



IOM STRATEGY FOR **GEORGIA** (2022-2025)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Surbhi is a medical student from India. Despite her busy schedule, she finds time to help other Indian students get settled in Georgia: “Georgia offered me many opportunities – this country made me understand who I am”. According to Surbhi, IOM offered her and her friends strong support during COVID-19. © IOM 2021/ Eric Gourlan

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FOREWORD

We are delighted to present the strategy of the IOM Office in Georgia to you. This strategy is a key tool in clearly articulating trends and challenges and how IOM will work with governments, migrant communities, and our many partners to achieve a positive impact over the course of the next four years. The strategy affirms IOM's mandate and core priorities as laid out in its Strategic Vision and related governance documents.

This strategy is anchored in IOM's Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which further refines the global priorities and tailors them to the regional context. It lays out IOM's commitment to empower migrants and communities and to address drivers of migration. IOM is advancing positive, sustainable, and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to regional migration trends. In addition, IOM strengthens cooperative development and implementation of evidence-based and inclusive migration governance.

This strategy highlights the current and future migration trends in Georgia and sets out the context in which IOM carries out its activities. It outlines the challenges and opportunities relating to migration in the country and identifies the strategic priorities to address them in an effort to strive towards fostering safe, orderly and regular migration.

With the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), and establishment of a Country Network on Migration, IOM in its capacity as Network Coordinator and Secretariat, will continue to foster effective collaboration in support of the government's implementation, follow-up, and review of the GCM.

We are very grateful to IOM staff – particularly at the regional and country level – for their diligent and insightful work in developing this strategy and in their commitment to its successful implementation. The strategy is particularly timely given the operational needs on the ground, with a particular emphasis on response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and our collective commitment to *build back better*.

This strategy affirms IOM's commitment to support governments and stakeholders in upholding migrants' rights, regardless of their migration status and across all stages of the migration cycle. With this strategy, and in cooperation with our numerous and diverse partners, we will continue to respond to the needs and aspirations of migrants, building societies fit for a modern, mobile and interconnected world. IOM looks forward to strengthening its partnerships in Georgia and joining efforts in fostering migration for the benefit of all.

Sanja Celebic Lukovac
Chief of Mission
IOM Georgia

Renate Held
IOM Regional Director

ACRONYMS

CCAs	Common Country Analyses
CSOs	Civil society organizations
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
GoG	Government of Georgia
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IBM	Integrated Border Management
LMIMS	Labour Market Information and Management System
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoHLSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UMAS	Unified Migration Analytical System
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNSDCF	UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework
SCMI	State Commission on Migration Issues
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SESA	State Employment Support Agency
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
SH	Sexual Harassment
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. ABOUT IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN's leading agency on migration and the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, working closely with its key stakeholders - migrants and Member States - to promote humane, safe, and orderly migration. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants from an integral and holistic perspective, including links to development, in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities of migration and reduce its challenges. Established in 1951, IOM now has more than 170 Member States, offices in over 400 field locations and more than 14,000 staff - 90 percent of IOM's staff being deployed in the field. In the South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, IOM has 19 missions. In Georgia, IOM has five field offices and over 55 staff.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human mobility is indivisible from sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and the commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind – will not be achieved without due consideration of migration. Additionally, the Global Compact for Migration is grounded in the 2030 Agenda and promotes the principles of having a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address this intrinsic link. This Strategy will support the Member States to achieve this, ultimately leveraging the potential of migration through a whole-of-government approach to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all. It is a direct contribution to the Decade of Action to fast-track progress for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. It brings greater coherence and development impact to IOM's activities and allows for a joined-up approach to the way the Organization designs and delivers its operations, as called for in IOM's Strategic Vision.

IOM's Strategic Vision, presented to IOM Member States in 2019, spans the period of 2019 to 2023. The Vision articulates how IOM plans to meet its new and emerging responsibilities, including IOM's mandated role as Network Coordinator. It sets out the 'direction of travel' for IOM, is forward looking and encourages 'joined up thinking'. This Strategy is aligned with the Vision, its corresponding Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the IOM Strategic Results Framework, which are anchored in the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration.

1.2. IOM IN GEORGIA

Over nearly three decades, IOM has supported the Government of Georgia in developing enhanced and effective migration governance providing a comprehensive response to evolving migration challenges in line with international standards. Present in Georgia since 1993, IOM offers direct services to migrants and local beneficiaries and operates through the central office in Tbilisi and four field offices in Batumi, Kutaisi, Poti, and Telavi.

Over the years IOM has worked on various migration-related priority areas ranging from emergency and post-crisis response, integrated border management, counter trafficking and migrant smuggling, migrant protection and assistance, migration health, labour migration and human development, migration policy development and research, as well as provided capacity-building for migration-related institutions.

IOM has experience and capacity to lead on regional projects addressing mobility dynamics in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Based on this, IOM foresees expanding its support to intra-regional exchange to cover issues such as EU visa liberalization, outmigration, and others, where the Government of Georgia may be able to share its experiences with countries in the neighborhood.

Since 2010, under the coordination of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI), IOM supports the implementation of the national Migration Strategy of Georgia currently implemented for the duration of 2021-2030. IOM also fosters regional and international cooperation and partnerships. Working closely with the SCMI and other governmental stakeholders, IOM contributes to the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and supports Georgia in maintaining its visa-free regime with the EU/Schengen through a range of migration management cooperation schemes. In addition, IOM promotes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1. THE MIGRATION LANDSCAPE IN GEORGIA

Since its independence in the early 1990s, Georgia has been a country of origin of migrants, primarily for socio-economic reasons. Lack of employment opportunities, low remuneration, and unstable jobs, alongside inadequate social and health care services, have featured among the most common reasons for emigration.¹ Over the past decade, however, Georgia has increasingly become a country of transit or destination for migrants from other ex-Soviet countries, as well as countries from the Asian and African continents. The Government of Georgia (GoG), with the support of IOM, has introduced and developed legislation, policies, and institutional mechanisms that aim to govern flows of migration with a holistic perspective. The SCMI performs a central coordination role in this process and has recently formulated long-term and ambitious goals to govern migration in a strategic manner. The ongoing process of European integration has played an important role in spearheading migration governance as an important sectoral priority for the overall development of Georgia, inter alia by means of introducing legal pathways for Georgian workers to access employment in Member States of the European Union.

Key challenges and opportunities

IOM has identified a number of trends which will inform its programming in Georgia between 2022 and 2025:

Resilience

Adverse drivers of migration

Traditionally considered a country of origin, Georgia has in recent years, faced increasingly complex migration dynamics and diverse evolving trends impacting in various ways outward, inward and internal migration, and calling for innovative migration governance approaches. Unbalanced socio-economic development in Georgia has led to growing inequalities, in particular between impoverished rural communities and a few thriving cities. Lack of economic opportunities, social services, and infrastructure in the regions of Georgia contributes to the socio-economic vulnerability of households in many rural and urban areas in the regions that push many to migrate to a few select urban areas within Georgia (Tbilisi, Batumi) or to seek opportunities abroad.

There is an evident lack of information, counselling, and referral assistance on support socio-economic programmes and services of returnees' interest (housing, documentation, access to skills development and employment possibilities, business start-up support programmes, registration etc.) which are available at the national and local levels. Access to such information would be especially beneficial in communities prone to depopulation and remittance dependence, as well as to communities vulnerable to ethnic tensions and those hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and environmental migrant populations. IOM's experience shows that these communities are not systematically engaged in consultations on local development initiatives. Similarly, the needs of residents in communities adversely impacted by depopulation and migration are not systematically mapped by local, regional, or national authorities, preventing access to available opportunities or creation of customized interventions.

¹ IOM operational experience, interaction and counselling services provided to returning migrants.

The socio-economic insecurity experienced by the population in many regions of Georgia, two-thirds of which is mountainous,² is further exacerbated by the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural hazards. For example, rising temperature has led to dramatic glacial retreat since 1974. Over 50% of the national territory is prone to avalanches, which includes over 100 settled areas.³ Climate change projection indicates increase in average temperature and increase in frequency of heat waves. Rapid retreat in glaciers due to warming climate would increase the likelihood of flooding, which could worsen effects through its impacts on landslides and mudflows.⁴ This will be a major risk for biodiversity, health and livelihoods in Georgia. This could force people to move, especially the impacts of rapid-onset hazards. In other cases, where effects of slow-onset hazards build up over long timescale spanning decades, migration will be a matter of choice.

Migrants' rights and migrant protection

Significant progress was made by Georgia over the past decade in developing legislative and policy frameworks for a human right centred approach to migration governance, but various challenges still lie ahead. IOM's operational experience shows that increased immigration, coupled with prolonged irregular stay of hundreds of stranded immigrants who for multiple reasons cannot return to their home countries, and fail to reach their desired destination countries, necessitate the strengthening of migrant protection mechanisms. Difficulty in accessing basic services, such as health care and professional legal aid, as well as to expanded voluntary return programmes including reintegration assistance after return is often cited as existing challenges.⁵ Due to insufficient inter-ministerial coordination and outdated immigration legislation that does not fully respond to evolving challenges, migrant protection issues have not been appropriately addressed.⁶

In order to survive and meet their daily needs, some immigrants turn to dubious employers for low-paid jobs in often unsafe working environments or may end up in situations of labour exploitation. The range of people on the move in need of special protection and assistance is very broad, with particular vulnerability affecting children separated from their families, single-head households with mothers burdened with multiple care duties and labour migrants facing abuse or even exploitation in the workplace. The task of identification of the specific needs of vulnerable migrants and providing them with assistance and protection in accordance with applicable international human rights and their needs is particularly challenging in the context of irregular migration flows and in crisis situations.

The capacities of the Government of Georgia to manage labour migration schemes have been progressing steadily. The GoG has named the development of labour migration schemes as an important political priority as a means to outbalance irregular migration and at the same time foster the European integration process through enhanced people-to-people contacts and international mobility.⁷ Private recruitment agencies in Georgia are actively engaged in mediating for employment opportunities abroad, sometimes resulting in placement of Georgians in irregular employment with no access to protection mechanisms. The current legislation on labour migration does not provide for the collection and management of reliable data on physical and legal persons in Georgia engaged in international labour recruitment activities, leaving room for unethical and exploitative conduct, including abuse

² [Disaster Risk Finance Country Note: Georgia. World Bank, 2017.](#)

³ [Disaster Risk Finance Country Note: Georgia. World Bank, 2017.](#)

⁴ [Country Profile Georgia. World Bank, 2021.](#)

⁵ Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, "On the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia", 2020. "Public Defender of Georgia, Visit Report to the Temporary Accommodation Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs", 20 February 2019.

⁶ "Smuggling of Migrants in Georgia - A Review of the Evidence Base", IOM Georgia, November 2021.

⁷ [Migration Strategy of Georgia for 2021- 2030.](#)

of labour rights and labour exploitation of the Georgian migrant workers abroad as well as the foreign labour force employed in Georgia.⁸

Access to essential services and contributing to sustainable development

Recent years have also seen an increase of returns of Georgian migrants to Georgia, mainly from EU countries. Returnees include migrant workers returning to Georgia after decades of working abroad, those with failed asylum applications, migrants who travelled abroad to seek medical assistance or stranded migrants who have often become victims of exploitation.

Following return, Georgian migrants struggle to reintegrate in communities where structural factors typically have not changed. IOM's experience shows that returnees are unlikely to reintegrate if they find themselves in situations whereby moving again or relying on another family member abroad is considered necessary for their physical or socio-economic survival and wellbeing. Based on a pilot assessment conducted by IOM in 2019, returning migrants struggle most in the economic dimension of reintegration, especially after a short and irregular migration experience.⁹ Communities with strong social networks and access to resources can provide support and protection to returnees and benefit in turn from the reintegration process and experiences gained abroad. However, when communities are unable to provide such networks and resources, return can be burdensome to the communities with scarce resources.

Remittances from abroad represent an important part of the income among the Georgian population. IOM assessments reveal that the remittances are almost exclusively used for basic needs and very rarely for generating sustainable livelihoods or different types of investment, which is attributed to insufficient opportunities, tools, and mechanisms for investment, as well as low financial knowledge and literacy among migrants and those left behind.¹⁰

The government has already undertaken a lot of groundwork to explore and mobilize the development potential of the Georgian diaspora, but major work still lies ahead in order to capitalize on its full potential. While the role of diaspora is increasingly recognized and referred to, the concept of diaspora involvement remains largely absent from strategic national and local development plans and actions. The absence of any official register on diaspora and their comprehensive professional profile represents an important impediment for active outreach and cooperation with the Georgian diaspora.

Mobility

Regular migration channels

During recent years, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has taken important steps to improve the efficiency of the border and immigration institutions, facilitate regular movement of people and goods, counter irregular migration, and transnational crime. Despite the efforts made throughout the past years in enhancing integrated border management (IBM) standards and capacities, significant challenges still remain in managing Georgia's land borders and maritime space, including poor border infrastructure (especially in high mountainous regions), insufficient logistic and technical means to promptly respond to violations, limited electronic surveillance and information-technological coverage and analytical capacities.¹¹ This requires actions, not only in regards to the police and customs aspects of IBM, but expanding to health services, phytosanitary, veterinary, and food safety checks and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Based on a pilot assessment conducted by IOM in 2019.

¹⁰ OECD study conducted in Georgia reveals financial literacy score of 12.1%.

¹¹ IBM strategy of Georgia 2014 -2018 and draft IBM strategy of Georgia 2022-2026.

inspection. Georgia's commitment in reaching IBM touchstones set by the EU is strong but remains a work in progress, in need of further support and guidance.¹² IOM's support to the Government in this field is dedicated to strengthening Georgia's IBM capabilities as well as in the accountable, inclusive, and equal representation of all relevant state actors.

Second Report Under the Visa Suspension Mechanism released in December 2018 flagged several aspects requiring attention, as regards the increased number of asylum seekers and increased participation in organized crime of Georgian Nationals in the EU.¹³ The issues raised in this report emphasized the need to take actions to reduce the number of unfounded asylum requests, through targeted information campaigns, improved border control, and applied measures against organized criminal networks. To promote national and regional security, peace and stability, to ensure economic sustainability and development, and to progress towards EU integration, the Government of Georgia is committed to developing the new Integrated Border Management Strategy of Georgia 2022-2026, and IOM is well-positioned to provide the required support to the government in developing this new strategy.

In the past years, the Government of Georgia has invested considerable efforts in making regular employment schemes abroad more accessible to Georgian citizens. The Government of Georgia increasingly sees regulated, temporary, and circular labour migration as a tool to reduce irregular migration and asylum claims abroad and for tackling high unemployment in Georgia. This regular migration would ultimately contribute to poverty reduction and promote economic relations between Georgia and destination countries.

With the support of IOM, the Government of Georgia has reached several bilateral agreements with destination countries, including Bulgaria, France, Germany, and Israel, and further agreements are pending. Additionally, the labour market information and management system (LMIMS) is planned to be developed in Georgia by the State Employment Support Agency (SESA) of Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia (MoHLSA) through State and international partners' contributions, including significant support from IOM, conducive to reliable demand-supply evidence gathering and skills matching.

Migration flows and migrant well-being

In the area of counter-trafficking, Georgia is acknowledged as having a solid legislative base, developed institutional mechanisms, and sufficient budgetary resources to combat this crime. However, reports produced by the Council of Europe's GRETA group as well as OSCE and the annual Trafficking in Persons reports of the Department of State of the US Government point to low victim identification rates and limited success in prosecuting traffickers.¹⁴

Another key challenge is to advance inter-agency cooperation, for instance in combating child trafficking by engaging social workers and NGOs and trafficking for labour exploitation through strengthening operational ties between law enforcement bodies and the Georgian Labour Inspection Office. Bureaucratic and procedural obstacles are often cited¹⁵ as the reasons why inter-agency cooperation has not yet developed to the levels required.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ [Report From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Second Report Under the Visa Suspension Mechanism, 2018.](#)

¹⁴ [US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021. GRETA report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention, 2021. OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 2020](#)

¹⁵ Council of Europe, GRETA, 3rd evaluation report of Georgia, 2021

Governance

Evidence-based policy

In Georgia, data collection, research and data analysis has been an ongoing process with several accomplishments. IOM has contributed to establishment of systems such as Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS), MigApp, and the Migration Translation (MiTA) App, that have been developed to enhance communication flow, and there are upcoming projects to tackle introduction of digital systems to analyse labour market development trends.

The development of the UMAS also serves as one of the key benchmarks of EU's assessment of Georgia's performance in implementing the Visa Liberalization Action Plan and the EU-Georgia Association Agreement Agenda and as such a crucial element in Georgia's European approximation process. UMAS is also envisioned as an important data source for the Border and Migration Risk Analysis System.

Challenges do exist in terms of better access of all government entities to data in order for evidence to better inform policies. There is a general shortage of human and technical resources to ensure this process runs smoothly and there is still need for capacity building to ensure data collection can be done on regular basis at the highest standards, then analysed and utilized by relevant entities to enhance policies and practices. In Georgia, the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) exists as a well-established and capacitated Inter-Governmental coordination mechanism in the sphere of migration governance. Migration data collection and analysis efforts have generally taken place at the level of national migration related structures through Geostat, UMAS, and individual government agencies with a migration mandate. There is little to no data collection and analysis taking place at regional and local levels.

Well-coordinated migration management

Georgia has a comprehensive national migration policy as well as legal and strategic frameworks. It also features an institutional system integrating the whole-of-government approach. The institutional setup involves various governmental agencies responsible for different aspects of migration management, with the State Commission on Migration Issues as the government's advisory coordinative body. Regional, local, and municipal bodies actively participate in the development and implementation of migration approaches at regional and local level. The state promotes the whole-of-society approach involving civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, private sector, etc. Georgia has just recently enacted its national Migration Strategy 2021-2030 and developed action plans for 2021 and 2022.

As mentioned above an integrated border management strategy is currently being developed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia (MoHLSA) is looking into developing a reintegration and integration strategy while labour migration policies are in the process of being refined. Georgia will need support in the coming period to not only finalize these policies and strategies but also to implement them, which will require human and financial resources as well as strong political will.

Xenophobia and negative perceptions of migration

Frequent misinformation about migration creates a misleading narrative which can lead to stigmatization and social isolation of migrants as well as generate further risks related to the protection of migrants' rights. A fact-based public narrative would contribute to more diversity and better protection of the rights of migrants and would strengthen rule of law. IOM has contributed significantly to counter negative perceptions through public awareness activities, training courses such as intercultural communication, and the development of apps which facilitate communication and improve information flow. Opportunities are present to engage with the government at all levels to strengthen a fact-based narrative.

While there are many efforts to enhance data collection to contribute to evidence-based policies in Georgia, there is room to improve data collection, analysis and sharing to benefit all.

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities for IOM’s work in Georgia for 2022-2025 have been identified based on an assessment of what the next five years will bring in terms of migration dynamics and migrant needs in the country. The priorities will also directly support the achievement of key national as well as global strategic priorities related to migration and development. IOM’s priorities in Georgia are fully in line with the goals and objectives outlined in the Migration Strategy of the Government of Georgia for 2021-2030, articulated around the underlying principle of making migration a force for development, and support many of the priorities defined in strategic documents of individual national stakeholders and partners. IOM’s priorities in Georgia also comprehensively reflect the spectrum of objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration (GCM) and are fully aligned with UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 for Georgia. IOM’s priorities are also aligned with the IOM Strategic Vision¹⁶ and Strategic Results Framework (SRF),¹⁷ as well as the IOM Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia for 2020-2024, and centre around three key pillars: resilience, mobility, and governance.



¹⁶ Strategic Vision: Setting a course for IOM, available [online](#).

¹⁷ The Strategic Results Framework (SRF) is directly inspired by, but broader than the Strategic Vision, adding for example an additional objective on Humanitarian Assistance and incorporating complementary concepts and language from the Migration Data Strategy, the Migration and Sustainable development strategy and others.

In the event of a crisis: humanitarian assistance and protection

IOM stands ready to deliver emergency assistance on the basis of need in response to ad-hoc crisis events which may take place in Georgia, such as new events leading to mass internal displacement caused by disasters induced by natural hazards or conflict. IOM has the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance and protection programming to alleviate human suffering and upholding dignity and rights of people affected by crisis, including through contribution to immediate and long-term response, and delivery of humanitarian assistance informed by data. IOM stands ready to work to reduce or mitigate threats and vulnerabilities among affected populations via humanitarian protection interventions, and to contribute to improving the quality of humanitarian response systems through inter-agency coordination.

PILLAR 1: RESILIENCE

IOM will prioritize empowering individuals and building the resilience of communities in situations of vulnerability stemming from a range of complex drivers relevant to Georgia, including prevailing poverty, depopulation, forms of exploitation of migrant workers and individuals, as well as climate change and environmental degradation. IOM will endeavour to take a long-term and holistic approach to each of the above areas, integrating development objectives and supporting local, regional, and national stakeholders in recognizing and addressing adverse migration drivers and vulnerabilities.

Priority 1: Address adverse drivers of migration and structural factors that compel people to leave their homes

Addressing the adverse socio-economic drivers of migration and maximizing development benefits of migration in Georgia requires new integrated approaches and holistic migration management solutions. Lack of economic opportunities, social services and infrastructure, as well as lack of information on the available counselling and referral assistance on support programmes and services contribute to adverse drivers of migration. In order to address and mitigate such adverse drivers, IOM intends to increase the capacities of relevant government entities to support development and implementation of comprehensive development strategies that address inequalities and promote equal access to available services. Building on its global presence and capacities IOM will provide the Government of Georgia with up-to-date migration research, analysis, and information on socio-economic needs of population at risk of irregular migration, to support evidence-based policies.

The socio-economic insecurity experienced by population in many regions of Georgia is further exacerbated by risks related to climate change and disaster induced by natural hazards. In this regard, IOM will support efforts that aim to avert migration out of necessity, including displacement, and address the needs of trapped and immobile populations. IOM will engage in partnerships to develop and implement joint approaches that analyse and address environmental drivers that compel people to move, accelerate climate action, reduce risk, build resilience, and enhance adaptive capacities. Contributing to the development of policies and strategies that promote equitable access to natural resources regardless of migration status, IOM will provide targeted training to the government officials in Georgia.

Priority 2: Uphold rights of migrants and displaced populations and protect from violence, exploitation and abuse

The absence of a robust mechanism to pro-actively identify victims of trafficking, underdeveloped protection mechanisms, as well as the lack of coordination and referral pathways for identification and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations remain as challenges that require further support and enhancement. IOM, as a traditional partner of the Government of Georgia, will continue to support the measures taken across the full spectrum of counter-trafficking action, such as fostering of international cooperation, direct victim assistance, capacity building of all relevant government entities, in particular for the purpose of robust law enforcement action as well as targeted economic and social development assistance of vulnerable individuals and communities. As promoted in the National Migration Strategy of Georgia 2021-2030, IOM will support the development of stakeholder coordination mechanisms on migration issues and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, including to enhance the capacities of state structures and non-governmental organizations. This Whole-of-Society approach will assist in improving victim assistance efforts through national referral mechanism, contributing to more acute victim identification efforts, and aiming to expand sustainable reintegration opportunities for victims of trafficking in human beings. IOM will support gender-based-violence survivors with survivor-centred, gender- and child-sensitive protection and other essential services.

Considering the circumstances that migrants in vulnerable situations such as undocumented migrants face numerous obstacles in accessing basic protection-related services, IOM will support relevant stakeholders in providing migrants in vulnerable situations and displacement-affected persons, including unaccompanied children and victims of trafficking, with access to protection-related assistance, including throughout the return and reintegration process. In this regard, IOM Georgia will capacitate relevant government stakeholders and civil society organizations with knowledge, skills and tools to proactively identify and remove barriers to access to such services.

IOM will seek to address the assistance and protection needs of migrants and displaced persons, as well as address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards.

Acknowledging the need to enhance the regulatory base and capacities of the private recruitment sector in ethical recruitment standards and practices, especially in light of the ongoing process of elaborating labour migration legislation, along with the enhancement of knowledge base of the MoHLSA and other major stakeholder agencies in the Georgian government in monitoring of locally operational recruitment agencies and international recruitment policies and practices. IOM will support the improvement of management of labour migration schemes based on ethical recruitment principles and securing access for migrant workers to protection mechanisms. IOM will initiate several targeted capacity building activities to support development of policies and programmes that mitigate risks with private recruitment agencies.

Priority 3: Promote equity and access to essential services for migrants and vulnerable communities and promote sustainable development

Contributing to the inclusion of all migrants, including diaspora, displaced persons and crisis affected populations in policy processes and programmes for transition, recovery and development, promoting social cohesion and prosperity, IOM will engage in initiatives targeting community engagement and migrant inclusion into policies and decision making and will provide targeted capacity building to the local governments across the country.

Addressing the vulnerabilities of all migrants, especially those in the most vulnerable situations including returnees, stranded foreign migrants and crisis affected communities in Georgia, IOM will improve access to essential services such as housing, health and education and will provide direct assistance including by provision of shelter and food to the most vulnerable.

Recognizing the need to efficiently match migrant needs and potential with the local socio-economic opportunities, IOM will provide capacity building of municipal staff and support the establishment migrant information, liaison and referral services throughout the country. Additionally, IOM will support national and local government administrations with the development of guidance and tools to ensure migrant-inclusive legislative and policy frameworks and programming.

Recognizing the potential role of diaspora as a powerful instrument for local development, IOM will contribute to developing and enhancing the existing policies and capacities of the national and local governments in engaging with the diaspora; establishing and improving mechanisms/platforms to connect local governments, diaspora and communities; and enabling access to available information on the investment opportunities.

Contributing to sustainable development throughout the migration continuum involving all migrants, IOM will support the financial literacy of migrants and access to financial services and remittances backed products, leasing schemes and small to medium sized business enterprises support programmes. Meanwhile, IOM will enhance the capacity of the government at the national and local levels built on integrated approach to reintegration, attracting diaspora human and financial capital for local development and investment potential of migrant remittances.

Considering the importance of the revitalization of local economy and community in creating conditions enabling for return and subsequent sustainable reintegration of individuals and households in the community, IOM will address the root causes of insecurity across individual, community, and structural levels. IOM will support the development of the reintegration and integration strategy of Georgia, planned under the auspices of MoHLSA. IOM will contribute to eliminating the need for further irregular migration as a single realistic livelihood strategy. IOM will engage in initiatives that would contribute to enhancing community resilience and government capacity to enable sustainable reintegration across the economic, social, and psychosocial dimension.

Recognizing the need to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities and capacitate local government structures to benefit from and partake in Georgia's efforts in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, IOM will support to strengthen service provision, create local opportunities and increase community engagement, develop community and collective income generation projects, enhance infrastructure, and identify local investment opportunities.

Acknowledging the importance of community revitalization and engagement in recovery and establishment of sustainable and climate change-adaptation, IOM will provide targeted capacity building and technical support to MoHLSA to ensure migrants access to labour market and livelihoods opportunities as well as skills development and vocational training. IOM will also support returning migrants and their sustainable reintegration to the communities of their choice.

3.2. PILLAR 2: MOBILITY

As migration dynamics evolve and increase in complexity in Georgia, so must the tools that manage movement. In this regard, IOM will prioritize promoting safe, orderly, and regular human mobility for the benefit of migrants as well as the Georgian society at large. IOM will support the Government of Georgia in applying innovative approaches to the design and implementation of systems to manage migration, based on IOM's existing knowledge of what works, where, and for whom, and an understanding of the specific national and regional context.

Priority 4: Promote efficient, innovative, and sustainable channels for regular migration

In light of the priorities of the Government of Georgia, IOM will assist Georgian authorities in tailoring the new Integrated Border Management Strategy for Georgia 2022-2026 and its action plan, making sure that all current challenges, such as emerging migration and trafficking trends, terrorism, transnational organized crime, environmental and natural calamities, and the ongoing crisis generated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, will be duly considered in a gender-sensitive manner and in full respect of migrants' rights.

Acknowledging the importance of access to safe, orderly and regular protection-sensitive pathways for human mobility, IOM will promote assisted voluntary return of stranded migrants as the preferred option of return in advocacy to the host government, inter-alia by strengthening migrant right protection mechanisms, facilitating access to basic services, and capacitating the government to enhance meaningful integrated reintegration services for Georgian returnees. Efforts will also include awareness raising and outreach campaigns to provide information regarding available services and capacitating the government to implement solutions for persons who are forced to leave their communities due to the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. In this regard, IOM will work closely with MoHLSA and the Agency of IDPs, Eco-migrants and Livelihoods Provision to further enhance the capacities to address the challenges faced by environmental migrants in the country.

Advancing migrants' access to legal identity solutions and to relevant support to comply with visa procedures and admission, long-term stay and regularization requirements, IOM will provide technical support and capacity building to government institutions to process immigration and visa applications, including with regard to verifying the integrity of documents. IOM will also capacitate relevant government institutions to provide migrants and returnees with civil registration documents and non-discriminatory access to nationality determination services.

Ensuring access to accurate and up-to-date migration related information, IOM will conduct awareness raising campaigns including enhancing partnerships with relevant government entities to conduct inter-ministerial information campaigns on safe migration, combining social media, community outreach and mass-media engagement to inform the Georgian population about the realities of migration and the benefits of regular migration versus the pitfalls of irregular migration including the dangers of trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation. In case of emerging need, IOM will provide direct assistance to stranded migrants with appropriate services and protection, including transportation and documentation assistance.

Addressing the vulnerabilities of irregular migrants from Georgia living abroad, IOM will conduct information campaigns promoting safe migration providing unbiased and updated information on the realities of migration and risks of irregular migration and strengthen

the capacities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia to offer consular assistance to citizens abroad in need, including by means of developing and improving IT portals.

Contributing to safe, voluntary and dignified return of migrants, IOM will support government institutions to develop and improve existing evidence-based policy and legal frameworks to facilitate effective and sustainable regular migration channels for voluntary return. Recognizing the importance of access to timely, unbiased, and reliable information in dignified voluntary return and sustainable reintegration, allowing migrants to make informed decisions and take ownership of the voluntary return process, IOM will provide reliable information to migrants and potential returnees. Additionally, IOM will provide appropriate and gender-sensitive pre-departure, post-arrival or return assistance and counselling.

Acknowledging the potential of temporary regular migration (incl. circular migration) as a means of tackling high unemployment in Georgia and developing a skilled labour force, IOM will support the government and other stakeholders in originating initiatives to invest in skills development and to facilitate matching supply and demand for specific skills. IOM will provide technical support enhancing the capacities of the government, meanwhile supporting the development and conclusion of bilateral labour agreements. Efforts will also include awareness-raising campaigns on the available opportunities for studying/apprenticeships abroad and on employment. IOM will also contribute to the work of the Education Quality Enhancement Center, Ministry of Education and Science, to streamline the system for recognition of skills gained abroad.

IOM will promote approaches that facilitate orderly, safe, responsible, and regular migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters due to natural hazards. IOM will highlight the benefits of well-managed migration in supporting climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. IOM will support the development and implementation of innovative migration policies and practices. IOM will seek to develop solutions that leverage the potential of migration for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Priority 5: Safeguard well managed migration flows and support migrant well-being during mobility

As a long-standing partner of the Government of Georgia in the area of counter-trafficking, IOM will continue to contribute to the prevention of trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and related transnational organised crimes. IOM will engage in several initiatives such as enhancing the skills of government authorities, conducting awareness raising campaigns for victims of trafficking, individuals at risk of trafficking, and community members. For instance, IOM will engage with NGOs and social workers to connect to the communities of women from Central Asian countries present in the Ajara region, where they work in low-paid jobs in the service sector or as commercial sex workers. Efforts will also include enhancing data collection and sharing as well as risk analysis mechanism and methodologies to effectively develop national policies, and the establishment of community policing platforms for awareness-raising and prevention of trafficking in human beings.

IOM will continue to enhance communication between border officials, health workers and migrants and contribute to providing access to essential migration-related information through the MigApp and MiTA app online platforms and will provide screening equipment for border crossing points to mitigate the risks that population mobility may pose to individual and public health.

Contributing to the management of cross-border mobility, IOM will support access to data management systems such as border management information systems and passenger data exchange (Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record) and enhance the

capacities of relevant border officials on document authenticity, document fraud detection, identity management and the responsible use of biometrics.

Promoting integrated, non-discriminatory border management policies, strategies and systems that ensure the human rights, dignity and safety and security of people on the move, IOM will support in the development of infrastructure and equipment of border management at all border crossing points and enhance the capacities of border management officials in developing inclusive immigration and border management policies. Efforts will also include promoting adequate protection measures, facilitating and supporting persons with protection concerns such as victims of trafficking and smuggling, unaccompanied and separated migrant children and survivors of Gender-based-violence including sexual exploitation and abuse. IOM will also support the government to establish alternatives to detention to decrease the instances of migrant detention to the absolute minimum and train border management officials and frontline workers on prevention of family separation and promotion of family reunification.

3.3. PILLAR 3: GOVERNANCE

IOM aims to support the Government of Georgia in building capacity for the governance of migration and the provision of assistance to migrants. This requires more strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders and partners in the country, and the development of robust research, analysis and data collection capacities, to support decision-making in often politically challenging thematic arenas. IOM will also prioritize building stronger cooperation with other United Nations agencies in the country for the benefit of migration governance.

Priority 6: Support collection, sharing, and utilization of data for evidence-based policy making

Utilizing whole-of-government and whole-of society coordination mechanisms, IOM will contribute to improve migration data collection, management, sharing and analysis to support the government in developing policies and adjust legislation based on quality and timely data.

Contributing to forecast migration trends, prepare local capacities for increased migration flows, and plan resources, IOM will enhance the capacities of the government, civil society and private sector in migration data collection and management.

To keep up with the increasingly complex migration dynamics in Georgia, IOM will further support in developing national capacity for migration data collection, consolidation, analysis in the service of evidence-based policymaking across all relevant Government ministries. UMAS, a migration analytical system developed with the support from IOM, can be the key tool for addressing the shortage of well-analysed migration data and for achieving the goals set out in the present Migration Strategy of Georgia. IOM will continue to enhance UMAS, which will be key to facilitating up-to-date understanding and good management of the already complex and still diversifying migration trends in the future.

Priority 7: Promote well-coordinated, and coherent systems, policies and legal frameworks on migration aligned with international standards

Facilitating dialogue on migration governance and policies, IOM will support in enactment of migration policies and legal frameworks that support good migration governance. IOM will utilize platforms such as UN Network on Migration and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) to support regional and international

policy coordination mechanisms to foster coherence, promote adherence to international conventions and protocols, and encourage more effective migration governance.

As the coordinator of the UN Network on Migration in Georgia, IOM will support the government to receive effective, coordinated and whole-of-system support to develop and implement migration policies and mainstream migration into related frameworks. As a long-standing partner of the government, IOM will continue to contribute to the yearly Action Plans of the Migration Strategy of Georgia of 2021-2030, yearly Joint Work Plans of UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025, Common Country Analyses (CCAs), and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

IOM will also support the Government in taking a lead in facilitating transnational coordination and dialogue to encourage joint efforts and inspire learning and collaboration in the area of migration management among governmental and civil society stakeholders facing comparable contexts.

IOM will raise awareness and support the relevant sectoral ministries to mainstream migration in climate change policies and programming as well as to contribute to the human mobility work plan of the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism of Loss and Damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. IOM will support the Government of Georgia to further enhance its policies and programming to avert, minimise and address disaster displacement in the context of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. IOM will support the Government of Georgia to mainstream climate change and environmental considerations into their GCM implementation plan and to report on migration, environment, and climate change nexus as part of the GCM review process.

Priority 8: Mitigate xenophobia and negative perceptions of migration through evidence-based public discourse

Lack of information and limited interaction with migrants among communities contribute to rising xenophobia and negative perceptions of migration in Georgia. Promoting effective public discourse on migration that is ethical and balanced, IOM will conduct awareness raising campaigns and initiatives highlighting migrants' socio-economic and political contribution to the communities through various tools. IOM will enhance the capacities of the government and relevant stakeholders to counter misinformation, disinformation and fear-based narratives on migration and migrants. Utilizing the UN Network on Migration, IOM will engage in UN coordinated initiatives and advocate comprehensive strategies to counter xenophobia and discrimination, including through establishing multi-stakeholder alliances with the government and the civil society organizations.

In this context, IOM will put additional effort into enhancing migration governance and protection of migrants' rights through implementing innovative and evidence-based initiatives to inform migrants of their rights and prevent potential abuse. Through research and on the basis of data, IOM will contribute to enhancing collaboration of all migration stakeholders to combat negative public perceptions of migrants and migration, and generating accurate and constructive discourse and reporting on migration.

3.4. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

IOM follows a people-centred approach, guided by the *leave no one behind* principle. The Organization is committed to supporting governments and partners in upholding the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migration status, gender, disability, ethnicity, or age, across all stages of the migration cycle, while endeavouring to eliminate all forms of discrimination against migrants and their families.

IOM recognizes that persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups. We further recognize that a person's sex, gender and age shape every stage of the migration experience, whether forced, voluntary or somewhere in between. The roles, expectations, relationships and power dynamics associated with one's gender significantly affect all aspects of the migration process. It is therefore crucial to understand how gender interacts with migration and to respond accordingly. Given the gender-specific nature of migration, the following are central to the work of IOM: advocating for equal rights under the law in employment and mobility; addressing discriminatory migration practices; understanding how gender affects the type of migration undertaken; responding to how gender influences access to social services; economic growth, capacities, risks and vulnerabilities; promoting institutional reform; ensuring diversity and inclusiveness in consultations and participation in activities; and addressing how migration influences gender roles and relations.

IOM recognizes that incidents of sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace can serve as indicators of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) against beneficiaries, and vice versa, and takes a mutually reinforcing approach to tackle both forms of sexual misconduct. SEA and SH by IOM personnel and its partners and service providers are not only serious misconduct but can be violations of human rights. SEA and SH are forms of sexual violence driven by gender inequality and imbalances of power. IOM is committed to addressing SEA and SH through effective prevention, risk mitigation, and response measures at all stages of programming across all types of interventions and within all IOM offices worldwide. IOM conducts regular mandatory training on IOM's standards of conduct and SEA and SH and ensures that SEA and SH key messages/information, communication and education materials are continuously shared with IOM personnel, partners, beneficiaries and communities.

IOM integrates measures to protect beneficiaries from SEA across its interventions throughout the programme cycle, and raises beneficiary awareness on SEA, prohibited behaviors of IOM personnel, and how to report SEA. SEA and SH designated focal point is appointed at the IOM Georgia mission for receiving sensitive complaints of SEA and using referral pathways to connect survivors to assistance. IOM is committed to support collective efforts to address SEA and is an active member of the UN Georgia SEA and SH Task Force and contributes to the interagency work.

3.5. PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION

IOM has been an active member of the UN coordination mechanism in the country is committed to the delivery of interventions as 'One UN'. As a part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Georgia, IOM works closely with other UN agencies and the Government of Georgia. IOM supported the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2021-2025, that was signed on 2 October 2020 by the UN Country Team and the Government of Georgia. The UNSDCF outlines development cooperation priorities for Georgia for the upcoming five years, identified through a nine-month coordination process. The preparations considered the findings of the final evaluation of the previous programming cycle (2016-2020) and the development challenges identified in the Common Country Analysis (CCA). The resulting plan corresponds with national development priorities, including Georgia's EU integration aspirations and the country's international commitments under the 2030 Agenda. Migration is reflected as a key cross-cutting issue, and IOM's work over the next five years will contribute to all five outcomes of the UNSDCF. Under the coordination of the Resident Coordinator's Office, IOM participates in the UN task force on Partnerships and Development Finance as well as a task force on UN Result Groups. Within the UNSDCF, on which IOM participates as a standing member. Further, IOM Chief of Mission and the UN Resident Coordinator co-chair the United Nations Network on Migration (the Network) established in June 2020, focusing on improving coordination and leadership for joint UN efforts addressing migration-related issues and needs. IOM also collaborates with other UN Agencies in the implementation of various joint projects within Georgia and looks to expand this cooperation over the coming years.

4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While IOM already works in all of the areas outlined above and has unmatched expertise with respect to providing services to migrants, the achievement of strategic priorities ought to be supported also by the strengthening of the broader functions of the IOM Mission to Georgia in line with the drivers of success defined in the IOM Strategic Vision.¹⁸ Key areas of institutional investment include those set out below.

Knowledge Management and Data

With the continued growth of IOM, its entry into the UN system and role in global strategic frameworks, continuously addressing data and knowledge management in IOM is now more urgent than ever. In November 2020, IOM adopted a Migration Data Strategy 2020-2025¹⁹ to serve as a framework and guidance for IOMs action to improve own and Member States capacities to produce evidence-based policies, implementation, monitoring and reporting on relevant international frameworks. IOM is committed to promoting data and knowledge management and will invest in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of accurate, reliable, disaggregated, and comparable data; as well as ensuring that this data fosters research, guides coherent and evidence-based policymaking and well-informed public discourse, and allows for effective monitoring and evaluation of actions over time. Further, IOM aims to solidify partnerships and collaboration with other UN agencies on data initiatives as well as building the capacity of government partners such as the SCMI's data collection and statistics management mechanisms.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Globally, IOM continues to invest in improving monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to better assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact, and sustainability of its projects, programmes, strategies and policies. IOM will continue strengthening the knowledge and skills on M&E amongst staff, increase numbers of dedicated M&E staff, consistently apply M&E policies and promote more joined-up, collaborative and innovative approaches to M&E in line with emerging good practice and the need to support the United Nations system in its reforms towards a more streamlined organization. IOM is committed to continuously work towards streamlining and integrating M&E systems across programs to ensure that data is effectively used for sharing knowledge, learning and best practices.

¹⁸ Strategic Vision: Setting a course for IOM, available [online](#)

¹⁹ IOM Migration Data Strategy, available [online](#)

5. THE WAY FORWARD

In Georgia, IOM's response is based on continued engagement with migrants as well as the local, national, and regional, government structures, national and international partners, and direct engagement with the local communities.

IOM takes a comprehensive approach towards programming, reflecting the complex migration dynamics at play in Georgia's communities and regions. This area-based approach considers the need for adaptable interventions and coordination with a range of various stakeholders. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexible and innovative approach allows IOM to continue responding to the needs of migrants and host communities as well as national and local authorities. This approach also aims to recognize potential future needs with regards to climate change adaptation and development programming. In synthesizing common programming elements, IOM ensures that cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed, and programming is integrated with relevant frameworks across the areas of migrant protection, labour migration, immigration and border management, migrant health, migration, development, environment and climate change, and research and data collection on migrant presence, migrants needs and flows.



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