

ARMENIA EMERGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE

Inter-Agency Update 20 October - 30 October 2023

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Some 101,848 refugees from Karabakh have been registered by the Armenian authorities since 24 September 2023. On 26 October 2023, the Government adopted a decision granting temporary protection to refugees from Karabakh for one year. As most refugees have arrived in Armenia with nearly no personal belongings, they require urgent assistance including cash, shelter, food, non-food, and essential items, as well as medical and psychosocial support.



Zoya has arrived in Armenia from Karabakh with her son's family and her favorite birds.

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CASH

UNICEF and UNHCR are working with the Nork Social Services Technology and Awareness Center, Unified Social Service (USS) and MLSA to develop a protocol on data de-duplication that will guide partners contributing to the Government-led cash programmes. As a result of close MLSA/UNICEF coordination and collaboration, a Memorandum of Understanding and other templates on supporting Government-led cash programmes, providing vouchers and data sharing have been reviewed and shared with the Cash Working Group members for their use.

UNICEF has activated a partnership to provide voucher support for clothing for children and is in discussions with MLSA on its implementation with plans to initially target at least 6,000 children (0-3 years of age and children with disabilities).



PROTECTION

On 27 October 2023, UNHCR jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) of the Republic of Armenia, co-led the Protection Working Group meeting with participation of 73 representatives from the government, UN agencies, international organizations, as well as local and international NGOs. MLSA presented the ongoing work of the Protection Working Group, Child Protection and GBV sub-working groups, highlighting the expectations from the participant members to ensure close coordination, active participation and to avoid duplication.

UNHCR visited 17 consolidated communities (which includes villages and towns, united under administrative units) in five regions, namely Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik, Lori, Shirak, and Tavush to visit refugee households and host communities to understand their situation and coping mechanisms. The main findings remain shelter needs including shelter repair tools, winterization support, including warm clothes and bed linens. UNHCR also noted a need for psychological support as may remain uncertain about the future and find difficulties in coping with their emotional situation. Information and awareness raising on legal issues was also noted as a priority.

UNHCR Armenia Hotline received around 220 calls (84% female and 16% men) from refugees from Karabakh. 88% of the calls were from Ararat, Armavir, Kotayk regions and Yerevan city. Majority requested assistance with accommodation (48%), bedding sets (27%), food (25%), household items (18%), core relief items/hygiene kits (10%) and access to healthcare/medication (8%). 65% reported having a vulnerability in their household; 46% older persons at risk, 26% persons with disability, 10% households with four or more children, 9% with a family member having a serious medical condition, 8% single-parent households with one or more children, and 1% pregnant or lactating women.



SHELTER/ NFI

During the reporting period, emergency support packages (with essential items such as clothing, food supplies, hygiene products, school supplies, bedding, folding beds, ovens etc.) were distributed to 120 families (around 600 individuals) identified by social workers and the call center.

From 20 - 30 October 2023, 25,000 individuals received non-food items, such as foldable beds, mattresses, blankets, heaters, winter clothing, kitchen items and hygiene kits through a distribution in coordination with MLSA, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MOTAI), and eight partners, namely Armenia Caritas, AHH/ACF, ICRC/ARCS, Mission Armenia, PIN, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNHCR.

UNDP, IOM, AAH, Armenia Caritas, and PIN have commenced a technical assessment of shelters requiring renovation, to understand repair needs and costing, for about 2,000 persons at the initial stage. Partners will be undertaking minor emergency winter repairs of collective shelter, improving heating and insulation, and more significant renovations for buildings where refugee families are staying in less desirable conditions.



UNHCR's partner Mission Armenia distributing non-food items to refugees in Arinj settlement, Kotayk province in October 2023. ©UNHCR / Anahit Hayrapetyan



CHILD PROTECTION

704 children and caregivers were reached with case management support by UNICEF. Two unaccompanied children identified during the previous reporting period were successfully reunited with their families.

To date, UNICEF provided 3,800 children and caregivers with psychological first aid (PFA). Among them, 1,282 children and caregivers received community-based psychosocial support (PSS) interventions. Each week, some 1,550 children are benefitting from child-friendly spaces established with UNICEF's support and sustained by community efforts in Ararat, Gegharkunik, Lori, Shirak and Vayots Dzor provinces.

To date, UNICEF has supported training of more than 200 police officers and 130 frontline social service workers on PSS in emergencies, child sensitive communication and do no harm approach. UNICEF also continues organize and provide training and capacity development for social workers, expanding the overstretched capacity of the system.



EDUCATION

UNICEF is in contact with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS) for the coordination of the Education Working Group, in order to jointly identify needs of the education system for effective inclusion of refugee children into education and learning, as well as to support expansion of the capacity of schools and preschools to host new students.

UNICEF has partnered with Step-by-step benevolent foundation to equip with furniture and learning materials 20 preschool classrooms located in communities with the highest number of refugees for some 600 children. 50 preschool educators in selected communities will attend capacity-building sessions on inclusive pedagogy, basic psychological first aid and psychosocial support, methodological guidance on using of early childhood development kits and other areas. In addition, 270 educators in 60 kindergartens and alternative preschool centers in Syunik, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Lori, and Tavush will also be capacitated.



UNICEF has supported 300 refugee children with school bags and supplies to help them integrate new schools in Goris, Tegah and Tatev communities. October 2023. Syunik province. @UNICEF



FOOD SECURITY

To date, WFP has provided food assistance to 23,431 refugees, constituting 47 percent of the initially targeted refugees by the sector. More than 13,000 hot meals have been provided to refugees residing in registration and crisis centers, along with approximately 5,000 ready-to-eat lunch boxes for the most vulnerable, and 3,820 in-kind family food parcels (equivalent to 62 metric tons). This assistance has been provided to refugees in Syunik, Armavir, Ararat, Lori, Shirak, Gegharkunik, and Tavush provinces.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

So far, UNICEF mobile pediatric teams have reached over 800 children. Among them, 200 children have been registered in primary health care facilities.

To date, out of 107 people living with HIV (PLHIV) from the Karabakh region, UNAIDS established contact with 77 people, and assessed their needs. Among them, 16 people received a one-time food package, and clothes when necessary. 6 beneficiaries received antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, including covering their transportation expenses to reach the National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID) for annual blood examination and linkage to treatment. Under this support, Real World Real People NGO has also started providing minimal hygiene packages for women living with HIV, intended for 100 women, and started social-psychological support for PLHIV displaced from the Karabakh region. Mental health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) were also provided to 30 beneficiaries.

So far, the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) has been providing MHPSS activities for children/individual including counseling, case management, psycho-educational group support sessions, and individual counselling.

Between 25 – 27 October, WHO with the support of the national Emergency Medical Teams facilitated an essential burn rehabilitation training of trainers for 26 participants, including rehabilitation physicians, physical therapists, and occupational therapists from nine medical centers and rehab facilities. A participatory approach was applied using a variety of interactive methodologies including, but not limited to focused technical presentations, group work sessions and practical skills application with a simulation at St. Gregory Medical Center and direct care of patients with burns at the National Center for Burns and Dermatology.

On 27 October, WHO carried out an MHPSS beneficiaries' assessment, looking at the needs for psychosocial support interventions and helping the mobile team members in carrying out the needs assessment.



WHO trained psychologists respond to the needs of burn patients ©WHO / Spartak Avetisyan



GBV

During the reporting period, UNFPA provided additional 5,680 dignity kits, including sanitary pads, soap and shampoo, tissues and napkins, toothpaste, toothbrushes and also sprays to women and girls in reception centres and through regional authorities in Aragatsotn, Armavir, Ararat, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor regions, in addition to the 14,000 that had been distributed previously. 68 refugees received support from legal professionals within the Women and Girls Safe Space in Syunik, in addition to 113 women and girls who received services, such as psychological support and dignity kits within two UNFPA-supported Women and Girls Safe Spaces operating in Syunik region in partnership with WINNET Goris. 10 media representatives were trained in effective reporting on gender-based violence including in humanitarian situations by UNFPA Armenia.

During the reporting period, 44 participants, including gynecologists/obstetricians, midwives, and nurses attended two three-day training sessions on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) organized by UNFPA, in collaboration with its implementing partner ARNAP in the regions of Vardenis and Kapan. The training aimed to enhance their life-saving maternal healthcare skills, management of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, addressing gender-based violence, sexual violence, and offering family planning services to populations affected by emergency situations. Furthermore, the training encompassed discussions on the coordination and planning of comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, with an emphasis on their integration into primary healthcare settings as swiftly as possible.

UNFPA conducted field visit to Vardenis Medical Centre; Gynaecology/Obstetrics department to understand the work being undertaken at the health centre, particularly about the delivery of essential healthcare services to both the local community and refugees from Karabakh. Notably, two women from Karabakh have given birth within their healthcare unit. Furthermore, the director of the medical centre expressed deep gratitude for the generous donation of Reproductive Health (RH) kit 6A by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This donation has

provided the health centre with an ample supply of essential medications and equipment, ensuring that they can continue to deliver high-quality services for a period of three months.

The GBV Sub Sector working group meeting, co-coordinated by UNFPA and UNHCR, took place during the reporting period. Terms of reference of the sub sector working group were finalized; and humanitarian assistance and service provision mapping tools have been shared with all GBV partners, to coordinate the response and identify gaps.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES: Protection Mainstreaming, AAP, PSEA, AGD

WHO during its workshop on infectious diseases, risk communication and delivered a session about Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PRSEAH) with the aim of sensitizing partners on the risk of PRSEAH and gender-based violence - assuring that it is reported in a manner that is accessible and safe in line with the survivor-centred approach.

WHO is currently conducting a PRSEAH rapid Risk assessment through Key informant interviews with health professionals to identify gaps, risks, needs and capacity-building needs. The aim of the assessment is to generate evidence-based information for planning, advocacy, implementation, and tracking of progress in PRSEAH mainstreaming in the response operations. In that regards two field visits to Tavush, Dilijan Medical Centre, Dilijan former boarding school that is currently serving as a refugee shelter in Dilijan was conducted. Moreover, a costed plan for mid- and long-term WHO support to PRSEAH will be developed. WHO also conducted PRSEAH sessions with psychologists and psychiatrists working as part of the MHPSS mobile team that provides MHPSS support for refugees.

During the reporting period, UNWOMEN published a report “Armenia gender alert no. 1: Voices of women activists and civil society organizations: First respondents to the Armenia refugee crisis” available in [English](#) and [Armenian](#). The objective of this gender alert is to capture messages conveyed by women’s organizations actively involved in responding to the refugee crisis in Armenia.

WFP and UNHCR as PSEA inter-agency focal points, will organize PSEA sessions with all NGO partners working to support the RRP in the coming days.

INFORMATION MANGEMENT

Under the overall coordination structure of the RRP and in collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF is supporting MLSA to facilitate the in-depth multi-sectoral emergency needs assessment. The TOR is being drafted and the draft tool prepared by MLSA was widely shared and reviewed by partners.