PROTECTION MONITORING

ARMENIA

JANUARY-JUNE 2021

MID-YEAR REPORT

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OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

On 27 September 2020, fighting broke out along the former line of contact between Armenia and Azerbaijan and progressively expanded until a ceasefire statement was signed on 9 November 2020. As a consequence, tens of thousands of people affected by Nagorno-Karabakh conflict fled to Armenia while tens of thousands of conflict-affected people were also temporarily displaced within Azerbaijan.

According to the Migration Service of the Republic of Armenia, some 90,000 persons found themselves in a refugee-like situation in Armenia as reported in December 2020 of whom 88% were women and children. The latest report from the Migration Service of the Republic of Armenia accounted for 68,050 as of March 2021 who at the time were residing in ten marzes (provinces) of the country[1] including Yerevan.

The host community in Armenia welcomed population in a refugee-like situation, sharing accommodation, food, and other available resources. However, previously socioeconomically stable households that hosted refugee-like families are now facing challenges to pay rent, utilities and provide food for themselves and for those who they host. In addition to being hosted by local communities, the new arrivals benefit from the communal accommodation provided by the Government. In its effort to address urgent needs of the affected population, the Government has been rolling out several cash-based support programmes, since mid-November 2020[2]. UNHCR is conducting the protection monitoring of population in a refugee-like situation since November 2020 (the link to the previous Protection Monitoring reports).

[1] *Aragaatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush, and Vayots Dzor.*

[2] *Government assistance programmes finish at the end of June 2021.*

METHODOLOGY[3]

Protection monitoring is defined as a systematic and regular collection, verification, and analysis of information over an extended period to identify violations of rights and/or protection risks/priorities/needs for populations of concern. The results of monitoring can be used to achieve coherent and evidence-based community focused response and advocacy.

UNHCR mission heading to a remote village to reach vulnerable families living in isolation

[3] *Protection monitoring sits in the centre of the protection information and data ecosystem, with linkages to other information systems to achieve an effective response. Protection monitoring is shaped by UNHCR's points of communications with persons of concern (PoCs), regardless of the medium and UNHCR presence within the community*

The current report covers the period of January-June 2021 and shows protection trends and risks of people in a refugee-like situation. Protection monitoring in Armenia is conducted by UNHCR[4] through different data collection tools, including individual/household interviews and key informant interviews as well as observations. It also accounts for information and needs coming from other communication channels including self-referral through the UNHCR-operated hotline, among others. The principles of Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) are applied in the design of the Protection Monitoring methodology to ensure the exercise duly informs the delivery of specialized protection response focused on an individual's needs, capacities, opportunities, and vulnerabilities.

The Protection Monitoring questionnaire includes individual, as well as household-level questions. Some findings are further validated through technical assessments or focus group discussions with communities to support the implementation of the community-based projects aimed at strengthening of community mobilization and promotion of peaceful coexistence. The analysis contained in this report is mostly based on individual/household interviews and key informant interviews conducted throughout January-June 2021.

UNHCR's Protection Monitoring exercise that started in November 2020, uses standard questionnaire with the refugee-like population to gain information on their protection situation, needs, and coping mechanisms. In addition, starting from January 2021, key informant interviews and observations are conducted in collective shelters, with settlements' authorities, social and humanitarian workers, as well as with community leaders.

Departure monitoring in Yerevan is conducted through daily monitoring of bus departures from Yerevan to Stepanakert/Khankandi.

Based on the findings and data from previous Protection Monitoring reports, UNHCR has adjusted its activities and projects, including those of implementing partners' to the needs of population in a refugee-like situation.

[4] *UNHCR conducted Protection monitoring from November 2020 to May 2021. From May 2021 the Protection monitoring is conducted with UNHCR's implementing partner.*

PROTECTION MONITORING IN ARMENIA[5]

Highlights

10,880 individuals were interviewed during the reporting period through **2389** Protection Monitoring interviews. Among them, 51% were females and 49% were males.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of the children from interviewed families were registered and attending schools or kindergartens.

Main priority needs reported: **shelter, cash, household items and access to employment.**

Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents mentioned that they had moved several times (including changing different types of accommodations). The highest number of individuals who have moved several times were in the city of Yerevan (25%) and Kotayk (18%) and Ararat (14%) marzes (provinces).

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the interviewed population were living in rental apartments or houses, thirty-two percent (32%) were hosted by local families, six percent (6%) in collective centers and eight percent (8%) owned apartments or houses.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of households confirmed that they generated debts since their arrival in Armenia, and the amount of debt in 58% of such cases was more than 150,000 AMD (approx. 300 USD).

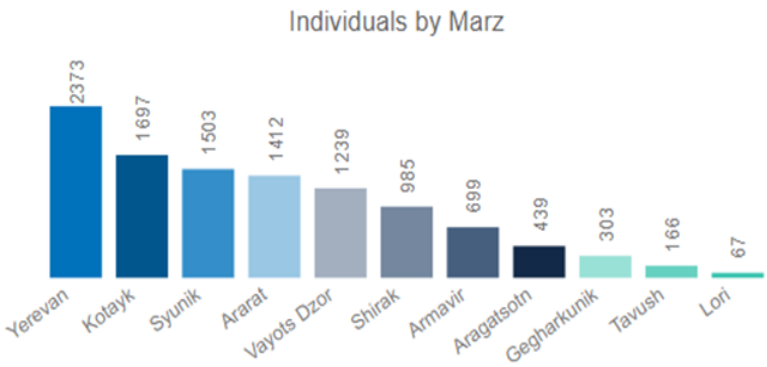
Forty-nine percent (49%) of the interviewed population reported that they were unemployed during the previous months. The highest numbers of unemployed individuals interviewed in the previous months were reportedly in Armavir (66%), Kotayk (66%), Tavush (66%), and Yerevan (65%), while the smallest numbers of unemployed individuals were in Shirak (27%), Aragatsotn (29%) and Ararat (31%).

With regards to the intentions to return, **fourteen percent (14%)** of interviewed households expressed their wish to return, 51% did not know, 33% were planning to relocate within Armenia and two percent (2%) wanted to go to a third country.

[5] *For other statistics visit the Protection Monitoring Dashboard.*

Demographics

During the reporting period UNHCR and its partner World Vision Armenia have conducted **2,389 Protection Monitoring interviews.** The questionnaire addressed individuals and their family members (**hence totalling over 10,880 individuals)**. The interviews were conducted by phone and in-person in the communities, where there is high concentration of people in refugee-like situation.



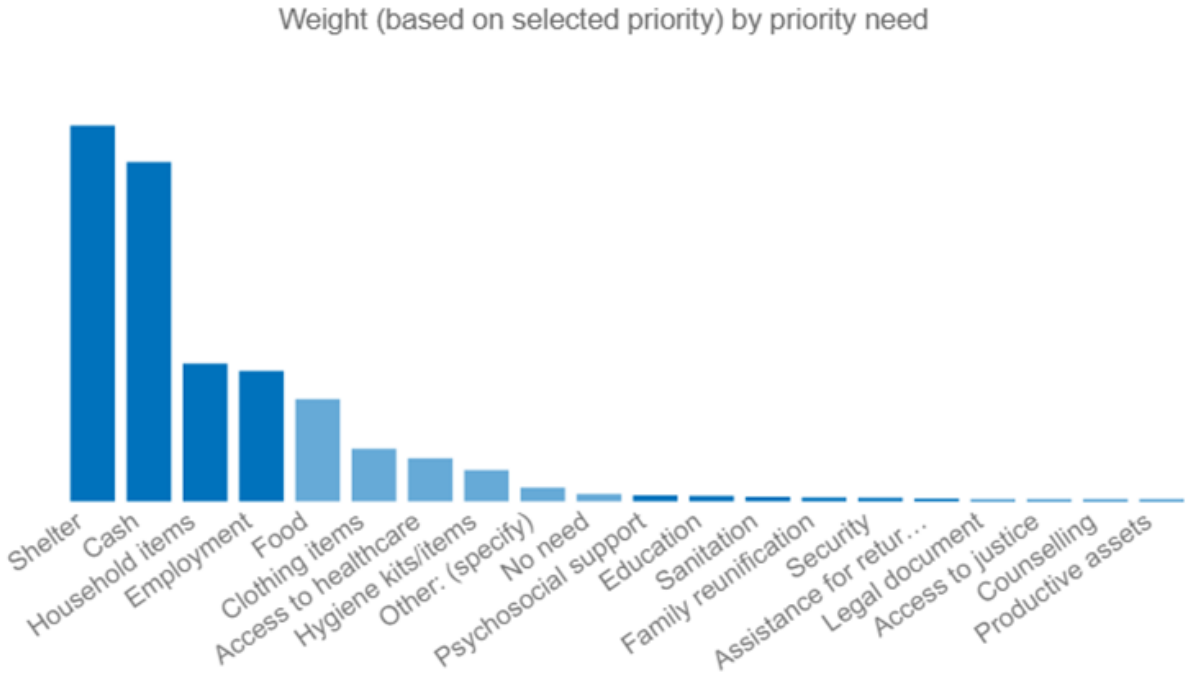
Forty-nine percent (49%) of participants of Protection Monitoring are adults between 18 and 59 years old, thirty-nine percent (39%) are children (under 18 years old) and twelve percent (12%) are over 60 years old. From January to June 2021 the interviews were conducted mostly in the city of Yerevan and provinces of Kotayk, Syunik, Ararat and Vayots Dzor, since the majority of people in a refugee-like situation were residing in those regions as of the end of March, as represented in the map.[6] Based on the triangulation of data by UNHCR, from 32,886 to 36,989 people in a refugee-like situation remain in Armenia as of 30 June 2021.[7]

[6] *The Government data on persons from NK in a refugee-like situation in Armenia as of 22 March 2021. This map doesn't apply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNHCR concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or its authorities, or the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries. All statistics are provisional and subject to change. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85676.*

[7] *Known to UNHCR, disaggregation by marzes: Shirak - 741, Lori - 1,178, Tavush - 595, Aragatsotn - 1,057, Kotayk - 5,582, Yerevan - 12,583, Armavir - 2,340, Ararat -2,894, Gegharkunik - 1,305, Vayots Dzor - 1,372, Syunik - 3,239.*

Priority Needs

Individuals interviewed expressed three priority needs: **shelter, cash and household items.**



1. Shelter

Fifty-two percent (52%) of those interviewed mentioned that they were living in rental apartments or houses, eight percent (8%) in owned apartments or houses, six percent (6%) in collective centers, while thirty-two percent (32%) were hosted by local families out of which sixteen percent (16%) were in Yerevan. Only thirty-five percent (35%) of interviewed households mentioned that they receive cash assistance for rent and fifty-six percent (56%) of interviewed households stressed that they had to move several times (including changing the type of accommodation), the main reasons being: lack of alternative accommodation (27%), overcrowding facilities (21%), looking for a long-term solution (13%).

2. Cash

Forty-nine percent (49%) of interviewed individuals mentioned that they were unemployed during the previous months. Twenty-six percent (26%) of interviewed households mentioned that they had no income. Those who mentioned having an income indicated the following sources: thirty-three (33%) humanitarian assistance, thirty-four percent (34%) pensions, thirty-seven percent (37%) employment[8].

3. Household items

Since more than half of the interviewed households live in rented housing, they very often lack basic items such as: cooking sets, (e.g. pots, plates), stoves, etc. Based on this information UNHCR expanded NFI program earlier this year and distributed many of these items[9]. In addition, forty-nine percent (49%) of persons interviewed in hosting communities mentioned that they are living on their own. Sixty-one percent (61%) mentioned that they are going to stay in their current accommodation.

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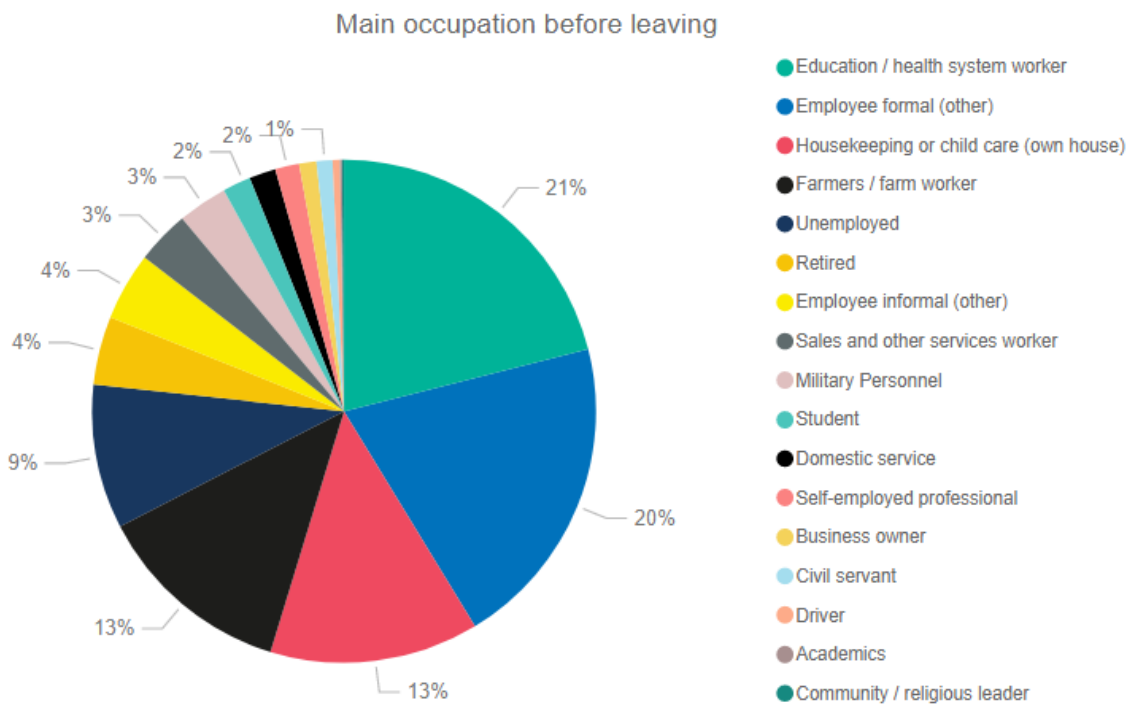
UNHCR conducting protection monitoring

[8] One individual may receive more than one source of income. Therefore, it is not expected that the totality of this figure is 100%.

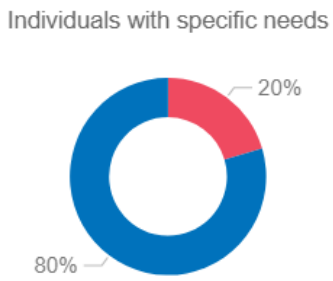
[9] During the first 6 months of 2021, directly and through implementing partners, UNHCR distributed the following number of NFI items: cooking kits 3,437, hygiene kits 1,905, jerrycans 3,273, bedding items, warm clothes 53,942, gas stoves 19, washing machines 20, refrigerators 23.

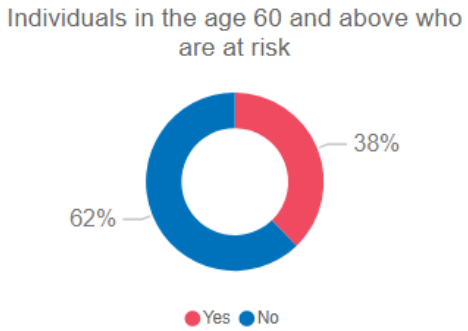
Profile of interviewed households

Among all interviewed, forty-eight percent (48%) confirmed having secondary education, twenty-eight percent (28%) tertiary or university education, fourteen percent (14%) vocational skills training, five percent (5%) postgraduate, four percent (4%) technical training, one percent (1%) primary education and another 0,1% no education. Interviewees were asked about their previous occupation, and 21% responded that they used to work in education/health system, 13% were busy with housekeeping/childcare, another 13% were farmers, 9% were unemployed and 20% were formally employed in other spheres. Amongst remaining 24% some had informal employment, such as sales, while some were service workers, military personnel, students, domestic service workers, self-employed, civil servants and pensioners.



Vulnerabilities and Specific Needs





Twenty percent (20%) of interviewed individuals are persons with specific needs, including persons with disability, single women, persons with serious medical conditions[10] without access to medical treatment, elderly at risk[11], pregnant or lactating women, unaccompanied or separated children[12], children in extended families[13].

From January to June 2021 thirty-eight percent (38%) individuals aged 60 and above were reported to be at risk, including those who have extensive medical needs (93%), with psychosocial needs (5%), lacking family or community support (2%).

Hundred percent of the families interviewed mentioned that there were no unaccompanied or separated children residing with or known to them, while fourteen percent (14%) reported to have a child in an extended family or a child spouse in the household.

[10] *Serious medical condition, a condition that requires assistance, in terms of treatment or provision of nutritional and non-food items, in the country of asylum. It includes mental illness, malnutrition, difficult pregnancy, chronic illness, critical medical condition, other medical condition, addiction.*

[11] *Elderly at risk. a person of 60 years old or above, with specific need(s) in addition to his/her age. This includes single older persons and older couples. They may be the sole caregivers for others, suffer from health problems, and have difficulty adjusting to their new environment, and/or otherwise lack psychological, physical, economic, social or other support from family members or others.*

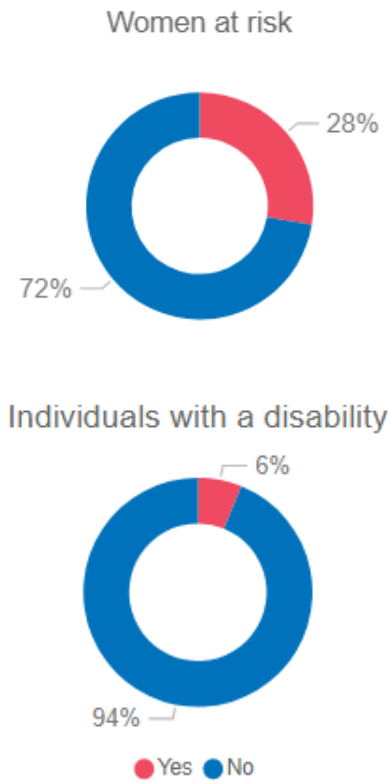
[12] *Unaccompanied or separated child, a person below the age of 18 who is currently not under the care of either parent or other legal or customary primary caregiver.*

[13] *Extended family, a family which extends beyond the nuclear family to include grandparents and other relatives.*

In most of the cases (78%) the child in the extended family was reported to be the grandchild of the interviewed individual or his/her sibling (7%). Six percent (6%) of the interviewed population reported to have different types of disabilities, mostly of a physical nature.

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the interviewed population were women at risk[14]. Four percent (4%) of the interviewed women (age 13-55) are pregnant, and 25% of them reportedly have not received the required assistance for pregnancy.

UNHCR meeting with local authorities in the remote village



[14] *Woman of 18 years or above who is at risk because of her gender, such as single mothers or caregivers, single women, widows, older women, women with disabilities and survivors of violence*

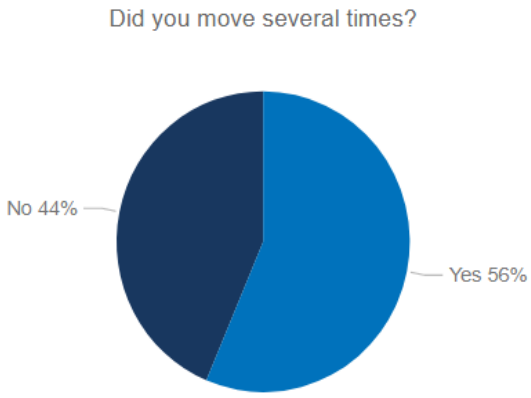
Documentation

Generally, the people in a refugee-like situation have access to documentation and are able to apply and renew their civil status documents.

During the Protection Monitoring exercise all interviewees were asked questions about the availability of the following documents: property ownership document, marriage/divorce certificates, school diploma, driving license, birth/death certificates. In 53% of cases, the interviewed individuals mentioned that they did not miss any documents. Among those, who are missing documents, 17% were related to property ownership, 8% to birth certificates and 7% to school diplomas while 5% reported missing marriage certificates, driving license (2%), residency card (1%), death certificate (1%), divorce certificate (0,5%) and other/not specified (5%). Of the interviewed population who were missing some documentation, 48% mentioned that they did not approach authorities for missing documents due to the following reasons: lack of information about the location where to obtain the documents (35%), lack of resources to cover expenses (25%), lack of relevant authority in the location (14%), not eligible to obtain the document (5%), whereas 21% mentioned other reasons. During the reporting period, 95% of adults responded they had passports with them.

Freedom of movement within Armenia

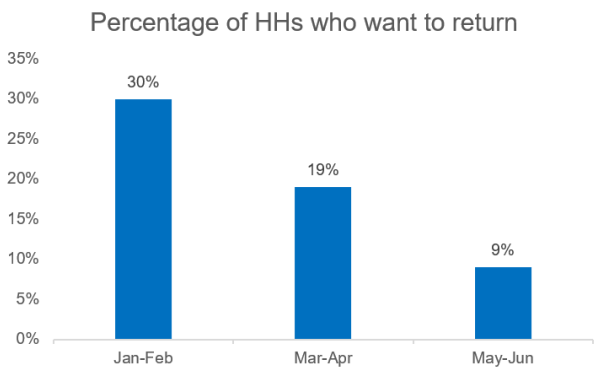
Generally, the people in a refugee-like situation are not restricted in their movement within the country and depart from the country.



During the period from January to June 2021, 56% of respondents mentioned that they had moved several times (including changing different types of accommodations). The highest number of individuals who have moved several times were in the city of Yerevan (25%) Kotayk (18%) and Ararat (14%) marzes (provinces). About 85% of interviewed population mentioned that they have stayed in their current accommodation for 3 months or more. Four main reasons for moving from previous accommodation were: : overcrowded commonly shared premises (21%), looking for long-term solutions (13%), security issues (8%).

Return intentions

During the reporting period (January – June, 2021 combined), 14% of interviewed households wanted to return, 51% did not know, 33% were planning to relocate within Armenia, 2% wanted to go to a third country.



While during the period from January to February thirty percent 30% (100 households) out of interviewed 327 households noted that they would like to return, nineteen percent (19%) (85 households) out of the interviewed 437 households wanted to return during the period from March to April and only nine percent (9%) (145 households) out of interviewed 1,620 households expressed the wish to return during the period from May to June.

Perceived risks upon return

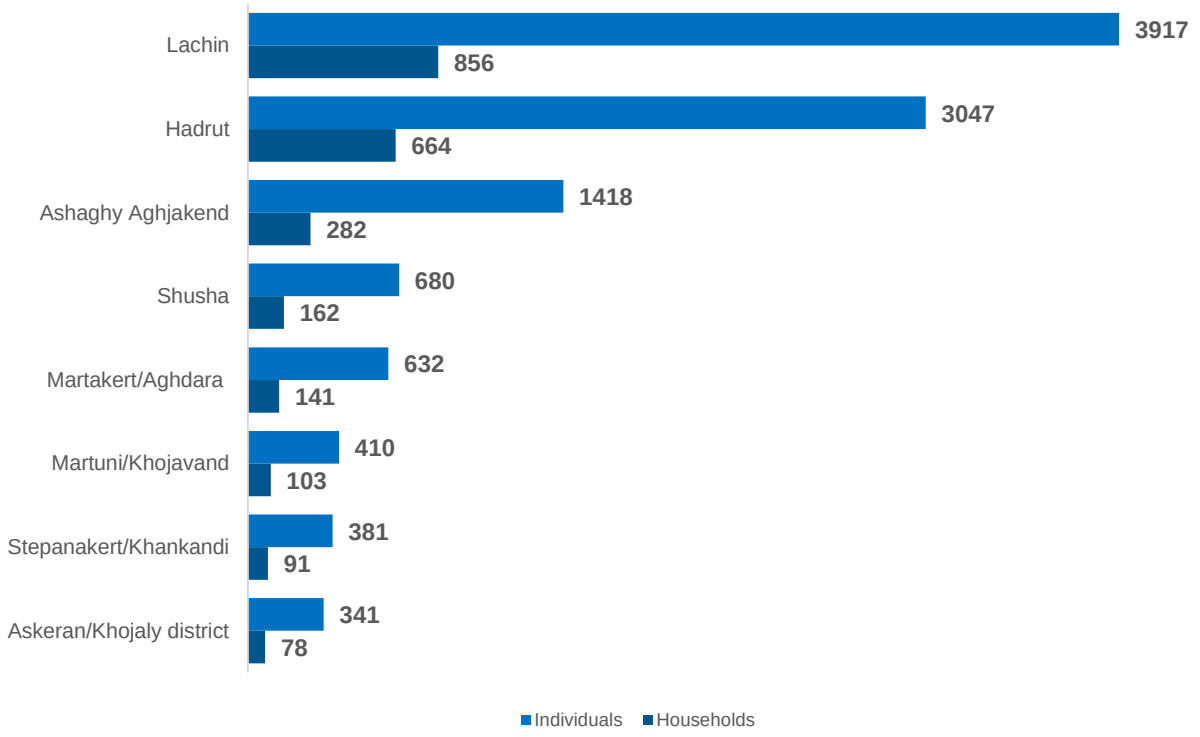
Among concerns upon return the following were reported: security risks (31%), no access to the area of origin/former habitual residence (24%), damaged property (15%) and lack of access to livelihood (15%), presence of mines (9%), lack of access to food (4%).

UNHCR team on mission to a remote village to meet with local authorities and reach vulnerable displaced families.

Place of former habitual residence

As stated by interviewed individuals during the period from January to June 2021 prior to the displacement to Armenia most lived in Lachin, Hadrut and Ashaghy Aghjakend, and there were few interviewees from Stepanakert/Khankandi.

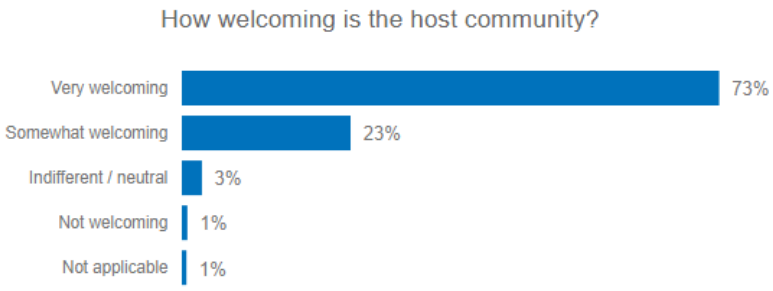
Place of habitual residence in NK (as stated by people interviewed)



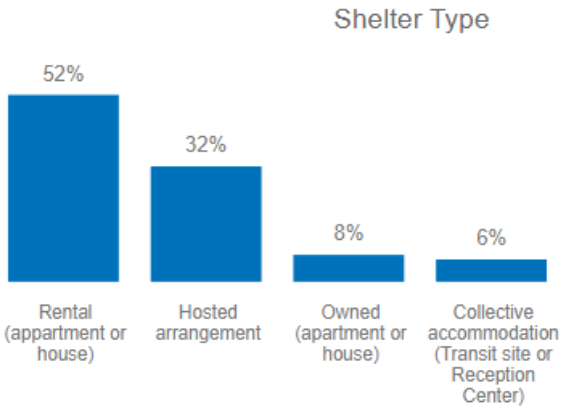
"It would not have been possible to survive and move forward without the support of the host community and the humanitarian workers", says a displaced woman to UNHCR with sincere gratitude and warmth towards UNHCR.

Social Cohesion Concerns

During the reporting period eighty-three percent (83%) of interviewed households felt safe in their current location. Persons were also asked to report any incidents related to social cohesion. Ninety-six percent (96%) of households mentioned that they did not have any incidents with host communities, and 73% mentioned that the host communities were very welcoming.



Living Conditions



During the reporting period, fifty-two percent (52%) of the interviewed population were living in rental apartments or houses, thirty-two percent (32%) were hosted by local families, six percent (6%) in collective centers and eight percent (8%) owned apartments or houses. Overall, 79 % of households interviewed paid for their accommodation.

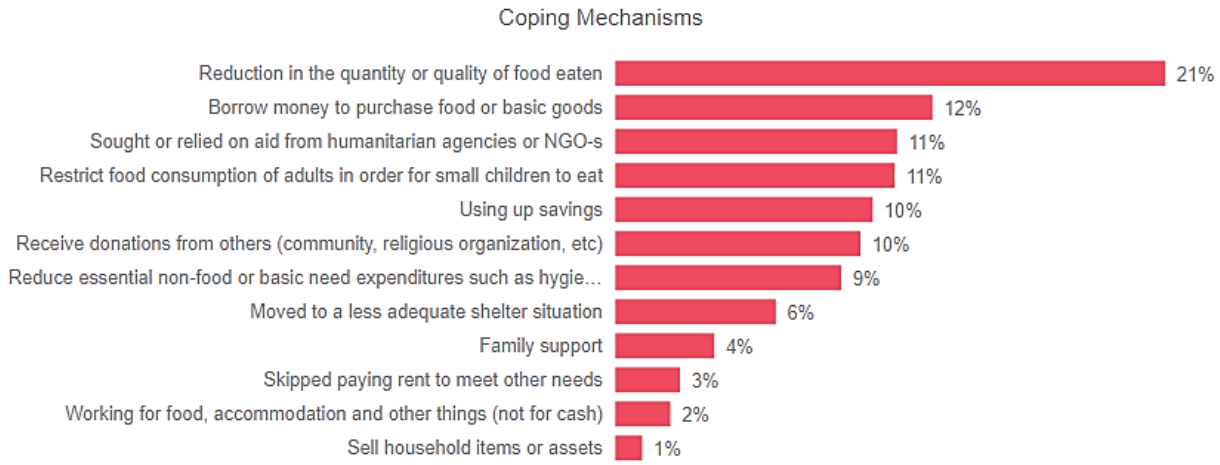
Of the interviewees, 99% confirmed having access to electricity, 92% to water inside their dwellings, 68% to private toilets. However, there were marzes/provinces deviating from the general picture. In Shirak, 24% of interviewed individuals mentioned that they do not have any toilets, 26% mentioned that they have access to private toilets and 48% were using shared toilets.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of the interviewed individuals confirmed that they are planning to stay in current accommodation, 14% planned to leave their current accommodation and 24% did not know. It is important to note that access to services (electricity, gas, water, etc.) is not provided free of charge and affected population requires financial support to pay for utilities.

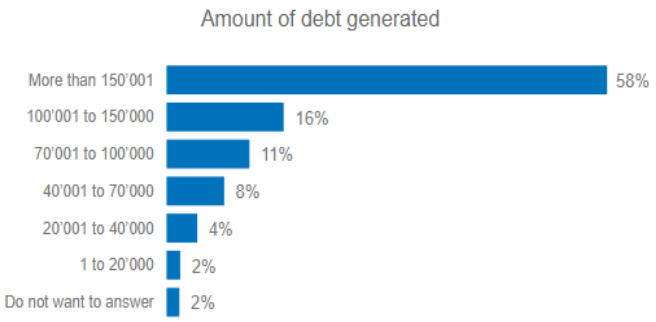
Coping mechanisms and livelihood

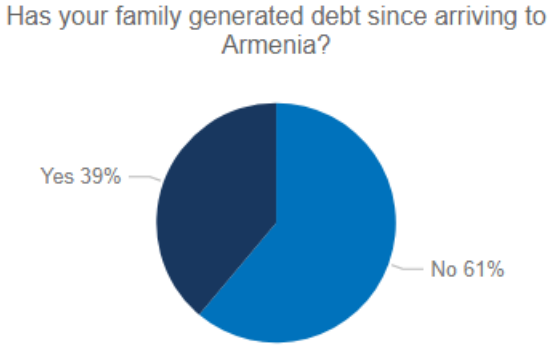
"It's really hard to try and make ends meet. I constantly have to choose between paying rent and buying food for my children", says a displaced mother of many children.

As mentioned in previous protection monitoring reports, coping mechanisms used by interviewees as a result of displacement include reduction of the quantity or quality of food, spending savings, receiving donations from community, faith-based organizations, etc., seeking or relying on aid from humanitarian agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGO), portioning food consumption of adults, borrowing money, and relying on extended family support. Twenty-one (21%) of interviewed individuals said they had reduced the quantity or quality of food, 12% had to borrow money to purchase food or basic goods, 11% sought or relied on aid from humanitarian agencies or NGOs, another 11% had to restrict food consumption of adults to benefit small children, 10% were spending previously owned savings, another 10% were receiving donations from community, religious organizations, etc., 9% had to reduce essential non-food or basic needs expenditures such as hygiene items, water, baby items, etc., and 6% had to move to a less adequate shelter.



Generated debts





From January to June 2021, 39% of households confirmed that they generated debts since their displacement to Armenia, and in 58% of such cases the amount of debt was more than 150,000 AMD (approx. 300 USD). Forty-nine (49%) percent of the interviewed population reported that they were unemployed during the previous month. The highest numbers of unemployed interviewed individuals during the previous month were reportedly in Armavir (66%), Kotayk (66%), Tavush (66%), and Yerevan (65%), while the smallest numbers of unemployed interviewed individuals were in Shirak (27%), Aragatsotn (29%) and Ararat (31%) provinces. As one of the sources of income, thirty-seven percent (37%) of the families had employment, thirty-four percent (34%) benefitted from pension, thirty-three percent (33%) received humanitarian assistance from Government, local authorities, and NGOs, two percent (2%) received support from extended family members abroad[15]. Twenty six percent (26%) of the families reported no financial income. The highest numbers of interviewed individuals who reported relying on humanitarian assistance from Government, local authorities, and NGOs as the main source of income were from Tavush (76%) and Lori (65%) provinces.

"We had some savings, but we spent them all. It's not easy to raise a child far away from home, in harsh winter, with diminishing means and increasing demands", says a young displaced mother

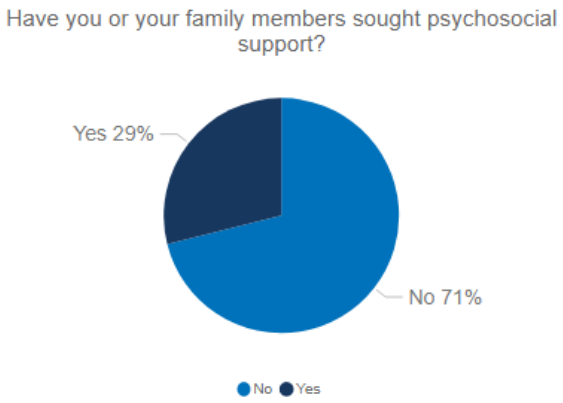
[15] *One individual may receive more than one source of income. Therefore, it is not expected that the totality of this figure is 100%.*

Access to healthcare

The Protection Monitoring revealed that the people in a refugee-like situation have full access to health care services and use this right.
Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the persons interviewed said they or their family member had some health-related issues since their arrival to Armenia (e.g. physical or mental health, suffered an accident, or chronic illness). Among them, 84% approached health facilities, and 93% received different types of medical assistance – a very encouraging indicator for access to health care. Some of the obstacles in accessing medical assistance mentioned by respondents include lack of financial resources to cover expenses, lack of information on where to access services, distance from health centre and lack of specialized health services in their location.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, 97% of the interviewed households mentioned that they were well-informed of the preventive measures and 99% confirmed that they had access to different protective equipment. Every resident of Armenia has access to the vaccination.

Access to psychosocial support



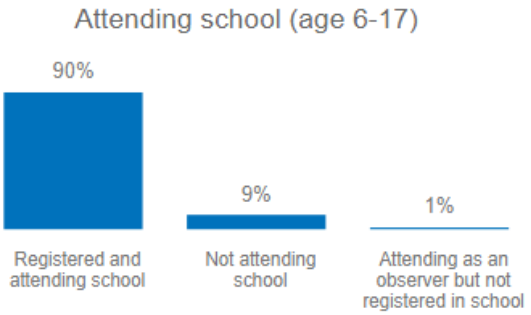
Fifty-eight percent (58%) of interviewed individuals reported that they or someone else in their family were showing signs of stress, and 54% of respondents have noticed signs of stress in their children including changes in their routine behaviour. Lost livelihood (16%), loss of property (15%), not being able to return home (13%), lack of shelter (13%), ongoing conflict (12%), loss of hope for the future (12%), being separated from their community (10%) were reported as the main reasons of stress by the interviewed households. However, only 29% of interviewed households or someone else in their family who were showing stress have sought professional psychosocial support

Access to education

The Protection Monitoring revealed that in general the people in a refugee-like situation have access to education.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of children from families interviewed were registered in and attending schools or kindergartens. Specifically, 68% of the children aged 3-5, were not attending kindergarten, while 90% of the children, aged 6-17 were registered and attending schools.

A boy displaced is enjoying his IT classes in the computer room equipped and furnished by UNHCR



Children were reportedly not attending kindergartens due to facts such as: limited space in local schools/kindergartens (12%), no kindergarten in the neighbourhood (9%), the uncertainty about the duration of stay in Armenia (8%), closure of the school/kindergarten related to COVID-19 pandemic (6%), lack of financial resources (3%) and others.

Access to food

Seventy-five percent (75%) of interviewed households reported that they have access to 3 meals a day, 21% have access to 2 meals a day, 2% to over 3 meals a day and another 2% to only one meal a day. Vast majority, 85% of the interviewed households mentioned that they needed food assistance and 87% of such households reported having received food assistance after displacement. Thirty-two percent (32%) of households received the food assistance in the previous month, 29% several months before and 25% several days before the interview was conducted.

Access to social assistance

In addition to being hosted by local communities, the people in a refugee-like situation still benefit from the communal accommodation provided by the Government. In its effort to address urgent needs of the affected population, the Government of Armenia has been rolling out several cash-based support programmes, since mid-November 2020[16].

Ninety-three percent (93%) of interviewed households reported that they or one of their family members have received social assistance since their arrival to Armenia. Of those who have received social assistance, 96% reportedly received special (financial) assistance for refugee-like population from NK.

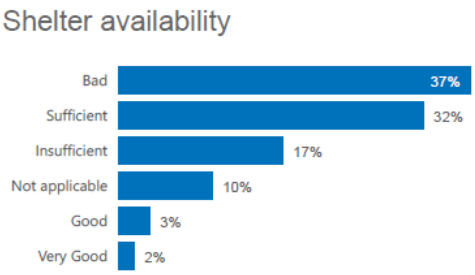
KEY INFORMANT (KI) INTERVIEWS[17]

UNHCR Protection monitoring team conducted KI interviews to get more insight into the situation of the conflict-affected population after 27 September 2020. Among the KIs were community volunteers, humanitarian workers, representatives of the local authorities, and the site management[18]. During the period from January to June 2021, 123 in-depth KI interviews were conducted.

Accessibility of shelter

The displaced women living in a shelter

Fifty-four (54%) of the interviewed KI rated the accessibility of “Shelter” (finding accommodation) in their community/collective shelter as bad or insufficient, 32% as sufficient and only 5% as good or very good.



[16] *Gouvernement assistance programmes finish at the end of June 2021*

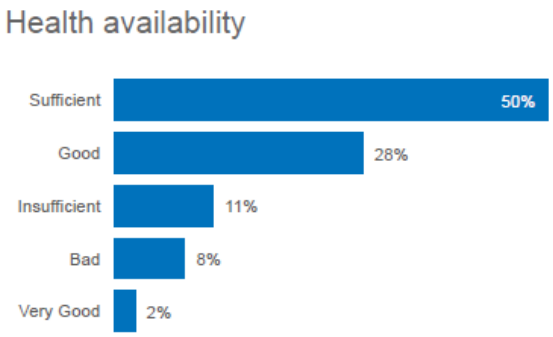
[17] *For other statistics visit the Key Informant Monitoring Dashboard.*

[18] *Site: where more than 5 displaced households have settled collectively without formal rental agreements in place.*

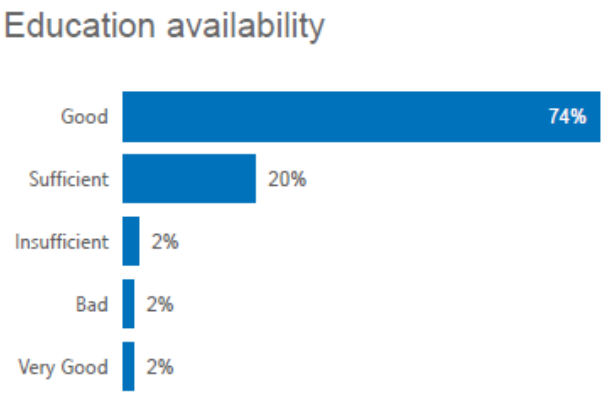
"We are happy to see that the renovation works in our shelter are in full swing. We are thankful to this hospitable Centre and to UNHCR for ensuring decent living conditions for us and our children", a group of displaced women said.

Accessibility of health services

Thirty percent (30%) of the interviewed KI reported that in their community/collective shelter the accessibility of health services is good or very good, while 50% mentioned that the accessibility of health services is sufficient, and 19% mentioned that it is bad or insufficient.



Accessibility of education

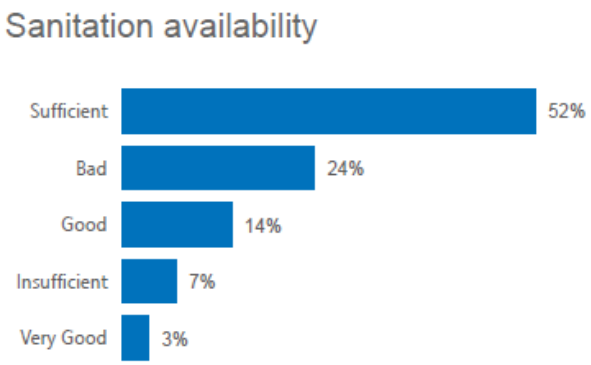


The accessibility of education was rated as good or very good by 76% of the interviewees, sufficient by 20% and insufficient or bad by the rest. Also, 92% and 86% of the interviewed KI mentioned that there are schools and kindergartens respectively within walking distance from their accommodation.

Accessibility of food

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the interviewed KI reported that food assistance is available in their community/collective center.

Accessibility of sanitation, water and separate facilities for males/females



Fifty-two percent (52%) of the interviewed KI rated the accessibility of sanitation in their community/collective shelter as sufficient, 31% as bad or insufficient and only 17% as good or very good.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of interviewed KI rated the accessibility of water in their community/collective shelter as good or very good, 48% as sufficient and 4% as bad.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of interviewed KI mentioned that they don't have separate sanitary facilities for male/female in the community/collective shelter.

UNHCR conducting interview with displaced young mother awaiting distribution of hygiene items

Accessibility of public transportation

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of interviewed KI reported that in their community/collective shelter they have access to public transportation always or often, 11% sometimes, while the rest mentioned that they have access to public transportation hardly (14%) or never (5%).

DEPARTURES MONITORING

UNHCR Armenia continues to monitor departures of buses from Yerevan to Stepanakert/Khankandi, organized by the Yerevan Municipality since 14 November 2020. The daily departure monitoring visits to "Kilikia" Bus station were handed over to UNHCR partner World Vision Armenia starting from 13 April 2021. However, UNHCR continues monitoring the results of the departure monitoring using KoBo toolbox and preparing departures monitoring dashboards. The daily departure monitoring is focused on the organization of departures, observation of the profile of returnees and their possible specific needs, including use of COVID-19 preventive measures.

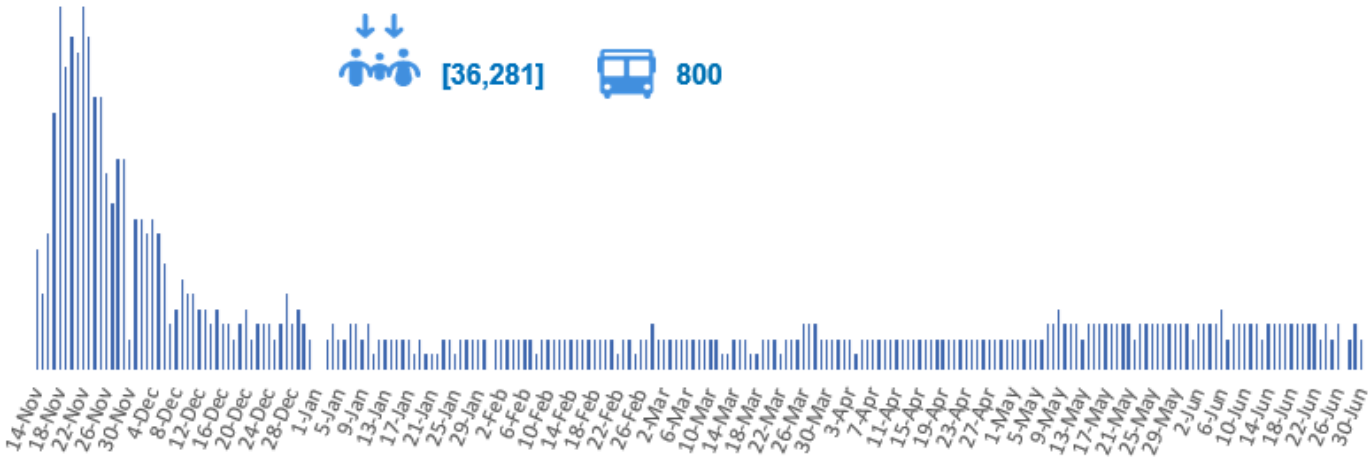
During the monitoring period there was a sharp decrease in the number of people departing Armenia. From January to June 2021, UNHCR Protection team observed a daily average of 94 people, while during November-December 2020, the daily average of departing individuals was 404.

People returning from Yerevan to Stepanakert/Khankandi

Based on the departure monitoring findings, both men and women frequently travel to NK for their private matters, such as obtaining the re-issued property-related documents, claim pensions and/or entitlements, explore employment and housing opportunities made available to the displaced population. Among reasons for travel, very often visiting the graves of relatives or friends has been mentioned.

Most of respondent men mentioned that they have been trading goods from Yerevan to NK. Among young people, the main reason for travel to NK was the fact they continue their studies in the universities in NK.

UNHCR departure monitoring of buses provided by the Mayor's Office in Yerevan



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