

EMPLOYMENT AND EXERCISE OF LABOR RIGHTS FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE OF ARTSAKH IN ARMENIA





This report was developed within the framework of the "Decent Work Now" project, which is implemented by Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor, Transparency International Anticorruption Center, the Leading Group of Public Research, the Factor Information Center, in cooperation with the "Education and Solidarity" trade union.

The publication was prepared with the financial support of the European Union. The content is the responsibility of the "Akanates" observation mission and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

EMPLOYMENT AND EXERCISE OF LABOR RIGHTS FOR FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE OF ARTSAKH IN ARMENIA

Expert: Varduhi Avanesyan

Reviewers: Sona Ayvazyan, Narine Nushervanyan

Managing Editor: Christine Margaryan

ISBN 978-9939-1-1983-0

© Transparency International Anticorruption Center

www.transparency.am

Yerevan 2024



Executive Summary

The study aims to support the Government of Armenia in developing and implementing targeted and effective programs to help forcibly displaced people of Artsakh to access employment opportunities in Armenia. It focuses on the opportunities and challenges faced by forcibly displaced people of Artsakh in exercising their employment and labor rights.

The study aims to map the support and services provided to displaced people of Artsakh in the employment sector and assess their effectiveness; identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of state support programs and provide recommendations for more targeted and effective social support measures in the employment sector.

The study covers the period from the forced displacement and influx to Armenia in September 2023 until July 10, 2024. The study was conducted through desk research, including a review of domestic legislation; interviews with stakeholders, including representatives of respective authorities and displaced persons, focus group discussions. The study also utilized quantitative surveys conducted by partner organizations.

Key Findings:

Several issues have been identified regarding the exercise of labor rights and employment opportunities for forcibly displaced people, which included unequal opportunities due to citizenship requirements; gaps in targeted inclusion of vulnerable groups in programs; disproportionate approaches to employment solutions; limited awareness and training opportunities; coordination, synchronization, monitoring, and evaluation gaps in programs.

Recommendations:

Special Employment Programs

1. Develop or adapt employment programs for persons with disabilities, limited abilities, and individuals aged 50+. and create special employment programs for pensioners.
2. Increase the number of participants in employment programs and extend the income reimbursement period for employers to 18 months.
3. Include additional allowances for teachers hired through competitive processes under support programs.

Professional Training/Skills Development

4. Organize training for professional groups such as accountants, judicial assistants, and other specialized professions through state or commissioned organizations and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) or professional associations, unions, and relevant organizations through grants.

Access to Public Service Positions for Displaced Persons

5. Amend sectoral legislation to allow forcibly displaced Artsakh people with temporary protection status to fill public service vacancies, provided they meet examination requirements and are expected to obtain Armenian citizenship.

Economic Empowerment Programs

6. Identify forcibly displaced professionals with vocational education or experience and, based on this mapping, offer them employment opportunities in state and non-state institutions requiring artisans, both in the regions and in the capital.
7. Develop specialized programs for reopening businesses of displaced persons in Yerevan and the regions, which would include educational initiatives to familiarize them with Armenia's tax system and business start-up procedures, as well as providing initial capital in the form of grants and subsidies for acquiring tools and equipment or renting premises.

Regional Employment

8. Incorporate agricultural activity promotion components, such as leasing programs, in employment initiatives.
9. Explore socio-economic development programs in regions to support employment for displaced people. This could include offering tax incentives to landowners who lease their land to displaced persons.

Awareness Campaigns

10. Conduct awareness campaigns, including in the Artsakh dialect, to familiarize Artsakh residents with employment and training programs.
11. Increase awareness of labor rights and the State Labor Inspectorate through information leaflets, TV, and social media videos.

Employment Programs/Initiatives Coordination and Collaboration

12. Link and synchronize state support programs, including employment and housing initiatives, to provide coordinated and targeted assistance based on the needs of forcibly displaced individuals.
13. Develop a methodology and effective mechanisms for the implementation of interim monitoring for programs in addition to final evaluation of the programs, including statistical data collection to identify needs and gaps in a timely manner.
14. Consider developing a complaint mechanisms system, which will allow to submit and record complaints, and enable real-time online monitoring of programs to track participation rates, sectoral involvement, as well number and nature of complaints, which will allow timely identification of program needs and shortcomings.

15. Ensure effective collaboration with civil society, private, and international organizations in addressing employment issues for displaced persons, particularly in identifying needs and exchanging information.