

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

**Education Provisions for Children at Risk:
Needs Assessment for Caucasian Region
(Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)**

Author: Lika Glonti

Editors: Natalia Shablya and Nora Henter

April 2007

Education Support Program (ESP)
Open Society Institute, Budapest

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The education to which every child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values. The goal is to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence. (*The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 29*)

Not just access and the content, but also the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place are important when assessing the realization of these rights. (*UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: General Comment No 1. The aims of education 2001*)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The needs assessment report outlines the education problems of a specific group of children at risk: IDP and refugee children. The document was prepared by the ESP in order to inform discussions on preparation of the regional proposal for the South Caucasus.

The situation of IDP/refugee children in South Caucasus requires urgent attention by international community. Up to 250,000 children in all three countries of the South Caucasus still have IDP and refugee status. Poverty, poor schooling conditions, including low qualification of teachers, state of health, inappropriate housing, incomplete legal framework, hamper children's performance in school and often school attendance. The scale of these problems is substantial in Azerbaijan and Georgia while in Armenia it does not present a major concern.

One of the most important findings of the survey is that in all three countries access to quality education is a major challenge for IDP/refugee children. Although there are specific educational problems in each country, the above mentioned elements that hamper children's performance seem to be shared by all groups of at risk children. Their education needs have been assessed through interviews with relevant international and local non-governmental organizations.

The general findings of the survey are the following:

- *The main educational obstacles hampering school attendance and/or performance of at risk children – irrespective of the country and risk group – are costs, poor housing conditions and low quality of schooling.*
- *Considering categories of vulnerable children, there are more similarities between Georgia and Azerbaijan, while the situation looks different in Armenia.*

According to the official statement of the Government of Armenia, the problem of refugees has already been solved in the country. The number of IDPs is also significantly lower there, than in neighboring countries (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of IDPs/refugees in the South Caucasian countries.

Country	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
IDPs	8,400	686,586	237,069
Refugees	480	3,118	1,334

- *Despite this difference, there are common education problems for all risk groups, such as low attendance and high drop out rates, especially at the secondary school level.*

For example, more than 20% of Azeri IDP children do not go to school at all. Unwillingness to study and poverty are given among main reasons for low school attendance in Armenia. Extreme poverty prevents IDP children in Georgia to attend classes. Up to 19% of Chechen refugee children in Azerbaijan do not attend any school at all.

- *Segregation is one of the main problems of education provisions for IDP children in Georgia and Azerbaijan.*

While in Georgia segregation of IDP schools is mainly due to political reasons, in Azerbaijan this is due to compact living areas of IDPs. Since 1994 there are 25 schools for IDP children from Abkhazia, governed by the Ministry of Education of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic. In Azerbaijan, there is no special governmental structure in charge of education provisions for IDP children, but de facto segregation is very high. Majority of IDP children (up to 70%) in Azerbaijan attend so called IDP schools. In Georgia only 8% do so, the rest is assimilated in “normal” schools. In both countries the majority of teachers in segregated schools are IDPs.

Table 2. Data on segregation

Country	Number of schools	Number of segregated schools	Number of IDP children of school age	Number of children in segregated schools
Georgia	2,744	25 (0.9%)	ca. 40,000	3,238 (8%)
Azerbaijan	4,600	687 (14.9%)	124,150	88,301 (70%)

- *There is no special governmental approach to the education problems of IDP/refugee children in the region. Despite activities of international and local aid organizations, situation remains difficult.*

A statistical overview on IDP/refugee children is given in the table below indicates that scope of the problem that governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia face in the years ahead.

Table 3. Number of IDP/refugee children

Country	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
Child population (total)	819,000	2,736,000	1,080,000
IDP children	N.A.	202,623 (7.4%)	45,000 (4%)
Refugee children	100 (0.01%)	1,387 (0.05%)	245 (0.02%)
School age children living in conflict zones	–	–	7,637 (0.7%)
Children of migrant workers	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

What we have learned from the needs assessment is that the scope of the problem in Azerbaijan and Georgia requires an urgent attention. There are significant numbers of IDP/refugee children who are either out of school or dropped out because of acute poverty, inadequate school infrastructure, unwelcoming school environment and poor housing conditions. Armenian case is different since this problem is almost non-existent and there are other more important issues that have to be addressed. For example, hate issues, prejudice and bias in school textbooks. This tells us that the focus on education for IDP and refugee children might not be the one that unites South Caucasus therefore ESP needs to explore further what focus could be of importance to everyone.

The following approaches must be considered in order to ensure access to quality education, improve school attendance and decrease drop outs:

- Creating of safe and enjoyable school environment that stimulates students' interest in school attendance and learning;
- Training of IDP teachers and school administration representatives to improve quality of education provision;
- Initiating gradual desegregation;
- Eliminating the legal obstacles for education provisions of IDP and refugee children (see p. 14, 16);
- Mobilizing parents and teachers of IDPs/refugees children to bring changes to quality of education provision;
- Providing psychological rehabilitation IDP/refugee children;
- Providing special language training for IDP/refugee children;
- Improving housing situation and economic status of IDPs/refugees.

I INTRODUCTION

The Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute Budapest undertook this needs assessment in order to be able to have an informed dialogue with its partners on the development of a regional proposal for the South Caucasus. The focus on education provisions for children at risk, specifically refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons)¹, was looked at in this document. This is an exploratory focus that was suggested to ESP by Education Coordinators from the Caucasus region at the Zagreb meeting in December 2006.

The purpose of the report is to initiate and encourage discussions on the possible regional project in South Caucasus with Foundation representatives, local NGOs active in the field and donor organizations. Comparable needs assessment is being conducted in the North Caucasus to initiate similar discussions with NGOs in that geographical area.

The purpose of the needs assessment is:

- to identify the scope of the problems that IDP/refugee children face regarding access to quality schooling;
- to identify what has been done and is being done by donors, civil society actors and governments towards better schooling provisions;
- to outline current education needs of children at risk;
- identify potential civil society actors and donors who would be interested to participate in the regional project;
- to provide recommendations on the focus of the future regional project.

A desk study was conducted collecting and analyzing data from reports, studies and other written materials concerning at-risk children in Caucasian region, as well as regional studies relevant to the understanding of the IDP/refugee situation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The most important material was gathered from ministries, UNICEF, UNHCR, NRC, Save the Children and some other NGOs active in the field.

Altogether up to 40 organization representatives from all countries were interviewed. Interviews and meetings were conducted with representatives of governmental structures, such as ministries and state committees responsible for education and IDP/refugee issues, aid organizations, educational NGOs (see annex 3 for details). All organizations expressed their readiness for collaboration in the framework of the future project. This study was made in close collaboration with Soros Foundations in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose staff contributed significantly with their expertise on the issues and assistance with field missions.

Main problem of the study was lack of reliable statistics (see below); sometimes controversial data from different sources or outdated information, so data should be interpreted with caution. The report is divided into chapters according to the countries and sub-chapters according to the risk groups and main needs.

¹ Definitions of at risk groups are given in the annex 2.

II POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The collapse of the USSR started as of the 1990s. This process was accompanied by military conflicts, destruction and losses. Caucasus became a “hot” region (Figure 1).

- **Georgia/Abkhazia/South Ossetia**

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence in 1991, Georgia had to confront two regions within its own borders demanding their own independence, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The fighting that followed killed about 10,000 people and caused the displacement of some 250,000 (more than 95% from Abkhazia, the rest from South Ossetia). The conflicts also resulted in the loss of control by the Georgian government over both regions, which owe their de facto autonomy largely to Russian backing.

In order to prevent the resumption of violence, the international community sent peacekeepers to South Ossetia and to Abkhazia in 1992 and 1994 respectively. The UN has led the international community’s efforts for a peaceful settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. In May 2006, the Georgian and Abkhazian sides exchanged proposals aimed at bringing peace but no progress has been achieved so far.

One key element for solving both conflicts seems to be improvement of relations between Georgia and Russia, which remained tense as of early 2007. While Russia officially recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia, it has unofficially extended its political, financial and military support to Abkhazia.

The continuing lack of a political solution to these conflicts has made return for those displaced unfeasible. However, 45,000 Georgians have returned to the Gali district of Abkhazia.

- **Armenia/Azerbaijan**

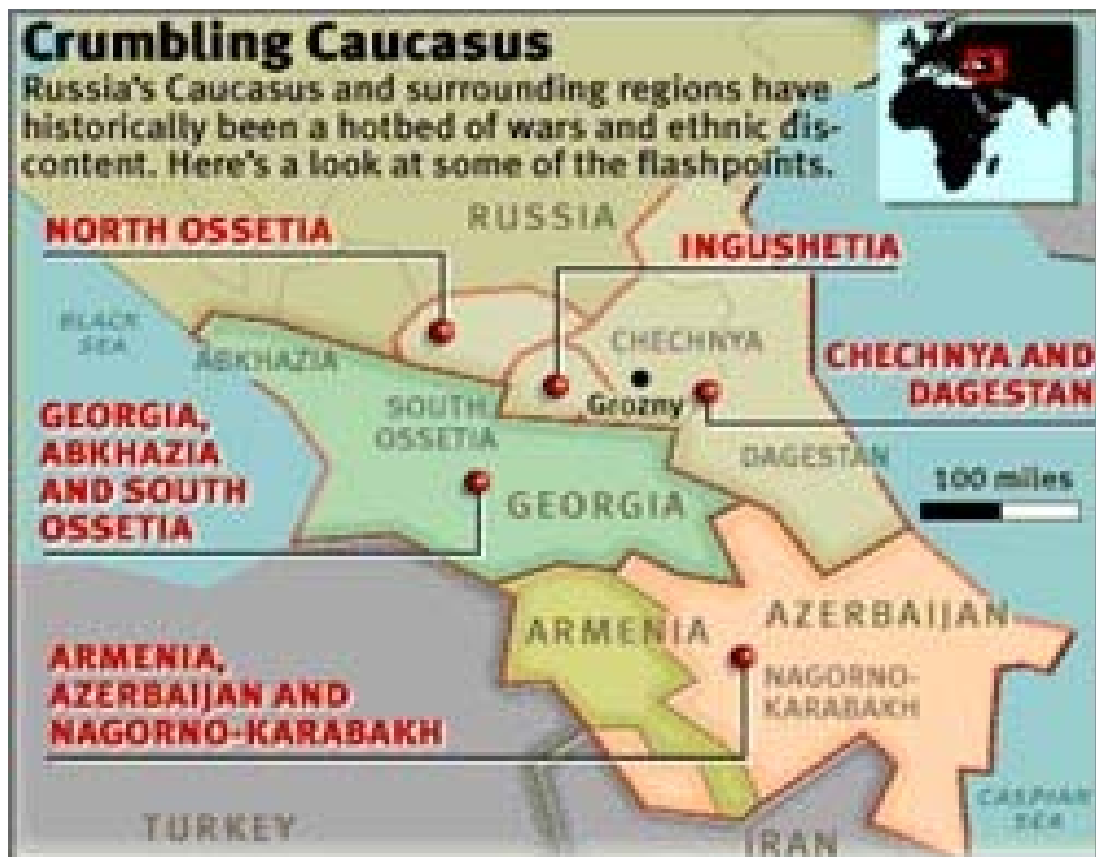
The territorial dispute between Armenians and Azeris goes back centuries but has its more immediate roots in the demarcation of borders when the south Caucasus became part of the Soviet Union in the early 20th century. Many Armenians did not accept the inclusion of the largely Armenian-inhabited area of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, even with the status of autonomous region. Ethnic tensions between Azeris and Armenians escalated before the break-up of the Soviet Union and with announcement of independence in Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991. Armenian communities were forced to leave Azerbaijan for Armenia between 1988 and 1991 because of increasing violence, while ethnic Azeris fled in the opposite direction.

In 1991, the situation degenerated into an armed conflict between the self-proclaimed "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh" and Azerbaijan. The biggest wave of displacement occurred in 1993 when Karabakh Armenian forces made significant military gains beyond Nagorno-Karabakh, displacing an estimated 500,000 ethnic Azeris. At the time of the 1994 ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan had lost about 20 per cent of its territory to Armenian and Karabakh forces, including Nagorno-Karabakh in the west of the country, and large portions of neighboring districts.

Eleven years after the signing of the ceasefire agreement, some 680,000 people remained internally displaced, the majority of them female. The government is under pressure not to integrate them fully into the population where they are now staying, as this might be seen as acceptance of the permanent loss of Nagorno-Karabakh².

Negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have dragged on for many years, and as of early 2007 there was no sign of a breakthrough in the talks.

Figure 1. Main conflict areas in the Caucasian region.



- **Common and specific issues of IDP/refugee problems in all three countries**

Considering IDP and refugee issues, Georgia and Azerbaijan show more similarities, while situation in Armenia is different.

IDP numbers (both absolute and percentage of the whole population) are considerably high: Azerbaijan leading with 686,586 (8.1% of total population), followed by Georgia – 243,000 (5.43%), and only 8,400 (0.27%) IDPs in Armenia (see Table 4). Azerbaijan and Georgia have lost control over their territories, while Armenia has gained about 20%.

² "Political pawns: Continued hardship for Azerbaijan's IDPs" Refugees International (RI) (2002) www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/826

Refugees who settled in Azerbaijan and Georgia are mainly from Russia (ethnic Chechens), while refugees in Armenia are ethnic Armenians coming from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon. Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan are not any more recognized as such by the Government of Armenia – the majority received Armenian citizenship or left for third countries – officially, the problem of refugees from Azerbaijan has been solved, although there are many problems of economic nature left, such as poor living conditions, unemployment, etc.

IDPs/refugees housing/economic conditions are similar in all three countries (see below).

Table 4. Statistical summary

Data	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
<i>General information</i>			
Total population	3,016,000	8,411,000	4,474,000
Child population (under 18 years)	819,000	2,736,000	1,080,000
Total adult literacy rate	99	99	99
Net primary school enrolment/attendance %	94	91	94
% of the population below the poverty lane ³	35%	49%	54%
Unemployment rate ⁴	7.4%	1.2 %	12.6%
GNI per capita (USD)	1,470	1,240	1,350
Net migration rate ⁵	-5.72 / 1,000	-4.38 / 1,000	-4.54 / 1,000
IDPs	8,400	686,586	237,069
Refugees	480	3,118	1,334
<i>Number of children (% of total child population)</i>			
IDP children	N.A.	202,623 (7.4%)	45,000 (4.1%)
Refugee children	100 (0.01%)	1,387 (0.05%)	245 (0.02%)
School age children living in conflict zones	–	–	7 637 (0.7%)
Children in boarding institutions ⁶	10,585 (1.29%)	26,916 (0.98%)	2,490 (0.23%)
Children of migrant workers (including children of trafficking victims)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

³ Data on poverty refer to different years: Armenia (2004), Azerbaijan (2002) and Georgia (2001)

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

⁴ Data on unemployment rate refer to different years: Armenia and Azerbaijan (2006), Georgia (2004)

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

⁵ CIA fact-book (2006) www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

⁶ Boarding institutions (otherwise also called special general education institutions) are for children with mental or physical disabilities, children deprived of family care or for children from socially vulnerable families.

Lack of reliable statistics is a common problem in all three countries. Data provided from governmental, international and non-governmental organizations differs. Some categories are not registered at all.

Data provided in the table is mainly from governmental sources – ministries of education and departments of statistics. Some information was provided by UNICEF⁷, NRC and various NGOs.

- **IDP and refugee figures and their profile in the Caucasian region (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)**

It is difficult to gauge the number of refugees and displaced persons in the region. By law or by virtue of administrative practice, three countries tend to recognize the descendants of displaced persons in various capacities within the region as “refugees” or “displaced persons”, with the result that the total number of refugees and displaced persons never seems to decrease (Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, 13 April 2006).

Accurate and up-to-date statistics on the numbers, locations and living arrangements of IDPs is not available in Georgia and Armenia. In both countries a verification project of the IDP/refugee registration is in progress. The government of Azerbaijan seems to have more detailed information on IDPs, considering age, gender, living conditions, educational and occupational profile. There are also few surveys on differences of IDPs versus general population allowing for the assessment of differences in rates of poverty or vulnerability.

Available statistical information on IDPs is given in Table 4. Main locations of IDP camps are shown on Figure 2.

The plight and status of IDPs in **Georgia** continues to generate much debate. According to official Government data, there are currently 237,069 persons (224,947 IDPs from Abkhazia and 12,122 IDPs from South Ossetia) displaced from the two ethnically fuelled conflicts in those regions. They still reside in Georgia unable to officially return to their places of origin. After more than 15 years of displacement, approximately 42% of IDPs inhabit collective centers, only some of which were renovated several years ago to serve as temporary dwellings, while the majority of the remaining 58% continue to live in crowded conditions with host families or in rented apartments. Many IDPs who have purchased private accommodations reportedly refrain from registering their location for fear of losing IDP benefits, such as cash assistance and free healthcare.

The census data once again confirmed alarming demographic trends among IDP population in Georgia. The age pyramid for IDPs is distorted. It means that many IDP households “...have chosen not to have children under current living conditions. The number of IDP children aged 5–9 is one-third of those aged 10–14, and those aged 0–4 are just 15 percent of those aged 5–9, a demographic free-fall. Unless drastic changes in demographic trends take place in the future, Georgia’s IDPs will dwindle as a population group” (*Women and Children in Georgia. Situation Analysis. 2003. UNICEF*).

⁷ UNICEF statistics (2005) www.unicef.org/infobycountry

Available figures from the government of **Azerbaijan** suggest a slight decrease of the internally displaced population since 2001: there are 686,586 IDPs registered compared with 778,000 in recent years.

There is an above-average prevalence of women among the displaced population. Gender imbalance can be explained by conflict-related losses, a lower life expectancy for displaced males is linked to psychosocial stress, and labor migration. The average size of displaced families is significantly lower than for the rest of the population. The average IDP/refugee family has 3.9 people, as compared to the national average family size of 4.8 people. Since the majority of refugees and IDPs come from rural areas, which have traditionally large families, this indicator attests to the profound impact of poverty and destitution on the refugees and IDPs. Percentage of the population below the poverty line is almost twice as high among IDPs and refugees, as national figures.

Living conditions remain very poor. After years of displacement, many IDPs continue to live in makeshift shelters. Types of shelters include public buildings, camp settlements, unfinished buildings, railway cars. The rest live with relatives or friends, on farms, specially built houses, or illegally occupied apartments. Many new families have appeared within IDP households, increasing the need for additional housing.

Table 4. IDP and refugee figures (www.internal-displacement.org)

Data	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
IDPs	8,400	686,586	237,069
% of females	N.A.	53	55
% of children under 18	N.A.	29.5	19
% of people living in collective centers	N.A.	64	42
% of people living in rented apartments/ host families	N.A.	36	58
% of people living in urban areas	N.A.	54	72
% of people living in rural areas	N.A.	46	28
Refugees	480	3,118	1,334
% of females	N.A.	52	48
% of children under 18	20.8	44	18

Displacement within **Armenia** is relatively small. Numbers of refugees were very high after the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict. Armenia has received more than 360 000 refugees. At the moment no up-to-date information exists on refugee numbers. Government has granted Armenian citizenship to the majority of refugees, thus there are no comparable data on age or gender profile of displaced persons available for Armenia.

III EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF THE REGION

The collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1990s brought about radical political, social and economic changes in the entire region. All three countries suffered deep economic recession, which was further exacerbated by armed conflicts. The dramatic reduction of GDP caused decline of education expenditures. After almost 16 years of independence, education funding is far below international standards (up to 2.8% of GDP in Georgia, ca. 3.2% of GDP in Armenia and Azerbaijan).

The education sector in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia was strongly influenced by Soviet mentality and teaching methods. This became a major challenge after the break-up of the system.

Caucasian countries became independent and new methods had to be developed. Another major challenge was to keep the education process running and organize schools for the thousands of displaced children that were scattered all over the country. But there is no specific government strategy on education provision for IDPs and refugees neither in Georgia, nor in Azerbaijan or Armenia. Only recently, the government of Georgia has published the strategy of IDP integration, mentioning the importance of integration through education. In Azerbaijan governmental activities are limited to the construction and renovation of school infrastructure.

Reforms of education sector in all three countries have been supported by World Bank projects, aiming at improving the quality and relevance of the school system to meet the challenges of the knowledge society. All three countries have signed the Bologna Declaration, and are implementing significant reforms in the higher education.

IV AT-RISK CHILDREN: CURRENT SITUATION WITH FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Significant number of the children in Caucasian region still experiences severe hardships that resulted from the transitional period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Children have been affected by war and forced to leave their homes; they grow up with parents suffering from unemployment and poverty.

At-risk children categories that are present in Caucasus are various. They are children that have been identified as IDPs, refugees, with special education needs, street children, also children living in conflict zones, children of trafficking victims and trafficked children themselves. We tried to see whether some information could be obtained on children of migrant workers but there is absolutely no data available about this group of children neither in Armenia, nor in Azerbaijan or Georgia. Moreover, no NGOs or international organization work specifically on this problem. This group of children is not considered as at risk, since parents working abroad can support their families and children of migrant workers, although deprived from parental care (usually children are

brought up by one parent or grandparents), are able to attend schools and cover all costs concerning education. Children living in remote rural areas or in extremely poor conditions are considered to be more vulnerable. The high percentage of the population below the poverty line in all three countries (see Table 3), indicates that the number of vulnerable children is high.

Georgia

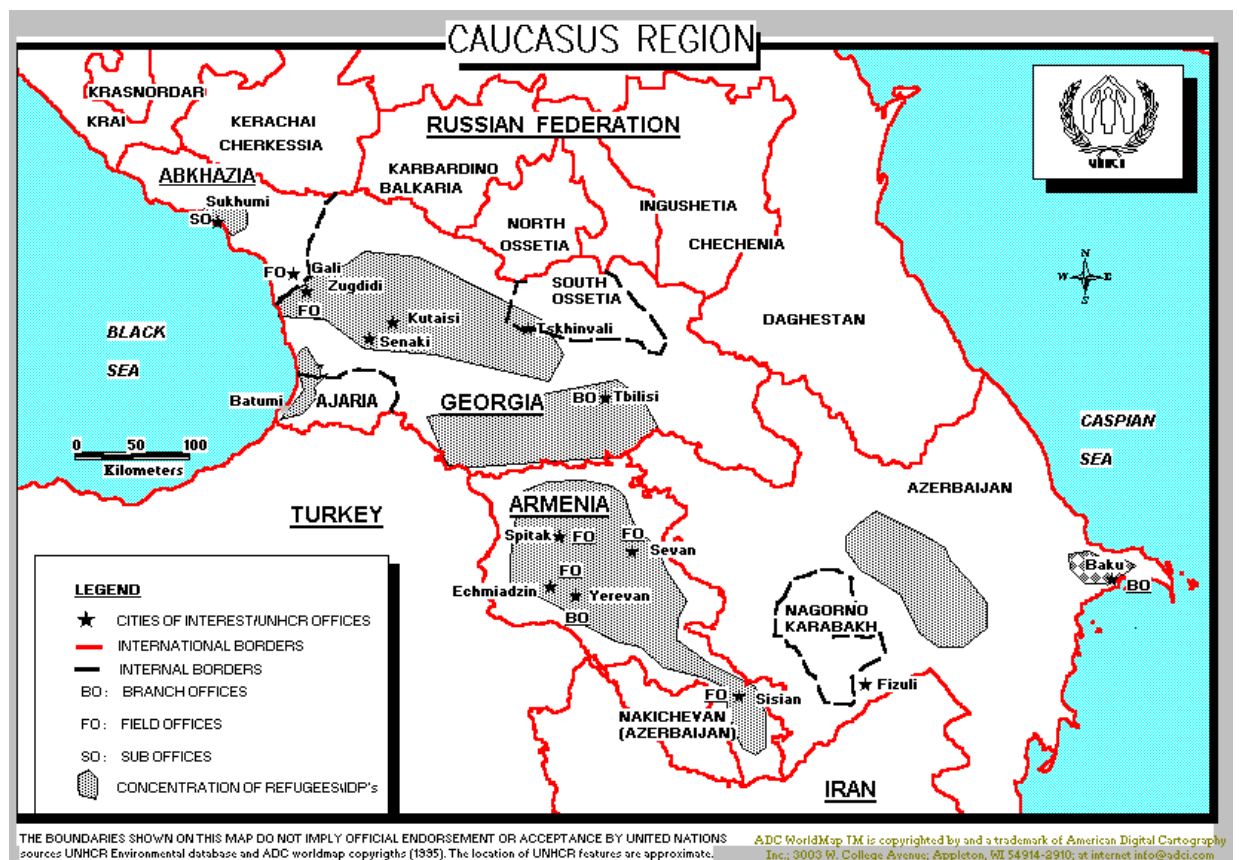
At-risk children categories are IDPs and refugees. Children living in conflict affected areas – Gali district in Abkhazia, Liakhvi gorge in South Ossetia – make a specific risk group.

- IDPs

Statistical overview

237,069 IDPs, about 225 000 from Abkhazia (95%), the rest from South Ossetia, including 45,000 children have been registered by Georgian authorities, although the new registration of IDPs is in progress now. IDPs are concentrated in the capital and other big cities, many camps are in the region of Samegrelo, close to Abkhazian border (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Areas of main concentration of IDPs/refugees are shown in grey. (UNHCR, 1995⁸)



⁸ IDP locations remained mainly unchanged since 1995.

Governmental General strategy on IDPs has been published on January 15, 2007. Issues of education are discussed here in the context of desegregation. Special focus is made on the vocational education and training (VET) provision for IDP children in order to enhance their employment chances on the labor market: VET is considered as a tool for better social integration. Necessity of special language programs for IDP children is mentioned. This is only a preparatory document with general statements: a detailed action plan as well as financial issues has not been elaborated. The implementation of the governmental strategy is the responsibility of the relevant ministries. Involvement of NGOs is encouraged.

Economic conditions

A decade after the major clashes shook Georgia, the scale of humanitarian needs may actually have incrementally increased, rather than declined. One of the most serious causes of IDP vulnerability is related to their emotional conditions, as the conflict and their difficult situation after the conflict have created feelings of dependency, passivity and depression that have hindered social integration and economic self-reliance. Of particular concern are vulnerable groups among the displaced, such as elderly, traumatized and disabled persons, as well as female-headed households.

In the years since the displacement, internally displaced women and men have struggled under the massive weight of poverty and unemployment. According to unofficial statistics, 75 percent of displaced families earn less than half the monthly subsistence income level, set by the Georgian government at \$35 per family member. The survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council published in 1997 concluded that 51% of the IDP households consistently lacked adequate clothing, and 70% were without enough food.

IDPs live in so called collective centers – buildings which are not appropriate for living, with poor sanitation, no heating, in overcrowded rooms. Children have almost no possibilities to do their homework.

Segregation

The Ministry of Education of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic is officially in charge of education issues of IDPs, attending so called “Abkhaz” schools – schools in IDP collective centers (or near them) employing IDP teachers and staff from different parts of Abkhazia. IDP children participate in the educational process either with local children or separately. Different regions have different approaches: they range from having no separate school at all to having a mostly separate education system (as in Samegrelo).

Right after the conflict, IDP students continued their studies in different schools all over the country. But since 1994 the Ministry of Education of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic has opened special schools for IDPs living in collective centers (now 25 such schools – 0.9% out of the total school number in Georgia – are operating with 485 teachers and 3,238 students, so the vast majority of IDP children is not in segregated schools).

There are no special curricula designed for IDP children; they follow a program approved by the MoES for the entire country. Most IDP schools are located in local school buildings and operate during the 2nd shift. Schools are in critical conditions, lacking appropriate facilities.

Some children do study in segregated settings. Pro-segregation arguments are: because of poverty IDP children would feel embarrassed and intimidated; only IDP teachers can cope with problems of IDP children; segregated schools help preserve traditions and cultural values.

These arguments might have an element of truth, but the Government of Georgia believes that the segregation will hamper integration of IDP children into local communities and in the long run, jeopardize their future. In the Governmental Strategy of IDPs desegregation is stated as one of the main objectives.

Donor projects

Upon the end of the civil war in Georgia, as of 1994, the international community started providing massive relief aid, in parallel with some development-oriented support. Since the mid-1990s, the international community has shifted away from primarily humanitarian aid into more transitional/developmental programs, reflecting the changes in both society and the perceived priorities.

Main aid organizations are: UNHCR, USAID, NRC, DRC, and UNICEF.

Short- and long-term education needs

Current problems:

- **Legal framework** – the existing legislation does not regulate special cases related to the education of IDP children and/or special issues regarding IDP teachers. But this is not an exclusive problem of IDPs – the same problems are faced by the local population from the remote mountainous regions.
- **Management** – ministries in exile try to maintain their importance, while not acting effectively. Their functions are not clear, often overlapping duties and responsibilities of the central ministry or local municipalities.
- **Poverty** – IDPs have a lower monthly household income, on average, than the general population. The shortage of public funding makes schools dependent on private contributions from parents (costs for heating, teaching materials, building maintenance, etc.). The high price of textbooks was named as one of the most important problems related to education. Often even the purchase of clothes for children is a problem. Because of lack of clothes some refugee children can not attend school.
- **Facilities** – schools and kindergartens are often in old buildings, which do not meet elementary safety standards. Often IDP children attend classes in the second shift. Heating is also a problem. Schools and kindergartens lack all educational materials
- **Teachers** – IDP teachers have to work in even worse conditions with children with special needs. Parents have low involvement in school process. Teachers have no access to training courses, since they are not free. They are not involved and even not informed about the ongoing reform process in secondary education.
- **Access to further education** – higher education provision for refugee children has been supported previously by the government of Georgia. But now, in the context of the higher education reform, IDP students can receive grants only in the framework of the social support program on the same basis as other risk groups, since everybody has to pass a national exam in order to become a student.

- **State of health** – the problem of nutrition is acute. Because of bad living conditions epidemics of infectious diseases are very often and wide spread.
- **Psychological state** – because of their age, IDP children from Abkhazia (the conflict has started in 1992 and main wave of refugees left Abkhazia in 1993, that is 14 years ago) are in most cases not the eyewitnesses of armed conflicts, but they suffer from depression of their parents, bad living conditions, isolation, etc. Tensions with local population are an additional problem. IDP children show signs of depression and stress. There is a need for psychological assistance programs. IDP teachers name parent's difficult social and psychological conditions as one of the main obstacles for IDP children in receiving high quality education.

Needs that must be addressed are:

- Access to quality education: creating appropriate schooling environment that is conducive to quality learning;
- Empowering parents and teachers to solve education problems;
- Increasing availability of benefits of the current reforms to IDP students;
- Providing IDP teachers and school administration representatives with necessary knowledge and skills to improve school management and quality of teaching;
- Initiating gradual desegregation.

- **Refugees**

Statistical overview

According to the data of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia (MoRA), currently 1334 Chechen refugees have been registered in Georgia: 590 from them under the age of 17 (0–4 age group – 113; 5–17 age group – 477). However NRC who works directly with refugees provides different data – 245 children enrolled in two kindergartens and three schools. The number of refugees has decreased since 1999 from 6,000 to the current 1,334. The vast majority leaves in Pankisi gorge (north-east of Georgia) and only few families leave in Tbilisi.

Additionally asylum seekers from Iran came to Georgia, but have not been granted refugee status (*UNA*).

Children are educated according to the curricula of the Russian Federation. Russian textbooks are used at schools. Language of tuition is officially Russian; although during lessons teachers and pupils often use Chechen. The problem of teacher's competencies is a specific issue, since about half of currently working teachers have no pedagogical background. They have only vocational education. Sometimes even housewives were forced to become teachers in order to provide schooling for their children. Teachers get additional two months ration of food as a compensation for their efforts. School furniture, textbooks and other supplies have been purchased by NRC. NRC runs a kindergarten program with UNHCR funds – kindergarten is attended both by refugee and local children.

Donor projects

Main donors working with refugees are UNHCR and NRC. UNHCR helped with rehabilitation of Pankisi gorge schools in 2000–2003 where refugee children are educated. NRC has also supported establishment of the cultural centre, which offers

computer classes. It is equipped with the library; serves as a sports centre and hosts all cultural events, organized for and by refugees.

The German government has supported 15 Chechen students with scholarships thus allowing them to study at the university.

Short- and long-term education needs

Main problems:

Poverty:

- Poor housing conditions, lack of adequate clothing, limited access to school supplies;

Educational lag:

- Pupils are not adequately prepared since they often have spent several years out of school;

Teachers' competence:

- Teachers in schools lack special pedagogical background;

Health/psychological status:

- Impossibility of return to Chechnya negatively affects psychological status of children and their parents;

Legal issues:

- Being educated according to the Russian curricula the issues of school leaving certificate becomes a problem for Chechen children. The MoES refuses to issue a Georgian certificate. Thus children who de facto attended school can not prove it and have no chance for further education neither in Georgia nor in Russia (in case of their return);
- It has been reported (*NRC, UNA*) that Chechen children, who wanted to attend Georgian schools have been refused because their birth certificates were missing.

- **Children in conflict affected areas**

In two breakout regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia – children live under permanent fear, although they have not been displaced and live in their own homes with parents. Georgian villages are in fact a kind of enclave, bombing is a daily experience. Schools operate here in an emergency-like situation. More than 7,000 children (Liakhvi gorge in South Ossetia – 18 schools, 3,742 children; Gali district of Abkhazia – 32 schools, 3,895 children) are forced to learn in those conditions. An additional problem is the language of tuition for Georgian children in Abkhazia.

The majority of the displaced persons from Abkhazia have found refuge in the different regions of Georgia. Many of them still live in precarious conditions and depend on meager state benefits. But during the past few years, some 45,000 IDPs returned to the Gali district (bordering area to Georgia) in eastern Abkhazia, only to find bleak economic prospects. The situation in the Gali district is still difficult. A monitoring study of several murder and abduction cases in the Gali district carried out by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Sukhumi confirmed that the rule of law remains too weak to ensure the protection of the basic human rights – to life, physical integrity and security – of its residents. Lack of access by the central government hinders efforts to support the population, who in addition, lack any official status there. Besides permanent returnees there are also others who shuttle between Zugdidi and Gali on a seasonal basis

to work their land plots and secure livelihood for their families⁹. The Human Rights Office also noted that many children in the Gali district still do not have the right to education in their mother tongue: returning children have to attend school in Russian, despite the fact that they are all ethnic Georgians¹⁰.

The UN Representative on the human rights of IDPs was informed that Abkhaz de facto authorities, following an order from the Head of the de facto Department of Education in the Gali district in August 2005, have been attempting to restrict or eliminate the use of the Georgian language in public schools, and to enforce this policy with varying degrees of severity.

The de facto authorities in Sukhumi told the UN Representative that this policy was not directed against the Georgian language per se, but aimed at preventing the use of Georgian-language school books which reportedly conveyed a distorted account of Georgian and Abkhaz history. The Representative was informed by other sources that the withdrawal of teaching materials and, in some places, of Georgian-speaking teaching personnel, had led to a shortage of material and personnel in general, thus leading to an interruption of the regular functioning of local schools and a negative impact on the quality of education. Some teachers in Gali district still manage to teach Georgian language and history, but they work underground and risk their lives every day.

Main problems:

Specific problems of children, living in conflict areas are:

- lack of schooling infrastructure – although school buildings are intact, there are absolutely no facilities for extracurricular activities;
- permanent fear negatively affects children’s psychological status;
- language issues for children returning to schools in Gali region.

Azerbaijan

- **IDPs**

Statistical overview

According to official statistics from the Government of Azerbaijan, at the end of 2005 there were 686,586 IDPs registered (578,545 IDPs from Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent occupied districts; 108,041 resettled from areas near the border with Armenia). Among them 78,473 are children of 0–5 age group, and 124,150 children of 6–15 age group (*data from State Committee on Refugees and IDPs*). IDP camps are scattered all over the country, but mainly in central Azerbaijan and main cities of Baku and Sumgayit (Figure 2).

About 70% of IDP children of relevant age (88,301 out of 124,150) attend so called IDP schools – 687 schools located in IDP settlements (154 schools in Baku, 83 in Barda, 53

⁹ United Nations Security Council (UN SC) Report of the Secretary-general on the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (2004) S/2004/26 www.un.org/docs/sc/reports

¹⁰ See the above reference

in Sumgayit, etc.). Majority of teachers in those schools are also IDPs. The rest of children are assimilated in “normal” local schools.

Lack of school facilities in the areas inhabited by refugees and IDPs means that it is difficult for children to attend schools. In some areas, schools operate on a 3-shift system. 94.8% of refugee and IDP families have difficulties in obtaining school materials, although textbooks were always free for this group of children (since 2003 textbooks are officially free for all school children in Azerbaijan). The number of the teenagers over 16 with incomplete secondary education is 2 times more (37.8%) than the national level¹¹. Enrolment rates for IDP children have dropped due to the lack of school facilities. Even when these are available, they are often poorly heated and equipped.

Access to education, not just for the children of refugees and IDPs, but for all Azerbaijani children has been restricted as a result. More than half (54.5%) of the IDP and refugee children attend schools in their host communities during second, and even third, shifts in the same buildings as their local peers. The nation’s middle schools, even those in Baku, are filled beyond their capacity. The majority of these schools (76%) have a two- and three-shift schedule for classes, as compared to 59.5% in 1990. About 36% of all secondary school students attend schools during second or third shifts, compared to only 27.4% in 1990. The burden of these additional students has drastically increased the pressure placed on the remaining schools. Accordingly, school attendance and quality of studies are not high.”¹²

Economic conditions

IDPs and refugees are vulnerable to both income and non-income poverty¹³. This has been linked with high rates of unemployment, limited assets, poor standards of housing, poor nutritional levels (especially among women and children) and declining enrolments in secondary education.

Percentage of the population below the poverty line is almost twice as high among IDPs and refugees, as among the rest of the population – 57% compared with 31%. Unemployment is a major problem for both male and female IDPs. Only 16.9% of IDP households receive income from wages and salaries; almost one third (29.3%) of their income is from benefits provided by the state and humanitarian agencies. According to 2002 World Bank/UNDP Survey, 47% of IDPs are unemployed, and unemployment levels are higher outside Baku. Unemployment may contribute to low self esteem and depression and can result in a dependence on alcohol and drugs to alleviate the feelings of helplessness. Early studies in Azerbaijan have linked unemployment and injecting drugs, although this is now more widespread amongst males of all social groups.

¹¹ “Annual report” The State Committee on Refugees and IDPs (SCRIDP) (2002) Baku

¹² “Azerbaijan Human Development Report” UNDP, section 5.2 (2002) www.un-az.org/undp

¹³ A common method used to measure poverty is based on incomes or consumption levels: a person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. Non-income dimensions of poverty refer to the social indicators, and indicators of vulnerability to risks and of socio/political access. <http://povlibrary/worldbank.org>

Many IDPs including women are known to work in the informal sector. Although no surveys have been undertaken to establish who is working informally (by gender and by age), the kind of work undertaken, and the difference this work makes to family income and well-being. IDP men and some women are known to be labor migrants, both within the country and externally. However, no detailed assessments have been conducted on the effects of migration on families and communities who have been left behind. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a considerable number of temporary female headed households exist within IDP communities as a consequence of male labor migration. Such households are considered to be under particular stress due to the limited allowances from absent husbands/male income earners. Women are often left with total responsibility for the family care.

“State Program on Improvement of the Living Conditions and Raising Employment for refugees and IDPs” approved by #298 Decree of the President of Azerbaijan stipulates construction of new settlements with education, health and other necessary socio-technical infrastructure for more than 4,000 IDP families till the end of 2007. At the moment ca. 3,000 IDP families still live in school buildings, thus negatively influencing educational opportunities for local children. For IDPs settled in school buildings new houses have to be constructed till the end of 2007.

Over the last few years, in the framework of the Presidential program 45 new settlements have been constructed, modern houses and apartments have been built in different cities and districts which were turned into settlements for refugees and IDPs.

Despite the wide range of measures taken to improve the living standards and generate employment for refugees and IDPs, the majority of them are still living in very difficult conditions in tent camps, railway carriages, run down public buildings (often school buildings) without appropriate living conditions. In addition to this, they face a variety of social problems.

Segregation

The impact of internal displacement on education extends beyond the displaced themselves. It also affects population at large. The accommodation of the displaced in the student dormitories of universities or technical schools and in schools has resulted in disruptions and difficulties in the education of the non-displaced, creating certain resentment on the part of host population. While these disruptions may have been tolerable on a short-term basis, after more than five years there is a need, not only for the well-being of the displaced but also for the educational system as a whole, to provide alternative arrangements for shelter (*UN Commission on Human Rights 25 January 1999, § 90*).

In the education of the internally displaced, issues of integration into mainstream schooling are critical. In a situation of displacement lasting for several years, separate education of IDPs segregates them from the local population, and thereby impedes the process of integration, which is particularly important as alternative solutions to return are increasingly required (*UN Commission on Human Rights 25 January 1999, § 91*).

Not many changes took place after the above mentioned UNHCR report of 1999: situation still remains difficult. Officially segregation doesn't exist in Azerbaijan (unlike

the situation in Georgia), but *de facto* there are more than 600 so called IDP schools – schools located in IDP settlements, which makes 14.9% out of total school number in Azerbaijan.

Donor projects

A wide range of humanitarian projects and other measures for the social protection of IDPs have been carried out. Main donors are: NRC (closing Baku office till the end of 2007), USAID, UNHCR and UNICEF. In the last years the government of Azerbaijan is increasing its financial support and activities aiming at improvement of living standards and reduction of poverty.

Short- and long-term education needs

According to a 2001 survey by the Research Center for Development Problems and International Cooperation “SIGMA” based in Baku „...the literacy rate among IDPs is as high as among general population. However, the survey indicates that 21.8% of IDP children do not go to school at all. Poverty also prevents children from purchasing school supplies, uniforms and other extra costs”.

Main problems:

Poverty:

- Lack of funds for school supplies, transportation, clothes;
- Poor housing conditions;

Facilities:

- Inappropriate schooling environment – run down buildings, lack of school materials;
- Overcrowded classrooms – 2-3 shift system;

Educational problems:

- Low enrolment rates for IDP children both on primary and secondary school levels

Health/psychological status:

- Stress; de-motivation.

The urgent needs that must be addressed are:

- Access to quality education – creation of appropriate schooling environment;
- Increase of school enrolment ratio at least on the primary school level;
- Empower IDP parents and teachers to solve education problems.

- **Refugees**

Statistical overview

Number of refugees in Azerbaijan has decreased since 1999. At the end of 2006 UNHCR had verified that 3,015 refugees and asylum seekers currently live in the country. The overwhelming majority of refugees were from Russia (Chechnya) – ca. 80%, the rest are coming from Afghanistan (15%), Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. Due to political reasons, Chechen refugees are denied access to seek asylum or individual refugee status in Azerbaijan. They are recognized by the UNHCR as *prima facie* refugees and are provided with “protection letters” stating that they are considered as refugees under the UNHCR mandate. 44.5% of refugees is under 17 (16.4% is under 5 years, 28.1% are between 5 -17). Refugees are settled mainly in Baku, a very small percentage living in the second largest city – Sumgayit.

Most data regarding housing, health, educational needs of refugees are provided on example of Chechens, since they represent a biggest group of refugees in Azerbaijan, and there is a comprehensive study conducted by NRC in 2006 (*Chechen Refugees in Baku, Azerbaijan: A needs assessment*). Specific studies concerning the living, health, and education conditions of Afghan and other refugees have not been conducted. However, problems seem to be similar for all refugee groups.

Economic conditions

Economic conditions of refugees are similar to those of IDPs (see above).

The majority of Chechen refugees in Baku are subject to several risk factors associated with the living conditions, poverty, and lack of food, sufficient living space, sanitation and security.

Most of the Chechen refugees live isolated from the Azerbaijani community and are totally dependent on assistance and support from others, be it family, social network or external humanitarian or charity organizations. This dependency is strongly impeding their ability to develop healthy and self-sufficient lives. The refugees are growing desperate as their means of survival are overstretched. This situation can spiral into a vicious circle where the lack of financial resources (and poor living conditions), increases stress and deteriorates psycho-social conditions, further aggravating wide spread health problems, which in turn impair the refugees' capacity to find work and income.

According to figures from the refugee polyclinic, 90% of all refugee children suffer from anemia and malnourishment. Poor health, psycho-social environment, housing conditions and poverty are important factors that influence the current educational situation of Chechen refugee children.

Segregation

Until 2003, when UNHCR succeeded in reaching an agreement with the Ministry of Education, the Chechen refugee children were not granted the right to attend public schools in Azerbaijan. Before that, schooling was organized by the Chechen community themselves in six (now only five) different self-help centers, partially supported by UNHCR and NRC. The Chechen centers provide safe and supportive environment for learning about Chechen traditions and culture. One centre offers only vocational training. Two centers offer various Chechen cultural and rehabilitation activities for school-aged children. In addition they organize tutoring classes for children attending Azerbaijani schools, assisting them with homework. Special preparatory classes are also offered for Chechen children to bridge the gap between their current education level and the qualifications required in Azerbaijani schools. In one or two of the centers, religious discourse is prominent, and for some parents this is not acceptable. All courses and classes are conducted in Chechen language.

According to the NRC report of 2006, 56.6 % of the school-aged children attend public primary or secondary school. Up to 19% of all school aged children do not attend any school at all. The rest receive schooling in the Chechen centers.

Donor projects

Main donor organizations working on refugee's issues in Azerbaijan are UNHCR, UMCOR and NRC. Some other organizations like Kaukasus Mannheim (Germany), Rahman Islamic Relief (Norway) and Chechen self-help groups allegedly funded by wealthy members of the Chechen Diaspora in Europe and Asia distribute financial assistance to families and also to Chechen centers.

But overall coordination of refugee assistance, including educational projects, is responsibility of UNHCR. The vast majority of educational projects implemented so far have been funded by UNHCR and NRC. NRC was assisting Chechen refugees with:

- school material;
- technical assistance to schools;
- vocational training;
- support to Chechen culture centers;
- teacher trainings.

NRC is closing down its Baku office at the end of 2007 because an oil-rich country as Azerbaijan must be able to cope with IDP/refugee problems by itself. This was the statement of the Norwegian Government. IRC inherits NRC's main functions.

During its 10 years of activity NRC spent only on educational programs up to 3 mln USD, and more than 50,000 IDPs benefited from this program. NRC education program has concentrated on the following:

- In-service teacher training and training of education administrators: more than 100 training seminars involved 2,950 teachers and teacher trainers;
- Development of teaching materials in local languages: 8 textbooks and manuals (42,400 copies) on human rights have been translated and adapted to the Azerbaijan context. This was followed by the teacher training, involving 2,200 teachers;
- Supplying IDP schools with furniture and educational materials; rehabilitation of 18 IDP schools; construction of 13 new schools;
- Creation of resource centers in IDP's –densely populated areas – 5 centers were established;
- Special training in HIV/AIDS awareness and gender issues;
- Special efforts to ensure access to education for refugees and asylum seekers: assistance with textbooks and technical assistance to schools in Baku.

Short- and long-term education needs

The profile of Chechen pupils:

- Some have practically no schooling and cannot read or write;
- Some have gaps in their schooling, but attend public school with assistance from the Chechen centers;
- Some attend school on and off;
- Some receive formal education in one of the Chechen centers;
- Some have gaps in some subjects, but not in others;
- Most live in inadequate housing, hampering a positive learning environment;
- Some have insufficient knowledge of the Russian language, required for attending public schools.

Main problems:**Poverty:**

- Lack of funds for paying school fees (both official and unofficial);
- Lack of financial resources for transport, contributions to class funds and adequate clothing;

Educational lag:

- Same age children have different level of school attendance and knowledge;

Teacher's competence:

- Teachers in public schools are not prepared to cope with children with special needs. The classrooms are overcrowded and the teachers have little training in modern teaching techniques and methodologies. To have conflict-affected refugee children in a classroom usually represents a particular challenge, as their learning ability is weaker than that of other children. In order to be able to facilitate and provide adequate tuition for traumatized children, specific competences are needed which these teachers do not possess;

Health/psychological status:

- Refugee parents often describe their children as nervous because of traumatic experiences and particular problems that arose because of displacement. The polyclinic confirms that many children are affected both psychosomatically and mentally. Some children have serious behavioral problems and disorders. The common symptoms are short attention span, headaches, stomach pain, problems with remembering and concentration. Some children tend to become aggressive.
- Harassment and bullying from classmates;
- Chechen children are deprived of the possibility to learn about their own culture and traditions.

The urgent needs that must be addressed are:

- Urgent measures must be taken to bring to school children who do not study;
- Knowledge and skills of teachers should be raised to offer quality schooling;
- Housing situation needs to change;
- Psychosocial care and assistance should be improved;
- Factors influencing children's learning situation such as poverty, housing conditions, physical and mental health, should be addressed in order to facilitate better schooling.

There is the specific issue of access to higher education – due to financial reasons many families can not afford to pay tuition fees. Scholarships would be helpful to provide further learning opportunities for Chechens. Another problem is lack of official school leaving certificates, but according to anecdotic reports, corruption in the field of education allows Chechens, even those not attending schools, to “buy” necessary certificates of general education.

Long-term perspective

The destiny of refugees in Azerbaijan depends on a variety of political reasons. For those who still live here, there is no prospect of return to Chechnya in the near future. Resettlement is becoming virtually impossible, as there are almost no receiving third countries. Acknowledging this fact, long-term solutions must be found for refugees to facilitate local integration.

Armenia

In contrast to Azerbaijan and Georgia, at-risk children categories in Armenia look different. According to the official statement of the Government of Armenia the problem of refugees has been already solved. Number of IDPs is also significantly lower, than in neighboring countries: 8,400 compared with 243,000 IDPs in Georgia and 686,586 in Azerbaijan.

Interviews showed that the most vulnerable group of children are those living in remote mountainous areas irrespective of whether they are local, IDPs or former refugees. All those living in rural areas are affected evenly by poverty, lack of school facilities, absence of qualified teachers, etc.

Almost all international and non-governmental organizations interviewed state that official statistics on school attendance and literacy rates in Armenia are not accurate – as is statistics in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

- **IDPs**

A country wide mapping survey conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council in Armenia in 2002-2004 concluded that there were up to 8,400 people still displaced as a result of the conflict. Primary cause of internal displacement has been shelling of border villages during the conflict with Azerbaijan. But the vast majority of the estimated 65,000 households which were displaced at least once during the conflict have returned to their homes following the ceasefire signed in 1994. The rest moved to urban centers and no longer wish to return, or have left the country. Obstacles to safe and voluntary return of the remaining IDPs include landmines and sniper activities along the ceasefire line, as well as the destruction of homes and infrastructures in areas of origin. Their integration elsewhere in the country is hampered by the lack of permanent shelters and a high level of social-economic vulnerability.

Data on IDP children is not available.

- **Refugees**

After the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict, more than 360,000 Armenians have left Azerbaijan. Vast majority came to Armenia, where they have been scattered all over the country (Figure 2); the rest went to Russia and other countries.

The last survey on refugees, coming from Azerbaijan, has been conducted in 1997. Since then no statistical data is available. Migration Agency of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and UNHCR are conducting new registration of refugees – presumably data will be available in summer 2007. At the moment, there are no data on gender and age profile of refugees from Azerbaijan.

Government of Armenia states that the problem of refugees in Armenia has been solved. International emergency organizations – like NRC – are closing down their country offices because of this statement. It has been reported, that almost all Armenians, coming from Azerbaijan, became Armenian citizens, therefore have lost the refugee status and have been integrated into the Armenian society. The rest has left the country mainly for Russia, USA, European and other NIS countries. It has been assumed, that some persons

have refused Armenian citizenship because of fear to lose privileges (special compensations, etc.) and a fear to be called to the national army. But this is unofficial information.

Although some international and non-governmental organizations state that changing the legal status has not affected actual housing and economic conditions of refugees. According to the official version, this problem doesn't exist any more. But still many "former refugees" live in so called collective centers in very bad conditions. Unemployment and poverty among them is two – three times higher than in local population. One of the reasons is language: the majority of refugees came from Baku and were Russian speakers. Elder generation still has difficulties with the Armenian language. Another problem is that former city dwellers found themselves in rural areas and they are not used to live and work in these conditions.

A generation of refugee children from Azerbaijan that came right after the war has grown up. The ceasefire was signed in 1994 and those born in Armenia are already Armenian citizens although their parents are not. All children from "former refugee families" are enrolled in Armenian schools (since there are only Armenian schools in the country). However, the language of these families remains Russian. This causes problem with learning, especially in the high school (grades 9–10). Special Armenian language courses for this group could be helpful.

Another problem is the lack of proper school facilities for children living in collective centers. Often they don't have appropriate conditions for doing their homework and there is a limited access to textbooks and other school supplies. Families find it difficult to afford clothes and shoes. High transport costs make school attendance difficult and even impossible.

Another group of refugees are ethnic Armenians from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, etc., coming to Armenia in recent years as a result of war in Near East. According to UNHCR, by the end of 2006, there were 480 refugees registered with the status of *prima facie* and *temporary protected person*. As a rule, these refugees are quite wealthy, able to buy property in Armenia and to support their children's education. Children (100, aged 5–13) are enrolled in Armenian schools. Although they can speak West-Armenian, there is still a need of special language training in order to ensure smooth integration process.

- **Children in remote rural areas**

Educational opportunities have been severely curtailed in rural areas of Armenia. Some border villages with Azerbaijan and villages in mountainous regions have no functioning schools. Where school facilities do exist the majority require urgent renovation. Aside from the damage to or destruction of physical infrastructure, a number of other problems impede access to education. Qualified teachers are needed for most of the schools. However, given the poor housing conditions in the area, few teachers are willing to live in the region. Persons with no special pedagogical education (sometimes without any higher education at all) have to teach in those schools. Pupils lack textbooks and other school supplies.

Experts consider high numbers of drop-outs as one of the major problems of education in Armenia. In 2006 2,482 pupils left schools, giving different reasons: unwillingness to

study – 37.8%, social (poverty) – 3%, parents do not send to school – 3.5%, disability/health problems – 3.7%, other (not defined) – 52%. These /figures are four times higher than that of drop-outs in 2003. Children are leaving schools without any certificate, which means no access to further education – neither vocational, nor higher. There are no data on involvement of these children in labor activities. Presumably they help their families to survive.

Donor projects

Humanitarian projects are funded by NRC (closing Yerevan office till the end of 2007), USAID, UNHCR and UNICEF, Armenian Church and All Armenian Fund.

Short- and long-term education needs

Main problems

Irrespective of the official statement about solving the refugees' problem, de facto problems look very similar to those of Georgian and Azeri at risk children.

Poverty:

- Lack of funds for school supplies, transportation, clothes;

School facilities:

- Run down school infrastructure especially in remote rural areas;
- Lack of libraries;

Educational problems:

- High drop out rates;
- Questionable competence of teachers, especially in remote rural areas;

Language:

Although both IDPs and refugees are ethnic Armenians, language problems still hamper their integration.

The urgent needs that must be addressed are:

- Decrease of drop out rates;
- Improve school facilities;
- Improve teachers skills;

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of the report was to provide insight into the current situation on education provision for IDP/refugee children in the countries of South Caucasus. The survey results indicate that despite of country specific differences there are a series of similarities in terms of general education needs for these categories of children at risk.

The main educational obstacles hampering school attendance and performance of children are:

- **parents are not able to afford the costs of education:** books, school supplies, transport, uniforms, meals, etc.;
- **housing conditions do not allow children to do their homework** (many of them live in overcrowded rooms in collective centers);
- **school infrastructure is in critical need of repair;**

- **the quality of schooling is very low** (there is a lack of school facilities, teaching materials; teacher qualification);
- **segregation** : IDP and refugee children still study in segregated settings;
- **psychological conditions**: both children and their parents, and teachers suffer from depression as a result of displacement;
- **the children's state of health is worrying**: most children are malnourished and lack adequate diet;
- **the distance to the nearest school** makes it inaccessible in winter season, and there is a lack of available transport, parents cannot afford transportation costs, etc.;
- **the legal framework** for the specific problems of the refugee children is either missing or not adequate (see p. 14, 16).

It is often the combination of some or all of above mentioned elements that lead to children dropping out or never attending school.

Based on the general findings reported, the following interventions must be considered in order to ensure access to quality education for the above mentioned categories of children and to decrease number of drop out children from general education:

- Creating of schooling environment that facilitates enjoyable learning;
- Training for IDP teachers to raise their teaching skills;
- Training of school administration representatives to manage school effectively;
- Introducing gradual desegregation;
- Eliminating legal obstacles for education of refugee children;
- Increasing availability of benefits to IDP students;
- Empowering IDP parents and teachers to solve of education problems of their children;
- Conducting psychological rehabilitation for children and their parents;
- Offering special language training to specific categories of IDP/refugee children;
- Improving housing situation and school infrastructure.

Annex 1

Acronyms and Abbreviations

DRS	Danish Refugee Council
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst
ESP	Education Support Program
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoRA	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIS	Newly Independent States
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OSGF	Open Society Georgia Foundation
OSI	Open Society Institute
SC	Save the Children
SCRIDP	The State Committee for Refugees and IDPs (Azerbaijan)
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNA	United Nations Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WB	World Bank

Annex 2

Definitions¹⁴

child	every human being below the age of 18 years
displaced person (DP)	a person who has been forced to leave his or her native place
economic migrant	see foreign worker
forced migration	coerced movement of a person or persons away from their home or home region; often connotes violent coercion, and is used interchangeably with the terms “displacement” or “forced displacement”
foreign worker	also guest worker/economic migrant/migrant worker – a person who works in a country other than the one of which he or she is a citizen
guest worker	see foreign worker
human migration	any movement by humans from one locality to another, often long distances or in large groups
internally displaced person (IDP)	someone who has been forced to leave their home for reasons such as religious or political persecution or war, but has not crossed an international border
refugee	a person seeking asylum in a foreign country in order to escape persecution, war, terrorism, extreme poverty, famines and natural disaster
human trafficking	illegal transport of people (the majority of victims are women and children) across a border, forced into slavery and prostitution.

¹⁴ Definitions are given according to the “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, “United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees”, “Non-binding Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement” agreed by Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children”

Annex 3

List of organizations visited

Armenia

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Territorial Administration
UNICEF
UNHCR
NRC
IOM
Save the Children
National Institute of Education
Fund against Violation of Law
Armenian Human Rights Protection Center after Sakharov
Armenian Red Cross Society
Scientific Education Center for National Development
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Education without Boundaries

Azerbaijan

Ministry of Education
State Committee on Refugees and IDPs
UNICEF
UNHCR
NRC
International Rescue Committee
Center of Innovations in Education
Buta
IDP society

Georgia

Ministry of Education & Science
Ministry for Refugees
Ministry of Education of Abkhaz Autonomous Republic in Exile
DRC
NRC
UNA
UNICEF
IOM
Save the Children
EU Commission
Education Development Institute
PTA of Tskinali region
IDP Women “Consent”
Institute for Policy Studies

Annex 4

Basic education data

Category	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia
Number of children attending kindergarten	45,563	602,000	242,000
Number of kindergartens (public & private)	662	1,300	1,214
Number of school children	483,842	1,700,000	1,080,000
Number of schools (public & private)	1,373	4,600	2,744
Number of teachers	43,667	280,000	68,992
Primary school attendance rates	94	91	99
Secondary school attendance rates	85	84	85
Adult literacy rates	99	99	99
Number of VET schools (initial and middle level)	121	270	86
Number of HEIs (public & private)	88	27	42 ¹⁵
Number of students at HEIs	92,013	110,000	144,300

¹⁵ Only accredited HEIs; number of non-accredited, but licensed HEIs in Georgia is 129 (www.nea.ge)

Annex 5

NGOs active in education and IDP/refugee issues

Armenia

Fund against Violation of Law
Armenian Human Rights Protection Center after Sakharov
Armenian Red Cross Society
Scientific Education Center for National Development
Helsinki Committee of Armenia
Education without Boundaries
Mission Armenia
New Armenia

Azerbaijan

Center for Innovations in Education
Buta
IDP society
NGO Legal Enlightenment of Refugee Women
Reliable Future Youth Organization
CYL IDP Youth and Community development
Azeri Red Crescent Nurse in IDP Centers in Binagadi District

Georgia

Abkhazinterkonti
Assist Yourself
Association of IDP Women "CONSENT"
Association of IDP Women "IMEDI"
Association "School, Family, Society" (SFSA)
Atinati
Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC)
Center for Studying Youth Problems
Centre for Protection of Constitutional Rights
CHCA– Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti"
Child and Environment
Education Development Institute
Education Policy Planning and Management Institute (EPPM)
EMPATHY –Psycho-Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture, Violence and Pronounced Stress
Impact
Ertoba –Charity Association of Women
Foundation for Human Resources Development
GCRT– Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
GYLA–Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
HCAGNC –Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – National Committee of Georgia
Hera– Abkhazian Blinds and Deaf-and-Dumb Union
HIRDC –Human Rights Information and Documentation Centre
Human Development Center of Georgia
Institute for Policy Studies
Liberty Institute

Ndoba –Centre for Social and Psychological Aid
PTA of Tskinali region
Satnoeba –Charity Fund for the Social Protection of Children and Youth
Social Programs Foundation – Free Legal Consultations for IDPs
SOS –Union for Survival of the Helpless and the Fallen
Tbilisi Youth House Foundation
Teachers Union “Education and World”
The Institute of Georgian-Abkhazian Relations
The Regionalism Research Centre
UNA – Georgia– United Nations Association of Georgia
Woman in Business
Women Aid International – Caucasus

Annex 6

Donor assistance / Network Programs activity in Caucasus

Counterpart International, Inc.
DRC – Danish Refugee Council
ICRC –International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM – International Organization for Migration
NRC –Norwegian Refugee Council (*closing down in Armenia and Azerbaijan by the end of 2007*)
OSI– Open Society Institute
OXFAM
Save the Children
UMCOR– United Methodist Committee on Relief
UN WFP –United Nations World Food Program
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNHCR –United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Found
UNIFEM –United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID – United States Agency for International Development.

Annex 7

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