

Questionnaire on the issue of informal settlements and the right to adequate housing

May, 2018

Question N1

IDPs living in informal settlements:

Gender	Up to 18 year olds	18 – 60 year olds	60 and older	Sum
M	11,547	12,885	3,372	27,804
F	10,846	14,618	5,482	30,946
Total	22,393	27,503	8,854	58,750

A large part of 58,750 IDPs live in the lawfully owned living spaces, meaning that they have residence permit according to the relevant presidential decree. However, they do not have these spaces (state/private owned) in their private property. The government is gradually providing durable housing solutions to these IDPs.

23 ecological migrant families (approximately 120 persons) live in the settlement in the territory of the former the 25th and 53rd battalion in Batumi city (so-called 'Dream Town'). These families have received monetary compensation/alternative housing; however they are refusing to leave the settlement.

In Tsalka municipality 29 families (80-100 persons) who claim to be eco-migrants are illegally settled in the former hospital building. These families are not in the Ministry's database of eco-migrants, they were offered to submit an official application form, so that the Ministry can address this issue according to the regulations.

Question N2

Internally displaced persons living in state-owned buildings have access to water, sanitation, electricity and other services.

LLC "United Water Supply Company of Georgia" (UWSCG) is a state-owned limited liability entity, with 100% of shares owned by the state. The company provides water supply and sanitation services to urban-type settlements throughout the country, except for Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Gardabani Municipality, and Adjara Autonomous Republic.

The company provides services to over 306 000 domestic customers, and up to 19 000 non-domestic customers.

Domestic and non-domestic tariffs are regulated by Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission Resolution №17 (17.08.2010), according to which:

- domestic tariff for metered customers is – 0.499 GEL (inc. VAT);
- domestic tariff for unmetered customers is – 2.395 GEL (inc. VAT) per month;
- non-domestic tariff is – 4.307 GEL (inc. VAT).

It should be mentioned that the company is authorized to regulate/alter tariffs which are stipulated by the aforementioned Resolution №17.

Question N4

Georgia has adopted a development goal according to the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere*: “1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance”. Moreover, the Government of Georgia is currently implementing a 4-Point Reform Plan, according to which, more than 10,000 internally displaced families will be provided with Durable Housing Solutions in the timeframe of 4 years. Provision of housing to these families is financed by the allocated Governmental budget.

Since the internal displacement in the nineties and afterwards in 2008, approximately 30% of IDPs in Georgia are living in dire conditions. In this regard, the detailed objectives and goals are set in the Georgian State Strategy and Action Plan on IDPs, which is updated every two years. The MRA carries out multiple accommodation programs and consequently IDPs are settled either in newly constructed, rehabilitated or in purchased housing units.

Question N5

Internal migration in Georgia is mainly caused by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and socio-economic factors. IDPs currently residing in Georgia are comprised of two major groups: First wave of IDPs was displaced in 1990-1993 as a result of conflict in occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia; and second wave of IDPs was displaced as a result of 2008 Russia-Georgia war. 20% of the territory of Georgia is occupied and the IDPs constitute approximately 7 percent of the total population of Georgia. To this day they live in protracted displacement as there is no progress in terms of the implementation of their right to return to their places of origin.

In the nineties, part of the IDPs were placed in collective centers, schools, kindergardens, factories and different administrative buildings, and part of the IDPs found a solution to the problem individually – they settled with relatives, friends, rented or purchased an apartment. In the 1990s approximately 45% of IDPs were living in the collective centers that were built for different purposes, were unusable for long-term, and frequently, even short-term accommodation. IDPs living in private sector properties encountered similar problems.

Question N6

The right of IDPs to receive adequate housing is protected by the state. The “Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons” which entered into force in 01/03/2014, aligns the national framework with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. It dictates that the Government should ensure

that internally displaced persons enjoy their rights to life, dignity, safety and liberty. It guarantees protection of IDP rights, including: the right to be protected from unlawful evictions, the right of emergency aid during the displacement, the right of adequate housing, integration in other parts of the country and reintegration into the place of permanent residence. Furthermore, the Law has introduced a notion of legal ownership on living spaces so that IDPs retain their living spaces provided by the State even after returning to their places of origin.

The MRA distributes housing to IDPs transparently according to the rules and eligibility criteria for the provision of IDPs with the living space, which is set out in the Decree №320 of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia. “The Guiding Principles, Criteria and Procedures of Durable Housing Solution” was developed by the Ministry in close cooperation with civil society organizations. Annex №4 of the Decree №320 includes “criteria for evaluating opportunities for using the living space”; Annex №5 includes “social criteria”. IDP families receive scores in accordance with the criteria; therefore the most vulnerable are placed first in line. It should be noted that the priority is placed on providing housing to those IDPs, who live in collapsing units, and closing of these buildings.

The MRA has also developed and published a normative act on “Approval criteria of Accommodation of Persons Affected by and Displaced as a Result of Natural Disasters” (Minister’s Decree №779 13/11/2013).

Question N7

In the years following internal displacement, Georgia has received assistance from international donors for recovery programs. Part of the aid went to rehabilitation of IDP settlements, as well as to provision of alternative housing units.

However, IDPs in Georgia continue to require international assistance. The support to the government of Georgia for the accommodation of IDPs has stopped and is now fully dependent on the state budget. The Ministry continues to invest the efforts and resources in multiple accommodation programs, but these efforts are outmatched by the scale of IDP housing needs. Therefore, additional assistance in this matter is extremely important.

Question N8

IDPs and eco-migrants get housing units from the Ministry into their private property. Moreover, they can choose their place of the settlements.

The MRA has launched multiple programs aimed at provision of Durable Housing Solutions to IDPs. The “Rural Housing” program is a good example as it combines housing solutions with livelihood opportunities. The program foresees providing housing in the rural areas with land plots. Along with housing, these IDPs have the opportunity to use arable land for their livelihoods and to become self-subsistent in agricultural sector. Moreover, as they choose location of the settlement, they have fewer obstacles with integration in local communities.