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AZERBAIJAN

After more than 20 years, IDPs still urgently need policies to support full integration

The Azerbaijani government continues to assume primary responsibility for the care and protection of the country's 597,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), who fled their homes in the early 1990s as a result of the conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. It has devoted significant resources to IDPs' problems over the past two decades. It has also raised awareness on displacement, collected data, trained officials on IDPs' rights and adopted laws, policies and programmes for their protection. Some IDPs now enjoy better access to certain rights than their non-displaced neighbours.

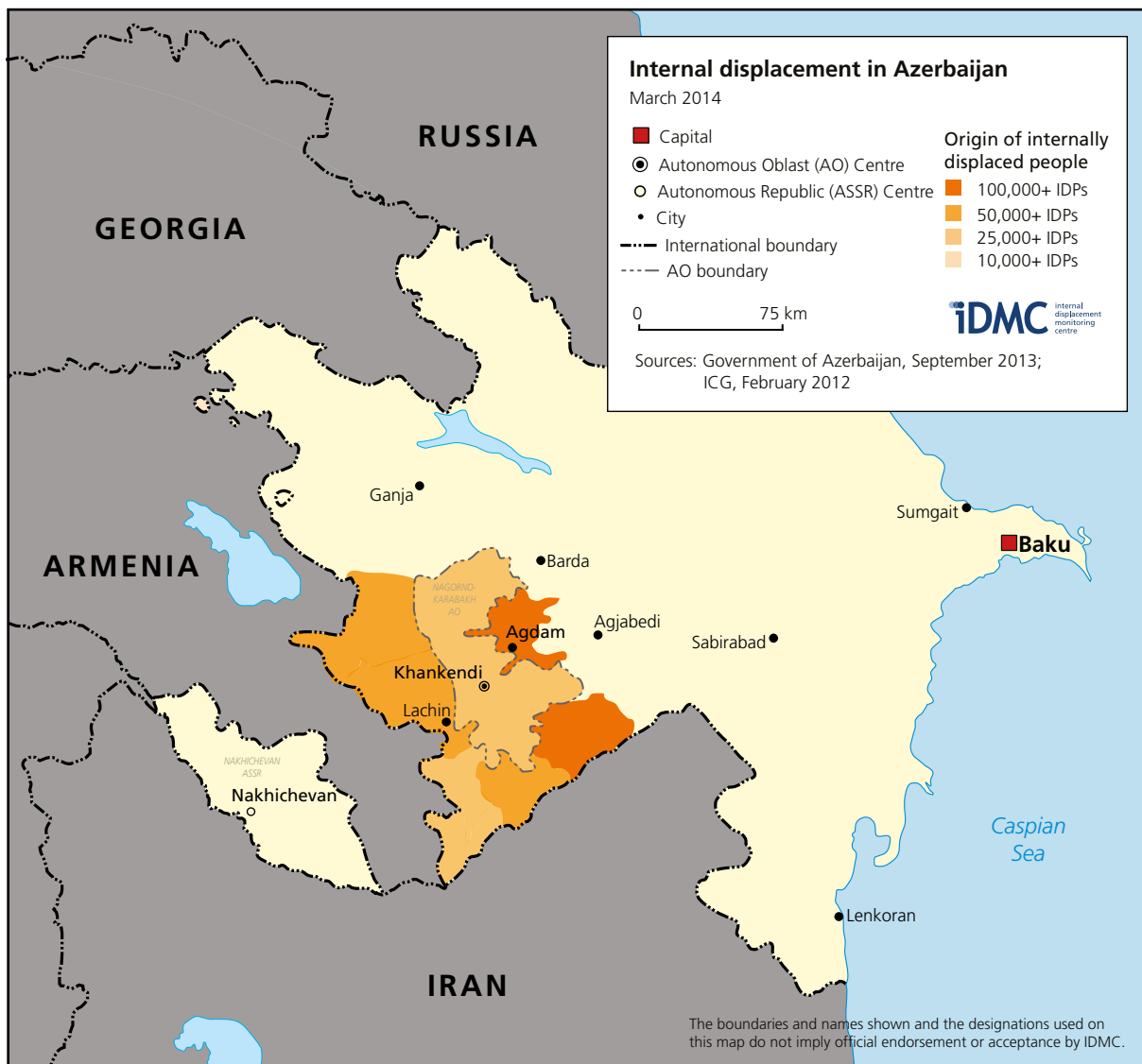


12 internally displaced families living in this former administrative building for 22 years have lost hope for return. Zaqatala, Azerbaijan (Photo: IDMC/N. Walicki, May 2013)

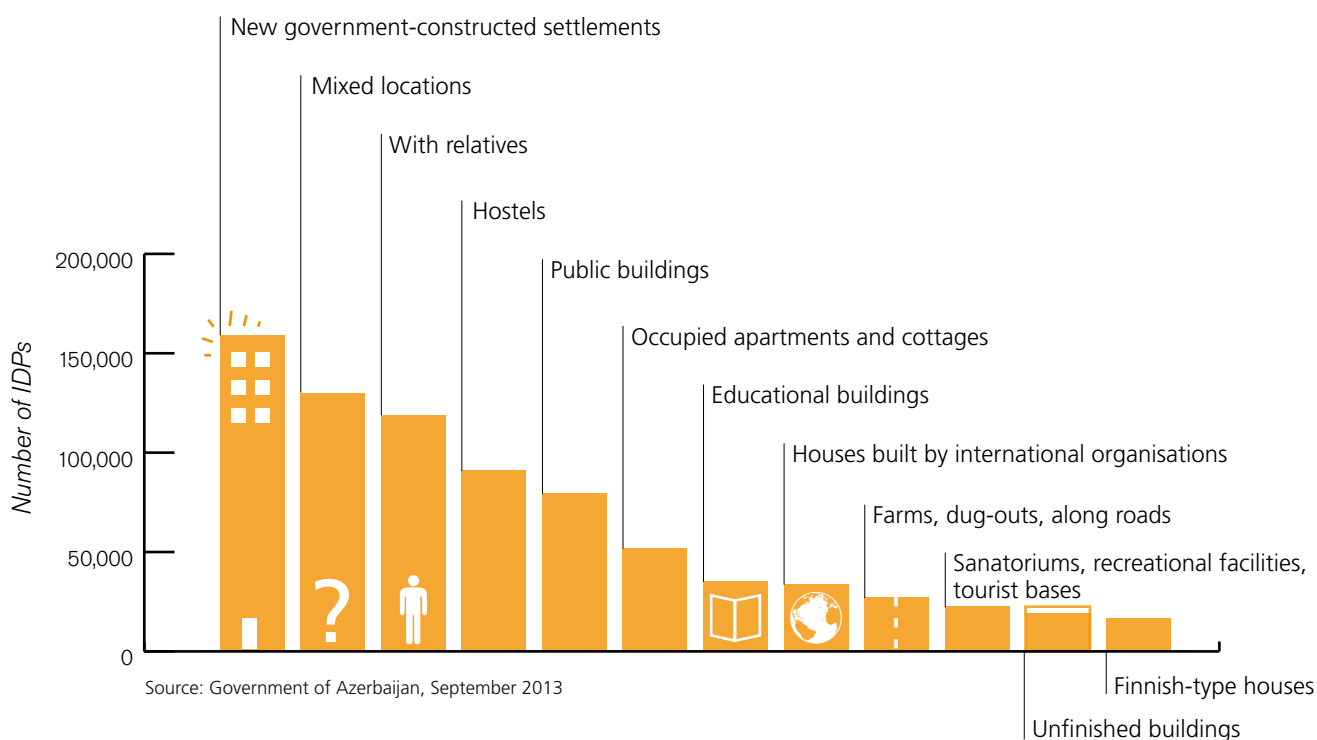
An improved response would assist IDPs based on their needs and facilitate their full integration in the areas where they have settled. The government's response reflects its view of displacement as temporary, until return becomes possible. The majority of IDPs themselves wish to return, but given that the prospect of a peace settlement remains remote, their situation can no longer be considered temporary. The government's preference for return should not deter it from fully restoring IDPs' rights and improving their self-reliance and integration while they wait to return.

Despite significant government assistance, protection gaps for IDPs continue to include inadequate housing, precarious livelihoods, gender-based violence, segregated education, discrimination against children of the displaced and IDPs' limited participation in decisions that affect them. In the absence of comprehensive up-to-date data on IDPs' socio-economic situation it is unclear, however, how many continue to struggle with these issues as a result of their displacement.

Azerbaijan's next state programme for IDPs begins in 2015. This presents an ideal opportunity to consult IDPs, assess their needs and ensure that the most vulnerable are prioritised for assistance. A profiling assessment would reveal the extent to which IDPs still have needs related to their displacement and help to tailor the response accordingly under the next state programme. Its findings would also be relevant to priority-setting and implementation of government and UN development frameworks beyond 2015.



Types of IDP housing



Map by: IDMC

More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org/maps

Background

Displacement caused by conflict

Internal displacement in Azerbaijan is mainly a consequence of the country's conflict with Armenia over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous and fertile autonomous region in western Azerbaijan. The roots of the dispute can be traced back to the early 20th century, but conflict broke out in 1988 when nationalist aspirations resurfaced in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Soviet government in Yerevan agreed to incorporate the territory into Armenia. Ethnic tensions intensified and led to violent attacks by both sides, and full-scale war broke out between the two countries following their independence in 1991. Nagorno-Karabakh declared its own independence in 1992, which no other state has recognised.

A ceasefire agreement officially brought hostilities to an end in 1994, since when Armenia has wholly or partially controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts. By the time of the ceasefire, an estimated 700,000 people had been displaced in Azerbaijan, and a further 30,000 people in Nagorno-Karabakh itself (NRC, 30 April 2008, on file with IDMC; [ICG](#), 11 October 2005). The conflict has not, however, been resolved and peace negotiations have been deadlocked since 2011 ([de Waal](#), 22 January 2014). Internally displaced people (IDPs) have become an inherent part of a national narrative around occupation, in which they are presented as having been forced to flee and denied the right to return ([Wistrand](#), February 2013; [European University Institute](#), 2013).

The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia is often described as frozen, but in reality it is active along the frontline. The 260-kilometre Line of Contact (LoC) established by the 1994 ceasefire has more than 20,000 troops stationed on each side, making it perhaps the most militarised zone in Europe ([de Waal](#), 2013; [Saferworld and Conciliation Resources](#), May 2012). Skirmishes are a regular occurrence, and in the current context

of stalled mediation efforts and an accelerated arms race on both sides, they have become more intense and widespread ([ICG](#), 26 September 2013; [Conciliation Resources](#), 20 October 2013). Neither peacekeepers nor other international forces supervise the LoC, but international monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) make twice-monthly inspections.

Displacement caused by natural hazards

Azerbaijan is also susceptible to natural hazards that can cause displacement, such as flooding and earthquakes, and to a lesser extent droughts, landslides, avalanches and mudflows ([UNICEF and UNISDR](#), December 2011, p.47; [IFRC](#), 31 July 2013; [Oxu.az](#), 5 July 2013; [Day.az](#), 3 July 2013; [Zoi Environment Network](#), 2011). Azerbaijani officials acknowledge that around 50 per cent of the country's 9.5 million people live in areas vulnerable to earthquakes ([Trend](#), 18 June 2012). Fluctuations in the water level of the Caspian Sea, the world's largest naturally enclosed body of water, may cause changes in seasonal precipitation patterns and provoke hazards such as landslides, avalanches, river floods, flash floods and mudflows, which in turn can lead to disasters and displacement if they are not well prepared for and responded to ([UNISDR and World Bank](#), 2009, p. 30).

The most recent disasters occurred in 2012 and 2010. The 2012 earthquake in north-western Azerbaijan destroyed or seriously damaged more than 7,000 homes, forcing the evacuation of a similar number of families into tents and nearby properties ([IFRC](#), 23 May 2012; [IFRC](#), 22 December 2012). In 2010, heavy rains caused flooding in 40 districts near the Kura river in central and southern Azerbaijan, affecting 70,000 people, 24,000 of them in Sabirabad district. More than 20,000 homes were flooded, of which 2,300 were damaged beyond repair, and 60,000 hectares of farmland were inundated ([CREED](#), May 2012, [IFRC](#), December 2010). These disasters do not appear to have affected IDPs who had been displaced by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Displacement figures and patterns

The government's State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, seated in the cabinet, is the sole source of statistics on internal displacement in Azerbaijan. It reported in 2014 that 597,429 people were registered as IDPs (email correspondence with [GoA](#), 31 January 2014). The vast majority are ethnic Azerbaijanis, but there are also ethnic Kurds, Russians and Turks ([CoE](#), 24 May 2007; [UNCHR](#), 25 January 1999). They come overwhelmingly from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, rather than the enclave itself ([de Waal](#), 26 June 2013; [UNCHR](#), 25 January 1999).

The government figure includes IDPs' children, who number around 230,000 (email correspondence with [GoA](#), 5 September 2013), and up to 54,000 IDPs who have been able to return (NRC, 29 February 2008, on file with IDMC). The figure also includes people living along the LoC who have not been displaced but are registered as IDPs in acknowledgment of the security risks they face ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011). At the same time, people displaced by disasters are not included although the law recognises "military aggression, natural or technological disaster" as causes of displacement ([GoA](#), 1999). The inclusion of IDPs' descendants, returned IDPs and people in areas of insecurity, and exclusion of people displaced by disasters, is not in line with the criteria outlined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, nor with Azerbaijan's 1999 law on IDPs' status, and contributes to an artificial inflation of the overall figure.

IDPs are present in all of the country's 69 districts, but around half live in the capital Baku ([Eurasianet](#), 20 November 2013). Around 32 per cent continue to live in public buildings offered as temporary accommodation at the beginning of their displacement, also known as collective centres. Around 25 per cent live in new housing the government has provided, 20 per cent with relatives and 12 per cent in makeshift housing.

Around eight per cent occupy other peoples' property (email correspondence with [GoA](#), 5 September 2013).

Protection issues

The government has allocated unprecedented funding and introduced numerous positive discrimination measures to help IDPs access their rights. Protection concerns persist, however, as a result of the official focus on return and the corresponding lack of support to help IDPs fully integrate locally. These include inadequate housing, precarious livelihoods, gender-based violence, segregated education, discrimination against displaced children and IDPs' limited participation in decisions that affect them. The government could address these issues by consulting with IDPs, collecting comprehensive information on their needs, and using the data as the basis for the next state programme on IDPs and the work of international and local organisations.

Inadequate housing

The government has dedicated significant resources to new housing for IDPs living in collective centres over the past decade. As part of the State Programme for the Improvement of Living Standards and Generation of Employment for Refugees and IDPs, it closed the 12 emergency camps in which IDPs had been living for more than 10 years by 2007. It also relocated up to 180,000 IDPs and refugees to more than 80 purpose-built settlements, most of them with new schools and medical centres, by 2014 ([GoA](#), 27 November 2013; [GoA](#), 1 July 2004). The largest new settlement to date, Mushvigabad, houses 60,000 people ([Zerkalo](#), 28 February 2013). In some areas of the north-west of the country, local officials have relocated IDPs' relatives from other regions, which contributes to family unity, and allowed the use of nearby land for cultivation, grazing and other livelihoods activities.

The government has also said it will provide new housing for at least 90,000 IDPs in the region of Absheron ([Contact.az](#), 15 January 2013), including 5,400 who have been occupying other people's homes since their displacement. The relocation of this group will comply with a number of European Court of Human Rights rulings in favour of the apartments' owners, which Azerbaijan is obliged to implement having ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 2002 ([Radio Azadlyg](#), 12 February 2013). By the end of 2015, the government plans to have moved another 110,000 IDPs currently living in military bases, schools, kindergartens, sanatoriums and summer camps ([Eurasianet](#), 19 November 2013). If all goes ahead as planned, it will have provided new housing to around 70 per cent of the country's IDPs.

These efforts have undoubtedly improved the living conditions of tens of thousands of people, but shortcomings with the housing programme have also been reported. The quality of some of the new housing is poor and repairs have been needed within months of completion. Access to water, transport, land and jobs is limited in some settlements, and IDPs said they had not been consulted or otherwise involved in the planning process, despite official claims to the contrary. Many IDPs, and especially women, have only very limited information about the government's relocation plans and are unsure if they are included (Brookings-LSE, December 2011). Some would have preferred to stay at their previous location with assistance to improve their housing, but this was not an option. Spending does not seem to have been monitored, and some IDPs said they had received lower quality housing than planned as a result ([Obyektiv TV](#), 31 August 2012; [ICG](#), 27 February 2012; [Kavkaz Uzel](#), 5 May 2011; [CoE](#), 31 May 2011).

New housing is allocated on a temporary basis until IDPs are able to return, and they are not allowed to rent, sell or mortgage the property. In an effort to maintain social cohesion, the new settlements also tend to be isolated from exist-

ing communities. The programme has therefore continued the collective accommodation of IDPs separate from the general population. The policy, however, serves to hamper IDPs' integration in their new settlement areas and reinforces the sense that their residence is temporary, with return ultimately being the only solution available to them. It also stigmatises IDPs as poor and helpless, which in turn hinders their efforts to improve their self-reliance ([Wistrand](#), February 2013). The government should ensure its housing programme for IDPs helps to end segregation of IDPs rather than perpetuate it.

IDPs who have not been relocated continue to live in dilapidated housing. Living space in public buildings such as university dormitories has become cramped as families that have grown continue to occupy single rooms. Large numbers of families share kitchens and bathrooms, and plumbing problems, broken facilities and damp are common. Electrical wiring is exposed and circuits overloaded with makeshift connections. In some cases, such problems may have caused whole floors and even entire buildings to collapse, and fires have also broken out ([Gapp](#), 8 May 2013; [Kavkaz Uzel](#), 3 September 2011; [Radio Azadlyg](#), 30 June 2011; [Obyektiv TV](#), 25 March 2013; [Kavkaz Uzel](#), 13 June 2012; [Contact.az](#), 2012; [Radio Azadlyg](#), 4 February 2011; [Eurasianet](#), 19 November 2013). Some IDPs living in public buildings have been evicted to make way for urban development, but alternative housing has not always been provided ([HRW](#), 6 May 2013; [Radio Azadlyg](#), 15 January 2011; [RFE/RL](#), 31 July 2013; [BBC](#), 21 May 2012; [RFE/RL](#), 5 July 2013; [HETQ](#), 18 June 2013).

Other IDPs are still living in makeshift shelters made from scrap materials and with no access to utilities or sanitation. These have been established anywhere from railway wagons to basements and areas below football stadiums, and they are often unsafe, particularly for children who play in dangerous conditions ([Radio Azadlyg](#), 3 April

2013; [IWPR](#), 5 November 2012; [Wistrand](#), February 2013; [Contact.az](#), 2 September 2013). IDPs' housing conditions in rural areas are also crowded and inadequate, with poor roads and only limited access to water in some areas ([World Bank](#), April 2013). IDPs in inadequate housing suffer particularly poor health, with ailments ranging from heart conditions and high blood pressure to diabetes and rheumatism, as well as mental health problems ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011; [CIE](#), 2013; [UNHCR](#), 2009; [European University Institute](#), 2013). Most IDPs in public buildings, makeshift shelters and rural areas have not invested in significant renovations, given their belief that their situation is temporary and the fact that they do not own their property. As a result their living conditions have only deteriorated since their displacement.

Precarious livelihoods

IDPs continue to suffer worse rates of unemployment and poverty than the general population. According to government figures, the poverty rate among IDPs fell from around 75 to 18 per cent between 2003 and 2013, compared with a drop from 50 to six per cent for the population as a whole ([Trend.Az](#), 20 June 2013; [GoA](#), 3 May 2013). The rate fell faster for IDPs, most likely as a result of the government's positive discrimination measures. In 2011, the World Bank reported that the poverty rate for IDPs was 25 per cent, while for the general population it was 20 per cent. It also put the unemployment rate for IDPs at 60 per cent, compared with 43 per cent for the general population. The situation is particularly acute in rural areas and for internally displaced youth ([World Bank](#), October 2011). Land allocated to IDPs tends to be relatively infertile, which has further limited their ability to generate an income.

State benefits continue to be the main source of income for more than 70 per cent of IDPs. These include the monthly allowance for IDPs, currently set at just over \$23, and other social assistance for vulnerable groups ([UNHCR](#), October 2012, p. 3, [World Bank](#), October 2011). This is despite the

fact that 40 per cent of IDPs are employed, which suggests that for some their earnings do not cover basic needs. Since January 2011 the number receiving the monthly allowance has been cut by 70,000 ([Caucasian Knot](#), 20 May 2011). Those affected include IDPs who work for government agencies, law enforcement bodies and the military; those who register as permanent residents at a property they own; and children whose parents are not both displaced ([News Azerbaijan](#), 10 January 2011; [Radio Azadlyg](#), 6 March 2012). IDPs also report having been asked to pay bribes when they applied for state benefits other than the IDP allowance ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011).

High unemployment of IDPs has effects beyond economic hardship. There were 5,000 early marriages recorded in Azerbaijan in 2013 and cases of children abandoning school to earn an income for their family have also been reported. Early marriages and child labour affect IDPs, but there are no specific figures on the extent to which they are affected ([European University Institute](#), 2013; [Wistrand](#), 11 February 2013; [UN SR](#), 6 December 2013). Early marriages may provide financial relief for a bride's family, but they are detrimental to girls' physical, mental and reproductive health. Many families have been forced to split up as men of working age leave in search of livelihoods elsewhere in Azerbaijan or in Russia, but again there are no figures to show how many IDPs have become labour migrants ([IDMC](#), May 2013; [UNCHR](#), 25 January 1999; [European University Institute](#), 2013).

Other internally displaced families are reluctant to move to find jobs elsewhere. They report their monthly allowance and other IDP assistance, including new housing, is dependent on their continued presence at their government-registered address ([UNHCR](#), 2009; [European University Institute](#), 2013). By linking the provision of assistance to IDPs' registered addresses, the government aims to maintain displaced communities so that they can reintegrate more easily upon return.

At the same time, however, it restricts IDPs' right to freedom of movement and choice of residence. As recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee, Azerbaijan should relax its procedures for the registration of addresses to ensure that IDPs are able to fully exercise these rights ([UN CCPR](#) 13 August 2009).

Insecurity adds to the difficulties people living along the LoC face in accessing their land for livelihoods. Around 128,000 people, both locals and IDPs, live within five kilometres of the LoC ([ICG](#), 27 February 2012). With virtually no local employment or income generating opportunities, most depend on subsistence farming, but their livelihoods are undermined, either because their land is occupied by Armenian troops or because it is too close to the LoC for safety ([British Red Cross](#), 27 June 2012; [Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011; [Saferworld and Conciliation Resources](#), May 2012). The Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Awareness continues to clear landmines and run public information campaigns ([ANAMA](#), January 2014), and the Azerbaijan Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ARRA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have built protective walls and redesigned homes to shield the most exposed residents from stray bullets ([ICRC](#), 27 June 2013; [ICRC](#), 12 September 2013; [Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011). Despite these efforts, residents continue to struggle to access and earn an income from their land.

Segregated education

IDPs in larger communities are offered education separate from the rest of the population. Their parents are given the choice of sending their children to mainstream schools or institutions specifically for the displaced. The curriculums are identical, however, and in some places classes are taught in the same building. Around 60 per cent of displaced children are educated separately, and the government continues to exempt all IDPs from paying for secondary school textbooks and tuition fees for higher education in state institutions ([CIE](#),

2013). The government's rationale for segregated schooling is that it helps children to adapt to their displacement and to maintain the social fabric of displaced communities, which in turn will make integration easier when they return. Many IDPs also value and wish to retain both their status and separate schooling, so that their children understand their heritage and because they find teachers in schools for IDPs more attentive and collaborative ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011).

Prolonged segregation is not, however, in the best interests of the child. Policymakers agree that internally displaced children should study in local schools as soon as they arrive in their places of refuge ([Brookings-Bern](#), 2008, p.226; [UNHCR](#), February 2003, p.48; [UNHCR](#), 1994, p.112). Special measures for separate education may be necessary for logistical reasons in the immediate aftermath of flight, but the justification weakens as displacement continues, even if parents support the practice ([IDMC](#), 2011). Segregation reinforces IDPs' stigmatisation and their isolation from the broader community and encourages nostalgia for the past, hampering their integration and adding to their precarious social position ([CIE](#), 2013; [Wistrand](#), 11 February 2013; [NRC](#), March 2010).

Encouraging mixed schooling with local children, as recommended by a number of UN bodies, would speed the integration of displaced children and their parents and help to restore the rights that the government is responsible for ensuring in the absence of possibilities for return ([UNHRC](#), 23 December 2010; [UN CEDAW](#), 2009; [UN CERD](#), 7 September 2009; [UNCHR](#), 25 January 1999). As the former representative of the secretary general on the human rights of IDPs, Walter Kälin, recommended in 2008, a study of the quality of education at schools for IDPs, access to it, the performance of students and their views of their schools would be useful in better understanding their needs and issues, with the ultimate aim of ensuring they become integrated members of society ([UNHRC](#), 15 April 2008).

Gender-based violence

Internally displaced women and girls experience higher rates of abuse at the hands of their parents, partners and partners' family members than their counterparts in the general population, mainly because of their greater economic vulnerability (Pathfinder International, 2000; UNIFEM, 2006; UNFPA, 2008; WARD, 2009; UNFPA, 2011). Strained family finances, crowded living conditions and lack of prospects for the future are reported to trigger violence as well as underage and unregistered marriages ([UN CRC](#), 12 March 2012). The number of such marriages increased from 4,000 in 2012 to 5,000 in 2013 nationwide as the legal age for marriage was raised to 18 in 2011 ([UN CESCR](#), 5 June 2013). Widespread notions of family unity, shame and stigma help to keep women and girls silent, as does the general view of the police and family support centres that gender-based violence is a private matter ([UN SR](#), 5 December 2013).

As recommended by numerous UN treaty bodies, the government should collect disaggregated data on the prevalence of underage marriage, including among IDPs, as an important first step in addressing and ultimately eradicating the issue ([UN CESCR](#), 5 June 2013; [UN CEDAW](#), 2009; [UN CCPR](#), 13 August 2009). The UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women have also recommended the government implement measures to improve access to education, employment, health and housing for internally displaced women and girls, and that it consult IDPs, particularly women, on the renovation of collective centres ([UN CEDAW](#), 2009; [UN SR](#), 5 December 2013). Such measures would work to increase their self-reliance as well as quality of their family life and contribution to their surrounding community.

Discrimination against IDPs' children

The children of women registered as IDPs are treated differently to those of men with the same registration. A child whose father is registered, but

whose mother is not, is eligible to be registered themselves and is entitled to the benefits that registration affords. The same is true of the children of divorced, widowed and unmarried women who are registered as IDPs. A child whose mother is registered but whose father is not, however, is not eligible. The result is that IDPs' children are treated differently based on the registration of their father.

The government says its stance is based on the fact that when internally displaced women marry, they move to and are registered at their husband's residence, as are their children. Men who have not been displaced have property and housing, meaning that their children do not need to be registered as IDPs. Children born to men with IDP registration are registered at their fathers' place of origin. Registration of IDPs' children should be granted according to need to avoid such discrimination.

Limited participation in public life

IDPs may not vote or stand as candidates in municipal elections in their place of refuge. They are allowed to run as candidates and vote in municipal elections, but only in their places of origin. The government maintains constituencies in IDPs' places of origin, ready for the time when return becomes possible. Some IDPs themselves prefer this arrangement as part of their desire to preserve the cohesion of their community and retain a separate voice in parliament from other communities in their places of refuge ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011; [ICG](#), 27 February 2012). The result, however, is that IDPs have no influence on local politics and are unable to campaign on local issues they deem important. Their inability to take part in local politics limits their access to local government resources and narrows their options for addressing their displacement-related needs. It also hampers their integration, especially in the absence of other mechanisms for them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The fact that decisions are made for them does not improve IDPs' self-reliance, but rather reinforces

their expectation of, and dependence on, government assistance ([Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011; [ICG](#), 27 February 2012).

Prospects for durable solutions

Limited settlement options

The government's preferred settlement option is for IDPs to return to the seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh and the enclave itself. In consultation with international organisations, it is reported to have drafted a programme in 2005 that established the principles of return and coordination mechanisms in the event of a peace deal, but details have not been made publicly available ([News Azerbaijan](#), 22 November 2011; [Brookings-LSE](#), December 2011; Johansson, 2010, p. 70; [Eurasianet](#), 2 August 2009).

Despite the fact that many IDPs have in effect integrated locally in their places of refuge, either out of choice or for lack of other options, the government does not recognise such achievements as a durable solution because to do so would imply giving up its claim to disputed territory (Johansson, 2010, p. 71; [EC](#), April 2012). Its view is that resolution of displacement can only happen after resolution of the conflict. Until return is possible, however, it is obliged to create the conditions for the integration of IDPs in consultation with them ([UN Guiding Principles](#): 28, 1998). Pursuing peace at the same time as undertaking efforts to strengthen IDPs' capacities while still in displacement would also ensure that those affected were able to make informed choices about return when such a move becomes possible.

Prospects for resolution of the conflict

There does not currently appear to be any prospect of a political solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Negotiations have been facilitated by the OSCE's Minsk Group since 1992, but no significant progress has been made. The

two countries' presidents met for the first time in nearly two years at the end of 2013 and emerged to say that they could work with each other to find a settlement ([RFE/RL](#), 19 December 2013; [de Waal](#), 22 January 2014). Full negotiations have not resumed, however, and despite their conciliatory rhetoric they continue to stick firmly to their positions on the origin of the enclave and the conflict.

Both presidents have kept their negotiations private and confidential, excluding the de facto authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh, displaced Azerbaijanis and wider society on both sides, making them unaccountable before their respective publics. Information and public debate on the conflict are heavily controlled in Azerbaijan, and narratives beyond the official line and calls for peace are rarely heard ([Freedom House](#), June 2013; [Conciliation Resources](#), 20 October 2013; [International Alert](#), August 2013). More than 4,600 people are still registered as missing, 3,770 of them in Azerbaijan, and families are still waiting for news on their fate and whereabouts ([ICRC](#), 30 August 2012; [UN SR](#), 5 December 2013). Increasing the resources available for peacemaking in both Azerbaijan and Armenia would make the prospects for a negotiated settlement less bleak.

In the meantime, provocative acts by both sides further entrench their positions ([ICG](#), 1 July 2013; [AFP](#), 3 September 2012; [Conciliation Resources](#), September 2012; [ICG](#), 26 September 2013). Given the continuing impasse, and the fact that Azerbaijan's military spending in 2013 was \$3.7 billion, more than Armenia's entire state budget, the risk of renewed violence is ever-present ([ICG](#), 26 September 2013).

National response

Significant efforts to date

The government has shown significant commitment to improving IDPs' lives. In 1993, it established the State Committee for Refugees and

Internally Displaced Persons, which has been chaired since its inception by one of the deputy prime ministers, Ali Hasanov. The issue is at the forefront of national politics and an extensive legal framework exists to address it. This includes the 1999 Law on the Status of Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons ([GoA](#), 1999), the 1999 Law on Social Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons ([GoA](#), 1999) and the 2004 State Programme for the Improvement of Living Standards and Generation of Employment for Refugees and IDPs ([GoA](#), 2004). The latter was amended in 2007 and 2011 to include additional support for IDPs, and a revised programme for 2015 to 2020 is under preparation.

The government has also trained state officials on IDPs' rights, collected data on the number and location of the displaced population, raised national awareness of internal displacement and cooperated with international and regional organisations on the issue. The Ministry for Emergency Situations is responsible for people displaced by disasters.

As considerable income from petrochemicals has come on stream, some of the new wealth has been used to respond to IDPs' needs. The State Oil Fund for Azerbaijan earmarked around \$600 million to improve IDPs' living and housing conditions in 2013, and by the end of year, the government had spent \$5.4 billion over two decades ([World Bank](#), October 2011, [World Bank](#), April 2013, [Trend. Az](#), 20 June 2013; [Oxu.az](#), 30 August 2013; [GoA](#), 27 November 2013). It has relocated around 180,000 IDPs and refugees to new villages, and improved access to utilities and built new wells and roads in areas along the LoC. The Ministry of Emergency Situations has embraced disaster risk reduction and management, and has received significant financial and political support ([UNICEF and UNISDR](#), December 2011, p. 48). The government also allocated \$382 million for repairs and reconstruction after the 2012 earthquake and \$586 million after the 2010 floods ([President of Azerbaijan](#), 9 September 2012; [IWPR](#), 5 November 2012).

It has also taken a number of measures to improve the economic situation of internally displaced families. Most of those granted status as IDPs are entitled to a monthly allowance, currently set at just over \$23; temporary housing; a plot of land; tax privileges; and free secondary school textbooks, heating fuel, utilities, local telephone calls, health services and higher education. Many of those who were public sector employees at the time of their displacement have kept their posts on the basis that the organisations they work for still function "in exile", and those who have since been dismissed for reasons beyond their control continue to receive an average monthly salary. The government has also set employment quotas for IDPs, issued thousands of IDPs with low-interest credit, allocated 50,000 hectares of land to IDPs and established 760 farm enterprises employing 45,000 displaced people ([ICG](#), 27 February 2012; [Trend](#), 13 February 2013; email correspondence with [GoA](#), 5 September 2013; [News.az](#), 17 May 2013).

Outstanding challenges

Despite these impressive efforts, significant challenges remain. The government has spent enormous sums on housing for IDPs, but the vast majority continue to live in substandard conditions, including some of those displaced by the 2012 earthquake and 2010 floods. Given that those displaced by the conflict have endured their current conditions for two decades and prospects for return are poor, the government must expand the housing options it offers to include purchase certificates through which IDPs could find and buy their own accommodation, the allocation of government-purchased apartments and houses, and financial assistance to build their own housing. It must also speed up the construction and allocation of new units for the most vulnerable and ensure that all IDPs are better informed, consulted and involved in the development and implementation of such plans. Many people have had their homes repaired or rebuilt, but others report that funds have not reached all those in need and that

build quality is poor ([Kura](#), 27 May 2011; IWPR, 5 November 2012).

The majority of IDPs still struggle to earn enough income despite government measures to stimulate their employment. Given the many negative effects of unemployment that IDPs experience, a comprehensive national-level study is needed to determine the causes, characteristics and scope of economic migration, child labour and early marriage. Specific data on IDPs is required to determine whether or not they are disproportionately affected, and, if so, IDPs' ideas on how their economic situation might be improved. Such a study would be a step towards implementing the recommendations of Kälin and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to strengthen programmes to improve IDPs' economic integration, employment opportunities and self-reliance, with particular attention being paid to the young and the long-term unemployed ([UNHRC](#), 23 December 2010; [UN CESCR](#), 5 June 2013).

Consultation and participation of IDPs in processes that affect them could be improved. The government has not established mechanisms to ensure IDPs' consultation and participation in decision-making, and their meaningful involvement in reconciliation processes has not been permitted. IDPs with disabilities, older people and those with other special needs are included in national programmes, but there are few targeted measures to identify and respond to their particular situations. UN treaty bodies have recommended the government ensure the timely consultation of IDPs on its plans for them, with channels for their voices to be heard and particular attention to the participation of women ([UN CEDAW](#), 7 August 2009; [UN CERD](#), 7 September 2009). Some municipal offices receive IDPs on certain days to hear their concerns, and this practice should be replicated in all areas of refuge.

In terms of law and policy, the 1999 legislation on forcibly displaced people must be brought into

line with the Guiding Principles. The definition of internal displacement in the legislation should be broadened to include human rights violations and generalised violence as causes of displacement. People displaced by disasters should also be registered as IDPs, making them eligible for the benefits set out in the 1999 laws. Separate laws on IDPs and refugees, and policies dedicated to displacement caused by disasters are also required to ensure a comprehensive approach overall.

The rights, needs and legitimate interests of IDPs must guide all future policies and decisions on internal displacement and durable solutions. To ensure this, a comprehensive profiling assessment is required to establish both the number of IDPs still in need as a result of their displacement more than 20 years ago, and the extent of those needs. Such a study could inform the new state programme for IDPs for 2015 to 2020, and ensure it fosters their self-reliance and full social integration while they wait to be able to return. As Kälin has stated, basing assistance on updated and comprehensive data would improve IDPs' prospects of achieving a durable solution, whether it be by return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country ([UNHRC](#), 23 December 2010).

International response

There has been a steady decline in international humanitarian engagement in Azerbaijan, as the country has experienced substantial oil-driven growth that has enabled it to become an aid donor itself ([EU](#), 12 November 2007). International organisations have found it increasingly difficult to secure funding, but a number continue to work with IDPs. These include ICRC, World Vision, Oxfam, the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise, and the International Organisation for Migration. In 2011, the World Bank launched a \$78.5 million project to improve IDPs' economic self-reliance and living conditions in more than 60 collective centres ([World Bank](#), 7 April 2013). Given that

with the exception of ICRC, international agencies rely on local NGOs as implementing partners, the establishment of an operating environment more conducive to their work is particularly important. Restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association continue to make their work difficult ([CoE](#), 12 November 2013; [EurasiaNet](#), 11 December 2013).

Despite pressure on its budget, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) undertook its largest participatory assessment in the country to date in 2013, interviewing around 1,500 IDPs and 150 of their local community neighbours. In addition to standard questions on protection risks, the assessment included others on IDPs' development priorities and challenges. The assessment's findings informed UN-facilitated national consultations with Azerbaijani citizens for the country's post-2015 sustainable development framework, which is aligned with the government's Azerbaijan 2020: Outlook for the Future strategy. It found that IDPs' development priorities were improved living conditions, economic and social self-reliance, good quality education and health care, inclusion in decision-making and a peaceful resolution to the conflict ([UN Azerbaijan](#), 26 September 2013).

Inter-governmental organisations continue to focus on conflict resolution. The OSCE and the co-chairs of its Minsk Group - Russia, France and the United States – have conducted more than two decades of diplomacy, but a resolution to the conflict and the achievement of durable solutions to displacement remain elusive. The OSCE should do more to push for IDPs to be consulted in the process at the headquarters and field level. The EU's special representative on the South Caucasus, Philippe Lefort, visited Azerbaijan in mid-2013 and pressed for confidence-building measures. The new special representative to be appointed in 2014 should also meet IDPs and insist on their active engagement in peace and reconciliation efforts in addition to confidence-building measures.

The achievement of durable solutions in Azerbaijan will require the coordinated engagement of a wide range of national and international actors, including development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding organisations, donors, the private sector and the government.

Given the protracted nature of displacement and the limited information on IDPs available, the data collected during UNHCR's latest participatory assessment is an important basis from which to develop a policy for full integration of IDPs while they wait for return. This data could be used to design a larger scale IDP profiling exercise to determine what remains to be done to achieve full integration of IDPs in accordance with the criteria set out in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs. Including IDPs and their neighbours in the profiling exercise, and using the information gathered to enact policy that ensures IDPs can access their rights without discrimination where they currently live, will serve to facilitate IDPs' integration until return becomes possible.

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is a world leader in the monitoring and analysis of the causes, effects and responses to internal displacement. IDMC advocates for better responses to the needs of the millions of people worldwide who are displaced within their own countries as a consequence of conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters. It is also at the forefront of efforts to promote greater respect for the basic rights of internally displaced people (IDPs). IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

What we do:

- Promote appropriate responses to internal displacement through targeted advocacy
- Provide timely, accessible and relevant information on internal displacement worldwide
- Develop research and analysis to help shape policies and practices that have positive outcomes for IDPs
- Provide training and support to country-based policy-makers and practitioners with a responsibility to protect IDPs

Who do we target?

IDMC is best placed to effect positive change for IDPs through advocacy to influence the decisions and practices of duty bearers and all those with a responsibility or capacity to promote or fulfil the rights of IDPs.

How do we operate?

As information on internal displacement is often controversial and politically sensitive, IDMC must continue to operate and be seen to operate as an independent and effective global monitor of this widespread phenomenon.

IDMC has become an indispensable resource for anyone seeking impartial data and analysis on internal displacement, independent of political or operational considerations. www.internal-displacement.org

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