

ARMENIA EMERGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE

Inter-Agency Update 25 September- 5 October 2023

Overview

Situation Overview

As of 3rd October, 100,625 refugees, including an estimated 30,000 children, entered the Republic of Armenia. 91,924 have been registered by authorities so far. The Government of the Republic of Armenia promptly responded to the situation by ensuring access to territory, protection, and assistance.

Registration and vulnerability screenings are undertaken by the Migration and Citizenship Service (MCS) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The screenings are carried out along check points in Kornidzor and Goris settlements of Syunik province and Vayk settlement in Vayots Dzor province. The Governor’s Office also registers later those who do not stop to register at the check points, using a network of already established 63 Humanitarian Coordination Centers across Armenia, one-stop shops providing information and assistance to all.

Regional distribution of the
91,284 registered refugees,
as of 3rd October

Location	Number of Refugees
Yerevan	37,829
Syunik	15,762
Kotayk	8,193
Ararat	7,270
Armavir	4,940
Gegharkunik	4,326
Vayots Dzor	3,760
Shirak	2,893
Tavush	2,317
Aragatsotn	2,189
Lori	1,805

Inter-Agency Response

Coordination: UNHCR has been requested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to lead the inter-agency response in support of the Government’s humanitarian refugee efforts. In response, the Refugee Coordination Model is rolled out under the leadership of the Government and led by UNHCR, in close collaboration and coordination with the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (UNRCO).

The Interagency Refugee Response Plan is being finalized in coordination and collaboration with UN, NGOs, and CBOs, and includes a joint financial appeal. The plan recognizes the importance of considering both the short-term and long-term needs of refugees within this emergency as well as delivering the response through national systems of the Republic of Armenia, aiming to further strengthen its capacities and overall resilience.

Sectoral Responses



PROTECTION

Assistance at check points/registration centres: UNHCR, together with IOM, provided technical, material, and expert support together to the MCS during the organization of registration at check points and centres in Kornidzor, Goris and Vayk. The registration centres also operate as first aid and psychological aid points. The Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) provided volunteers for the reception and registration of refugees in reception posts of Syunik and Vayots Dzor and UNICEF and People in Need ensured Child Friendly Spaces were established. WFP provided hot meals to the newly arrived. The volunteers supported data registration and collection, and the provision of tents for people to rest, change clothes and feed and care for babies. UNICEF also helped with restoring family links for separated children.

Information and counselling: UNHCR opened a counselling desk at the MCS registration centre in Goris where the Yerevan State University's Legal Clinic provided free legal aid to refugees. The KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation strengthened its hotline service, the Goris Youth Union is providing counselling and referrals.

Protection monitoring visits: UNHCR launched protection monitoring visits to the humanitarian and registration centres to observe access to registration, information and, reception conditions as well as to identify the main protection concerns and needs of refugees. Protection monitoring visits were conducted to 11 humanitarian coordination centres in Kotayk and Ararat provinces.

Rapid Needs Assessment: A Rapid needs assessment is being rolled out, scheduled to be finalized by 13 October.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UNFPA provided 35 local service providers with GBV prevention pocket guides, which include information on referral pathways, in Syunik and Vayots Dzor marzes (regions). Information on GBV services is provided in reception centres in Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Kotayk and Ararat regions for refugee women and girls and other vulnerable refugees. UNFPA also carried out specialized training to ensure survivor-centred support. Refugees with mobile phones have access to information on GBV prevention, safe reporting of cases and information on service points through the SafeYOU application.



CHILD PROTECTION

UNICEF trained 50 community social workers in child protection in emergencies to expand the overstretched capacity in Goris. Together, the Armenian Red Cross and UNICEF also established two Children's Corners in Syunik and Vayots Dzor provinces. The NGO People in Need also created a child-friendly space in the

registration centre in Goris to provide a safe and supportive environment for children. A Children's Corner remains operational in Goris and, to date, at least 100 children (both displaced and host community) visited the Corner during the time their parents and caregivers were engaged with registration at the local humanitarian centre. The Partnership & Teaching NGO provided child protection services.

UNICEF activated two contingency programme documents for the provision of psycho-social support and psychological first aid services, and child protection case management. Two more partnerships are being established for mental health and psychosocial support and parenting support and one for multi-disciplinary support to children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities among the displaced are being identified. UNICEF is in regular communication with the MLSA and organisations working with persons with disabilities to support with needs assessment and provision of specialized services and assistive technology, such as wheelchairs, prosthetics, glasses, hearing aids and screen-reading software. UNICEF conducted a rapid needs assessment in the regions of Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor, aiming to expand the UNICEF support and partnership framework responding to the protection and humanitarian needs of the newly arriving families.

UNICEF is procuring 160 tablets for social workers that will support the process of in-depth needs assessment, case registration and management. In the coming weeks, MLSA is expected to launch a new platform for registration of refugee children and UNICEF is actively working with MLSA to support this effort.



EDUCATION

UNICEF is engaging with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports to support the immediate enrolment of refugee children in schools and to expand the capacity of schools and preschools in Armenia to host new students. UNICEF is working to establish the first temporary early learning space in Goris, in close collaboration with local authorities and other counterparts, and stands ready to activate a partnership to establish temporary learning spaces and early childhood education spaces elsewhere in the country, as per observed needs.

UNICEF has prepositioned School-in-a-box kits sufficient to cater for the needs of at least 1,400 children and Early Childhood Development kits sufficient to cover the needs of 1,800 young children. Both types of kits are ready for distribution and UNICEF is working with its partners to identify locations where those kits will be most needed.

Teach for Armenia is providing job matching and placement of teachers among refugees, as well as operating an emergency education scheme for children who have limited access to schooling. The Youth Palace NGO (Gyumri) initiated homework support for children.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

WFP delivered and erected two 400 m² mobile warehouses in Goris for NFI storage and to serve hot meals. This mobile kitchen in Goris can serve hot meals to up to 3,000 people per day. In addition, they delivered 4,000 family food parcels for 16,000 people to the Goris municipality warehouse for future distribution. The

Armenian Red Cross Society, in Syunik and Vayots Dzor reception points, provided water, dry food and energy bars to refugees.

The NGO New Generation delivered 8,624 food packages, while People in Need provided lunch boxes to refugees in Syunik.

The NGOs Resource Center for Women's Empowerment and Astghazard provided food to newly arrived refugees, while the Armenian General Benevolent Union provided food in the registration centre in Goris.

Many children among the refugees appear to show signs of malnourishment. There are also reports of cases of low birth weight among newly arrived refugee children. Taking this into account, UNICEF has organized the establishment of mobile paediatric units equipped to monitor and address these cases that can be activated upon request of Ministry of Health. Procurement is ongoing for 3,000 food boxes for young children and 1,500 therapeutic biscuits for moderately and severely malnourished children.



HEALTH

On 1 October 2023, WHO facilitated the deployment of two senior-level specialists on burns management from the Israel's EMT (Emergency Medical Team) Type 3, at the request of the Armenian Ministry of Health (MoH). They carried out the initial burns management needs assessment. From 3 October, WHO then facilitated the scale up to 15 burn experts from Israel's EMT Type 3, to support hospitals in Yerevan hosting burns patients.

An international call for additional specialized Emergency Medical Team for burns management was published upon the request of the MoH and Medevac options for the patients in critical needs are being discussed with the bilateral partners. In the meantime, WHO is dispatching 10 burns modules of the trauma and emergency surgery kits (called TESK kits) to support the advanced care need for 500 burns patients.

To support the general health needs of the displaced population, WHO is preparing to send medicines for non-communicable diseases, that will cover 3 months of treatment for up to 50,000 persons. To date, WHO has dispatched 1,672 kgs of supplies worth over USD\$71,300.

The Armenian Red Cross provided psychological first aid as well psychological support at Syunik and Vayots Dzor reception posts. The NGOs Family and Community (Metsamor) and the Resource Center for Women's Empowerment provided mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to newly arrived refugee children and women. The Arevamanuk children's centre (Gyumri) provided MHPSS to vulnerable children and art therapy classes.

VIVA doctors and Volunteers for Armenia provides first aid in the Goris registration centre. The Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People mobilized a specialized health assessment team for displaced elderly in Hankavan and Aghavnadzor of Kotayk marz (region).

The New Generation Humanitarian NGO provided psychological support for 12 people. People in Need also provided psychosocial support.

Astghazard, an NGO for children with disabilities in Vardenis city, provided wheelchairs, round-the-clock psychological counselling, and art therapy to children with mental health concerns.

For Equality Human Rights NGO in Ijevan provided 300 hygiene packages to the Municipality to support their response to the refugee inflow.

UNFPA distributed 20 interagency reproductive health kits to key health facilities in Syunik, Tavush, and Gegharkunik regions, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The kits are intended to be used for safe child delivery, prevention of STI/HIV and the prevention, and management, of complications during child delivery. More than 60 healthcare providers (including midwives, nurses, and family doctors) received a training on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and increased their knowledge on minimum initial services package.

UNICEF provided essential medical supplies and medicine to the Ministry of Health for urgent distribution to health facilities. UNICEF is also working with the MoH to monitor the situation of immunization status of the refugee children and their rapid inclusion into the national Expanded Programme on Immunization . IOM provided primary healthcare via mobile clinics. These were first launched on 2 October and two visits - covering 100 individuals - have already been conducted, including the provision of MHPSS where needed.

With UNAIDS support, the NGO Real World Real People provided hygiene packages for one hundred women living with HIV and started social-psychological support.



RESILIENCE

UNDP initiated the renovation of one collective shelter (under MLSA) which will accommodate up to 50 single older persons.

The first batch of green energy solutions and equipment- 45 PVE mobile hybrid stations / 10 solar panels / 4 water heaters has been procured by UNDP and is ready to be dispatched to the most affected localities with the capacity to cover the emergency needs of up to 2,500 refugees.



SHELTER/ NFI

UNHCR distributed 315 foldable beds, 325 blankets and 122 pillows as well as 84 hygiene kits for a family of five in the Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions, in addition to bedding items, jerrycans and diapers for children. The first of 16 trucks carrying core relief items arrived in Armenia on 29 September. Some 752 core relief are being distributed, including 160 foam mattresses, 160 folding beds, 108 pillows, 96 blankets and 104 hygiene kits. The truck also carried 4 rub halls, to support local authorities.

Some 100 families registered at the registration centre in Yerevan received family hygiene kits from UNICEF, estimated to meet needs for one month. UNFPA has positioned 13,000 dignity kits at the transit centres in Syunik, Vayots Dzor, as well as to communities in Ararat and Armavir regions.

The NGO Ukrainian Forum provided hygiene items to 50 refugees, while the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) provided 175 packages of hygiene items to Vayk (Vayots Dzor) and another 125 to Berd (Tavush). Additionally, the NGO Resource Center for Women's Empowerment and Armenian Relief Society provided hygiene items directly to refugees.

The Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People provided non-food items (NFI) kits to frail and single elderly sheltered in Yerevan and other regions in Armenia. UNICEF and the Armenian Red Cross Society stationed 15 mobile bio-toilets at registration centres in Goris and Vayk. UNDP also distributed 8 mobile bio-toilets, with two in Kapan and six in Goris, adjacent to registration centres.

UMCOR provided mattresses and hygiene items to refugees in Armavir, mainly accommodated in collective shelters. WINNET Goris Development Foundation provided support in the crisis centre in Goris, distributing warm clothing and blankets to the refugees. The Sose Women Issues provided diapers, hygiene items, blankets, and warm clothes to refugees, while the Partnership & Teaching NGO provided stationery and clothes. Additionally, the Ethos Foundation NGO distributed bedding sets. The Goris Youth Union provided shelter and NFIs.

The Women's Support Center assisted refugees in Yerevan through the provision of 120 packages of diapers, 200 food ration boxes for basic sustenance and nutrition to individuals, hygiene items to 200 people, water bottles to 500 people, bedding items to 20 people, underwear to 50 people and shelter to one family.

The Youth Palace NGO, in Gyumri, conducted a needs assessment of vulnerable families accommodated in guest houses for the provision of dry food and hygiene items donated by host community members.

UNICEF activated the contingency partnership to provide voucher support for clothing for children and is in discussions with MLSA on implementation – initially targeting at least 6,000 young children. In the meantime, UNICEF has been providing ad hoc in-kind support to complement the efforts of local authorities, including some 200 blankets and mattresses for children and families in accommodation or crisis centres.

The New Generation Humanitarian NGO provided **temporary shelter** to three people, financial support for three people, and clothing for 15 others. The NGO Syunik Development, in Yeghegnadzor, provided shelter for 200 refugees. The Voskeporik development centre, based in Martuni, provided accommodation to 80 refugees in a summer camp in Tsovinar, as well as hygiene items, washing machine, heaters, and warm clothing. They also provided specialized treatment and care to refugee children with specific needs.

The KASA Foundation's shelter (KASA hostel) in Gyumri is open and at stand-by to accommodate refugee families.

The Armenian Caritas provided shelter at the residential building of the Catholic Church in Toros village in Shirak province. They also engage in humanitarian assistance to the refugees.

Mission Armenia NGO has provided shelter to 84 elderly refugees, 200 hot meals, and support to the Government of Armenia's Unified social service (USS) in the registration of refugees in the state primary needs assessment platform in Vayots Dzor, Kotayk, Aragatsotn, and Armavir provinces. They also provided of free legal aid and social services.

In the area of **cash assistance**, UNHCR and UNICEF, as co-leads of the Cash-Based Interventions Working Group, are working with MLSA to transition towards a multi-purpose cash assistance programme. This transition is aimed to enable refugees to procure items to cover their most pressing needs themselves.

Cross-Cutting Response



Government and partners put in place several hotlines aimed at preventing and/or mitigating incidents of exploitation and abuse, and to facilitate reporting of possible issues faced by refugees while respecting confidentiality principles. Numerous protection monitoring visits to the communities have been conducted.



A dedicated PSEA Coordination Group will continue its work on the prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, to ensure a collaborative response within the country. This Coordination Group is crafting a comprehensive PSEA strategy that encompasses a survivor-centred approach, aiming to be the standard guideline for all PSEA. Alignment with global PSEA commitments and advancements across pertinent sectors within the response will be meticulously maintained to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Many factors, including and not limited to vulnerability of the displaced population and the expanding involvement of humanitarian organizations in the response, can be considered as risks with regards to SEA.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Partners are working to maintain the protection and well-being of persons of concern by strengthening community and family support, ensuring that persons distressed by mental health and psychosocial problems have access to appropriate care, and ensuring that persons suffering from moderate or severe mental disorders have access to essential mental health services and to social care. As part of preparedness, the humanitarian community established contingency arrangements with implementing partners that could be immediately activated to provide psychosocial first aid and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.



Age, gender, and diversity (AGD)

Partners are working together to ensure that emergency responses are safe, dignified, participatory, community-owned, and socially and culturally acceptable. There are differences among the refugees in age, gender, and other characteristics such as social or legal status, ethnicity, and disability. These identities can exacerbate inequalities and limit opportunities. Partners are considering each person's unique needs, priorities, and strengths, and working to provide specialized assistance to people with specific needs, i.e., isolated elderly or children with disabilities.



Government Ownership/Localization

The Government continues to lead the humanitarian response. The host community demonstrated a spirit of welcome and unwavering generosity, with families and communities opening their doors to refugees. The local response, led by national and municipal authorities across the regions, has been equally remarkable, with large numbers of volunteers, national and local non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors coming together to support those in need. This spirit is captured in the inclusion of more than 35 local and national NGOs in this first Inter-Agency Update and their interest and commitment to joining the coordinated refugee response captured in the Refugee Response Plan.

