UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Supporting Refugees

A Photo Report of UNHCR's Work in Armenia

October 2024

Working together with implementing partners

Access to asylum, support to asylum authorities and legal assistance programme

As part of the multi-year project titled "Enhancing Policy Framework and Capacity for Effective Migration and Asylum Management in Armenia" co-funded by the European Union, UNHCR, together with the Migration and Citizenship Service (MCS), conducted a joint workshop to discuss the initiatives aimed at enhancement of the international protection system in Armenia. With over 20 participants from the MCS, UNHCR, non-governmental organizations, and experts, the workshop provided a forum for detailed discussion on improvement of refugee protection legislation and quality assurance mechanisms, including institutionalization of training capacities on asylum, as well as digitalization of asylum procedures.

UNHCR through its partners Mission Armenia and Chamber of Advocates, focuses on providing comprehensive legal aid to refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. It includes representation in legal matters, advocacy for their rights, and essential support in navigating asylum procedures and detention conditions.

Through legal awareness and counseling sessions refugees were provided with information and referrals related to documentation, access to pensions and social assistance, and other issues of concern. As of August 2024, some 11,600 refugees have been supported, including some 59 with documentation issues.

Cash Assistance

Cash-based assistance has been recognized by the Government of Armenia and UNHCR as the most dignified and flexible modality for providing immediate and medium-term support, thus upholding safety, catering for the individual needs of refugees, and providing freedom of choice to affected families. Meri [pictured on the left] is a teacher of Armenian language and literature in the local village school in southern Armenia. With her husband and three children, she was thankful for the vital cash assistance received from UNHCR and the State, which allowed the family to survive during the cold winter season.

Distribution of humanitarian assistance

Since the influx of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, UNHCR, together with its partner Mission Armenia NGO, distributed 115,747 core relief items, benefitting 12,433 households (51,221 people). Since the 2023 emergency, UNHCR has received in-kind donations from companies like Inditex, Nike, Hestra, H&M, and Essity, in the form of winter and sport clothes for men, women and children, which were distributed among refugees as well as host communities across Armenia.

Improvement of living conditions

UNHCR, through its partner Action Against Hunger has conducted repairs of 50 private houses in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions in an effort to address urgent maintenance issues of refugees. UNHCR through its partner Mission Armenia concluded renovation works in Darbnik Social Housing complex, increasing its accommodation capacity for refugees. Collective shelters have been rehabilitated or remodeled into apartments for families, such as the former sports center in Masis, Ararat province. UNHCR worked in collaboration with UNDP to remodel the shelter into apartments to house 18 refugee families (46 people).

Communication with communities

Engaging communities through effective, inclusive, and consistent communication is key to strengthening UNHCR Armenia's accountability to affected populations. It is also important for realizing UNHCR's Age Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy, which seeks to ensure that all affected populations fully participate in decisions that concern them and enjoy their rights on an equal footing with others.

Hotline is one approach UNHCR Armenia uses to facilitate access to rights and services for refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons, by providing practical information about access to the territory, asylum procedures, prevention of refoulment, and available assistance. Since September 2023, UNHCR Armenia has been receiving an average number of 613 calls per month.

Community based protection

Through its community outreach efforts in towns and villages hosting refugees, UNHCR Armenia aims to understand refugees' well-being, educational and development needs, as well as the opportunities offered to them by host communities. It is through such efforts that UNHCR is able to tailor targeted interventions to address the evolving needs of refugees.

Community support projects aim to strengthen the capacity and resilience of refugees in finding solutions to identified protection needs. These projects are intended to empower communities by promoting inclusion, well-being and cohesion as well as encouraging peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.

Mental health and psycho-social support (PSS)

Community-based arts and crafts activities for children, carried out by UNHCR's partner NGOs such as Mission Armenia, Partnership and Teaching, as well as various community-based and refugee-led organizations in Armenia, are a crucial aspect of UNHCR's humanitarian work. They greatly contribute to the mental well-being, social cohesion, and inclusion of refugee children.

Clows Without Borders International

UNHCR teamed up with Clowns Without Borders International to bring laughter and joy to the refugee and host community children in Armenia. The clowns, Nacho, Peppo and Angie performed in the host communities of Ararat, Armavir, Kotayk, Gegharkunik, Lori, and Tavush provinces for two weeks.

Localisation- working with refugee-led organizations (RLOs)

To enhance the capacity of RLOs in their work with refugees, UNHCR supported the implementation of a series of small projects initiated by 5 RLOs, including 'mother & child' summer camp, PSS, leisure, art and music events for children and elderly, as well as educational and livelihood activities. The goal of the projects is to promote social cohesion in host communities, as well as strengthen the inclusion, self-reliance, and overall well-being of refugees.

Private sector engagement

Zvartnots International Airport

Within the framework of the long-standing partnership, UNHCR and Zvartnots International Airport launched a photo-exhibition "Portraits of Resilience – Refugees in Armenia," allowing a glimpse into the life stories, the achievements, and contributions of refugees in their host country, Armenia. The exhibition symbolizes the strength and optimism of refugees and the solidarity of the host communities which offered opportunities and inspired refugees to unfold their skills.

TUMO Center for Creative Technologies

As part of UNHCR Armenia's ongoing cooperation with TUMO, forcibly displaced young people from different countries, benefited from the Center's summer camps for children and youth, which this year were organised in Yerevan and Dilijan.

Sports engagement

National Paralympic Committee of Armenia

The National Paralympic Committee of Armenia and UNHCR Armenia, along with the Government of Armenia, Yerevan Municipality and Embassy of France came together to promote inclusive sportsmanship through the 20th National Para Sports Festival.

Football Federation of Armenia (FFA)

Since 2020, UNHCR Armenia and FFA cooperated in two major directions – Unity EURO Cup tournament for teams of refugee and local amateur footballers, jointly organized by UEFA and UNHCR; and Playing Football for Integration project for refugee children and children from host communities, which concludes with Solidarity Cup tournament among the participating 16 teams. In 2024, UNHCR Armenia has allocated a grant to FFA for the selection and preparation of Team Armenia to Unity EURO Cup 2024 held in Switzerland, and for forming and training three additional children's teams in three new locations in Armenia.

Social inclusion & cohesion

Diliton

UNHCR supported the annual Diliton festival organized by the Youth Cooperation Center of Dilijan in collaboration with the Dilijan community and local artisans, including refugees. The festival celebrates the importance of community solidarity and resilience. For UNHCR, festivals like Diliton are more than just celebrations; they are vital platforms for fostering inclusion and showcasing the strength of the host communities that welcome and support refugees.

Youth

International Youth Day celebration brought together the young people of Gavar in Gegharkunik region to engage in different art and sport events and enjoy a UNHCR-supported open-air concert by the well-known “Nemra” band.

Working with persons with specific needs

Older refugees

UNHCR recognizes the unique challenges faced by older persons and through social events, such as camps and celebration of international days for elderly, aims to promote their social inclusion, ensure that they have opportunities to interact, share knowledge and experience, as well as improve their psychological wellbeing.

Gender Based Violence

UNHCR strives to create a safe environment for all refugees, promote gender equality, and enhance their integration and well-being by focusing on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response. This is achieved through targeted interventions, including capacity building for partners in the field, providing technical assistance, and raising awareness among the displaced population in Yerevan and the provinces.

Case workers

UNHCR partners have been actively engaged in providing individual and household case management activities to address the specific protection concerns and needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. A total of 185 cases have received this personalized support, aimed at both preventing protection risks and finding durable solutions for those in need. Such an approach ensures that every individual's situation is carefully assessed and appropriate referrals are made to address their special needs.

Culture

The refugee and local children came together to learn about the Armenian music and prominent composers, and traditional music instruments during a week-long summer camp at Komitas Museum-Institute in Yerevan.

Refugees living in Armenia benefit from and enjoy the various cultural activities such as sight-seeing, study visits and handicrafts to understand the history and culture of their host communities, to learn and share, and develop new skills.

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