

2018

International Center on Conflict
and Negotiation

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THE IMPACT OF THE IDP STATUS IN GEORGIA

Which impact does the IDP status have on the government and on the IDPs in Georgia.

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Introduction

Methodology

When I came to Georgia I knew about the conflict areas, about Internally Displaced People and the history of Georgia, but as soon as I had arrived this topic was more or less out of my focus until I went on a trip after a couple of weeks and passed the settlement “Tserovani” for the first time.

In Germany the discussion about the refugees, how to deal with them and how to integrate them is in the daily news and always present. So I was really captivated by these huge settlements located pretty in the middle of nowhere. The picture of the houses did not let me go since then.

With my research project, I had the possibility to gain a lot of knowledge about the Internally Displaced People and their life. When I had the first overlook on the topic questions concerning the status appeared. Why is the government still providing the status? What are the interests of the government and which impact does the policy have on the Internally Displaced People themselves?

It is easy to get an overview of the situation and especially the history, but after the last war in 2008 the official reports got less and less. Meanwhile there are almost no actual reports about the situation of the IDPs and the policy of the government towards them. Nevertheless I could get some information from different reliable sources.

In addition I contacted many specialists on that topic and asked for information or an interview. I did not get answers back from all of the people, but a few answered and I met with all of them to get as many information, views and opinions as possible.

The interviews are one of the most important sources I based my research on.

The Internally Displaced People are an issue that is loaded with a lot of emotions.

Consequently it is really hard to get a balanced view.

Furthermore the problem appeared that everybody is talking about the facts, but when it comes to the intentions of an organization or of the government nobody likes to answer. So I could just get hints and tried to make up my own thoughts about most of the intentions each party could possibly have.

There is the problem of the sources on the one hand, but on the other hand it is also really difficult to narrow the topic down. Everything is connected with other issues, and although it would be the best to get a really balanced opinion that takes everything in consideration this obviously is not possible.

As a result, this report mirrors only a brief view of the situation of the Internally Displaced People.

Explanation of the term:

Everybody knows the term “refugee”, but only a few people know that there is a huge number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) all over the world. Furthermore, most of the now so-called refugees have been Internally Displaced People before.

Internally Displaced People were also forced to flee from their place of residence, their home. The reasons often are one and the same: armed conflicts, natural disasters, etc., but IPDs never crossed an internationally recognized border.¹

People who flee within their country are facing the same problems as refugees. The provision of food, water and housing most of the time is not sufficient. As a result of the inhuman situation IDPs also have to deal with health issues. Moreover, the violation of the basic human rights often is everyday life of the IDPs.

IDPs, of course, have the same human rights as every other human being, but in contrast to refugees there is no international law to clarify the special rights people have when they are internally displaced.

1998 the “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement” was published by Mister Francis M. Deng². It contains the international human rights as well as the attempt to lighten grey zones. Nevertheless it is the responsibility of the government how to deal with the Internally Displaced People.

¹ Cf. www.ohchr.org,” Questions and answers about IDPs”.

² Cf. www.internal-displacement.org; “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement – History”.

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 1997/39.
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G98/104/93/PDF/G9810493.pdf?OpenElement> (last seen on 1 June, 2018).

Overview - History:



Map of Georgia and the occupied territories (2015)³

After the end of the Soviet Union, in 1991, Georgia was one of the first countries that claimed the independence. By then the national territory included also the regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which were autonomous provinces in the Soviet Union.⁴

After Georgia proclaimed the independence Adzharia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not conform and tried to separate from the state for several times.

Adzharia as well as Abkhazia were two of the richest regions at that time.

The situation with Adzharia had calmed down since 2005, other than in Abkhazia and South Ossetia where the conflicts are still not solved.⁵

In 1992 Abkhazia proclaimed the independence. This was directly followed by a year of civil war with 12,000⁶ to 20,000⁷ killed people and over 200,000 of driven out mostly ethnic Georgians⁸ - as in every big conflict the total numbers of killed, injured and displaced people varieties a lot from source to source, as it is also linked with the intentions of the source itself.

³ www.en.wikipedia.org (org. www.un.org); Map: "Georgian–Ossetian conflict", Sep. 2015.

⁴ Cf. www.bpb.de; "Georgien", 20.12.2017.

⁵ Cf. Kunze, Thomas/ Vogel, Thomas; Das Ende des Imperiums - Was aus den Staaten der Sowjetunion wurde, Ch.Links, 3. ed., Berlin 2016, pp. 212 ff.

⁶ Cf. www.c-r.org; "History: Georgia – Abkhaz conflict".

⁷ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p. 213.

⁸ Cf. www.icrc.org; Country report Georgia/Abkhazia - ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war, Nov. 1999.

After this first period of war the parties of conflict agreed on a ceasefire agreement as well as on a UN peacekeeping mission.

Nevertheless, in 2006 a referendum followed where the majority of Abkhazians voted for the independence again.

Both sides, Georgia and Abkhazia, hoped for international stakeholders. On the one side there was Abkhazia with Russia and on the other there was Georgia with hope for help of the EU, NATO and especially the USA.⁹

The independence of Abkhazia is acknowledged only by Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and recently by Syria.¹⁰

This is not the only conflict that remains unsolved.

Right from the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union, South Ossetia as well tried to gain independence, with hope to unite with North Ossetia¹¹, which is a republic of the Russian federation.¹² But Georgia did not accept the independence of the region and in 1992 a civil war broke out with 1,500 killed people and dozens of thousands of people who were fleeing. The armed conflict ended also with a ceasefire agreement where the CIS (Commonwealth of Independence States¹³, which is a Union of several former Soviet Union states that was founded in December 1991) mediated. The CIS represents the interests of these states in topics like economics.¹⁴

Georgia used to be part of the Union until 2008 when the second armed conflict took place.¹⁵ Even though the armed conflict ended in 1992, Russia cultivated its system more and more in South Ossetia. Russia provided the inhabitants with free medical care, schooling and Russian passports. Moreover, they invested in the infrastructure and the telecommunication network.¹⁶

Before the outbreak of the war in 2008, South Ossetia, too, had voted in a referendum, in which the majority of the local population, excluded the Georgian citizens as well as the IDPs, decided to become an independent state.¹⁷ Again both parties hoped for support from the international stakeholders. Even though the referendum was evaluated as an illegal and thus invalid due to being separated and lacking legal basis by the Georgian government. Then, in the night from the 7th to the 8th of August 2008, the Georgian government had ordered the Georgian military to invade or, how the Georgian government would put it to restore the constitutional order, South Ossetia.¹⁸ The result of this act of war were many killed people and a new wave of displacement within a few days.

Other than from the Georgian side expected, the Russian military was prepared. So after five

⁹ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; pp. 214 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. www.bpb.de; "Georgien", 20.12.2017.

¹¹ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p.214.

¹² Cf. www.britannica.com; "North Ossetia – Alania".

¹³ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p.214.

¹⁴ Cf. www.cisstat.com; "About Commonwealth about independent states".

¹⁵ Cf. www.rferl.org; "Georgia Finalizes Withdrawal From CIS", 18.08.2009.

¹⁶ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p. 214.

¹⁷ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p. 214.

¹⁸ Cf. www.bpb.de; "Georgien", 20.12.2017.

days of active battles the Georgians had to back up. Russia is occupying Abkhazia and South Ossetia since then.¹⁹

Under the influence of the French European Union council president, Nicolas Sarkozy, all parties agreed on a new ceasefire agreement.

Primarily Russia and the de facto governments in the regions are not obeying the agreement.

There are still no neutral observing missions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and there is a remaining high presence of the Russian military.²⁰ In addition to that the de facto border is shifted, most of the time on account of the Georgian population, which suddenly is illegally on the other territory. It also happens that people get shot or kidnapped for no reason.

On top of the remaining unsafe situation, there are no official diplomatic relations between Georgia and Russia.

The neutral Switzerland represents the interests of Russia in Tbilisi and Georgia's interests in Moscow.²¹

Furthermore, every 3 months the International Geneva Discussion is hold. It was founded in October 2008 and is an arrangement that bases on the ceasefire agreement of the war in 2008. Representatives of Georgia, the Russian Federation, the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are attending the discussions as well as international stakeholders such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – are co-chairs of the GID. Alongside to the co-chairs, the discussions are participated by the United States of America,

The International Geneva Discussion works in two working groups.²² “The first of them is focusing on security and the stability in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia (for example, statement on the non-use of force and creation of security mechanisms in the occupied regions). The second group discusses the issues related to the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to the places of their origin, also cultural heritage issues, freedom of movement, etc.”²³

Even though the Discussion is hold on a regular basis and 3 international stakeholders are co-chairing the round, there are only minimal results, because of walk-outs or the parties are not cooperating. Nevertheless 2009 the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) was put in place and works since then in Ergneti and Gali.²⁴ The meetings in the regions are mainly focusing on daily based issues and to identify potential risks.

In South Ossetia the meetings are co-facilitated by the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), OSCE as well as representatives from Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Russian troops on the ground.²⁵ “Such meetings on the Abkhaz direction in Gali were suspended since April, 24, 2012.”²⁶

The last Geneva International Discussion took place from 27th to 28th of March 2018.²⁷

¹⁹ Cf. www.bpb.de; “Georgien“, 20.12.2017.

²⁰ Cf. www.bpb.de; “Georgien“, 20.12.2017.

²¹ Cf. Kunze/ Vogel; p.216.

²² Cf. www.smr.gov.ge/Uploads/Geneva_Int_16780ccc.pdf; “Geneva International Discussion”.

²³ www.smr.gov.ge/Uploads/Geneva_Int_16780ccc.pdf; “Geneva International Discussion”, par.5.

²⁴ Cf. www.osce.org; Press releases related to the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM).

²⁵ Cf. smr.gov.ge/Uploads/Incident_P_249b2131.pdf; Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM).

²⁶ smr.gov.ge/Uploads/Incident_P_249b2131.pdf; Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM).

²⁷ Cf. www.ge.usembassy.gov; “U.S. Participation in the Geneva International Discussions on the conflict in Georgia”, 29.03.2018.

Legislative frame of Georgia

Law

Article 6. Definition of an IDP

1. A citizen of Georgia or a stateless person with a status residing in Georgia shall be considered as an IDP, if he/she was forced to leave his/her permanent place of residence because of threat to his/her or his/her family member's life, health or freedom caused by the occupation of the territory by a foreign state, aggression, armed conflict, mass violence and/or massive human rights violations and/or he/she cannot return to his/her permanent place of residence due to the above mentioned reasons.
2. An underage person is entitled to an IDP status if one or both of the parents have and/or had IDP status, only based on the consent from parent(s) or his/her other legal representative.
3. In case IDP status is not granted to an underage person in accordance with paragraph 2 of this Article, IDP status will be granted based on personal application when the person reaches age of majority.”²⁸

Article 12. Rights and Obligations of IDPs

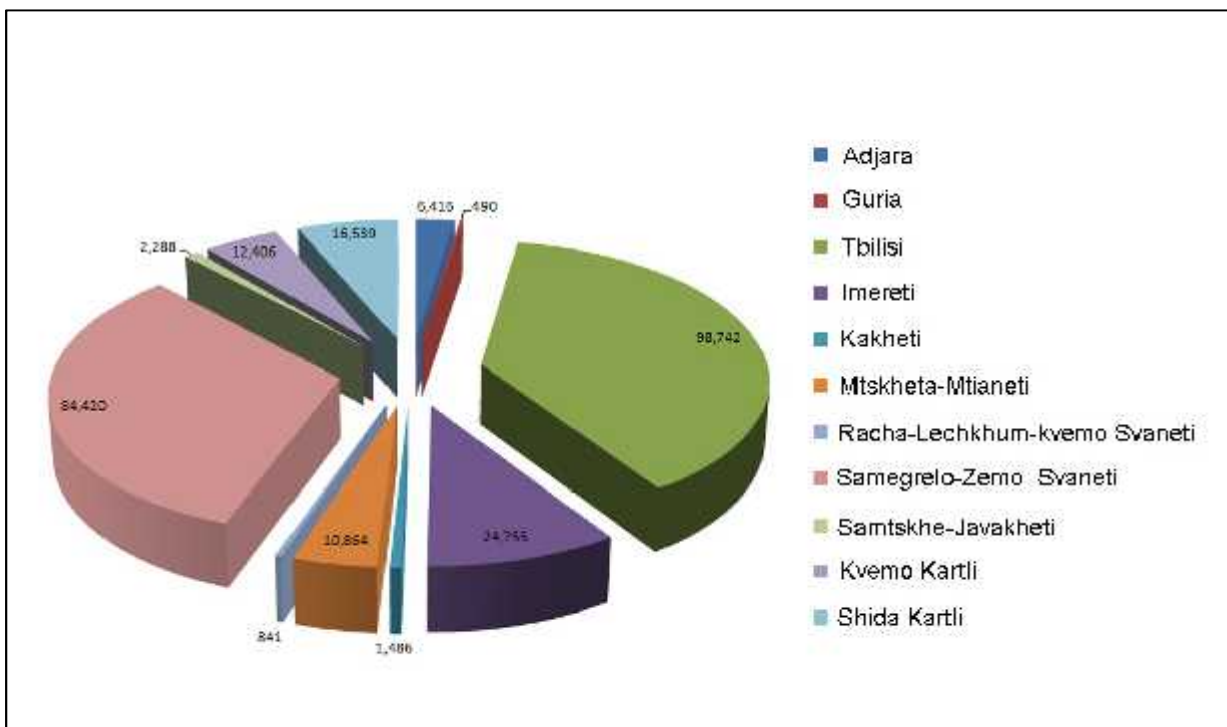
1. IDP has the right to
 - a) receive IDP monthly allowance of 45.00 GEL;
 - b) receive social and other types of assistances in accordance with the rules and conditions established by the Georgian legislation;
 - c) receive adequate housing in Georgia until return to the place of permanent residence, except for those cases when durable housing has already been provided to him/her.”²⁹

²⁸ Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, Chapter II Definition of an IDP, article 6, pa. 1–3.

²⁹ Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, Chapter IV Protection of Rights of IDPs During Displacement, article 12, pa. 1.

Statistics on the numbers of IDPs

In 2014 the total number of IDPs was around 259,247.³⁰ In 2018 approximately 280,000 persons are registered as internally displaced. The number is increasing every year on one hand because the status is provided to every person whose grandparents or parents or just even one parent or grandparent is an ID Person. Most of the IDP families are mixed families now. But besides that, there are also many people who fled to other countries, especially Russia, and are now returning to Georgia.³¹



Number of Registered IDPs - Statistics by Region (2014-09-17)³²

³⁰ www.mra.gov.ge; "Number of Registered IDPs-Statistics by Region", 17.09.2014.

³¹ Cf. Interview; guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³² www.mra.gov.ge; "Number of Registered IDPs-Statistics by Region", 17.09.2014.

It has been 26 years since the first war in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the number of registered Internally Displaced People is still increasing every year.

The reason for that is not because more people flee from the occupied territories. But the number is increasing because every person who has a parent or a grandparent with the status is according the law also automatically gaining the status.

Why is the government still providing the status even though it seems on the first sight as if there are just disadvantages for them and what is the opinion of the IDPs themselves?

Statement of the Government concerning the status

Since the first wave of IDPs came to Georgia many reforms have been adopted and the programs changed from government to government. Nevertheless there has always been some kind of provisions and there is even a ministry, which is mainly responsible for the people who were fleeing from Abkhazia or South Ossetia.

In 2018 the budget of the state household for the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodations and Refugee of Georgia runs 95 Mil. GEL in total. It is divided in to three expenditure items: 85 Mil. GEL is used for the durable housing the government promised to provide every IDP family with.

This amount is also increasing, even though the government provided many families already with accommodation. But new IDPs are moving to Georgia and new families are created,³³ 7 Mil. GEL are used for economic migrants and refugees from other countries, 3 Mil. GEL are taken for the Ministry apparatus.

The monthly allowance, every person with an IDP status gets, no matter in which circumstances they live in is paid by the Ministry of labour, health and social affairs (MOH). 2016 the total amount that was provided was 140 Mil. GEL, 2017 the allowance budget amounted already 143 Mil. GEL³⁴ As a result of the unlimited disbursing the amount of the allowance budget increases every year and is burdening the state household more and more. On top of that the amount of donated money is decreasing³⁵, because the public attention moved on to more pending topics and the remaining unsolved conflict moved to the background.

To prevent the steady growth it is in the discussion to change the allowance from a status based allowance to a needed based allowance.³⁶

That would mean that the status is not connected to the allowance anymore and only the Internally Displaced People who are factually vulnerable can apply for the allowance.

The main goals of that reform are to shift the saved money from the “allowance-budget” to the “housing-budget”, so more houses can be built and provided to the people in need.

Furthermore, there would be more money that can be given to the vulnerable IDPs.

One problem is that these people are not having enough money to afford gas or food, but the

³³ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³⁴ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³⁵ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³⁶ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

integration is also linked to that. [...] But they have (an integration problem). It is only because they are living in these soviet style hotels [...] but if we give them all accommodation that means that they are fully integrated...”³⁷.

The housing is so essential because integration problems such as bullying are affiliated to that. No child has to be ashamed of the family’s housing conditions and there should be no cause to be bullied for.

The reform could be inducted in various models. The most radical one would be that every IDP who already got an accommodation will stop getting the monthly allowance. Only the vulnerable people can apply for the social allowance, which is 89.7 GEL/month³⁸, every Georgian citizen in need can get.

These IDPs who were not provided with durable housing yet and are socially vulnerable would get the social allowance and the IDP allowance until they will be provided with a flat. After housing is provided, they are only legitimated to get the social allowance, if necessary.³⁹

Besides that integration appears to be not a big problem⁴⁰ as other organizations confirm, since the culture, the language, etc. is the same.

Still, integration is always a double-edged sword. The people who need to be integrated and the society who also needs to welcome them. Of course, if the culture is almost the same this seems not to be a big problem, but it is worth mentioning that there exist some problems concerning jealousy. Georgia is still a developing country, where many people have to live with very little amount of money. The vulnerable population only gets the social allowance, but no housing, etc. as the IDPs do. This is where problems appear, even though it is only a small issue.⁴²

Nevertheless the people that live in the settlements are also rated as fully integrated. So the government does not see any need in changing anything at that point. The only problem that appears for the government with the settlements is that the houses are not owned by the Internally Displaced People, who are living there, but they are just given provisionally to the people, because the former government had not seen a long term problem with the conflict areas. So they were not planning for long term integration.

The government tries to privatize some of the houses.⁴³ So the settlements can exist also in the future and the people do not have to move to other places.

For the government the Internally Displaced People are fellow countrymen and women, who are equal to the other population, but need to be considered with some extra provisions, since they lost almost everything.

Within the country the IDP status is mostly used for economic and social issues. But of course political impacts play an important role in home affairs as well as in foreign policies. Even though the political aspect is so important, there are no reliable sources about the political intentions of the Georgian government. ”We [the government] are not going to

³⁷ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

³⁸ www.web.worldbank.org; “Georgia targeted social assistance program – Targeting model at a glance”

³⁹ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁴⁰ Cf. Interview; guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia

⁴¹ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁴² Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁴³ Cf. www.mra.gov.ge; “Privatization of long-term accommodations for IDPs”, 2013

abolish the status because of the political reasons.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless the intentions were not elaborated closer.

⁴⁴ Interview; guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Effect of the status on the Internally Displaced People

The number of People in Georgia with an IDP status is increasing every year. So the question of how do the people feel when they are provided with the status and which effect does the status have on their daily life is a striking thought that is worth to be investigated.

Internally Displaced People are not one homogeneous group, but with respect to many factors, that are keys for good living conditions, the people still are needier than non-IDPs. Unemployment among the IDPs is one essential point. This is a result of the lack of access to land. Many IDPs have not the possibility to be self-sufficient in their provision with food. Moreover, around most of the settlements there is no land envisaged to grow food. Besides that IDPs, who live in settlements, often have the problem that their houses are located in rural areas, where no jobs can be offered and where no means of transportation exist.

Only in Tserovani, one of the 14 still existing settlements, the situation is different, because it is close to Tbilisi, with regular connection to the city centre as well as with surrounding factories, which provide many residents with work. Consequently, Tserovani with 8,000 inhabitants is the biggest settlement, with a kind of an own infrastructure which includes a school, kindergarten, shops, etc. It is also regarded as the showpiece and it is shown to many international donors and politicians.

Nevertheless a high unemployment rate is common among the IDPs. Prejudices still exist concerning these people and play a significant role on the job market.

As a result, many IDPs depend on the allowance from the government or on money from relatives working abroad. The reason for that is not only unemployment, but it also is still really hard for Internally Displaced People to get a credit from a bank.

It is obvious, that a high unemployment rate leads to high poverty.

Some of the IDPs are vulnerable to such a degree that they cannot even pay for gas or water. So in some settlements or collective centres they have these basic supplies only for several hours a day.

Especially in the collective centres 4 or 5 people live together in one small room, which is not bigger than 12 m².

The health conditions suffer from these circumstances as well.

However, it can be stated that the people do not show a negative spirit on the status they hold, because the situation of IDPs is not significantly worse compared to the situation of non-IDPs.⁴⁵

On the contrary the status has other benefits for the people.

There are additional provisions from the government, which come along with the status. It is not only the monthly allowance and the housing, even though this is not provided to every

⁴⁵ Cf. World Bank Report no. ACS16557; "Georgia Transitioning from Status to Needs Based Assistance for IDPs - A Poverty and Social Impact Analysis", p. 11, Feb. 2016.

IDP yet, but the Internally Displaced People also have the opportunity to attend the university for free.⁴⁶

Despite of all this, the support by the government got less and less over the years, especially with respect to the settlements.⁴⁷

But besides the government some NGOs made it their mission to support and help Internally Displaced People, for example with providing land, giving trainings to improve the work entry or giving micro credits, so that IDPs can build up their own business.⁴⁸

In addition to the material support, for the IDPs the emotional factor might be even a more important cause to keep the status.

The status is understood as a bond among the family and the different generations. So the younger ones, who have not been directly affected by the war have the duty to keep the history alive so that people will not forget about it.

As a result, also many young people want to return as soon as possible, as the interview partner thinks.⁴⁹

This view appears not to represent all of the IDPs' opinion. For example according to one of respondents, also an IDP from Abkhazia, reckons, that her daughter, who is holding the status as well, would just go back for vacation, but would not like to live there permanently.⁵⁰

The status seems to have a lot of advantages for the Internally Displaced People.

Even though the opinions of the individual IDPs are not representing the majority and these results cannot be taken as the primary trend.

On top of that, the way how the IDP-children got raised by their parents and grandparents should not be underestimated as one of the main influences the children are under.

⁴⁶ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁴⁷ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁴⁸ Cf. World Bank Report no. ACS16557; p. 11.

⁴⁹ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁵⁰ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Comparison with German Refugee politics

At the beginning it must be said that many factors of this subject cannot be considered. The comparison would fail because of all the different prevailing conditions, such as state budget, demographic development, economic strength, international relations and cooperation.

Thus Germany is incorporated in the European Union, which is an important key when it comes to the refugee policy. Whereas Georgia is primarily responsible for the Internally Displaced People by itself.

But still, if we look at the actual situation in both countries, these vulnerable groups exist and the governments are helping and supporting them in different ways.

The biggest difference appears when we talk about the integration politics: For Georgia housing is the essential point to integrate the IDPs properly into the civil society and the country. Germany has not such a straight policy, but as Armin Laschet, who was part of a think tank to recommend reforms for the refugee policy in Germany, said: "Flüchtlingen schnell und unkompliziert Wege in Ausbildung und Arbeit zu eröffnen, ist die beste, weil nachhaltigste Integrationspolitik."⁵¹ (If refugees could get the possibility to enter the labour market or to start an apprenticeship faster and more easily, they would be integrated better and more sustainably.)

Even though the German policy seems to be the better and more lasting way, it is important to point out that in Georgia integration concerning intercultural or interreligious differences is not a really big problem, since IDPs in most cases are the same fellow countrymen and countrywomen. Moreover, the employment rate even within the Non-IDP Georgians is really low and many people live under poverty level. Consequently, is it hard to put employment that as a priority on the agenda. But it must be also said that housing alone is not a long term solution for full integration and an easier entry to the labour market should be considered.

That would also help to decrease the vulnerable group of IDPs, which is necessary, since the number of IDPs, who are provided with the allowance and the housing, is increasing. Even though the government wants to change the status into a needed based allowance, the number of vulnerable IDPs would be still high.

Germany has to deal with an increasing number of refugees, too, which was the reason for a controversy, whether Germany should limit the number of refugees or if the borders should be open for every vulnerable person.

The situation in Georgia is different: only a few IDPs return from other countries in which they fled after the war. The majority of "new" IDPs are the new generations that were born into the IDP families and are also provided with the status.

In both cases is it a financial burden for the state, but Georgia is about to change the status, so that only the vulnerable people get financial support from the government. Besides that Georgia is a country with a lower residential density than Germany.

For Germany, not only the financial or the living space is an aspect that has to be thought

⁵¹ Cf. www.bosch-stiftung.de; "Experten fordern leichteren Zugang für Flüchtlinge zum Arbeitsmarkt", April 2016.

about, but also the integration of refugees in the civil society. How far can the German culture be influenced by other cultures without losing its specific profile?

Even though Germany is a rich country that can welcome many refugees, it is not possible to take all people that are violated by wars or other disasters right now. Consequently, it is also important to think about the causes for escape and how they can be solved so the people can return to their countries of origin.

This is also a point to compare Germany and Georgia. It has to be mentioned that the starting points are different though. Georgia is one of the conflict parties, whereas Germany is not, although with its own interests.

Georgia has no official diplomatic relations with Russia or the occupied territories and will never recognise or tolerate the secession territories as independent ones. As mentioned, Switzerland represents both countries and every 3 months the International Geneva Discussion takes place.

Right now Germany is not included in any official dialogues with war affected countries. But refugees are not only a German problem. Many countries are affected by the arriving refugees. Germany is leading and an integral part of international cooperation and – organizations, such as the United Nations, the European Union and the NATO. The decisions are not only depending on Germany, but on the whole international community. Furthermore, there is not only one country people flee from, but several and the problems for the flight are multifaceted.

The starting points are different in both countries, but the actual situation is comparable in some points, even though it is always important to keep the differences in mind, because different possibilities result from that.

However, in both countries the vulnerable group of Internally Displaced People / refugees is an urgent topic, in which many people, organizations and institutions are involved.

It does not seem as if there is one patent remedy. Germany has a lot of advantages and possibilities because of its economic strength. So it would be not correct to compare Georgia's policy with Germany.

As a result, is it always good to widen the view, to compare one's own country with others and to question the own policy. However, the starting points do stay different. Therefore it is not possible to give any recommendations for improvements to Georgian politics from a German perspective to the treatment of refugees.

Evaluation

At first sight the current status of the IDPs seems to be more winning, especially since the reform, that should change the status based allowance to a needed based allowance is not adopted yet. The state household on the other hand gets burdened more and more.

Why did the government provide the status for so long and still is providing it?

Of course, there is the obvious reason, that the government is responsible for the people and especially for vulnerable groups as the IDPs are. But over the years the group of Internally

Displaced People changed and it is not anymore one vulnerable group. It is divided as every society is in wealthier people, the remaining vulnerable ones and many grades in between. But within my research I found out that many representatives see the IDPs as one big group. One big group, that the government calls fully integrated. But how can the IDPs, who have been living in so called “collapsing collective centres” for over 20 years or how can IDPs, who live in settlements far away in rural areas with no 24/7 access to water or gas be as fully integrated as Internally Displaced People, who live in an apartment in Tbilisi with a safe job and a monthly income?

Of course, there are no real problems with the cultural - or language integration, but every society has fringe groups, that need special attention. IDPs, which have been living in bad living conditions for so long, are more likely to remain a part of these fringe groups for generations. When the government just focuses one group of Internally Displaced People, the question arises, if they can really spend enough attention towards IDPs, who remain vulnerable? Is it really correct talk about full integration of all Internally Displaced People?

Another reason, why it is easier for the government to see the IDPs as one homogeneous group is that it is more likely to get donations from international institutions. Georgia puts itself in a vulnerable position, particularly with the increasing number of people with a status. They use the high number of status holding Internally Displaced People to put themselves in a role of a victim that needs support by sponsors.

But this is only one side of the coin. On the other hand, giving full status to all IDPs means that the Georgian government has not forgotten about the people and the regions, has not given up the fight – especially with respect to Russia, to the occupied regions and to the IDPs themselves. . For the Internally Displaced People it is a reassurance, for the other conflict parties a declaration for Georgia’s persisting point of view.

If Georgia’s government would discontinue the provision of the status, for Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia it would seem as if the Georgian government had given up the territories and Russia would be the “winning part”.

The effect of this scenario would be huge, not only would it give Russia even more power, but it could be also a key point in other conflicts Russia is involved in, such as on the Krim. Furthermore, other countries, which are in the same situation as Russia, would be empowered by the example of that conflict.

Even if Georgia would give up the status, but would not give up the territories, the scenario would be almost the same, as the humanitarian issues are the preferred topic at least the Georgian side would get in contact⁵². The necessity to somehow deal with each other would be not given anymore. So the minimal talks would come to a stop, or the worse scenario would be an armed conflict again.

Right now the relations are really hardened on both sides and there is no official contact or agreement besides the finding and exchange of missing people from the war.⁵³

⁵² Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

⁵³ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

On the scale of things the Georgian government, too, has its interests in the status and it is not an advantage only for the Internally Displaced People.

In Georgia, the topic of Internally Displaced People is very delicate.

The different groups have different opinions and emotions that make it really hard to develop a progress of better integration or to come to dialogues with the other parties of conflict. Most of the time it sets up a huge discussion within the society, which also shows that these people are still not fully integrated since they are always considered separately. Because of that separate consideration many non-IDPs feel treated unfairly. The government for example is not giving money to needy families with many children, but to every IDP, no matter how high the income is.

There are some paradoxes within the politics of the Georgian government, that have to be changed to become a better developed and welfare state.

Nevertheless the actual government continued and fastened the process of the former government to improve the law and the living conditions of the vulnerable IDPs.

At the beginning of my research I had the theory that the government is still providing the status only because of its own interests, but within my work I spoke with many Internally Displaced People and had to rethink my theses.

As I worked out above, the government has a lot of own interests in the status, which most of the time are for political reasons, but I underestimated the emotional attachment of the IDPs themselves and what they are connecting with the status.

If the status would no longer exist, this would mean for many IDPs that they lose hope. Hope to return, hope for support from the government, hope for a peaceful ending of the conflict, hope not forgotten to be. There might be also some IDPs, mostly younger ones, who would not care at all, if they would not be provided with the status anymore, but for me it seemed to be a minority.

The question, whether it is acceptable that new-borns are “labelled” already with the status, must be answered individually as well, but for the people the status does not seem to be a labelling, but rather a bond with the family. It is one of many influences of the family a child gets influenced by while it grows up. So the feelings that are attached to the status are individual from child to child and person to person.

Many co-factors have to be considered, but if the government will adopt the new law to change the allowance policy, a new step towards full integration will have been made. For the Georgian government this would be a win-win situation. They do not have to compromise what their political interests are concerned, and on top of that they can reduce the budget for IDPs. The saved money should be for the benefit of the IDPs as well, but it must be questioned, if this is the reality. Many IDPs would accept the reform of the status, but are scared that the government is just using it to save money.⁵⁴

Nevertheless the Internally Displaced People will also benefit from the reform. The vulnerable people have the option to be financially supported by the government. Moreover, every IDP is keeping the status for the emotional attachment and the right to return.

⁵⁴ Cf. Interview guided by Leonie Kattein, Tbilisi, Georgia.

As a conclusion, the status seems to be a win-win situation for the government and the Internally Displaced People, but only under the condition that the reform of the status gets adopted soon.

There are remaining problems, such as the living conditions of parts of the IDP group as well as the access to work, but that is only partly connected to the status. Georgia is still a developing country which has been rapidly developing in the last few years, but especially a working welfare system needs time and a lot of money, which is not easy for any country. Even though Germany has a working social system and might be a good example, the system also needs reformed from time to time and is not untouchable.

Georgia is in the sense of new beginnings and it seems that also the social system including the IDP law is on the way to new reforms.

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