

## **Introduction**

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (the “Ministry”) is providing the Internally Displaced Persons as a result of armed conflicts (the “IDPs”), Eco-migrants, Returned Georgian migrants and Asylum seekers with long-term as well as temporary housing solutions.

As a result of armed conflict, the first and the largest wave of internal displacement in Georgia took place in the beginning of 1990s, followed by the displacement as a result of Russian-Georgian war of 2008. 20% of the territory of Georgia is occupied and therefore as of October 2017, there are 277,398 registered IDPs (89,169 families). To this day they live in protracted displacement as there is no progress in terms of the implementation of their right to return in dignity and safety to their places of origin. The Government of Georgia provides IDPs with long-term accommodation.

As of October 2017, there are 18,804 registered Eco-migrants (4,433 families) and the Ministry is also implementing housing program for them. In 2013-2016 365 Eco-migrant families were provided with accommodation. Since, many Eco-migrants are originally from Adjara region, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara also implements housing programs for Eco-migrants. Additionally, the Ministry is offering a temporary accommodation to returned Georgian migrants, who have been living abroad irregularly for more than one year.

As for asylum seekers, the Government of Georgia fully finances the service of two Reception Centers designated for 132 persons. In the reception center, asylum seekers are provided with appropriate living conditions and shelter before the decision on international protection is made.

## **IDP Housing Strategy**

*Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia* ensures provision of housing solutions to IDPs. According to the Article 12 (c) IDPs have right to receive adequate housing in Georgia until return to the place of permanent residence. For achieving abovementioned objective, from 2013, there have been adopted several Action Plans, the most recent one covers 2017-2018 years. The 2017-2018 Action Plan for the implementation of the IDP State Strategy foresees the fulfillment of three main activities:

- a) Improvement of IDPs’ living conditions through Durable Housing Solution;
- b) Improvement of IDPs’ social and economic conditions;
- c) Improvement of IDPs’ awareness.

The Action Plan is based on the State Strategy for IDPs, a document with an indefinite duration, while the Action Plan intended for implementation of the Strategy, foresees priority directions and programs to be fulfilled in 2017-2018.

According to updated statistical data, from 89,169 IDP families, 36,332 families were provided with accommodation, others - 52,837 families are still waiting to be housed under Durable Housing Program. The Government of Georgia is able to provide housing solutions to approximately 2,000 IDP families annually, since due to shortage of financial resources, it is unable to accommodate all IDPs.

### **Main priorities of the 2017-2018 Action Plan**

Main Priorities of the Action Plan are providing IDPs with temporary or long-term housing solutions through implementing following programs:

- Rural Housing program, according to which, IDPs can choose a house with agricultural land in the countryside, and the Government of Georgia assists them in purchasing;
- Rehabilitation or construction of new apartment buildings, following the cost-efficiency analysis;
- Acquisition of individual houses and apartments for IDP families;
- Mortgage Loan Repayment Program, under which IDP families receive monetary assistance for covering their mortgage loan.

While waiting to be accommodated under Durable Housing Solutions program, IDP can also benefit from temporary rent subsidy program if they qualify.

It should also be pointed out that IDP Livelihood Agency operating under the Ministry has been implementing various programs in order to help IDPs to realize their socio-economic rights and ensure their integration after resettlement.

### **Criteria for providing durable housing solutions to IDPs**

Since, due to the financial difficulties, provision of housing to all of IDPs simultaneously is not possible, the Ministry is processing their applications by applying certain criteria for prioritizing the families which are the most vulnerable. Process of evaluation is based on the vulnerability point system and decision is made by the Commission on IDP issues. In order to ensure transparency of the evaluation process different NGOs and Public Defender's offices are involved.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to maintain transparency during the selection process, monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan's implementation is carried out by the Steering Committee, in the working process of which representatives of different Ministries, Non-Governmental Organizations and international organizations, are involved.

The Ministry provides Public Defender's Office, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the representatives of other monitoring agencies and donor organizations with full access to information related to IDP accommodation process.

Public Defender of Georgia annually examines IDPs situation from human rights perspective, both on the basis of individual appeals, as well as within the framework of the Support project on IDP issues. The project has been ongoing since 2010 with the financial support of the Council of Europe and UNHCR.

It should also be pointed out that following the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, Georgia has started a process to move from a status-based to a needs-based assistance for IDPs. As resources become available as a result of implementing the new policy, more finances will be directed to Durable Housing and to the livelihood programs. As a result, process of accommodating IDPs under Durable Housing Solutions will be accelerated; however, considering the number of IDP families to be accommodated, the Government of Georgia will be unable to accomplish the set goal in due time for all IDPs without the support of international donors in this matter, which is extremely important.

### **Access to justice for the claimants of the right to housing**

IDPs can use the valid appeal mechanism according to the General Administrative Code of Georgia, which sets out steps to be taken by an individual to challenge the decision within the Ministry or afterwards before the Court.

### **Hotline of the Ministry**

At the Ministry, the Hotline of Complaints system is operational for the beneficiaries. IDP inquiries usually concern the following topics: living spaces, communal problems in collective centers, compensation and cash assistance, as well as status and registration at the new address. The Hotline system allows identifying grievances of the beneficiaries and addressing them before cases are brought before the Court.

### **Links to the relevant Legislation**

- Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, available at: <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201406171444442634.pdf>