



## New Report on IDP Cottages Looks at Transparency in Aid and Construction

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Tbilisi—Transparency International Georgia has issued a new report about the process and the quality of construction of the cottages that were built for IDPs displaced in August 2008. The report was prepared with the support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation within the framework of the *Transparent Aid for Georgia* coalition.

“The coalition *Transparent Aid for Georgia* was established after the August 2008 war and it consists of 7 non-governmental organizations. The coalition is monitoring the spending of the international financial aid pledged for Georgia after the war, focusing especially on infrastructure, energy projects and IDP housing. This report is part of this big initiative”, noted the executive director of the Open Society Georgia Foundation, Ketik Khutsishvili.

Following a one-year monitoring process, the report finds that the main problems in construction quality that persist today and continue to negatively affect the lives of IDPs, are due to a poor architectural plan that was drafted behind closed doors without broader consultation or expertise.

“The cottages were constructed in the post-war period and the mindset at that time was focused on providing emergency shelter, rather than long-term, durable shelter. Some aspects of the planning process did attempt to address the long-term needs of IDPs, such as identifying land plots with the recognition that many IDPs came from subsistence agricultural backgrounds. But the architectural design of the cottages was done so quickly and with so little planning that the final result is something in between emergency and durable shelter,” said Vakhtang Kobaladze, TI Georgia’s Executive Director. “The problems with the mold and damp could have been foreseen by a planning process that included a wider number of experts.”

Independent engineers who assessed the cottages for TI Georgia found that the structural integrity of the cottages is sound and they are expected to remain standing for many years, albeit with continuing mold and damp problems.

The report also assessed the procurement monitoring systems of the Municipal Development Fund (MDF) and Mtskheta municipality, both of which managed separate sets of contracts with construction companies. The report finds that although the MDF’s system for monitoring construction work is generally well-documented and allows independent parties to verify the process, the inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate method used to document cottage defects and verify that they were repaired erodes the agency’s ability to hold construction companies responsible for problems in quality of construction. And while MDF employed supervisory engineers to monitor each construction contract, there was no final, independent assessment of the construction quality.

Mtskheta municipality’s procurement monitoring also lacked independence: the commission responsible for reviewing the cottage quality was made up of Mtskheta Municipality and the monitoring company it hired. In addition, the documentation and repair of defects appears to have been conducted on an ad hoc basis and with a less rigorous, comprehensive approach to addressing the problems caused by construction companies.

The report emphasizes in its conclusion the need for better communication by the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation towards IDPs; this should also involve publication of architectural plans and full transparency of construction company contracts and budgets.

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