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## Activities of Local Non-governmental Organizations and State Policy of the Republic of Armenia on Refugees

Alina Topchyan<sup>1</sup>

### List of Abbreviations

<b>CRS</b>	- Catholic Relief Service
<b>DMR</b>	- Department of Migration and Refugees
<b>GoA</b>	- Government of Armenia
<b>IOM</b>	- International Organization for Migration
<b>NA</b>	- National Assembly
<b>NGO</b>	- Non-governmental organization
<b>RoA</b>	- Republic of Armenia
<b>UNHCR</b>	- United Nations High Commission for Refugees

### Abstract

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh brought to Armenia a considerable number of forcibly displaced people from different parts of Azerbaijan. According to UNHCR statistics, about 300,000 of these people were ethnic Armenians. For more than a decade now Armenians from Azerbaijan have been living in Armenian society. Since then, the prospects for repatriation of the refugees to their former places of residence are far from realistic due to continuing inter-ethnic conflict. Therefore, the process of naturalization and full integration of these people became the ultimate goal for the Government of Armenia. However, this process is advancing very slowly. Only about 10% of all refugees gained Armenian citizenship. What are the reasons for this? According to surveys conducted by several NGOs, the main problems faced by refugees are naturalization, housing and employment. So, in this paper, the problems with naturalization, housing and employment are considered to be the main barriers to integration of refugees in Armenian society.

Together with state institutions, there are a number of international organizations as well as local NGOs working on the resolution of these problems. The major institutions among the international organizations are UNHCR, NRC, IOM and others; local NGOs also constitute a considerable part of such organizations and these are the Refugee Foundation, the Sakharov Fund, the Union of Refugees, and others.

Thus, the topic of this paper is the implementation of the policy of the Government of Armenia on naturalization and integration of refugees by local NGOs, particularly in the spheres of naturalization, job creation and housing. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of local NGOs in the implementation and improvement of state policy.

The findings and analyses made during this study allowed for several conclusions:

- 1) After 1998, there was more attention placed on the problems of refugees. However, many laws and decisions do not work in reality and exist only on paper.
- 2) The Armenian Government does not have a separate employment policy directed towards resolution of refugee employment problems.
- 3) Local NGOs actively participate in the implementation and improvement of state policy. The majority of these work on naturalization issues. Only a very limited number of the NGOs studied focus on housing and employment activities and this is limited and on a small scale.
- 4) Local NGOs have a certain influence on the state policy towards refugees.
- 5) The overall assessment of state policy by the NGOs leaders is negative.
- 6) Financial dependence is the major hindrance restricting the activities of NGOs.

<sup>1</sup> American University of Armenia 2001, School of Political Science and International Affairs

## Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the transition from a communist to democratic form of government for most of the CIS was marked by intensive migratory movements and these were partly due to ethnic and territorial cleavages. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh brought to Armenia a considerable number of forcibly displaced people from different parts of Azerbaijan. According to UNHCR statistics, the number of these people was about 300,000 ethnic Armenians. (<http://www.unhcr.ch/world/euro/armenia.htm>)

Together with demographic changes, the influx of these people brought various socio-economic and political hardships and this happened at the time when there was a grievous economic and political stalemate.

For more than a decade, Armenians from Azerbaijan have been living in Armenian society. Since that time, the prospects for repatriation of the refugees to their former places of residence are far from realistic due to continuing inter-ethnic conflict. Therefore, the process of naturalization and full integration of these people has become the ultimate goal of the Government of Armenia.

Nowadays, Armenian legislation provides almost the same rights to refugees as it does to all citizens of the Republic of Armenia. Several legislative acts such as the "Law on Citizenship," the "Law on Socio-Economic Guarantees to Refugees," and the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, etc., have created rather favorable conditions for the naturalization of refugees. However, this process is advancing very slowly and according to UNHCR statistics, after the beginning of the active naturalization campaign in 1998 only about 10% of all refugees have gained Armenian citizenship. The reasons for this are many and complicated; but the most obvious of these is the difficult socio-economic situation of the refugee population. According to "Human Rights and Human Development, Armenia 2000," the main problems that refugees face are housing and employment. Therefore, along with other difficulties, the problems with housing and employment should be among the priority issues to resolve.

Together with state institutions, there are a number of international organizations as well as local NGOs working on the resolution of these problems. The major institutions among the international organizations are UNHCR, NRC, IOM and others; local NGOs also constitute a considerable part of such organizations and these include the Refugee Foundation, the Sakharov Fund, and the Union of Refugees, among others. According to their missions, all their activities should be directed towards facilitating the integration of refugees in Armenian society. Analysis of the effectiveness of the work these institutions implement will be the focus of this paper. Thus, the topic of this paper is the implementation of the policy of the Government of Armenia on naturalization and integration of refugees by local NGOs, particularly in the spheres of naturalization, job creation and housing. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of local NGOs in the implementation and improvement of state policy.

The following research questions should be answered in the paper:

1. What is the state policy towards Azerbaijani refugees directed towards the resolution of naturalization, housing and employment problems?
2. What projects have been undertaken by local NGOs to facilitate naturalization?
3. What activities have been undertaken by local NGOs towards the resolution of housing problems?
4. What projects are undertaken by local NGOs to increase employment opportunities?
5. Is there any influence of NGOs on the state policy towards refugees?
6. What are the hindrances for the effective implementation of the NGO activity?
7. What is the attitude of NGO representatives towards government policies?

## Literature Review

### State policy towards refugees from Azerbaijan in 1988-1998

The state policy of the RoA towards refugees varied in the course of time. Refugee issues were not always on the government agenda.

There are four phases of the state policy towards refugees that are distinguished in the book "Poverty of Vulnerable Groups in Armenia" published by UNHCR, UNDP and UNCF (United Nations Coordinator Fund). According to this book, the first phase (1988-1990) was mainly directed at receiving refugees, providing temporary housing and solving their most urgent problems. One of the most important problems for the government in that period was to place homeless people in housing. Therefore, the majority of the refugees were provided with temporary housing in places such as public health and vacation resorts, dormitories, hotels and school buildings. The government decrees during this period were mostly concerned with creation of special committees that would be busy with refugee issues (dec. # 699, 11.29.89; dec. # 10, 01.10.90), socio-economic issues (dec. #593, 11.20.89; dec. #22, 01.19.90) and humanitarian assistance (dec. #302, 06.20.90; dec. #535, 11.21.90).

For the implementation of the government policy, a special commission on refugee problems was created in 1988, which later in 1989 became a separate body.

The second period (1991-1995), which coincided with the establishment of the newly independent Armenian State, was the period of adaptation of refugees to economic, public and social environment. However, it should be noted that such crucial events as the break-up of the USSR, declaration of independence of Armenia, war in Karabakh and the economic sanctions added to the severe socio-economic hardships of the population of Armenia as a whole. Moreover, as a result, these factors had a certain amount of impact on the nature of the policy of the state towards refugees. Together with the local population, refugees suffered a sharp decrease in living conditions, increased unemployment as well as all other factors of such an unstable socio-economic situation.

So the state policy at that time was mainly directed towards the "Paros" social program, which included refugees being on an equal basis as locals, as well as other humanitarian assistance programs (dec. #421, 10.06.92; dec. #385, 07.26.93).

During this period, the first international instrument related to refugees was signed by

the Government of Armenia (1993), particularly the 1951 Convention on Status of Refugees. The adoption of this document meant that Armenia joined one of the main regulations of international law and from that time it been in compliance with this law in relation to the refugee population.

The third phase encompasses the years from 1996-1998. This period was marked with quite a passive state policy towards refugees. In 1996 and 1997, there were only 3 governmental decrees concerning refugees. This can be explained by the fact that the refugee population was considered similar to the rest of vulnerable groups in Armenia. As with all other social strata of the Armenian population, refugees were included in such social instruments of the state policy as unemployment benefits, pensions, and family benefits.

More attention to refugee problems came with the new stage of the state policy, which began in 1998 and which is still in a state of implementation. This stage is considered the fourth and final stage on the way to civil integration and naturalization of refugees.

The role of naturalization in the process of full integration of refugees can hardly be overestimated. "The Government of Armenia attaches great importance to the process of naturalization and believes that the process of naturalization should be a voluntary one, ensuring the interest of the country, as well as refugees and their families." (Department of Migration and Refugees, 1999)

However, despite the fact that the government declared the policy of naturalization as one of its ultimate goals as well as adopted several legislative acts in this direction (laws "On Citizenship" (1995), "On Passport Acquisition Procedure" (1998), "On Refugees" (1999), "the process of mass acquisition of Armenian citizenship has failed." (Ghazaryan, Y., 2001).

According to the Head of the Department of Migration and Refugees Gagik Yeghayan:

"The main obstacles to naturalization and integration are housing problems and the high rate of unemployment among refugees." (UNHCR Monthly Bulletin, June 2001, 2)

Thus, in this paper, the problems with naturalization, housing and employment are

considered the main barriers to integration of refugees in Armenian society.

### **Activities of local NGOs and international organizations in Armenia**

The main role of resolving refugee problems by implementing and improving state policy towards them lies with the local non-governmental sector and international organizations working in Armenia.

The UNHCR, the main body representing international organizations, began its mission in Armenia in 1992. The statute of the organization states that one of the major goals of UNHCR in Armenia is "seeking durable solutions to the problems of refugees by assisting governments ...to facilitate their (refugees) assimilation into new national communities." (UNHCR Background Notes) According to this statute, this international organization, in cooperation with the government of Armenia, is implementing wide naturalization campaign.

At the beginning of its mission, UNHCR mostly implements humanitarian assistance by distributing food, clothing, kerosene, etc. Currently, humanitarian programs are gradually shifting to development programs. For instance, UNHCR played a significant role in the area of legal protection of refugees. Moreover, it provided technical assistance to the Government of Armenia in drafting the basic law "On Refugees"(1999) in accordance with international standards, particularly in accordance with the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees ratified by the RoA in 1993.

Besides, UNHCR is implementing a great variety of programs directed at the resolution of naturalization and integration problems.

The other international organizations that work on some of the refugee issues in Armenia are the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Organization for Migration, the Catholic Relief Service and others. The domestic non-governmental sector also participates in activities directed at the integration and naturalization of refugees. Local NGOs cooperate with UNHCR and other international organizations as implementing partners. Among them a few can be distinguished such as the Mission Armenia, the Sakharov Foundation, the Refugee Foundation Charity Union, and the YMCA Shelter.

Basic social and medical assistance is provided to lonely elderly and disabled refugees in communal centers through Mission Armenia.

The "Fund against Violation of Law" NGO concentrates its activities on legal issues concerning the refugee population. One of their campaigns was directed at the promotion of refugee awareness as to their legal rights.

However, it should be noted that every NGO works in multiple areas and their activities are not isolated. If, at the beginning of the migratory process, NGOs were mostly involved in humanitarian assistance projects, then nowadays their activities are mostly concerned with naturalization, legal issues and awareness campaigns for refugees.

General information on NGO activity is very limited. The publications and Internet sources on this issue are dispersed and rather scarce. That is why personal contact with the representatives of these organizations is needed to reveal information concerning the work carried out by local NGOs in Armenia.

### **Methodology and Research Design**

This paper is a policy analysis of the specific policy area, meaning the policy of the government of Armenia towards refugees and the activity of local NGOs working in this field.

Qualitative Research methods are applied to analyze the data. These methods can be placed in the following order:

- At first, it was necessary to build up a comprehensive list of all the organizations that work with refugee issues. Since there was no updated information on this, snowballing\* took place among the above-mentioned local organizations. For the purpose of the study, there is also a need to make a distinction between those organizations that are work on issues to be studied in the paper; that is, naturalization, housing and employment. It should be noted that only NGOs working in Yerevan were studied. Regional NGOs are out of the scope of the paper due to clear reasons of limited time and finance.

\* "snowballing" is one of the social research methods mentioned in several social research handbooks. (for example, E.Babbie "Social Research Handbook")

- Secondly, in order to analyze the policy of the Armenian Government towards refugees, all laws and governmental decrees on refugee issues adopted by the government of Armenia since 1998 should be identified. As the paper is concerned with three fields of refugee issues, that is, naturalization, employment and housing, the laws and normative acts were analyzed from these particular angles. Naturalization, housing and employment issues in the policy of Armenian Government are the focus of this study.
- The third step was the interview process through open-ended questions with representatives of the local NGOs. The interviewees were the leaders of the organizations, i.e., the heads of the appropriate offices since these people are expected to be highly competent regarding the activity of any given organization.

As the number of local NGOs is not high (there were only 12 organizations working on issues of naturalization, housing and employment), all of them were interviewed to get a clearer picture of the topic under study.

The questionnaire for the interviews is divided into certain thematic parts with regard to the discussed issues. The issues addressed are the following:

- General information on the organization;
- Activities of the organization concerned with employment, naturalization and housing;
- Cooperation with the government;
- Cooperation with other agencies in related areas; and
- Awareness of government policies and assessment thereof by representatives of the organizations.

The responses of the interviewees are processed and analyzed using qualitative methods. (See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire.)

The last step of the research was the assessment of data gathered. The results of the work of local NGOs in regard to the policy of the Republic of Armenia. According to the findings and analysis results, necessary recommendations on the policy of the Government of Armenia as well as the activities of the NGOs are made.

## Findings

### *State Policy of Armenia towards Refugees since 1998 in the spheres of Naturalization, Housing and Employment*

Nowadays, the legislative field of the Republic of Armenia concerned with refugees is comprised of several laws and more than 100 governmental decrees. However, up until 1999, in the absence of the law on refugees, the legislative field of the RoA was not formed. The policy of the state before the adoption of the law "On Refugees" was mainly dependent on governmental decrees.

The basic law in the field of refugees is the law "On Refugees" that came into force on March 27, 1999. The main provisions of this law were worked out in compliance with the 1951 Geneva Convention and it meets international law requirements. This document clarifies and underlines the rights and responsibilities of people who have the status of refugee in the RoA.

These rights and responsibilities include the:

- Right to freedom of movement and residence;
- Right to protection under the law, of security of person, of confidentiality of communication, against infringement to honor and dignity, life and health, and personal liberty and property;
- Right to ownership, employment and business activity;
- Right to acquire Armenian citizenship and the duty to serve in the armed forces;
- Fact that a refugee of RoA doesn't have voting rights, rights to join any public-political party of the RoA as well as cannot be elected or appointed to official positions stipulated by RoA legislation.

However, the great achievement in regard with the last point was made by the adoption of the law "On Amendments to the RoA Electoral Code" (April 21, 2000). This law entitles refugees with the right to participate in the elections of the local self-governmental bodies.

Another important law, adopted in December 2000, was "On Legal and Socio-economic Guarantees for persons forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan from 1988-1992." This law is mostly concerned with the resolution of

refugee housing problems, and in particular, with privatization of temporary housing for refugees.

Thus, these are the three main pillars (i.e., laws) on which refugee legislation rests. An indispensable part of the state policy towards refugees constitutes 119 governmental decrees, whose main function is to provide procedural mechanisms for the accurate implementation of the laws of the RoA. Since 1999, there have been 9 governmental decrees issued concerning various spheres of refugee legislation.

Decrees that related to the spheres to be observed in this study are:

1. "On Procedures for issuance of a refugee identity card and a travel document in the RA and samples thereof." (11.20.99)
2. "On a procedure for privatization of dormitories in favor of forcibly displaced persons who have acquired Armenian citizenship and who have resided in those dormitories for more than 3 years." (05.14.00)
3. "On inclusion of persons forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan in 1988-1992 and have acquired Armenian citizenship on the beneficiary list of housing." (05.14.00)

### Naturalization Policy

The process of naturalization, i.e., acquisition of citizenship, is considered to be the priority issue for the government of Armenia. The 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees prescribes the option of naturalization. In Article 34, the following is stated "Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the changes and costs of such proceedings." (<http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/legal/instrumen/asylum/1951eng.htm>)

Moreover, Armenia is a signatory state to the 1961 Convention on Reduction of Statelessness, and the 1954 Convention Related to the Status of the Stateless Persons. The national legislation is brought in compliance with these international treaties. The following laws of the RoA correspond with the norms of international law: the Constitution (1995), the law

"On Citizenship" (1995), the Civil Code (1998), the law "On Refugees" (1999), and others.

The Law "On Citizenship" of the RoA is favorable to the refugees who want to naturalize. The conditions are: 1) residence in the territory of Armenia for 3 years, 2) proficiency in Armenian language, 3) familiarity with the Constitution (Chapter 2, Article 10 of the RA Citizenship Law). Moreover, in Article 8 of this law, the following is stated: "the Republic of Armenia encourages Armenian citizenship for stateless persons and does not hinder them from gaining citizenship in another state."

However, it is not only law that creates favorable conditions for naturalization. More important for the implementation of these laws are those governmental decisions and decrees that create procedures and mechanisms. In order to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship, the Government of Armenia has developed simplified legal administrative procedures. At first, a refugee should denounce refugee status by applying to the DMR and then to the passport department of the Ministry of Interior to get a passport from the RoA. This process should take several days. Moreover, photos, passport and registration fees will cost about 600 AMD. (1 USD=560 AMD)

In the regions of Armenia, to help refugees avoid travel expenses, all operations with citizenship acquisition are done through existing governmental structures working at the regional level; that is, the Social Service Department in the Governors offices in ten regions of Armenia as well as regional passport departments of the Ministry of Interior.

However, a simplified procedure for naturalization is not a guarantor to increase the number of people who wish to give up their refugee status. That is why it is important to note that the naturalization process cannot be considered as simply a mere acquisition of citizenship. As naturalization is a voluntary process, there must be certain preconditions for the public to envisage citizenship of the RoA as beneficial to themselves.

When does a person decide to become a citizen of a particular country?

The following preconditions can be considered necessary:

- A stable political and socio-economic situation in a country;



- Access and ability to work, education and place of residence; and
- Protection of human rights and freedoms, etc.

Although these three preconditions are just a small part of those requirements that should be present in this list, the majority of them do not exist in Armenia. This is why simplified procedures for acquiring Armenian citizenship did not bring about the mass naturalization of refugees. And here the issues of housing and employment become very important to the process of naturalization.

### Housing Policy

The process of integration and naturalization of refugees in Armenian society can undoubtedly be facilitated by the resolution of housing problems of refugee population.

After 13 years of living in Armenia, the housing problems for refugees are far from being resolved. According to the Department of Migration and Refugees, there are about 11,000 refugee families under temporary housing in Yerevan and marzes\*\* of Armenia. Among them, 1,967 refugee families own small pieces of lands throughout Armenia, 1,183 families live in half-constructed houses and 784 have no housing at all. Recently, of 784 families, 343 have been provided with temporary housing in Yerevan.

The Government of Armenia adopted a number of decrees in order to resolve housing problems. However, not all of them were successfully implemented. For example, on January 17, 1994, decree #583 stated that 9,200 apartments needed to be built for refugee families from 1995-1999. Nevertheless, according to the head of the Refugee Fund NGO V. Aghayan, by the end of 1999 there were only 2,500 apartments built, and these only constitute 25 % of the planned number. So the fact is that if the present construction activities are kept at the same rate, it will take about 25 years to complete the envisaged work. These housing construction indicators for refugees can be explained. Allocations from the state

budget are not significant due to understandable reasons of hard economic situation in Armenia<sup>1</sup>; moreover, many thousands of people in the local earthquake zone do not have housing either<sup>2</sup>. Because the expenses on the construction projects are rather high, the state policy on housing issues has changed since the beginning of 1999.

The direction of the state policy changed from construction programs to privatization of temporary housing construction of semi-finished houses or renovation of houses with substandard communal conditions.

On December 13, 2000, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted the "Law on Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees for Displaced Persons from Azerbaijan who came to Armenia from 1988-1992." According to this law, refugees who become citizens of Armenia have the right to own temporary housing belonging to the State Housing Resources if he (she) resides in the same apartment for 3 years.

The mechanisms to implement the provisions of this law, in particular concerning the privatization of communal centers, were issued by the Government of Armenia through decree #404 on May 14, 2000. According to this decree, refugees can privatize dormitories, hotels or other types of communal centers if the mentioned centers are under state budgetary control. Refugees who have been naturalized and are living in this housing for 3 years have the right to apply to the Department for Migration and Refugees for privatization of the room. To begin this process, it is necessary to submit an Armenian passport, a certificate confirming former refugee status, and the written consent form of all members of the family who possess passports. In 20 days, this state institution has to submit applications to the Ministry for Management of State Property of the GoA. When the GoA approves it, the marzpets in the regions or Municipality office in Yerevan can privatize the room. The relevant Cadastre department registers privatized housing in apartment buildings.

\*\* "marzes" means "regions." Armenia is divided into 11 administrative regions (marzes) such as Lori, Shirak, Gegharkunik, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Economic hardships exist for several reasons: economic and energy sanctions, the ethnic conflict over territory of Karabakh, a destructive earthquake in 1988, as well as a period of transition of the state to market economy.

<sup>2</sup> On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1988 Armenia was hit by a disastrous earthquake of magnitude 9 on the Richter scale (the epicenter was the town of Spitak). The country lost 25,000 people and many thousands were left without shelter.

Despite the fact that the government approved this mechanism earlier this year, it has not yet been implemented in practice. So the question arises why.

This law also has another side. With all its positive results, it can bring negative consequences as well. Privatization of the housing allows many of the refugees to sell their apartments and leave Armenia. Taking into account the huge emigration from the RoA, the government had to consider the fact that emigration increases after the process of privatization takes place. Certain mechanisms and regulations to prevent such a consequence should have been addressed in the law. However, they are absent for now. And until the process of privatization is not put in force, there is time to make some corrections in this respect.

DMR, which is the main representative of the GoA in relation to refugee issues, proposed the project "On Housing for People Who Suffered from the Inter-Ethnic Conflict" in the year 2000. The project was presented to UNHCR as well as other international organizations for cooperative implementation. It underlines several directions on resolution of housing problems of refugees:

1. Completion of the construction of apartment buildings. The proposal is to complete the construction of semi-finished apartment buildings throughout Armenia. When this project is implemented, 1,130 refugee families will be provided with housing. This will require about 4.9 million USD.
2. Completion of semi-finished individual houses on private land. Upon the completion of this project, 1,183 families will have houses. The estimate for financing this is about 8.2 million USD.
3. Reconstruction of the communal center to be apartments inhabited by refugees. 1,100 families will get housing for 3.3 million USD.
4. Purchase of apartments where refugees live and in surrounding areas. To help 350 families who are living in housing at level 4 emergency status. About 1 million USD is required for this project.
5. Construction of special houses for the elderly living alone and renovation of existing buildings for this purpose. To provide 1,500 refugees with housing will require about 2.5 million USD.
6. Construction of new houses. This proposal includes buying apartments for 7,553 families and this will require 34 million USD.

This project makes an appeal to the international community, the World Bank, the IMF, and the UNHCR to help with financial assistance because the sum needed (about 54 million USD) is an unrealistic figure for internal implementation. There is nothing said about how much is expected to be received from each donor or whether the institutions mentioned are willing to provide such assistance. The project was approved by the GoA and, therefore, represents state policy. However, a year passed since the proposal was submitted and none of the proposals are funded.

The question arises about how a project can be approved by the government if it is not going to be implemented. The same question can be applied not only to this particular project but to other decisions and decrees adopted by the GoA as well.

Thus, it can be concluded that the policy of the Republic of Armenia towards refugees as it exists in legislation provides certain guarantees for refugees but that implementation remains out of the scope of government policy.

### Employment Policy

The situation in the labor market of Armenia is very difficult. The problems of the labor market are considered to be one of the most pressing at the current stage of Armenia's development. The official unemployment rate is estimated by the Ministry of Statistics as 10-11%, while real unemployment is likely to be approximately three times higher. (<http://www.undp.am/rescoord/cca/113.htm>) In June 1999, official statistics registered an increase in unemployment of 30.3%-35.6% compared to December 1998, and as of July 1, 1999, the number of registered unemployed persons constituted 12-13% of the economically active population. Labor statistics reveals that the workforce supply is 200-300 times higher than demand on average.

Thus, it is clear that the problem of employment is a priority issue for the population of Armenia as a whole. However, in comparison with people born and raised in Armenia, the unemployment rate for refugees is 1.5

times higher. (UNCF, UNHCR, UNDP Report 1999) Moreover, integration into the labor market is 1.3 times more difficult for refugees than for local citizens and this is not due to the passivity of the refugee population towards work. (UNCF, UNHCR, UNDP Report 1999) So, it is clear that this stratum of Armenian society has more problems with employment than do other segments of society.

What are they? First of all, there is a language barrier. Despite the fact that all refugees are of Armenian ethnicity, almost none of the refugees can speak Armenian. The reason for this is that in the former USSR, Russian was the state language, and therefore, several generations of Armenians living outside of Armenia didn't have to use their ethnic language. That is why most of the refugees only speak Russian.

By the time these people were taken out of their homes, the Soviet Union broke up and Armenia became an independent state with Armenian as the state language. Therefore, in Armenia, refugees faced the problem of not being able to use the state language.

Refugees have been living in Armenia for 13 years now, but Armenian is still a problem to many of them. Although second generation refugees don't have as many difficulties with the language, they are for the most part school children and aren't represented in the labor market. As for the adult refugees who don't know the state language, they can hardly apply for those kinds of jobs that require knowledge of Armenian. This problem was not considered urgent at the state level. Though there were some attempts to arrange Armenian language courses, these never became common and were not applied consistently. This can be explained by the fact that there is no state policy on language problems for refugees. Among all governmental decrees since 1998, none of them mentioned the language issue. Moreover, such indifference on a state level may be considered one of the main reasons that there was hostile attitude on the part of the local populace towards refugees during the first 5-6 years after their arrival. This created antagonistic relationships between locals and the refugee population as well as brought a feeling of isolationism to refugees. Therefore, it may be concluded that state indifference

and, as a result, persistent language problems became one of the major hindrances in the process of integration of refugees in Armenian society and into the labor market.

The second problem is that some of the refugees are used to living in urban areas and have skills and knowledge that correspond to that environment, whereas in Armenia they were mostly placed in rural areas. As a result, nowadays refugees are forced to work in agriculture without the necessary skills and knowledge.

Another problem is that a portion of refugees are made up of engineers or skilled workers who were mainly employed in the oil industry in Azerbaijan. Taking into account the absence of such an industry in Armenia, this segment of the refugee labor force faced the problem of inapplicability and had to acquire new skills.

When considering all these problems plus the high unemployment rate in Armenia as a whole, we see that very difficult conditions were created for refugees in the labor market.

A review of the laws and regulations the RoA adopted on employment issues concerning refugees revealed the following:

- The basic law "On Refugees" mentions only the right of a refugee to work and to be employed in Armenia;
- Another reference on employment is made in the 1951 Geneva Convention to which Armenia is a contracting state since 1993. It is stated that: "Contracting States shall accord refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favorable treatment... as regards the right to engage in wage earning employment." (<http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/refworld/legal/instrume/asylym/1951/eng.htm>)

However, the national legislation since 1999 provided no law or even governmental decision to guarantee this "most favorable treatment."

#### **Snowballing Results**

Several sources provided original data about existing local NGOs working with refugees. They are the Armenia-Karabakh Fact Book, the database of the NGO Center as well as a list provided by UNHCR. However, these lists didn't prove to be comprehensive. Therefore,

snowballing was carried out among organizations on these lists.

As a result, twenty-five organizations were found to be working on refugee issues. Among these NGOs, twelve turned out to be dealing with naturalization, housing and employment. (See the list in the Appendix C)

Interviews with the chairpersons of all twelve NGOs were conducted. The interviews revealed the following:

### **1. General information on the organizations**

The majority of the NGOs were established in the period from 1990-1992.

Based on mission statements, they can be divided into 3 groups: those who focus on the socio-economic problems of the refugees; those who work on legal protection and those who see their mission as integrating refugees into Armenian society. In fact, this division does not have clear-cut boundaries as those NGOs focusing on resolution of socio-economic or legal problems contribute significantly to the ultimate goal of refugee integration. And visa versa, those who are working in the field of integration come across and help resolve the economic and legal issues of the refugees.

The membership of the organizations varies from 10 to two hundred fifty people whose average age is forty. The number of members depends on the scope of the activities a certain NGO encompasses as well as the period of time it has been in existence. The wider the sphere of the activity, the earlier the organization was established and the greater the number of members.

Most of the organizations not only work in Yerevan but also have branches in Syunik (southern Armenia), Gegharkunik (central Armenia) and other marzes where refugee communities are settled.

The number of staff members in most of the NGOs studied is not large. Staff numbers fluctuate from 5 in small NGOs to sixteen in the big organizations.

Financial support for almost all of the NGOs is provided through grants from such international organizations as UNHCR, USAID, Save the Children, IOM, DRC, NRC, and UNDP. Very few of the organizations support their activities with fees.

During the course of time, the nature of the projects the organizations implement has changed. These changes can be placed in the following order: humanitarian assistance (food, clothes, and kerosene) and development programs (legal protection, cultural and socio-economic integration and naturalization). However, currently, due to the persistent harsh economic conditions in the republic, many NGOs continue to provide refugees with humanitarian assistance. In 2001, the NGOs that were studied implemented from 1 to 5 projects.

### **2. The activities of the organizations concerned with employment, housing and naturalization problems.**

#### **Employment**

Employment problems are primary issues not only for refugees but also for the populace of Armenia as a whole. While the unemployment rate is high for the local populace, it is two times higher for refugees. Apart from the local populace, NGOs leaders distinguish the employment problems of refugees in the following way:

- Most of the refugees create their own communities and isolate themselves from the overall population;
- Refugees do not have established communication links to be able to find jobs because in Armenian society, personal links play a decisive role in finding a job;
- The language problem still remains acute and, therefore, it is more difficult for refugees to find a job without knowledge of the state language;
- During the course of time, a certain tendency developed among refugees - reliance on humanitarian aid brought an unwillingness to work for a low salary;
- There are no privileges for the refugee population in employment legislation: the state treats locals and refugees equally;
- Refugees often are not competitive in the labor market. The majority of them, being residents of urban areas, were placed in rural areas, and until now, after 13 years, a considerable number of these people have not become used to agricultural activities; and

- Psychological problems: passivity, indifference, dissatisfaction with everything and distrust of everybody.

The activities undertaken by NGOs towards the resolution of refugee employment problems can be divided into two groups: creation of small firms and making a database of unemployed refugees to further provide them with information on available vacancies. The overall effectiveness of these activities is not high. According to information provided by the interviewees, there are only three or four firms throughout Armenia. As for service with available vacancies, there is no information about the efficiency of this activity; however, as some of the chairpersons have claimed, the number of refugees who could get a job in this way is too small to have any significant influence on the overall employment rate of refugees.

In the future the nature of employment projects is not going to change a lot. Most of the NGOs are going to continue focusing on opening small firms for the production of boxes for cakes, tinned food, bread, and so on. Additional workplaces can be created through opening community-based services like hairdressers, laundries, shoemaker workshops and medical assistance clinics.

There are also some proposals concerning the legal field, particularly to free refugees who run small businesses from taxes and to make amendments to the Labor Code.

Interviewees found almost no serious hindrances to the implementation of their proposals. The main things they will need are financial support and governmental cooperation.

### Housing Issues

The problems with housing are the following:

- 13,000 families are without permanent housing;
- Available shelter does not have appropriate communal conditions. Some of the houses are rated as being in a high level emergency condition; and
- Refugees that live in cottages do not have the right to ownership, while there is a law on privatization of dormitories. The law on legal and socio-economic guarantees doesn't include cottages because they are

not considered state resource housing. Cottages were constructed by the international donors.

Construction of housing or repair work is mostly implemented by international organizations. The one big achievement of NGO activity on housing problems is the law adopted in 2000 "On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees to people forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan from 1988-1992" that gives refugees the right to privatize the dormitories they live in. The proposal for this privatization right was made by the Refugee Fund NGO. Consequently, all the other NGOs dealing with refugee issues joined this proposal. After that, it was adopted by the National Assembly of Armenia.

Another type of activity is the legal protection of refugees in the sphere of housing problems. These activities are mostly concerned with individual cases. For example, the Sakharov Fund NGO and several other NGOs providing different types of legal assistance have lawyers who provide free legal counseling for refugees.

Awareness campaigns on the rights of refugees in the framework of housing legislation are also directed towards resolution of refugee housing problems.

There are a number of proposals in this field:

1. To resolve the problem with ownership of cottages just by adding the word "cottages" into the law "On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees to people forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan in 1988-1992."
2. To re-classify a number of buildings in Yerevan and marzes, previously used as scientific-research institutes or that had administrative purposes, and renovate them to fit the needs of refugees.

These proposals will only be implemented if there is financial support and governmental cooperation.

### Naturalization Issues

What are the problems of naturalization as discussed by the interviewees?

- Culture, psychology, language and customs are different between refugees and locals; this fact makes the process of naturalization more difficult. As naturalization is an im-

portant part of the integration process, it is necessary that refugees accept Armenia as their homeland and assimilate themselves into the rest of the population without differentiating themselves from the Armenian society. Cultural differences that exist between the refugee and local population in the environment of troublesome economic conditions in the country may often cause clashes and as a result, strengthen the feeling of alienation among refugees. In this sense, cultural differences can create a hindrance to the process of naturalization and to the willingness of refugees to become full members of the Armenian society;

- Social and economic hardships make many people leave Armenia;
- The fear of losing refugee status that is perceived as bringing certain privileges not only in Armenia but also abroad; and
- Distrust in the government as well as disappointment with the work of the DMR (Department for Migration and Refugees).

The activities of local NGOs in this field are many. For the most part the activities are made up of different kinds of awareness campaigns. These campaigns include meeting-seminars with refugees, the local government, and the media on explaining rights and responsibilities to refugees in accordance with Armenian legislation. For example, these are the project of the Refugee Fund NGO on "Legal protection of Refugees," or the "New Citizens of Armenia" project organized by the Fund against Violation of Law NGO. Brochures on Armenian laws and governmental decrees were also distributed to refugees by the Sakharov Center NGO in 2001.

There are also different kinds of cultural programs with the aim of promoting the integration of the refugee population; for example, organizing summer and winter camps for refugee elderly and children; classes on Armenian history, traditions and customs with the participation of the local populace, tours to theatres, and celebration of winter and summer holidays for children.

Other activities are directed at the psychological rehabilitation of refugees, particularly at the rehabilitation of women refugees; for example, a project entitled "Adaptation and Psychological Rehabilitation of Women Refu-

gees" was implemented by the Fund against Violation of Law NGO.

In the future, NGO leaders plan to continue the projects they are currently implementing - that is, awareness campaigns, services on legal issues, and cultural programs with refugees.

There is a proposal by the Fund against Violation of Law NGO for the establishment of a rehabilitation center for torture victims and survivors of organized violence. Another proposal from this same NGO is concerned with refugee problems on the whole. The purpose is to draw the attention of the international community to these problems because many potential donors do not have any idea that refugee problems exist in Armenia.

### **3. Cooperation with the Government of Armenia (the DMR as its main representative).**

Most of the NGOs cooperate with the government. This cooperation has certain achievements. The most significant of these are the adoption of the law "On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees" and creation of a "Housing Allocation Committee for Provision of Permanent Shelter to Refugees." The Committee deals with refugee housing issues on a weekly basis and it includes representatives from several NGOs as well as experts from the DMR and UNHCR.

Most of the NGO leaders claim that the DMR is ready to cooperate and to listen to new proposals on the resolution of refugee problems. However, the effectiveness of such cooperation is considered unsatisfactory because of several reasons:

- The NGO institution is new and inexperienced;
- The state apparatus does not have enough experience in coping with NGOs; moreover, despite the fact that more than a decade has passed since Armenia changed its command administrative management system that existed under the USSR, the state apparatus continues to work in the old manner;
- Frequent leadership and staff changes within the DMR;
- Difficult economic conditions in the state;

- The personal relationship between representatives of NGOs and DMR staff may play positive as well as negative role.

Nevertheless, cooperation is taking place and, moreover, some of the NGO chairpersons are convinced that NGOs can influence government policy towards refugees. For example, a project of the Fund against Violation of Law that was implemented in 1996 was called "Reducing Statelessness" and it served as the precursor and facilitator of the policy on naturalization proclaimed by the Government of Armenia in 1998.

Lobbying for the project on "Social Support for Refugees" by several NGOs resulted in the adoption of the law "On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees to people forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan in 1988-1992" in 2000.

#### **4. Cooperation with other agencies.**

Cooperation of local NGOs with other international organizations as well as among themselves is very close. The majority of projects are implemented through donor assistance from such international organizations as UNHCR, IOM, Save the Children, USAID, UNDP and many others.

Cooperation among local organizations has acquired a daily nature in the sense that NGO leaders share their problems, communicate to each other on the problems of refugees and know about the activities of each other quite well. In some cases, they help each other in the implementation of the projects.

A new body aimed at strengthening such cooperation was established in 2000 under the name of the "NGO Forum." This is an umbrella organization made up of twenty-five local NGOs that collectively works on refugee issues. However, it should be mentioned that after the creation of this body, it met only twice. And this cannot be considered a good indicator for further strengthening of cooperation.

#### **5. Awareness on government policies and an assessment by the interviewees.**

All the NGO chairpersons are well aware of the main laws and regulations impacting refu-

gees on housing, employment, and naturalization issues. These are laws "On Refugees," "On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees," "On Citizenship" and governmental decrees #404 and #405.

These laws and regulations are not found to be sufficient to meet the needs of the refugee population according to most of the interviewees. Overall, the legal field is considered to be underdeveloped. Every new law and decision brings more problems and these problems are the result of the lack of a complex approach to the problems of refugees as well as a lack of one determined direction in the state policy. Many issues are out of the scope of legislation, particularly the integration, post naturalization, and migration processes.

According to NGOs, one of the achievements of Armenian legislation is that Armenia became a signatory state to all international treaties concerned with refugees. However, procedural mechanisms for these laws do not work in practice. Moreover, some terms in laws are not clearly defined.

Thus, the overall assessment of the state policy by NGOs is that it is negative and there is no clear-cut policy towards refugees.

## Analysis

### 1. What is the state policy towards refugees directed on the resolution of naturalization, employment and housing problems?

Based on the findings concerned with the legal field of the RoA on refugees, it is possible to underline some features of the state policy of Armenia towards refugees.

- Naturalization is facilitated due to the law "On Socio-economic and Legal Guarantees" that gives the right to private ownership of housing to those refugees who gained Armenian citizenship. However, the law has not reached the implementation phase yet; therefore, its impact cannot be observed;
- The housing problem will partly be resolved by privatization of temporary housing; and
- Armenian legislation provides the basic right to work for refugees. There is no longer a reference on employment issues in the refugee population.

The evaluation of the policy of any state can be done through two mechanisms - legislation and regulation and implementation. By analyzing the policy of the RoA, it is possible to conclude that:

- Legislation does not address all the issues faced by the refugee population. It does, however, guarantee the protection of all basic human rights for refugees (the right to education, employment, personal liberty, etc.); and
- Implementation often does not work. For example, the project on the resolution of housing problems presented by the DMR and approved by the government requires financial expenses that neither the DMR nor the government can provide. As a result, after one year of approval none of the proposals of this project are going to be implemented in the near future.

Therefore, the adoption of projects, which are impossible to implement, should not be a priority for state policy.

Thus, there is a strong necessity for state policy to address as many of the urgent issues of the refugee population as possible and to coordinate legislation with implementation.

### 2. What projects are undertaken by local NGOs to facilitate naturalization?

Naturalization represents the field where most of the NGOs are involved. The activities in this case vary a lot. All of the NGO leaders believe that naturalization can be facilitated through awareness campaigns, psychological rehabilitation, legal protection of refugees and a variety of cultural programs, though it should be noted that such activities will not bring immediate results. For example, cultural programs for the elderly, children or disabled refugees aim at spiritual rehabilitation of refugees as well as the "creation of an atmosphere akin to a second homeland for the refugees" (Hovumyan, J., 2001).

Thus, activities undertaken by NGOs in this direction are the most popular among local NGOs. Moreover, these projects are considered by NGO leaders as the most effective and valuable projects they have.

### 3. What activities are undertaken by local NGOs on the resolution of housing problems?

Housing problems are acute to those 13,000 families that do not have permanent shelter and live in dormitories, hotels, schools, with relatives, or in unsafe buildings.

The major type of activity implemented by NGOs in this field is the legal protection of refugees having problems with housing based on individual cases.

Many refugees participate in awareness campaigns on rights concerning housing issues.

These campaigns are very popular among NGOs.

Building houses is undertaken by international organizations such as UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council. Among local NGOs, only the YMCA Shelter starting building houses.

An important achievement made by NGO activity was the right to privatize apartments in dormitories. This solves the housing problem for those refugees who want to become the owners of their rooms. However, the problem remains for those people who are not satisfied with the communal conditions of their rooms and are unwilling to privatize



them. The problems of inappropriate living conditions are not addressed in the law; they are out of the scope of NGO activity as well.

Thus, legal protection for individual cases and awareness campaigns on housing issues are the main directions Armenian NGOs are going. Building houses is not one of their activities, most probably due to the vast financial expenditures this would entail. So it cannot be said that housing problems are addressed by NGOs to a full extent.

#### **4. What projects are undertaken by local NGOs to increase employment opportunities?**

The field of employment proved to be the most troublesome for NGOs. Very few of the organizations directed their activities towards resolving the employment problems of refugees. This situation correlated with almost no attention to this problem by the government. Legislation provides no separate mechanisms to increase employment opportunities for refugees.

Activities undertaken by NGOs cannot be considered effective as they are mostly of an individual and small-scale nature.

As the findings show, there are only two basic types of activities local NGOs are involved in this area. The first one is creating small firms for the production of various goods. This type of activity would be considered very important and would have an impact on the overall unemployment rate among refugees if it were implemented on a large scale. However, currently the number of such firms is too small to bring about an appreciable difference in the employment situation of the refugee population.

Creating databases of unemployed refugees does not directly deal with the number of employment opportunities; nevertheless, it helps to have the data on the unemployed and, therefore, to provide them with information of available vacancies. This is another type of activity that is performed by NGOs. NGO leaders evaluated the effectiveness of this service as very low.

The activities of NGOs aimed at increasing employment opportunities are not effective because they are on a small-scale and are not supported by state legislation.

#### **5. Do NGOs have any influence on the state policy towards refugees?**

The interviews conducted with leaders of local NGOs show that they are able to influence state policy. The term "lobbying" is not unknown to NGOs and is used to achieve desired goals.

The best proof for this is the lobbying that takes place for the privatization of dormitories done through seminars. These were also open to the media and there were discussions with government officials. The goal was achieved and the law "On Legal and Socio-economic Guarantees" was adopted in 2001. Another example is the abolition of a governmental decision that was adopted in 1998 and that provided for the displacement of refugees from Yerevan to rural areas. Because of constant pressure by NGOs leaders and the discontent expressed by the refugee population in Yerevan, the decree was cancelled.

The representatives of the Refugee Fund NGO are planning to propose amendments to governmental decree #404 and the law "On Socio-economic and Legal Guarantees." These changes will be directed at giving the right of privatization to those refugees who reside in cottages, schools, or hotels.

Although the lobby culture is still not developed fully in Armenia, there is a certain amount of influence that NGOs have on the state policy.

#### **6. What are the hindrances to the effective implementation of NGO activity?**

The main hindrance to local NGO activity is financial dependence on grants. The scope of activities is determined by available funds. Only a very small number of NGOs can sustain themselves with fees.

Another constraint is the imperfection of the legal framework. A legislative playing field on refugees has not yet been developed; it does not include a strong enough base to help refugees solve their problems and to be fully integrated in the society.

The lack of organized cooperation among local NGOs as well as government structures is also considered a serious hindrance. NGOs do not always find support from state authori-

ties. Moreover, the body that was founded to strengthen cooperation among NGOs – the Forum of Local NGOs – met only twice after its creation. This means that this type of cooperation has not acquired a strong basis and is still not well organized.

Personal ties with government officials help NGOs leaders achieve their goals easier and faster. Therefore, for those leaders without these connections, the processes of project approval and lobbying become more difficult.

## 7. What is the attitude of NGO representatives towards government policies?

The attitude of NGO representatives towards government policies varies. However, it should be noted that no respondent gave a positive assessment of state policy. The attitude of NGO leaders can be divided into two groups as absolutely negative and moderately negative.

The number of those NGOs that gave absolutely negative assessments on the role of the government in the resolution of refugee problems is not high. The respondents who belong to this group do not recognize any kind of state policy towards refugees. They are sure that the government does not consider refugees worthy of a separate policy from the rest of the Armenian population.

The second type of respondent distinguishes some achievements of the state policy in the ratification of almost all international treaties and in adoption of the basic laws “On Refugees” as well as the law “On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees.” Pointing out the deficiencies of legislation towards refugees, respondents underline the environment in which the Government of Armenia has to act. In particular, the difficult socio-economic situation in the country, economic sanctions, and problems because of being in an earthquake zone.

Thus, overall assessment of state policy is negative. Despite the fact that there are certain achievements in the legislative field on refugees, the legislative field still remains undeveloped and ineffective.

## Conclusion

The findings and analyses made during this study allow for several conclusions:

1. After 1998, there was more attention paid to the problems of refugees by the government. This fact is proven by a number of important laws and governmental decisions adopted by the Republic of Armenia during this period. They are the laws “On Refugees” (1999), “On Passport Acquisition Procedure” (1998), “On Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees” (2000), “On Amendments to the RoA Electoral Code (2000), and the decrees “On the Duties of the State Institution of RoA Responsible for Refugee Issues” (1999), and “On the Procedure for the Privatization of Dormitories.” (2001)
2. Many laws and decisions do not work in reality and exist only on paper. That is, legislation does not correspond with implementation.
3. The Armenian Government does not have a separate employment policy directed at the resolution of refugee employment problems.
4. Local NGOs actively participate in the implementation and improvement of state policy. The majority of them work on naturalization issues. A very small number of the 12 NGOs studied focus on housing and employment problems. Four NGOs work on housing problems and five NGOs work on employment problems.
5. Activities on employment are small-scale and limited.
6. Local NGOs have some limited influence on state policy towards refugees.
7. Financial dependence is the major hindrance restricting the activity of NGOs.
8. The overall assessment of state policy by NGO leaders is negative.

This paper makes the following recommendations:

1. It turned out that the legislation and implementation phases of state policy do not correspond with each other. Therefore, government officials should always take into account the correlation between legislation and its implementation. It is important for government officials to be realistic about

- the financial possibilities of the state when determining state policy.
2. Separate legislation or governmental decrees on employment issues for refugees have to be worked out. For example, non-tax credits for refugees who open businesses. However, this may affect the local populace and cause more antagonistic feelings.
  3. NGOs should enlarge the scope of their activities on the housing and employment problems of refugees.
  4. There is a necessity to activate NGO lobbying activities. For this purpose, training courses with leaders of the organizations can be very useful.
  5. The government, in cooperation with NGOs, should find more ways to call the international community to the attention of refugee problems.

**This study showed that there are certain problems in the state policy of Armenia on refugees that should be taken into consideration by government officials. Moreover, the NGO sector working on refugees also has a considerable number of problems that should be addressed.**

Although work in this direction is on-going, there is a need to facilitate the processes directed towards the resolution of these problems.

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Law of the RoA, On Refugees. 3 March 1999.

Convention, On the Status of Refugees. 28 July 1951.

Governmental Decree # 594, On procedures for issuance of an identity card to an applicant for refugee status in the RoA. 4 July 2001.

Governmental Decree #404, On procedures for privatization of dormitories in favor of forcibly displaced persons who have gained Armenian citizenship and who for more than 3 years have resided in these dormitories. 14 May 2001.

Governmental Decree #405, On the inclusion of persons forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan from 1988-1992 and have acquired the citizenship of the RoA in the beneficiary list for housing. 14 May 2001.

## Appendix A

Laws adopted by the RoA after 1999

- **The RoA Refugee Law** adopted on March 27, 1999.
- **The Law on Amendments to the RoA Electoral Code** adopted on April 21, 2000.
- **Law on Amendments to the Law on State Duties** adopted on December 13, 2000.
- **The RoA Law on Legal and Socio-Economic Guarantees for Persons Forcibly Displaced from Azerbaijan from 1988-1992 and who have gained Citizenship from the Republic of Armenia** adopted on December 13, 2000.
- **Governmental Decree # 632** "On the duties of the state institution of the RoA responsible for refugee issues" dated October 16, 1999.
- **Governmental Decree # 695** "On procedures for issuance of a refugee identity card and travel document in the RoA and samples thereof" dated November 20, 1999.
- **Governmental Decree # 52** "On the movement and selection of places of residence of applicants for refugee status" dated February 4, 2000.
- **Governmental Decree # 82** "On allocation of lump-sum allowance for applicants for refugee status in the RoA territory" dated February 23, 2000.
- **Governmental Decree # 86** "On placing the applicants for refugee status in the RoA into special and temporary housing, treating them to a medical examination, and providing free translation, legal services, medical assistance and service" dated February 23, 2000.
- **Governmental Decree # 404** "On the procedure for privatization of dormitories in favor of forcibly displaced persons who have gained Armenian citizenship and who have resided in these dormitories for more than 3 years" dated May 14, 2001.
- **Governmental Decree # 405** "On inclusion of persons forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan from 1988-1992 and who have acquired Armenian citizenship in the beneficiary list for housing" dated May 14, 2001.
- **Governmental Decree # 594** "On procedures for issuance of an identity card to an applicant for refugee status in the RoA" dated July 4, 2001.
- **Governmental Decree # 655** "On refugee status determination procedure" dated July 19, 2001

Source: UNHCR office in Armenia

## Appendix B

### Armenian Non-Governmental Organizations working with refugee problems.

1. Ahazang Armenian Refugee Association
2. Back to Hayk
3. Center for Development of Civil Society
4. Refugee Foundation Charitable Organization
5. Armenian Refugee Supporting League
6. Mission Armenia
7. Future Generation
8. The Fund against Violation of Law
9. The Sakharov Center for Human Rights Protection, Progress and Benevolence
10. The Armenian Sociological Association
11. Soldier's Mother
12. Armenian Committee of Helsinki Citizens Assembly
13. Araza Social Benevolent Organization
14. Hazarashen Armenian Center of Ethnological Studies
15. Armenian Center of the Saint-Petersburg Social Protection Center "Lastochka" for Orphans, Refugee, Socially Vulnerable and Disabled Children
16. Yerjanik Children Benevolent Organization
17. Podruzhka
18. Ghev. Alishan Cultural and Educational Association
19. Potential Union of Refugee Intellectuals
20. Refugee-Farmers Union Agrariy Charity Social Organization
21. "Our home is Armenia" NGO of Armenian Compatriots from Azerbaijan
22. Caravan-88
23. Young Lawyers Association
24. Armenian Red Cross
25. YMCA Shelter

## Appendix C

### List of NGOs working on Naturalization, Employment and Housing

1. Ahazang Armenian Refugee Association (naturalization, employment)
2. Back to Hayk (naturalization, housing, employment)
3. Refugee Foundation Charitable Organization (naturalization, housing)
4. The Sakharov Fund for Human Rights Protection, Progress and Benevolence (naturalization, housing employment)
5. Armenian Sociological Association (naturalization)
6. Soldier's Mother (naturalization)
7. Araza Social Benevolent Organization (employment)
8. Hazarashen Armenian Center of Ethnological Studies (naturalization)
9. Yerjanik Children Benevolent Organization (naturalization)
10. YMCA Shelter (housing)
11. Caravan-88(employment)
12. The Fund against Violation of Law (naturalization)

## Appendix D

Questionnaire for in-depth interviews with representatives of Armenian NGOs working on Naturalization, Housing and Employment.

Identification sheet Interview ID number

Organization Name

Respondents Name

Phone Number

### Interview #:

Date of Interview

Location of Interview

Time Interview began

Time Interview ended

### 1. General information about the organization

- a) When was your organization established?
- b) What is the mission of your organization?
- c) How many members does your organization have?
- d) What is the average age of the members of the organization?
- e) Does the organization have other offices?
- f) If yes, then how many and where are they located?
- g) What is the number of staff members in the organization?
- h) What are the main sources of funding for the organization?
- i) How many projects have been implemented by your organization this year?
- j) Has the nature of the projects changed over the course of time?
- k) If yes, then how?

### 2. Activities of an organization concerned with housing problems

- a) What are the housing problems of refugees?
- b) What projects were implemented by the organization towards the resolution of these problems?
- c) Do you have data concerning the results of the projects implemented?
- d) If yes, what are they?
- e) What housing problems remained unresolved?

- f) What proposals do you have on the resolution of these problems?
- g) Are you going to implement them?
- h) If not, what hinders implementation?

### 3. Activities of an organization concerned with employment problems

- a) What are the employment problems of refugees?
- b) What projects were implemented by the organization towards the resolution of these problems?
- c) Do you have data concerning the results of the projects implemented?
- d) If yes, what are they?
- e) What employment problems remained unresolved?
- f) What proposals do you have on the resolution of these problems?
- g) Are you going to implement them?
- h) If not, what hinders implementation?
- i) How do refugee employment problems differ from the local employment problems?

### 4. Activities of an organization concerned with naturalization problems

- a) What are the naturalization problems of refugees?
- b) What projects were implemented by the organization towards the resolution of these problems?
- c) Do you have data concerning the results of the projects implemented?
- d) If yes, what are they?
- e) What naturalization problems remained unresolved?
- f) What proposals do you have on the resolution of these problems?
- g) Are you going to implement them?
- h) If not, what hinders implementation?

### 5. Cooperation with the Government of Armenia

- a) Do you cooperate with the Government of Armenia (DMR)?
- b) If yes, then what are some examples of this cooperation?
- c) If not, what are the reasons for non-cooperation?

- d) Do you find Government of Armenia willing to cooperate?
- e) How effective is such cooperation?
- f) How would you evaluate the housing, employment and naturalization policies of the Republic of Armenia?

**6. Cooperation with other agencies**

- a) Do you cooperate with any other NGO or international organization?
- b) If yes, what are some examples of such cooperation?
- c) Do you find the cooperation successful? Explain, why or why not.

**7. Awareness on government policies and assessment by interviewees**

- a) What are the main laws and regulations of the Government of Armenia directed towards the resolution of housing, employment and naturalization problems?
- b) Do you find these policies appropriate to the needs of the refugee population?
- c) What are the main deficiencies in housing, employment and naturalization legislation on refugees?
- d) What do you think are the achievements of state policy towards refugees?

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