

Coordination and participation in Georgia - what worked and what didn't

Good Examples and Challenges from Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

The issues of coordination and IDP participation are not new for Georgia and the country has developed several mechanisms of coordination and citizen engagement. As much as the experiences from Georgia can provide positive examples for other countries, Georgia is also an example that developed frameworks are no use unless they are put in practice. The coordination among stakeholders and IDP participation are challenging and requires capacity and willingness of major stakeholders (particularly, government bodies) as well as advocacy efforts of non-governmental organizations and IDPs themselves. In addition, the example of Georgia shows that coordination and IDP engagement must be ensured not only on horizontal level among state, regional or local stakeholders but also vertically –between these levels.

Considering limited financial resources and unresolved IDP needs the coordination among stakeholders and IDP engagement in priority identification is highly relevant. Coordinated programming among state, local government bodies as well as other stakeholders can maximize the impact of provided support and ensure IDP ownership.

In this paper I will briefly go through the background of and policy framework on displacement in Georgia, then elaborate in more detail the coordination and participation on IDP issues at different levels and will conclude with recommendations for Georgia and other countries affected by internal displacement.

Background

The internal displacement is a long-standing issue for Georgia. The Government, internally displaced persons and general public have been facing displacement related challenges for up to 30 years. Over the years, the stakeholders have accumulated knowledge on how to tackle problems of displaced population and have concluded that coordination among different stakeholders is one of the main principles of the state policy implementation¹. The participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in government decision-making processes have been acknowledged as necessary to ensure IDP ownership over the decisions, sense of belonging to the local community and IDP integration.

The military conflicts in Georgia over the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, created massive population displacement in the beginning of 1990s. The second massive displacement happened after the Georgia-Russia war over South Ossetia in 2008. These conflicts are still not solved and are considered as “frozen conflicts”. Many persons affected by the conflicts of 1990s and 2008 are not able to return to the places of origin and continue to live in displacement. Currently there are 283,271 registered internally displaced persons (IDPs) (90,156 households) in Georgia-constituting approximately 8% of the general population².

¹ State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a268c564.pdf> Tbilisi, 2007; page 12; accessed 12.03.2020

² The statistics from the Ministry website in Georgian: <https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2019/Failebi/27.03.2019-51.pdf> accessed 16.02.2020; As of January 1, 2019 the Georgian population is 3,723,500 persons. <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/41/population> accessed 16.02.2020

Development of Policy Framework

Over the years, the Government of Georgia, with the support of donor agencies, international and local non-government organizations, developed legal and policy frameworks to address IDP problems. The frameworks consist mainly of the Law on IDPs (first adopted in 1996 and revised several times over the years), the IDP State Strategy (adopted in 2007), its implementation Action Plan and IDP Livelihood Action Plan (both Action Plans are periodically updated).

The Law on IDPs grants internally displaced persons entitlement to receive 45 GEL (approx. 16 USD) per month per person as IDP allowance. According to the Law, IDPs are also entitled to social and other type of assistance as well as adequate housing³. In addition, IDPs are eligible for other types of assistance prescribed for all citizens of Georgia.

The State Strategy complements the Law on IDPs and aims to (1.) create conditions for dignified and safe return of IDPs and (2.) achieve IDP integration. The Strategy deals with all aspects of displacement: housing, employment, social issues including education and health, and legal status⁴. The Strategy is materialized by its Action Plan. The current Action Plan covers 2019-2020⁵.

Since 2009 the Georgian Government has focused mainly on the provision of durable housing to IDPs and more recently – in addition to housing, to support to the development of IDP livelihoods.

Prior to adopting IDP Strategy, the Government and donor response to IDP needs was uncoordinated and focused on meeting emergency needs of IDPs⁶. Though the Law on IDPs existed it was generic. The Strategy and its Action Plans specified the state vision and prescribed specific areas of intervention as well as activities. This enabled all stakeholders to plan and carry out their activities in line with the elaborated State policy. Since the adoption of the Strategy, the Government of Georgia implemented several durable housing and livelihood-support programs. At the same time donor agencies funded IDP support programs, covering a range of issues from housing to IDP participation.

The policy development on IDP issues is currently led by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, while the government's IDP-specific programs are carried out by the Ministry's sub-agency Legal Entity of Public Law Agency for IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihoods⁷.

Current Situation

Despite many different programs funded and implemented by the Government of Georgia, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations, 30 years after the first wave of displacement, internally displaced people still face vulnerabilities linked to their displacement. There is a higher dependence of IDPs on social transfers such as pensions, scholarships, and social assistance, and remittances than among non-IDPs, and

³ Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/201406171444442634.pdf> accessed 06.03.2020

⁴ State Strategy on IDPs <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a268c564.pdf> accessed 12.03.2020

⁵ IDP State Strategy implementation Action Plan 2019-2020, Georgian version https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/Devnilta_mimart_2019-2020_samoqmedo%20gegma.pdf accessed 16.02.2020

⁶ Durable Housing Solutions for IDPs: Lessons Learnt from Georgia and Steps Forward in Ukraine; Thematic Bulletin, Danish Refugee Council; April 2018; page 4 <https://drc.ngo/media/5278672/durable-housing-solutions-in-georgia.pdf> accessed 12.03.2020

⁷ Over the years the IDP issues were covered by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Refugees and Accommodation (MRA). In 2018 the Ministry for IDPs from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees was dissolved and its different functions were taken over by different Ministries. In particular, the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social affairs took over main roles and responsibilities of the IDP Ministry related to IDP issues. The IDP settlement rehabilitation and construction tasks for durable housing were handed over to the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure. The tasks related to refugees and asylum seekers were handed over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. See Amendment to the Law of Georgia on Rules and regulations for Government of Georgia's (GoG) structure, mandate and activities, adopted on July 5, 2018. Amendment number: 3024-RS. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4249951?publication=0> accessed 12.03.2020

The LEPL on IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihoods was established by the Order of the Minister of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs on October 31 2019 (No. of the Order 01-109/N) <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4690884?publication=0>

IDPs have significantly higher ratios of unemployment⁸. In addition, around 55% of IDPs are still waiting for durable housing solution⁹.

Even though IDP still have needs, the funds available to meet these needs have become more limited over the years. After 2008 conflict all major donors working in Georgia such as European Union, USAID, United Nation's Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Swedish International Development Agency, Swiss Cooperation Agency, etc., had IDP specific programs and in case of European Union the direct budgetary support was provided specifically for IDPs. Currently IDP-specific programs are funded by Government of Georgia and the German Government. Other donors consider IDPs as one of the vulnerable groups among others and don't have IDP specific programs.

MISSING THE OPPORTUNITY? – STATE-LEVEL COORDINATION AND IDP

ENGAGEMENT

Coordination Structure

The coordination structure among state-level stakeholders on IDP issues has existed in Georgia for several years now, however, currently it experiences challenges.

The Government of Georgia established an interagency body - Steering Committee – after the IDP Strategy was adopted. The objectives of the Steering Committee are to serve as partnership forum among key stakeholders, to set priorities in the sector of displacement, to monitor, oversee and coordinate implementation of IDP Strategy, IDP and Livelihood Action Plans, to ensure transparency of national and international efforts to implement State Strategy¹⁰.

The Steering Committee is led by the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs. The Agency for IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihoods under the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs serves as the Steering Committee Secretariat, which entails drafting the meeting agenda, preparing necessary documents in advance and circulating them among relevant meeting participants, preparing minutes of each meeting, and disseminating decisions. The Steering Committee has to meet at least twice a year and can have ad-hoc meetings when relevant¹¹.

Over the years, the Committee approved IDP and Livelihood Action Plans, the IDP Ministry reported to the Committee on the progress of implementation of the Action Plans. The Steering Committee also approved the policy documents which were vital for the policy development in the displacement sector in Georgia at the time of adoption. Among these documents were

- Standard Operating Procedure for Vacating Buildings and Transferring IDPs from these Buildings to Other Accommodation with the Purpose of Providing Durable Housing to IDPs.
- Construction and Rehabilitation Standards for the Buildings Envisioned as Durable Housing for IDPs.

The Steering Committee consists of representatives of all Ministries in Georgia, such as the Ministry of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health, and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and etc, Administration of Georgian Government, Abkhazian Government in-exile, Georgian Public

⁸ Rebosio Calderon, Michelle P.; Karadzic, Marko; Makumi, Carolyne Nyatuga; Georgieva, Sophia V.. 2016. Georgia - Transitioning from status to needs based assistance for IDPs: a poverty and social impact analysis (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group; page 21, paragraph 40 & page 22, paragraph 42

⁹ Annual Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2018, Chapter 29. Protection of the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, page 270, <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019101108583612469.pdf> accessed 14.02.2020

¹⁰ IDP State Strategy implementation Action Plan 2019-2020, Georgian version, chapter IV: Coordination Mechanism, page 9. https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/Devnilta_mimart_2019-2020_samoqmedo%20gegma.pdf accessed 16.02.2020

¹¹ Ibid

Defender's Office, European Union Monitoring Mission, two representatives from the NGO community (one Georgian and one international NGO), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UN Country Team (UNCT), German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), USAID, Project Zrda, German Development Bank KfW, and French Development Agency AFD¹².

The Steering Committee decisions have been informed by recommendations of Temporary Expert Groups. The Temporary Expert Groups are established based on the needs and they provide technical assistance and address specific time-bound tasks required for implementation of the Action Plan (e.g elaboration of standards, legal issues, etc.). The specific membership of each expert group is determined by the Steering Committee. Each Expert Group consists of representatives of the Ministry of IDPs, other relevant government agencies and organizations with expertise relevant to the assigned task.

Having said that it does not mean that over the years there were no issues with coordination, particularly, among the local branches of different Ministries. The World Bank report of 2016 acknowledged that while IDP policy framework was strong, its implementation was challenged and found that the inter-agency coordination and institutional capacity to provide services for IDPs at the local level needed strengthening to correspond to the commitments made on national level¹³. The World Bank report also highlighted that the division of tasks among different government agencies was not always clear for IDPs as many agencies and Ministries were involved in dealing with IDP issues¹⁴.

In the last one and a half years the reorganization of government bodies and merger of different Ministries, particularly, the merger of the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Refugees and Accommodation with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs¹⁵, resulted in stall of the Steering Committee's work, though the body has not been abolished. The reactivation of the Committee and its expert groups was requested among others by civil society representatives on several occasions and commitment from IDP Ministry was made to convene Steering Committee meeting, but this has still not happened at the time of writing this article. On the positive side, one temporary expert group meeting was recently convened. It is hoped that this indicates a new beginning of regular coordination at the state level again and that the Steering Committee will soon be reconvened.

Overall, despite its flaws, the Steering Committee remains the only interagency platform for IDP policy coordination and in case it is reactivated, can serve as a good forum of coordination.

Are IDP Voices heard?

IDP participation in Steering Committee is ensured by the presence of one international and one local NGO working on IDP issues. When the Steering Committee was active, these NGOs held coordination meetings with relevant IDP NGOs or NGOs working on IDP issues prior to the Steering Committee meetings as well as afterwards. Meetings prior to the Committee meetings aimed to agree on joint positions on relevant issues and meetings afterwards aimed to share the Committee decisions and plan further actions.

Over the years a few good examples of IDP engagement in national IDP policy development was accumulated. For example, with the facilitation of Danish Refugee Council, IDPs together with other stakeholders such as international and Georgian NGOs, donor agencies, municipal officials participated in a conference "Updating the IDP Action Plan 2010". The conference participants were engaged in four

¹² Ibid

¹³ Rebosio Calderon, Michelle P.; Karadzic, Marko; Makumi, Carolyne Nyatuga; Georgieva, Sophia V.. 2016. Georgia - Transitioning from status to needs based assistance for IDPs: a poverty and social impact analysis (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Page 15, paragraph 27

¹⁴ Rebosio Calderon, Michelle P.; Karadzic, Marko; Makumi, Carolyne Nyatuga; Georgieva, Sophia V.. 2016. Georgia - Transitioning from status to needs based assistance for IDPs: a poverty and social impact analysis (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Page 18, paragraph 33

¹⁵ The IDP settlement rehabilitation and construction tasks for durable housing were handed over to the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure. The tasks related to refugees and asylum seekers were handed over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

thematic working groups that developed recommendations for the Action Plan update. The recommendations were later incorporated into the updated IDP Action Plan¹⁶.

In 2011 different stakeholders, such as international and local organizations as well as Public Defender's Office led by UNHCR and IDP Ministry facilitated focus group discussions among IDPs (divided by age, sex and type of accommodation) to obtain suggestions and recommendations to solve IDP problems. These recommendations informed the updated IDP Action Plan of 2012-2014¹⁷. Unfortunately, such participatory policy planning did not take place in Georgia in the last few years but when they did, they ensured the participation of the IDPs at the state level.

COORDINATION AND PARTICIPATION – WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Coordination Structure or the Absence of it

Currently, the coordination between the state and local authorities in Georgia on the displacement issues requires further strengthening. This is particularly true when it comes to setting priorities and planning state durable housing programs for IDPs.

The local authorities are not members of the Interagency Steering Committee. Moreover, there is no mechanism that would bring the voices and positions of local authorities on IDP issues systematically to the Steering Committee or to any other decision-making bodies at the central level. The central government leads the processes related to resettlement, including the construction of apartment buildings, allocation of houses to IDPs. Hence, there is insufficient degree of planning and coordination between central and local authorities when it comes to creating or developing the infrastructure and services around the new IDP settlements.

Since the central government commissions and oversees the construction of new settlements for durable accommodation, the local authorities systematically do not anticipate the service or infrastructure new settlements may need, e.g playgrounds or community spaces for children and adults and etc. Therefore, IDPs face challenges with accessing local services in the new places of resettlement, these services may come with significant delay or never at all. For example, several years ago in mountainous area of West Georgia, the Government renovated a remote settlement of Potskho-Etseri for over 550 IDPs for their durable housing. The settlement, due to its remote location, needed a community center but the local authorities managed only recently to renovate a public building to host the community center with support from Danish Refugee Council.

The need for engaging with local stakeholders has been recognized by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Council of Europe (Georgia is member of Council of Europe). The Congress has called the Council of Europe member States to engage the local authorities in planning, implementing and following up on IDP policies. The Congress also encourages local authorities to promote IDP welfare by providing equal access to basic services and infrastructure considering specific needs of sub-groups of IDPs such as, women, elderly and etc when developing policies and initiatives¹⁸.

The Government of Georgia has recently developed a Decentralization Strategy for 2019-2025. This aims to grant more power to the local bodies of self-governance, but no major changes have been observed so far. This new priority of the Georgian Government could be used to argue more involvement of local authorities in the issues of displacement.

The lack of joint planning is coupled with the lack of funds both on state and local levels which makes it challenging to invest in the local services for IDPs and host community members. Most funds that benefit

¹⁶ Final Report for the project Joint Solutions are Durable Solutions – Steps to Solve the IDP Issue in Georgia. Danish Refugee Council

¹⁷ Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy on IDPs during 2012-2014 <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/2014100614552521290.pdf> page 8, accessed 12.03.2020

¹⁸ "The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)", Recommendation 437 and Resolution 448, Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2019, 1st sitting (see Document CG37(2019)09), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Marianne HOLLINGER, Switzerland (L, ILDG) and Oleksandr SIENKEVYCH, Ukraine (L, ILDG)

IDPs are spent on durable housing programs. Consequently, there are new IDP settlements which accommodate hundreds of people but don't have proper infrastructure and local services.

Lack of local services may cause IDPs to face challenges with the development of social capital and thus, local integration. Various researches indicate that social capital helps households escape from poverty and the societies with higher degree of social capital are less vulnerable and are more likely to resolve their own conflicts¹⁹. A simple example is a small playground DRC arranged for newly resettled IDPs in the IDP settlement in Samegrelo region. The playground attracted not only kids from the settlement but also from neighboring local community as it was the only space for the children in that area. This playground has therefore a potential for creating networks and connections not only between IDP kids and their peer locals but also between their parents and thus, contribute to IDPs' local integration.

The private businesses are engaged in the resettlement process as the constructors of IDP settlements. They are rarely seen as strategic contributors to the local service development and job creation, e.g. by constructing food markets, providing transportation, or other cultural and educational services, workshops or enterprises for jobs and etc. The businesses are not systematically engaged in the planning resettlement areas. If the government attracts businesses from the very beginning to open workshops or enterprises close to the new IDP settlements, new jobs will be created for resettled IDPs and thus, integration will be supported. The enterprises in the areas of IDP resettlement may also serve as service providers e.g. pharmacies, grocery shops. Timing is important so that the services and jobs are created shortly after the resettlement takes place and IDP are not left with only accommodation and no means of livelihoods.

For the engagement of all relevant stakeholders it is important that the central government acknowledges the role of local stakeholders – local authorities or businesses –and systematically engages them from the planning of new IDP settlements.

The local authorities at their end, should strategically map the potential services resettled IDPs may need and identify how the private and state bodies (state or local) can meet these needs. For example, DRC has identified a few remote IDP settlements that don't have pharmacies in the settlements, which deprives IDPs from medical care. Due to IDP vulnerability the private businesses might not find it profitable to open pharmacy in such remote areas, however, alternative solutions could be provided by local authorities by subsidized support or by promoting mobile pharmacy concept.

Participation of IDPs and Host Communities in local decision-making platforms

In Georgia there are mechanisms at the local level that can ensure the community engagement (including IDP communities) in local decision-making process though application of these mechanism needs to be strengthened.

The mechanisms of community engagement prescribed in the Code of Local Self Governance of Georgia are as follows: community meetings, collecting petitions, establishment of Civil Advisory Council, participation in the local council meetings, attendance of public hearings of local Mayor or local Council members about their implemented activities²⁰. This paper will focus on the work of Civil Advisory Council as a tool for IDP engagement as Danish Refugee Council worked with the mechanism in 2018.

The Civil Advisory Council is the consultative body for the executive branch of the local government. The local executive bodies must present the draft municipal budget, infrastructure and social draft projects and other important draft documents to the Council for feedback. More detailed Terms of Reference of the Council can be defined by each municipality. The Code of Self Governance defines that an Advisory Council has to include representatives of local businesses, local NGOs and other local citizens.

Prior to incorporating Civil Advisory Councils as one of the tools for citizens' participation in Local Self Governance Code, Councils were established under USAID-funded Good Governance in Georgia (G3)

¹⁹ Influence of Social Capital on Livelihood Outcomes for the Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya: A Social Capital Approach, Christopher Nkonge Kiboro, Literature review, Social Capital and Welfare Outcomes page 268

²⁰ Code of Self Governance of Georgia, Chapter XI Participation of citizens in the local self governance, Article 85

program in several municipalities in 2012. The Advisory Councils later became part of legislation on local governance.

The system of Advisory Council is relatively new and therefore, needs further support in operationalization. In 2018 – 7 years after it was first introduced and 3 years after it became part of Georgian legal system - DRC worked in seven municipalities of Georgia where IDPs live to strengthen the Advisory Councils and identified during the baseline survey that 3 municipalities had established Advisory Councils and IDP representatives were members of the Councils, however, these Councils did not work in reality. And in 3 other municipalities there was a lack of understanding of the concept and heads of municipalities claimed that citizens' involvement at municipal level had been already secured via other tools, one remaining municipality had functioning Council. DRC carried out training activities on Advisory Councils in target municipalities and shared positive examples of Advisory Council's work. However, further support is needed.

Engagement of citizens in local decision-making forums is a process that requires continued support and engagement of authorities. In Georgia the process is hindered due to several reasons - lack of local authorities' capacity and willingness, low interest and skills of population, lack of innovative approaches of community engagement and etc²¹. The situation can potentially be worse for resettled IDPs who are new to the area. Continued support and advocacy of civil society is needed to engage authorities and citizens, including IDPs, in the mechanisms that already exist but also to come up with new forms of engagement.

WAY FORWARD

The example of Georgia shows that establishment of stakeholder coordination and IDP engagement mechanisms does not mean the mechanisms will work. Continued efforts, willingness of all stakeholders as well as capacity (human and financial) are necessary to apply the mechanisms in practice.

Creation of massive IDP settlements as durable housing solution, which concentrates poor IDPs is flawed, however, since we have a number of such settlements and the Georgian Government plans to build more, only by coordinated efforts can stakeholders mitigate the risk of ghettoization and ensure that IDPs have relevant services in the place of resettlement.

Based on the analysis of Georgia's history of addressing displacement issues the following recommendations can be given to Georgian and international stakeholders.

Recommendations for Georgian Stakeholders

The Steering Committee has to renew its operation and must be reengaged in the oversight of the implementation of IDP and Livelihoods Action Plans.

Local authorities need to be engaged in planning and implementing of IDP and livelihoods Action Plans by joint planning of IDP support programs. It is particularly important that new IDP durable housing programs are created in consultation with the local authorities ensuring that local authorities have a say on priority identification (locations, targets, housing modalities). The engagement of local authorities together with other local stakeholders, including local branches of state institutions, would ensure transparent resource allocation and management, joint risk management and sustainability planning. It would be good to create coordination mechanism of central government bodies, particularly, IDP Ministry with the local stakeholders (e.g. regular planning meetings, workshops or conferences, jointly adopted program documents). The mechanism would coordinate the decisions on multi-faceted aspects of resettlement and financial allocations (housing, infrastructure around the settlement, issue of accessing the local community

²¹ Assessment of Citizen Engagement Practices in the Municipalities of Batumi, Kutaisi and Akhaltsikhe, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, March 2017, Tbilisi https://idfi.ge/public/upload/IDFI_Photos_2017/idfi_general/Engagement_Practice_Assessment_in_Municipalities_of_Georgia_Final_ENG.pdf page 8, accessed 10.03.2020

services and etc.). The coordination mechanism would operate in line with the State Strategy for IDPs and possibly endorsed by the Steering Committee.

A coordination mechanism between state and local authorities would also support the local authorities to better plan their local budgets to meet the needs of IDPs (particularly, the newly resettled ones) in light of limited funds; this would contribute to sharing the financial burden between central and local governments.

Moreover, in light of the recent Decentralization Strategy, the Government of Georgia should start discussing the increased role of local authorities in addressing IDP problems in all areas and sectors.

The engagement of private businesses as service providers and creators of livelihood opportunities for IDPs should be recognized and their engagement in policy and program planning and implementation should be enhanced. Consultative meetings between authorities and businesses could serve as a starting point.

The local authorities should encourage the engagement of IDP and host communities in existing mechanisms of consultancy and decision-making, e.g. local Advisory Civil Councils and etc. This will enhance the sense of belonging to the local communities among IDPs and sustainability of IDPs' integration. The encouragement for engagement should be coupled with the willingness of authorities to operationalize such mechanisms and readiness to invest relevant resources in the work of these mechanisms.

By engaging IDPs in local decision making, local authorities would have better understanding of the needs of IDPs. This would also contribute to better budgeting on local level and would inform the coordination mechanism between local and central government authorities – the local authorities would have grassroots-based knowledge of needs of IDPs which they could transfer to the central government for better programming.

Meeting IDPs' communal needs, particularly, in big settlements (e.g. by building playgrounds, kindergartens, schools and etc) can benefit not only IDPs but also host communities. Therefore, when planning projects for IDPs, consideration should be taken to neighboring host communities as well so that the projects contribute to meeting IDP and host community needs and thus, contribute to social capital development and IDP integration.

Recommendations for other countries

Taking into account Georgian example, when setting coordination mechanisms, it is important to invest in stakeholder mapping and identifying the opportunities the engagement of these stakeholders will bring. Coordination on all levels (state, regional and local) have to be sought and multiyear capacity building and support for the relevant stakeholders, including IDPs, has to be ensured. Coordination solely between state stakeholders or solely among local stakeholders is insufficient, coordination mechanisms should ensure that coordination takes place between state, regional and local stakeholders. This is the only way to tackle IDP issues holistically.

The role of private businesses should be identified and their engagement in policy and program development should be ensured by the authorities on all levels.