

Armenia

6-19 February 2024

Since October 2023, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has registered **115,183 refugees** from the Karabakh region, among whom 30,000 are children.

The forcible displacement has negatively impacted refugees' lives and livelihoods, resulting in critical **humanitarian needs**. Needs are both immediate and long-term.

Refugee resilience has been a consideration from the outset of the emergency response. Refugee inclusion in national **development plans** and social cohesion are priorities.

KEY INDICATORS

115,183*

Reported newly arrived **refugees** as of 7 February 2024, according to the Migration and Citizenship Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs

45%*

Percent funded against the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) joint appeal

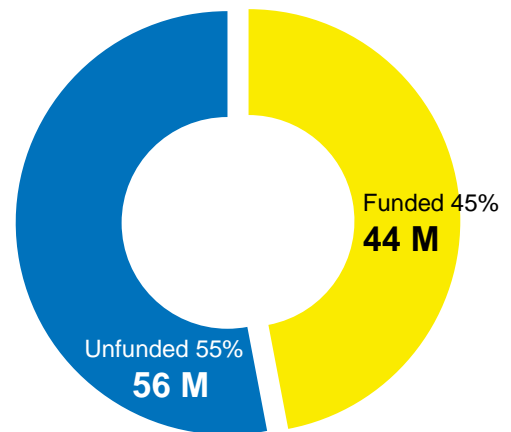
60

RRP appealing **partners**

FUNDING (AS OF 19 FEBRUARY)

USD 97 M

requested for the Armenia situation



Update On Achievements

Operational Context

A new online [application system](#) is now active under the Unified Social Services (USS) that enables refugees to check their eligibility for government-led cash assistance programmes and the status of submitted applications. Through the Cash Working Group, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced that a new government-led multipurpose cash assistance programme is being designed. More details, including eligibility criteria and target groups will be shared in the coming month. Both developments highlight strengthened government cash assistance systems and a trend towards cash-based and more targeted refugee assistance. Meanwhile, winter-related in-kind assistance is winding down.



Refugees await the arrival of winter clothing and core relief items, distributed by UNHCR and its partner Mission Armenia NGO. February 2024. Sevan, Gegharkunik province, Armenia. ©UNHCR/Areg Balayan



Food assistance is currently in process, with the support of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), covering the food needs of refugees residing in Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, and Tavush provinces. © WFP

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- On 7 and 8 February, UNHCR organized two virtual training sessions for USS staff in Yerevan and partner organizations in the provinces. A total of 30 participants attended the sessions. The training focused on **Temporary Protection for refugees** from Karabakh and **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with "New Generation" and Mission Armenia, held an **information session for youth** displaced from Karabakh. The topics covered included temporary protection status and the associated protection measures. A total of 13 youth refugees from Yerevan, Masis, Ashtarak, and Vagharshapat communities participated in the session.
- During the reporting period, UNHCR conducted community-level outreach to Metsamor, Armavir, and Vagharshapat communities of Armavir province and to Sevan and Martuni communities of Gegharkunik province to assess the main needs and challenges of refugees. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized with USS, Municipality, and local NGO representatives. The main concerns raised by

refugees consulted relate to housing, access to job opportunities, social entitlements, and psychological support. Internal movements between municipalities and between provinces continue to be reported. These are mainly attributed to family reunification, harsh weather conditions, and access to job opportunities. The FGDs underscored the multifaceted needs of refugees and emphasized the importance of addressing these concerns to promote the well-being and integration of refugees.

- During the reporting period, UNHCR hotline received a total of 52 calls from refugees. The inquiries primarily centered around (i) requests for household items and appliances such as clothes, bedding items, beds, heaters, washing machines, refrigerators, food, hygiene items and other household necessities; and (ii) requests for information about assistance projects. Since 1 October 2023, UNHCR's hotline has received 4,208 calls from refugees from Karabakh.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Cash support targeting elderly people and people with disabilities to cover additional costs for specialized health services.
- Access to livelihoods and job opportunities for both refugee and host communities, particularly during the winter season, when tourism and construction-related jobs decline.



SUB-SECTOR CHILD PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- Child protection partners continue to provide support for children and their caregivers. A network of child friendly spaces (CFS) was established and has **continued** to expand its scope of services to increasingly include refugee children and adolescents. During the reporting period, 2,241 more children and caregivers (62 percent female, 38 percent male) accessed safe spaces, child protection support and protection hubs.
- 4,407 more children, adolescents and caregivers (64 percent female, 36 percent male) received mental health and psychosocial support and 128 children (42 percent girls, 58 percent boys) received individual case management in and outside the CFSs.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- Education sector partners continue to support 8,072 refugees and host community children in schools and preschools. Remedial classes, psycho-social support, and recreational activities have been provided in learning spaces within 11 host schools

as part of UNICEF-ARCS joint program. Teach for Armenia carries on the MHPSS program in schools and access to education afterschool support.

- UNICEF and UNESCO work closely with the Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Center (RPPC) on the enhancement and institutionalization of MHPSS in schools. The RPPC has developed assessment tools for children, teachers, and parents and initiated capacity needs assessment of teachers and school psychologists. The results will be used for the development of a comprehensive MHPSS in school training module.
- Approximately 100 young refugees have the opportunity to further their education in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) through scholarships provided by the Fund for Armenian Relief.
- Education partners joint fundraising efforts resulted in the approval of USD 1 million Education Cannot Wait (ECW) funds to reach children who need support the most. The funds will be used to address the gap in refugee children's access to inclusive early learning services by expanding spaces in public kindergartens. Refugee and host community girls and boys, including children with disabilities, will also have access to psychosocial support, parental education sessions will be provided to improve positive interactions between caregivers and children, and teachers will receive much-needed assistance to help integrate and support these children in their classrooms.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Concerns remain related to the monitoring of the attendance of a certain group of refugee children whose families are in temporary shelters and may move at any time, especially after 31 March. There is an expectation that the Early Warning System for the identification of out-of-school launched by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MESCS) on 1 February 2024, will help to identify the most at-risk children and youth.
- While referral systems exist within schools and preschools to connect children with external mental health support, there is a need to strengthen these mechanisms to ensure they effectively address the needs of refugee children.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- WHO and the Psychological Society organized an event with burn patients, family members, and psychologist, including training on stress management. It's clear from the event that rehabilitation has been largely successful. Furthermore, WHO's vaccination campaign visited two elder care centers where influenza vaccinations were provided and awareness was raised regarding preventative measures for older

people to mitigate their health risks; 5 refugees and over 100 locals were involved. Regarding risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), WHO is working on an awareness raising video for pregnant refugee women focused on access to healthcare, as well as training for social workers providing services to refugees in the provinces.

- IOM continued provision of primary health care in the regions, especially remote regions hosting refugees. 3 mobile clinics are deployed per day, including primary healthcare, a neurologist, a radiologist, a psychologist, and other specialists tailored based on request. During the reporting period, over 1,000 primary healthcare consultations were provided, as well as subsequent treatment and referrals. Additionally, IOM is continuing its MHPSS-oriented awareness campaign on social media. Furthermore, IOM and the Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation continue to provide psychological services in communities with a particular focus on children, as well as a growing focus on MHPSS for their school teachers. During the reporting period, over 500 additional individuals were supported with MHPSS.
- Centers supported by Médecins du Monde (Mdm) have started working and doctors are gathering medical requests and convening. Of note, there are requests concerning free access to medications and Mdm is working to gather evidence to better understand why this is happening and what is the solution. To learn more, see the section below on “Identified Needs” for the Health Sector.
- UNFPA started a new series of accredited simulation training for ophthalmologists and gynecologists. Two trainings were conducted in Yerevan with 10 specialists from Kotayk and Ararat provinces. The training will continue in the coming weeks.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- **Access to Medications:** Mdm’s centers noted a concern around some refugees not accessing their medications free of charge. Mdm is exploring the issue further, however, the issue may be related to (a) misunderstandings around equivalent medications that have a different brand name; and/or (b) a concern that medication referrals that are made in one area cannot be covered if the refugee is registered in another location.
- **MHPSS:** IOM and the Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation are receiving increased requests for MHPSS, especially for children. Most recently, there is a request to expand MHPSS for teachers so that they can best support the children in need. Overall, the number of people approaching and requesting psychological support is increasing, including an increase in the number of men.
- **ArMed Registration:** Reflecting the Ministry of Health’s data, WHO’s on-the-ground findings confirm that approximately 70% of refugees are registered in ArMed. They are meeting with refugees to better understand why some refugees are not registered. So far, a frequently voiced explanation is that they may still move to another area where they would then register.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- Based on refugees' reported continued food needs for winter/early spring period and in line with the Government priorities, targeting, and assistance requirements, in February 2024, WFP started the distribution of pre-packed food parcels to about 37,000 refugees (244 metric tons of food). Food assistance is currently in process of being distributed, with the support of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), covering the food needs of refugees residing in Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, and Tavush provinces. WFP's food assistance will cover the February-March period in three tranches of food parcels to the same refugees, gradually transitioning to cash-based transfers using food cards for both refugees and vulnerable host communities.
- As of January 2024, WFP has provided food assistance to 58,811 refugees. Assistance included provision of hot meals and ready-to-eat lunch boxes to 8,351 refugees in registration and crisis centers and 12,615 family food parcels (200 metric tons) to 50,460 refugees across all 10 provinces of Armenia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- To develop context-specific activities for livelihood support and integration needs for refugees and host populations, WFP initiated the analysis of barriers and opportunities for socio-economic integration of refugees. Also, as part of WFP's regular food security assessment, in January 2024, WFP started its 6th Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment covering refugees and host communities.



SHELTER AND NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- Following the inputs provided by other working groups, namely Protection, Cash and GBV, the consolidated Guidance Note on Risk of Eviction was finalized and shared with the Inter-Sector Working Group for final review.
- MoLSA/MoTAI further identified 19 buildings for technical assessment. These structures have the potential to receive renovation works and increase the accommodation capacity of Social Housing. Approximately half have already been visited by partners and it is expected that all the technical reports will be finalized by the end of the current month.
- During January, Shelter and NFI partners provided a total of 45,243 instances of assistance. The majority of the assistance focused on winter specific NFIs with a total of 20,348 individuals reached, mainly in Ararat, Syunik and Kotayk provinces.

Concurrently, the disbursement of funds for the government-led cash scheme to support rent and utilities took place.

- UNDP continues the renovation of another shelter for refugees with capacity to host up to 75 people; the works are expected to be completed by April 2024. In addition, the assessment of another building requiring deeper retrofit is in progress; it is expected to be completed by summer 2024. This building will host additional 150 refugees. Negotiations with MLSA and regional authorities on identification of other potential buildings are in progress.



RESILIENCE

Achievements and Impact

- Activities are in progress regarding the implementation of the SIDA-funded livelihood support programme that will provide paid on-the job training opportunities for 400 refugees.
- UNDP started implementation of ADA-funded initiative which focuses on economic empowerment of women and targets approximately 1,300 vulnerable women including refugees from Karabakh.



CASH WORKING GROUP

Achievements and Impact

- All partners joining Government-led cash programmes (except for one pending) have finalized contractual arrangements with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) and the Unified Social Service (USS), as informed by MLSA during the Cash Working Group meeting co-led by UNICEF and UNHCR on 14 February 2024 which was attended by 25 partners.
- Upon verification of beneficiary lists received from MLSA, 10,945 children aged 0-9 have received multipurpose vouchers from UNICEF (4,709 households), while 761 pregnant and lactating women received multipurpose pharmacy cards (UNICEF/UNFPA). The distribution was accompanied with information sessions in Yerevan and target regions (including on voucher use, data protection, GBV risk mitigation and prevention, complaint and feedback mechanisms), as well as provision of awareness raising materials on immunization, breastfeeding, nutrition, parenting and others.

- In February, 300 refugee families benefitted from voucher support for utility payments by People in Need upon referrals from MLSA. 1,760 refugees benefitted from multipurpose vouchers provided by ACTED in Lori and Gegharkunik regions.
- Some other voucher programmes are in preparatory stages and discussions with MLSA and local communities (e.g. Action against Hunger, People in Need, Armenian Caritas).
- Post-distribution monitoring exercises for cash and voucher programmes supported by partners are in design or implementation phases.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- MLSA announced its intention to develop and rollout an additional multipurpose cash support programme, however, more details, including the eligibility criteria and target groups will be shared during the upcoming working group meeting. Partners will be encouraged to join the new initiative following mechanisms and procedures developed by the Cash Working Group.
- Sometimes beneficiaries do not receive assistance due to the lack of registered phone numbers or other constraints, thus a feedback mechanism has been activated with MLSA to receive information from partners, using a specific template, which enables MLSA to find alternative ways of reaching out to those beneficiaries and including them in the programmes.
- The voucher mapping and distribution reveals under-coverage in certain provinces and differences in targeting approaches and transfer values. Further coordination and alignment to national social protection thresholds is needed. Additional needs that can be covered by voucher support include household appliances, winterization, furniture items, and medicine.
- There is a need for continuous awareness raising on both Government cash schemes and voucher support provided by partners with simple and easy-to-understand messaging.

Cross-Cutting Task Forces

GENDER TASK FORCE

- The first draft of the Rapid Gender Analysis is being reviewed, and the initial findings will be presented on the next Gender Task Force meeting (on 28 February) as part of the validation process. The Gender Task Force also offers training opportunities on gender in humanitarian action for partners across all sectors. Interest has already been expressed by some organizations for training on specific gender topics and specific target groups.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS) TASK FORCE

- A template for emergency MHPSS service mapping was jointly developed and work to complete the mapping divided amongst Task Force members.
- The group provided responses and suggestions on the Government feedback on the terms of reference, which was then shared with the Inter-Sector Working Group for consideration.

Working in partnership

- The inter-agency coordination architecture facilitates partnership in the humanitarian response by creating the fora needed for communication, collaboration, and operational coordination. The Refugee Coordination Forum, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, is the highest level body, under which the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG), and sectoral Working Groups and Sub-Working Groups sit. There are currently two task forces under the ISWG, the Gender Task Force and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Task Force.

Financial Information

Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the operation.

Donors who have contributed to the operation:

- Australia
- Austria
- Canada
- Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)
- Czech Republic
- European Union
- Finland
- France
- Japan
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United States of America
- Private donors and foundations

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LINKS

[UNHCR Armenia – Operational Data Portal - Armenia](#)