

Armenia

8 March 2024

On this International Women's Day (IWD), we honor the strength and resilience of refugee women. Among those interviewed in recent needs assessments conducted by ACTED and People in Need, 48% and 35% respectively are women-headed households, who continue to manage their life in displacement with vigor and hope for the future. Many of these women have voiced the need for employment or livelihood opportunities to thrive in Armenia. Humanitarian actors play a pivotal role in prioritizing the protection, participation, and empowerment of women and girls. The implementation of both integrated and targeted interventions will advance the UN's IWD theme: *"invest in women: accelerate progress"*. Throughout the refugee response efforts, it remains essential to consider the diverse situations, needs, priorities, and capacities of affected refugees and host community members of all genders, ages, and backgrounds, ensuring no one is left behind.

Gendered Refugee Experience

- Refugee women have actively engaged in economic activities since their displacement while fulfilling household duties.
- Refugee women have seen their caregiving responsibilities increase, particularly for children, the elderly, and family members with disabilities.
- Refugee girls may be at heightened risk of school drop-out, especially those with disabilities.



- Refugee women require strengthened social network support and information on available services.
- Displacement-induced psychological distress can increase females' vulnerability to GBV, while males are less likely to seek mental health support due to stigma.
- Refugee women with disabilities may be at heightened risk of care or rehabilitation disruption due to lack of resources.

Gender Task Force

Established in October 2023, the Gender Task Force (GTF) led by UN Women is an integral part of the Armenia Refugee Response Plan (RRP) inter-agency coordination architecture. The primary aim of the GTF is to enhance accountability in gender mainstreaming throughout the refugee response. This involves ensuring that stakeholders engaged in the refugee response address the diverse needs, acknowledge the priorities, and capabilities of affected individuals across genders, age groups, and backgrounds, including the most vulnerable populations and those facing heightened risks. Such efforts are carried out throughout the project cycle, including design, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Additionally, it involves facilitating meaningful participation and active engagement of refugees and host communities, including women, girls, and women-led organizations, in decision-making and leadership roles, thus harnessing their strengths, capacities, and expertise.

The Gender Task Force's **key achievements** to date include:

- Providing gender related information and resources, including the Gender Alert newsletter (Oct. 2023)
- Offering technical support to sector working groups and partners through capacity building, such as training on Gender in Humanitarian Action for Humanitarian Actors (Dec. 2023)
- Integrating gender considerations into actions for each sector through Sectoral Gender Tipsheets (Feb. 2024)
- Coordinating a Rapid Gender Analysis (March 2024)

Update On Achievements



This is Mariam, displaced in 2023 from the Karabakh region and now living in Gyumri with her family. She is good at making traditional baklava and is dreaming of opening a small business soon. © UNHCR/2024/Hayrapetyan



RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS

The Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) seeks to examine the dynamics of gender and power relations before and after displacement. Its purpose is to explore the diverse needs, risks, capabilities, and coping mechanisms of women, girls, men, and boys throughout the crisis. It offers practical recommendations for humanitarian actors. Data collection for the analysis took place from December 2023 to January 2024.

Findings from the RGA reveal that refugee women, despite often possessing qualifications beyond immediate job requirements, actively pursue available employment opportunities and undertake entrepreneurial ventures, such as cooking local specialties. While this highlights a potential vulnerability to exploitation, it also underscores the imperative for women to secure an income for their families. This finding emphasizes the strategic value of assistance that focuses on enhancing women's skills and resources while fostering an enabling environment for their resilience and well-being.

Invest in Refugee Women

It takes time for livelihood and other income-generating initiatives to result in household revenue that women can use to support themselves and their families. However, experience has shown that investing in women yields significant results. In line with this year’s International Women’s Day theme, “invest in women, accelerate progress”, the below female-focused income-generating projects from previous refugee influxes are examples of the success that is achievable when investing in the resilience and capacities of female refugees. For more information on these and other income-generating projects, please contact Anahit Hayrapetyan, External Relations Associate, UNHCR (hayrapet@unhcr.org) and Olga Azatyan, Gender Officer at UN Women (olga.azatyan@unwomen.org).

Lilit Chobanyan, who arrived in Armenia as a refugee in 2020, is a participant in the **UN Women project on Women Economic Empowerment** where she developed her beekeeping knowledge into a source of income.



Photo ©UN Women

She shares this advice to fellow female refugees: “Losing is terrible, it’s hard, but no matter how much you lose materially, if you are alive, you must create...you must not give up, you can never give up.”



Photo ©UNHCR

Inna fled as a refugee from Karabakh to Armenia in 2020. With UNHCR’s support, she has established a small business in Yerevan, the Hadrut Bakery Café. Inna now hosts her extended family who fled from Karabakh in September 2023. The revenue generated by her small business plays a significant role in supporting her extended household.

MADE51, an ongoing project in collaboration with **UNHCR** and the **Homeland Development Initiative Foundation**, contributes to refugee women’s empowerment in Armenia, supporting the design and marketing of handicrafts and showcasing women’s skills as artisans. Find out more at made51.org