

PROTECTION WORKING GROUP MEETING

MINUTES

1 JUNE 2021

VENUE: Yerevan, ARMENIA (via MS Teams)

Participating organizations:

On 1 June 2021, 29 participants attended the twenty-first meeting of the Protection Working Group (PWG).

Meeting agenda:

- Updates by Child Protection Sub-Working Group (SWG) on protection activities and issues
- Updates by Education SWG on protection activities and issues
- Updates by participating organizations on protection activities and issues
- Presentation of population estimates maps and departure monitoring dashboard by UNHCR
- Departure monitoring by World Vision
- SGBV case management system by Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS)
- Shelter repair process by Mission Armenia
- Future of Inter-Agency Response Plan
- Miscellaneous updates and issues.

Updates by Child Protection SWG on protection activities and issues:

Not many updates. Very few organizations attended the last meeting of the Child Protection SWG. The members of the group have also very passive approach to 5W-s matrix of the group, only 1 or 2 contributions. This creates difficulties for reporting for the regular SitRep reports and providing updates to the Coordination Steering Group.

The government has initiated assessment of the current 2017-2021 child-rights protection strategy UNICEF was asked to support the implementation. The government will start the preparation of the next cycle of the child-rights protection strategy. UNICEF will be supporting them trying to ensure the participatory nature of the development process. The members of the PWG will be updated in due course.

Updates by Education SWG on protection activities and issues:

Very passive participation in Education SWG. Very few organizations provide inputs for the 5W-s matrix. The document on the future of the Inter Agency-Response plan was presented during the last meeting of Education SWG and circulated among the members. The only suggestion regarding the document was coming from the Save the Children, who would share their overall feedback with the PWG. The opportunity for ECHO proposal as a group was also presented, and only 2 organizations were interested. They asked for the document to get acquainted with it, but no expressed interest in terms of developing a joint proposal.

According to the shared reports (REACH, ICRC) most of the children are enrolled in secondary schooling. According to data from EMIS currently there are 2639 students registered in the system and participating in education. The number is not final because this is based on the reports from school principals.

Updates from the participating organizations:

Save the Children International:

- 3 child-friendly spaces (one static and two mobile) operate in Goris, Tegh and Shinuhayr communities. One child-friendly space operates in Armavir community providing non-food items and psycho-social support to beneficiaries. A total of 581 children benefitted from child-friendly spaces during May. A new mobile child-friendly space was established in Kornidzor, in Tegh consolidated community due to high demand.
- During education SWG representative of ICRC informed that they will also work in Kornidzor secondary school doing WASH renovation activities there.
- Positive parenting sessions are conducted in child-friendly spaces engaging monthly 138 caregivers. Partners have managed also to engage the fathers and grandfathers in those parenting sessions involving them in upbringing sessions.
- Save the Children project for NK response will end in 2 months due to lack of funding. Currently SCI is helping partners with fundraising and building capacities for the continuation of their activities in the field. The SCI has undertaken necessary steps so local partners are included in PWG.

Mission Armenia NGO:

- Project coordinator responsible for the project for lactating mothers was presented to the group. She presented the focus of the project. The main partner of the project is Action Against Hunger. Project started in March with the duration of 5 months. Organizational part and procurement have been completed. 4 baby-friendly spaces were established (2 in Yerevan, 1 in Masis and 1 in Hrazdan). These baby-friendly spaces are supposed to host pregnant women and women who have children under the age of 2. Project is aimed to help lactating and breastfeeding women. In Kotayk 29 beneficiaries are attending and 28 receiving remote messages. In Ararat 30 beneficiaries are attending and 20 are receiving remote messages. In Yerevan 15 beneficiaries are registered in Avan center and 19 in Nor Nork centre, and 8 are registered for remote messaging. They are provided with group training sessions and private sessions with psychologists and breastfeeding experts. 2 groups were established in each centre. The beneficiaries come once a week for group meetings and upon need once a week for private sessions. The centres are open every day and beneficiaries can attend every day.
- 75 persons applied to Mission Armenia offices in Yerevan and regions of Armenia with issues related to mainly provision of humanitarian assistance. They were provided with information on financial assistance, government assistance programs. They were also informed about the humanitarian projects implemented by Mission Armenia.
- 16 persons were provided with legal counselling on issues related to provision of cash assistance by government, loan payment obligations, University admission, tuition fee discounts, business consultations. The issues will be shared with the PWG for the referral to the Cash Coordination SWG.
- 205 families received NFI assistance in the form of bed linens, clothing, disinfectant liquids, protective masks, COVID-19 awareness raising leaflets and hygiene items. All these NFI-s were provided by the financial support of Open Society Foundations and Save the Children.
- 274 persons received one-time cash assistance in the amount of AMD68,000 funded by Save the Children.
- 225 persons received psychological support in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Mission Armenia has a regional office in Stepanakert (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Médecins du Monde:

- MDM is finalising GBV referral pathways. The final product will be shared with the group in the coming week.

WHO/Armenian technical reference group:

- Mapping of mental health and psychosocial activities have started around the country. The results were shared with the members of the PWG.
- Webinars with translation in Armenian will be organized on best practices, guidelines, counselling and all the PWG members are welcomed to join the webinars.
- WHO is going to translate a self-help guide for psycho-social support "*What matters in the time of stress?*". It is planned that the guide will be available by the end of June. It will help people who does not have access to professional assistance in the sphere of the PSS.

Presentation of population estimates maps and departure monitoring dashboard by UNHCR:

- Official number of the population in a refugee-like situation as shared by the Migration Service is 66051. Though this statistics is not being updated, there is no other officially-endorsed figure so far.
- UNHCR has been engaged in key informant interviews with municipalities during the last months and based on the data collected from municipalities where 70% of displaced population resided, the reports of the Migration Service and the departure monitoring a population estimates was provided triangulating those sources to support UNHCR programming. The figures are being updated on a monthly basis and show a tendency to decrease as well internal movement of the population. Updates of the figures through the use of protection monitoring tool will continue. According to an agreement reached between UNHCR and partners, while more focus in terms of response will be on marzes with highest numbers, others will not be neglected.
- UNHCR also shared with PWG the dashboard on monitoring of departure from Yerevan to return areas as of 27 May 2021 as well as the figures of persons reached through protection monitoring (PM) activities in May 2021 (help line calls, PM during field visits, PM by phone and key informant interviews).

Departure monitoring by World Vision:

- As part of the project funded by UNHCR, WV is monitoring the departure from Yerevan Kilikia bus station since May 2021.
- Every day 2-3 buses depart to NK (three weeks ago, 2 buses per day were departing). The number of travellers has decreased, and the latter had been told that buses are likely to stop running from 1 June 2021 (which did not actually happen).
- WV staff is monitoring the boarding process, counts the number of travellers, and provides information on COVID-19 and preventive measures as well as distributes hygiene materials to them.
- Short interviews are conducted with travellers and, in case of consent, contact information is taken for engaging them in the pool for protection monitoring. At least 1-2 persons are engaged per day for the purpose of monitoring their situation upon return to NK.
- As of the 31 May 2021, as monitored by WV, 5333 persons have travelled to NK (in 128 buses), 5700 masks and 5 large packs of wet naps have been provided to the bus station administration for distribution to the travellers.

SGBV case management system by Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS):

- ARCS presented the system of response to SGBV, including information on the SOP developed jointly with UNHCR, 2014-2021 statistics on registration of cases and case management (identification of cases increased in 2019-2020 as a result of awareness-raising activities), stages of SGBV case management, main partners, identification of cases and pathways of support and referrals as regards medical, legal, safety and security and

psychical support issues. ARCS expressed readiness to receive referrals when respective concerns arise among the persons displaced from NK.

- Contacts of focal persons from ARCS for referral purposes were shared: Anahit Kalantaryan (Project Coordinator, anahitkalantarian@gmail.com); Ani Nikolyan (Project Case Manager, aninikolyanp@mail.ru, 060-62-50-63).
- The issue of low identification rate among persons displaced from NK and the need to strengthen information dissemination and mainstreamed sustainable pathways for identification, referrals and support was underlined. PWG members were encouraged to share relevant ideas and suggestions with ARCS and/or UNHCR.

Shelter repair process by Mission Armenia:

Mission Armenia presented the components of the 8 months project funded by UNHCR: (i) provision of NFI to collective shelters and households of those shelters; (ii) renovation of collective shelters: implementation partner: Action against Hunger Foundation; shelters in urgent need of renovation (currently 10 shelters located in Yerevan, Kotayk, Kapan, and Ashtarak) were identified through UNHCR protection monitoring; (iii) enhancement of social services and case management: 900 persons residing in collective shelters have been assessed, counselling is offered, case management and referrals are conducted; (iv) promotion of peaceful coexistence: 10 projects have been designed, two of which are already in progress (installation of children playgrounds and football pitch).

Future of Inter-Agency Response Plan:

Save the children raised some questions and comments:

- With the stark contrasts between the plan's financial requirements and the funding level (14% funded) several questions arise- a) if comprehensive analysis was done to understand reasons of low level of funding level and potential funding landscape; b) if a better analysis of needs met could help in making decisions for what the next phase should look like, whether it is to transition the IARP into the UNSDCF or not; c) it seems the paper has already outlined what the options for a potential transition could be, are there any options or descriptions of what the approach would look like if it is not to be transferred? d) has a decision already been made to not continue with a IARP beyond June 2021?
- Mapping of services in the provinces of Armenia and Yerevan done by SCI and other organizations can serve as a good source and base for referral mechanism's establishment and coordination between partner international and local NGOs.
- Coordination between UN agencies, INGOs, LNGOs and government is critical at this stage to ensure smooth handover and further strategy planning.
- Shelter/ NFIs and Cash- It is very important to monitor the condition of Collective Centers where many people in a refugee like situation are located. Once observed, they are in a very bad sanitary-hygiene conditions, and too small premises for families with more than three children.
- Protection- a) It should be decided on how Child Friendly Spaces or Child Friendly corners (different organizations call them differently) established by several organizations should be handed over either to local municipalities/ communities or local partners. It would be good to coordinate efforts and further handover within Education and CP SWGs; b) In terms of MHPSS, the linkages should be created between province/ community level services and professional organizations and associations which provide MHPSS, can be coordinated within the MHPSS SWG; c) In terms of Education, it would be good to advocate with MESCS on increasing their ownership and responsibility in Education SWG engagement for further handover.

- Protection- Ensure the importance and integration of Child Protection in Emergencies component during development of Child Protection National Strategy for 2021-2023, led by MoLSA.
- Food Security and Nutrition- Promote the importance of breastfeeding both for mothers and children. There is a lack of information among mothers of newborns about benefits and advantages of breastfeeding.

UNHCR Senior Protection Officer informed that the decision has not been made and the chairs of the working groups requested that document to be shared to take the bottom up approach, to discuss it with the members, between themselves and share the comments with the heads of agencies who will be discussing them with the Resident Coordinator's office. All other questions/concerns will be shared with the heads of other working groups through the Coordination Steering Group.

UNHCR Senior Emergency Preparedness Coordinator from the Coordination Steering Group informed that the level of funding is not 14% but 29%. There is also a possibility to get funding from the EU, at least a couple of millions. In comparison to worldwide statistics where refugee plans are sponsored approximately 16%, these are not bad results. It was highlighted that taking also into account the fact that Education and Child Protection SWG members have become very passive, this a good timing for making a decision and adapting.

Miscellaneous updates and issues:

- Save the Children introduced their local partners who were invited to participate in the PWG meeting and become a member: Armavir Development Centre, Martuni Women's Community Council and Partnership and Teaching NGO. Save the Children will not apply for the ECHO funding, but they would be happy if local partners are considered for this opportunity.
- WHO representative informed that the country office is looking for a national specialist on mental health and psycho-social support. The link to the announcement was shared with the PWG members so the qualified candidates can apply for the position.
- The next regular meeting of the PWG will be held in July.

UNHCR Armenia
June 2021