ARMENIA EMERGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE

Inter-Agency Update 6 - 12 December 2023

A refugee woman is making baby clothes, thriving to restore her business in Armenia. December 2023. Yerevan. ©UNHCR

KEY FIGURES

50,000 refugees provided immediate food response, including family food parcels, hot meals, and ready-to-eat lunch boxes.

8,430 winter specific items distributed during the winter period.

5,334 core relief items were distributed, namely in Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik, and Kotayk regions.

1543 households were interviewed during protection monitoring (covering 7103 individuals) in 11 regions.

1273 children and caregivers reached with case management and follow up support by social workers.

EMPLOYMENT

To date about 5,351 refugees are employed in manufacturing industry, education, service, construction, and other sectors. As of December, 3,929 jobseekers were registered in 49 centers of the Unified Social Service, of which 3,737 received the status of unemployed, 1,608 received job referrals, resulting in 438 job placements. There are currently 5,000 available vacancies for refugees in various fields. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) announced that two employment programmes have been developed and will begin in 2024.

The Ministry of Health along with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports are implementing special measures to support refugees with the employment of relevant sector specialists. In addition, various employment programmes are being implemented and planned with international partners.

MATERNITY ALLOWANCE

Refugees may apply for a maternity allowance in Armenia if they are registered in the state register of the population of the Republic of Armenia with the address of the place of residence in Armenia and/or they had not been granted maternity allowance. Important to note, if a person does not work and has a refugee status during the period of having the right for maternity leave, i.e., 140 days, or within 70 days after the birth of the child, the individual may apply for maternity benefits after 11 December 2023, within 140 days. The maternity benefits will not be granted if the application is submitted after that period.

SECTOR UPDATES

PROTECTION SECTOR (INCLUDING CHILD PROTECTION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE)

Sector lead: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA); **Co-lead:** UNHCR
Members: AGBU | UNHCR | UNICEF | Democracy International | Women's Resource Center | Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) | UNFPA | Women's Support Center | GIZ | PINK Armenia | World Vision | Sexual Assault Crisis Center |IFRC | Armenia Round Table | ACTED | Children Protection Center | HEKS/EPER in Armenia | KASA Foundation | Mission Armenia | ICRC | MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières | Action Against Hunger | OxYGen Armenia | Doctors of the World France in Armenia | New Generation Humanitarian NGO | WINNET Armenia | SafeYOU | Save the Children | Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People | Armenian Progressive Youth

- UNHCR Hotline received 206 calls from refugees, mainly requesting NFI items. The families need warm clothes, bedding items, blankets, beds, heaters, mattress, household items, washing machines, refrigerators, TV, pots, irons, towels, diapers, food, hygiene, and other household items.
- During the reporting period, UNHCR protection team conducted 17 refugee household visits (covering 62 individuals) in 4 communities in Yerevan and 3 provinces namely Shirak, Kotayk, and Syunik. In total, since 1 November 2023, 1,543 households were interviewed (covering 7,103 individuals) in Yerevan and 10 provinces. The Protection Unit referred the most vulnerable cases identified for direct receiving of assistance with the support of Project Control and Supply Units.
- As a co-lead of the Protection Working Group, UNHCR prepared winterization messages for refugees. Given that winter season approaches, cold temperatures and harsh weather conditions can pose significant challenges to those living in temporary shelters or unfamiliar surroundings. Winterization messages are intended to provide vital information and guidance for refugees to take extra precautions and make necessary preparations to safeguard against winter conditions. The winterization messages were shared among the Protection Working Group members for feedback and are now finalized.
- 95 families received counselling and referrals by World Vision Armenia (WV) social workers on existing state and non-state support programs for displaced population in Tavush, Gegharkunik, Syunik, Lori and Aragatsotn regions. A needs assessment was carried out on ongoing basis to reveal the basic needs of displaced families and provide targeted support, as well as to plan more long-term interventions for displaced within WV programme activities. More than 45 adults and 86 children received psychological support in Tavush, Gegharkunik, Syunik, Lori and Aragatsotn regions. Children are enrolled in WV daycare centers to overcome the stress and trauma they've experienced through displacement and ensure their social integration in host communities.
- Mission Armenia NGO continued with provision of social services, legal assistance, and psychosocial support in Yerevan and provinces of Armenia. 28 refugees were provided with social services, 13 refugees received legal assistance, and 50 refugees received psychosocial support in administrative districts of Yerevan, and Kotayk, Ararat, and Syunik provinces of Armenia.
- Armenian Progressive Youth NGO provided legal counseling to seven beneficiaries, addressing key inquiries related to the process of obtaining pensions and other state benefits. The sessions also focused on informing them about the differences between citizenship and refugee status, guiding individuals on the restoration of documents, and clarifying labor rights. The legal counseling services were delivered through a hotline and were also available on-site at the community center operated by the Armenian Progressive Youth NGO in Yerevan.
- New Generation Humanitarian NGO delivered cash assistance, in the form of 30 gift cards; psycho-social support to 4 individuals; legal support, both face to face and through the hotline to 11 individuals; emergency relocation and support 2 individuals.
- To participate in the sector working group meeting please write to daradkeh@unhcr.org and copy melikset@unhcr.org.

Child Protection Sub-Working Group

Lead: MLSA and **Co-lead:** UNICEF
Members:
Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) | UNFPA | Women's Support Center | GIZ | PINK Armenia | World Vision | Sexual Assault Crisis Center |IFRC | Armenia Round Table | ACTED | Children Protection Center | HEKS/EPER in Armenia | KASA Foundation | Mission Armenia | ICRC | MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières | Action Against Hunger | OxYGen Armenia | Doctors of the World France in Armenia | New Generation Humanitarian NGO | WINNET Armenia | SafeYOU | Save the Children| Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People | Armenian Progressive

YouthMinistry of Labour and Social Affairs | Human Rights Defender's Office | Action Against Hunger South Caucasus Mission | Mission Armenia NGO | Medecins du Monde France | KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation | Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) | "Parenting School" Parenting, Educational and Psychological Support Center NGO | World Vision Armenia | Arevamanuk NGO | Armenian Association of Child and Educational Psychologists | Child Development Foundation |Armenian Red Cross Society | People in Need | Syunik Marzpetaran | ICRC | "Youth Initiative Centre" NGO (YIC) | Save the Children International | Armenian Caritas | Child Protection Centre Foundation | Armenian Association of Social Workers | World Health Organization | SOS Children's Villages Armenia | UNHCR | UNICEF | UNFPA | Childrenof Armenia Fund (COAF) | AGBU | Democracy International | Women's Resource Center

- Child Protection Sub-Working Group is conducting a mapping of service provision to children and caregivers and is harmonizing the needs assessment tools applied by different actors. Child Protection related activities and sub-indicators for the RRP indicators were defined and a methodological guidance was developed and shared with partners during SWG meeting. This week UNICEF and partners involved in the Child Protection Sub-Working group have reached out to around 2,831 children and caregivers with mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) interventions and child-friendly spaces, including those established with UNICEF's support in recent years and sustained by community efforts. 1,273 children and caregivers have been reached with case management and follow up support by social workers including through a call center with support of UNICEF.
- To participate in the sector working group meeting please write to hkhemchyan@unicef.org and anahit.hovhannisyan@mlsa.am .

EDUCATION SECTOR

Sector lead: Minister of Education, Science, Culture, And Sports and Co-lead: UNICEF
Members: UNICEF | UNHCR | UNFPA | World Bank (WB) | Asian Development Bank (ADB) | Armenian Red Cross Society | People in Need (PIN) | Save the Children | AGBU | KASA | Teach for Armenia | Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport (MoESCS) | Civil Initiative for the Right to Education Umbrella Coalition for 30 CSOs | UNESCO

- UNICEF launched a joint programme on MHPSS in schools in collaboration with the state Pedagogical-Psychological Support Center (RPPC). The basic components of mental health and psychosocial support in schools are the mainstreaming of a comprehensive MHPSS policy within existing education policies, and plans, including more targeted interventions for refugee children. UNESCO supports RPPC in contextualizing MHPSS diagnostic tools, guidelines, and training materials. The intervention would be accompanied by the capacity building for around 2,000 teachers and 630 school psychologists. These interventions will complement the provision of MHPSS to children, adolescents, and caregivers by other partners and throughout all relevant RRP sectors.
- In the last week Armenian Red Cross society provided non-formal education to 431 children, including 389 refugee children through non-formal education settings.
- Step by Step Benevolent Foundation is planning to reach overall 1,997 pre-school age children and their families. Currently, the organization is conducting a mapping to Identify communities with the highest number of refugee population to select 20 preschools with higher potential to expand early learning spaces to enroll new students.
- To participate in the sector working group meeting please write to apoghosyan@unicef.org.

UNICEF and partners work together, psychological first aid to refugee children and their families. Abovyan, Kotayk region. December 2023 ©UNICEF Armenia/2023/Galstyan

BASIC NEEDS SECTOR

Shelter/ Non-Food Items

Sector lead: MLSA and **Co-leads:** UNHCR, UNDP
Members: UNHCR | UNDP | UNICEF | IOM | UNWFP | UNFPA | ARCS (Armenian Red Cross Society) | APY (Armenian Progressive Youth) | Mission Armenia | World Vision | People in Need | CARE | Caritas | CRS (Catholic Relief Services) | ACF Spain | ACTED | ICRC | Rescue | Democracy International | HDIF

- During the reporting period, a total of 5,334 core relief items were distributed. The distributions took place in the provinces of Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik and Kotayk covering a total of three communities. 1,384 winter specific items were distributed, namely: heaters, winter jackets and winter gloves.
- During the winter period, a total of 8,430 winter specific items has since been distributed. Partners have already confirmed planned distributions of over 7,200 electric heaters in the coming weeks in an effort to assist the refugees to cope with winter conditions.

- While works are being carried out in three buildings used or to be used as accommodation, the technical assessment of buildings selected by MoLSA continues. So far, 11 buildings have been assessed and technical reports have been completed.
- UNDP continues working with the Government of Armenia on the long-term housing strategy, expected to be finalized at the end of January.
- Basic Needs group will meet bi-weekly. To participate in the sector working group meeting please write to sobral@unhcr.org.

UNHCR Representative in Armenia accompanied the French delegation to visit a temporary shelter in Masis town, Ararat region. The temporary shelter hosts 67 refugees, among them women, children, elderly and persons living with disabilities. ©UNHCR

FOOD SECURITY

Sector lead: Ministry of Economy and **Co-leads:** WFP, FAO
Members: ACF Spain | AGBU | ACTED | ARCS | Democracy International Inc. | FAO | FAO | ICRC | IFRC | REACH | UNHCR | WFP | World Vision International (WVI)

- Since 28 September 2023, WFP continues its assistance to refugees. As of 12 December 2023, family food parcels, hot meals and ready-to-eat lunch boxes have been provided to about 50,000 refugees, covering initially targeted caseload for the immediate food response phase.

- WFP's food response included distribution of 10,050 family food parcels (168 metric tons), and provision of about 40,000 portions of hot meals and ready-to-eat lunch boxes to refugees, following the Government's request. Immediate food assistance has been provided to refugees residing in all provinces of Armenia. More family food parcels are currently under distribution to about 9,000 refugees.
- In the first quarter of 2024, WFP plans to gradually shift to cash-based transfers through the use of a food card, in line with the Government priorities, targeting, and assistance requirements.
- To participate in the sector working group meeting please write to oscar.ekdahl@wfp.org and maria.muradyan@wfp.org.

WFP ensures distribution of food packages to refugees. ©WFP

RESILIENCE SECTOR

Sector lead: MLSA and **Co-lead:** UNDP
Members: Action Against Hunger | ACTED | AGBU | Aleppo-NGO | Armenian Caritas | Armenian Red Cross Society | CARE International | Catholic Relief Services | COAF | Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia | Democracy International | DRR National Platform | EU Delegation | FAO | Fund for Armenian Relief | Goris Women's Development "Resource Center" Foundation | Green Lane | HDIF | Hungarian Interchurch Aid | ICRC | ILO | IMWG | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |International Rescue Committee | IOM | Kooyrigs NGO | Médecins du Monde France | Miaseen NGO |

OxYGen Foundation | People in Need | REACH | Republican Union of Employers of Armenia | RCO | SALAR International | Samaritan's Purse International Disaster Relief | Save the Children | UNDP | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | UNIDO | UMCOR | UN Women | WCC Armenia Round Table Foundation | WFP | WHO |Women's Rights House in Gyumri | Women's Support Center NGO | World Bank | World Vision

- UNDP is currently renovating two shelters targeting elderly and other highly vulnerable refugees, providing space for up to 130 refugees. The project aims to finish by December 2023. Furthermore, the assessment of another building, which requires more extensive retrofitting, is underway. It is anticipated to be finished by late spring 2024, which will accommodate an additional 150 refugees.
- The renovation works of the IT center for refugees and host community in Verishen (Goris community) completed with support of UNDP. In addition, UNHCR would provide technical assistance, including equipment, tables, chairs for community center.
- UNDP completed design and scope of the project and is ready to commence the on-the-job training scheme that will allow 400 refugee households to benefit from this initiative.
- To participate in the Resilience sector working group meeting please write to dianna.areyan@undp.org.

Shelter renovation is ongoing in Masis, Ararat region. © UNDP

HEALTH AND NUTRITION SECTOR

Sector lead: Ministry of Health and **Co-leads:** WHO/IOM
Members: WHO | IOM | UNICEF | UNFPA | UNDP | ICRC | MSF Operations Center of Geneva | Jinishian Memorial Foundation | WFP | Armenian Psychiatric Association | Traveling Doctors | AMAA | Fund for Armenian Relief | Sante Armenie | Henar | SGMHF "Intra" MHC | COAF (Childrenof Armenia Fund) | Project HOPE | New Generation Humanitarian NGO | Association of Healthcare and Assistance to Older People | Habitat for Humanity Armenia | Armenian Red CrossSociety | Pan-Armenian Psychological Association | Armenian Association of Child of EducationalPsychologists (AACEP) | Yerevan State University Center of Applied Psychology | ARPI | Armenian Union of Psychologists | Armenian Association of Social Workers | City of Herouse | KASA SwissHumanitarian Foundation | "Ambra" Mental Wellbeing Center | Psychosocial Recovery Center | MdM France (Medecins du Monde) | "Centre for Psychosocial Recovery" | Frontline Therapists | Armenian Red Cross Society | IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) | People in Need | Oxygen

- WHO conducted site visits to the Nor-Nork and the Shengavit elderly care centres in Yerevan within the framework of the WHO-MoH Influenza Vaccination Campaign, aimed at raising awareness about infectious diseases and providing influenza vaccinations for the beneficiaries of social care centers, including refugees.
- WHO provided mhGAP training for 14 doctors and 1 psychologist from Syunik and Gegharkunik regions with the Armenian Psychiatric Association, as well as a training on basic psychosocial skills of nurses with the Armenian Psychoanalytical Association. Additionally, WHO engaged with the Mental Health Kotayk Mobile Team on their progress and strategic planning.
- WHO shared social media and monitoring reports with the MoH, as well as developed an animation on Access to Healthcare for refugees with the MoH that has had 130,820 post impressions and 87,450 post reaches.
- New Generation Humanitarian NGO has implemented HIV prevention projects benefiting 2,364 people. During the reporting period, 9 people were assisted with temporary housing, 19 with MHPSS, 26 with financial support, and 117 with HIV and AIDS prevention services.
- UNFPA successfully conducted a series of trainings focusing on enhancing the skills of healthcare providers from Tavush and Vayots Dzor regions on MISP, as well as training for obstetrician-gynecologists and midwives from Kotayk region on Emergency Obstetrical Care. Specifically, the MISP Training was conducted in Ijevan for 24 healthcare providers from Tavush region and in Yeghegnadzor for 29 healthcare providers from Vayots Dzor region. The trainees improved knowledge and skills to enable them to provide quality SRH services during emergency situations. The training for healthcare providers on Emergency Obstetrical Care was conducted in Yerevan for 5 healthcare providers who enhanced their capacity and skills to enable them to manage complications during deliveries.
- MSF conducted 37 visits in Tsaghadzor in 16 locations (Aliq Hotel , Sion Hotel, Narek- Yerevan State University Base, Zartonq Hotel, Khoror Djur, Multi Rest House ,Kecharis, Avea, Qvant, Viladjor, American Evangelical Church, Yehten, Sporthall, Tegheris Hotel , Karap Hotel, Edem Hotel) and 27 visits in Masis in 11 locations (Zorak, Khachpar, Sis, Ranchpar, Ayntap, Norabacts, Arbat, Hayanist, Sayat-Nova, Drabnik, Shastavan). As part of these visits, 789 people received services (545 in Masis and 244 in Tsaghadzor), amongst them 524 were women and 48 children or adolescents.

- The Apaga Psychological Center has 11 psychologists and psychotherapists who are providing free services to refugees in Yerevan and in the regions of Tavush and Lori.
- Frontline Therapists have completed their crisis support activities that reached over 500 families and included 20 truckloads of items dispersed.
- IOM supported the provision of MHPSS for refugees and community members in Kotayk region. During the reporting period, 13 people received individual therapy sessions: 9 boys and 4 girls.
- To participate in the sector working group meeting, please write to esenamanovv@who.int.

CASH

Sector lead: MLSA and Co-leads: UNICEF, UNHCR
Members: Armenian Red Cross Society | UNICEF | UNHCR | CARE Caucasus | People in Need |European Union Delegation to Armenia | AGBU Armenia | Acted Armenia | Asian Development Bank | "Armenian Caritas" Benevolent NGO | "Mission Armenia" Charitable NGO | World Bank | ICRC | Armenian Progressive Youth NGO | USAID | UNFPA | Save the Children International | Action Against Hunger | USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance | UN Women | IFRC | WFP |New Generation Humanitarian NGO | Partnership and Teaching NGO | Armavir Development Center | WCC Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation | FAO

- 10 members of the Cash sector WG co-chaired by UNICEF, UNHCR and MLSA proceeded with signing of the Agreement for providing cash (6 partners) and vouchers (4 partners) with MLSA, including in alignment with the Government-led schemes, targeting both rent and utility support and multipurpose cash for basic needs programmes. Considering payment timelines and partners' eligibility criteria, Nork Technology Center has prepared respective beneficiary lists, pending transfer to partners upon signature of the Tripartite contract, including commitment letter/data sharing arrangements with the USS and the bank of choice (one partner has signed already).
- The Armenian Red Cross Society is conducting verification of beneficiary lists for rent and utility support in alignment with the Government programme to proceed with payments in the next reporting period.
- Following finalization of specific considerations for providing voucher support with MLSA in collaboration with the Cash WG, partner organizations are updating their planned voucher support activities (including locations, eligibility criteria, partner shops/vendors, transfer values etc.), which will be analyzed to avoid duplication and ensure a standardized approach. Indicative transfer values for food baskets, hygiene items and clothing have been shared by MLSA for reference, which will be finalized at a later stage also in consultation with other sectoral Working Groups. In the reporting period, 578 refugee families were reached with multipurpose vouchers by People in Need.
- To participate in the cross sectoral WG working group meeting please write to ahovakimyan@unicef.org

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES
(Protection Mainstreaming, Accountability to Affected People, PSEA, Age, Gender, and Diversity)

During the reporting period, UNHCR reinforced its commitment to PSEA through conducting a refresher session to enhance the understanding and commitment of its staff on combating SEA and on their roles and responsibilities on maintaining a secure and respectful work environment. Simultaneously, WFP arranged a PSEA refresher session for its staff. As part of this initiative the No Excuse cards were distributed and the findings of the PSEA annual survey that are related to WFP were presented and deliberated.

See the **Operational Data Portal for the Armenia Emergency** for more details on refugee population figures and information resources and the **Refugee Funding Tracker for RRP** funding information