

# *Cumulative report on education among IDPs*

## **UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA**

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This is the third thematic study in the series of research on specific issues related to IDP population of Georgia (UNAG) done by the United Nations Association of Georgia. As two previous studies, this report also has been generated within regional representations of UNAG in Shida Kartli (Gori), Samegrelo (Zugdidi), Imereti (Kutaisi) and Ajara (Batumi). Results demonstrated similar situation in education sphere among IDPs throughout Georgia. General trend is that problems persist and, in some respect, even grow.

From general figures the most interesting is that of enrollment: from 1 to 3 percent of children do not belong to any school at all. They usually assist their parents in trade by selling cigarettes or roasted sunflower seeds.

The only fact that most of IDP children are enrolled in primary and/or secondary education does not mean that they actually have access to them. Number of absentees grows with time reaching in some regions (especially Zugdidi region). This problem is, basically, caused by the fact of impossibility by IDP parents to provide educational materials and decent clothing for their children who are otherwise shy to attend classes. Some children do not go to school due to missed years.

In past, government as well as some international organizations (e.g. UNICEF) has provided assistance in distributing school materials but these programs have been cancelled now. Furthermore, old books could not be used as

official program requirement has been changing recently almost every year. The only assistance that IDPs receive is that government has freed them from any fee related to education in schools. In Ajara IDP students receive 50% discount in private universities as well.

Apart of this, UMCOR intended to distribute clothing in Zugdidi region though IDPs are unaware of this assistance program as nobody has been a recipient or knows such person. Besides, number of absentees grows in winter due to lack of heating in schools.

The only substantial assistance comes to Tskhinvali region - UNHCR puts big effort in rehabilitating old schools in conflict areas (villages Kheiti, Tamarasheni, Ksuisi). Children receive free books there as well.

As to the education process itself, it should be noticed that no special programs are designed for IDP children and they follow the program approved by the Ministry of education of Georgia. Only several children in Gori region study at private school and receive alternative education. IDP students attend same universities as others. Even affiliations transferred from conflict zones (from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region) do educate not only IDPs but also non-IDP youth.

Education process of IDP children in school is either together with locals or separately. Different regions have different approaches in this direction from having no separate school (in Gori region) through allowing only several (one in Ajara and just few in Imereti serving 10-12% of IDP children) to having mostly separate education system (in Samegrelo).

Our study has indicated that most problems with integration of IDP children exist in Samegrelo, which employs separate school system for them. While tension and embarrassment is less in Imereti and almost not existent in Ajara and Shida Kartli. The latter region has introduced special post in the Department of Education of the region dealing with special education methodology used with regards to IDP children.

In Zugdidi, where most IDP children study at separate schools, faculties consist of IDP teachers. This increases isolation and aggravates psychological environment in schools - teachers extrapolate their attitudes, feelings and problems onto children who bear gigantic pressure coming from homes, schools and local population. Frequently children are exposed to harassment from non-IDP population

including local children. This problem is most expressed, again, in Samegrelo and has been overcome in other regions.

Managing free time of children stays as acute problem despite several projects implemented by international and non-governmental organizations. These projects include additional classes in foreign languages, computer skills, different sports, music, dancing, etc. Following organizations are involved in projects related to engaging IDP children in creative learning process and free-time activities: Red Cross Federation (in Zugdidi has organized group of 20 children to visit US), SIDL and Business Incubator (in Zugdidi organized computer servicing of IDPs), Atinati (in Zugdidi has organized foreign language courses, "Youth House" for rehabilitation of IDP and local children, 13 educational courses free of charge), IRC (in Zugdidi and Kutaisi has organized counseling in schools), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (in Samegrelo has implemented Civic Development Program with 7 centers in Zugdidi, Senaki, Chkhorotsku, Khobi, Jvari and Poti), USIA and Zugdidi Regional Chamber of Commerce (in Zugdidi are planning to form group of 10 leaders of local NGOs to send for 3-5-week practice to US), Charity center "Aphkhazeti" (in Samegrelo and Imereti implements project for development of youth with 8 clubs for 17-years old IDP children to learn English, Computer skills, leadership, etc to train further their fellows), Youth organization "Davitiani" (in Kutaisi organizes free groups for children in business, foreign languages, computer skills, arts and science), UNAG (in Kutaisi has organized "Children's Forum" engaging some 40 IDP children), DRC (in Imereti has financed Karate Do Federation to train 15 IDP children for 1 year), Foundation "Favoriti" (in Batumi together with USAID has organized youth development club to learn English, computer skills, conflictology to communicate with Abkhaz counterparts; also they send 5 children a year to G. Mason University together with Abkhaz children; they have established sunday school and Debate Club, send children to summer camp in Likani, organized different courses with some 150 children participating in them).

Despite this substantial list of activities most of IDP children are ostracized from participation in them simply because of lack of funding. Much more needs to be done. The most vulnerable group still is that of IDP children who are frequently placed under pressure coming from their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Name "IDP" has become a shameful label for them.