

**On July 1, 2009 the Office of Heinrich Boell Foundation held public debates on the subject:**

**“The fate of Georgian IDPs: hardship, problems, hopes”**

**Speakers:**

**Medea Turashvili – International Crisis Group**

**Marina Pochkhua– ID Women’s Association “Tankhmoba”**

**Iulia Kharashvili –Ministry of Refugees and Settlement**

**Moderation: Gogi Gvakharia**

“This clock has stopped for those thousands of IDPs who had to leave their houses after the August war. We should speak whether the situation will change or not”, – with these words Iris Kempe, the director of the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation has opened the Uwe Schober’s exhibition which was dedicated to the Russian-Georgian conflict and human perspectives.

The same subject has been dedicated to the debates at the Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation. The invited guests spoke about the problems of IDPs. The first speaker Marina Pochkhua, representative of ID Women’s Association “Consent” said that comparing to IDPs of the old wave the state has made much more for the people who had to leave their houses after the August war, though many problems are not solved so far. According to M. Pochkhua the issue related to the privatization process is the main problem. Upon the adoption of the acting plan the process of space privatization in communal centers is intensively going on. The main problems are related to small quantity of spaces and non-alternativeness of privatization.

Medea Turashvili, the analyst of the International Crisis Group underlined the perspective of returning of IDPs and spoke about the Akhagori region where the perspective of returning of IDPs is seen in the near future. IDPs settled in Tserovani are saying that if the social-economical situation is improved the return of IDPs to Akhagori would be possible.

The government of Georgia should try to find a common language with the de-facto government of the so called South Ossetia in regards to returning and security of the population. It should be implemented in the format of Geneva negotiations. Probably the only way is that Georgia should use the Geneva format in order to raise a question of IDPs. As Medea Turashvili said returning of IDPs to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region in the near future is less expected, therefore in such situation the creation of normal residential conditions for these people should be the priority for the government.

The stream of accuser IDPs at the Ministry of Refugees and Settlement confirms the elaboration of programs therein. There always emerge problems and questions when it is started to overcome something during fifteen years. Iulia Kharashvili, a representative of the Ministry of Refugees and Settlement said that more is done, more questions will be arisen. She spoke about the acting plan and the strategy of the Ministry. So far there is a different practice in relation to the old and new IDPs. According to Kharashvili the acting plan adopted in May is concerning all IDPs and no one should be left outside the project.

Iulia Kharashvili mentioned that at present the Ministry is working on the privatization of the space which is not a subject of argument. About four thousand families have already got a certificate of ownership which is very important and positive. She also spoke about the problems related to the privatization process and underlined the compact settlement of IDPs in those centers being under the private ownership.

According to Iulia Kharashvili's information the state strategy is focused on two basic objectives: a peaceful, voluntary returning of IDPs and improvement of their residential conditions until the return is possible. Therefore, the Ministry is working on the second objective as the returning of IDPs is not safe yet.

Iulia Kharashvili also spoke about IDPs living in the private sector and mentioned that they have not received different kinds of aid unlike those IDPs living in the compact spaces who were receiving it for many years. That is why now the government has planned to provide a special assistance for them.

Several organizations together with the Ministry are working on the employment of IDPs. Three big projects are being implemented in Gori, one of them is carried out on the bases of the Gori University in frames of UNOMIG. USAID is financing the project of professional training at the college in Khidistavi. It is planned to train about three thousand people in frames of this project. IDPs are studying English and computer.

The issue of training and employment of IDPs has caused a special interest at the debates. The speakers have been asked the following questions: does the people whose life is connected with agriculture want to study English and computer; what land plots have been given to each family, and which agrarian cultures have been offered by the state; is it planned to carry out the research on economical development of the settled population, etc.

According to I. Kharashvili land plots have been given to all settled IDPs except for two settlements. The plot norm has not been equally defined in all villages as there were different possibilities. All houses have their own spaces which have been given various seeds by the order of the government.

As Marina Pochkhua said the organization "Tankhmoba" has conducted a special research in order to find out what is mostly required for IDPs. The majority of IDPs said that they need money, however it is not known for them the way of earning money. Therefore, these people should be learned how to get well and not to wait permanently the assistance of the state, they should know their rights and whom to apply.

At the conclusion of the debates the director of South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation thanked the audience and the speakers for constructive and interesting debates.

According to Iris Kempe the clock on the picture is stopped at the same point, however the fact that the discussion on the mentioned subject has begun is already good.