

ARMENIA EMERGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE

Inter-Agency Update 6 October- 12 October 2023

Overview

Situation Overview

As of 12 October, 100,632 refugees, including an estimated 31,000 children, entered the Republic of Armenia. Among them, some 99 per cent of the refugee population have been registered by the authorities so far. Armenia's Migration and Citizenship Service (MCS) continues to identify and re-register refugees as they settle in host communities, to update and prevent double registration in the government's database.

As of 8 October, 58,000 have been provided shelter in hotels and hostels, guests houses and other government-operated accommodation. Authorities reported that approx. 40% of school-aged children have been enrolled in local schools. Authorities indicated their intention to adapt the state employment schemes and development projects, to meet the needs and capacities of refugees and accelerate access to employment.

Inter-Agency Response

Coordination: Coordinated by UNHCR, the [Interagency Refugee Response Plan](#) (RRP), developed in close consultation with 60 partners, was released on 5 October. While supporting and complementing the government response, the plan recognizes the importance of considering both the short-term and long-term needs. In line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach, the plan aims to integrating inclusion, resilience, and solutions from the start, targeting both refugees and host communities with a longer-term view of strengthening public services.

Protection support: NGOs and UN Agencies continue supporting refugees with basic needs, counselling, protection services and case management. Rapid needs assessments are ongoing to further inform about refugee needs and vulnerabilities, including a specific rapid needs assessment dedicated to children's needs. To help refugee women and girls, dignity kits have been distributed alongside awareness-raising material about gender-based violence. Vulnerable groups, including women and children, are receiving life-saving services, such as psychosocial, health, mental health, legal and other type of assistance in multiple safe spaces established in locations with a high refugee concentration. Primary health is being provided through mobile clinics.

Support to the government: RRP partners are supporting the government and health care providers with training on the provision of psychological first aid to enable them to provide life-saving assistance. In the area of cash assistance, partners are working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) to transition towards a multi-purpose cash assistance programme and enable refugees to meet their most pressing needs themselves. In addition to renovating collective centres, partners are also equipping them with foldable beds, mattresses, and bedding to create sleeping spaces.

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,

Regional distribution of the 100,623 registered refugees as of 7 October

Location	Number of refugees*
Yerevan	45,202
Syunik	12,185
Ararat	9,862
Kotayk	8,235
Armavir	7,645
Aragatsotn	3,822
Gegharkunik	3,400
Vayots Dzor	3,341
Tavush	3,047
Shirak	2,721
Lori	2,388

with large numbers of volunteers, national and local non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors coming together to support those in need.

SECTORAL RESPONSES

CROSS CUTTING: CASH

UN Agencies are supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance to define a cash distribution mechanism by the members of the Cash Working Group, co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF.



PROTECTION

Protection monitoring and counselling: UNHCR conducted protection monitoring visits to 33 humanitarian coordination centres to eight provinces to observe access to registration, information and reception conditions as well as to identify the main protection concerns and needs of refugees. During the visits, UNHCR met with 79 households residing in shelters and private accommodations. UNHCR staff members provided counselling to all the households as well as screened their vulnerabilities and priority needs. Refugees were referred to local authorities and social protection services for relevant assistance, as relevant. In collaboration with the KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation, UNHCR strengthened its hotline service by increasing the hotline capacity allowing five operators to answer five calls simultaneously, as opposed to one call before the emergency.

Assistance at check points/registration centres: From 24 September – 5 October, UNHCR, together with IOM, installed IT equipment and provided IT expert support to the Migration and Citizenship Service (MCS) to set up registration spaces at check points and centres in Goris, Kornidzor and Vayk. Although registration activities have largely concluded, protection actors continue to provide needed services and assistance in the Goris city centre. NGOs People in Need (PIN), Mission Armenia and Médecins du Monde are providing counselling services and psychological first aid. The Armenian Red Cross Society is supporting the municipality with distribution processes. UNICEF jointly with ARCS, and People in Need continue to operate Child Friendly Spaces.

Rapid Needs Assessment: A joint Inter-Agency rapid needs assessment (RNA) exercise was launched by the multifunctional teams of UN Agencies, including UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, FAO, IOM, UN Women in 26 communities in 10 provinces. A KOBO questionnaire was used to collect information. The results of the RNA will be issued shortly. A joint coordination structure, led by the government and co-led by UNHCR has been set up.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Information on services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) is provided in reception centres in Ararat, Kotayk, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor regions for refugee women and girls and other vulnerable refugees.

13,000 dignity kits have been procured and distributed in reception centres and some shelters in Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Kotayk, Gegharkunik and Ararat regions for refugee women and girls and other vulnerable refugees.

UNFPA has established two Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) for refugees in the Syunik region, where psychosocial, health and legal assistance and other life-saving services are available.

The NGO Women Community Counsel, located in Martuni community, provided food, hygiene kits, baby diapers and nutrition to 2,000 refugees settled in Vardenis, Chambarak and Martuni communities.



CHILD PROTECTION

In the reporting period, UNICEF trained 26 community social workers, in addition to 50 community social workers trained previously, who are supporting child protection, case management, and the rapid needs assessments in the Goris Humanitarian Centre. Together, the Armenian Red Cross and UNICEF also established two Children's Corners in Syunik and Vayots Dzor provinces. Both facilities are operational, continuously receiving daily some 100 children from the refugee and local community, benefiting from mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and recreational activities. UNICEF is working with partners to establish similar facilities in other regions of Armenia and expand the network of child-friendly spaces, focusing on communities with high concentration of refugees.

The Partnership & Teaching NGO provided child protection services. Psychosocial support activities were conducted through ADRA's volunteers in an accommodation facility near the border in Goris, providing safe spaces for children and emotional decompression activities.

UNICEF continues to provide MHPSS and psychological first aid services as well as child protection case management, reaching over 1,000 children and caregivers with case management support, and over 3,000 children and caregivers with psychological first aid and MHPSS interventions. Three more partnerships are being established for MHPSS and parenting support and one for multi-disciplinary support to children with disabilities.

UNICEF is closely coordinating with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) and organizations of people with disabilities to support needs assessment and provide specialized services and assistive technology for children with disabilities. Various needs assessments are coordinated by the Inter-Agency focal points through the assessment team and sector leads.

During the reporting period, UNICEF and UNHCR in partnership with Child Development Foundation trained 100 patrol police officers on working with refugee children and caregivers, including child sensitive communication and psychological first aid.

“Astghavard” Disabled Children Parents’ NGO is providing rehabilitation and psycho-social assistance to three refugee children with disabilities residing in Vardenis community.



EDUCATION

UNICEF is partnering with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS) to identify needs of the education system for the effective inclusion of refugee children into education and learning, as well as to support expansion of the capacity of schools and preschools across Armenia to be able to teach new students. At present, MESCS is accelerating the process of registering school-aged refugee children and to date, over 55 per cent of school-aged children have been registered and enrolled in schools.

UNICEF is discussing with MESCS and relevant local authorities the establishment of temporary learning spaces and early childhood education (ECE) spaces in the marzes (regions) with highest concentration of refugees, as per the observed needs and request from the government.

In addition, UNICEF and its partners are distributing 1,000 schoolbags to children.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

On 3 October, to support hospitals in Yerevan helping burns patients, WHO facilitated the deployment of 15 experts from Israel’s Emergency Medical Team.

Psychologists of the mobile clinics deployed by IOM provided psychological consultations and screenings to 60 adults and children as of 11 October.

To support the general health needs of the refugees, WHO is preparing to send medicines for non-communicable diseases, which will cover 3 months of treatment for up to 50,000 persons. To date, WHO has dispatched 1,672 kg of supplies for over USD 71,300.

More than 40 health care providers have been trained on provision of psychological first aid in Goris and Kapan with the support from UNFPA, to enable them to provide lifesaving first assistance.

UNICEF is coordinating closely with the MoH and regional health authorities and is on standby to deploy mobile paediatric units in response to immediate needs of refugees. UNICEF is also partnering with the MoH in monitoring the situation of immunization status among refugee children and their rapid inclusion into the national Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI).

With UNAIDS support, the NGO Real World Real People provided hygiene packages for 100 women living with HIV and started social-psychological support.

IOM deployed two mobile clinics with multi-disciplinary health teams to provide primary health care services to the beneficiaries. As of 11 October, the mobile clinics have implemented nine visits in seven communities of Syunik, Gegharkunik, Ararat, and Vayots Dzor regions. About 300 adults and 200 children benefited from the mobile clinics’ services. The psychologists of the mobile teams consulted about 60 adults and children.

WHO trained 10 psychologists to create Emergency Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Teams to provide much needed MHPSS to some 200 victims of the explosion at Berkadzor and their family members.



RESILIENCE

UNDP equipped public places with high concentration of refugees in the cities of Goris and Kapan with eight bio toilets.

The first batch of green energy solutions and equipment, including ten solar panels, and four water heaters have been procured by UNDP and are ready to be dispatched to the most affected localities with the capacity to cover emergency needs of up to 2,500 refugees.

UNDP mobilized its established networks and partnerships for the rapid roll-out of livelihoods support activities for about 650 refugees and people in the host community. UNDP aims to offer support, such as on-the-job training schemes; targeted upskilling and reskilling; and career counselling, including job matching and small grant support.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

On 26 September, local authorities have started distributing emergency food assistance from WFP to some 16,000 refugees, including providing hot meals, ready-to-eat lunch boxes, and in-kind food parcels at registration and crisis centres in Syunik, Ararat, and Armavir regions, as well as distributing 4,000 in-kind family food parcels.

Recognizing that food needs exist in all regions, WFP is collaborating with the government and local authorities to expand its reach, by currently procuring more in-kind food parcels to support the food needs of an additional 34,000 refugees.

UNICEF has established mobile paediatric units equipped to monitor and address cases of refugee children showing signs of malnourishment. The mobile units can be activated upon request of MoH.



SHELTER/ NFI

ADRA NGO is working to implement a multipurpose cash transfer as an initial emergency response project aimed to aid 237 refugee families. Each beneficiary family will receive a one-time-payment of 40,000 AMD (some USD 100) to help them respond to their most urgent needs.

As of 12 October, UNHCR has distributed 106 bed linens, 160 folding beds, 86 hygiene kits, 160 foam mattress 87 blankets, 83 synthetic pillows, 150 solar lamps, 150 kitchen sets, 300 synthetic blankets.

As of 12 October, 8 out of 29 trucks with humanitarian aid cargo have arrived in Armenia to assist 17,000 vulnerable refugees by UNHCR and partners.

The Ukrainian Forum NGO provided food, hygiene items, and clothing to 500 refugees residing in Yerevan and nearby communities.

UNICEF delivered hygiene kits to 100 families in Yerevan, and 54 winter blankets and 200 bedding items to vulnerable families residing in government-provided facilities.

ADRA Armenia provided accommodation to 35 refugees in Goris, including mattresses and other non-food items.

“Hzor Mitq” Youth Development NGO provided food, hygiene kits, clothing, and shelter assistance to 1,500 refugees residing in Yerevan and nearby provinces (Kotayk, Aragatsotn, and Ararat).

The Syunik Development NGO 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.

Mission Armenia NGO has provided shelter to 84 older refugees, in addition to 200 hot meals, and has supported the Government of Armenia’s Unified social service (USS) in the registration of refugees through the primary needs assessment platform in Vayots Dzor, Kotayk, Aragatsotn, and Armavir provinces.

Cross-Cutting Priorities



The government and partners are operating hotlines aimed at preventing and/or mitigating incidents of exploitation and abuse, and to facilitate reporting of issues faced by refugees while respecting confidentiality principles.



The PSEA Coordination Group is actively involved in initiatives to deter Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). UN agencies are making PSEA information readily available to refugees by distributing information materials including No Excuse Cards and posters. The Inter-Agency rapid needs assessment carried out from 9 - 10 October included queries regarding safety and security, which will provide insights into potential cases of physical abuse among refugees.



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

UNICEF and its implementing partner the Armenian Association of Social Workers are providing a lifesaving assistance and strengthening resilience through individual case management support to 300 children and psychological first aid/psychosocial support to 3,000 children and their families.

UNICEF is establishing three more partnerships regarding MHPSS support and one for multi-disciplinary support to children with disabilities. UNICEF and its partners supported the recruitment and training of volunteers providing case managers in the Unified Social Services (USS).



Age, gender, and diversity (AGD)

UNDP initiated the renovation of two collective shelters managed by MLSA which will accommodate up to 150 single older persons and vulnerable groups.



Resilience from the Start

To ground mid and long-term solutions in the systems approach, the government and UN agencies are conducting the RNA among 72 key informants to offer a snapshot of the situation on the ground, aiming to map cross-sectoral needs, identify humanitarian priorities, and serve as a basis to inform more in-depth needs assessment and initiate sector specific assessments.

