



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL



## **“A New Life”**

### **An Evaluation of the Norwegian Refugee Council Self Help Private Accommodation Rehabilitation Model**

**Guy Hovey**

**‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.’**

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights 25**

## Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>PART 1</b> .....	<b>0</b>
Executive Summary .....	0
Acknowledgements .....	1
Acronyms .....	2
Context .....	3
NRC Background .....	4
Evaluation Methodology .....	4
Evaluation Purpose .....	5
<b>PART 2</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Programme Strategy and Design .....	6
<i>Programme Strategy</i> .....	6
<i>Programme Planning</i> .....	6
<i>Participatory Programme Design</i> .....	6
<i>Selecting the Model</i> .....	6
<i>Rehabilitation Standards</i> .....	7
<i>Beneficiary Selection and Criteria</i> .....	8
<i>Programme Information Dissemination</i> .....	8
Field Staff .....	9
Project budget .....	9
Implementation processes .....	10
<b>PART 3</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Field Visits and Observations .....	11
Relevance and Appropriateness .....	11
Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness .....	12
Sustainability .....	12
Impact on Properties .....	13
Psycho-Social Impacts .....	16
Meeting Beneficiary Priorities .....	20
Coordination .....	21
Recommendations .....	21
Project Design .....	21
<i>Define Target Beneficiary Group</i> .....	21
<i>Define Project Goals and Objectives</i> .....	21
<i>Define the Budget</i> .....	22
Project Implementation .....	22
<i>Provide Group Training</i> .....	22
<i>Safety Glass</i> .....	22
<i>Livelihoods</i> .....	22
<i>Furniture and other NFIs</i> .....	23
<i>Profiling PA IDPs</i> .....	23
<i>Review the UI project</i> .....	23
<i>Develop the Model</i> .....	24
<i>Sustain the Assistance</i> .....	24
Replicability and Transferability of the NRC Self-Help Model .....	24
Legal and Social Support Services .....	25
The NRC Model in Relation to the MRA DHS .....	25
Concluding Remarks .....	27
<b>ANNEXES</b> .....	<b>28</b>

Annex 1 - Interview Guide.....	28
Annex 2 - Guidance Note.....	29
Annex 3 - Section 2 of the 2011 IDP Action Plan .....	32
Annex 4 – Tripartite agreement.....	33

## **PART 1**

### **Executive Summary**

Between 2005 and 2007 the Urban Institute (UI), funded by the BPRM implemented a Housing Purchase Voucher (HPV) scheme in Western Georgia. The scheme was designed partially to enable the Government to free up strategic buildings such as kindergartens and schools which were being used by IDPs from the conflicts of the early 1990s. UI issued 175 eligible IDP families with vouchers ranging from \$2,200 to \$7,000 depending on family size and redeemable for cash against a property purchase.

Concurrently IDPs were evicted from properties used as collective centres which the original owners wished to re-possess. Repossession was contingent upon payment to IDPs of financial compensation. Each family received \$4,200 in Kutaisi and \$7,000 in Batumi.

An increase in property prices meant neither UI HPVs nor investor compensation was adequate to purchase appropriate property. Many recipients of HPVs returned them, being unable to find suitable property for the voucher values. Other beneficiaries purchased sub-standard or derelict property in a bid to escape from their collective centres which many described as 'a prison'.

It was unfortunate that for many beneficiaries, the programmes transferred them from arguably adequate yet inappropriate accommodation, to arguably appropriate yet inadequate accommodation.

The NRC, recognising the needs of these IDPs, and in support of the 2009/10GoG Durable Housing Strategy and IDP Action Plan, implemented a programme to alleviate the often appalling conditions in which beneficiaries found themselves living. The programmes funded by both Sida and (more recently) the NMFA, rehabilitated a total of 224 urban and rural houses and apartments<sup>1</sup> for PA IDPs. Sida funded the rehabilitations via stand-alone components of a wider IDP project implemented in partnership with the DRC. An NRC developed self-help model provided materials plus technical and legal assistance to enable IDPs to rehabilitate their properties into dignified homes and anchor reintegration.

The evaluation interviewed fifty NRC selected Privately Accommodated IDP beneficiary families<sup>2</sup> of the Sida and NMFA funded programmes. Those assessed for this report had been either recipients of an HPV<sup>3</sup>, bought a property with investor compensation, or in a few cases had been given unfinished apartment space by the MRA<sup>4</sup>.

Undertaking sixty one structured, semi structured and informal interviews with programme beneficiaries, key stakeholders, host community members and independent experts, the evaluator identified the NRC self-help model's strengths, weaknesses and replicability.

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<sup>1</sup>164 funded by Sida (from an initial target of 142) and 60 by the NMFA

<sup>2</sup>This report defines PA IDPs as those IDPs not living in Government supplied accommodation such as collective centres. PA IDPs may be living in rented accommodation, with relatives, their own property or have some other arrangement other than living in Government supplied accommodation.

<sup>3</sup>For an Urban Institute overview of the programme see <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR33/55-56.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>'Living space' provided by the MRA often consisted of empty unfinished apartments with no windows or doors – living space but not living conditions.

The NRC self-help project(s) were effective and had a highly significant impact on beneficiaries; enabling them to live and develop with dignity. Without the programme it is difficult to imagine how many beneficiaries could have continued to live in their properties<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore the NRC projects provided a significant enhancement to beneficiaries' psychological well-being. Self-worth and esteem were enhanced, dependency was lessened and children's behaviour and academic performance improved. Although dependence still manifests itself, it is clear that many beneficiaries have made significant steps towards independence. All but five families had contributed extra funds or materials to enhance that provided by NRC. Of the beneficiary families interviewed all but one said they had benefitted psychologically as well as materially from the programmes.

The programmes also enabled families to develop in what they considered a 'normal way' with daughters and particularly sons being able to marry – something considered impossible previously due to the living conditions which they considered unsuitable for a new spouse.

In other cases, beneficiaries no longer felt marginalised by society by virtue of their poor living conditions and were able to take an active and proud role in their community.

Interviews evidenced that the process of application, assessment, materials prioritisation, delivery and installation was undertaken in a fully inclusive, participatory and coordinated manner. Of note was the prioritisation of urgent cases such as examples where roofs required urgent repair prior to autumn rains.

The programme was designed 'in house'. Staff and beneficiaries have highlighted a number of recommendations for improvement should the programme be replicated.

Self-help methodology is often viewed as a cheaper alternative to using contractors. However while cost savings of 40% were found in the Balkans<sup>6</sup> it is likely that any unit cost saving in Western Georgia will be in the region of 20-30%.

NRC has demonstrated in Western Georgia, that self-help can be a successful, appropriate and efficient *principle* with which to assist PA IDPs. This report recommends developing this model to suit different contexts. It furthermore urges donors and the GoG to consider the use of self-help as a programme strategy to support PA and other IDPs who continue to live in sub-standard accommodation.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Norwegian Refugee Council for their unstinting support during my time in Georgia, in particular the Country director Petr Kostohryz, the Kutaisi Head of Office Nusret Osmanspahic and the field staff – Koba Tsiramua, Kate Bibileishvili, and Khvicha Shubitidze who accompanied me to explain the situation, translate and transport me to fifty beneficiary interviews. Together we travelled many roads and walked up and down an estimated 500 flights of stairs – all without one word of complaint – perhaps because we were all too exhausted!

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<sup>5</sup> Some IDPs had temporarily vacated their properties to stay with relatives as they were too unhealthy, unstable and humiliating to live in.

<sup>6</sup>See 'Self-help Housing As Practiced by SIDA' (Stockholm: SIDA, 2000).

Finally I would like to thank the NRC beneficiaries and host community members who made this evaluation possible: their honesty, friendliness and engagement made our task easier and a very enjoyable experience. Moreover their dignity, steadfastness and resolve in the face of adversities which I can only hope I never experience - remains a source of inspiration to me and to those who accompanied me. I wish them well in their futures.

### **Acronyms**

ACF - Action Contra La Faime

CC – Collective Centre

GoG – Government of Georgia

HPV – Housing Purchase Voucher

IC – International Community

IDP – Internally Displaced Person(s)

ICLA – Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (NRC implemented project))

MRA – Ministry for Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Refugees and Accommodation

MRDI – Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure

MDF – Municipal Development Fund

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

NMFA – Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council

PA IDP – Privately Accommodated Internally Displaced Person(s)

TA – Technical Assistance

UI – Urban Institute

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

WB – World Bank

## Context



Displacement in Georgia occurred during ensuing waves of conflict: Fighting in the early 1990s in the autonomous areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia displaced approximately 273,000 people within Georgia. Hostilities continued until the 1994 ceasefire agreements that lasted until 2008 when the conflict ignited between Georgia and the Russian Federation over South Ossetia. This conflict displaced a further estimated 128,000 people from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, some for a second time<sup>7</sup>. These conflicts remain unresolved. The UNHCR in Georgia currently (November 2011) estimates the number of IDPs in Georgia at approximately 236,000.<sup>8</sup> The MRA Durable Housing Strategy updated in May 2011 estimates that 58% of this figure reside in private accommodation (with relatives, friends or in dwellings that they rent or own) and the remaining 42% in collective centres such as former hospitals, hotels, schools and other buildings.

Post 2008 conflict, the government showed a greater willingness to improve the IDPs situation, mobilising significant resources and making a serious commitment to implement its IDP Strategy and Action Plan. Most notably the Durable Housing Strategy was developed to ultimately provide all IDPs in need of shelter with permanent housing.

The NRC project was designed and implemented against this backdrop of a renewed impetus to find durable solutions for Georgia's IDP population. The GoG concentrated mainly on non-PA IDPs meaning that the needs of 58% of the IDP population were being left unaddressed. The NRC initiative set out to tackle the problem and show a way forward for Government, the IC and the IDPs themselves.

<sup>7</sup> NRC internal report: A Place of One's Own 2002-2009. The context and NRC background sections draw heavily on this report

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/teaxis/vtx/page?page=49e48d2e6>

## **NRC Background**

NRC has been present in Georgia since 1994 starting with early relief efforts and expanding to its current portfolio of support to long-term solutions for the internally displaced in Georgia proper and reintegration options for returnees to Abkhazia. NRC currently implements various projects in education, legal aid (ICLA – Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance), education and livelihoods support. NRC complements its programmatic intervention with strong advocacy on behalf of the rights of displaced, both refugees and IDPs residing in Georgia.

NRC launched its shelter rehabilitation programme in West Georgia in 1999 with the goal of improving temporary living conditions for IDPs and facilitating integration through provision of durable shelter solutions for IDPs who had resided in collective centres (CCs) or had been privately accommodated. The shelter programme has provided assistance through various interventions from rehabilitation of dilapidated CCs through material distribution to IDPs residing in private accommodation to individual house construction and conversion of CCs into durable housing solutions. The NRC intervention has increasingly focused on exploration of possible assistance schemes to privately accommodated IDPs, who continue to be largely out of focus of any governmental efforts.

In 2002, NRC built individual houses for IDPs in west Georgia and since that time 212 IDP families have been provided with a new house. As a part of their contribution, the selected IDPs had to present a document proving that they already owned a land plot where the construction would take place. In some 10-15% of cases NRC would financially assist IDPs in purchasing the land<sup>9</sup>.

Recognising in 2009 the high unit costs and lack of psycho-social impact of the 'turn-key' model employed, NRC, with support from Sida designed a self-help rehabilitation model for PA IDPs. Targeting mainly those IDPs who had purchased property using an Urban Institute voucher the project sought a new high impact low cost alternative to the turn-key method previously employed.

NRC has made the policy decision to move away from shelter/rehabilitation type programmes in Georgia and is seeking to transfer the self-help model and lessons learned to an organisation which can replicate, develop and continue the impact.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

Initiated by NRC, the semi-external evaluation was undertaken utilising both NRC staff and an external consultant. The team consisting of an independent consultant, an NRC Community Mobiliser/Project Coordinator and the NRC electrician visited fifty beneficiary households pre-selected by NRC. These consisted of forty five from Sida and five from the NMFA programmes.

NRC programme staff acted as guides and interpreters. This potentially could have impacted the willingness of beneficiaries to be critical of the project. However, the majority of interviewees were found to be forthright in their views of the project and the use of materials was self-evident. The independent evaluator remains satisfied that, in his view, the interviewees did not withhold criticisms of the project.

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<sup>9</sup> The first three paragraphs of this section have been taken from the internal NRC report: A Place of One's Own 2002-2009

Beneficiaries gave their opinions on how to improve the project and these are included in the 'recommendations' section. The pre-selection of beneficiary families by NRC precluded random sampling. However NRC selected beneficiaries who had experienced challenges during the project, as well as families which had not experienced problems. Therefore a mix of experiences was provided to the evaluation team.

The evaluation was undertaken utilising a variety of methods designed to ascertain both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the projects. These included a document desk review as well as face to face interviews with Privately Accommodated IDP (PA IDP) beneficiaries in their homes and host community members from communities in Imereti and Samegrelo. Interviews were structured using an interview guide. In order to maintain spontaneous information flow and explore other aspects of the programme the interviewer avoided using a formal questionnaire. The interview guide is attached as annex 1 to this report.

Thirty eight beneficiaries had purchased their properties under the Urban Institute Voucher programme and ten had bought properties using compensation provided by the owners of the collective centres they had been occupying. Two had been provided with apartments by the MRA. The types of accommodation were divided into thirty one apartments in accommodation blocks and nineteen semi-detached and detached nineteen houses.

In addition, meetings were held with the UNHCR in Tbilisi and Zugdidi, DRC in Tbilisi, MRA in both Kutaisi and Tbilisi and NRC Tbilisi and Kutaisi. The consultant also met with NRC engineering, management and mobilisation staff.

Of the 159 beneficiary family members interviewed or present the demographic make-up was:

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Female Adult	104	65.42
Male Adult	33	20.75
Children (under 18)	21	13.20
Disabled	1	0.63
		100%

## **Evaluation Purpose**

The purpose of the evaluation was two-fold:

1. To assess the project and identify, capture and formalise the lessons learned by NRC during its self-help re/construction programme working with PA IDPs;
2. To examine the project as a potentially replicable model for PA IDPs

## **PART 2**

### **Programme Strategy and Design**

#### **Programme Strategy**

The strategic direction of the project was driven by the recognition by the NRC and the MRA, and articulated in the IDP Action Plan, that PA IDPs, while constituting 58% of IDPs are only a small proportion of those being assisted. Concurrently the situation of UI voucher recipients was recognised as needing urgent action. NRC sought to develop a replicable model for assisting PA IDPs, while assisting UI and similar beneficiaries to rehabilitate their homes and live in dignity and security.

#### **Programme Planning**

The outputs and impacts of the project reached, and in some areas exceeded expectations. However, in the project design phase there was a lack of detailed programme planning and design, particularly in areas of rehabilitation standards and beneficiary selection criteria. These areas are critical drivers of quality control and guide programme implementation by setting parameters and benchmarks to work to. Virtually all issues identified in the programme can be traced back to this area.

An internal review after year one of the programme identified and rectified these shortcomings. Therefore these issues are presented in this report as lessons learned.

#### **Participatory Programme Design**

The Sida self-help project was a component of a wider initiative implemented in partnership with the DRC. This component was designed by the NRC in collaboration with Sida, DRC, UNHCR, the MRA and (indirectly) IDPs. The NMFA project was an NRC generated initiative, building on experience gained and lessons learned in the Sida project.

Beneficiaries were involved in the initial project design: their homes had previously been visited by NRC staff, who had gained an understanding of their needs. Programme outputs were driven by beneficiaries in close collaboration with the NRC field staff. Examples of this would be the types of materials and the work to be undertaken. Another example would be the 2010 NMFA programme which, in response to beneficiary inputs, a livelihood component was incorporated into the programme.

#### **Selecting the Model**

Designed 'in house' the NRC model borrowed heavily from similar self-help programmes in the Balkans where successful models had been operating for a number of years, through a variety of NGOs. This example of institutional learning provided a platform from which to develop a culturally appropriate and effective intervention.

Alternative interventions such as 'turn-key' (where all labour and materials are supplied by a contractor), complete self-help and labour voucher schemes were also explored. NRC's and its partners' experience in shelter programmes guided the selection of methodology.

Experience demonstrated that a programme utilising turn-key methodology provided ease of administration and management, on-time deliverables and acceptable build quality. However

NRC's experience supported by a variety of evaluations<sup>10</sup> demonstrated that, in addition to being more expensive (than self-help), turn-key methods fail to produce significant beneficiary 'ownership' of the programme and have less impact on psycho-social well-being.

Full self-help (where all works are undertaken by the beneficiary) was also considered. However, the poor state of electrical, water/sewerage systems and windows in many beneficiary homes, meant demand for utility and window rehabilitation would be great. The need to meet GoG construction regulations (for example for utilities), and to ensure correct installation of PVC windows meant skilled labour was required for these components.

The NRC team selected self-help with technical assistance as their model. This was the least intrusive on the life of the family and provided flexibility to the beneficiaries to undertake works at their own pace. The model's focus on achieving an acceptable structure, building self-reliance, mobilising families and communities and providing technical assistance where required struck a balance between self-help and turn-key methods.

Focused on the physical rehabilitation of properties to enable IDP re-integration, the programme also sought to alleviate the negative psycho-social effects of the beneficiaries' situation. NRC (correctly) judged that, the need to take responsibility for rehabilitating their home, coupled with the sense of achievement engendered by completing the task, would mobilise the family and increase beneficiary self-esteem. NRC did not provide any livelihood assistance directly to its beneficiaries - an important driver of increased psycho-social well-being. Instead, as part of the wider project, NRC relied upon DRC to provide the livelihood component. Legal assistance was provided through the NRC ICLA programme which assisted beneficiaries in obtaining ownership documents and social assistance.

### **Rehabilitation Standards**

The MRA's 'Minimum Rehabilitation Standards' is a 2009 GoG document, outlining the minimum standards to which IDP accommodation should be rehabilitated to (see annex 2). In apartments in particular, the evaluation found that the standards had been adhered to and, in some cases exceeded. For beneficiary houses, the budget restrictions meant it was not possible for NRC to meet the standards fully. It was unfortunate that the project was designed, and started prior to the adoption and dissemination of the rehabilitation standards in September 2009. It was encouraging to see that when issued, they had been taken up by the NRC engineers and adhered to where possible.

As detailed in the 'implementation' section, many rehabilitation works were comprehensive (particularly in apartments) and created a safe, secure and dignified structure.

Conversely, the application of the same average budget for both apartments and houses meant that, because of the size and free standing nature of houses, house owners could not rehabilitate to the same extent as apartment owners. In spite of this, house owning beneficiary satisfaction levels were high and, anecdotally appeared to be more satisfied with their life<sup>11</sup>. As detailed later in this report, the understandable desire to meet beneficiary

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<sup>10</sup> For example see: Sultan Barakat ODI Network Paper no. 43 'Housing Reconstruction after Conflict and Disaster' 2003

<sup>11</sup> Families in houses were very positive about the psychological impact of the project and a common theme was that the project had freed them and they appeared mobilised and optimistic. Apartment dwellers while extremely

expectations and provide assistance to as many families as possible, did result (in the early project stages) in some inconsistency in rehabilitation support.

The NRC Sida project's objective was to rehabilitate dwellings. At the project design stage, there was no GoG or generally accepted NGO minimum rehabilitation and living standards for IDP programmes. At this time it could have been useful for the NRC to design its own rehabilitation standards in cooperation with the MRA and IDPs. It could also have defined its project aims and defined assistance criteria to complement *beneficiary selection* criteria. For example, was the aim an engineering one? To provide materials to enable the structure to be structurally sound, secure and warm? Or was the aim a humanitarian one: To provide materials to ensure a dignified environment in which a family can live and develop. While the difference in aims is subtle, the impact is significantly different.

### **Beneficiary Selection and Criteria**

Beneficiary selection criteria in the proposal primarily targeted beneficiaries of the Urban Institute HPV scheme. However, not all UI recipients were equally vulnerable: some families had received higher value vouchers than others and some combined vouchers to increase available funds. Some beneficiaries had jobs, savings and relatives while others had no independent familial, financial or material resources.

This issue was identified in 2009 and the criteria was widened to include PA IDPs evicted from private property, who had purchased property, had been provided with sub-standard accommodation by the MRA or were otherwise in urgent need of rehabilitation assistance.

A 2010 programme review identified the need for a ranking system which was developed based on vulnerability and need.

### **Programme Information Dissemination**

The NRC was provided with lists of UI HPV recipients and evicted PA IDP by its ICLA Programme, the MRA and UNHCR. For valid reasons, there was no campaign to announce the programme in any formal manner such as via the media. However, NRC did systematically contact potential beneficiaries on the lists provided, and many families interviewed learned of the project this way. Most project information though appeared to have been spread by word of mouth - the majority of families hearing about the NRC project from friends or relatives. Of the remaining, some families had been informed of the project by the local MRA office or UNHCR. For beneficiaries not on the lists it was possible to be part of the programme by applying at the NRC office. Informal IDP information networks worked well and over 400 applications were received from a wide variety of PA IDP families.

A transparent programme information dissemination process would conform to accepted good practice. However, the results of disseminating information widely would have completely overwhelmed the beneficiary selection process as families not meeting the criteria would have applied in large numbers. This is supported by UNHCR Zugdidi, who contended that, to announce a formal application process would result in 'an avalanche of applications which would be impossible to assess in a timely manner'<sup>12</sup>.

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happy with the project did not appear to have been impacted as psychologically as house owners and did not appear to the interviewer as being as optimistic about the future.

<sup>12</sup> Interview UNHCR Zugdidi 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011

Pragmatism meant a compromise between the application process being completely open to all, and ensuring the viability of the project by limiting the numbers applying. The use of existing priority IDP lists was a realistic compromise. Keeping the project open to independent applications ensured that application opportunities existed for all. Nevertheless the process excluded many who had not managed to be included on a list. These included IDPs who did not have the social networks to hear about the project or were otherwise unable to contact the NRC office to apply.

Although the 2010 beneficiary selection criteria targeted vulnerability, field visits showed this in varying degrees. Some, such as female headed households, elderly and large families with no employment were clearly among the most vulnerable. A few were not as vulnerable and two respondents from the early stages of the project said that they did not need many materials as their apartments (in these cases) 'were not in too bad a condition'.

The problem of identifying potential beneficiaries who meet designated criteria once again highlights the need for an accurate and searchable database of PA IDPs. This would have enabled the NRC team to match beneficiary selection criteria with potential beneficiaries. This report therefore urges the GoG, its partner organisations and Governments to identify and profile PA IDPs and create an effectively managed and searchable database as set out in the third benchmark of the National Responsibility Framework<sup>13</sup>

### **Field Staff**

The need to liaise and build congenial relationships with self-help beneficiaries was recognised as an important programme goal: Construction engineers were employed to visit beneficiaries, make drawings, calculate bills of quantities and provide technical assistance during rehabilitation works. Engineers also discussed with beneficiaries what was possible both within the budget and within the structural integrity of the property. This enabled beneficiaries to understand what was possible and did not raise undue expectations.

Liaison/Mobilisation officers were tasked to work with beneficiaries who had often become completely dependent on the State and NGOs. Interviews with beneficiaries demonstrated the close relationship between beneficiaries and NRC field staff. This was vital to ensuring the programme remained on schedule and that any problems were resolved amicably.

A valid criticism of self-help models is that beneficiaries cannot ensure that components such as electricity and plumbing are installed/rehabilitated to a safe and legal standard. NRC recognised this need and directly employed a plumber and an electrician as NRC staff. This was a good decision; ensuring NRC had direct control over the costs, scheduling, quality and type of works resulting in a consistently high standard of work as witnessed by the evaluation team. Beneficiary satisfaction was high and this report recommends this approach be given serious consideration in any future project of this type.

### **Project budget**

The initial \$4,200 average expenditure per structure was selected by the project coordinator in consultation with the project engineers and the then Kutaisi Head of Office. Following the 2010 project review, the average expenditure per property was reduced to \$3,000 to

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<sup>13</sup>This states that: "Credible information on the numbers, locations and conditions of the internally displaced is essential to designing effective policies and programs to address their needs and protect their rights."

maximise the number of beneficiaries. However without clearly defined rehabilitation parameters, a budget figure was difficult to set. Issues around the average budget per dwelling are dealt with later in this report.

## **Implementation processes**

The project employed a participative implementation process designed to encompass the maximum number of stakeholders as practicable. Coordination was undertaken at the regional and national MRA levels and also with other NGOs such as DRC.

Applications were received by the NRC Kutaisi office directly from beneficiaries and added to the lists of UI and other potential beneficiaries.

Applicants were screened for conformity with the beneficiary selection criteria. Those meeting the criteria were visited by an NRC Community Mobiliser and an Engineer who explained the project and the roles and responsibilities of each party. The engineer informally inspected the property to ensure its suitability for the project. Field staff assisted potential beneficiaries to make a formal application should they wish to.

As applications were received they were (from 2010) ranked according to criteria based on a range of factors including income and vulnerability. Eligible applicants selected for inclusion in the project were notified. Ownership was verified via the Cadastre records or on production of valid ownership documents. The NRC ICLA project provided legal and other assistance to beneficiaries who had lost or mislaid their documents.

Engineers visited the property to make drawings, take measurements, discuss the beneficiary's priorities and advise what was possible within the confines of the project. Engineers worked with beneficiaries to utilise the budget in the most efficient manner to meet beneficiary priorities.

At each stage of consultation field staff were careful to ensure that women and disabled people were included in the consultation and decision making process. Female and disabled beneficiaries were central in ensuring that rehabilitation works provided private, hygienic and (where appropriate) disabled friendly structures.

A bill of quantities was drawn up in the form of a materials list detailing specifications and types of materials including sizes, designs and colours. Beneficiaries had choices in respect to (for example) colours and designs of tiles. The list was left with the family to review over the following days. Once the family had reviewed and agreed the materials they signed and submitted the list to NRC. Following the signing of a tripartite beneficiary agreement by the beneficiary family head, NRC and the regional MRA offices in Imereti and Samegrelo the material list was processed by NRC's finance and procurement department.

Transparent and open procurement processes conforming to donor requirements were undertaken to determine most suitable suppliers at best value. The NRC shelter project coordinator stipulated that suppliers were responsible for offloading materials. This was extremely important to recipients, particularly elderly, disabled or vulnerable people.

Upon delivery the beneficiary verified that all materials had been received, were of an acceptable quality, and matched the materials list in type and specification. This formed part of the beneficiary participation in project monitoring.

Following delivery of the materials, beneficiaries were regularly visited by NRC engineers and mobilisers who confirmed materials were being used in an efficient, durable and safe manner and provided TA. NRC Tbilisi and Oslo staff also made monitoring visits. In line with work schedules the NRC plumber and electrician installed the relevant utilities. Electrical installations were 'A' tested with an inspector from the electricity company. During installations final (minor) changes could be made to locations of plug sockets, lights sinks and taps. Beneficiaries monitored all installation works.

All but two interviewed families utilised all materials. The reasons for the two cases of non-use are detailed in the 'Field Visits and Observations' section below.

Staff met regularly to discuss the project and to determine changes such as a revision of beneficiary selection criteria, the use of the MRA rehabilitation standards and a budget reduction per dwelling from an average of \$4,200 to \$3,000. This was probably a retrograde step for houses but entirely appropriate for those living in apartments.

## **PART 3**

### **Field Visits and Observations**

Visits and interviews with beneficiaries enabled the evaluation team to ascertain the appropriateness and impact of the intervention and the level of beneficiary participation. Recommendations for project improvements were provided by beneficiaries. These informed the recommendations for a replicable model. This approach ensured a direct contribution to the model's development by those who have experienced it.

### **Relevance and Appropriateness**

Pre project conditions of the majority of beneficiary properties were awful. Details will be found in the 'Impacts on Properties' section below. All programme beneficiaries were extremely grateful for the help they received - emphasising they had been treated with dignity and respect throughout the process. This was evident in the interaction between the NRC staff in the evaluation team and the interviewees. This contributed significantly to the project's success. Beneficiaries added that the types, quality and specification of materials and assistance provided was appropriate, and met priorities. The speed and care with which materials had been utilised (particularly in apartments) demonstrates their need, relevance and suitability. Indeed it would be difficult to envisage a more relevant and appropriate overarching programme principle than that of self-help. A 'turn-key' model *may* have produced more timely work but would have lacked virtually all the psycho-social impacts discussed later in this report.

The lack of closely defined project aims and rehabilitation benchmarks in the first year of the project, coupled with an understandable desire to fulfil beneficiary priorities, resulted in a risk of providing what the beneficiary *wanted* as opposed to what the structure *needed*. The dynamic between meeting beneficiary expectations and a programme aim of meeting basic needs is explored in the section titled 'the question of meeting beneficiary priorities'.

Beneficial impacts on the physical and psycho-social conditions of project beneficiaries were significant. The NRC model balanced the roles and responsibilities of NRC and the beneficiaries and provided an entirely appropriate, high impact and relevant solution to the plight of beneficiaries.

### **Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness**

The term 'efficiency' can be subjective: self-help is arguably not as 'efficient' as engaging a contractor - private individuals take longer to complete the work. When looked at through the lens of cost effectiveness though, beneficiaries providing the labour make the approach cheaper and more cost effective. That the majority of rehabilitation work was undertaken within the time-frame of the project reinforces the argument for self-help.

Rehabilitation projects cannot be regarded in logistic terms: supplying and installing building materials. The aim must also be to enhance the psycho-social well-being of beneficiaries. In this aim the self-help approach is far more effective than other non-self-help models. Experience of 'turn-key' programmes shows that far from mobilising beneficiaries it increases senses of entitlement and dissatisfaction with what is being provided.

Therefore the NRC model proved to be cost effective in terms of beneficiaries covered per average budget spend and also in terms of achieving goals and objectives.

### **Sustainability**

Exit and sustainability strategies are an integral part of project design. The Sida project strategy was to replicate and hand-over the model should it prove successful. Sustainability in the context of the NRC project falls into two categories: 1) the sustainability of the impacts – will the physical and psycho-social impacts of the project endure and develop and 2) the sustainability of the model - will the self-help model be sustained after NRC exits from shelter/rehabilitation projects?

Project impacts are dependent upon a number of factors, arguably the most important being beneficiary participation followed by post project support from authorities and community.

The NRC project had a very high degree of beneficiary participation. Beneficiaries were central to the process and worked in partnership with NRC to make the project a success. One beneficiary (Number 1) said he would not return to Abkhazia as he was too settled 'to move yet again' and had many familial ties in the area, The remaining expressed their desire to remain in their 'new' home unless return to Abkhazia became a realistic possibility. All beneficiaries realised the chances of return were extremely remote.<sup>14</sup>

The physical rehabilitation works will endure – of that there is no doubt. The beneficial psychological effects of the programme will depend much on the character of the person, the support s/he receives from the family and community and the general economic development of Georgia. Georgians, perhaps by virtue of their history, are a close knit mutually supporting society – evidenced by the help given to beneficiaries by their neighbours. If this level of community relations is maintained it is not unrealistic to assume that the project's psycho-social impacts will also be sustained, enabling former beneficiaries to help others more vulnerable than themselves.

The sustainability of the project model is more unclear and is dealt with in the recommendations section. The model is successful, cost effective and replicable. There is

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<sup>14</sup> Children who had never seen Abkhazia were also keen to 'return' to a place they had never seen, demonstrating similarities with children of Greek Cypriots displaced from Northern Cyprus. See Professor Roger Zetter's work on 'the myth of home' for a deeper exploration of the effects of long term displacement on IDP children.

no doubt in this author's mind that given a successful advocacy campaign by NRC the model can be sustained by another organisation or Government authority

### **Impact on Properties**

Prior to the project, properties were invariably damp, leading to health issues. Houses had leaking roofs. Wooden windows were rotten and let in draughts. Bathroom facilities were unhygienic and floors decayed. Parquet flooring in apartments had usually been swollen by damp and floods and had buckled and warped. Ceilings were mould and damp stained and, in some cases, had degraded to the point of collapse due to leaks. Electricity systems were exposed, rotted and represented both a shock and fire hazard. Leaking potable and solid waste systems posed potentially fatal health hazards to elderly people and young children. It is clear that the minimum conditions for living in any semblance of dignity and safety were not present: many beneficiaries existed in just one or two rooms.



***Above: Un-rehabilitated part of property number 44. Typical of pre-project conditions in most structures***

One single female headed household beneficiary (Number 35) lived in a 3 x 1.5 metre space for three years prior to the NRC programme.

There were positive aspects of apartment life, even-though living conditions were poor: IDPs tended to purchase apartments a short distance from their original collective centre, meaning they had existing contacts with the host community<sup>15</sup>. Apartment blocks and block settlements provided a ready-made community with support, links and social networks.

Despite the problems of living in such conditions, the majority of respondents emphasised that it was better than living in CC accommodation.

***"...Before the project conditions in the apartment were very bad but living in the collective centre was even worse – seven of us crowded into one room. Five families shared a bathroom and a cooking area. We had no privacy. I've not been in prison but that is how I think it would be...."***

***Female interviewee. Apartment. NRC beneficiary number 5***

When asked, if the decision to accept a voucher was the right one, as families are now being given new apartments in Poti, Tskaltubo and Batumi, all but one answered that they believed their decision was correct.

***“Would I rather have a new apartment in Poti? No - everyone will be IDPs and will be talking about their problems – that’s not a healthy way to be – it infects everyone. I’d rather be in a normal community”***

***Female interviewee, House, NRC beneficiary number 11***

Families who had managed to obtain a property made it as habitable as possible. For many of the poorest this meant partitioning large rooms with sheets and blankets to provide a modicum of privacy – as they had learned to do in their former CCs. Others either had relatives abroad who were able to send funds, or had some small amounts of money saved with which to make small emergency repairs to create very basic living conditions. In all but five instances families were able to add to the NRC materials by utilising their own savings, money from friends/relatives or accessed additional materials by bartering. These additional materials were often minor in nature and reflected the financial poverty of the beneficiaries.

***“My son who works in France heard about the materials we’d been given and sent us some money. Then he came back and installed the materials himself. That’s why it looks so good! Without the NRC materials my son’s money would have had no effect at all on our living conditions and I wouldn’t have asked him for it”***

***Female interviewee – House. NRC beneficiary number 9***

All beneficiary priorities were similar: windows, floors, doors, water and electricity. In apartments the bathroom was considered a higher priority than those living in houses while for house owner’s, water/drainage connected to the house, roof repair and an extra room (often enclosing part of a balcony) were high priorities.

Of the properties visited all but two had utilised all materials supplied by NRC. Particularly in apartments the materials had been used carefully and efficiently. Due to the smaller area of apartments, financial inputs had more impact than in houses. Many beneficiaries with some financial resources chose to spend them on hiring professional artisans to install materials. This work was monitored by residents and NRC engineers alike and was to a consistently high standard. Because of the availability of craftspeople, residents were able to use materials in innovative ways – designing multi-level ceilings, internal mouldings and covings. These features enhanced and individualised the apartments and stand out in stark contrast to the collective centre accommodation previously endured by the owners. Apartment owners without funds were unable to hire artisans to assist in the work. However these beneficiaries were assisted by relatives, friends and neighbours (demonstrating integration into the community) and all materials were utilised efficiently and to an acceptable standard.

For the first time since purchase, properties under the programme were effectively isolated from the elements by new windows, had hygienic washing, toilet and food preparation facilities, were free from damp, had safe and functioning electrical systems, and functioning

potable and waste water systems. Additionally floors were insulated and covered with a durable laminate flooring system. Privacy was provided by new wooden partitions and doors.



***Rehabilitated bathroom property number 25***

The transformation in living conditions for apartment dwellers in particular was still difficult to conceive for many beneficiaries who had become disillusioned and mistrustful of a Government which they consider had abandoned them.

*"I could never believe that anyone would help us (to rehabilitate the apartment). The conditions we lived in were awful. Our own Government would certainly not help us – they just want to make themselves rich"*

***NRC interviewee. Apartment. Beneficiary number 41***



### ***Replacement Windows Property Number 3***

The poorest beneficiaries are still struggling to obtain rudimentary furnishings. A GoG project to provide basic furniture to the most vulnerable would have a high impact and go some way to restoring people's confidence in the Government.

The condition of many houses was much worse than apartments. In addition to the problems in apartments were added a lack of structural strength due to decayed walls and timbers. Complex areas such as roofs invariably required major repair. The larger size of houses and the number of components (such as outside walls, roofs and outside water pipes) requiring work meant a correspondingly larger scale of the problem and funds required to rectify them. Knowledge was required in (for example) the use, need and location of load bearing walls. The impact of the \$4,200 (later \$3,000) average was correspondingly smaller than in apartments. However the project enabled houses to be secure, warm and provide for dignified year round habitation, representing a significant increase in living standards.

### **Psycho-Social Impacts**

Project impacts were both material – related to the fabric of the property – and psycho-social – related to the residents of the property. Overall the programme had significantly beneficial impacts in both areas. Curiously empirical evidence appears to show differing levels of psycho-social impact between residents of houses and those living in apartments.

The evaluation team found, in common with their house owning compatriots, apartment owners had a greatly increased sense of self-worth and well-being engendered by the programme. The ability to purchase an apartment contributed to breaking the cycle of dependence on the State and moved them towards independence. However the enormity of the task of making apartments habitable, coupled with the lack of funds, soon extinguished many of the new owner's initial enthusiasm.

Prior to the NRC project many project beneficiaries exhibited degrees of despondency, dependence and lack of initiative. All referred to needing employment but felt that GoG should provide it. Many said they had wanted to improve their conditions but were 'overwhelmed' by the enormity of the task. Others declared that, although they possessed some small resources, they were insufficient to have a significant impact on their living

conditions. Subsequently resources remained unused until the NRC project provided the opportunities to maximise their impact. In Georgia the male is traditionally the head of, and provides for the family. An inability to provide for their family resulted in depression and feeling of worthlessness in many males. The NRC project provided the opportunity for beneficiaries to use their own human and financial resources to provide a dignified living space for their families which in turn restored some family pride and self-worth.

Social impacts of poor living conditions were common: beneficiaries such as number 43 who had been provided with 'living space' by the MRA (in reality an unfinished top floor apartment with missing windows, floors and no plaster on the walls) spoke of being too ashamed to engage with the local community. Other families, particularly with sons echoed this sentiment. Young male family members of numbers 12 and 15 could not marry as they considered the pre-project conditions to be too degrading and humiliating for a new bride<sup>16</sup>.

In general, most NRC beneficiaries, prior to the project, possessed varying degrees of feelings of humiliation and shame at their living conditions. Georgian culture, to a certain extent, regards property ownership, and the ability to make that property a dignified home as a mark of social standing. While UI and other beneficiaries owned a property, their inability to protect their loved ones and provide them with a dignified home, was a constant reminder of their powerlessness and a driver of depression.

The NRC project involved the beneficiaries in decision making responsibilities from an early stage by requiring them to identify their rehabilitation priorities. Some female respondents said this revitalised the men in particular. Two pointed to this as the time when their husbands became more energised and pro-active in seeking ways to help the family. The need to organise receipt of materials, check and verify deliveries against material lists, mobilise friends and relatives to help with the building work, liaise with NRC and, in some cases make arrangements for alternative accommodation while work was being carried out, meant a high degree of organisation and responsibility. For some beneficiaries this was the first time they had been empowered to make a significant improvement in their family's lives for many years and they eagerly accepted the challenge. The boost in self-esteem, particularly in the men who had felt disempowered by their inability to help their families has, according to many respondents manifested itself in a variety of ways.

*"My husband was so depressed before your (NRC) project – we had four children and no work. He didn't know what to do. Life was very hard and I was worried about him and the children. When your project came it was like a new life for him: he became revitalised and enthusiastic – he worked very hard to install all the materials with family members and even when they were used he got materials from abandoned houses and used them. We're now working on piping water down from the hill to the house. Although he still has no work my husband is a different man and he goes out looking for work and sometimes succeeds in finding some short term employment. Life is still hard but I've started to believe in a better future."*

*Female interviewee. House. NRC beneficiary reference 8*

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<sup>16</sup>Both families' sons have married since the NRC project and the three generations of one of the families including the new baby are shown on the front cover of this report.

One example of the pride which families have taken in their work was witnessed in property number 32 where the family worked with their non IDP neighbour to tile the floor of their common areas and rehabilitate the stairs. Common areas are commonly neglected by both residents and authorities and this action demonstrates a significant indicator of pride in the rehabilitated apartment, integration with the neighbours and a sign that the family considers this to be their home.



***Beneficiary owners of property number 36 with their new-born son***

Children were psychologically impacted by their conditions. Witnessing the better living conditions of their non- IDP friends, (many IDP children did not have a bed to sleep in) made some realise, maybe for the first time, they were different. This realisation coupled with taunts from non-IDP children made some beneficiary children withdrawn, anxious and reluctant to interact with their peers. This had the effect of slowing (but not preventing) integration into communities, particularly where the IDP family was newly resident.

For many children the beneficial impacts effects of the project were profound. Parents told the evaluation team of children being withdrawn and anxious prior to the project but afterwards being 'proud of their new home.'<sup>17</sup>

*"My husband suffered a stroke at the age of 27 and we had two children when we moved to this apartment. It had no (internal) walls, no plaster, broken rotten windows and one light bulb in the whole place. Life was unbearable. My children were too ashamed to bring friends home. After the work was completed my children were so excited they ran round and round saying 'look at our beautiful home'. Unfortunately they kept putting their hands on the walls and made them dirty!"*

***Female interviewee.Apartment. NRC beneficiary number21***

<sup>17</sup>Quote from mother: project number 26

Other parents spoke of children being de-motivated at school prior to the rehabilitation works but being different after the works had been carried out:

***"...before the (NRC) help our daughter was not doing well at school: she was mocked because of the bad conditions where she lived. Now she has her own room and can bring her friends back to play. She's not ashamed anymore and her school work has improved greatly. She's so much happier and that makes us (husband and wife) happy too".***

***Male and Female interviewees.Apartment. NRC beneficiary number 27***

However, just as apartment owning beneficiaries had intangible benefits such as entering a community and having close neighbours, so did families in houses. Extra space in houses meant that family members had more privacy. Gardens attached to some houses, particularly in rural areas provided space for children to play and for adults to grow vegetables, keep livestock and socialise in. This may account for an impression of higher levels of satisfaction/happiness than apartment dwellers: House dwelling families were invariably extremely enthusiastic about the project and their situation, even-though the quality of the interior of their houses was lower than those in apartments. The joy of being independent and back in a rural setting in a liveable house was plainly evident.

***"Each morning I look out of my door (at the garden) and thank God that I am free again. The collective centre – it was like a prison and the house before NRC's help was almost impossible to live in. Now we can live again as a family. Life is still hard but now it will get better".***

***Male interviewee.House. NRC beneficiary number 16***



***Property number 15 demonstrating house improvements and outside space***

One very significant impact was the ability for sons to marry and bring their new brides back to a house which they now considered to be suitable for married life. This was considered impossible prior to the project and had prevented some families from developing:

***"When we moved into the house it was terrible – I, my wife, daughter and two sons lived in one room. The roof leaked, the windows were rotten and broken and the ground floor was bare concrete and block. One of my sons wanted to get married but couldn't: how could he bring a bride back to this place? It was humiliating. Now (after the NRC project) my son has been able to marry and they have a beautiful baby. My family will now grow and I can be happy again"***  
***Male interviewee.House. NRC beneficiary number 12 (photograph on front cover of report)***

There can be little doubt the project impacted beneficiaries enormously: women expressed their satisfaction with having hygienic conditions, children were happy to have their own bedroom and the independence that brought. Men told of their sense of fulfilment at being able to rehabilitate their home and provide a warm, safe and secure home for their families. The psycho-social impact of the project in some ways outweighs the physical impact on the home (although the two are linked). The revitalising of families has resulted in families developing and striving with new vigour towards an improved future.



***Owners of property number 11 utilising the rehabilitated area in their house***

### **Meeting Beneficiary Priorities**

Subjective criteria are open to interpretation and can create the potential for beneficiary requests being fulfilled which do not meet the priority needs of the property. When a project encompasses an engineering component the assistance criteria should be clearly defined. NRC programme beneficiary priorities usually coincided with the needs of the structure itself and following the project review beneficiary and structural priorities matched in all cases.

Potential problems arise when the beneficiaries' priorities do not match the needs of the building and there are no clearly defined assistance parameters. For example NRC beneficiary reference number 14 requested materials to build a balcony rail. Another requested materials to enclose part of the balcony to make an extra room even-though (according to the MRA rehabilitation standards) the number of inhabitants did not justify the request for extra space. Both houses had leaking roofs and suffered from damp which could not be covered under the budget.

The question therefore arises: is the role of the implementer to satisfy the beneficiaries' priorities? Or is it to steer them towards the goal of a warm, secure and safe property? If an offer to meet the latter is declined should the implementer refuse assistance beyond that required to meet the project goal? Projects are more sustainable if they are beneficiary driven and this report does not contest that. However what action should be taken when the beneficiary wishes to drive the process in a direction which does not meet the project objectives? In other words; the materials a beneficiary *wants* to improve the house may not be what the beneficiary *needs* to improve the house. For example a beneficiary may *want* an

extra room but the house may *need* roof repair to prevent further deterioration of the structure and create a warm, dry, secure environment. In the early stages of the project the lack of rehabilitation criteria resulted in a very small number of examples of the beneficiaries' wishes superseding the needs of the structure. However, this was rectified in the project review and no examples were found in rehabilitation workers after that date.

This point again illustrates the importance of setting clearly defined rehabilitation parameters and assistance criteria reinforced with appropriate training.

While working in partnership with beneficiaries and considering their requests, materials supplied should be appropriate for project objectives. In nearly all cases beneficiary and structural priorities will coincide. There will however be exceptions. In these cases it may be necessary to decline beneficiary requests and utilise the funds more effectively elsewhere.

### **Coordination**

The project was coordinated with the UNHCR, MRA (at both national and local levels) and other NGOs. Interviews with the MRA demonstrated that regional MRA offices had been closely involved in identifying and selecting beneficiaries. The Ministry was also consulted during project reviews. Close collaboration with the UNHCR in Zugdidi was also maintained.

Due to the scattered locations of project beneficiaries it was not possible to coordinate project activities or changes with any established IDP groups. However collaboration with project beneficiaries was close and effective.

### **Recommendations**

Some of the listed recommendations were put in place in early 2010 following a project review and therefore are lessons learned. Other recommendations originate either from observation by the evaluation team or from conversations with beneficiaries.

### **Project Design**

As reiterated throughout the report the initial design concept and design phase is crucial if it is to have the impact required. To aid project design the following should be clearly defined:

**Define Target Beneficiary Group**– in the Sida project this was defined as recipients of Urban Institute Vouchers. This was too wide a criterion without any secondary criteria.

A future project could define the target group as: *'IDPs living in private accommodation where the standard of that accommodation falls below that stipulated in the MRA Minimum Rehabilitation Standards document'*.

To narrow the range a points based ranking system (based on that developed after year one of the project) using vulnerability criteria and living conditions can be developed.

**Define Project Goals and Objectives**– the programme's initial goal was to provide construction materials to rehabilitate/improve (PA IDP) dwellings. Such a subjective goal places the responsibility of defining 'rehabilitation' on the NRC engineers and community mobilisers. A variety of works fit the definition of 'rehabilitation' and it can be difficult for staff to refuse beneficiaries' requests. A defined goal and supporting objectives could have served to guide them in agreeing eligible works and drawing up materials lists.

A goal of similar future projects could be *'to provide the opportunity for PA IDPs to live in dignity and security'*.

A future project's supporting objective could be *'to provide building materials to project beneficiaries to enable them to rehabilitate their homes to the standards set out in the 2009 MRA Minimum Rehabilitation Standards document'*.

In some cases it may not be possible to reach the full rehabilitation standards set out in the MRA document. In these cases areas for rehabilitation such as structural integrity, roof, windows, doors and sanitation can be prioritised in agreement with the beneficiaries. This approach provides flexibility within the parameters of agreed Government guidelines.

**Define the Budget**—A budget can be set according to the programme strategy - at a level required to rehabilitate a property or to provide safe and secure accommodation for a family.

The difference in costs of rehabilitating apartments and houses is wide. It could be argued that the average budget of \$4,200 per structure was too little to rehabilitate houses but adequate for many apartments. The reduction to \$3,000 average after year one was a good decision in terms of apartment rehabilitation but effectively excluded some houses.

This report recommends using the MRA rehabilitation standards to set separate budgets for houses and apartments. These budgets can be set by assessing sample houses and apartments and costing the materials required to meet the MRA Rehabilitation Standards.

If the project is orientated towards providing secure accommodation then budgets can be set on a sliding scale based on the number of family members – different average budgets according to family size.

## **Project Implementation**

**Provide Group Training**— Field staff recommended that increases in efficiencies could be made by holding group trainings of beneficiaries. Topics could be; basics of building work, such as the correct mix of concrete for different tasks, laminate floor installation, basic carpentry and the importance of load bearing and non-load bearing structures.

**Safety Glass**- Vulnerable families include physically and psychologically disabled members. Provision should be made to ensure any internal glass supplied to families with disabled members should be of the safety type to guard against accidents. Likewise internal glass for families with young children should not be situated at a level which toddlers could fall against unless it is of an approved safety type.

**Livelihoods**— Many interviewees relied on IDP allowances and remittances from relatives abroad for income. Given the current economic problems in countries where Georgians seek employment such as Russia, Italy and Greece, the reliance on remittances is a precarious strategy. Those without income beyond that supplied by the Government exhibited signs of extreme vulnerability. Unsurprisingly, beyond the rehabilitation of properties the top beneficiary priority was formal or informal employment. A livelihood component accompanying future projects (such as UNHCR's Shelter Plus) could follow the satisfactory completion of rehabilitation work. This would support the IDP Action Plan and help beneficiary families to develop. Providing IDP beneficiaries *and* host community members with livelihood assistance will facilitate the re-integration of IDPs into host communities.

In rural areas a livelihood component would be reasonably simple – most rural house owners said they needed tools, seeds and small livestock. In urban areas a livelihood component may not be so simple; respondents mentioned construction or other equipment which could enable them to earn an income. Women pointed to small trading or providing dress-making services as potential income generators. Under Sida, DRC supplied livelihood inputs to NRC beneficiaries. Future projects could be similarly coordinated - a livelihood provider could livelihoods inputs to beneficiaries of a rehabilitation project.

This report recognises that the NMFA project does include a livelihood component and encourages future rehabilitation projects to continue this approach.

**Furniture and other NFIs**– The most vulnerable beneficiaries have experienced severe problems in furnishing their homes. In some instances children and adults had no beds and were sleeping on old sofas and in one case wooden boards. All furniture in evidence was sparse and worn as were other non-food items such as kitchen utensils. While it can be argued that furniture does not constitute rehabilitation of a house, it can be contended that it is a central component of a dignified existence.

This report recommends one of two options for future projects:

1. A budget line is introduced to supply basic furniture such as beds, tables and chairs to beneficiaries who meet a defined criteria of extreme vulnerability;
2. Coordinate the supply of basic furniture above with the MRA and/or relevant supplying NGOs.

**Profiling PA IDPs**– NRC was fortunate in having access to lists of UI beneficiaries from the Kutaisi MRA and also UNHCR vulnerable PA IDP lists. These however represent a small fraction of the estimated 55,000<sup>18</sup> PA IDPs. INGOs such as the DRC and NRC in cooperation with the MRA have undertaken pilot surveys. It is time for lessons learned from the pilot surveys to be applied to a profiling strategy and for a profiling campaign to be rolled out. This report urges the MRA, the wider GoG and national and international partners to address the problem and profile this significant yet neglected section of Georgia's society. It is recognised that due to the nature of PA IDPs situation any profiling will not be perfect.

**Review the UI project**– The Urban Institute project has been regarded as causing property price inflation which reduced voucher buying powers. Subsequently many beneficiaries lived in very sub-standard accommodation<sup>19</sup>. While anecdotal evidence may support this theory, the team also found UI beneficiaries who had found suitable accommodation<sup>20</sup>.

The principles behind the UI project of empowering beneficiaries and enabling them to seek their own solutions were sound. Many beneficiaries welcomed the opportunities presented to them. Whilst questions remain over the HVP's wider impacts this report recommends it is analysed to identify components which can inform future strategies to assist IDPs.

**Legal Agreements and Municipal Responsibilities** – The tripartite agreement is the legal document in which the beneficiary, NRC and the MRA agree the roles and responsibilities of each party and sign to signify that agreement.

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<sup>18</sup>MRA DHS Report May 2011

<sup>19</sup>Although others would dispute this. See: <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR33/55-56.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Although some of them had added their savings to the UI voucher value

This report recommends that the Municipality is also added as a signatory to any future agreement. Municipalities are local Government bodies and have jurisdiction over IDP re-integration areas. The Municipality signature will reinforce the Municipalities' role in transferring IDPs from status to needs based categorisation.

**Develop the Model**– The self-help model provided a highly successful and replicable intervention to assist the NRC target beneficiary group.

This report recommends that the model is developed further to assist further categories of PA IDPs who require reintegration, property rehabilitation or new build support.

**Sustain the Assistance**- A key recommendation of this report is to urge NRC to make all efforts to hand over the model to a competent implementer. The NRC's self-help model has developed into a remarkably successful methodology, being cost effective and impacting significantly on beneficiaries' psycho-social and physical wellbeing. Some INGOs have the requisite capacity. Additionally, with correct and thorough training the MDF and MRA could build capacities and implement the model.

### **Replicability and Transferability of the NRC Self-Help Model**

The NRC model successfully demonstrated a way forward to assist PA IDPs living in beneficiary owned sub-standard accommodation. The model's development and replication either in the original project locale or elsewhere is encouraged. However to assume that a successful model in one location will be successful elsewhere – can be a flawed assumption as many NGOs discovered when attempting to replicate Bosnia shelter projects in Kosovo. To determine the model's replicability certain criteria can be used. In order for the self-help approach to be replicable it should:

- Be culturally appropriate, accessible and acceptable;
- Effectively meet and address a need;
- Able to access sufficient funding;
- Be scalable;
- Be able to access appropriate construction materials at appropriate prices;
- Be implementable given the financial and skill capacities of potential beneficiaries;
- Target similar accommodation, motivation, skills and legal profiles of beneficiaries as the replicated model;
- Be replicated by an implementer with the required capacity;

The NRC project meets all of the above criteria apart from access to funds and the identification of alternative implementers.

PA IDPs are concentrated mainly in Western Georgia, and Tbilisi. While a definitive list has not been compiled, the MRA and UNHCR have enough PA IDP data to enable an implementer to commence a PA IDP programme. A proven programme model including procedures and manuals coupled to high levels of human capacities means that the programme can, and in this author's personal opinion should be handed over and replicated.

Transitional development principles advocate for host Governments to assume responsibility for NGO programmes once they reach capacity. The MDF and NGOs such as DRC and CARE have the technical capacity to implement such a project. Arguably although the MDF

has technical capacity it lacks the crucial softer elements of community mobilisation and beneficiary liaison. Regional MRA offices employ field staff who could, with suitable training, undertake the community mobilisation aspects of the model. This would build on the UNDP and others' MRA capacity building programmes and could justify staffing increases of those offices which have long been advocated by most international actors.

To transfer the engineering side to the MRDI will require a shift in institutional philosophy and close engagement with urban and rural IDPs. This contrasts with the current emphasis on sub-contracting turn-key construction and infrastructure projects. Significantly the MRDI would be required to begin focussing on regional development beyond infrastructure.

The model's transfer would require Technical Assistance to hand over methodology, manuals and supporting documentation to the MDF and community mobilisation expertise through a joint project. Ideally this would be undertaken either by NRC utilising its project staff via a TA programme. This could be regarded as a capacity development programme – training the GoG to respect the dignity, wishes and rights of PA IDP beneficiaries.

Alternatively the model could be taken over by an existing NGO who could continue the implementation. However this does not enable the GoG to add the model to its capacity and hence its sustainability as a model would be questionable.

Donor budgets are under pressure due to shifting global humanitarian priorities and the financial crisis. Cost effective and cheaper alternatives to current interventions are being sought. To maximise the programmes potential replicability the low cost, high impact NRC model can be advocated both bilaterally and through seminar(s). This can bring together donors, Government, NGOs and IDPs to develop the model and move the process forward.

### **Legal and Social Support Services**

NRC through its ICLA legal aid programme, added value to the project by supporting beneficiaries in obtaining property ownership documentation and access to social services. These types of support should form part of any future similar projects by utilising the unique set of people skills built up by the NRC staff and transferring them to any future implementer.

The MDF equates rehabilitation projects with engineering exercises. This ignores the crucial element of beneficiary liaison. Unless beneficiaries can be mobilised, take an active and central role in any future project and obtain their legal rights to fair and dignified project participation, key project impacts will be lost. The mobilisation of future beneficiaries should continue to be linked with the provision of legal and social assistance. This expertise should form part of any project transfer process.

### **The NRC Model in Relation to the MRA DHS**

The MRA Durable Housing Strategy and IDP Action Plan are updated annually with the active participation of UN, NGOs, Government agencies and Civil Society. NRC has taken a central role in the Action Plan updates as well as in various TEGs.

The DHS is divided into a three stage strategy: 1. to construct new buildings such as the EU funded apartment blocks in Poti, Tskaltubo and Batumi for CC residents under threat of eviction. 2. To convert existing CCs into privatised apartments owned by resident IDPs. 3.

To provide building materials to PA IDPs.<sup>21</sup>To date a disproportionate level of funding has been allocated to non-PA IDPs. The reasons for this inequity are beyond the scope of this report to make an informed comment. However the ‘invisibility’ of PA IDPs has kept PA IDPs out of the public and political view. This has resulted in a general public opinion that PA IDPs are living in good conditions. It is important that organisations advocate for, and physically assists PA IDPs to obtain their rights as set out in the IDP AP.

The NRC self-help approach provides a proven model of assisting those PA IDPs who fall under section 2.2.2. sub-section B of the IDP Action Plan of which the Durable Housing Strategy forms an integral part. Annex 3 states that a priority for the MRA will be:

*b. Targeting IDPs living in the private accommodations (sic).*

Furthermore the DHS states that:

*‘The overall guiding principle is to enable IDPs to remain in their current location and/or residence, should they so choose, by providing them with DHS locally<sup>22</sup>.*

The strategy which NRC has been implementing is also in line with the principles of collaborative working set out in the DHS:

*‘NGOs play a variety of important roles in complementing, informing and implementing the State Strategy, the Action Plan and supporting the MRA’s activities. These activities include (but are not limited to): information raising activities, providing legal advice and implementing livelihood, agriculture, infrastructure and housing rehabilitation work<sup>23</sup>.*

In early 2011 the MRA disseminated a diagrammatic representation of its strategy for providing durable housing solutions to IDPs living in structurally unsound CCs. Although not PA IDPs the strategy is one which could be supported via the NRC model.

An element of this strategy enables IDPs wishing to return/move to rural areas to be provided with a cottage or farmhouse with some land. The MRA has been implementing this element with the assistance of SDC and UNHCR. Many of the properties procured for the process have required some rehabilitation works. The NRC model can support this programme both in terms of providing direct rehabilitation assistance and also with legal and social support - particularly in ensuring transfer of ownership documents to beneficiaries.

The DHS 2.2.3.sub section C states that:

**‘c) IDPs who are hosted by relatives/non-relatives or renting accommodation and who do not own real estate:**

Where feasible, State in coordination with relevant regional authorities will either: identify a block of flats to be rehabilitated and transferred under ownership of this category of IDPs; *or allocate a plot of land where an individual house/cottage will be constructed in accordance with Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs again based on the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination<sup>24</sup>.*

The text opens up the possibility of developing the NRC model further to construct a complete house through partial self-help: a shell could be built by a contractor and the rest completed using the NRC methodology.

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<sup>21</sup>Decree of the Georgian Government#575 11 May, 2010 Tbilisi

<sup>22</sup>DHS Page 6

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Author’s italics

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. Author’s italics

Clearly the NRC model currently supports underfunded and underserved elements in the GoG DHS. Significantly it could potentially assist other categories of IDPs.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The NRC self-help project was a modelling exercise under the Sida programme. In the opinion of this report the NRC model in Western Georgia has proven to be timely, appropriate, sustainable and efficient. It had a high impact in both physical and psycho-social terms as well as being cost effective. The economic crisis necessitates the development of increasingly cost efficient models. The NRC model is easily replicable, supports the DHS and combines and balances the hard and soft elements of property rehabilitation, psycho-social and reintegration programmes to produce a truly durable solution.

PA IDPs have been marginalised since the early 1990s. Should the NRC self-help model not be replicated by alternative implementers, that marginalisation may continue. This will mean that many PA and other IDP families will not receive the support they need to move forward with their lives, develop and thrive within society.

In the opinion of the evaluation team the NRC self-help model should be strongly advocated for and replicated.

This report concludes with a quote from an interview with a family consisting of a husband, wife and their two children (Number 16). The mother of the children gave her perspective of the NRC project and by doing so, summed up the sentiments expressed by all the others:

***“We will forever be thankful for what you (NRC) did for us. You have given us our lives back. But now we will take our lives into our own hands and we will not be dependent on NRC or anyone else anymore. Thank you for setting us free”***



***Beneficiaries outside their rehabilitated house (number 20)***

## **ANNEXES**

### **Annex 1 - Interview Guide**

- Where were you and your family living before here (CC etc)?
- What were conditions like there?
- Can you tell me how you came to be here in this house/apartment (UI, Investor buy out etc)?
- With the funds you received were you able to buy a house easily (had prices risen)?
- Did you need to (could you) add your own (or borrowed) funds to the funds you received from UI/investor?
- What were conditions like here when you arrived?
- How did you live?
- How did you hear about the NRC project?
- Can you take me through the process from hearing about the project to receiving and using the materials (how long between applying for project and receiving materials, what happened when NRC visited, were beneficiary priorities met, were materials sufficient quantity, quality and appropriate and was TA provided)?
- Did you add any materials of your own to the rehabilitation?
- Now that you are living here can you tell me how it has affected your life (impact, explore psychological impact if appropriate)?
- Given the choice between what you have now and one of the new apartments in Poti, Batumi or Tskaltubo the GoG is giving which would you choose and why?
- We'd like to learn how to do this better so that if an organisation does another project they can learn from you and your experiences. Can you think of anything that you would change which would have made things easier for you or for the NRC? (changes in procedures, ability to sustain and develop their integration)?
- How do you get on with your neighbours, do you feel part of the community (does the ben class themselves as an IDP or part of the community or a combination, do they attend weddings etc)?
- How do you earn money/feed the family/pay for medical expenses etc?
- Where is home?
- Is there anything you'd like to ask us?
- Ask permission to take photographs.

## Annex 2 - Guidance Note

### Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs

The goal of the '*Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs*' (attached) is to ensure adequate housing for all IDPs. No IDP housing should fall below these standards; housing that does not meet these standards cannot be considered a durable housing solution.

The overall guiding principle is to enable IDPs to remain in their current location and/or residence, should they so choose, by providing them with durable housing which conforms to the standards set out in the attached document.

In the event an IDP family's living conditions fall below these standards and rehabilitation of their place of residence in line with these standards is not feasible, an alternative durable housing solution, which conforms to these standards, must be secured for them. An exception to the aforementioned is where an IDP family makes a genuinely informed decision to waive their right to alternative accommodation and expresses a wish to remain in their current accommodation.

These standards provide guidance to:

- IDPs by informing them of their rights related to securing adequate housing, and providing them with a tool to hold the government and partner organizations accountable to these standards in the implementation of the durable housing program outlined in the IDP Action Plan;
- The Government and the IDP Steering Committee in planning, implementing and overseeing the durable housing program outlined in the IDP Action Plan, including (but not limited to):
  - Assessing the feasibility of rehabilitating or adapting existing collective centres for conversion into durable housing, and resulting categorization of CCs;
  - Converting existing idle buildings into durable housing for IDPs;
  - Constructing new, durable housing for IDPs;
- Government and all implementing organizations, including contractors, undertaking housing rehabilitation, adaptation, conversion or construction projects as part of the IDP Action Plan.

In buildings to be rehabilitated (as opposed to new or idle buildings), some families occupy more living space than specified by the standards. In cases where there are found to be gross inequities among IDP households, as regards living space, in buildings where this space is needed to accommodate other IDP families, a transparent process must be instituted, whereby the community can devise an equitable solution for addressing these inequities.<sup>25</sup>

Actors (whether governmental, private contractors, or international agencies / NGOs) implementing housing projects should ensure the genuine participation and inclusion of the beneficiaries in design and implementation. While the modalities will differ depending on the housing solution (rehabilitation, conversion or construction) such consultation must take place.

In all cases, the works' implementer is responsible for ensuring that provision is made, either directly or through a third party, to support the occupants in establishing procedures and developing the skills required to manage the communal maintenance and repair of common spaces and any building-specific systems which require regular servicing or maintenance (such as septic tanks).

Where an IDP household contains one or more persons with disabilities, the design of the accommodation (including the building's common areas) will ensure its accessibility and support its use by the individual(s) with disabilities, incorporating features such as low-level and accessible toilets and bathrooms, wider doorways and ramps for wheelchair access etc. Where technically not feasible in the individual's current place of residence, an alternative durable housing, which meets disability accessibility standards, must be found. As a general principle, external disabled access should also be provided for all other buildings wherever possible.

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<sup>25</sup>This process must be truly representative of the community and include safeguards to protect the rights of vulnerable or socially excluded individuals. Independent monitors are critical to ensure the credibility of the process.

## Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs\*

Parameter	Units	Standards		Comments	
		<i>Minimum standards for New and idle buildings</i>	<i>Minimum standards for Rehabilitation of Occupied Collective Centres</i>		
<b>Living space (excluding bathroom)</b>	m <sup>2</sup> per flat	25 - 35 m <sup>2</sup>	An area greater than 15 m <sup>2</sup> for one person + additional 5-8 m <sup>2</sup> per additional person.	One room flat	One or two persons
		40 - 45m <sup>2</sup>		Two room flat	Three to four persons
		50 - 60m <sup>2</sup>	Unless technically not feasible or rejected by the beneficiary family (see guidance note), person per room guidelines <u>must</u> be met.	Three room flat	Five to six persons
		Additional 5 m <sup>2</sup> per additional person			For each additional person (in a family of more than 6 people)
<b>Bathroom**</b>	bathroom	1 in flat	1 designated private and lockable bathroom on the same floor	per flat	Toilet + shower with hot water + hand washbasin with hot water. Floor drain for the shower. Adequate ventilation Tiled floor and walls Washable paint elsewhere Humidity resistant ceiling
<b>Kitchen**</b>	kitchen	1	1	per flat	Sink + stove (two rows of tiles behind the sink to form splash back)
<b>Windows</b>	window per room	1	1	No blind rooms (for living space)	Double glazed windows
<b>Heating</b>		1	1	Appropriate and adequate heating provision in each flat. Consider individual gas or wood furnace or kitchen woodstove with efficient and adequate smoke removal to outside.	
<b>Chimney</b>				Wood stove and furnace chimneys should vent to an outside area where fumes will be disbursed. Chimney should be permanently fixed and sealed through outside wall or window and should terminate at a distance from the building in accordance with the State Standards (1977) on construction.	
<b>Walls</b>				The existing partition where possible should be kept. If new partitions must be built, soundproofing and use of light material (knauf type) to be specified.	
<b>Walls finish</b>		Painted wall-paper		Washable paint to be used in kitchen	

<b>Floor</b>				Laminated floor where floor needs to be changed; underfloor covering where necessary
<b>Electrical System</b>	system	1	1	Electrical systems to be designed and installed using assumption that each family accommodation unit will use at least two high wattage appliances in the winter in addition to the standard household electrical appliances.
<b>Building envelope and common areas**</b>				Repairs of roof, stairwells, structural walls, pavement, facades, water pumps to a standard that prevents further damage to the building fabric, contributes to the safety of the residents and eliminates hazards, e.g.: banisters and handrails on staircases, waterproof roof, patching of facades, etc. Particular care should be paid to ensuring common areas are free of hazards such as protrusions likely to cause injury. Adequate shatterproof glass to be used in common areas.
<b>General facilities</b>	water and sewage			Internal installations must at a minimum be in accordance with relevant legislation and Water/Sanitation authority standards
				The external networks are the responsibility of the local authorities. Contractor or contractee should arrange external connections
	electrical network			Internal installations must at a minimum be in accordance with relevant legislation and Electricity authority standards
				The external networks are the responsibility of the local authorities. Contractor or contractee should arrange external connections
	gas			Internal installations must at a minimum be in accordance with relevant legislation and gas authority standards
				External connections are the responsibility of the local authorities. Contractor or contractee should arrange connections
<b>Protection against hazardous materials</b>				All buildings may potentially contain hazardous construction material, such as: asbestos, paints containing lead, PCB containing electrical transformers, etc. If the presence of hazardous material is suspected, an assessment survey should be undertaken by an organization with relevant expertise. In cases where hazardous materials are found, these should be removed or contained in accordance with established safety standards.
* All rehabilitation, conversion and construction must be implemented in compliance with Georgian legislation, guidelines and procedures on construction, as a minimum.				
** Where an IDP household contains person(s) with disabilities, the housing design will ensure its accessibility and support its use by individual(s) with disabilities.				

## **Annex 3 - Section 2 of the 2011 IDP Action Plan**

2.2.2. The **second stage** will involve the following activities:

- a. Improving the living conditions of those IDPs who refused to privatize living spaces in the CCs.
- b. Targeting IDPs living in the private accommodations.**
- c. Identifying and rehabilitating the State owned and unused buildings
- d. Constructing the new houses in various regions of Georgia, with priority to be given to the regions where IDPs are already reside and are integrated. New buildings will not be constructed in Tbilisi.

2.2.3 There following measures to be taken by State for the listed below categories of IDPs living in private accommodation:

**a) IDPs who own real estate/private accommodation:**

In collaboration with NAPR, IDPs who live in private accommodation and who own real estate will be identified. A thorough assessment of this category will be conducted and those IDPs whose accommodations were identified as in need of rehabilitation will receive assistance in rehabilitation in accordance with Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs according to available financial resources; or alternatively will be provided with construction materials in case an IDP family has a capacity to rehabilitate the dwelling by own means. The government will ensure that women-headed IDP households are fully engaged and benefit from these processes

**b) IDPs who are hosted by relatives/non-relatives or renting their accommodation, who do not own house but have a plot of land under their ownership:**

This category of IDPs will receive assistance in construction of an individual house/cottage on this plot of land in accordance with Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs or alternatively will be provided with construction materials in case an IDP family has a capacity to construct the dwelling by own means. The government will ensure that women-headed IDP households are fully engaged and benefit from these processes.

**c) IDPs who are hosted by relatives/non-relatives or renting accommodation and who do not own real estate:**

Where feasible, State in coordination with relevant regional authorities will either: identify a block of flats to be rehabilitated and transferred under ownership of this category of IDPs; or allocate a plot of land where an individual house/cottage will be constructed in accordance with Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs again based on the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination.

## Annex 4 – Tripartite agreement



### TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT FOR SHELTER ASSISTANCE WITHIN NRC IMPLEMENTED PROJECT

This Agreement is made between the following Parties:

1. The Beneficiary XXX IDP No. :XXXXXX(hereinafter referred to as “the Beneficiary”), currently residing at XXXXXXXXXXXX
2. [Norwegian Refugee Council], represented by XXXXXXXX, Shelter Programme Manager, (hereinafter referred to as “NRC”),
3. The Ministry for Refugee and Accommodation, represented by XXXXXXXXX (hereinafter referred to as “the MRA”),

This Agreement governs the obligations of each Party pertaining to the NRC project implemented under the funding from Danish Refugee Council (DRC) / The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

#### **PART I – Responsibilities of the Beneficiary**

1. The beneficiary confirms that s/he is a lawful owner of the structure(s) located at XXXXXXXXXXXX (hereinafter referred to as “the House”) as confirmed by the proof of ownership for the housing unit.
2. The beneficiary undertakes to secure the abovementioned proof of ownership and seeks NRC’s assistance if needed and warranted. If NRC assistance is required, the Beneficiary shall provide necessary proof of entitlement to the property.
3. The Beneficiary authorizes NRC to install water, sewerage and electricity installation in the House and provide construction materials determined in the attached List of materials necessary for further rehabilitation.
4. The Beneficiary agrees that the materials donated by NRC will only be used for the agreed purposes. The Beneficiary understands that sale, barter or any other unauthorized use of the materials will constitute misuse, in which case the Beneficiary will return the remaining unused materials to NRC and/or reimburse NRC for the value of the misused materials.
5. The Beneficiary releases NRC and its employees from any liability for pre-existing defects in the structural integrity of the House as well as from any maintenance costs that may occur after the handover of the House to the Beneficiary.

#### **PART II – Responsibilities of NRC**

6. NRC undertakes to provide construction materials in accordance with attached List of materials.
7. NRC shall inform the Beneficiary as to the details and time plan for provision of materials and keep the Beneficiary informed of any circumstances that will delay the process.
8. NRC will provide necessary technical advices to the Beneficiary during the rehabilitation works.

#### **Part III – Responsibilities of MRA**

9. The MRA shall facilitate all necessary permissions and approvals for the realization of this Agreement and the rehabilitation/construction works.
10. The MRA shall ensure no duplication of efforts between the NRC's shelter activities and the housing/shelter repair activities of other organizations, including the Government of Georgia.

**Part IV – General provisions**

11. All Parties understand that the possibility for NRC to deliver the services and works stipulated under this Agreement are dependent on donor funding and that NRC's suspension or termination of works due to lack of funding or any reasons that amount to *force majeure* does not constitute a breach of this Agreement.
12. This Agreement is made in three copies in the English language and three copies in the Georgian language. Each party retains one copy in each language. In case of dispute over the content of the provisions of this Agreement, the English copy shall prevail.
13. Each Party agrees that a signed copy of this Agreement may be shared with a fourth party.
14. Each Party confirms by signing below that it has read and understood the terms of this Agreement.

**Beneficiary**

**NRC**

**MRA**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date