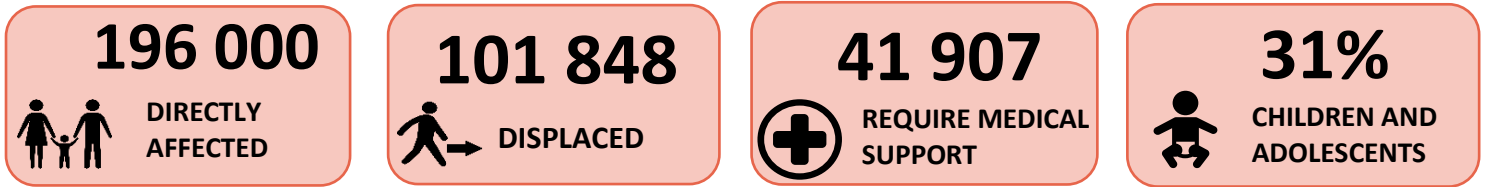


# Armenia refugee response

Situation report No. 3, 23 October 2023



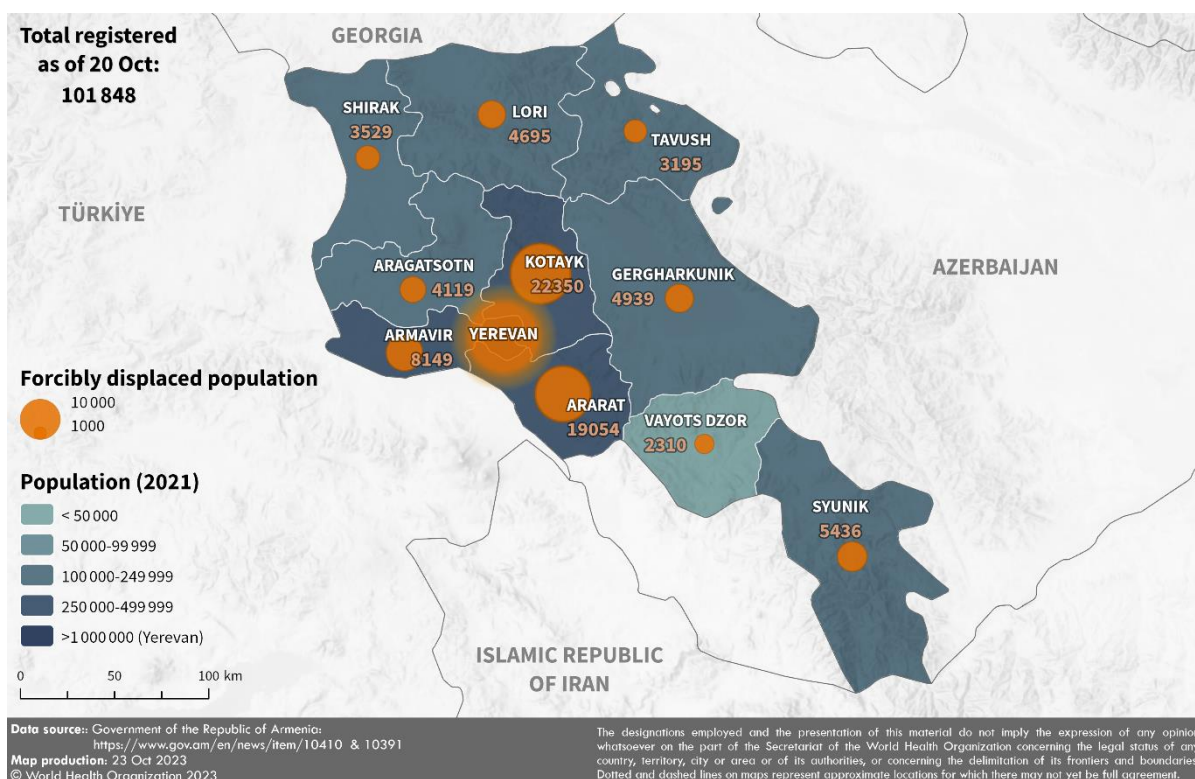
## Situation update

As of 20 October 2023, 101 848 people have crossed into Armenia. The [total number of people affected](#), including refugees and the local population, is 196 000. Since 1 October 2023, the number crossing into Armenia has decreased and most of the registration points have been closed, as refugees can now complete their registration online.

It is [reported](#) that 48% of the refugees are males and 52% are females.

- The largest vulnerable groups are children (29%), older people (12%) and persons with disabilities (2.5%).
- UNFPA has [reported](#) that there are 2070 women currently pregnant and an estimated 1380 will give birth in the next six months. As of 16 October, 54 children were born amongst refugee families.
- As of 5 October, initial assessments [indicate](#) that 41 907 refugees are in need of medication and medical assistance.

Fig. 1: Map of the registered refugee population in Armenia as of 23 October 2023



## Health needs and priorities

Initial [assessments](#) by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that 41 907 refugees are in need of medication and medical assistance.

According to the [latest national data](#), the region hosting the largest number of refugees is Kotayk with 24 141 people, followed by Ararat.

According to the Humanitarian Centre of the Government of Armenia, as of 21 October, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has recorded the following information.

- The number of patients transferred to health facilities in Yerevan is 180. Most of these patients remain burn patients hospitalized following the fuel depot explosion on 25 September.
- Of these, 32 are severe cases and nine are critical.
- The process of refugee registration in Armenia is ongoing, with 41 280 registered at polyclinics and outpatient clinics, of which 5600 are children and 250 are pregnant women.

As of 13 October, a total of 646 COVID-19 cases have been reported, of which 106 are among refugees, as well as five deaths, of which three were reported among refugees.

[According](#) to the Deputy Minister of Health, of approximately 2200 refugee health-care workers, 565 have been registered, of whom 240 are senior and 325 are mid-level medical workers. Based on the health system workforce needs, there are currently 273 senior medical worker and 59 mid-level medical worker vacancies in Armenia.

Eligibility for all routine services is granted upon registration. Refugees with documented vaccination records will be entered in the ArMed health information system. Those without documented evidence of vaccination history will be vaccinated according to the national catch-up immunization schedule used for children who have missed doses. Vaccine administration has begun across primary health-care centres where refugees have been registered. The Karabakh region has historically had very high immunization coverage, but many refugees lack documentation and will be considered unvaccinated by Armenia by policy.

Initial priorities for the health response are outlined in the [Public Health Situation Analysis \(PHSA\)](#).

## WHO actions to date

### Leadership

- On 2 October 2023, WHO designated the refugee situation a **Grade 2 emergency** and activated emergency procedures.
- The Incident Management System has been further strengthened within the WHO Country Office in Armenia through repurposing of staff and surge capacity.
- WHO is developing a health sector winterization plan to ensure adequate preparation and response to the health needs of refugees during the winter season and to facilitate sectoral planning, in order to scale up operations to complement the national response through coordinated and inclusive interventions.

### **Partnerships and emergency medical teams (EMTs)**

- On 18 October, the WHO Country Office in Armenia co-led the third Health Coordination meeting.
  - As part of the health sector coordination, WHO has developed a 5W analysis to map activities being carried out by all health sector partners.
- An EMT Coordination Cell was established by WHO under the leadership of the MoH of Armenia to support the ongoing medical support for burn survivors. As of 20 October, a total of four EMTs have been deployed to Armenia, of which three are currently on the ground.
  - As of 23 October, a total of 19 patients have been evacuated to Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Spain and the United States.
  - Samaritan's Purse arrived on 6 October with a team of 11 burn management experts. The team is currently operating in the National Center for Burns and Dermatology and the Armenian Republican Medical Centre, building hospital staff capacity and providing rehabilitation services, surgery and wound dressing. As of 23 October, a total of 323 medical procedures have been carried out, including escharotomies, skin grafts, surgical debridements, and dressing changes.
  - The UK-Med EMT arrived on 12 October with a team of five burn and rehabilitation specialists and started working in the Mikaelyan Institute of Surgery, providing surgeries and wound dressing. As of 23 October, 45 procedures have been carried out.
  - An Italian EMT arrived on 14 October with a team of three medical professionals – a surgeon, an anaesthesiologist and a nurse – to work at the Yerevan Scientific Medical Center.



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*WHO trained psychologists respond to the needs of burn patients*

## **Health information**

- WHO continues to carry out event-based surveillance monitoring from open sources.
- WHO organized a subregional online briefing session on Routine health information systems – rehabilitation toolkit for 12 participants from the MoH and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, as well as Armenian ICT providers (ArMed National e-Health Operator NEO and Nork Technology Center ).

## **Health operations**

- Between 2 and 23 October, WHO deployed 33 surge and leadership staff to Armenia, including WHO leadership deployments, as part of WHO's support for the emergency response.
- A scale-up of the response to the ongoing measles outbreak in the country is under way. A nationwide catch-up immunization effort will be conducted from 17 October to 17 December to vaccinate children who have fallen behind schedule and to fill immunity gaps in the domestic population. This will include an intensive outreach component aimed at vaccinating refugees and ensuring that they are integrated into the health system using 10 outreach teams.
  - On 20 October, WHO carried out a training on risk communication and infectious diseases for 40 biomedical student-volunteers from Yerevan State University and Erebuni Medical Academy Foundation. The students learned how to communicate the value of vaccines and the risks of infectious diseases and their complications, address questions, and explain science in simple terms. They will join the national medical teams to support the ongoing nationwide vaccination campaign by raising awareness about the importance of vaccines among at-risk groups and the public.
  - A total of 20 computers were procured to support the medical outreach teams in real-time data collection and progress tracking for vaccination coverage.
- On 15 October, WHO supported the pilot visit of a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) mobile team to Aghveran, which has a refugee community of 140 people. A preliminary needs assessment was conducted to better understand what the mobile teams need to be operational.
- On 13 October, WHO trained 10 psychologists to serve as operators for a mental health helpline that gives callers access to trained mental health professionals who can offer empathy and defuse crisis situations. The mental health helpline is one of the most accessible and affordable ways to provide timely and much-needed psychosocial support to refugees.
- On 13 October, a WHO team assessed the health needs of refugees living in a shelter in Artashat in western Armenia. The building provided temporary accommodations for more than 70 people who arrived at the end of September. WHO visited the community to understand refugee health needs. The key health needs highlighted included MHPSS and information on how to access health services.
- On 17 October, WHO visited a primary health centre and refugee settlement in a former boarding school in Dilijan housing 53 people with disabilities and vulnerable refugees (older persons and children). The facility was missing basic water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, heating and running water. WHO raised the issue with UNHCR and immediate action was taken to provide the refugees with the necessary beds, electric blankets and non-food items.

### **Risk communication, community engagement and infodemic management (RCCE-IM)**

- WHO has finalized the initial phase of the RCCE-IM plan and shared it with the MoH. The plan aims to support refugees in navigating Armenia’s health system based on perceptions and needs through the engagement of community actors, and to sustain social cohesion.
- WHO is supporting the MoH in developing an outreach vaccination campaign, targeting both the refugee population with unknown vaccine status and local population catch-up efforts.
- An RCCE-IM review was carried out and included consultations with partners and civil society organizations such as the Children of Armenia Fund, Caritas, New Generation Humanitarian NGO, People in Need, UNICEF, International Organization for Migration, Red Cross, Women’s Resource Centre Armenia, and the MoH. The review identified health information being shared with refugees by local actors. Reports from field teams and key informants revealed that the primary health-care centre registration process may be further streamlined.
- WHO developed a poster and frequently asked questions fact sheet on primary health-care centre registration to help refugees to navigate the Armenian health system.

### **External communications**

- WHO published [Armenia refugee response situation report No. 2](#) on the WHO/Europe website and social media channels.
- WHO published [a photo story on WHO refugee response in Armenia](#).
- For further updates on the response, refer to the WHO Armenia refugee response [webpage](#).
- Photos from the response are available [here](#).



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*WHO team assessing the health needs of refugees now living in a shelter, in Artashat, western Armenia.*

## **Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PRSEAH)**

- WHO conducted a desk review to identify the risk and prevalence of Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse, and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) and Gender-based Violence (GBV).
- On 16–20 October, WHO held various consultations with partners to understand the activities undertaken in the past 12 months and generate evidence-based information for further planning, advocacy, implementation, and progress tracking to mainstream PRSEAH as part of the refugee response operations. This included consulting with partners such as UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, World Food Programme, UNHCR and the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office.
- As part of the vaccination training for student-volunteers on 20 October, a PRSEAH training was also provided. This is an essential tool to sensitizing partners on the risk of SEAH and, overall, GBV – ensuring that it is reported in a manner that is accessible and safe as well as responsive to following the survivor-centred approach. Engaging the partners and community is an integral action and advocacy in addressing GBV and SEAH.

## **Supplies and logistics**

- WHO had prepositioned trauma supplies for over 200 patients at the end of August 2023.
- On 6 and 7 October, WHO delivered 10 burn modules from TESK kits to support advanced care needs for 500 burn patients, in addition to five noncommunicable disease modules comprising medicines and insulin that will cover three months of treatment for up to 50 000 people.
- Since mid-September, WHO has dispatched 1672 kilograms of supplies valued at over US\$ 71 300.

## **Resource mobilization**

- The WHO Regional Office for Europe has established an Emergency Donor Appeal for Armenia for a total of US\$ 2.9 million for the next six months.
- UN Armenia has requested US\$ 97 million as part of the [Armenia Refugee Response Plan](#) to provide urgent humanitarian aid and protection to refugees and those generously hosting them in Armenia, in support of the government-led response.
  - The health sector has expressed the need for over US\$ 10.5 million for the health sector interventions to be conducted under the overall coordination of the MoH.

## **Next steps**

- Provide continuous specialized care for burn survivors and assess their rehabilitation needs.
- Extend the existing MHPSS programme to affected refugee and host populations.
- Enhance surveillance and response for disease outbreaks (such as measles in Armenia).
- Increase immunization activities for measles, poliomyelitis and COVID-19.
- Support the scale-up of primary health-care services and referrals.
- Carry out a rapid risk assessment on preventing and responding to SEAH.