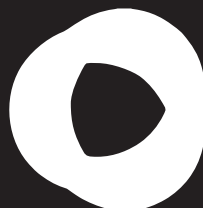


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# Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions: Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia

Policy Paper



# **Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions: Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia**

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საჯარო პოლიტიკის, ადვოკატირებისა და სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების განვითარება საქართველოში

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**ALTERNATIVES TO DURABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS:  
PRIVATELY ACCOMMODATED IDPS IN GEORGIA**

Study is undertaken by Georgia’s Reforms Associates (GRASS) – a non-partisan, non-governmental multi-profile policy watchdog and think tank, which conducts research and public policy analysis, and provides advice and project management in the fields of public policy and public administration reform. GRASS has identified Foreign Policy and Security, European Integration, Occupied Regions and Engagement, National Minorities, Education, Vulnerable Groups and Justice and Liberty as the areas of its work. GRASS was established in October 2012 by a group of like-minded former senior civil servants from the Georgian Ministries of Justice, Interior, Economy, Foreign Affairs and Defense, among other Government agencies and former international civil servants with worldwide experience.



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# ALTERNATIVES TO DURABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS: PRIVATELY ACCOMMODATED IDPS IN GEORGIA

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# Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions: Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia

## Abbreviations

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CC	Collective Centers
DHS	Durable Housing Solution
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MRA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PA	IDP in Private Accommodation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## Definition of Terms

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IDPs living in collective centers (CCs) – IDPs who live in temporary residence centers until the residential units are transferred into their ownership according to the legal procedures.

Privately Accommodated IDPs (or IDPs in private accommodation) – IDPs who live in the residential units that serve as temporary dwelling places.

Durable Solutions – solutions that permanently resolve the problems of IDPs.

Durable Housing Solutions – solutions that permanently and adequately resolve the housing problem of IDPs.

Non-resettlement Solutions – durable housing solutions that do not result in the dislocation of IDPs from one place to another.

Resettlement Solution – changing of the place of residence of IDPs.

## Executive Summary

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The present study has been undertaken by the independent multi-profile think tank, Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS), within the framework of the Policy, Advocacy and Civil Society Development Project in Georgia (G-PAC) of the East-West Management Institute (EWMI). GRASS is a non-partisan, non-governmental think tank which conducts research and public policy analysis and provides professional project management, advice and advocacy services in the fields of public policy, public administration reform, foreign policy, conflict resolution and education policy.

As a result of the foreign instigated separatist conflict which erupted in the early 1990s in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia almost the entire ethnic-Georgian population - more than 300,000 people – had to flee their houses and either leave Georgia, or resettle in other parts of the country. These people remain displaced to this day.

The Georgian Law on Internally Displaced Persons (1996) recognizes some of the basic socio-economic rights of the IDPs. Article 5 (1) of the Law states that an IDP is granted with the right to a) receive an IDP social assistance; b) receive social and other forms of assistance provided under the Georgian law; c) have an access to a temporary housing on the territory of Georgia. However, it was not until 2007 that the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA) devised State Strategy on IDPs and the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the subsequent Action Plan to meet the basic housing, medical, socio-economic and other needs of IDPs. Since 2007 the MRA mostly focused on the durable housing needs of the IDPs who are residing in so-called Collective Centers. MRA has a practice of postponing the issue of the housing needs of the privately accommodated IDPs until the needs of the first category of internally displaced persons are fully satisfied.

In 2013 MRA decided to address the durable housing needs of both categories of the IDPs. However, the Ministry mostly focused on the provision of one solution – resettlement. Alternative solutions, such as monetary assistance, agricultural plot, business loan, are not sufficiently explored by MRA to this day. The objective of the present study is to examine the perceptions of the privately accommodated (PA) IDPs with regard to the alternative durable housing solutions (DHS).

The study found that about 43 % of the surveyed IDPs in PA are in need of urgent housing solution, with additional 26 % anticipating that such need would arrive soon for various reasons. However, the study also found that despite various levels of housing needs and social vulnerability of the IDPs in private accommodation, still their considerable number demonstrates the willingness to engage in the alternative housing programs. A significant number of the IDPs in PA (39 %) considers monetary assistance as an acceptable DHS, while 15 % is open to engage in discussions about other non-traditional DHS options.

Based on the findings, GRASS recommends to the Ministry (MRA) and other major stakeholders- local and international NGOs. to focus their efforts on the policies leading to the gradual shift to a need-based targeted assistance by the state through developing alternative

housing solutions based on the free choices and voluntary participation of the IDPs in the process.

The study has an added value to the ongoing debate especially in view of the revised policy by the MRA to address the durable housing needs of all categories of IDPs including those residing in private accommodation (PA).

By using a snowballing sampling technique, the study surveyed 293 privately accommodated IDPs in Tbilisi and the Imereti and Samegrelo Regions, which have the largest concentration of the IDPs in PA who have not received assistance from the state. In addition, GRASS conducted 11 focus groups in the targeted regions for a deeper analysis of the housing needs of IDPs in PA. GRASS engaged IDPs in PA in the discussions in order to find out what might be the alternative durable housing solutions and what would be their willingness to accept these initiatives if offered by the state.

Among the various alternatives, the following solutions were enumerated and proposed: (a) repairing the house/apartment of residence; (b) providing agricultural land/village house; (c) providing monetary assistance; (d) making available business loans with low interest rates; (e) covering the costs of education; (f) enabling state intervention to cover loans and (g) other solutions.

Based on the collected data and retrieved information, the study identified various needs and levels of housing solution urgency among the IDPs in private accommodation. The majority of these IDPs feel excluded from the government assistance programs. Moreover, in their opinion, if the government housing programs continue with the current scale, it will leave the DHS needs of IDPs further unaddressed. Only a small portion of privately accommodated IDPs have a chance to participate in the state housing program given its limited resources, the scope of rehabilitation/construction programs and the eligibility criteria for housing. At this stage, the state capacity to provide all privately accommodated IDPs with the appropriate housing assistance is limited, including the data on the housing needs of these households.

The study evidenced a considerable number of IDPs in PA with the willingness to accept alternative housing solutions. Based on these findings, the recommendation of the study includes the following:

- The government should undertake a nationwide assessment of the socio-economic conditions and the housing needs of all privately accommodated IDPs;
- The government should explore the policy options of need-based housing alternatives against the existing housing practice;
- The government should develop clear eligibility criteria for any alternative programs to ensure that right of the IDPs to adequate housing or their access to other durable solutions is duly exercised;
- The alternative programs should run in parallel to the ongoing housing initiatives by the government and be offered to those categories of IDPs for whom the existing housing practice is the only adequate durable housing solution;

- A cost-benefit analysis of any such alternative against the current housing schemes should be undertaken. The alternative housing solutions will not only satisfy the needs of a greater number of privately accommodated IDPs but will also relieve the burden of a greater financial responsibility on the state;
- Government should closely consult the IDPs during the process of elaborating the criteria and making any important policy decision on the matter of alternative housing solutions.

## Conflict and Displacement

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Separatist conflict, which has been widely perceived as instigated from abroad by the Russian Federation, erupted in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s. These conflicts resulted in a massive displacement of persons from both regions and destroyed the relatively peaceful, pre-war coexistence among the different ethnic groups. Almost the entire ethnic Georgian population, over 300,000 people, fled Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia during the conflicts in the 1990s and remain displaced within Georgia to this day. The conflict in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia resulted in the displacement of about 60,000 people. Many Ossetians sought refuge in North Ossetia while as many as 10,000 ethnic Georgians were displaced to other regions of Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

New wave of displacement occurred in 2008 after the Georgia-Russia war of August 2008. Over 30,000 people were displaced as a result immediately after the war, however almost half of them were from the villages adjacent to the occupation line, where they returned after the active phase of hostilities ceased and European Monitoring Mission (EUMM) replaced Russian occupation forces in September-October 2008.

The respective ceasefire agreements effectively froze the ethnic separation but failed to secure a long-standing peace. Given the nature of the violence and the resulting ethnic cleavages, it is no surprise that very few displaced persons returned to their areas of origin. Almost no ethnic Georgians have returned to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.<sup>2</sup>

Negotiations over the return of the IDPs and refugees to their places of permanent residence have been ongoing since 1990s in various international formats. Recently, after the creation of the Geneva International Discussions in 2008, second working group was tasked with the aspects related to the return of the IDPs and refugees. However, no progress has been made, mainly due to the disagreement by the parties over the status issues. Participants of the Geneva Discussions failed to even agree on the basic principles governing the rights of the displaced persons. Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali usually maintain that the obligations they had undertaken after the initial conflict in the 1990s are fulfilled and all people that had the right to return did return (reference is made to the close to 40,000 persons living in the Gali region).

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<sup>1</sup>Alex Mundt, Elizabeth Ferris "Durable Solutions for IDPs in Protracted Situations: Three Case Studies," Brookings Institute, Canberra, Australia, October 2008, pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Georgian position, however, is that all displaced persons need to return in an organized way, so that the internationally recognized requirements for voluntary, safe and dignified return are met and the property rights of the forcefully displaced are respected. This is usually contradicted by Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, who argue that the right to return is internationally recognized only for the refugees, and Tbilisi can not apply the criteria of safety, dignity and voluntariness to the issue in question, as Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not recognized by Georgia as independent states, therefore no refugees could have originated from them for Georgia. As for the issue of internal displacement, Moscow and the authorities in control in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, argue that since Georgia continues to claim the two regions as its own, it should acknowledge that there is no international legal provision envisaging the safe and dignified return of the IDPs. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are not considered as legally binding document by Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali. Such an approach closely links the issue of return to the status of these regions. Therefore, the issue of status is the main obstacle in the discussions, despite the usual message from the Secretary General of the United Nations that “[t]he right of return and its exercise by an internally displaced person cannot therefore be directly linked to political questions or the conclusion of peace agreements. It is essential to recognize return as both a human right and a humanitarian issue that must be addressed irrespective of any solution to an underlying conflict.”<sup>3</sup>

These political and international law related questions are closely intertwined with each other and the absence of a dialogue based on political will from all sides, makes it impossible for the IDPs to return. Thus, returns to the places of their habitual residence are currently not possible, and do not represent a topic of this study.

## Legal Background

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According to the official statistics of the MRA, there are 265,109 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia. However it is widely believed that the total number of the displaced persons, including IDP family members and refugees, which fled the conflict to Russia and elsewhere is close to half a million. Most of the IDPs are residing in the capital Tbilisi and two regions; specifically, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti<sup>4</sup>. Further, 17,000 IDPs were displaced due to the conflict in 2008 and 3,000 have been displaced more than once. 157,276 persons (60%) are privately accommodated and 101,323 (about 40%) reside in the collective centers (CCs).<sup>5</sup>

The Georgian Law on Internally Displaced Persons, enacted in 1996 and last revised on December 23, 2013, determines the rights and obligations of IDPs. A report on IDPs issued by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) rightfully stresses the importance of the normative acts in ensuring the protection of IDP rights. Despite the fact that there are serious legislative gaps, as acknowledged in the GYLA report, the Law nonetheless recognizes some basic socio-economic rights.<sup>6</sup> Article 5 (1) of the Law states that an IDP is granted with the right

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<sup>3</sup>“Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia,” Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/813, p. 10

<sup>4</sup> Official web page of the MRA, Statistics related to the IDPs, viewed at - <http://mra.gov.ge/geo/static/55>

<sup>5</sup> Natia Kochlashvili, 2013, *Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia: Needs Assessment*, Norwegian Refugee Council.

<sup>6</sup> Kurdovanidze, Nona. 2013. “IDPs’ Rights to Adequate Housing: Legislative Analysis, the Key Trends of Court Practice”. Tbilisi: The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association.

to a) receive an IDP social assistance, b) receive social and other forms of assistance provided under Georgian law and c) have access to temporary housing on the territory of Georgia. Moreover, the Law guarantees that until Georgian jurisdiction is restored on the occupied territories, IDPs residing in Georgia will not be evicted from collective centers unless a) written consent is given by an IDP residing in a collective center to receive a monetary compensation or other material or immaterial good in exchange for vacating an occupied residential unit, b) an IDP is provided with an accommodation that will not aggravate her/his living conditions, c) natural or other kinds of disasters are occurring at the place of an IDP's residence and d) an IDP has occupied the place arbitrarily by breaching the law.<sup>7</sup>

It is acknowledged in the Law that apart from housing rights and the IDP social assistance program, there are other aspects of the state's obligation towards the IDPs. The responsibilities of the state include assisting and ensuring the rights of IDPs to education, employment, health insurance, pension, social assistance, etc.<sup>8</sup> with these broad responsibilities covering not only IDPs who reside in collective centers (CCs) but also those residing in private accommodation (PA). CCs are defined as temporary residence centers of IDPs organized until residential units would be transferred to their ownership according to legal procedures. Private accommodation, on the other hand, is defined as residential units purchased, rehabilitated or constructed by the state after 2007 with the aim of accommodating IDPs or those residential units that serve as temporary dwelling places for the IDPs. It must be noted that meeting the socio-economic needs of IDPs (finding so-called "durable solutions") does not amount to the fulfillment of state compensation for lost property located on the occupied territories. Rather, it means ensuring the successful integration of IDPs into the local communities and supporting their rights to lead safe and dignified lives. IDPs very often inaccurately refer to the social benefits doled out under the durable solution program as their final "compensation."<sup>9</sup> The MRA clearly states that durable housing solutions do not equal to the renouncement of state responsibilities towards the IDPs for the loss of their property on the occupied territories.<sup>10</sup>

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## Policy Background

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### State Strategy on IDPs

The Government of Georgia had long neglected to systemically addressing the needs of IDPs and adequately fulfilling its responsibilities towards them. Only on February 2, 2007 did the MRA (by Decree No. 47) devise the State Strategy on IDPs with the Cabinet of Ministers adopting the subsequent Action Plan to meet the basic housing, medical, socio-economic and

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<sup>7</sup>Law of Georgia on IDPs, viewed at -

[https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com\\_idmssearch&view=docView&id=2244506&lang=ge](https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com_idmssearch&view=docView&id=2244506&lang=ge), or [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/GE/NRC-IDMC\\_NorwegianRefugeeCouncil-LawonIDPs-Annex2-eng.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/GE/NRC-IDMC_NorwegianRefugeeCouncil-LawonIDPs-Annex2-eng.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR GEORGIA, 2013, *Report on Participatory Assessments for the Extension of the IDP Action Plan.*

<sup>10</sup>Law of Georgia on IDPs, viewed at -

[https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com\\_idmssearch&view=docView&id=2244506&lang=ge](https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com_idmssearch&view=docView&id=2244506&lang=ge), or [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/GE/NRC-IDMC\\_NorwegianRefugeeCouncil-LawonIDPs-Annex2-eng.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/GE/NRC-IDMC_NorwegianRefugeeCouncil-LawonIDPs-Annex2-eng.pdf)

other needs of IDPs.<sup>11</sup> The state set two broad objectives to fulfill its obligations towards the IDPs:

- Creating conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs to the territories from which they were unlawfully displaced;
- Supporting decent living conditions of IDPs in their local communities and ensuring their successful integration.

The Strategy states that “prior to the IDPs’ return, 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.”<sup>12</sup> It is declared in the Strategy that apart from the state’s obligation to ensure the safe return of IDPs to their place of origin, IDPs are to be provided with durable housing solutions (DHS).

In fact, DHS is considered to be one of the top priorities set forth in the Strategy. DHS entails the accommodation of IDPs on a voluntary basis; that is, they are free to choose whether or not they accept the receipt of durable housing solutions. The Strategy aims at satisfying the needs of IDPs to the extent that at the final stage they will be integrated into the state’s social protection system and receive allowances based on their need rather than on their IDP status.<sup>13</sup>

### 2010-2012 Action Plan

On May 28, 2009 by Decree No. 403, the Government of Georgia adopted the IDP State Strategy Implementation Action Plan for 2010-2012. The primary objective of the plan was “the promotion of the socio-economic integration of IDPs and the development of their living conditions.” The latter encompasses the fulfillment of various measures including the provision of adequate long-term accommodation.<sup>14</sup>

In the period of 2007-2011, durable solutions were achieved for 28,861 families. Of these, 23,344 were provided with apartments and 5,517 were given a one-off financial assistance amounting to USD10,000. In total, 732 residential buildings were built, of which 247 were constructed in Tbilisi and 485 in other regions of the country.<sup>15</sup>

The Graph 1 illustrates that the 28,861 families who were provided with durable solutions comprise only approximately 33% of all IDP households which means that 67% of the total IDP households were still in need of help (although not all of them necessarily require access to DHS).<sup>16</sup> Graph 2 breaks down how many of the IDPs provided with DHS were given a one-off financial assistance to satisfy their housing needs. It shows that 19% of the IDPs were provided with financial assistance to solve their housing needs.

#### Graph 1. IDPs Provided with DHS

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<sup>11</sup> UNHCR GEORGIA, 2013, *Report on Participatory Assessments for the Extension of the IDP Action Plan*.

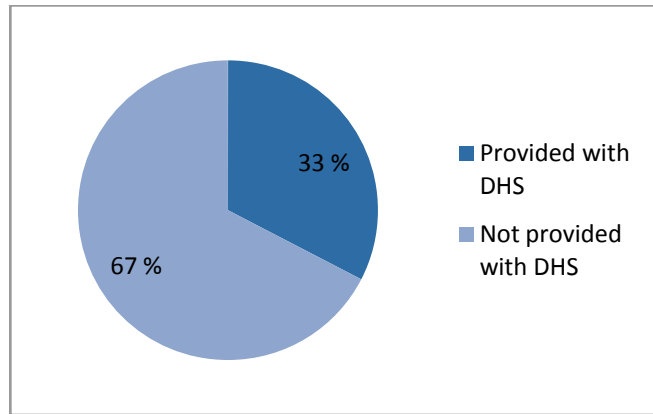
<sup>12</sup> Nona Kurdovanidze, 2013, *IDPs’ Rights to Adequate Housing: Legislative Analysis, Key Trends of Court Practice*, Tbilisi: Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

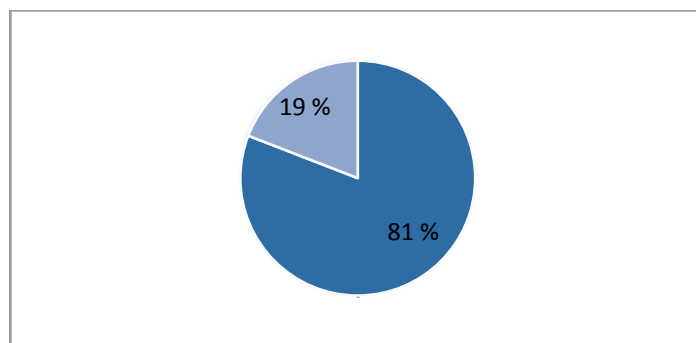
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, 2012, viewed at - <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/20131119184834227.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



**Graph 2. IDPs with Housing**



MRA sought to achieve durable solutions by using the following alternatives: a) rehabilitation and privatization of CCs, b) completion of unfinished buildings and transforming them into residential apartments and handing them over to IDPs, c) construction of the new cottage-type buildings, d) purchasing village houses and transferring them to IDPs' ownership, e) one-off financial assistance and f) construction of new residential blocks.<sup>17</sup>

### 2012-2014 Action Plan

On June 13, 2012 the Government adopted the Decree #1162 and approved the State Strategy Implementation Action Plan on IDPs for 2012-2014.<sup>18</sup> The new action plan was meant to renew the previous plan and fulfill the objectives of the State Strategy. Additional details concerning the Action Plan for 2012-2014 and its main directions are given below.

Activities related to durable housing solutions for IDPs were to be implemented in three phases. The first phase included IDPs living in CCs who were in need of durable housing and who were offered their current apartments by the government. The second phase included IDPs in CCs but without the government offering them these buildings (because they were not habitable for technical reasons, rehabilitation was expensive, they were privately owned, represented strategically important public buildings, etc.) as well as IDPs living in private accommodation who were in need of DHS. In the third phase, the government would examine alternative possibilities of DHS provision for all other IDPs. In the last stage, the action plan would consider

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Nona Kurdovanidze, 2013, *IDPs' Rights to Adequate Housing: Legislative Analysis, Key Trends of Court Practice*, Tbilisi: Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

possibilities to target those IDPs who were not in need of being provided with DHS. The first and second phases of the action plan were launched in 2008-2009 and scheduled to continue in 2012-2014. The third phase was supposed to begin after first and second phases had finished.<sup>19</sup> The graphic illustration of the Action Plan is presented in the table 1.

**Table1. Phases of the Action Plan**

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
State-owned CCs will be transferred to the ownership of IDPs	Improving living conditions of those IDPs who:	Addressing the needs of those IDPs who do not require new houses
State will purchase privately owned CCs and give them to the IDPs	Were refused privatizing of their living houses/apartments	
State-owned CCs will be purchased by an investor who will offer alternative housing solutions or financial compensation to IDPs	Reside in private accommodation	

According to the action plan, IDPs registered in the private sector who have no access to DHS or who live in difficult living conditions will be offered DHS gradually in the rehabilitated state-owned idle buildings, newly built residential blocks or other houses purchased by the government. The Action Plan states that even though a durable housing solution is regarded as a foremost priority, the MRA will still offer other alternatives to those IDPs who already solved the problem on their own.<sup>20</sup>

### Rules and Criteria for Providing Long-Term Housing Solutions

In 2013, the MRA decided to treat both categories of IDPs (i.e. privately accommodated and those residing in CCs) on an equal footing in terms of policy priorities and address their DHS needs simultaneously. The new policy gives both categories of IDPs a formal chance to DHS. On August 9, 2013, by the Order # 320, the MRA adopted the Rules and Criteria for Providing Long-Term Housing Solutions to IDPs and Regulations for the Commission on IDP Matters. The new policy on IDPs is formulated in the document entitled “Rules for Long-Term Accommodation of IDPs.”<sup>21</sup>

The new rules and criteria do not contradict the Action Plan of the State Strategy on IDPs. It specified the ways how the accommodation procedures will be conducted. MRA takes the responsibility to inform IDPs in the community where the residential units have to be distributed in order to solicit applications. MRA also determines what categories of IDPs are allowed to

<sup>19</sup>Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy on IDPs during 2012-2014, viewed at <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201311211211332665.pdf>

<sup>20</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Order No 320 of the Minister of the Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, August 9, 2013, viewed at [https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com\\_idmssearch&view=docView&id=1980225&lang=ge](https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com_idmssearch&view=docView&id=1980225&lang=ge)

participate in the selection process. IDPs, on their part, apply for the state program and take part in an MRA organized evaluation and selection process where their needs of durable housing are judged according to special criteria. The criteria are divided into two parts: 1) criteria for determining the capacity of using the residential space and 2) social criteria.<sup>22</sup>

During the evaluation and selection process, special preferences are given to the following groups:

a) Those IDPs who reside in collapsing or hazardous CCs. Evaluations to determine the hazard levels of the building will be launched by the MRA or on the request of particular groups of IDPs.

b) IDPs with regards to whom there is a court order or an order issued by higher authorities.

c) Those IDPs who reside in CCs which are subject to special state interest and are declared so in written form by the legitimate state organ.

d) Those IDPs who reside in CCs that are well below the standards approved by MRA are also considered to be of a special priority.<sup>23</sup>

The criteria document also defines what an “IDP family” is. According to this definition, an “IDP family is a circle of persons related or not related by blood to each other, who have an IDP status (a family member may not be an IDP) and who are residing at the same residential place; members of the family are engaged in a common domestic economic activity (a family can be comprised of only one member too) and they have not yet been provided with housing solutions or a one-time financial assistance according to the procedures laid down in the Action Plan within the framework of the activities that aim to provide long-term housing solutions.”<sup>24</sup>

It is important to underscore that according to the rules, unmarried adult members of the family (for example, adult siblings, a single parent and adult offspring) should not be placed in one room. Although, underage family members, married couple and same sex adult IDPs are allowed to be provided with a single shared room.<sup>25</sup> In case two or more IDPs receive the same scores during the evaluation, the commission will cast a ballot.

In this new concept, DHS, as one of the most important durable solutions, is offered to privately accommodated IDPs. The previous studies on privately accommodated IDPs (especially those by NRC and DRC) have apparently been taken into account when devising the aforementioned criteria. For instance, there is a special emphasis on the stability of living; if an IDP family changed their location too often, it reflects the degree of instability of life and, therefore, is a disadvantage vis-à-vis the local population. Also, the new criteria take into account the number of family members who can be accommodated in one room and this is also an apparent step forward to alleviate the disadvantaged position of IDPs. The inclusion of social criteria is also justified as IDPs have different needs according to their social status and socio-economic conditions.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

In 2013, MRA planned to undertake a new countrywide registration of IDPs with the purpose to renew the existing database of IDPs; that is, to make corrections within the information as regards to the place of residence of IDPs, the number of family members and other general information. As a result of the registration, MRA hopes to gather the information necessary to design or revise state programs that aim to provide IDPs with durable housing solutions. In the Action Plan and subsequent Rules and Criteria for Providing Long-Term Housing Solutions to IDPs, the main focus is made on resettlement as a way of providing IDPs with access to durable housing (i.e. purchasing or constructing houses and handing them over to the IDPs themselves). Although one-off financial assistance is viewed as one of the means to achieve DHS, it is not utilized on a large scale.

## Review of Existing Studies on Privately Accommodated IDPs

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The needs of privately accommodated IDPs were the main subject of a several recently published studies on the IDPs in Georgia. Most prominently, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) issued a report<sup>26</sup> that exclusively addressed the above-mentioned problem. The report by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)<sup>27</sup> also touched on the issue of durable housing among privately accommodated IDPs. In 2011, UNHCR published a report on a participatory assessment for the extension of the IDP State Strategy Implementation Action Plan for 2012-2014. One of the main recommendations of the UNHCR study was to: “plan and conduct activities aiming to identify and address the specific needs of privately accommodated IDPs (housing, social assistance, access to services, access to information and other needs) in a comprehensive manner.”<sup>28</sup>

The NRC report, published in 2013, was concerned with the non-DHS related needs of privately accommodated IDPs, but also stated that there was a need to go beyond the resettlement as a solution of durable housing problem. In one of its observations, concerning housing support for IDPs, it stated that “over 10% of the interviewed IDP families have received some external assistance in improving their living conditions both from individuals or legal entities and from an NGO or the state. The types of assistance included eviction compensations, housing vouchers or direct shelter material assistance. Among the interviewees were 20 families who benefited from eviction compensation. Only 12 of those had used the compensation to procure a house or apartment while the remaining 8 families used the money for different purposes.”<sup>29</sup>

One of the recommendations of the NRC report was that the durable housing solution should not be circumscribed with resettlement as the ultimate solution. The study states that because of the diverse living situations and conditions among the privately accommodated IDPs, it is impossible to generalize about their housing needs based on their housing/property status. The fact that a number of IDP families have managed to buy property without the government’s

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<sup>26</sup>Danish Refugee Council (DRC), 2011, *Survey Reports on Privately Accommodated IDPs in the Samegrelo Region and Tbilisi*

<sup>27</sup>Natia Kochlashvili, 2013, *Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia: Needs Assessment*, Norwegian Refugee Council

<sup>28</sup>UNHCR GEORGIA, 2013, *Report on Participatory Assessments for the Extension of the IDP Action Plan*

<sup>29</sup>Natia Kochlashvili, 2013, *Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia: Needs Assessment*, Norwegian Refugee Council, p. 18.

assistance does not mean that these families were not in need of additional support. Some of these families are not able to use their property properly (sub-standard living conditions) while others could be in imminent risk of losing the property, most often due to their inability to repay loans against which the property had been mortgaged. The study concludes that their further support needs should be addressed individually with a variety of possible housing solutions in mind (e.g., material distribution, loan refinancing support, etc.).<sup>30</sup>

The DRC report was published earlier than the one produced by the NRC (in 2011) but of the two it is the one which most extensively discusses the topic in concern. Like those of the NRC report, several of its recommendations directly touch upon the idea of alternative solutions for the durable housing problem. For example, the report states the following recommendation for solving the DHS problem of privately accommodated IDPs: “Housing conditions and the need for durable housing solutions seemed not necessarily to be related to housing situations or economic vulnerability; for example, a household may live in its own housing but still have housing needs and a household may be economically vulnerable but live in good housing conditions.”<sup>31</sup>

The study also recommends to government not to focus only on resettlement as a means for giving IDPs access to DHS but “provide all housing solutions as stated in the Georgian Government’s Action Plan on durable housing solutions in a relatively parallel process.”<sup>32</sup>

The DRC report mainly focused on the existing housing conditions of IDPs and then contrasted these assessments with the IDPs’ own views as to how the durable housing solution can be achieved.

The study undertaken by GRASS enquires further about the willingness and capacity of IDPs to undertake alternative housing solutions to satisfy their durable housing needs. To this end, the study did not involve the individual assessments of housing conditions but, rather, explored the socio-economic profile of the selected group of IDPs and their willingness and capacity to participate in the alternative DHS programs, if offered by the State.

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## Methodology

### Scope of the Study

This report is based on the findings of a study undertaken by GRASS on Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions for Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia. The study was conducted in June-September 2013. The study employed 11 focus group discussions and administered questionnaires to 293 IDPs in the capital Tbilisi and two regions of Georgia, Samegrelo and Imereti, where the largest concentration of IDP communities is concentrated, including those in private accommodation.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p.30

<sup>31</sup> Danish Refugee Council (DRC), 2011, *Survey Reports on Privately Accommodated IDPs in the Samegrelo Region and Tbilisi*, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* p.47.



## Objective of the Study

The objective of the present study was to explore alternative durable housing solutions (DHS) for IDPs in so-called private accommodation and examine the perceptions of IDPs and their willingness to engage in the alternative housing initiatives. The findings of this study and the recommendations offered will be used by GRASS to advocate the government and respective stakeholders to develop policy solutions that envisage a shift from the traditionally viewed housing and resettlement schemes to more need-based targeted state assistance towards privately accommodated IDPs that ensures voluntary participation and free choices made by IDPs.

The GRASS study has an added value especially in view of the revised initiative by MRA to address the housing needs of all categories of IDPs, including those residing in private accommodation (PA), based on the developed/adopted housing eligibility criteria.

## Instruments

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods based on data gathered through questionnaires and focus group discussions. The target segments of the survey and focus group guide were IDPs living in private accommodations and aged 18 years and older. The questionnaire was designed by GRASS based on instruments used in various studies on IDPs (see Annex 1). The instrument was piloted and administered by GRASS prior to the fieldwork.

The focus group guide (see Annex 2) was also designed by GRASS. The focus group discussions were administered parallel to the questionnaire collection process.

The questionnaire used in the study was structured as follows:

- (a) Information about the project and the study
- (b) Basic information: socio-demographic profile of IDPs in PA
- (c) Housing conditions of IDPs in PA
- (d) Housing solutions and willingness to participate in the alternative DH initiatives
- (e) IDP access to services and social assistance programs
- (f) IDP perceptions on how informed they are with regard to state policies

A desk review of recent publications and studies and available statistics as well as primary and secondary legislation related to IDPs and their housing issues was also conducted in order to get a sense of the reality and draft preliminary research tools.

## Sample Design and Selection Criteria

Respondents were selected by using a snowballing sampling technique. This was justified for two main reasons: first, as the previous studies showed,<sup>33</sup> it is often problematic to find an IDP using their official registration data, and second, it provided access to IDPs who are members of the IDP family, but don't have an IDP status themselves.

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<sup>33</sup> Danish Refugee Council (DRC), 2011, *Survey Reports on Privately Accommodated IDPs in the Samegrelo Region and Tbilisi*.

The obvious limitation of the sample design is that the snowballing sampling technique does not allow for generalizations about the whole IDP population. However, since the goal of the study was an identification of issues pertaining to the housing needs of IDPs in PA and a description of the potential willingness to accept alternative housing solutions, the use of the snowballing technique was justified.

In total, 293 questionnaires were completed in all three settings. It must be noted that there was one IDP who was registered in another region (Kakheti) and six IDPs who did not answer the questions on the questionnaire.

*Table 2. Interviewed IDPs by Region*

	Number	Percent
Tbilisi	83	28
Samegrelo	109	37
Imereti	94	32
Kakheti	1	0.3
Not responded	6	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In the process of administering questionnaires, one person per household criterion was employed, strongly supported by all communities participating in the program. The idea of the focus group was to get a systemic understanding of IDP perceptions of durable housing solutions and in such a way to supplement the quantitative data findings.

In order to recruit respondents for focus groups, GRASS asked local NGOs working on IDP issues to identify the primary list of potential respondents in the targeted areas. All of the potential respondents, nominated by the respective organizations, were contacted. Focus groups were conducted with the respondents who agreed to participate in the study.

In total, 81 people took part in 11 focus group discussions as per following: 2 in Tbilisi, 3 in Kutaisi, 1 outside Kutaisi (rural) in Tskaltubo; 3 in Zugdidi and 2 outside Zugdidi (rural) in the Samegrelo Region.

*Table 3. Focus Group (FG) Data*

FG	Male	Female	Total
FG 1	2	4	6
FG 2	2	5	7
FG 3	3	5	8
FG 4	2	6	8
FG 5	6	1	7
FG 6	0	6	6
FG 7	5	4	9
FG 8	3	4	7
FG 9	1	6	7
FG 10	5	3	8
FG 11	5	3	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>81</b>

## Limitations

- There was a difficulty to access privately accommodated IDPs in terms of finding their places of residence.
- Because the project was administered during the summer season some IDPs were not easy to locate due to the period of increased mobility.
- In cases when the respondents completed questionnaires themselves, they would not always respond to some of the questions, thereby leaving part of the questionnaire incomplete.

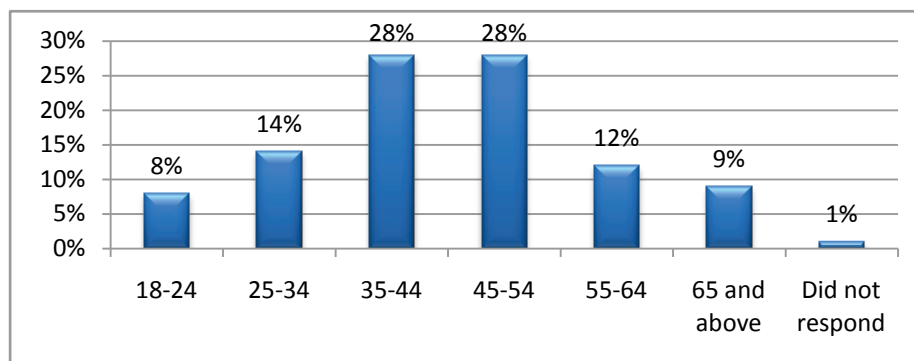
## Socio-Economic Profile of the IDPs

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The following section provides a demographic and socio-economic profile of the surveyed participants. The aim is to draw a clearer picture of the social conditions and economic status of the selected IDPs. This is all the more important if taking into account that the respondents were selected using a snowballing sampling technique and thus, their responses cannot be generalized across different socio-economic and demographic groups.

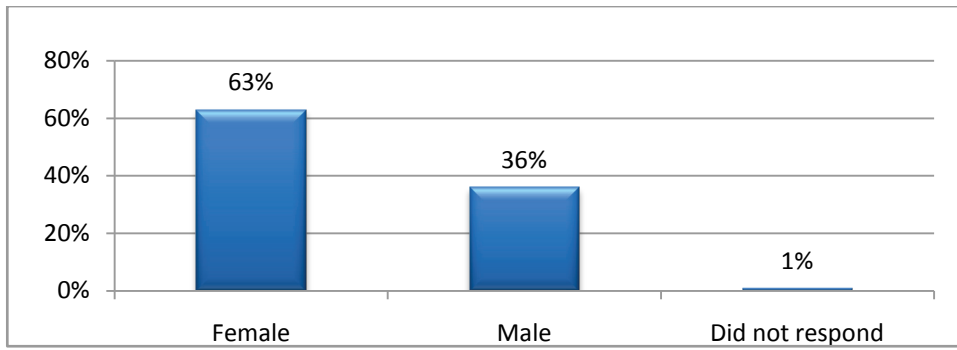
As it can be seen on the Graph 3 all age groups were captured, though the largest number, about 70 % of the respondents belonged to the 25-54 age group.

**Graph 3. Age Group Composition**



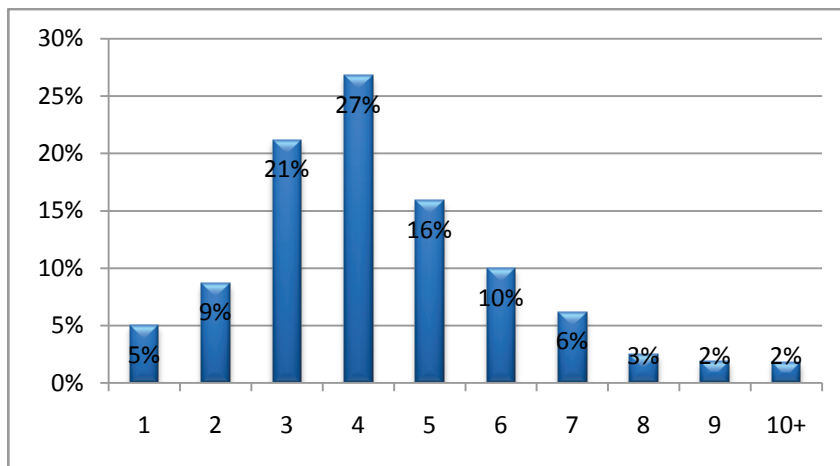
Graph 4 shows that 63% of the respondents were female and only 36% were male.

**Graph 4. Female/Male Ratio**



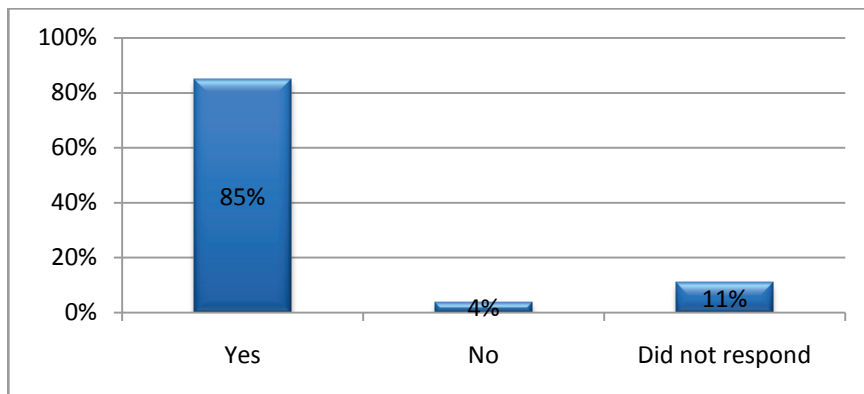
The family composition of the respondents varied from single person households to families with more than ten family members. The average family size was 4. The results are shown in the Graph 5.

**Graph 5. Household Composition**



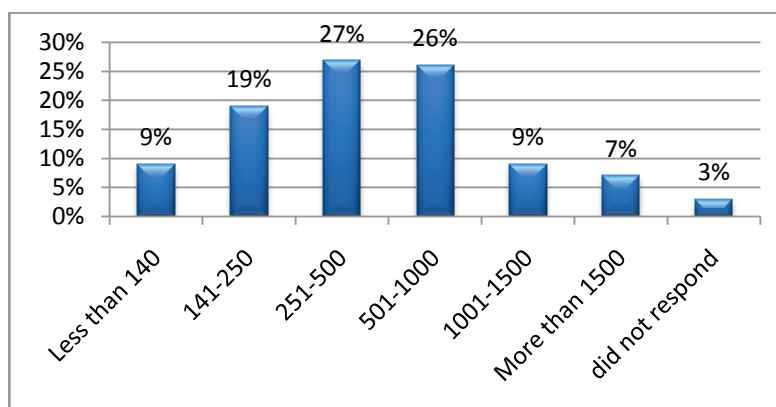
Among the respondents, 85% had an IDP status, 4% belonged to a family with an IDP member and the rest (11%) did not respond to the question. The results are shown in the Graph 6.

**Graph6. IDP Status**



Graph 7 shows how much average monthly income respondents claimed to have, including income from social allowances.

**Graph7. Monthly Family Income**



Of the selected IDPs, 55% said that their monthly family income was less than GEL 500. Further, 42% claimed to have incomes more than GEL 500 and the rest did not respond to the question.

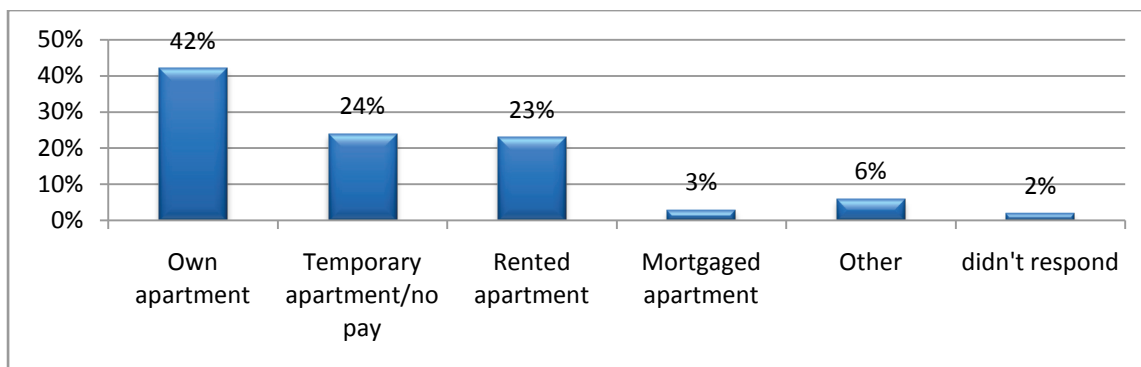
## **Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions of IDPs in PA**

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### **Housing Situations of IDPs in PA**

In order to assess what durable housing solutions IDPs might find acceptable, the study started from the analysis of housing situations of privately accommodated IDPs. The housing situations among the surveyed population varied as follows: interestingly, the largest number of IDPs, at about 42%, appeared to own some type of property. Another largest combined group is 47% of IDPs which includes (1) 24% who does not own property but lives in a borrowed property of their friends and relatives/do not pay for housing and (2) 23% with no property but renting/paying for apartments. A small number of IDPs at 3% reside in mortgaged apartments. This picture is illustrated in Graph 8.

**Graph 8. Housing Situations of IDPs in PA**



The IDP perceptions with regard to the group not owning apartments/not paying for rent were connected with the high sense of insecurity about the future.

*“At this moment, my relative [whose house we live in temporarily] is not pushing on us to move out but we are so uncomfortable and feel alien under somebody else’s roof. This relative will arrive back in one year or so and will sell this house and then we will be facing a true problem [of urgent housing].” Female 18, Zugdidi.*

In the rural areas, the housing situations are aggravated by no access to a land plot which leaves the households without permanent housing, makes for unemployment and provides no means for economic sustainability.

*“We are seven members in the family. I do not pay for a house and live temporarily at a relative’s place but the space is not enough for all of us. More than housing, I need access to land in order to provide for my family.” Male 39, Samegrelo Region, villager.*

Among those who rented property, most frequent were the perceptions of economic insecurity coupled with the absence of a permanent dwelling place and the sense of “not belonging” in terms of adaptation. The most severe case of the surveyed IDPs included the multi-member family with unstable jobs that changed rented homes 14 times in the past 20 years.

Interestingly, even though a large group of surveyed IDPs constituted the group who owns some type of property, most frequently these respondents listed the problems of inadequate housing conditions, and small-space apartments with families becoming larger or when younger children became grown up; other problems included unemployment and job insecurity to cover utilities and running costs, especially apparent in non-urban areas.

Thus in the sample population surveyed, the housing situations of IDPs in PA tend to vary in so many ways that it is not easy to determine the exact correlation between the property ownership, vulnerability and economic security of the IDP families in relation to what they have already achieved/or are in need of durable solutions unless a large-scale profiling of all the IDPs in PA is made in order to collect in-depth data of the socio-economic situations, housing conditions and the needs of each individual households in private accommodation.

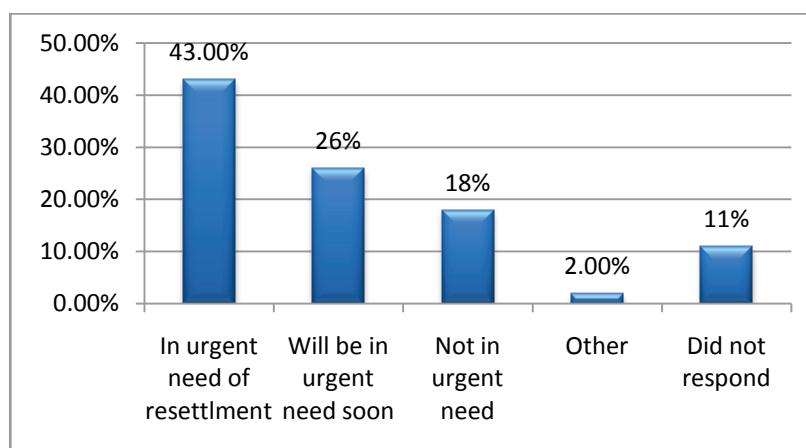
### Urgency of IDP Housing Needs

Following the analysis of the IDP housing situations, the study looked at IDPs’ own assessments on the urgency of their housing/resettlement needs. One of the assumptions was that IDPs who are in more urgent need for a resettlement solution would be less willing to

accept other durable housing alternatives as accepting alternatives might be too risky given their immediate needs (mainly due to insufficiency of such assistance to adequately address the housing need).

IDPs were asked to respond as per the following options: (a) we are in urgent need of housing/resettlement solution, (b) resettlement solution is imminent due to the needs associated with the extension of family or other reasons, (c) we are not in need of a resettlement solution and are ready to consider other alternatives, and (d) other.

**Graph 9. Urgency of the Resettlement Solution**



As Graph 9 illustrates, remarkably, 43% of the respondents said that they were in urgent need of housing, 26% were anticipating that such need would soon arrive due to the extension of the family or for other reasons; and 18% were not in urgent need of resettlement and were ready to consider other non-resettlement alternatives while another 2% had different options in mind.

Disaggregated data on the level of urgency of the resettlement solution across the different regions presented in Table 4 shows that a lower number of the respondents in Tbilisi are in urgent need of a resettlement solution, as compared to higher figures in the Samegrelo and Imereti regions who listed their resettlement need as urgent.

**Table 4. Urgency of the Resettlement Need byRegion**

Regions	How urgent is the resettlement need?						Total
	Urgent	Will be urgent soon	Not urgent	Other	Not relevant	Did not respond	
<b>Tbilisi</b>	27	33	12	1	0	10	83
<b>Samegrelo</b>	48	23	26	2	3	7	109
<b>Imereti</b>	50	16	14	4	0	10	94
<b>Kakheti</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>N/A</b>	0	3	1	0	0	2	6
<b>Total</b>	125	75	53	7	3	30	293

The IDP perceptions on the urgency of their situation cross-tabulated with the housing situations of IDPs shows, that generally speaking, those who own their apartments are in less

urgent resettlement need (only 15% are in urgent need), versus those who own or live in temporary borrowed houses (61%) or are renting an apartment (69%). The results are shown in the Table 5.

**Table 5. Urgency of the Resettlement Need by the Housing Situations**

Housing Situations	How urgent is the resettlement need?						Total
	Urgent	Will be urgent soon	Not urgent	Other	Not relevant	Did not respond	
Own apartment	18	45	37	5	1	18	124
Temporary apart/no pay	43	14	8	0	0	5	70
Rented apartment	47	10	6	1	1	3	68
Mortgaged apartment	3	3	1	0	0	1	16
Other	10	2	1	1	1	1	16
Did not Respond	4	1	0	0	0	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>293</b>

By the time the project implementation started, the MRA had already introduced new rules and criteria for the participation of IDPs in the resettlement programs. Therefore, as a part of our research IDPs were asked about their views on the new rules and how they might target IDPs in need-based assistance DHS programs provided the differences in “urgency” and limited state resources.

Some of the responses we received are provided below and they are more or less representative of the general attitude of the IDPs.

*“There should be special criteria to determine the urgency of IDP needs for durable housing solutions, however no criteria will work unless each IDP family in PA is ‘profiled’ individually on the spot.” Male60, Kutaisi*

*“There should be certain rules, the government should know exactly who is in urgency, when and what kind of [housing] solution can be offered for each family, especially with alternatives.” Male 55, Zugdidi region*

Thus, it was important to find that IDPs closely connected the issues of prioritization of the “urgency” and eligibility of privately accommodated IDPs with the enactment of certain policies by the government to individually assess the needs/urgency of each household, including the capacity of IDPs to resolve/achieve durable housing solutions on their own, especially in the cases of alternative solutions.

### Alternative Solutions that Might be Considered

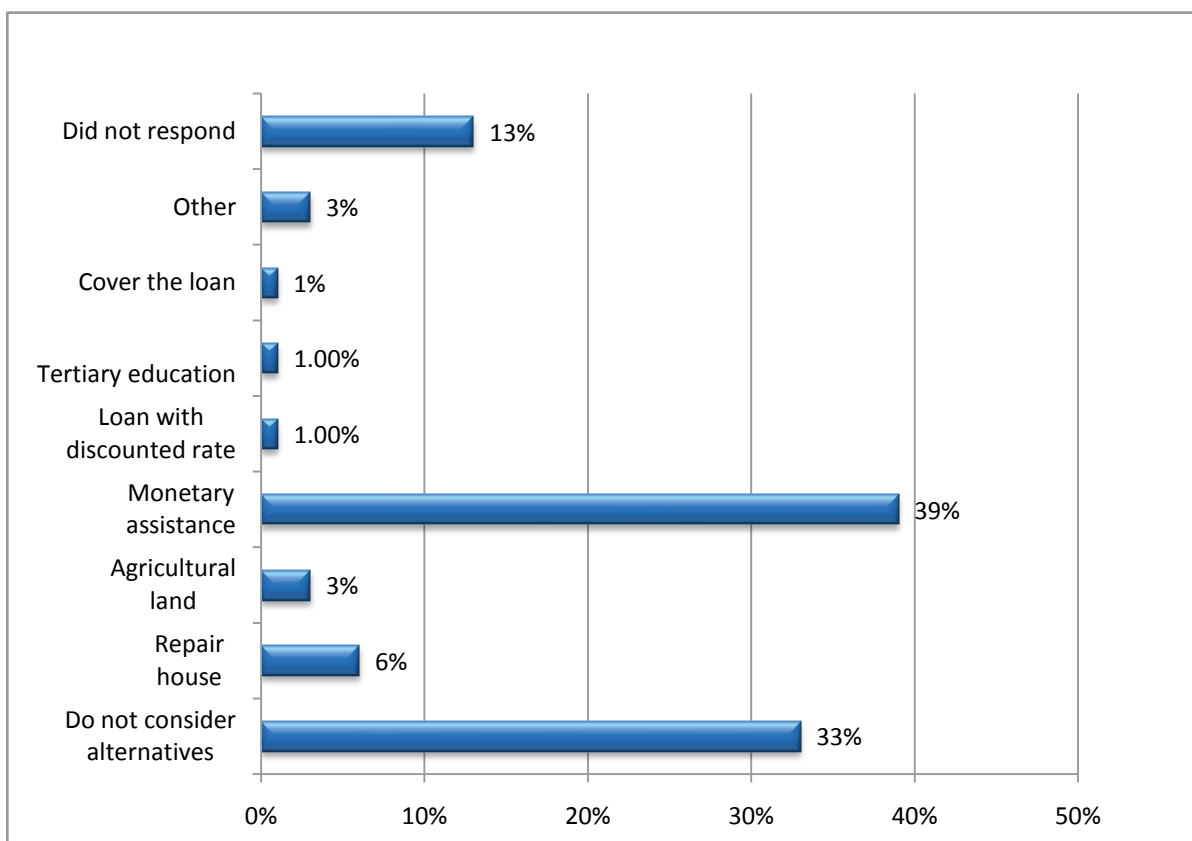
Next, the study examined what alternative solutions might be considered as durable housing solutions for the surveyed IDPs. The questionnaire provided several specific alternative choices but respondents were free to come up with their own ideas on alternative solutions as well.



Graph 10 shows what alternatives are presented to the selected IDPs. The question contains the following options: a) I don't consider alternatives, b) to repair the house/apartment where I live, c) to be provided with agricultural land/rural house, d) to receive monetary assistance, e) to secure a business loan with a discounted rate, f) to cover the costs of tertiary education, g) enabling state intervention to cover the loan and h) other.

The study finds that the largest numbers of IDPs, 39%, regard monetary assistance as the most preferred non-resettlement solution. About 33% do not consider alternatives but, rather, wait for their turn to participate in the current resettlement program. By combining the various alternatives together, it can be seen that up to 15% of IDPs consider other non-resettlement alternatives right away while another 13% did not have an answer to the question. It is also important to look at the data per the particular alternative solution by regions.

**Graph10. Alternative Solutions**



The Table 6 below shows that by a regional desegregation of data, monetary assistance remains as the most acceptable alternative. It also stands out that only 9% of respondents in Tbilisi reject alternative solutions as compared to Samegrelo at 41% and Imereti at 45%.

These differences might be accounted to the fact that in Tbilisi there is a greater number of respondents who claimed to be in less urgent need for the resettlement solution having higher incomes and better employment opportunities in the capital.

**Table6. Non-Resettlement Alternative by Region**

Regions	Do you consider non-resettlement alternatives?									
	Do not consider	Repair house	Agriculture	Monetary assistance	Business loan	Education	Cover loan	Other	Did not answer	Total
<b>Tbilisi</b>	8	3	4	50	0	1	2	4	11	83
<b>Samegrelo</b>	45	4	4	35	2	1	0	2	16	109
<b>Imereti</b>	43	9	1	24	0	0	0	3	14	94
<b>Kakheti</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

The cross-tabulation of the urgency of the durable housing need with the alternative solutions confirms the assumption that IDPs in urgent need of a resettlement solution do not exclude the possibility of accepting other alternatives.

The Table 7 below shows that while it is generally true that IDPs in urgent need of DHS are less inclined to accept non-resettlement solutions (56% of them do not consider alternatives), there is still a substantial number of respondents in urgent resettlement need and 40% of them are ready to accept non-resettlement alternatives.

*Table 7. Urgency vs. Alternatives*

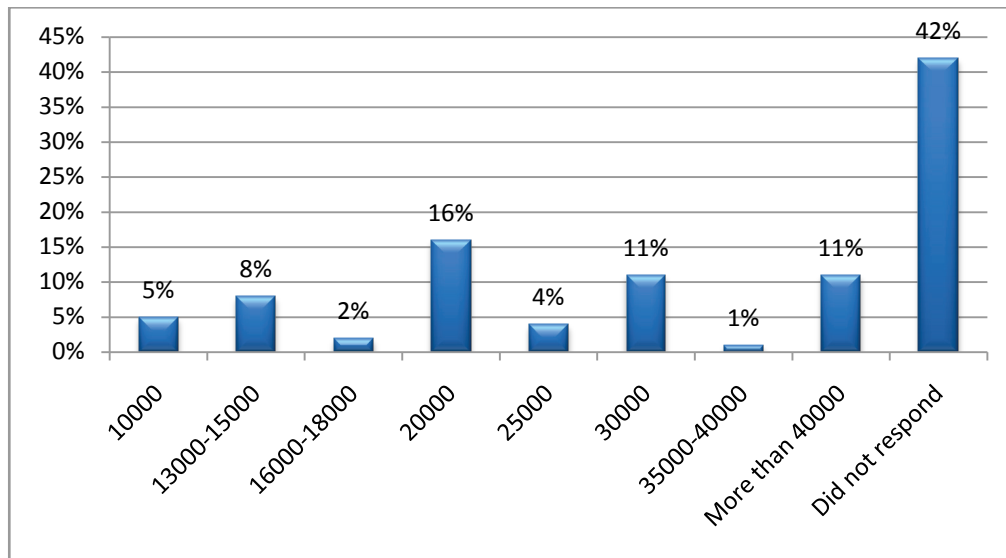
What alternatives do you consider?	Urgency of the resettlement need by alternatives				88
	Urgent	Will be urgent soon	Not urgent	Other	
Do not consider	70	15	3	2	7
Repair the house	9	3	3	0	2
Agricultural land	3	3	3	0	0
Monetary assistance	33	42	24	4	11
Business loan with discounted rate	1	1	0	0	0
Financing tertiary education	0	1	1	0	0
State intervention to cover the loan	0	2	0	0	0
Other	4	1	2	0	2
Did not respond	5	7	17	1	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>

Notably, in the focus group discussions, participants underscored the fact that even though they were in urgent resettlement need, the urgency did not necessarily imply that the existing housing practice was viewed as the sole durable housing solution for them.

### Monetary Assistance as an Alternative Housing Solution

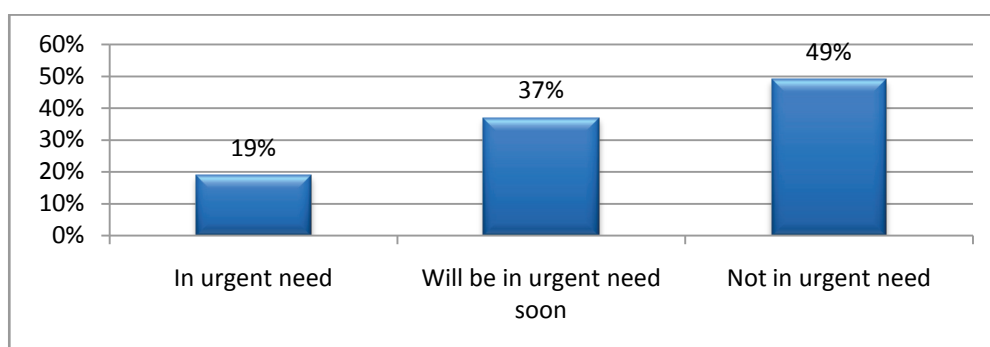
The study found that the monetary assistance was named as the most preferred/acceptable alternative for the larger number of IDPs in PA. The study further explored IDP perceptions with regard to what amount of monetary assistance was perceived as satisfactory contribution towards resolving the housing needs. Graph 11 illustrates that about 31% of the selected privately accommodated IDPs view up to USD 20,000 as an acceptable amount of monetary assistance, while 27% require more than USD 20,000.

**Graph 11. Financial Assistance to Meet Durable Housing Needs**



It should be noted, that in the Graph11 above, the need for financial assistance of IDPs is illustrated irrelevant of the urgency of their housing situation. When the data is analyzed in comparison to the urgency of the housing situation, it turns out that only 19% of the IDPs in urgent need of a resettlement solution desire monetary assistance equaling USD 20,000 or less. For those who are in less urgent need, the comparable figure is 37% and for those not in urgent need at all, the comparable figure is 49%. The results are shown in Graph 12.

**Graph 12: Financial Assistance to Meet Durable Housing Needs**



This implies that the monetary assistance might not be a durable solution for all kinds of IDPs. In this regard, the focus group discussions provided more valuable insights into the reasoning for the accepting or not accepting of monetary assistance as an alternative solution.

*“We are hardly able to rent an apartment. We are a family of four and nobody works. My father has TB and there is no way that monetary assistance can resolve or replace our urgent need for housing.” Female25, Kutaisi.*

*“In the past years, I would not opt for financial assistance and would wait for resettlement, but now that I am adapted [to my current living conditions,] I would accept it but use it for purposes other than housing.” Male40, Tskaltubo.*

While considering the monetary assistance option, IDPs stressed that it is important for the government to assess the specific needs and living conditions of families as the monetary assistance would not necessarily solve the durable housing needs of IDPs and might leave them more vulnerable. In other cases, when the housing need is already resolved by the household on its own, any such assistance might be directed towards meeting other needs of the IDPs such as business activity, education, or other investment.

Based on the Graph 12 it can also be argued, that among the selected IDPs who were in less urgent need for a resettlement solution, they were more inclined to accept lower monetary support offers as an alternative. This can be accounted to the differences in housing needs and different levels of severity/satisfaction of IDP conditions which requires individual need-based policy approach development.

### **Other Alternative Solutions**

The focus group discussions provided more information on the types of alternatives that IDPs in PA may consider as an adequate solution to their durable housing needs. Note, that some IDPs consider non-housing alternatives in a larger concept of durable solutions. This includes the replacement of a housing solution with livelihood assistance, financing tertiary education or other. IDPs commented that with these alternatives they will successfully solve both the housing problem and other types of issues related to the livelihood and local integration.

*“Repairing the house is an acceptable alternative or constructing a house on an [owned] plot of land. Also, covering a mortgage or a bank loan is a good alternative. It is important if these alternatives are tailored to individual needs of families.” Female35, Tbilisi.*

*“If they give me an opportunity to start a small business, like a shop/market, this would allow me to generate income and a business grant would be an alternative to housing for me in this case.” Male44, Kutaisi.*

In some cases, IDPs felt that non-resettlement options would give them better choices, especially for those who were not living at the places/cities of their original registration for many years and are seeking resettlement in the places of integration. With the existing housing practice, these IDPs said they might not be offered, nor would be eligible for housing in the places/cities where they currently reside. In this case, a resettlement option elsewhere would cut them off from the established networks of support.

*“It’s important to resettle [IDPs] by taking into account the location where they live already. After 20 years, they are already integrated in the local community. There should be more choices for them.” Female42, Tbilisi.*

It seemed that one of the most important reasons why IDPs might think that alternative solutions are acceptable, even if the resettlement need is truly urgent, is the slow and small scale of the available resettlement programs over the decade, largely excluding IDPs in PA. In this regard, many interviewed IDPs felt that their turn for and offer of the durable housing

solution will arrive very late (if at all). The validity of this explanation was also confirmed during the focus groups interviews as can be seen from the following commentaries:

*“If they [MRA] did not offer me anything in the past and may not offer me anything in the next five years, I am willing to consider alternative solutions and alternative assistance forms. The state should inform us what it plans over the next years, only then I will wait.” Female28, Zugdidi.*

*“If there will be no [large scale] assistance to IDPs in PA in five-to-ten years, then I am ready to consider financial assistance now. In ten years, my conditions may worsen.” Male43, Zugdidi.*

By providing alternative housing solutions, IDPs in PA are more likely to make more informed and voluntary choices with regard to their resettlement and thus also maintain the integration level in the places where they have resided over the longer period of time.

Overall, based on the findings of this study, it can be said that a significant size of surveyed IDPs in private accommodation, including those in urgent need of resettlement solution, are to some extent willing to consider the non-resettlement solutions to meet their durable housing needs. IDPs in private accommodation felt excluded from the ongoing debate and stay largely uninformed on the policies concerning their future in satisfying durable housing needs.

### Definition of the Family Unit

Finally, the study also examined the government’s definition of a family unit. IDPs were asked if they agree or disagree with the definition of an IDP family unit if utilized for the resettlement and alternative housing solutions programs by the government. It should be noted that in the context of the durable housing program, the MRA addresses the needs of IDP households and not IDPs individually.

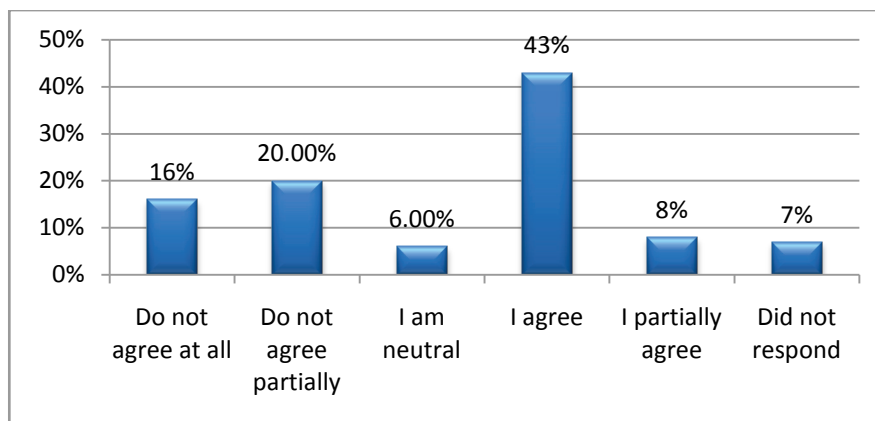
The current definition of the family unit is the following: “An IDP family is a circle of persons related or not related by blood to each other who have an IDP status (a family member may not be an IDP) and who are residing at the same residential place. Members of the family are engaged in a common domestic economic activity (a family can be comprised of only one member) and they are not yet provided with housing solutions or a one-time financial assistance according to the procedures laid down in the action plan within the framework of the activities that aim to provide long-term housing solutions.”<sup>34</sup>

Graph 13 shows that although the majority of the surveyed IDPs, at 43%, agreed with the definition, there is still a considerable number of IDPs, at about 36%, who disagreed strongly or to the certain extent.

#### Graph 13. Family Definition

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<sup>34</sup>Order No 320 of the Minister of the Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, August 9, 2013, viewed at [https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com\\_idmssearch&view=docView&id=1980225&lang=ge](https://matsne.gov.ge/index.php?option=com_idmssearch&view=docView&id=1980225&lang=ge)



While IDP commentaries in the focus group discussions were in general approving of the attempt by the MRA to define the term, most of them, including those who agreed with the term, did not have an awareness of its implications and could not be clear in understanding the definition.

*“According to this definition, the whole Georgia would be one family... Is this the definition that is tailored for the specific purposes - to unite the families for resettlement programs?” Male 52, Kutaisi.*

*“The problem will arise if several [generations]of the family still live together. Will their housing needs be considered as a whole unit? I am not clear on that.”Female42, Tbilisi.*

IDPs felt they should be properly informed how the defining of a family unit is going to affect their resettlement offers by the government. Moreover, IDPs viewed this issue problematic more so for their participation in the alternative solutions program since many families might not feel accepting assistance from the state unless the family unit is properly defined and identified for the purpose of DHS.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

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In order to determine what constitutes durable housing solutions for IDPs in PA, the housing needs of privately accommodated IDPs have to be assessed on a large scale based on the housing situations, conditions, economic vulnerability and other criteria to develop alternatives that can be applied to the particular situation of each IDP family in PA. It is also essential to determine in what capacity privately accommodated IDPs have to accept alternative solutions to resolve durable housing needs on their own.

MRA should develop special criteria of eligibility for alternative housing solutions as it does in the case of a resettlement program. In such a way, the MRA will be able to provide need-based targeted assistance to IDPs ensuring that the right of IDPs to adequate housing and/or their access to other durable solutions is duly exercised.

MRA should pay special attention to the definition of a family unit and eligibility criteria to participate in the alternative housing solutions programs. The current definition, used in resettlement programs, is met with considerable criticism from the privately accommodated IDPs as it does not allow an effective separation of family units to exercise their right to adequate durable housing solutions.

It will be necessary to take into account IDPs' own ideas on what alternative durable housing solutions entail. The state should solicit ideas from IDPs and take into account voluntary choices made by IDPs.

If the state considers monetary assistance as one of the alternatives, it should be adequate to the particular durable housing needs of each IDP family. Moreover, the effectiveness of the monetary option should be examined against other resettlement solutions, based on a cost-benefit analysis.

The state should not be focused solely on monetary assistance but, rather, it has to develop need-based alternative solutions. The findings show that 21% of the selected privately accommodated IDPs consider other non-resettlement alternatives. In the case of monetary assistance, it should be ensured that the money is spent on improving the housing conditions. To this end, housing vouchers that were already piloted in Kutaisi can be successfully utilized.<sup>35</sup> Overall, in the case of both non-monetary and monetary assistance the state should pay particular attention to the different levels of needs of IDP families.

Lastly, considering the fact that the state sponsored resettlement program covers only a fraction of all privately accommodated IDPs who are in need of housing solutions, it would be beneficial if, in parallel, the state would start to offer alternative solutions to a greater portion of the target group. This will not only satisfy the housing needs of a greater number of privately accommodated IDPs but also relieve the burden of responsibility on the state.

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<sup>35</sup>Andrew Golda, "Use of Housing Vouchers in Georgia, Forced Migration Review 33, September 2009, pp. 55-56, viewed at - <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR33/55-56.pdf>

## Annex 1. Questionnaire



### Number of the Questionnaire

# \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Questionnaire is coded:

( ) Questionnaire is processed:

### The Study of the Durable Housing Needs of IDPs

July 2013

Please, read the text below to all respondents.

Hello, my name is ----- . I represent non-governmental organization “Georgian Reforms Associates” (GRASS). We are conducting a research to study the various needs of privately accommodated IDPs, including their needs for durable housing. We are selecting the respondents from Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi and neighboring villages, this is why we are here. I would like to assure you that the confidentiality of your answers will be fully protected. The answers of the respondents will be analyzed in total and your individual opinion won’t be published. Your honest answers will help us to draw a realistic picture of the subject of our study. We are going to use the acquired information to propose recommendations to the state and relevant stakeholders for policy planning and any future projects to resolve DHS needs of IDPs.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. Even after you agree on participating in the interview, you are still free not to answer any question. The interview will last only 30 minutes.

Can I start the interview? (If the respondent accepts, say thank you to her/him) Thank you that you agreed to the interview.

**To the interviewer:** Fill out the table below after you finish the interview. Before filling out the table, explain why we are asking for personal information: in coming days, you might be contacted by the representative of our organization, to ensure that the survey was conducted properly. Let me write down your contact information for this:

Only for the interviewer who is filling out the survey:
---

Name and last name of the interviewer:

Code::

Starting time of the interview (hour, minute)

Ending Time of the Interview (hour, minute)



Only for the respondent who is filling out the survey independently:

Address of the respondents (Town/Village)Code:

The date of the interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the interviewer: Use the following codes in the survey:**

The question isn't applicable for her/him	77
Did not respond to the question	88
I do not know	99

**Section A:  
Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondent**

**A.1 Sex:**

Female	1
Male	2

**A.2 Birthplace**

**A.3 You are an IDP since:**

1990s	1
2008	2

**A.4 Your education**

No formal education	1
Unfinished high school	2
High school	3
Incomplete university studies	4
Some professional/technical training	5
Professional degree	6
Bachelor's degree	7
Master's degree	8
Other, please specify:	9

<b>A.5</b> Age of the respondent: ----- (Pls. indicate age and check the relevant age group below)	
18-24	1
25-34	1
35-44	1
45-54	1
55-64	5
65 and above	6

<b>A.6</b> Marital status	
Married	1
Lives with a spouse, though not in an official marriage	2
Single	3
Divorced	4
Divorced, but still in an official marriage	5
Widow	6

<b>A.7</b> Please tell me how many people live in your family	<b>A.8</b> Please tell me how many children live in your family (age 0-5)	<b>A.9</b> Please tell me how many children live in your family (age 6-18)

<b>A.10</b> With whom do you live in your family?				
			Has an IDP status	Does not have an IDP status
	Mother	1	1	2
	Father	2	1	2
	Spouse	3	1	2
	Sister	4	1	2
	Brother	5	1	2
	Child	6	1	2
	Grandchild	7	1	2
	Living alone	8	1	2
	Other, please, specify:	9	1	2

	Other, please, specify:	10	1	2
	Other, please, specify:	11	1	2

A.11 Are there any members of the family who don't live with you? Please, specify:				
		Please give the reason why you live separately:	Has an IDP status	Does not have an IDP status
No	0			
Mother	1		1	2
Father	2		1	2
Spouse	3		1	2
Sister	4		1	2
Brother	5		1	2
Child	6		1	2
Grandchild	7		1	2
Other	8		1	2
Other	9		1	2

A.12 Do you agree with the "family" definition? (Please, read)				
"IDP family is a circle of persons related or not related by blood to each other, who have an IDP status (a family member may not be an IDP) and are engaged in the common domestic economic activity (family can be comprised of only one member too)"				
I don't agree at all	I agree partially	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	I fully agree
1	2	3	4	5

A.13 How would you define a family?	

A.14 Whom would you consider as your family members for the purpose of resettlement?	
Mother	1
Father	2
Spouse	3
Sister	4
Brother	5

Child	6
Grandchild	7
Other	8
Other	9

**Section B: Respondent's Residence and Housing Needs**

<b>B.1</b> Do you have a permanent residence?	
yes	1
no	2

<b>B.2</b> Is your family registered at the same place where you live?	<b>B.3</b> How did it happen that you are registered at the different address?
0 I don't know	
1 yes	
2 no	

<b>B.4</b> Are all members of your family registered on the same address?	<b>B.5</b> How did it happen that they are registered at the different address?
0 I don't know	
1 yes	
2 no	

<b>B.6</b> How long do you live at the current place/address?	
6 months and less	1
6 – 24 months	2
2 – 5 years	3
5 years and more	4

<b>B.7</b> How long do you think you will live at the current place/address?	
Less than 6 months	1
Less than 1 year	2
1 – 3 years	3
Until we find something better	4
Until we can afford the rent	5
Other, please specify:	6

<b>B.8</b> How many times have you changed your place of residence during the displacement?	
Only once	1
2-3 times	2
4-5 times	3
I change the place of residence once in several years	4
I change the place of residence several times in a year	5

<b>B.9</b> What were the reasons for changing the place of residence?	
Could not pay the rent	1
We were asked to move out from the place	2
We found a place with better living conditions	3
Due to the extension of the family /lack of space	4
For work-related reasons/job opportunity	5
Moved from urban to rural area	6
Bought our own apartment	7
Other, please, specify	8

<b>B.10</b> Please, specify your residence type:	
Private house	1
Apartment	2
Other, please, specify:	3

<b>B.11</b> What is the status of your residence place?	
Private house/apartment	1
Owned by government/other private person but transferred in temporary ownership with no pay	2
Rented house/apartment/room	3
Mortgaged house/apartment/room	4
Other, please specify:	5

<b>B.12</b> If you have a private residence, is your apartment/house registered in the public registry?		
Yes	1	(Go to question <b>B13</b> )
No	2	(Go to question <b>B14</b> )

<b>B.13</b> Your private house/apartment is registered as		
Your own	1	
As a family member's private property	2	
As other's private property	3	

<b>B.14</b> How come your property is not registered?		
Did not think this was necessary	1	
Do not have information how to do it	2	
Did not have money to pay for it	3	
Do not have all necessary documentation	4	
Other, please, specify:	5	

<b>B.15</b> Are you willing to register your property in the public registry?		
Yes	1	

No	2	
----	---	--

<b>B.16</b> Is your property mortgaged/under bank surveillance?		
Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know	99	

<b>B.17</b> How was the bank credit/loan used?	
To buy the apartment/home we live in	1
To buy other property	2
To improve living conditions	3
To improve health condition	4
To pay for education	5
Other, please, specify	6

<b>B.18</b> If you are renting an apartment, you have:	
Verbal agreement, didn't request to have a contract	1
Verbal agreement, couldn't manage to have a contract	2
We have a contract	3
Other, please, specify:	4

<b>B.19</b> Total size of the apartment in square meters	_____
<b>B.20</b> Total size of the apartment in square meter per family member	_____
<b>B.21</b> Number of rooms suitable for living (excluding kitchen, toilet)	_____

<b>B.22</b> Sanitary-hygienic conditions of the living space	
Very good	1
Good	2
Average	3
Unsatisfactory	4
Very bad	5

<b>B.23</b> Residence space suited for living	
Yes	1
No	2

<b>B.24</b> Have you or any member of your family received support to solve durable housing problem?	
Yes	1

We got a proposal, but we rejected	2	
No	3	
Don't know	77	

<b>E.1</b> From whom did you receive this proposal/assistance? (You can have several answers)		
State		1
Municipality		2
Local or international NGO		3
Private individual or an organization		4
Other, please, specify:		5

<b>B.25</b> What kind of assistance did you receive?		
Compensation for vacating the place		1
So called "compensation"		2
Housing support		3
Other, please, specify:		4

<b>B.26</b> How urgent is the resettlement need for your family?		
We are in urgent need	1	
It will arrive soon due to the extension of the family	2	
We are not in urgent need, we are ready to consider alternatives	3	(Go to question <b>B 29</b> )
Other, please, specify:	4	

<b>B.27</b> What is needed to solve your durable housing problem?		
To repair the house I live in		1
Get an apartment/house considering number of family members		2
Buy the property I live in		3
Build a cottage on my private land		4
Other, please, specify:		5

<b>B.28</b> Do you consider alternatives to the resettlement solution? (You can have several answers)		
Dot consider		0
To repair the house I live in		1
To get an agricultural land		2
Monetary assistance		3
Business loan with a discounted rate		4
Financing tertiary education		5
State intervention to cover the loan		6
Other, please, specify:		7

**B.29** What could be an acceptable amount of monetary assistance as an alternative DH solution?

--

**B.30** How would you spend this money?

--

**B.31** How necessary is it to devise special criteria for IDP eligibility for housing/durable housing solutions?

Necessary	1
Not necessary	2
Do not know	99

**B.32** In your opinion, what should determine the housing criteria?

It should clearly rate eligibility of IDPs	1
It should clearly define criteria to asses needs of the family	2
It should ensure impartiality/objectivity in decision-making	3
It should ensure the transparency of the process	4
Other, please, specify:	5

**B.33** What do you think about the Housing Criteria defined by MRA?

Not familiar	1
Not clear how IDPs will be rated	2
Not clear how families will be assessed	3
Does not ensure impartiality	4
Does not ensure transparency	5
Ensured impartiality/objectivity in decision-making	6
Ensures clearly eligibility of IDPs/rating	7
Other, please specify:	8
Other, please, specify:	9

**B.34** Whom do you trust most to solve the durable housing problem?

State/ministry	0
Municipality	1
Local NGOs	2
International NGOs	3
Other, please, specify:	4

**B.35** When do you think your housing problem might be solved?

Will NOT be solved	0
--------------------	---



Will be solved in the next 4 years	1
Will take more than 4 years	2
Other, please, specify:	3

<b>B.36</b> To solve your durable housing issues, what are you going to do?	
I only wait for the state offer to resolve my DH issue	0
Meanwhile, I might resolve DH issue myself with income/savings	1
Meanwhile, I might resolve DH issue with a bank loan of support from friends/relatives	2
Other, please, specify:	3

**Section C: IDP Registration**

<b>C.1</b> What do you think, is it necessary to renew IDP registration?		
Yes	1	
No	2	(Go to question <b>C.3</b> )
Might cause some problems	3	
Don't know	77	

<b>C.2</b> If you think it is necessary, please specify, why?	
To fix the database of current addresses of the privately accommodated IDPs	1
To change registration of IDPs to another location	2
To unify families	3
To split the family	4
To register new family members	5
To restore the status of the family members living abroad	6
To solve the housing problem	7
Other, please, specify:	8

<b>C.3</b> If you think that to renew IDP registration is not necessary, why?	
I don't know to what purpose it serves	1
It's useless	2
Too much bureaucracy	3
Not all family members will be able to register	4
Please specify, if other	5

**Section D: Employment and Expenses**

<b>D.1</b> In terms of employment, what does better describe your situation?	
I have a job with a regular salary at the private organization	1
I have a job with a regular salary at public organization	2

I am self-employed	3
I am unemployed and looking for a job	4
I am unemployed, but I am not looking for a job	5
I am unemployed and interested in getting a job, but I am looking for it at the moment	6
Other	7

<b>D.2</b> What is the reason for unemployment status of you or your family member (s)?	
Lack of qualification/experience	1
Insufficient education	2
Lack of jobs	3
Health condition	4
Cannot work because of taking care of children	5
I don't have respective connections to start a job	6
Other	7

<b>D.3</b> What do you think is the most important to find a good job?	
Talent	1
Contacts/connections	2
Diligence	3
Education	4
Work experience	5
Good luck	6
Professionalism	7
Other	8

<b>D.4</b> Income of family members (You can have several answers)	<b>D.5</b> Yes - 1 No - 2		<b>D.6</b> How many members of the family	<b>D.7</b> Average monthly income
Stable, permanent job	1	2		
Seasonal/temporary job	1	2		
Pension	1	2		
Social assistance	1	2		
IDP assistance	1	2		
Income from self-employment	1	2		
Agricultural activities	1	2		
Savings	1	2		
Remittances	1	2		
Alimony	1	2		
Gift	1	2		
Loan	1	2		
Income from a pawnbroker	1	2		
Selling things from family (specify)	1	2		
Other (specify)	1	2		

<b>D.8</b> How much is your monthly family income, including pension and other social allowances?	
Less than 140 GEL	1

141-250 GEL	2
251-500 GEL	3
501-1000 GEL	4
1001 -1500 GEL	5
More than 1501 GEL	6

<b>D.9</b> Have you participated in the projects funded by the state/donor/non-governmental organization to increase your income?	
Never participated	1
I received assistance to start a small business	2
I received assistance to start/ develop some agricultural activities	3
I received assistance to buy some cattle	4
I received assistance to receive education/to get new qualification	5
I received partial funding, please, specify	6
Other	7
Other	8

<b>D.10</b> How do you imagine to increase your family income? (You can have several answers)	
To start a small business	
To engage in agricultural activities	
To establish a non-governmental organization	
To get a new profession/qualification	
To get a stable job	
Other	

<b>D.11</b> Please, assign your monthly family expenses by priorities:	
Rent / mortgage	
Communal expenses	
Medical expenses	
Food	
Transport	
Education	
Loan	
Other, please, specify:	

**Section E: Social Assistance**

**E.2** What do you think, IDP social assistance should be:

Equal for everybody- both for IDPs who live in CCs and privately accommodated IDPs	1	
Different rates for IDPs in CCs and privately accommodated IDPs	2	
Need-based – only for those who really need it	3	
More importantly, it should be increased	4	
Other	5	

<b>E.3</b> Do you, or your family members, receive any type of social assistance? (You can have several answers)		
No	1	How many members of the family
Old-age pension	2	
Pension for disabled persons	3	
Pensions for having the breadwinner lost	4	
War veterans' pension	5	
IDP monthly assistance	6	
State medical insurance (<70 000 points)	7	
Social assistance for multi-children families	8	
Social assistance for orphans who lost both parents	9	
Social assistance for disabled children	10	
Social assistance for lone pensioners	11	
Social assistance for affected families (Subsidized assistance of AKA) (<57,000points)	12	
Vouchers for social assistance (for example: medical assistance center vouchers, prevention voucher, food vouchers, etc.	13	
Communal subsidies	14	
Municipal social assistance	15	
Other, please, specify:	17	

### Section F: Information and Awareness of IDPs

**F.1** Are you informed what are government plans to address the housing needs of privately accommodated IDPs?

Yes	1	
No	2	(Go to question F3)
Do not know	77	

<b>F.2</b> Most commonly, where do you get information about IDP resettlement programs by MRA/Government?	
TV	1
Internet	2
From the Ministry/regional representative	3
Newspapers	4
NGOs	5
From other IDPs	6
I don't receive any information at all	7
Other	8

<b>F.3</b> What do you think the state can do to solve the housing problems of the privately accommodated IDPs in due time?		
Yes	1	
No	2	(Go to question F3)
Do not know	77	

## Annex 2. Focus Group Guide



### Focus Group Guide

#### Part I. Introduction

##### *Introduction of the study topic*

##### *Please explain:*

- What is a focus group
- What is the purpose of the study
- How long will the focus group last. Ensure respondents that their identity and responses will be confidential
- Explain the purpose of the recording equipment (recorders, microphones).

##### Main rules for moderating discussions:

- Honest reactions and honest answers
- There are no “right” and “wrong” answers
- Talk loudly and clearly
- Ask participants to switch off mobile phones.

##### *Short introduction of participants*

- Name, age, occupation, place of residence, family size, displacement period.

#### Part 2: Warm up: Family

- Please, briefly describe what constitutes a family; who are your family members/composition
- Do all of your family members live together? If not, what are the reasons of living separately?

#### Part 3: Housing Issues

- Do you live at the same address where you are and your family members are registered? If not, what are the reasons to separate?
- How often do you change the place of residence? What are the reasons of changing the place of residence?
- What is your residence type: house/apartment/other? Is it registered? Who is an owner? Is it mortgaged? If yes, for what did you spend the money?
- What are the living conditions of your residence? Describe size of the apartment in square meters; number of rooms/per family member. How satisfied are you communal (heating,

electricity, water, etc.) and sanitary-hygienic conditions? How long do you plan to stay at your place?

- How urgent is the resettlement need for you and your family? Have you received any kind of assistance to solve your housing problem? From whom? What kind of assistance?
- How are you going to address the housing issue? What is your expectation of DHS with the current scale of government programs? What conditions are acceptable for solving your housing problem? Do you consider alternatives to the ongoing resettlement program? If yes, what alternatives might resolve your need for housing? What alternative would you prioritize? Why? What is your opinion about “monetary compensation” as an alternative? What amount could be sufficient in terms of “monetary compensation” for DHS purposes? What kind of needs will it resolve for you?
- In your opinion, who is the most trusted partner for solving your housing problem?

#### **Part 4: Criteria**

- What do you think, how should the families be selected in the state durable housing program?
- How necessary is to come up with housing eligibility criteria? To what purpose should the criteria serve? (Rating, impartiality, needs assessment etc.)? On what should the criteria be based (needs, etc.)?
- What do you know about the criteria defined by MRA? If yes, what is your opinion about it?

#### **Part 5: Registration of IDPs**

- What do you think about the renewed registration of IDPs? If you think that it's necessary, give us your reasons why; what expectations privately accommodated IDPs may have with regard to the new registration process in terms of future housing program planning? If you think that it's not necessary, give us your reasons why.

#### **Part 6: Assistance**

- How should the IDP assistance work, equal or differential? If it should be differential, than what criteria should it use: residence type (private/CCs), income level? Please, tell us about your opinion.
- What do you think what kind of assistance you may need in the first place? For instance, housing, psychological, increasing your income, acquiring new profession, receiving education, etc.?
- Have you participated in the activities aimed at increasing income? What can be done?

#### **Part 7: Being Informed**

- What information do you have about the state programs/plans of providing durable housing solutions for IDPs in PA?
- Have you ever met the local/central authorities on solving your housing problem?
- What do you think what should be done for solving the durable housing problem of the privately accommodated IDPs?

**Thank You for Your Cooperation!**



# **Alternatives to Durable Housing Solutions: Privately Accommodated IDPs in Georgia**

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