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Understanding Displacement in Georgia: An In-Depth Analysis of IDP Needs



February 2024

Estonian Refugee Council (ERC) is a value-driven non-governmental EU-certified humanitarian organization.

Established in 2000, ERC currently provides humanitarian assistance to displaced and vulnerable individuals across five crisis-affected countries: Ukraine, Georgia, Jordan, Armenia, and Türkiye.

Additionally, it offers various support services to beneficiaries of international protection living in Estonia

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KEY FINDINGS

- **1 in every 13 Georgians is internally displaced.** There are currently 292,887 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia, constituting 7.84% of the population.
- **IDPs face persistent housing challenges** with issues including inadequate living structures, sewage problems, and unsuitable climates.
- **State aid of GEL45 per month per person** is considered valuable but insufficient for essential needs. 84% of interviewed IDPs earn less than GEL1250 monthly.
- According to an MMRH survey of 250 participants, **72% of IDPs were unemployed.** Reasons for unemployment include transportation access, unsuitable opportunities, and lack of basic skills required for employability.
- **Intersectional vulnerability of displaced women** creates feminization of poverty, increased risks of domestic violence, and other systemic problems.
78% women have no savings whatsoever,
67% unable to afford medical treatment,
63% believe inadequate childcare affects employment opportunities.
- **Services for adults with disabilities are severely lacking**, posing significant challenges both for them and their caretakers.
- Beyond IDPs, **refugees and humanitarian status holders** from various countries, especially non-Ukrainians, face notable challenges in Georgia.

Introduction

In late 2023, the Estonian Refugee Council (ERC) conducted a comprehensive secondary data review (SDR) regarding the current situation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and other groups of concern in the Republic of Georgia. The SDR included examination of a wide variety of independent sources resulting from application of diverse research methodologies such as census data collection, geospatial mapping of displacement events, surveys, focus groups, open-ended interviews, etc.

The main objectives of this data triangulation exercise were:

1. To collate available information regarding the needs of IDPs and other groups living in Georgia;
2. To identify gaps in existing knowledge and evaluate whether further collection of primary data is required;
3. To use the gathered knowledge for designing future ERC interventions in Georgia, while avoiding duplication of efforts being carried out by other actors on the field.

Methodology

Sources:

Beyond reports and datasets collected manually via platforms like Reliefweb, HDX, UNHCR Data Warehouse, GEOSTAT, etc., alongside a few others flagged by digital tools such as DEEP, this SDR draws extensively from insights gained through direct collaboration with our local implementing partners - [Mtskheta-Mtianeti Regional Hub \(MMRH\)](#). To ensure robust triangulation, the document also incorporates research conducted by ["Consent" IDP Women Association](#). MMRH and Consent are both highly specialized local NGOS focusing on the unique needs of IDPs.

Comprehensive research carried out by MMRH employed a hybrid approach involving both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Geographically, their research focused on Tbilisi, Rustavi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, and Gori, involving both displaced individuals and members of organizations that work with IDPs.

The quantitative component comprised 250 interviews, the relevant questionnaires for this section were collaboratively developed with IDPs. Respondents aged 18 and above were chosen using the snowball sampling technique. The final group of participants included 170 individuals affected by the 1990-1993 conflicts and 80 from the 2008 war-affected IDPs. Following the fieldwork phase, the collected data was analysed using SPSS. Final analyses can be [here](#).

MMRH's qualitative research, on the other hand, encompassed 5 focused groups including 2 focus groups from Abkhazia and Samachablo, 1 focus group with the IDPs who were displaced following the events of the 2008 war, and 2 focus groups with people displaced from Ukraine to Georgia. In addition, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted, designed in order to provide more nuanced insights. These included 8 interviews with representatives of organizations mainly involved in addressing the needs of the displaced, and 7 in-depth interviews with IDPs. The average duration of a focus group session was determined to be 1.5 hours, while the average duration for in-depth interviews ranged between 60 and 80 minutes. The qualitative research was conducted remotely through a distance-based approach, utilizing online research methodologies.

Simultaneously, **Consent also carried out a comprehensive mixed methods research** integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Their qualitative efforts included 11 focused groups conducted across various municipalities, including Zugdidi, Poti, Tskaltubo, Gori, and Tetrtskaro. These sessions engaged 100 IDPs and 35 civil servants including public officials working on IDP-related issues, such as representatives from local self-government and budget agencies. The age range of participating IDPs spanned from 18 to 72 years.

Additionally, Consent employed an online survey completed by 400 IDPs, comprising 264 women and 136 men. The questionnaire contained 68 questions and was distributed across cities as follows: Gori - 120, Zugdidi - 130, Tskaltubo - 55, Tetrtskaro - 34, Poti - 24, Tbilisi - 37. The questions were closed and open-ended inquiries of both quantitative and qualitative nature. It took approximately 40 minutes to complete. As an exception 37 respondents answered these questions in person in Tbilisi.

Tools and Frameworks Used:

The secondary research presented herein utilized an internally developed [spreadsheet](#), in order to collate various resources, organize readings, and cross-reference information from multiple sources, enabling proper triangulation of data. This method was further substantiated by online and in-person discussions with humanitarian actors actively operating in Georgia. Said discussions not only played a crucial role in validating and confirming the data obtained from secondary sources, but also presented opportunities for questions and clarifications, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the research findings.

Challenges

Barriers encountered during this exercise included limited or outdated data on humanitarian needs (especially IDP needs) as well as accessibility limitations due to limited availability of English language materials. Furthermore, we observed disparities in data collection and presentation methodologies between different organizations, which hampered direct comparisons of data when attempting triangulation.

This said, the paper expresses a high level of confidence in the information gathered, largely due to reliance on recent and comprehensive primary data collected by MMRH and Consent.

Displacement Overview

The legacy of the territorial conflicts which accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union remains a daily reality for hundreds of thousands of families displaced in their wake. This is particularly true for Georgia, where the conflicts in South Ossetia (1991 to 1992) and Abkhazia (1992 to 1993),¹ followed by the hostilities between Georgian armed forces and non-state armed groups from South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008² have left scores of people displaced.

According to the 2023 GRID report published by IDMC³, the global count of internally displaced persons reached a record high of 71.1 million people across 110 countries and territories. The

¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. [Assessing the Severity of Internal Displacement 2021 Report](#).

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. [Country profile: Georgia 2020](#).

³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023](#).

Republic of Georgia ranked among the top five countries in Europe and Central Asia, with the fourth-highest number of internal displacements at the close of the year.

Notably, not all displacement in Georgia was related to conflicts and violence. In fact, almost a tenth of the displaced population⁴ was forced to move as a result of natural disasters. These disasters appear to occur periodically rather than as isolated, rare events. In the last three years, for example, the following natural disasters have led to 675 internal displacements in Georgia:

Year	Event Name	Date of event (start)	Internal Displacements	Hazard Category	Hazard Type
2022	Dry mass movement - Imereti (Chiatura > Itkhvisi) - 16/04/2022	4/16/2022	100	Geophysical	Dry Mass Movement
2022	Flood - municipalities of Kazbegi, Tianeti, Dusheti, Tkibuli, Kutaisi, Ambrolauri, Senaki, Khobi, Poti and Zugdidi - 21/06/2022	6/21/2022	330	Weather related	Flood
2021	Floods - Adjara, Guria - 22/09/2021	9/22/2021	85	Weather related	Flood
2020	Floods - Guria (Lanchkhuti Municipality) - 29/07/2020	7/29/2020	10	Weather related	Flood
2020	Floods - Racha - 30/07/2020	7/30/2020	150	Weather related	Flood

Table 1: Displacements caused by natural disasters, 2020 - 2023 [Source: IDMC]

Regardless of the reason for displacement - disaster or conflict - the quality of life of displaced individuals varies based on a number of factors. These factors include not only common individual markers such as age, gender, level of education, and physical fitness but also situational or contextual indicators like geographical location, rural or urban residence, access to transportation, etc.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the needs and problems of this large and varied population are rather complex. The following sections discuss what we have learned regarding the problem IDPs face in Georgia, as well as their multidimensional needs.

⁴ 9.14% based on rounded up values - 308000 (conflicts) + 31000 (disaster)

What we learned

Demography

2023 statistics from the Georgian Agency of IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihood Provision suggest that there are 92,000 displaced families living in the Republic of Georgia, adding up to a total of 292,887 internally displaced persons.⁵

If we look at the GRID report mentioned earlier, however, we see that according to IDMC there were a total of 339,000 displacements recorded at the end of 2022 already - 308,000 displacements related to conflicts and 31,000 displacements related to natural disasters. The reason for this apparent discrepancy is that the GRID report indicates the number of internal displacements, while the Georgian Agency of IDPs records the number of people that are displaced. Put simply, if a family

	2021	2022	2023
Males	1 796 200	1 770 000	1 793 800
Females	1 932 400	1 918 700	1 942 500
Total	3 728 600	3 688 600	3 736 400

Table 2: Population of Georgia, 2021 - 2023
[Source: GEOSTAT]

of 4 people was displaced due to communal violence in 2008, and then once again in 2013 due to a flood that destroyed their new residence - Georgian authorities would record displacement of 4 people, while IDMC would record this as 4 people twice displaced = 8 instances of displacement.⁶

Even considering the lower statistic, however, 292,887 individuals in a country with a total population of 37,36,400,⁷ means that **7.84% of Georgia's population is currently internally**

displaced (forming 0.41% of all of global IDPs).

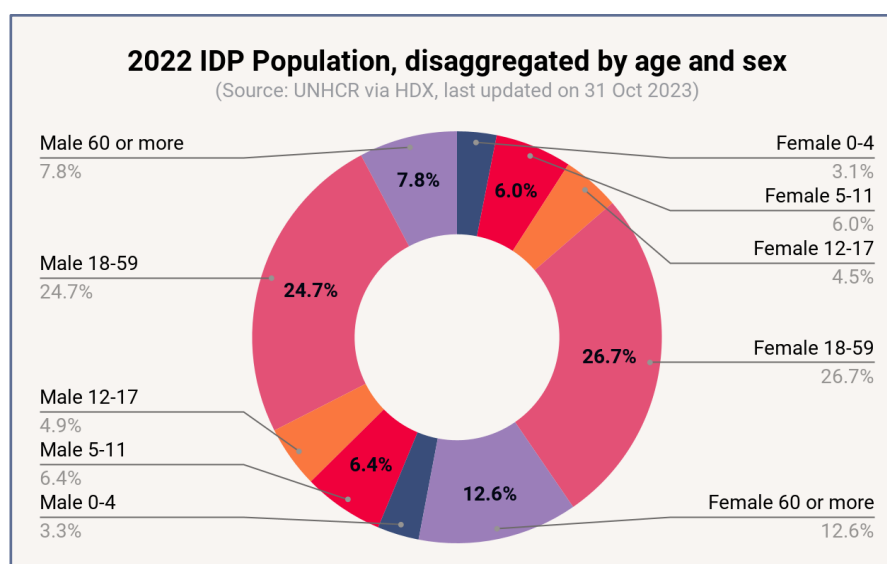


Figure 1 [Source: UNHCR via HDX]

⁵ According to the Georgian Agency of IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihood Provision as cited in the needs assessment report [published by Consent on October 26, 2023](#).

⁶ See [this page](#) for reading more about IDMC's methodology. These kinds of discrepancies were one of the major challenges faced in the process of need analysis.

⁷ National Statistics Office of Georgia - [Population](#). Retrieved on 2023, November 27.

As illustrated above, a noteworthy segment of the displaced population - more than half - falls within the age bracket of 18 to 59 years old. This suggests that individuals in this group are adults, potentially in the peak of their productivity, facing distinct challenges and aspirations related to higher education, employment, family planning, child rearing, retirement savings, and more.

Geographical Factors

In an attempt to identify the needs of IDPs in Georgia, we spoke with local actors such as MMRH and Consent. These discussions revealed that there was a strong geographical element to the problems that faced displaced people. For example, we were informed that Zugdidi - a city in the northwestern part of Georgia, roughly 10 kms away from the Abkhazian border - is home to a significantly large population of IDPs. In fact, by the end of 2025, half of the city's population is expected to be IDPs.

While a large population of IDPs living in close concentration may indicate a higher ability to gather and organize, to attract attention of concerned authorities, and a higher saturation of interest from humanitarian actors such as INGOs and foreign aid agencies; it may also create circumstances which lead to overcrowding, poor living conditions, and scarcity of basic resources needed to meet the requirements of a large population.

Similarly, IDPs living in smaller, poorly connected rural regions of Georgia, may face a geographical disadvantage which not only limits attention and aid, but also creates barriers to accessing employment and social engagement opportunities. Consent's findings⁸ indicate that over a quarter (26.5%) of IDPs who were surveyed, encounter difficulties related to transportation on a regular basis. According to the research, this experience of remoteness impacts the ability of IDPs to access essential services and opportunities. Addressing remoteness can also be expensive. It's worth noting that **82% of the respondents spend up to 20% of their income on transportation**, with 15% spending between 21% to 40%, and 2% of respondents spending 51% to 90% of their income on transport expenses.

Living Standards

Housing

Living conditions have been a long-time source of concern for IDPs in Georgia. According to a piece⁹ by the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, tensions around the housing debate flared up again in January 2022 following the suicide of Zurab Kiria, a displaced person from the Abkhazian Black Sea region. He had lived in a 14-meter-square room in Kartli for 29 years, waiting to be assigned proper accommodation. The rooms in Kartli - a Soviet era sanatorium - were meant for no more than two people and for short stays. Yet, in many cases they now house entire families.

These concerns were echoed by NGO workers we spoke to. According to MMRH, one of the key challenges faced by IDPs - not only in the initial stages, but throughout their displacement - revolves around the provision of housing and access to suitable living conditions.¹⁰ Poignantly, they note:

⁸ Consent IDP Women Association. (2023). Needs Assessment " [დეზნილთა საჭიროებების კვლევა ზუგდიდში, ფოთში, წყალთუბოში, გორსა და თეთრიწყაროში.](#)", page 56.

⁹ Institute for War & Peace Reporting. (2022). [Georgia: IDP's Death Reopens Debate Over Housing.](#)

¹⁰ Mtskheta-Mtianeti Regional Hub, & Estonian Refugee Council. (2023). [Needs of Internally Displaced Individuals: Research Report](#), page 14.

“Some families have been waiting for a house for 31 years.”

Respondents in the comprehensive study carried out by MMRH, explained that following initial displacement, many of them sought refuge with relatives or acquaintances residing in the controlled territory of Georgia. However, seeing that this was not a feasible long-term solution, they opted to live in dormitories or abandoned buildings as temporary shelter. Regrettably, “a segment of the displaced population, particularly those from Abkhazia and Samachablo, still resides in some of these places (referred to as temporary shelters) while awaiting a long-term housing solution.”¹¹

According to the assessment of focus group participants, the process of securing housing was most challenging for IDPs from 1990-1993, as they observed that the state did not provide housing, requiring them to locate and settle in vacant or uninhabited buildings independently. This initial housing that the IDPs were able to obtain was seen as unsuitable for living, with deficiencies in space, heating, water, hygiene and other basic needs. A person displaced from Samachablo recounts:

“Recalling the initial stage of forced displacement remains the most challenging episode in my life, haunting me like an unending nightmare. [Over] a decade later, I could not fathom that the issue of providing housing would still persist for IDPs. We, the 'old IDPs,' harbour particular concern about this predicament, and I don't mean to offend anyone, but, except for isolated cases, we find ourselves in worse conditions than the IDPs from Abkhazia.”

As a result, the Georgian state launched a new strategy in 2007 “prioritiz[ing] the long-term goal of voluntary and dignified resettlement, aiming to reduce dependency on the state and incorporate extremely needy IDPs into a unified social program.”¹²

However, the emergence of a new wave of IDPs following the August 2008 war necessitated changes in the state's approach yet again. A significant amount of money (around three billion USD) was allocated for housing. Though the allocated money was mismanaged and has only recently, during the last 2-3 years, resulted in a faster pace of housing construction for IDPs.

Although housing conditions are poor across the board, research shows that living conditions of people who were displaced during the 1990-93 period are particularly problematic, both due to the prolonged experience of subpar living conditions as well as due to the unpreparedness of protection bodies such as the government.

This is also reflected in the responses received from IDPs in the research carried out by MMRH. When asked what type of housing IDPs inhabit, a clear difference was found between the so-called “old” IDPs and those displaced following the 2008 war.

¹¹ MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 14.

¹² MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 15.

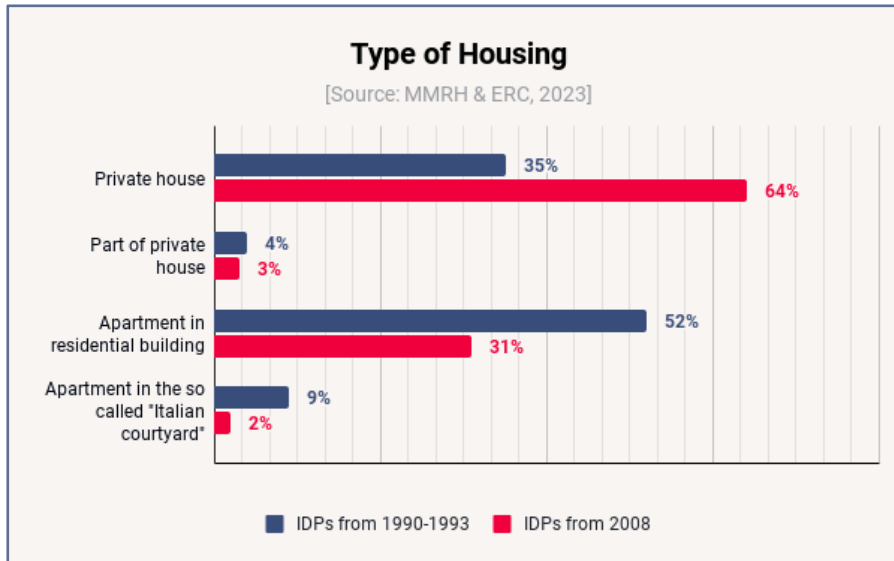


Figure 2 [Source: MMRH & ERC, 2023]

In the context of home ownership, results indicate that over two-thirds of IDPs from both groups live in government provided housing, whether through long term housing plans or collective settlement allocations. Private ownership of homes was fairly low among both groups: 11% among IDPs displaced during the 90s, and 10% among those displaced after hostilities in 2008.

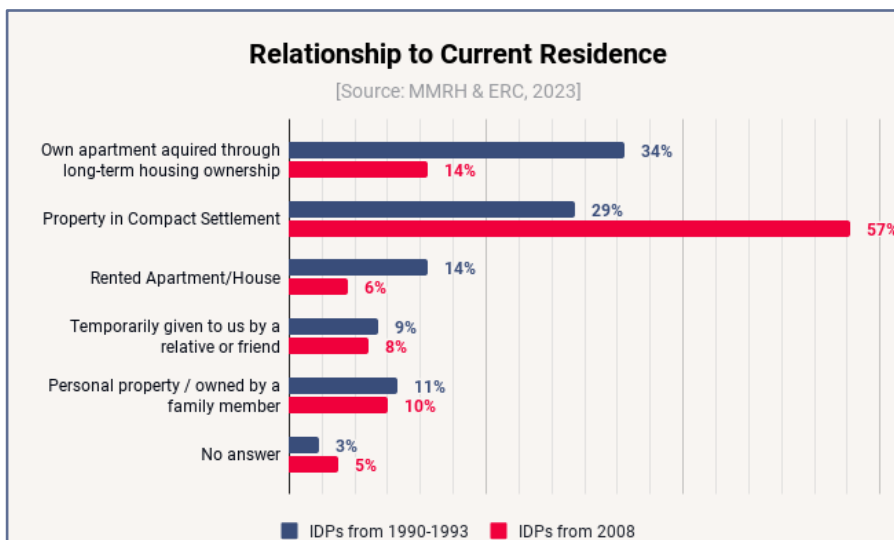


Figure 3 [Source: MMRH & ERC, 2023]

Regardless of housing type or ownership, however, the quality of **housing infrastructure was overwhelmingly rated as "very bad" or "bad"** within the Consent study. Living structures were seen as being **unsafe and non-compliant with minimum building standards**. In general, respondents named the following issues as the most acute problems:

- sewage (56%),
- inconsistency with the local climate of the building/humidity (51%),
- defective condition of elevators (51%),
- adaptation to persons with disabilities (69%),
- drainage system (64%),
- and homeless dogs (88%).

More particularly in the case of collective settlements, the following issues were seen as problematic:

- roofing of the building (43%),
- drinking water (46%),
- solidity of the building (45%),
- Solidity and safety of the area surrounding the building (51%).

In a rare positive observation regarding housing, MMRH discovered from both quantitative and qualitative studies that a vast majority of respondents, irrespective of the frequency of having to apply for housing assistance, uphold an optimistic perspective.

Income and Debt

As of November 2023, IDPs receive monetary assistance of GEL45 from the state per month, per person. According to the IDP families interviewed by MMRH, the assistance is seen as important and valuable, but they emphasize that “pensions and salaries remain the primary sources of income.”¹³

Participants within the Consent study more **strongly advocate for an increase in this aid amount.** Nearly 300 out of 400 participants, insist that this monetary aid should be increased, with a significant majority (65%) indicating that GEL45 is only symbolic in value. Participant from Tskaltubo elaborates:

"Those who are single - they only have 45 GEL social allowance or IDP aid and pension. They buy everything with it."

Regrettably, this attitude was not mirrored in discussions with representatives working on addressing the concerns of IDPs. Conversely, it was believed that the substantial humanitarian aid and monetary compensations provided during the early stages of displacement have, to some extent, contributed to the dependency of IDPs on aid and a rise in unemployment. IDPs are seen as “lazy” or lacking initiative.¹⁴

"When I reached adulthood and had to manage my own employment, especially after starting a family, I understood the necessity of working for a living. I question the notion that others are obligated to provide constant assistance. Many individuals fail to leverage their abilities effectively. The IDPs ought to proactively strive to move beyond the victim role. The post-conflict syndrome, characterized by a tendency to remain in distress and expect perpetual help, hinders the initiative to overcome challenges."

This mismatch between the attitudes of state authorities and displaced people may be one of the reasons for poverty within the displaced population. According to Consent's surveys a **large majority of households (84%) had a collective monthly income of under GEL1250, with 22% making under GEL 300 per month.**

In light of inflation and rising costs of living, households have started to manage their needs either through instilling coping strategies such as cutting down on various necessary expenses, or in cases

¹³ MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 66.

¹⁴ MMRH & ERC. (2023). pages 66-67

where expenses cannot be avoided, families have tried to mitigate the immediate problems through taking on debt.

According to Consent's survey, respondents selected the following categories when asked "Over the past two years, which of the following have you been unable to acquire or experience due to insufficient funds?"

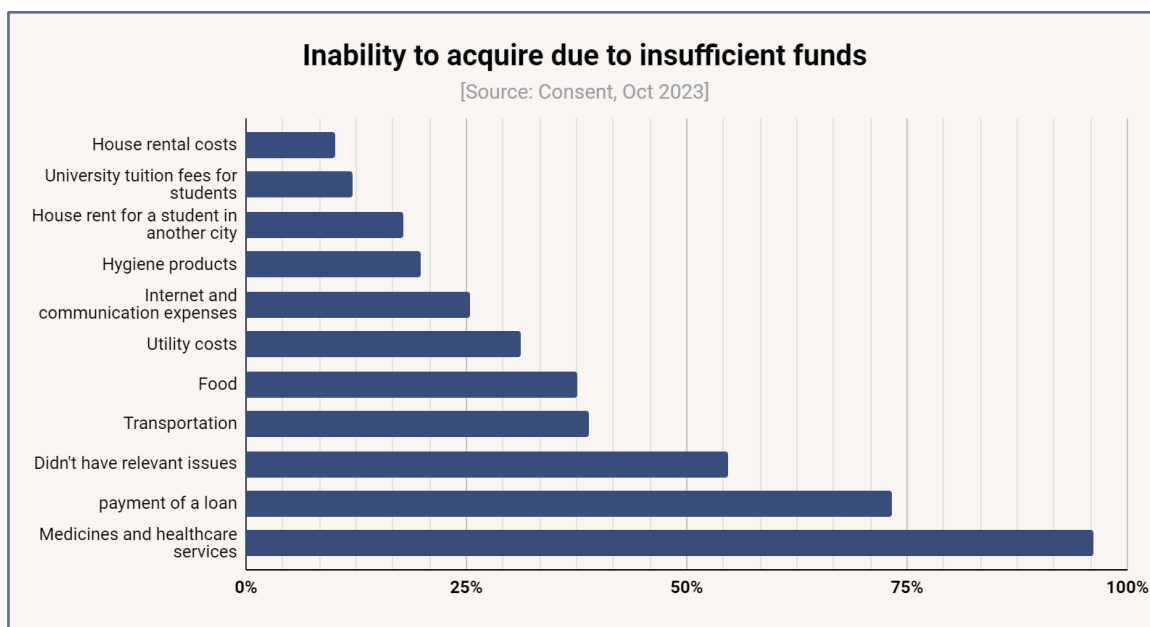


Figure 4 [Source: Consent IDP Women Association, 2023]

When asked about the respondents' savings and debts, **79% indicated that they had no savings at all and only 22% responded that they did not have a loan.** Among those who have accumulated debt,

- 67% - have a loan from the bank
- 15% - have a loan from microfinance
- 10% - have a loan from a relative
- and 2% - have a loan from a foreigner

Loans were most notably (44%) taken for buying medicines or addressing other medical needs.

Employment and Training

According to MMRH, a substantial portion of respondents in their study conveyed that their current income, whether through state support or personal employment, falls short or barely covers the essentials required for sustaining life.¹⁵ Therefore, an obvious next step in addressing these economic difficulties is consideration of better employment opportunities.

Respondents in both, the focus groups organized by MMRH, and surveys carried out by Consent, have indicated that securing employment was challenging for them. According to MMRH, "approximately half of the respondents, irrespective of their profession and qualifications, struggle to secure any form of employment."¹⁶

¹⁵ MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 55.

¹⁶ MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 5.

This is a widely recognized issue across Georgia, not only for IDPs but for all groups within the broader labour market. Although employment rates in Georgia have recently seen a slight uptick, a

	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3
Unemployed (no. of persons)	279,200	266,900	252,200
Unemployed (Percentage of total population)	18.0%	16.7%	15.6%

Table 4: Unemployment in Georgia, 2023
[Source: GEOSTAT]

significant portion of the population struggles to maintain consistent employment.

Within the MMRH focus groups, **unemployment, alongside rising prices, was seen as a source of deep anxiety and distress.** In fact, for many households, even when members were employed, their employment did not

provide adequate economic security. This deficiency could possibly be attributed to the exclusive dependence on cash income, observed among both "older" IDPs and individuals displaced post-2008.

MMRH notes that widespread unemployment is equally acute for internally displaced families originating from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. However, there is a discernible difference in how unemployment is experienced by city residents compared to **those living in rural areas**, with the latter **facing notably challenging employment conditions.**

As discussed in the [previous section](#), one of the knock-on effects caused by lack of employment and income is debt. However, research found that even indebtedness may be more precarious for displaced individuals, compared to the local native population. MMRH reports that for those grappling with unemployment and a lack of real estate, their interactions with traditional banks become inhibited forcing them to instead turn to pawnshops as a source of financial assistance. In fact, MMRH identified a specific source which was named several times during their research.

Extrapolating based on general economic principles then, we may assume that unemployment of IDPs not only puts them in a disadvantaged position from where to interact with financial services, but it also **necessitates use of potentially exploitative lenders who operate outside the bounds of traditional banking rules.**

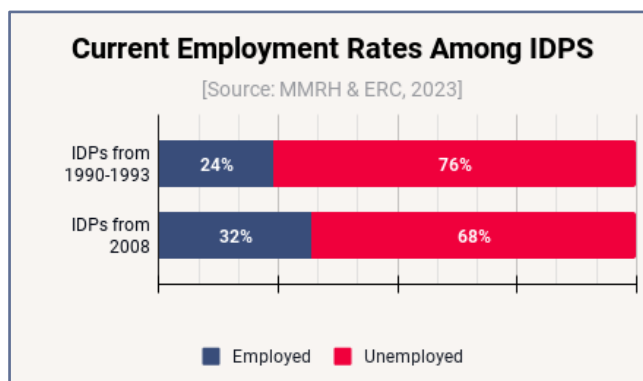


Figure 5 [Source: MMRH & ERC, 2023]

Before attempting to address a problem as complex and systemic as unemployment, it is important to evaluate just how widespread the issue of unemployment is. According to MMRH's findings based on 250 interviews, the **unemployment rate among the IDPs was 72% (average of both IDP groups, i.e. from the 90s and post-2008).**

When asked “what is the reason for their current unemployment?” the top three reasons identified by IDPS were:

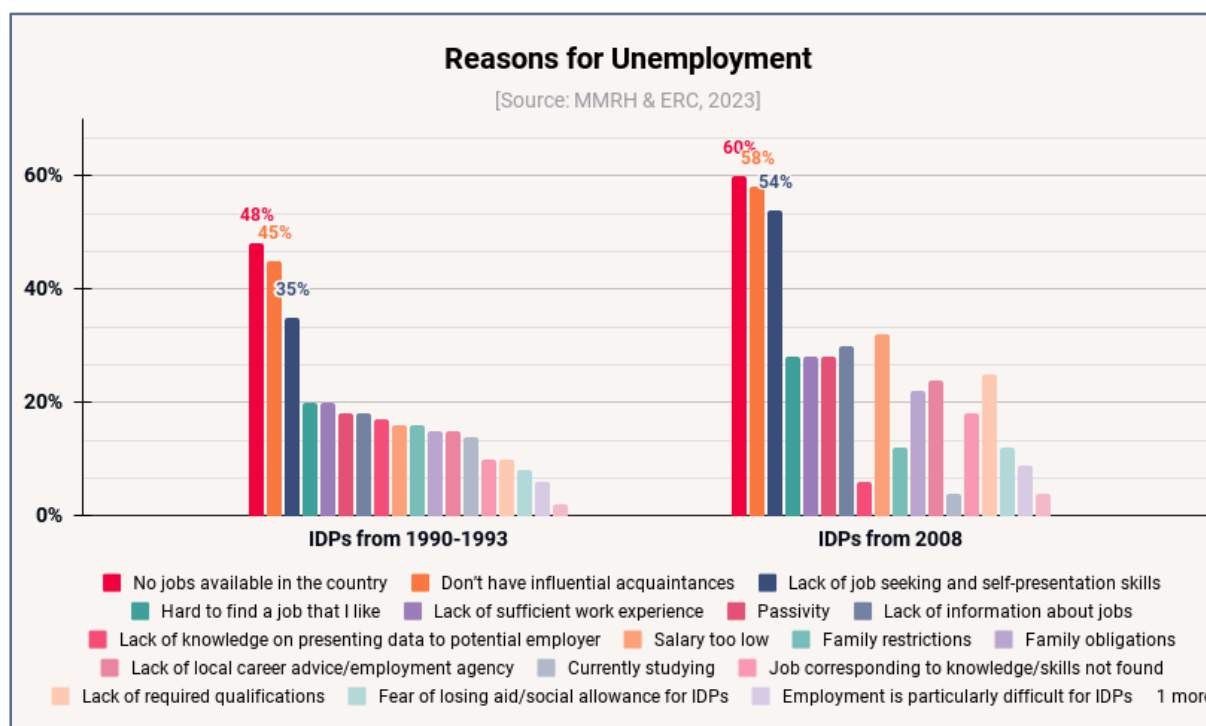


Figure 6 [Source: MMRH & ERC, 2023]

1. “In general, there are no jobs available in the country” - 48% and 60% among IDPs from 1990-93 and 2008 respectively,
2. “I don’t have influential acquaintances that will help me to find an employment” - 45% and 58% among IDPs from 1990-93 and 2008 respectively,
3. “I have **no occupation / crafting abilities (lack of job seeking and self-presentation skills)**” - 35% and 54% among IDPs from 1990-93 and 2008, respectively.

Qualitative research among IDPs also revealed that in the municipalities targeted by MMRH, “there is a **scarcity of private enterprises.**” Instead, there are small-scale operations such as tea, nut, and wood sawmills, which are characterized by **intermittent or unreliable employment.** According to interviewees,

- IDPs primarily sustain themselves through trade.
- When suitable opportunities arise, IDPs contribute to local communities by engaging in activities such as plot work and firewood cutting.
- Some IDPs pursue livelihoods in specific crafts, the research participants could not identify crafts that are in high demand within the municipalities.
- When possible, IDPs collaboratively acquire land¹⁷ and pool their resources to pursue livelihoods.

Lastly, MMRH research found that a significant majority of respondents fall short in meeting the minimum requirements of the labour market in terms of knowledge, skills, and employment

¹⁷ According to respondents in the MMRH study, IDPs faced restrictions as they were prohibited from owning agricultural land in private ownership until a few years ago. Presently, this restriction has been lifted, allowing IDPs to purchase land through auctions, albeit with limited financial capacity.

opportunities. For instance, **67% of interviewees among the IDPs from the 1990s and 60% among the IDPs from 2008 do not possess a résumé.** In fact, as the research delved deeper, a notable number of respondents demonstrated an unexpected lack of awareness regarding the need of creating a résumé.

Social protection and Access to services

Health

Interestingly, IDPs who participated in qualitative research carried out by MMRH, expressed minimal concerns regarding healthcare and indicated that their needs were well-addressed by state-provided insurance.¹⁸

Yet, in the research carried out by Consent, the ability to participate in state-organized healthcare programs was seen as unequal and unfair. It was noted that healthcare programs (alongside infrastructure programs) were difficult to follow and inclusion criteria were not sufficiently clear. Programs were seen as unsustainable, similar (but not complimentary), and as lacking effective coordination.

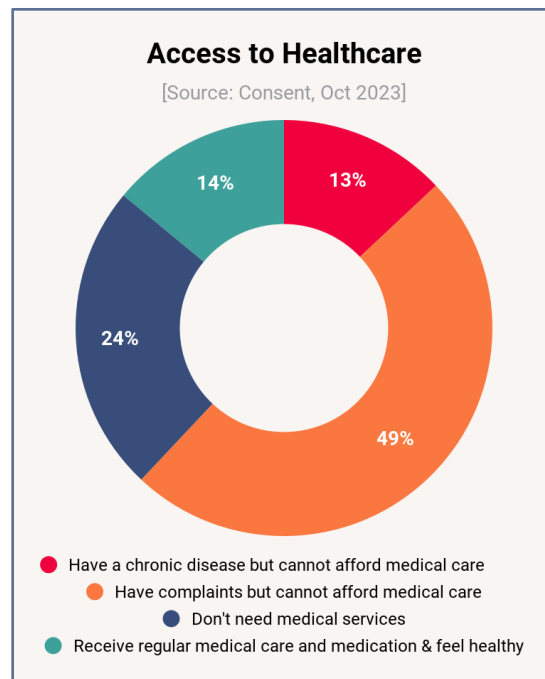


Figure 7 [Source: Consent, Oct 2023]

A large majority (**62%**) of the respondents expressed that they were unable to get the medical help they needed due to lack of funds. In another section of the study concerning healthcare, 21% of the respondents stated that they use private health insurance implying inadequate coverage from the state.

According to findings from Consent, therefore, the lack of appropriate state-provided healthcare not only necessitates indebtedness (Figure 3, page 10), but is also skipped by a large part of the population altogether (Figure 6).

Protection Status: Internally Displaced Persons v/s Socially Vulnerable Groups

Discussions with Consent revealed that there is need - and demand - for IDPs to be recognized as a distinct but equal part of the unified social protection system. This is particularly important in relation to the monetary assistance received from the state. As mentioned before, IDPs currently receive monetary assistance of GEL45 per month, per person. However, other people covered under the 'Socially Vulnerable Groups' category (such as people with disabilities or those under a certain income threshold) receive GEL255 per month, per person.

In the current framework, IDPs are also able to apply and receive the status of "socially vulnerable." However, a sizable majority of participants within Consent's study chose not to do so. This was surprising in light of the considerably higher monetary assistance package. When asked what the reason for this might be, social workers pointed towards a sentiment among IDPs where if they chose to transition their social status from "IDP" to "socially vulnerable," they would be "giving up the values" and distancing themselves from their marker of identity.

¹⁸ MMRH & ERC. (2023). page 79.

Therefore, the IDPs would like to have the amount of **monetary aid raised and receive non-discriminatory access to state social services without being forced to compromise their values.**

In a focus group organized by Consent, an IDP from Tetrtskaro said:

"You shouldn't be faced with a choice - displaced or social insecurity - you shouldn't be faced with a dilemma to choose one of them"

Integration

MMRH notes that discussions about **integration challenges among young individuals are fairly rare.** In fact, research shows that virtually all young respondents feel that the process of integration is largely completed, and that they increasingly identify with the local community. According to the interviewed youth, the primary distinction between the IDPs and the local population at this stage, can be seen in terms of private property ownership, particularly in the context of collective settlements. When followed up with specific questions regarding other differences between local and displaced populations, respondents (from all age groups) noted that the employment rate among the local population is comparatively higher.

Amidst discussions on the topic of conflict between the two population groups, respondents observed that the local population had to adapt to the IDPs just as much as the IDPs had to adapt to the local population. Respondents had difficulty recalling specific instances of conflict, though pointed out that the resettlement of IDPs has resulted in observable changes. Notable positive changes include:

- Improved infrastructure in abandoned areas: including installation of external lighting, larger effort to preserve buildings from demolition and disrepair, and a generally higher demand to enhance and maintain public infrastructure.
- Augmented markets for local products: leading to an expansion of trade activities.
- Introduction of new cultural aspects: Such as culinary practices, dress styles, and other cultural elements in daily life.
- Introduction of novel agricultural practices: through cultivation of unfamiliar crops like watermelons and melons, as well as through introducing different cultivation methods, ultimately contributing to more agricultural diversity.
- **Positive outcomes from IDP projects have also benefited the local population:** these include shared medical services, communal spaces like stadiums fostering interaction between local and displaced children, rehabilitation centres catering to both IDPs and local disabled children, and facilities like IDP kindergartens which also benefit the local community.

It should be noted that with increased integration of displaced individuals within the local population, the term "displaced" is less commonly used. From the respondents' discussions, it is evident that, unlike in previous years when the term "displaced" was a necessary epithet to specify a person's status, individuals are now commonly addressed by their names, similar to the local population.

This being said, the **use of terms "IDP" and "refugee" has not yet completely disappeared from everyday use, and for some IDPs may elicit a negative reaction.** Especially as these terms, in their perception, **carry connotations of a lower social status compared to the native population.** A small number of respondents within the MMRH study highlight that despite the prolonged duration of displaced migrants arriving into the country, the distinction between the statuses of "internally

displaced person" and "refugee" have not been fully understood in society. They also note that instances of the negative or derogatory use of the term "refugee" in reference to displaced persons remain prevalent.

"I visited our municipality, and a woman in the reception area gestured towards me, saying, 'these refugees again... Your problems have no end,' and then turned her back on me." - (IDP from Tskhinvali, Gori)

"The shop assistant shouted 'Debts of refugees' so loudly that we had a dispute over it. Honestly?! They label us as vulnerable groups, but among the 100 people in the debt book, at most 5 would be displaced. Yet, he insists on using the term 'refugee.' This speaks volumes, but perhaps he assumes that someone else did not hear it correctly and that the IDP owes some money he tries to downplay him/her." - (IDP from Abkhazia, Tskaltubo)

Intersectional Needs

Women

Research produced by Consent, shows that intersectional vulnerability of displaced women creates feminization of poverty, increased risks of domestic violence, and other systemic problems. Notable results from interviews with IDP women include:

- **78%** women who express that they **"have no savings at all"** including for using in case of a minor household crisis or emergency;
- **67%** women indicate that they have health problems, but they either **cannot go to the doctor** at all or if they do, they do not have enough funds to pursue further treatment;
- **More than half (53%)** of the surveyed women indicate that they **need psychological services**, but are unable to access these services due to lack of funds or other obstacles;
- Additionally, women note that they **don't have access to a so-called "third place"**¹⁹ for relaxation, socialization and pursuit of better mental health.
- Lastly, **63%** of IDP women **believe that insufficient availability of childcare centres/youth clubs/kindergartens affects women's employment**. Among them, a third (34%) indicate that less access to childcare services has a "very strong impact" on women's employment; presumably also affecting financial independence of women, as well as their ability to remove themselves from abusive or precarious situations.

People with disabilities

According to research conducted by Consent, an average of 69% of participants noted a substantial lack of infrastructural adaptation for accessibility concerning individuals with disabilities.

Moreover, 38% of respondents highlighted the complete absence of care services like day care or home care centres for people with disabilities. While 19% of the respondents acknowledged the existence of such services, they indicated that these are "difficult to access".

¹⁹ The "third place" is a term coined by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg. It refers to social surroundings that are separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place"). Third spaces have been characterized as neutral spaces which serve as "anchors" of community life and facilitate broader, more creative interaction.

Notably, available programs for individuals with disabilities are predominantly limited to children and adolescents under the age of 18. This has left a **significant gap in services for adults with disabilities** and poses considerable challenges for them and their caregivers.

Conclusion: Beneficiary Preferences and Durable Solutions

The above sections delineate available information regarding the needs of internally displaced people living in the Republic of Georgia. Based on the findings of the SDR, we conclude that there is no need to collect further primary data at this stage. Though a more robust and direct collection may be necessary in the future, if a specific beneficiary group is to be targeted.

With regard to recommendations for future actions:

- We found that the need to actively involve IDPs in various advocacy processes remains pivotal for their integration and engagement within society. IDPs expressed a keen interest in engaging in dialogue with state structures through meetings and IDP leader engagement. Consequently, the report recommends further extension of the community councils program, in collaboration with MMRH.
- Given that housing is one of the primary challenges facing displaced individuals in Georgia, particularly those IDPs affected by conflicts in the early 90s, it is imperative to enhance living standards through a targeted humanitarian assistance program. In the foreseeable future, this could materialize through initiatives like 'cash for repairs,' 'cash for rent,' 'cash for utilities,' or a 'multi-purpose cash assistance' program.
- Another strategy which may be applied parallelly, may encompass advocacy efforts, utilizing community council sessions dedicated specifically to petition writing addressing housing needs.
- Unemployment was another macro-level need identified among IDPs in Georgia. According to the results of 250 interviews carried out by MMRH, about 72% of IDPs were unemployed at the time. As such, unemployment and rising prices have contributed to deep anxiety and distress among IDPs. It is therefore important - if not essential - to devise mechanisms incentivizing employers offering IDP employment, to prioritize displaced youth in higher education through fostering better access, and to integrate intellectual potential within the community at large.
- In the immediate future, it is necessary to address the financial needs of IDPs not only through advocacy and direct humanitarian aid, but also by fostering sustainable livelihoods and income streams. NGO Consent asked participants in their study: "What would improve your financial and psychological state of mind?"

Overwhelmingly, participants expressed interest in engaging in vocational training, work, and business activities. Notably, accountancy was also highlighted as a specific skill that IDPs would like to learn, as it is believed that accounting jobs are plenty and easier to come along.

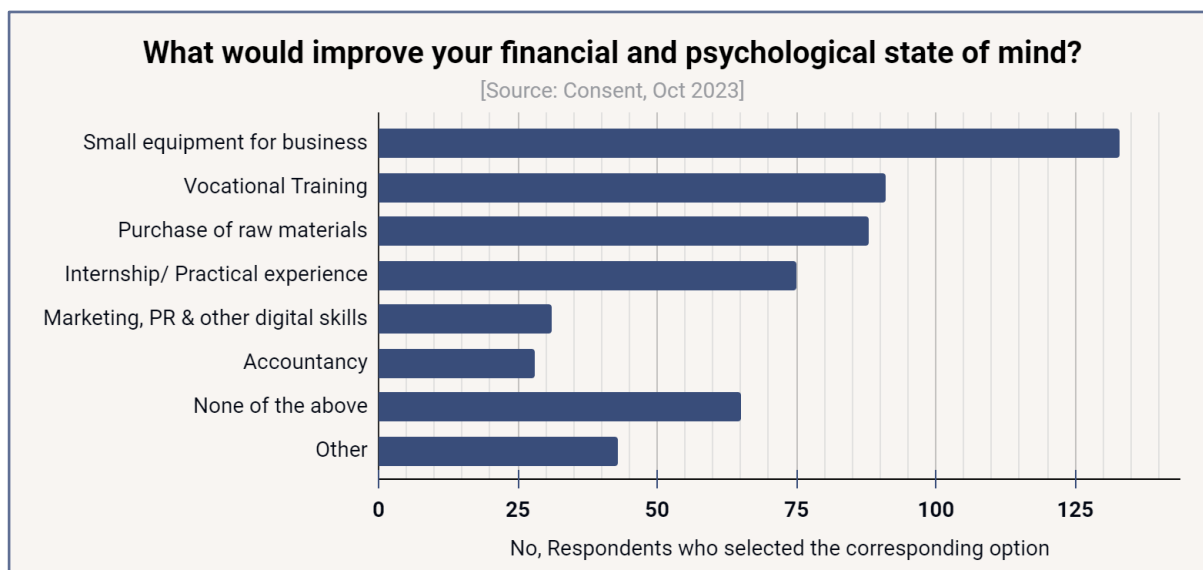


Figure 8 [Source: Consent, Oct 2023]

In a similar vein, MMRH found that a significant majority of respondents fall short in meeting the minimum requirements of the labour market in terms of knowledge, skills, and employment opportunities. For instance, 67% of interviewees among the IDPs from the 1990s and 60% among the IDPs from 2008 do not possess a résumé. In fact, as research delved deeper, a notable number of respondents demonstrated an unexpected lack of awareness regarding the mere need of creating a résumé.

In light of these findings, a compelling case can be made for a robust push toward long-term economic empowerment through livelihoods programming which focuses both on business ownership and on upskilling general employability skills for general job market participation.

- Consent’s research highlighted the specific experiences of poverty among women which were a product of dependence on male family members alongside inability to go to work due to factors such as lack of appropriate or sufficient childcare facilities.

A majority of women (53%) interviewed by Consent also expressed a need for psychological services, as well as a need for a ‘third space’ where they could spend time and solidarity among peers.

Subsequently, a key recommendation is to prioritize economic empowerment of IDP women in Georgia. This can be achieved through initiatives such as accountancy training, vocational and professional skills development, and potential entrepreneurship programs. Additionally, addressing the need for relaxation and social engagement among women can be tackled through the implementation of an MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) program.

- Debt alongside poverty was found to be a primary cause for distress among IDPS. A significant portion of the group, grappling with the absence of gainful employment, resorted to obtaining precarious loans from pawn shops. Primary reason for debt was inability to pay for healthcare and medicine. As such a continuation of ERC’s collaboration with MMRH in covering healthcare expenses is highly recommended.

- Despite the long-term and substantial presence of IDPs in Georgia, research has uncovered misunderstandings regarding their legal status, needs and motivations. MMRH noted that instances of the negative or derogatory use of the term "refugee" in reference to internally displaced persons remains prevalent. This is especially problematic as these terms are known to carry connotations of a lower or backward social status compared to the 'native' population.

Moreover, there is something to be said regarding the noteworthy shift in international attention away from the Georgian internal displacement. Given that displacement from Abkhazia and South Ossetia was followed by larger displacement events more recently in Europe and Central Asia, the international humanitarian community appears to have shifted focus away from IDPs in Georgia.

Therefore, it is important to redirect attention to the everyday realities and needs of the affected IDP population. Accordingly, a recommended measure is the initiation of a comprehensive information campaign for IDPs, actively promoting their visibility and awareness on a broader societal scale.

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