The platform for dialogue with Persons of Concern to UNHCR and partners

Validation Workshop on 2021 Participatory Assessment exercise

12 November 2021

SUB-GROUP DISCUSSION

➢ Sub-group 1: Access to the asylum procedure, information, and education
➢ Sub-group 2: Access to housing
➢ Sub-group 3: Access to social protection and livelihood/employment
➢ Sub-group 4: Access to Healthcare

Discussed issues

- Lack of funds to cover medical needs. Shortage of free of charge medicine, long queues at polyclinics and expensive services, COVID-19 vaccination and prevention among PoC;
- Housing, livelihood, and financial needs. Insufficient subsidies for rental and utility needs, and for renovation at the Reception Centre or social houses;
- Lack of awareness/activities/campaign about the rights of refugees among the state services providers, poor quality services;
- Language barriers when accessing to services, poor outreach info-materials in the understandable languages, lack of interpretation when accessing the state and non-state services;
- Financial challenges to cover the basic needs for extracurricular classes for school-age children;
- Challenges to access the labor market, poor employment opportunities, low salaries, and biased approach towards non-ethnic Armenians;
- Need of extra funding programmes for income-generating activities, grants for business start-up/entrepreneurship initiatives, and employment support;
- Access to rights and services for recently registered asylum-seekers, including asylum-seekers in detention facilities.

Main takeaways

➢ Ensure translation and interpretation while accessing governmental and non-governmental services;
➢ Find long-term and sustainable housing solutions (mortgage, increase the rental subsidies and winterization support);
➢ Capacity-building activities for governmental and non-governmental organization's staff providing social protection;
➢ Livelihood support programmes to promote better employment opportunities and self-reliance and community-based protection.

Suggested solutions

Language barriers
- Mandatory and better-quality Armenian language courses;
- Assistance to governmental stakeholders with interpretation services to ensure adequate access to state legal aid;
- Create an online platform in different languages to ensure the communication between the PoC and government agencies/ service providers;

Public Attitude
- Increase awareness among service providers, state/private institutions through awareness raising campaigns and events;
- Include tolerance education curriculum in the school programme;

Access to Information
- User-friendly online counseling platform/webpage, or info-materials on available programmes;
- Create digitalized apps describing all the available support systems;

Employment issues
- Tax privileges for employers hiring PoC: reduce the income tax of PoC. Create job/business start-up opportunities through the provision of various income generating tool kits;
- Vocational skills sessions to learn a new/competitive profession, improve existing skills to use them in practice;
- Socio-economic and cultural interconnected activities, to learn the language and socialize with the society at the same time.

Housing and accommodation
- Increase monthly rental subsidies, make it permanent/prolong the payment up to 12 months;
- Install solar panels and systems at the Reception Centre and social houses to save on the electricity and heating; engage the residents in the renovation process, to ensure employment;
- "Adopt a family" approach. Engage local families who may voluntarily accommodate a refugee family with small fees;
- Provide mortgage loans with low interest rates and partially subsidize the payment fees.

Social Protection
- Target-oriented and social protection and/or integration programmes matching the individual goals of PoC;
- Systematized curriculum/modules for the state authorities/staff working in social protection sectors;
- Initiate the social integration centres within the communities where the representatives of the ministries can provide counseling on available services, support to access social protection schemes;

Healthcare
- Pilot health insurance programme for the most vulnerable PoC at heightened risk.