggravated by a frequent lack of access to quality medical services⁸⁸, morbidity is expected to be much higher among IDPs than among the general population.⁸⁹

Particularly inadequate living and sanitary conditions in many collective centres would be conducive to a number of health conditions (TB, infectious hepatitis, other contagious diseases, cardiovascular disease, depression).⁹⁰ Moreover, internally displaced women may face elevated risks of STIs and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).⁹¹

One more indication of IDP susceptibility to disease is the number of registered HIV patients who are IDPs. While constituting ca. 5.5% of the total population, IDPs accounted for 8.9% of PLHIV in Georgia (in general a low-HIV-prevalence country⁹²) in 2006. One of the reasons for over-representation of IDPs amongst PLHIV seems to be

⁸⁶ Poverty gap is the mean distance below the poverty line as a proportion of the poverty line where the mean is taken over the whole population, counting the non-poor as having zero poverty gap. That is the mean shortfall from the poverty line, expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=6336>

⁸⁷ Child Poverty in Georgia, UNICEF, (upcoming.) Quoted from: Educational Needs of Conflict-Affected Children in Georgia: Rapid Assessment. A joint document produced by UNICEF, IRC, CHCA, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, Halo Trust. Tbilisi, December 2008

⁸⁸ "IDPs interviewed by UNHCR complained that they often could not afford to buy medicine, especially for chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure. Some IDPs also said that some medical clinics who are supposed to provide services under the voluntary social assistance program refuse to do so, because the required administrative agreement between them and the Government of Georgia had not been concluded." *Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gaps Analysis*. UNHCR, 2008

⁸⁹ For instance, according to a 2002 Save the Children survey "40.6% of IDPs families in collective centers had at least one member with an acute illness in the previous three months compared to 32.8% of families in the general population. As for chronic diseases, 33.1% of IDP families in collective centers had at least one member with a chronic disease compared to 18.4% of the families in the general population. When accounting for both illnesses and chronic diseases, a higher percentage of IDP families living in collective centers had both (55.4%) than in the general population (35.7%)." L. Dershem, N. Gurgenzidze, S. Holtzman. Poverty and Vulnerability among IDPs in Georgia. The World Bank. November 2002

⁹⁰ "Leading causes of IDP morbidity appear to be (i) infectious, respiratory and parasitic diseases, mainly related to the dire living conditions and the bad sanitary hygienic situation in many collective centers; (ii) psycho-neurological and cardiovascular disorders probably associated with post-traumatic and psychological stress related to their current existence and uncertain future; and (iii) injuries and accidents, mainly among 'permanent' or 'temporary' ('seasonal') returnees to the Gali region due to persisting and unsafe conditions for individual's security (land mines, armed assaults on civilian population) in the conflict zone... Morbidity among IDP children (under 14) appears to be significantly higher (up to two times) than in children from the general population. Respiratory, infectious diseases and diseases of the digestive system are the leading causes of morbidity among IDP children." Akaki Zoidze, Mamuka Djibuti. IDP Health Profile Review in Georgia. UNDP, Tbilisi 2004

⁹¹ "Internally displaced women are more likely than non-displaced women to have been diagnosed with PID (31% vs. 25%)." Khatuna Doliashvili and Cynthia J. Buckley. Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Post-Socialist Georgia: Does Internal Displacement Matter? *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 2008, 34(1):21-29

⁹² Georgia's HIV prevalence rate is estimated to range between 0.1 to 2.7 percent among 15-49 year olds. UNDP, 2007/8 Human Development Index at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/338.html>

the fact that poor living conditions, poverty, low self-esteem and lack of opportunities are associated with drug abuse amongst male IDPs living in collective centres.⁹³

Poor living conditions, traumatic memories, an uncertain future and financial worries impose psychological strains on adult IDPs, which also affect the children, causing depression and psycho-somatic diseases.⁹⁴ WHO has identified an acute need for trained psychotherapists to provide psycho-social rehabilitation assistance to IDPs in Zugdidi and Senaki. Lack of essential information details about relocation and winterization exacerbate mental health problems among IDPs and delay the psychosocial rehabilitation process. The uncertainty about the future might be a contributing factor to newly emerging severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, especially among male IDPs.⁹⁵

Post-traumatic disorders represent a particularly relevant concern in the case of the 'new' IDPs.⁹⁶ The August 2008 rapid assessment conducted in Tbilisi by the International Medical Corps observes that: "... uncertainties are among many issues faced by IDPs and have led to extreme stress associated with hopelessness and helplessness... Among male adults there is a reported increase in alcohol abuse and aggressiveness. Among children, fear, depression, lethargy or hyperactivity are reportedly very common. Regressive behaviour like bedwetting and thumb sucking has been observed. Many children are reportedly having nightmares, while others have lost their appetites." Such observations among children are substantiated also by the Save the Children led Interagency Child Protection Report.⁹⁷ Although more comprehensive and specific data on post-traumatic stress (PTS) disorders among newly displaced is scarce, experience from similar situations indicates that at least 4-6 % of the population directly affected by the conflict (or 5,000-7,000 people in this case) risk suffering in the long term and will be in need of specialized medical care.

'New' IDPs, who were given housing in newly built settlements, encounter difficulties with access to healthcare facilities, as well as regarding sanitary conditions. This may lead to aggravated health conditions in the nearest future, if not duly addressed. For instance, "Koda village settlement [1226 IDPs] has no hospital, dispensary, drug store or ambulance station. For urgent medical needs IDPs have to call the Marneuli ambulance service which is located 9 km away. Doctors from the local policlinic assessed the medical problems of IDPs in the Koda settlement. IDPs lack medicines particularly for chronic diseases... In addition, the latrine conditions may also pose a health hazards."⁹⁸

Finally, one of the obstacles to addressing the health related needs of IDPs is the lack of reliable information about the health profile, morbidity, infant mortality, and other statistical data gathered by qualified healthcare professionals. Existing data is highly contradictory and would not allow effective planning of necessary interventions.

⁹³ H. Homans & M. Schilperoord. HIV interventions amongst displaced persons in the Southern Caucasus. UNHCR, Geneva. Paper at XVII International AIDS Conference, Mexico City, 3-8 August 2008.

⁹⁴ "Four chronic diseases mostly contributed to this higher rate among IDPs in collective centers than the general population: hypertension (7.6% vs. 4.1%), neurosis (4.7% vs. 0.9%), ulcer (2.5% vs. 1.5%) and asthma (2.1% vs. 1.1%). These diseases, together with other disorders prevailing among IDPs like goiter (1.4% vs. 0.8) and neurological problems (1.5% vs. 0.8%), belong to the group of so-called psychosomatic health disorders". L. Dershem, N. Gurgendze. *Op.cit*, pg. 35.

⁹⁵ Georgia Health Cluster. WHO Bulletin No. 4, 9 December 2008

⁹⁶ Mental Health and Psychosocial Rapid Assessments of Georgian IDPs in Tbilisi. Assessment by International Medical Corps and the Georgian Center for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims. August 22, 2008.
www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Portals/1/.../Georgia/2008_Sept_02_MentalHealthassessmentIMC.doc

⁹⁷ "The Interagency Child Protection Report in Collective Centres was carried out in October/ November 2008 in 87 collective centres with 87 community leaders (key informants) in the first phase, and 27 focus groups in 10 centres (group size from 6 – 10 participants) in the second phase. Its relevant results are as follows: - Only 32.2% of key informants reported that children did not show any 'extreme behaviour' following their displacement. Sleep disturbance was the most frequently reported problem (35.6% of respondents), and not speaking was the least frequently reported (11.5% of respondents). Children were reported to be more short-tempered and aggressive towards people of all ages." Educational Needs of Conflict-Affected Children in Georgia: Rapid Assessment. A joint document produced by UNICEF, IRC, CHCA, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, Halo Trust. Tbilisi, December 2008

⁹⁸ Georgia Health Cluster. WHO Bulletin No. 4, 9 December 2008

Children, Youth and Education

Children and adolescents among IDPs are of particular concern, as the lack of adequate attention to their needs may have disastrous effects on their personal and physical development and future. Their generally poor living conditions are not only a problem in themselves, but may also hinder and harm their education and socialisation.

There are a few assessments of the impact of the August war on the IDP/returnee children. As a result of the August war, 28,000 children were displaced, out of whom more than 2,000 do not have parents or guardians. According to some experts, post-traumatic disorders may show up within 1 – 2 months, and as a result many of these children face the risk of dropping out of schools or failure in their studies.⁹⁹ However, other sources would stress the strength and adaptability of newly displaced and returnee children from areas adjacent to South Ossetia.¹⁰⁰ Still, frequent movement from one location or collective centre to another due to which children are forced to adapt to a new school and school peers, additionally entails a problem of the school books unless there is a standardised in all the schools of Georgia. Thus children face difficulties on both socio/emotional and school material availability levels. As a result of the war, the educational system especially in this area has suffered significant damage. There was direct damage to schools in the conflict-affected zones (JNA reports 99 schools damaged – 6 were burnt down and one heavily damaged). Moreover, some schools had to close down temporarily as they were used as shelter for displaced persons. Many of these IDPs have now returned home have or been re-housed. Still, about two thirds of the schools in the “adjacent areas” have to run double shifts, and pre-school education is affected by IDPs continuing to shelter in these facilities. The absence of schools in some of the new settlements for IDPs remains a problem for the ‘new’ IDP children, though there have been promises that such schools would be built speedily.



Norwegian Refugee Council, Youth Education Programme.

“225 young people from the most vulnerable displaced and local families in Georgia Proper and the Gali region benefit from the participation in specially designed programme with the link between the education and the labour market. The project is developed to meet the learning needs of disadvantaged youth who, through displacement and lack of opportunities, remain without any occupation after graduating from school. The Youth Education Project consists of three components: vocational trainings, computer literacy and life skills trainings. Unity of these components empower youth and equip them with the necessary skills to compete in the job market, support their families, become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods.”

http://www.nrc.ge/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=38&Itemid=84&lang=ka

⁹⁹ Russian Invasion of Georgia: Impact on Georgia’s education. September 14, 2008
http://www.mfa.gov.ge/files/554_7969_990136_ImpactonGeorgiaseducation.doc

¹⁰⁰ Child Protection Coping Mechanisms in Rural Shida Kartli before and after August 2008, Tbilisi, December 2008



IDP children enjoy marionette show. Zura Kikodze, Director of the Tbilisi marionette theater “Club of Puppet Makers” brings laughter and fun to refugee children from South Ossetia. American Friends of Georgia sponsored the performance which took place on October 19, 2008. It was arranged by Lena Kiladze, Executive Director/AFG Georgia. The story was written by Tamara, her assistant. The “Club of Puppet Makers” with their whimsical marionettes and humorous stories are a partner in AFG’s Art Rehabilitation Project for Vulnerable Children. <http://blog.afgeorgia.org/>

The situation for the children of IDPs in protracted displacement living in collective centres is much more alarming, due to its pure duration and scarce prospect of improvement. Based on interviews with IDP children, UNHCR observes that: “[t]he deplorable living conditions in collective centers as well as in the private sector have negatively impacted the physical and mental health of IDP children.” The lack of privacy and space makes studying difficult and IDP children are often “too ashamed to invite other children to visit them in their homes given their terrible living conditions.” IDP children were also sorry that their parents do not have “the money to pay for extra-curricular activities.” Moreover the uncertainty regarding the privatization process creates additional worry for IDPs living in collective centres, including the children.¹⁰¹

A rather specific issue related to education is the existence of IDP schools (subordinated to the Ministry of Education of the Abkhaz Government in Exile), even though their number has been dramatically reduced during the last several years. Different regions have traditionally different approaches to education for IDPs, with the highest concentration of separate schools (or separate shifts in the same school buildings) for IDP children in Samegrelo. Sometimes such schools are located in buildings that are now used as collective centres, which were built for non-residential functions but that were never intended to be used for education either. In other cases, they use the same building as ordinary schools, but operate in the second shift, in the afternoon. IDP schools are generally under-funded, the buildings need urgent repair and there is a lack of necessary equipment, as well as teaching and learning materials, which all negatively impact on the quality of education and the psyche of children.



A typical living room in a collective centre, Zugdidi. (from the ICRC archive).

Segregated education not only has a negative influence on children’s opportunity to receive a quality education due to lower educational standards, but also adds to the feeling of exclusion among IDP children. Separate education indeed hinders the integration of IDP children into the society – even the more so considering that teachers too as a rule are IDPs and often transmit a certain emotional misery on their pupils by continuously

¹⁰¹ Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gaps Analysis (Draft). UNHCR, May 2008

referring to the displacement issue. Furthermore, IDP children are sometimes exposed to harassment and bullying from the non-IDP population including local children.¹⁰² At the same time, where IDP children study in mixed schools, the process of integration of IDP/returnee children appears to have gone remarkably well, particularly as compared to previous years.¹⁰³

One alarming obstacle to academic achievement of IDP children is the lack of educational materials and textbooks, which are quite expensive, and a book may sometimes cost as much as a monthly IDP allowance. The Interagency Child Protection Assessment in Collective Centres¹⁰⁴ reports that textbooks are not available to the majority of children in these centres, with some being provided with photocopies produced by the schools, while there are also cases of children being humiliated by teachers for not having textbooks.

Project Borjomi was initiated by Gill and Bob Eddins, former Peace Corps volunteers who were English teachers in Borjomi, a former Soviet spa town in the south of Georgia not far from the Armenian border. They are partnering with various local organizations to facilitate Project Borjomi.



Borjomi, a town of approximately 13,000 people, is home to over 2,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) from Abkhazia. These IDPs, who were displaced from a subtropical climate with warm beaches and palm trees, are now living in dilapidated concrete, soviet sanatoria in the mountains where temperatures in the winter reach as low as -12% F. Their living conditions are often appalling and most have little money for food or clothing, let alone school books for their children, which can cost a family over \$100 per child per year. Hence it is often the case that IDP children are less successful in school and frequently present behavior problems. There are presently no Georgian NGOs helping the IDPs in Borjomi.

Gill and Bob recently conducted a camp for IDP children. One of the children's assignments was to interview their parents about their homes and lives in Abkhazia. Gill and Bob have written a grant application endorsed by a Georgian NGO which will provide funds for the publishing of the interviews. They hope through the book to highlight the plight of these refugees who appear to have been forgotten.

<http://themegobariproject.blogspot.com/2009/01/project-borjomi.html>

While IDP youth have equal access to higher education and are eligible to attend state universities free of charge if they pass the entrance examinations, their limited access to quality secondary education in reality makes this difficult. Indeed, for students who do not reside in Tbilisi or another major city, moving to large urban centres with higher education facilities may be overstressing limited financial resources of a poor household, thus bringing us back to the issue of the higher rate of poverty among IDPs. Lack of special programs for IDPs often result in IDP children in poor families preferring to work rather than to continue education, and according to anecdotal evidence the percentage of such children is higher among IDPs than the general population (although such data needs checking).

The same is true regarding access to vocational education, as there exist insufficient opportunities for IDP youth to get enrolled and benefit from vocational training. While interventions regarding the provision of vocational training for IDPs are under development, the system is not yet in place.

Indeed, many IDP children, especially in rural areas, need to assist their families by working on the land or helping with other activities, thereby exposing them to child labour and exploitation. However, in order to develop, children also need opportunities for leisure, relaxation, sports and creative self-realisation, and the lack of such

¹⁰² Cumulative report on education among IDPs. United Nations Association of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2000

¹⁰³ T. Aslanishvili, Interagency Child Protection Assessment of Collective Centres for Internally Displaced Persons, Draft 1, Save the Children, 2008

¹⁰⁴ T Aslanishvili, 'Interagency Child Protection Assessment of Collective Centres for Internally Displaced Persons', Draft 1, Save the Children, 2008 (upcoming.) Quoted from: Educational Needs of Conflict-Affected Children in Georgia: Rapid Assessment. Tbilisi, December 2008

opportunities may lead to academic underachievement, social passivity or delinquency. Practically all IDP children in collective centres complain about the lack of recreational or sports facilities. Only a few, more active, IDP communities have managed to collect funds and applied joint efforts to organize leisure activities for their children.

Equally unfortunate is the absence of opportunities for IDP children to get enrolled in pre-school education, due to the disruption of the state system and the high price of private facilities. While once again this is a more general problem that affects the general population as well, the case of IDPs who often live in inadequate housing, keeping pre-school aged children at home may be more problematic.

Especially vulnerable are IDP children who are mentally or physically disabled, as well as those who lack parental supervision and care.¹⁰⁵ Children who have been orphaned, or otherwise deprived of adult care are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, may be forced to give up studies and seek work to provide for themselves or their younger siblings. They may also be more at risk for becoming involved in illegal work, victims of trafficking, drug abuse, delinquency or criminal activities. Disabled children have sometimes stopped attending school because of stigmatisation by other children or a lack of special services to meet their needs and integrate them to mainstream education. As no special assistance is provided to the disabled children, those with more serious/severe disabilities are forced to give up their studies and socialisation with other children, which will lead to further isolation and reduced stimulation.

Currently 1,179 IDP children are placed in 15 special education institutions for children with limited educational abilities and centres for homeless children, often under dire conditions. Such measures, when not in line with international standards, further exclude and disadvantage them as compared to other children, and negatively impact their chances of future integration into the mainstream society. In one of the institutions - Akhalgori Orphanage – there are about 80 children, whose security is now threatened by instability in the area while unable to leave the institution. The children of two other institutions in Zugdidi (120 children) and in Senaki (70 severely disabled children) experienced bombings during the August military action and still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (enuresis, trembling syndrome etc.).¹⁰⁶

Gender dimension of vulnerability

While there is limited information of gender-specific problems of IDPs, existing data indicates the need to pay much more attention to both pinpointing the problems and addressing them. IDP concept used in the majority of studies is gender-neutral and in general would not include a gender analysis of the IDP situation in Georgia, even though the State Strategy for IDPs prioritises this issue. However, in order to target the special gender-related needs of the IDP population tools are needed (age and sex disaggregated data) to identify these needs. The bottom line should be to develop policy-relevant data on all of the population, not only IDPs, including those specific for women and men.

As already noted in the text above, gender disproportion is much higher for IDPs than the general population (10% vs. 4%), probably due to higher male mortality and asymmetry in labour migration/emigration. This would mean much higher number of women-headed households, women breadwinners and single mothers, which certainly increases the overall vulnerability of such households where women have to shoulder the double burden of domestic chores and bread winning.

Inadequate living conditions and permanent stress, psychological trauma and numerous deprivations are expected to lead to various types of anti-social behaviour among both “old” and “new” IDPs, such as alcohol abuse and aggressiveness among males, related increase in domestic violence and a potential for human trafficking particularly hurting women and girls. Poor living and sanitary conditions in many collective centres would be conducive to a number of health conditions of IDP women such as elevated risks of STIs and pelvic inflammatory disease.¹⁰⁷ To make it worse, poor IDP households have limited access to adequate sanitary materials, which particularly affects women and girls and their reproductive health.

¹⁰⁵ G. Scarborough et al. Rapid Assessment on the Protection and Livelihoods situation of Internally Displaced Children and Youth Living in Collective Centers in the Republic of Georgia. UNICEF & NRC, Tbilisi, October 2006

¹⁰⁶ Russian Invasion of Georgia: Impact on Georgia's education. September 10, 2008
http://www.ambassadegeorgie.fr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=123&Itemid=81

¹⁰⁷ See footnote 93.

Impact of security concerns

While the majority of IDPs do not have any immediate security concerns, for a number of reasons security is still one of the key issues related to displacement. The most important consideration is the possibility of renewed hostilities in and around Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although the adjacent areas are monitored by the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) observers, there is sporadic shooting across both the Abkhazian and South Ossetian administrative borders.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the situation is still volatile and the resumption of military action cannot be completely excluded. Hence, there is a risk that a new wave of displacement will be seen in the future.

Providing the safety of the returned IDPs is a challenge that requires concerted action of the government and the international community. Still, it is not clear by what means safety will be guaranteed on the ground against the risks of harassment by armed militias particularly around South Ossetia and Abkhazia, considering that several casualties among policemen have been observed in both areas recently.¹⁰⁹ One more concern is related to the multitude of landmines and unexploded ordnance that is left behind after the military action, though measures have already been taken by international agencies (most notably Halo Trust) to improve the situation. These conditions restrict the mobilisation of IDP returnee communities to enhance their livelihoods.

However, the issue of security is of more immediate relevance for those persons of Georgian ethnicity, who either live in Abkhazia's Gali region or seasonally move there in order to work on their land. While immediately after the August war the administrative border was closed, later the restrictions softened and people started moving across it again. The safety of those, who either travel to or stay in the Gali region, is threatened by high criminality (kidnappings, robbery, harassment), although criminality rates have subsided during the last years, as has violence from the Abkhaz police or military.¹¹⁰ Previously, the United Nations Human Rights Office Abkhazia Georgia (UNHROAG) has not infrequently reported that Abkhaz law enforcement officers committed various human rights abuses (arbitrary arrest and detention, mistreatment of detainees) in the Gali district, though the situation seemed to be improving until recently.¹¹¹ Under these conditions the local population have good reason to avoid any socio-political integration in the de-facto system, and security concerns also restrict their capacity to integrate.

Governance and IDP livelihoods

Success in addressing the above discussed policy challenges related to internal displacement depends upon the ability of the state to effectively apply available resources, i.e. on the quality of governance. This in turn depends upon the effectiveness of existing legislation, the existence of political will to deal with these issues in accordance with a certain set of values and priorities, and the institutional capacity of the government.

There are a number of legislative acts that regulate or refer to the issue of internal displacement. In addition, Georgia has signed a number of international conventions and core instruments of international human rights law.¹¹² Since 1992 the Georgian government has issued more than 200 legislative acts with provisions concerning internally

¹⁰⁸ EU – Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, Eleventh Meeting of 16-17 February 2009, Brussels. http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=491&info_id=22854 ; See also: EU's Georgia mission says shots fired near monitors. EUBusiness, 27 January 2009. <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1233075722.31/view> ; EUMM Condemns Shooting of Georgian Policeman at Knolevi. Diplomavy Monitor. 16.01.2009 <http://diplomacymonitor.com/stu/dma1.nsf/uh/cc9CE9E9AC86A3C07985257540004D5365>

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁰ *Cnf*, e.g.: "Many students and teachers suffer from high levels of stress caused by the conflict, uncertainty, difficult living conditions and, in some areas, high levels of crime, continued insecurity and violence. This manifests itself in a variety of psycho-social problems, such as anxiety, nervousness, emotional or aggressive behaviour, bedwetting, etc... The security situation for returnee communities in Abkhazia, Georgia is characterized by a widespread feeling of mutual mistrust, especially at the local level. Although no reports of systematic serious human rights violations or harassment of returnees by the *de facto* authorities have been received in recent years, the ordinary crime rate remains at concerning levels." UN Facilitated Review of Socioeconomic Needs in Abkhazia, Georgia. UN Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia. Final Report. March 2008 <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp178374.pdf>

¹¹¹ *Cnf*. the IDP perspective: "Gali returnees – security in areas of return." IDP Voices Project. IDMC/NRC. [http://www.idpvoices.org/80257297004E5CC5/\(httpPages\)/D690E30975AE2257C125742A003CD32C?OpenDocument](http://www.idpvoices.org/80257297004E5CC5/(httpPages)/D690E30975AE2257C125742A003CD32C?OpenDocument)

¹¹² Georgia is, *inter alia*, party to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the 1979 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child (CCR); the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention); the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and two 1977 Additional Protocols. Georgia has also joined the Council of Europe and ratified the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) in 1999. Georgia has also ratified Protocols No. 1, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14 to the ECHR and has recognized the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

displaced persons. The main legislative act, which regulates the rights of IDPs and the responsibilities of the Government of Georgia towards IDPs is the Law of Georgia on Forcibly Displaced Persons-Persecuted, which was adopted on June 28, 1996 and amended in 2001, 2005 and finally on June 9, 2006.

As stated in its Preamble, this law “determines the legal status of IDPs, grounds and rules for recognition as an IDP, granting, suspension, termination and deprivation of IDP status, legal, economic and social guarantees as well as IDPs’ rights and obligations.” The Law establishes full equality of IDPs with other citizens of Georgia, and regulates additional rights and privileges of IDPs.

Under the Law on IDPs, registered IDPs are entitled to the following benefits: a monthly allowance, temporary shelter and plots of arable land, free primary and secondary education, health coverage under existing state programs and assistance in finding temporary employment in line with their profession and qualifications. However, in some cases, the Law on IDPs is in conflict with other pieces of legislation. For example, according to the Law, IDPs have a right to have a land plot for temporary use which is exempt from land tax. However, no amendment in the tax code has been passed to incorporate such an exemption, and hence in practice IDPs cannot exercise this right. There are some other discrepancies with actual practices, e.g. the Law defines IDP as a person “who was forced to leave his place of permanent residency...” but in practice some of those who stay in their own homes, for instance in the Gali region, or even some of those who live abroad, are still registered as IDPs (though the latter group are not entitled to receive IDP allowances). This was justified by the volatility of the situation, but still is in conflict with the letter of the law, as well as with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Notwithstanding certain inconsistencies and weaknesses of the Law on IDPs, it is its implementation that is the most difficult challenge. Several governmental institutions are dealing with IDPs and their protection, first of all the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (MRA), which is directly responsible for the wellbeing of IDPs. However, the powers and main function of the MRA are in fact limited to registering IDPs and the collective centres where they live; distributing monthly IDP allowances and subsidies to collective centres and respective utility providers (electricity, water); maintaining databases and issuing various documents certifying the identity of an IDP; assisting IDPs in other unspecified ways, e.g. helping to find employment, together with local and sectoral authorities. In addition, MRA is running a special programme - “My House” – which implies the creation of a database of property owned by IDPs in Abkhazia and South Ossetia¹¹³, and issuing certificates as a proof of ownership. MRA is also responsible for coordinating the efforts of all other governmental agencies in relation to IDP protection. However, its capacity is hampered by scarce funding and an insufficient number of qualified and motivated staff. Frequent rotation of its leadership is also impeding effective performance and the maintaining of institutional memory – the Minister of Refugees and Accommodation has been replaced three times in the past four years. Another obstacle to the effective operation of the MRA is its centralized structure accompanied by poor information sharing and communication between the central and regional offices.

Another important governmental actor is the Abkhazian Government in Exile, which is itself mainly staffed by IDPs. It runs a number of ministries and agencies that serve IDPs, such as separate IDP schools and hospitals. Otherwise the responsibilities of the Government in Exile, particularly since it was driven out of Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia, are rather vague. Previously its main task was to advocate IDP interests in the national government, and to maintain a cadre and institutional framework that could be immediately vitalised in case of return to Abkhazia. Certain functions covered by the Abkhazian government in exile sometimes create an overlap of functions and responsibilities with the MRA (although the funds at the former’s disposal are much smaller), and resulting inefficiency. Despite the absence of territory, this structure keeps ministries, police and even security services which are accountable to the central bodies. It aims to represent the interests of the displaced people from Abkhazia and provides some assistance to IDPs, particularly in terms of education and health care; however, it lacks financial resources and political leverage.

A somewhat analogous structure, Kurta administration in South Ossetia, has never really played any significant role with regards to IDPs from South Ossetia, and now its existence seems to be in limbo.

As there are also other ministries and agencies that are directly involved with IDPs,¹¹⁴ the government has created the Inter-ministerial Commission on IDP Issues. Though this commission possesses limited functionality,

¹¹³ In accordance with the presidential decree entitled *Measures to Register the Rights to Immovable Property located in the Abkhazian Autonomous Region and Tskhinvali Region* (#124), issued in February 2006. By the end of 2007, about 53,000 IDP families had registered their property.

¹¹⁴ E.g. the Ministry of Economic Development, which actually runs all the state-owned buildings of collective centres, the Ministry of Labour, Healthcare and Social Affairs (MoLHSA), the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the Ministry of Justice.

since all the main issues are decided in the government sessions, its Secretariat plays an important role in preparing strategic documents and coordinating efforts.

Though not many IDPs benefit from the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) programme, this is not because of good economic conditions, but rather because of the specific design of SA which provides assistance on a regressive scale to bigger families, as justified by the economy of scale argument. Consequently, IDPs discovered that, particularly after the doubling the allowances in spring 2008, they would get less money if they were to subscribe for TSA instead of IDP allowance, as the latter is individual and hence is more beneficial for bigger families.¹¹⁵ As a result, while the maximum number of IDPs on TSA was never high (ca. 24,000 in August 2008) more and more IDPs are withdrawing from TSA (in October 2008 – 19,565 IDPs or 8,975 households, while up to 3,000 was the net withdrawal). This means that the hopes of the government that TSA would gradually replace the allowances for the most vulnerable IDP households, thus facilitating a subsequent shift to more targeted assistance to IDPs, have failed.

Role of international funding

As previous years, and particularly the August-September 2008 events, have demonstrated, there is insufficient coordination among international agencies and between them and the Government of Georgia, and existing efforts to introduce better coordination within the Government need to be enhanced. Apart from that, documents prepared by the international organisations in coordination with the government (e.g. the latest JNA), demonstrate a fragmented concept, and a lack of holistic, strategic vision regarding IDPs. Previously this could be attributed to the lack of a national policy on IDPs, but since the National Strategy on IDPs was introduced, there is a conceptual basis for such a strategic vision and clear formulation of priorities.

One of the big concerns of the Georgian society, as well as of the international donor community, is the effective use of the billions of dollars that have been allocated for Georgia's post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian needs. On December 19, 2008, seven prominent Georgian NGOs signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on forming the coalition "Transparent Foreign Aid to Georgia" in order "to promote the effectiveness of the foreign financial aid pledged to Georgia by donor countries and international organizations in aftermath of August 2008 armed conflict".¹¹⁶

Effective action by the government requires precise information about the numbers and the groups of the vulnerable population. It is not yet clear what will happen after the winter, and how many people will still need assistance while remaining in displacement or upon return. The lack of statistics of how many IDPs have access to land, or other livelihood opportunities, as well as their human capitals and needs are of utmost importance for effective planning. Gathering primary information, and registering new IDPs, has proved to be quite efficient. However further update, crucial for the project planning and implementation follow up has proved to be a challenge, particularly due to shifting security conditions that keep some segments of the displaced population constantly on the move. Currently, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation plans to start to award IDP status to the people affected by August 2008 conflict, who are still living in CCs or with the host families as well as to those who benefited from the Government led resettlement programs. Hopefully once awarded status and registered in the respective database as IDPs, information on social dimensions, and the economic situation and vulnerabilities of households will become easily available. The government should also decide what legal status those registered acquire, as up to now the 'new' IDPs have not received a formal IDP status.

¹¹⁵ IDP households on SA on average count 2.18 members, while the official average for IDP families is 2.82, or, according to the above-quoted survey of Nadareishvili and Tsakadze – 3.47. Partly this discrepancy may be explained by some households formally splitting into smaller units in order to maximise benefits, but this would not change argument much and refers rather to the latter discrepancy - 2.82/3.47.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum of Understanding: Transparent Foreign Aid to Georgia (TFAG) Coalition http://www.transparency.ge/files/210_471_877200_TFAG%20Memorandum%20of%20Understanding.PDF . See also: Access to information, accountability, and aid to Georgia. Transparency International Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 December 2008 http://www.transparency.ge/files/215_447_426697_Aid%20to%20Georgia%20ENG.pdf ;

Georgian Perspectives on International Aid: Survey Results. TI Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia, 11 December 2008 http://www.transparency.ge/files/215_462_204279_Opinion%20Survey%20-%20Georgian%20Perspectives%20on%20Aid%20ENG.pdf

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Findings

- The latest developments and particularly the war in August have dramatically affected the situation of IDPs, not only in terms of the number and profile of the IDPs, but also as a consequence of the overall socio-economic and political situation in Georgia. This implies that, besides new challenges the Georgian government and society face, new approaches and new thinking are needed to cope also with the previously existing problems.
- Continuous instability along the administrative borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as essential unpredictability of some external and internal actors, may lead to a resumption of hostilities and new displacement. It is still possible that parts of the ethnic Georgian population remaining in these two entities (Akhgori, Perevi, Gali) may be forced to leave their homes, due to a sudden or gradual deterioration of the security situation.
- It is obvious, and was already demonstrated in August 2008, that both the governmental agencies and of international organisations operating in Georgia are insufficiently prepared for an emergency, and that early warning and emergency preparedness systems are still not in place.
- The current system of administering IDP issues is marred by inefficiency, overlap and vague delimitation of responsibilities, frequent rotation of leadership, which erodes institutional memory, and a lack of clear strategic vision. Not only is there no clear functionality defined for the Abkhazian Government in Exile and its equivalent for South Ossetia – the Kurta administration – but even the functioning and the role of the MRA itself needs to be reconsidered.
- There is little probability that IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia will be able to return en masse to their homes in the short term, and they are therefore in need of durable solutions in terms of their livelihood and housing.
- There exist certain differences between the Government's emphasis on housing as the priority area, and the international community's more comprehensive approach to integrate IDPs in line with international standards as expressed by the Guiding Principles.
- While it is clear that the problem of IDPs are complex and diversified, there is a tendency among the decision makers to narrow their problems to the lack of adequate shelter, which makes respective policies unsustainable and ineffective.
- The majority of IDPs (besides Gali inhabitants and the newly displaced) still live in collective centres and, after 15 years of displacement, are still much more vulnerable than the general population. Apart from poor living conditions, chronic despair and other factors of vulnerability, only a very small portion of IDPs possess any real estate.
- The current policy tends to resettle 'new' IDPs in settlements located in economically underdeveloped rural areas, with low quality of housing, inadequate social infrastructure and sanitary conditions, and the most important – little access to sustainable income generating opportunities.
- The livelihood support was provided directly during the emergency phase, while currently the country is moving to the recovery phase. While direct and cash assistance are being phased out, the need for support systems still remains during this transitory period as many IDPs and returnees are not yet able to sustain themselves.
- Many of the new settlements are constructed without proper planning and appropriate consideration of livelihoods and essential services, there fore creating a risk that those settlements will become slum areas or will be deserted for urban settlements shortly.
- In the case of the new settlements there is also a risk for migration due to lack of opportunities and the low quality of life, as there is a further risk that IDP returnees to adjacent areas are forced to give up on agriculture and other income generation activities locally and will resort to alternatives including migration for urban based work, should insufficient support be provided to restarting their livelihoods.
- Even if IDPs have access to land, small land plots, dependency on unreliable irrigation prospects, and lack of opportunities for marketing agricultural produce, may only lead to perpetuating the state of vulnerability and poverty of the settlers, unless special actions are designed to cope with such dire prospects.

- Misbalance between the benefits received through the system of social assistance and the IDP allowances entails a gradual shift of IDPs away from the targeted social assistance programmes and will therefore make it difficult to gradually involve all IDPs in the single needs-based programme of social assistance.
- While IDPs may not have lower employment rates than the general population, their incomes are as a rule lower and less stable, and they have little possibility to escape poverty. Particularly IDPs living in collective centres have a significantly lower employment rate than IDPs in private accommodation and the general population. IDPs living in rural areas have little access to fertile land or necessary credits and assets.
- The most vulnerable group of IDPs is that of lonely elderly and disabled, but there are insufficient programmes to suit their needs, particularly at the government level.
- In the long term, another of the most vulnerable groups of IDPs is that of children and adolescents, who due to their poor living conditions and quality of life (including such factors as their family situation, education, health, and socialisation) have limited possibilities for self-realisation and integration, and may therefore experience increased risks of delinquency, harmful addictions, social passivity, dependency, and depression.
- IDP children and adolescents frequently experience difficulties with receiving quality education, due to inadequate education offered, poorly equipped educational facilities, lack or high cost of educational materials, segregation and IDP schools that lead to exclusion and isolation. In particular children and adolescents living in collective centres have little opportunity to socialise, prepare homework, conduct a healthy lifestyle, and enjoy participating in recreational or sports activities.
- The population of the Gali region are living under psychologically stressful conditions because of the uncertainty of their future, and the security situation in the region. While there is no prospect of a quick resolution of the issue of mass repatriation of IDPs to Abkhazia, or of a political settlement to the conflict, there is an obvious responsibility for all stakeholders to facilitate better living conditions of returned IDPs in this area.
- There exists the tendency of the local Georgian population to avoid any socio-political integration in the de-facto system in Abkhazia, motivated *inter alia* by the need to avoid its legitimisation by such collaboration.
- Georgian society and IDPs are concerned with the lack of transparency and efficiency in disbursing international aid, and have little feeling of ownership or participation in decisions or policies that directly concern IDP livelihood and their future.

Prerequisites of Success

There are a number of serious challenges for the government in addressing IDP issues effectively. First of all there is an issue of political will in the government to address the needs and the concerns of IDPs, and to prioritise their wellbeing. Previously there was a focus on the return of IDPs, while their integration was to a great extent neglected. However, as the issue of return remains uncertain, there is now more support for attempts to integrate IDPs and to improve their living conditions. However, until recently the issue of IDPs still remained on the periphery of the governmental planning, and there is a risk that due to turbulent political developments it may again move into the margins.

Thoughtful and qualified strategic planning is another prerequisite of success. Currently, a governmental working group and the Secretariat are preparing an updated Action Plan that would take into account the new post-war realities.

Introduction of necessary legislative amendments and more effective administrative practices are needed in order to prevent any discrimination of IDPs to ease access of IDPs to work opportunities, including in the public services, or assist in obtaining relevant documents.

While today there is an understanding among decision-makers that shelter is the absolute priority in resolving the IDP vulnerability and social integration issue, it is obvious that without a holistic approach to social needs of IDPs no durable solutions will be found. A comprehensive approach to integrate IDPs should be in line with international standards as express by the Guiding principles on Internal Displacement. Unless income generation opportunities are secured for IDPs, no shelter will bring them out of poverty and despair. So, for instance, the new settlements for IDPs will not be sustainable and will end as slum areas bringing in more vulnerability unless such comprehensive approach is used.

In general, the failure to address specific vulnerabilities of IDPs in the government's schemes will lead to ineffective results. One-for-all solutions are not effective in particular in looking for durable solutions for particularly vulnerable households, especially the elderly, or disabled. On the one hand, in order to sustainably mitigate of the plight of IDPs, their problems should be addressed within broader contexts of improved and comprehensive national policies (housing, social assistance, healthcare), and within long-term development planning. At the hand, special programmes and measures should be defined and implemented to facilitate the integration of displaced persons in line with International Convention on the Right of Displaced Persons, when adequate national policies capable of incorporating the needs of IDPs do not yet exist.

Whatever good the strategy and the action plan may be, their implementation depends on the effective allocation of responsibilities and coordination between different governmental and international agencies dealing with the IDP issue. The existing structure of managing displacement is far from effective, due to ambiguities with regards to the distribution of tasks, authority and responsibility, and multiple overlap. Without streamlining the decision making process, it will hardly be possible to achieve effective implementation of the forthcoming Action Plan.

However, effective decision making is only possible if it is based on reliable and relevant information gathering mechanisms. Currently, government databases fail to identify the particularly vulnerable IDP groups. There is no publicly available information about IDP employment, or e.g. about the amount and quality of land allocated to IDPs. There is no national monitoring system or database of abuses against IDPs, such as evictions. The shortage of accurate information undermines efforts to develop comprehensive, targeted programmes. MRA together with UNHCR currently implement program to remedy those gaps.

In addition to information gathering, there should be an effective cross-referral system which would involve in each case under consideration the competent agency which should deal with it, to which the case will be automatically referred. This issue comes back to the existence of synergy and cooperation between various agencies. Relevant information should also be shared between agencies and with the public, in accordance with a communications strategy.

Measures aimed at raising public awareness are necessary in order to enhance public participation in decision making and popular support for planned policies. Particularly important is to involve IDPs themselves in public debate and decision making related to their own destiny, and in monitoring of the implementation of programmes.

IDPs benefiting from the state programmes dealing with such issues as settlement, housing or jobs placement should be attempting to provide free choice among several options to the beneficiaries as to which scheme or approach they would prefer to rely on.

In the areas and settlements where IDPs are mixed with the non-IDP (host) population, whenever appropriate programmes and projects benefiting IDPs would also aim to benefit the host population.

While addressing IDP problems, special attention should be paid to ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination, and particularly to addressing specific needs of women – whether related to reproductive health, protection from domestic violence, equal opportunity to public participation¹¹⁷, or the double burden of domestic chores and bread winning. Gender mainstreaming in strategic and policy documents and applying affirmative action when justifiable is crucial in order to address the different needs and capacities of men and women and to include their different experiences.

¹¹⁷ UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, specifically calls for women's participation on all levels of decision making in post-conflict peace-building and recovery.

Recommendations

Legal and administrative framework

- The GoG, supported by international donors and agencies, should develop necessary strategic documents, taking into account the special needs of IDPs, and developing needs-specific action plans that would envision gradual inclusion of IDPs in more general national programmes and strategies.
- The existing system of administering IDP related issues should be streamlined and decentralised, duplication of functions and ambiguity in the distribution of responsibilities between agencies abolished.
- The usefulness of a separate Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation should be scrutinised from a functional perspective. It is assumed that social protection of IDPs should be gradually passed over to MLHSA, while the registration of IDPs could be easily coped by the Ministry of Justice. The functions and responsibilities of the Abkhaz Government in Exile should be also reconsidered, with a view to avoid further confusion.
- In order to enhance the possibilities of planning future actions by the Government, permanent multi-disciplinary teams (social workers, psychologists/psychotherapists, sociologists, lawyers, development specialists) working on IDP-related issues need to be created, in order to monitor the social area in a large geographic domain, to maintain up-to-date record and analysis of the situation, and to provide expert recommendations for further action and strategy.
- The GoG, with the support of UNHCR and other relevant partners should ensure that IDP protection principles and the rights of IDPs are reflected consistently in national legislation affecting IDPs, so that the amendment to the laws on education, healthcare, social assistance, as well as respective regulations and practices should better serve the integration of IDPs into the provision of social services by Georgia at the same level as other citizens, but taking into account their specific needs.
- The rights of IDPs should be recognized consistently in legislation and administrative practice (including privatisation, state support and property rights), while the IDP definition should be in full accordance with the IDP definition of the UN Guidelines on Internal Displacement. GoG should ensure that IDPs are integrated into national and regional development plans and that GoG agencies as well as local governments are involved in stronger and long-term efforts to improve IDP self-reliance.
- GoG, UNHCR and other relevant international and national partners should develop a framework for local integration that encompasses the necessary social, humanitarian, cultural and security dimensions necessary for sustained economic development and social integration of IDPs. GoG, UNHCR and other relevant international and national partners should take measures to strengthen capacity of local authorities to facilitate such local integration.
- State benefits that IDPs or other population groups hurt by the conflicts (e.g. returned IDPs, population in adjacent areas, in Gali and Akhagori districts) are entitled to should be explicitly dissociated from the status of an IDP, as well as from the right to reclaim property lost due to the conflict or return home in case of displacement.
 - Special attention should be paid both by the government and the donors to achieving full transparency with regards to disbursement of international aid, so that all relevant information is easily accessible on the internet, and in printed form. Whenever possible, international assistance should use resources, goods and services locally available, in order to support both IDP self-reliance and economic development in general.
 - A system of cross-referrals between institutions serving IDPs should be developed by the state, enabling a person or a family in need to be automatically re-addressed to the relevant authority or special assistance provider.

Communication and participation

- As the reliability and the quality of available social statistics is impaired by the subordination of the main state agency) for gathering such data (Department of Statistics) to the Ministry of Economic Development, the issue should be considered of securing independence of such a body from the executive government. A complex approach toward gathering information on IDPs should go beyond basic demographic data and cover all aspects of IDP existence that are needed to better plan specialised programmes and projects.
- An effective two-way (government-society) communication strategy should be developed that would not only inform IDPs and their subgroups about issues relevant for them, but also inform the broader society about IDP needs and their specific problems, prompt public debate, active public participation and a sense of ownership over policies.
- The GoG, UNHCR, IDPs and other relevant partners should develop awareness programmes that promote knowledge about IDP rights, but also respect for the rights of minorities, disabled, women and children.
- The GoG, UNHCR, international and national partners to ensure that IDPs, particularly IDP women and adolescents, and host communities participate in the design and development of social, educational and assistance programmes affecting them. The Government should take measures to increase the feeling of ownership or participation in decisions or policies that directly concern the IDP's livelihood and future.
- In developing awareness programmes stakeholders should give emphasis to orientation on civic values and obligations, outreach activities at community centres, women and children's clubs, as well as trainings and "street law" initiatives. One of effective means for awareness raising should be the creation of educational brigades that would move between areas of high IDP concentration and inform IDPs on new developments, their rights, and existing opportunities; this can also done through IT resources in community centres (computer communications, etc.) and the IDP activists.
- UNHCR, international and national partners, with the support of the GoG, should work to strengthen the capacity of IDP organizations to participate actively in decision-making affecting IDP communities and to support community-based mechanisms, with a particular emphasis on empowering IDP women and children.

Security and return

- As there is limited expectation that the situation on the ground will change any time soon, the GoG and the international actors should develop a long-term strategy and mechanisms for enabling the safe and dignified return of IDPs to their homes, and reinstating them in their property rights. This should be based on a set of confidence building measures between parties in conflict, applying international pressures through various instruments, providing economic benefits to all of the population in the areas of return, and promoting the values of democracy and human rights among respective populations.
- GoG, UNHCR, international and national partners to develop community projects to assist IDPs/returnees as well as the neighbouring groups of population in assisting with economic development, building mutual tolerance and trust, and democratic institutions.
- The policy of encouraging the Georgian returnee population of Abkhazia (Gali region) to participate in public life should be reconsidered, based on the guarantees of the protection of their rights, while also focusing on securing safety, wellbeing, good education, and confidence building between communities.

housing and resettlement

- A comprehensive resettlement programme should aim at changing that situation of IDP livelihood, mitigating the key sources of IDP vulnerability through providing access to adequate housing and self-reliance opportunities. Special attention is needed not to break existing social networks when planning resettlement of IDPs, as an important aspect of wellbeing.
- There does not exist any universal approach to deal with the issue. A multitude of approaches should be applied, including, among other options:
 - Privatisation of housing in a collective centre;
 - Providing vouchers or monetary compensation to move out of a collective centre and acquire private housing;
 - Building special housing for IDPs, including social housing (i.e. providing additional care and services) when needed;
 - Assisting IDP households in acquiring/building their own housing.
- The concept and practices of constructing and running social housing should be developed for extremely vulnerable IDPs, based on existing international experience, providing necessary support, care and services.

- GoG and the international agencies need to establish monitoring and needs assessment mechanisms for the new IDP settlements so that they do not transform into slums housing poor and vulnerable people. In case of evident deterioration of living conditions, alternative schemes for accommodating these IDPs need to be developed and implemented.
- Special attention, efforts and resources are needed to provide these IDP settlements with all adequate social infrastructure, sanitary conditions, security, access to essential services and income generating opportunities. Parallel to this, targeted effort is needed to help IDPs develop relevant condominium management practices in unfamiliar environment.

Social integration and protection

- As the country is moving currently from emergency to the recovery phase, special provisions are needed not to close down relief efforts and direct cash/food assistance provided to those IDPs and returnees who are not yet able to sustain themselves. Respective situation need to be closely monitored so that no IDPs in need fall out from the support net.
- One of the priority focuses should be ensuring that IDP children and adolescents are adequately integrated, fully participate in an integrated education system of reasonable standards (including higher education), but also are involved in cultural and social activities the same way as their peers from the general population (through creating facilities for satisfying social activities, such as various associations, circles, informal education facilities, community centres, computer facilities, sport clubs, etc.).
- The same could be said regarding the elderly members of the IDP communities, as well as disabled or chronically ill, who are not enjoying protection by their immediate families and are in need of special assistance, including social communication and leisure. This group should also be helped through various community support programmes, cultural and leisure activities, supervision by social workers, and through creation of self-assistance groups.
- While the poor IDPs are envisaged to be supported through the integrated and targeted social assistance (TSA) programme, in order to be effective, the vulnerability evaluation methodology should incorporate specific aspects of IDP vulnerability. The social assistance programme should be made more attractive to poor IDP households than the IDP allowance, irrespective of the household size.
- While the poor IDPs are envisaged to be supported through the integrated and targeted social assistance (TSA) programme, in order to be effective, the vulnerability evaluation methodology should incorporate specific aspects of IDP vulnerability. The social assistance programme should be made more attractive to poor IDP households than the IDP allowance, irrespective of the household size.
- One-for-all solutions may not be helpful to afford durable solutions for particularly vulnerable households, especially the elderly and the disabled. Special state programmes, but also a broad range of non-governmental initiatives and social outreach projects are needed to support and to promote self reliance of the vulnerable groups of IDPs such as single female headed households, based on existing international and local good practices and experience.

Livelihoods policies

- Ensuring better livelihoods for IDPs should become an integral part of the national programmes aimed at economic development, employment policies, and jobs creation, and support of SMEs. IDPs should also get effectively involved in already existing mechanisms of support for small business, micro-credit schemes, and professional retraining opportunities.
- Special provisions are needed to secure equal treatment in areas related to livelihood, particularly when it comes to access to resources, such as acquisition of arable land and participation in related privatization auctions, professional retraining or support for involvement in small businesses. Creating income generating opportunities for IDPs is the key to their well being, and this should be a main focus of interventions both by the Government and by other actors.
- A multitude of approaches should be applied to support IDP livelihoods, including *inter alia* outsourcing employment support and retraining services to private organisations and companies; focusing on creating jobs in the areas of high IDP concentration and IDP vulnerability; retraining IDPs for various agricultural, or non-farming activities (especially in areas with little access to land); creating state guarantees for small credits when IDPs initiate SMEs; considering quotas and state support to employers for hiring vulnerable people to work on the construction of dwelling, irrigation systems or other types of economic infrastructure that will benefit them.

- Specialised employment services and agencies should be employed through various financial motivation schemes that could provide comprehensive approach to study the labour market, train IDPs and place them into jobs.
- As around half of IDP households are engaged in agriculture, the government should consider effective mechanisms to ensure for these a proper access to fertile land as a basic income source when justified. GoG with assistance from UNHCR and other specialized agency should ensure land ownership rights to IDPs to enable secure development. Land plots allocated to IDPs, who stop using these, should be allowed to be sold, instead of being transferred back to the local administration.
- IDPs should be given access to the land as well as provided with support to cultivate it, both in the form of material resources (credits, seeds, equipment), processing the produce, advice, access to markets and capacity building. In order to have a harvest and to produce food, IDPs need additional help, such as fertilizers, equipment for cultivating land, seeds, equipment, transport, fuel, but also advice, access to markets, and skills - so that they can effectively cultivate land. And finally, in the situation of the lack of any real estate that could serve as collateral when credit is needed, targeted financing/credit schemes should be introduced.
- As lack of collateral is a frequent obstacle for obtaining credits, practice should be implemented of using state assets (or guarantees) as collateral for IDP economic development loans that have an expected positive rate of return based on their business plans and supervision by an implementing partner (also achieving favourable credit conditions or partially compensating for high interest rates). The use of IDP homes and land as loan collateral should also be considered as a viable alternative, though implemented with caution.
- The government should be supported in its plans to develop irrigation and amelioration, in the areas of IDP settlement or return. The livelihoods opportunity of the IDPs settled on insufficient or infertile lands is low, while there is no better land available or easily accessible, other interventions should be developed to support them with the income generation, such as non-farming activities (food processing, crafts, trade, tourism and other services).
- Significant proportion of the population in returnee areas are still quite vulnerable, and special attention is needed in order to avoid the possibility that these returnees are obliged to move once again from adjacent areas (also adding ambiguity as to whether they are IDPs, returnees, or economic migrants).
- When IDPs and returnees in rural areas appear to be in a situation where there is a strong deficiency of arable land and a low return in agriculture or non-farming production, and as a result migration to urban areas follows, the government should prioritise decisive measures to develop the labour market and develop targeted retraining programmes, particularly in small towns in the areas of high IDP/returnee concentration, as a way to help many of them out of poverty.
- The Government should consider locating economic development investment in urban areas with large concentration of IDPs, such as Zugdidi, Gori, and Kutaisi, as this could stimulate the labour market there. Particularly important is to support small townships and local governments in making and implementing development plans that would involve and benefit IDPs.
- As a result of the economic crisis, much of investment in Georgia's economy goes through the government agencies and therefore can be better directed to creating public goods such as economic and educational infrastructure (roads, communications, irrigation and amelioration, schools), or favourable conditions for SME development, it is important that the government incorporates the need to improve IDP livelihood when planning respective activities.
- There should be state support for organizations that are allocating grants or giving loans to IDPs for income generation activities. IDPs should be adequately informed about existing opportunities, and those who do not have relevant skills and experience with entrepreneurial activities, lack necessary social capital, or may need support to adjust to a new economic environment – should be offered training and capacity development programmes, and should be supported through business incubators, cheap credit, and similar schemes.

Education and training

- As vocational and professional education and training is the key to improving livelihoods, it is important that IDPs are integrated in the respective educational programmes and plans, through a number of mechanisms such as respective quotas and vouchers, partial coverage of educational costs, or by designing special programmes for IDPs when appropriate. It should be also ensured that all vocational training and retraining services are certificated and acknowledged.
- In order to develop effective vocational training system it is important to continuously monitor and forecast the development of the jobs market both in the country as a whole and by region (which segment of craftsmanship or services are currently under represented, are in demand or have a particular potential of providing long term income opportunities), so that the graduates can maximise their chances of employment.
- It is important that whenever possible vocational training is coupled with employment services as well as confidence among the graduates that acquired knowledge and skills are relevant for finding a job. Local authorities and agencies should be involved when possible to maximise outcomes, and efforts should be made to link the vocational training of IDPs with their actual employment by having different prospective employers and labour market specialists on board.
- When possible, distant learning opportunities should be provided when relevant communicational infrastructure exists, or is deliberately developed through complex or coordinated programmes, in the areas of high concentration of IDPs. General communicational skills also need to be developed (IT, languages) so that such resources could be successfully used.

Health

- The Government and other actors should pay special attention to improving livelihoods of traumatised persons, including victims of gender based violence, which require additional measures in order to support them, with counselling services; and, to empowering them and facilitate their integration.
- The Government should consider organising mobile complex medical brigades that would both provide comprehensive diagnostic service to the vulnerable population in remote areas and at the same time gather much needed information about the morbidity profile of IDPs.

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ANNEX:

STATE STRATEGY FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS – PERSECUTED



Unofficial translation

DECREE # 47

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

Tbilisi

2 February 2007

**On Approving of the State Strategy for
Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted¹**

With the purpose of ensuring the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of internally displaced persons – persecuted:

1. The attached State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted is approved.
2. The State Commission in charge of elaborating the State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted (Mr. G. Kheviashvili) shall ensure elaboration of an Action Plan for implementing the State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted within six months with relevant financial-economic calculations and shall submit it for approval.
3. The Decree becomes effective from the date of signature.

Z. Nogaideli

Prime Minister

¹ [EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR ENGLISH TRANSLATION ONLY: According to Georgian legislation, the term “internally displaced persons – persecuted” is the official term for what in English is generally understood simply as “internally displaced persons”.]

State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted

Preamble

This strategic document establishes the approach of the government of Georgia towards the internally displaced persons – persecuted, analyzes existing problems and determines two major goals of the state:

- 1 Create conditions for dignified and safe return of IDPs.
- 2 Support decent living conditions for the displaced population and their participation in society;

For achievement of these goals, a number of activities should be implemented, which are stipulated generally in the state strategy and will be formulated in more detail in the Action Plan. This document determines the conceptual framework, in the form of guiding principles, on which the activities aimed at achieving these goals, shall be based.

In the process of implementing the strategy for internally displaced persons – persecuted, the state and the local authorities act in accordance with the Constitution of Georgia, the legislation of Georgia and the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), within the framework of internationally recognized human rights and the norms determined by international law.

The respective ministries and agencies, at both the state and local levels, will apply the State Strategy for solving the problems of internally displaced persons – persecuted in Georgia. The Strategy should be widely disseminated among local and international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, which are working on issues of internally displaced persons.

Chapter I - General Overview

Internal conflicts in the early 1990s in Georgia have resulted in the displacement of the population from Abkhazia (1992) and Tskhinvali region (1989-1992). Currently in Georgia there are approximately 247,000 IDPs from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region,² representing about 6 percent of the population of Georgia³.

IDPs due to the conflicts in part were accommodated at premises of compact settlement or collective centres (hereinafter referred to as ‘collective centres’); others found shelter individually – with relatives or friends, or they rented a flat. Currently, approximately 45% of IDPs live in collective centres, and the rest, 55%, with host families or in rented or purchased flats. Living conditions at the majority of collective centres are difficult. IDP families living in the private sector face similar difficulties.

The majority of IDPs live in areas near the conflict zones – specifically, in Samegrelo region and Gori district - as well as in Imereti and Tbilisi. Others are dispersed throughout Georgia. A special case is presented by Abkhazia, where thousands of IDPs have spontaneously returned to their places of origin or live seasonally (to undertake agricultural works). They retain IDP status due to their situation of insecurity and unclear future. In addition, a certain number of IDPs has spontaneously returned to some villages of Tskhinvali region. A special approach is required for the population of Upper (Zemo) Abkhazia⁵, who have not abandoned their places of residence and continue to live and work there at risk to their lives.

The living conditions and economic situation of many IDPs are disadvantageous. The unemployment rate among IDPs is high. For many, their existence depends upon state allowances and international humanitarian assistance. Difficult social conditions are accompanied by poor health status and limited access to quality social services – education and healthcare (especially in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region).

In planning and implementing solutions for IDP problems, IDPs’ interests and needs often have not been adequately taken into consideration; dialogue has not been conducted with them. Activities also have mostly been ad hoc responses to situation-specific problems and have not focused on the long-term perspective. Since 1999, with the initiative of international organizations, the approach towards IDPs started to change with the aim that humanitarian assistance should be gradually replaced by

² According to the Law of Georgia in State Budget of 2006. ³ This Strategy concerns internally displaced persons from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, hereinafter

referred to as IDPs-persecuted. This does not exclude the existence of other categories of internally displaced persons in Georgia, who are not the subject of this document. ⁴ “Collective centre” is a state-owned or private building where groups of IDPs were accommodated and

where they have lived for a long period of time. 5 Currently the persons residing in Kodori Gorge/Upper (Zemo) Abkhazia (territory under Georgian jurisdiction) have IDP status, although majority of them have not actually abandoned their residential homes; consequently, their situation is not compatible with the definition of an “internally displaced person” provided in the legislation of Georgia and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Thus, these persons do not fall within the framework of the Strategy for IDPs. However, as far as their security is not guaranteed and they have to live in conditions of high risk, the Strategy envisages a special approach, requiring the development of a specific legislative basis.

development and other programs focused on self-reliance. However, until this time, no joint vision has existed for addressing problems related to IDPs.

Chapter II - Problems

1. Failure to resolve IDP issues for years, together with general difficulties in the country, has led to the following problems in Georgia related to the conditions of IDPs:

1.1. Lack of material resources and lack of land and other immovable property

Poverty and lack of material resources are problems widely spread among IDPs, as well as the general population; however, among these two groups, the structure and nature of these problems are different. The majority of IDPs are uprooted from their habitual environment and usual means of production, most notably their land. In general, the lack of real estate - their own house or land - or other means of production represents one of the most characteristic features of the lives of IDPs, and the hindering factor for their achieving self-reliance.

1.2. Unemployment

Following the conflicts, IDPs have experienced a higher rate of unemployment in comparison with general data in Georgia; while in the districts densely populated by IDPs, lower indicators of economic activity have been observed. During the spontaneous accommodation of IDPs under conflict conditions, there were limited opportunities of offering job placements; and due to scarce social linkages and insufficient awareness (especially among IDPs in big cities) as well as inflexibility of the labour market, it was difficult for many IDPs to find stable employment. For those IDPs who managed to find work, this often has been outside of their professional qualifications and they have suffered loss of skills. Other IDPs who could not find jobs have lost their hope and initiative.

1.3. Housing Conditions

The chaotic and incoherent (urgent) accommodation of persons displaced due to internal conflicts and the absence to date of a state policy on housing, which would have significantly facilitated the proper resettlement of IDPs, has made housing conditions one of the most difficult and hard to solve problems facing IDPs. Even now, almost the half (45%) of IDPs are accommodated in collective centres. These buildings have lost their primary function, which in many cases has resulted in their depreciation. Most of these buildings are unsuitable for living. As a result, on the one hand the social welfare of IDPs is at risk while on the other hand, the economic development of the country is hindered as in many cases the half-ruined buildings and their uncared for neighbourhoods represent disadvantageous factors for urban development of cities, the revival and management of resorts and industrial infrastructure, and the attraction of new investors, etc. More than half of IDPs (55%) are accommodated in private accommodation – in purchased houses or flats, but more often with relatives, friends or they rent a flat. The majority of IDPs live in inadequate living conditions, and this can create grounds for additional stress and tension with host families. There is an assumption that the IDPs residing in the private sector are in better socio-economic conditions than those accommodated at collective centres. However, it should be

pointed out this assumption about the living conditions of IDPs residing in the private sector is based on a lack of information.

1.4. Health and Education, Quality of Social Services

There is no entirely reliable information on morbidity of IDPs. However, considering the trauma experienced during the conflict, difficult living conditions and unemployment or inadequate employment which resulted in stress among IDPs and, in some cases, also the lack of access to quality medical services and unhealthy conditions, this indicator (morbidity) should be much higher among IDPs. The lack of material resources of many IDP families and their poor living conditions hinders access by IDP children and youth to quality education, which cannot be fully provided in schools located in collective centres -- buildings that had another function in the past. On the one hand, this has a negative influence on children's opportunity to receive a quality education and on the other hand it enhances the feeling of exclusion among IDP children. Special attention should be paid to the schools in Abkhazia, where in

addition to the low quality of education, attempts of repression of the Georgian language by the de-facto administration is a concern. Moreover, often, quality medical services are inaccessible and the reproductive health of men and women is at risk.

1.5. Representation of IDP interests

Currently the social capital of IDPs (social network of IDPs) does not facilitate their integration; this results in their isolation and lower participation in civil spheres. IDPs also participate less in the creation of formal social structures.

1.6. Syndrome of dependence on assistance and lack of initiative

Disappointment and desperation of many IDPs results in social passiveness, reluctance of initiative, and dependence on assistance. This is one of the most important problems as regards their social integration as well as their future return to their permanent places of residence.

1.7. Difficulties related to the return and insecurity of returnee IDPs

Currently, favorable conditions encouraging the voluntary return of IDPs to their permanent places of residence do not exist. However, there are cases of spontaneous return on the part of some IDPs. They live under significant risk not only due to the general criminal situation and the frequent and severe human rights violations by the de-facto administration, but also because of their unclear future and the threat of renewal of the armed violence. Additional problems are caused by their unsatisfactory living conditions and lack of access to social services.

Chapter III - Goals and Objectives

1. The government of Georgia takes into account the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, protects internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, and expresses its political will for peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia, which shall become the grounds for safe and dignified return of IDPs to their permanent places of residence. The government pays specific attention to the socio-economic rehabilitation of IDPs and to the preparation of suitable conditions for their return.

2. The State Strategy has two main goals:

2.1. Creation of conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs

2.1.1. Creation of conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs implies creation of conditions so that IDPs' return to their places of permanent residence is voluntary and dignified, and in a safe environment.

2.1.2. All IDPs, who so wish, should be given an opportunity to return in dignity and safety to their permanent places of residence after resolution of the conflict (or, whenever it is possible, before the conflict is finally settled), and should be provided with economic assistance. Their property and other rights should be fully restored; in case of destroyed or inaccessible property, they should receive adequate compensation. The protection of the rights of the returnees should be ensured. Realization of property rights by IDPs is not linked to their return to their places of permanent residence. To support restoration of the property rights of IDPs, the State Strategy also foresees the establishment of joint commissions for identifying on-site and compiling an inventory of the immovable properties of IDPs.

2.1.3. Those IDPs who have spontaneously returned to their places of permanent residence should be provided with all types of support from the government with the purpose of ensuring their safety and life in dignity and improving their socio-economic situation and protecting their civil rights.

2.1.4. Governmental agencies should be able, with the support of international organizations, to implement socio-economic programs and activities of humanitarian assistance in the conflict regions.

2.2. Integration of the Displaced Population

2.2.1. It is necessary to create, or to eradicate the hindering factors, for IDPs to enjoy legal, political, living and socio-economic conditions like other citizens of Georgia. It should be pointed out that from the legal viewpoint, IDPs have all the rights as other citizens of Georgia; despite this, however, they are not fully integrated in the society:

a) In accordance with the Constitution of Georgia, IDPs, like other population of the country, have the right to choose any place in Georgia for their residence;

b) IDPs have the right to equally benefit from state and other programs of social welfare, healthcare and education, that the government of Georgia or the non-governmental sector offers to any citizen of Georgia;

- c) IDPs have the right to pursue economic activity and to have the same access to economic resources as any citizen of Georgia;
- d) IDPs have the right to participate equally in the public discussion of civil issues and in the process of decision making and to exercise equally their democratic rights of active vote (to elect) and passive vote (to be elected);

2.2.2. For IDPs' integration, implementation of additional activities which consider their specific problems are required; and, if needed, positive discrimination within the frameworks of the state programs, before the goals of the Strategy are achieved. The purpose of additional programs is to achieve social integration of IDPs through the gradual closure of collective centres, reducing IDPs' dependence on state assistance, and inclusion of vulnerable IDPs in general state programs. It is envisaged:

- a) To reduce the number of collective centres, to gradually close them, vacating them for rehabilitation, and supporting alternative resettlement for IDPs, with the Government of Georgia using a case-by-case approach in making such decisions;
- b) To provide vocational education and training to IDPs within the framework of state programs, activate their economic initiative and ensure advantageous conditions of economic activities;
- c) To involve IDPs fully in state social programs.

3. Strategic priorities are divided into three phases according to timeframe, the terms of which depend on the continued progress of resolution of the internal conflicts:

3.1. First Phase -

3.1.1. Support to ensure safety and provision of basic living conditions for the IDPs who have spontaneously returned to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region;

3.1.2. Initiation of the process for closing the collective centres:

- a) In reference to the privatized collective centres, the government will assist the owners of the buildings in vacating the property in their possession;
- b) Privatization and vacating the buildings of state-owned collective centres of special importance for the state in a manner by which the IDPs will be satisfied by proper compensation;
- c) The state will assist IDPs, in cases when they consent, to privatize the state-owned collective centres, which are not of special importance for the state, at acceptable prices (privatization of buildings for IDPs will take place at a reasonable price that is less than market price).

3.1.3. Ensure involvement of extremely vulnerable IDPs in existing state programs;

3.1.4. While implementing the activities for improving socio-economic conditions of IDPs, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region as well as Samegrelo, Shida Kartli and Akhagori district represent priority regions;

3.1.5. Elaboration of a special status for the families residing in Upper (Zemo) Abkhazia (a high-risk zone for life and health), ensuring safety and elementary living conditions.

3.2. Second Phase

3.2.1. To vacate the collective centres gradually;

3.2.2. To improve the situations of vulnerable IDPs, to provide support for their integration;

3.2.3. To support the safe and dignified return of IDPs before the final resolution of the conflicts;

3.3. Third Phase

3.3.1. To ensure the safe and dignified return of IDPs after the resolution of conflicts;

3.3.2. To integrate those IDPs who will not return to their places of permanent residence after resolving the conflicts.

CHAPTER IV - Support to the Return of IDPs

Providing opportunities for the displaced population to return to their homes represents the main priority and the most important issue for the state. Return of IDPs implies both the currently ongoing spontaneous process as well as their organized return upon the final resolution of the conflict or (in the transitional stage) on the basis of separate negotiation.

1. Providing conditions for the return of IDPs in the transitional stage

The government of Georgia continues to work in the direction of gradual return of IDPs until the final resolution of the conflict. With the aim of achieving this, the state conducts negotiations with the parties involved in the conflict and calls upon the international community for assistance. The objective of diplomatic pressure is that the self-declared authorities fulfil their obligations in reference to the safe and dignified return of IDPs.

2. Support to IDPs who spontaneously return to the conflict zone

2.1. Governmental agencies are purposefully working to ensure the safety of IDPs who have spontaneously returned to the conflict zones. For this, they use not only direct negotiations with the parties to the conflicts, but also the assistance of the international community in order to monitor the situation in the spheres of human rights and safety.

2.2. Special importance is given to addressing the situation of criminality in the regions where the returned displaced population is living. For this purpose the government seeks opportunities for internationalization of the peacekeeping forces and

the deployment of international law-enforcement forces in the problematic regions (Gali).

2.3. Respective governmental agencies are working to activate social services in the places of spontaneous return; first of all, enhancing the educational system – schools. Negotiations are necessary for ensuring that teaching in these schools is conducted in the Georgian language and according to the Georgian state curriculum. International assistance will be needed.

2.4. More active and coordinated efforts by international organizations are required in order to rehabilitate houses and renew production means in the districts where the spontaneous return of IDPs has taken place as well as to support small businesses and to significantly improve the healthcare of the population.

3. Support the return of IDPs after conflict resolution

3.1. Upon resolution of the conflict, governmental agencies should be ready to support the dignified return of IDPs in a safe environment. The government of Georgia shall implement a specific action plan that will determine the mechanisms for ensuring safety, the restoration of houses and productive means, and return of the property, as well as support the mobility of socially integrated IDPs, eradication of discrimination, protection of cultural identity, the creation of adequate living conditions, opportunities for income generation, and participation in legitimate public and political activities.

3.2. A mechanism should be elaborated for ensuring the rights of return for those internally displaced persons who are currently residing in other countries. For this purpose it is necessary to strictly delineate the rights of IDPs to receive state assistance, and the basic right of an internally displaced person and that of their descendants, regardless of current place of residence, to return to their homes. People-to-people diplomacy also is important in order to support the restoration of trust among communities.

CHAPTER V - Integration of IDPs

1. In order to realize the goal of integration of the internally displaced population, the State Strategy aims at implementing activities for improving the living and social conditions, as well as health and economic status of IDPs, undertaking necessary legislative initiatives in this regard. These programs shall be based on the identification of IDP categories according to their poverty level (the kind of care they require) and their skills (ability to become self-reliant), which requires the elaboration of relevant indicators. In fulfilling these objectives, it is important to plan programs in a way which does not harm the existing social and economic linkages established among IDPs.

2. Improvement of Living Conditions for IDPs

2.1 Effective resettlement of IDPs represents a precondition for the improvement of their living conditions and for their integration as well. The existence of approximately 1,600 collective centres, most of which are unsuitable for living, on the territory of Georgia not only poses a threat to the lives and welfare of their residents, but also hinders the social and economic advancement of the country. Resolving the issue of collective centres will assist in improving the living conditions of IDPs and will address the following significant issues:

- a) Collective centres of public purpose will regain their primary function of social institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.);
- b) Collective centres which have commercial value will be vacated for private investment. Monetary compensations, which will be given to IDPs in exchange for vacating the places they are currently occupying for residence, shall be relevant and adequate to market prices;
- c) The collective centres that are suitable for living and have a specific importance, will be transferred to IDPs, if they so desire, for self-privatization (price for the privatization should be determined by considering the social condition of each IDP).

2.2. IDPs shall be protected against arbitrary / illegitimate eviction.

2.3. State assistance will be provided based on strictly determined selection criteria, according to which IDPs residing in the private sector and those in the collective centres shall be offered specific assistance tailored to their needs. The programs listed below provide for the stable and long-term improvement of living conditions of IDPs:

- a) Use of specialized social institutions, within state programs, for IDPs with limited mental/physical abilities who are in need of special care (different types of shelters for groups of persons with specific health needs);
- b) Social assistance, within state programs, to healthy elderly and other vulnerable IDPs (those without a breadwinner, etc.) without any income (deinstitutionalized care for those who cannot survive independently and will not be able to become self-reliant in the future, though do not need special care);
- c) Financial assistance (ex. vouchers or other forms of assistance) for those IDPs who do not have a place to live or who leave collective centres, to support them to purchase a residence;

2.4. Transfer of residences into private ownership will be especially encouraged, though this option shall not take place automatically. Participation and contribution of IDPs in this process is a precondition for their purchasing of flats.

3. Improvement of socio-economic conditions of IDPs

3.1. Improvement of living conditions of IDPs depends upon access to adequate social services, first of all in the spheres of healthcare and education. In order to achieve these goals, the state strategy envisages implementation of following activities:

- a) It is necessary to conduct a survey of the health status and morbidity of IDPs. Special attention should be paid to researching the prevalence of diseases of probable high risk among IDPs. It is recommended to elaborate medical and psycho-social assistance/rehabilitation programs for IDPs;
- b) For the extremely vulnerable groups of IDPs (such as people with disabilities, vulnerable elderly people, single mothers and their children, orphans etc.), who do not possess the necessary resources for achieving self-reliance, the State Strategy envisages the timely identification of their needs and their involvement in existing programs of humanitarian assistance or of targeted care and social and home-care programs, or if needed, elaboration of special programs for them;
- c) Segregated schools affiliated with collective centres should be closed once these collective centres are vacated and IDP teachers should be involved in the national program for upgrading their qualification;
- d) In order to increase the effectiveness of IDP-targeted programs, it is necessary to ensure awareness-raising among IDPs, and this requires the development and implementation of informational programs.

3.2. With a view to ensuring the right of IDPs to return to their places of permanent residence while at the same time supporting achievement of their social integration, it is necessary to dissociate the issue of IDP status from the receipt

of social assistance. IDPs, like other persons in Georgia, may take part in social state programs, determined on the basis of needs, and regardless of the status of the beneficiary. In addition, involvement of IDPs in social programs should not reduce the state assistance allocated to them. Before the goals of the Strategy are achieved, IDPs' participation in state social programs can be considered as an additional measure.

3.3. The ability of IDPs to pursue economic activities and initiatives is fundamental to their welfare, for which crucial importance is given to the human and social capital of IDPs as well as their access to material and financial resources. It is important to support economic activities of IDPs that will facilitate their reintegration after their return to their places of permanent residence. The State Strategy envisages implementation of the following activities:

- a) It is necessary to provide support, within state educational programs, for vocational education for IDPs, which can become a tool for the social integration of IDPs, to encourage their motivation for participation in vocational training and to increase IDPs' access to such programs; also, to raise their awareness about vocational training, professional skills-development or other learning opportunities;
- b) It is important to implement programs for supporting the development of small business and enterprise among IDPs, that will encourage entrepreneurship and provide access to start-up capital as well as the acquiring of relevant knowledge and skills; it is necessary to support employment in rural areas for those IDPs who possess relevant agricultural skills; (this should be implemented through the assistance of donors (e.g. grants) and no budgetary/state resources should be used); Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, also Samegrelo, Shida Kartli and Akh'algori district represent priority regions.
- c) In the areas where IDPs are residing in buildings with significant economic potential (e.g. Tskaltubo, Borjomi), there is need to elaborate area-based development programs, which among other activities imply vacating such buildings and restoring their economic functions.

CHAPTER VI - Main Principles of Implementation of the State Strategy

1. Implementation of the strategy is based on the following principles:

1.1. Voluntary Decisions and Free Choice of IDPs

Taking into account that according to the legislation of Georgia, IDPs make key decisions voluntarily and without pressure, implementation of the strategy should foresee clearly determined mechanisms for appeal.

1.2. Dialogue with IDPs and their participation in decision making

IDPs participate in the planning and implementing of activities envisaged in the strategy, in an organized manner.

1.3. Coordination and Information-sharing among Governmental Agencies and Stakeholders

The governmental agencies implement the state strategy in close cooperation with one another and in coordination with international donors. The various programs are implemented in a coordinated manner both within the framework of strategy and in relation to other state programs.

1.4. Planning of Activities based on Reliable Information and Research Data

Effective implementation of the state strategy requires comprehensive and reliable information. When needed, targeted studies are to be undertaken, on which the action plan will be based.

1.5. Integration of IDP-targeted Programs into State Programs

The programs intended for IDPs shall be integrated in general state programs. In case of absence of general state programs, it is necessary to plan IDP-targeted programs in a way that will facilitate the integration of these programs into state programs in the long-term. Involvement of IDPs in state social programs should not reduce currently allocated state assistance to IDPs.

1.6. Sustainability of Outcomes of the Activities Implemented within the Framework of the State Strategy

Programs implemented within the framework of the strategy should aim to achieve its identified goals in an adequate and sustainable manner. Where self-reliance of vulnerable IDPs cannot be achieved by single or short-term activities, long-term assistance should be ensured.

1.7. Development of Tailor-made Programs for Different Vulnerable Groups based on Categorization Criteria

In order to plan and implement tailor-made programs, it is necessary to define categories of IDPs based on their vulnerability. Definition of these categories should be according to IDPs' economic abilities, and their social and human capital.

1.8. Ensuring Social Equity in the Process of Providing Assistance to IDPs

In all cases where IDPs are residing alongside the local (host) population, the specialized IDP-targeted programs should consider the interests of the local population as well. Social equity does not exclude the possibility of prioritizing assistance to IDPs when justified.

1.9. Gender Equality, Protection of the Rights of the Child and Respect for Other Recognized Human Rights

The State Strategy, in addressing IDP problems, pays adequate attention to ensuring gender equality and equity, protection of the rights of the child, and other nationally and universally recognized principles, and elaborates relevant mechanisms.

1.10. Regular Updating of the State Strategy

The State Strategy for IDPs should be flexible. Accordingly, it is necessary to update it regularly so that it reflects and considers new developments and trends as well as changing state interests and IDP problems. The State Strategy envisages the elaboration of effective mechanisms for this purpose.

CHAPTER VII - Implementation of the Strategy and its Monitoring

1. To achieve the goals specified in the State Strategy, the government of Georgia – in particular, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, as well as other governmental institutions – will elaborate programs and implement them with the participation of international donor organizations and the non-governmental sector as well. The ministries represent the main bodies for assigning tasks within the programs foreseen by the strategy. Various governmental, international and non-governmental organizations will be widely involved in the financial and technical support and direct implementation of these programs.

2. The main condition for the successful implementation of the strategy is the development of a well-planned, detailed and realistic action plan, reflecting not only the necessary budgetary and non-budgetary resources, but also institutional and other resources, in the short-term and mid-term perspective. The action plan should also specify the following: division of functions and responsibilities clearly among agencies; define the order and schedule of activities; and define procedures for measuring of indicators reflecting the effectiveness of implementation of the strategy.

3. Implementation of the state strategy is led by the government of Georgia. To achieve the identified goals, the ministries and donor organizations act in a coordinated manner. The State Commission and ministries will identify legislative gaps and, as needed, undertake legislative initiatives. The leading role, responsibility and coordination function in the elaboration of programs and monitoring outcomes of their implementation is assigned to the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, which will closely cooperate with the thematic working groups through the Secretariat of the State Commission. In monitoring implementation of the strategy, much importance is given to the participation of IDPs themselves and of the civil society as well as to the transparency of the process.

4. Based on the results of monitoring of implementation of the strategy, the effectiveness of the activities envisaged will be evaluated annually and the strategy reviewed and updated taking into consideration new developments.



Back cover: In one of the IDP collective centres in Zugdidi, (from the ICRC archive).

Photo on the front cover: Recently built settlement for new IDPs near Mtskheta. (Sintija Smite)