

Armenia

January 2024

In the harsh cold of Armenian winters, the plight of refugees amplifies, underscoring the critical need for specialized winter assistance, and ongoing basic assistance, to mitigate risks and meet needs. Addressing refugees' unique needs during this season is not just a matter of comfort but a fundamental necessity for their survival and well-being. Under the leadership of the Government of Armenia, organizations working in alignment with the Armenia Refugee Response Plan (RRP) are responding to these needs and mitigating the associated risks, including risks to social cohesion and gender-bias within household resource distribution.

Refugee Winter-Related Needs and Risks

- Increased food consumption and expenditure
- Increased exposure to and risk of respiratory illness
- Decreased mobility and risk of social isolation
- Inability to access distant services
- Increased energy expenses, particularly heating
- Increased need for cold-weather clothing and bedding



- Increased need for weather-proofed accommodation
- Need winter-related information to make safe decisions
- Increased risk of reduced social cohesion
- Increased risk of gender-based inequality in household resources (ex. food, clothes)

KEY INDICATORS

101,848*

Newly arrived **refugees** since October 2023, according to Government registration

40%*

Percent funded against the RRP appeal

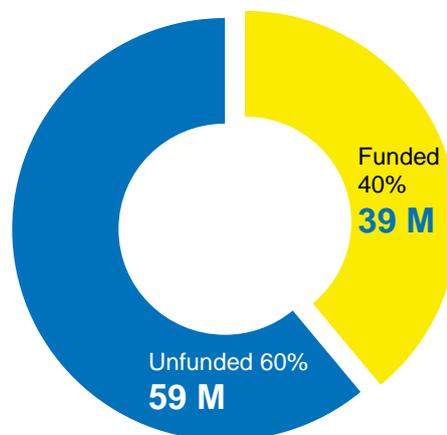
60

RRP appealing **partners**

FUNDING (AS OF 09 JANUARY)

USD 97 Million

requested for the Armenia situation



Update On Achievements



Health sector winter messaging campaign materials. WHO December 2023.



PROTECTION

Protection Working Group (PWG) members are prioritizing remote and high-elevation locations for outreach, identification, referral, and awareness raising activities so the most vulnerable refugees can be identified and linked with assistance. Outreach is critical to tackle weather-related social isolation and helps communicate lifesaving information. To maintain social cohesion, humanitarian actors are working in close coordination with local authorities to identify vulnerable host population members so that they can benefit from winter-related assistance. Hotlines are in place across sectors where refugees can report complaints and other feedback.

- The PWG has created and endorsed a set of winter safety messages for use during outreach activities that highlight prevention measures against winter-related illness and injury.
- UNHCR and partners are targeting refugees, people with specific needs (PSNs), and vulnerable host population members (up to 15% of the total assistance) in remote mountainous areas, such as Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotyak, Lori, Shirak, Tavush,

and Vayots Dzor Marzes. 2,530 vulnerable refugee and host population members have already been identified and referred for winter clothes assistance in Goris and Tegh.

- Armenian Caritas has identified vulnerable refugees with specific needs and referred them to shelter, non-food items (NFIs), and cash assistance, including 430 individuals (100 households) in ten settlements of Ararat province. Identifications and referrals will continue in Syunik Marze in January 2024.
- 70 vulnerable refugee households in Shirak Marze have been identified as at risk and referred for one-time cash assistance (AMD 40,000) for reimbursement of fuel and utility costs.

The Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Working Group's members work to prevent, mitigate, and respond to gender-based violence. This includes analysis of the context to better understand risks so that actors in all sectors can help mitigate them. Two important trends related to winter assistance have been identified:

- **Gender discrimination in household resource allocation.** Access to food in the household may be impacted by the increased household economic burden for winter-related expenditures, such as clothing and heating. This may exacerbate the already observed pattern of refugee women eating less, and less nutritious, food when resources are scarce, prioritizing instead men and children. Sufficient cash, food, and NFI assistance can help keep women's health and nutritional status from deteriorating.
- **Female-headed households are more vulnerable** to unmet winter-related needs. Female heads of household are their families' sole providers yet face significant gender-related obstacles in accessing the labour market. This added vulnerability means that female-headed households are facing critical challenges, with insufficient funds for winter-related expenses, such as blankets and bedding, heating, winter clothing, and shelter repairs to protect against the cold.



HEALTH

Health Working Group members have mobilized to ensure that refugees, vulnerable host population, and healthcare workers have the information they need to mitigate health risks during the winter season and make informed decisions to protect themselves and those under their care.

- Supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH), WHO organized a series of workshops for 155 primary healthcare workers and hospital representatives. Dedicated to the issue of integrated respiratory infections surveillance, the workshops aims at strengthening the national surveillance and response capacities for respiratory pathogens among refugee
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and host populations. Participants also received awareness raising materials for further dissemination at their respective facilities.

- Vaccination for respiratory infections was intensified, with distribution of posters and flyers through the primary healthcare network and community-level awareness raising campaigns by trained medical students, including in social centers for the elderly.
- Posters and flyers on protective measures against respiratory illness were developed and widely disseminated through outreach activities in Syunik region targeting healthcare professionals. 200 healthcare workers received materials for further distribution to patients and at their respective facilities. WHO’s risk communication, community engagement and infodemic management (RCCE-IM) team also circulated these materials as part of the Healthy Lifestyle campaign.
- A [mini social media campaign](#) on winter season health risks and prevention measures was launched on all of WHO’s Armenia Country Office social media channels.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Provision of in-kind food assistance has been critical since the onset of the crisis and remains so during the winter months, as food consumption needs, and expenditures, increase. The Food Security Working Group members have been providing food assistance, whether food parcels or hot meals, since October. Working Group members will continue to provide assistance throughout the winter season.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Shelter/NFI Working Group members and Government have played a critical role in protecting refugees and vulnerable host population members against the winter’s harsh cold. Non-food items (NFIs), such as warm bedding and clothing, heaters, and solid fuel have been provided using both in-kind and cash or voucher modalities. Winter specific NFI provision increased substantially towards mid-November with a focus on the coldest regions in Armenia.

Individuals Benefitting Shelter/NFI Winter Assistance

Shelter repairs/upgrades	81
Rent & utilities cash	18,448
In-kind winter non-food items	64,119

Private Sector Donations

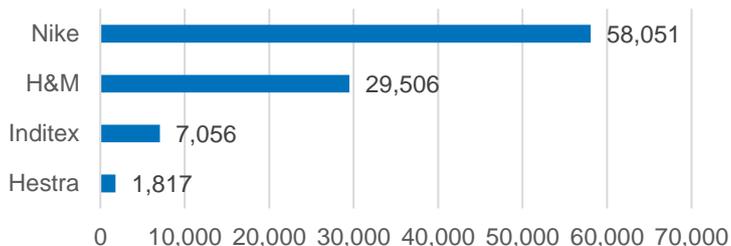
Families in Armenia prepare for winter by bringing out their winter clothes and bundling up against the cold. But for many refugee families their winter items were left behind when they were forced to flee. This means they are vulnerable to sub-zero temperatures and winter-related health risks. In response, private sector donors have been generous and swift to contribute in-kind donations, including transportation costs, to keep refugees warm through the winter months. Donations from Hestra (winter gloves), Inditex (children’s jackets) and H&M (mixed winter clothing including jackets, hats, gloves, and scarves) have all arrived. A donation from Nike is anticipated by February.



INDITEX



Winter Items by Donor



Challenges

This update highlights over 237,978 instances of winter support that have already taken place, helping refugees, vulnerable host population, and assistance providers to meet critical winter-related needs and reduce risks. This has been accomplished through the financial support from donors received so far, generous in-kind contributions, and the dedication of all RRP partners to provide swift assistance. But more needs to be done and more resources are needed.

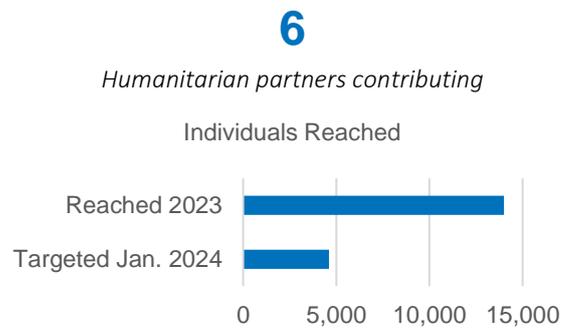
The Government rent and utilities cash programme has a USD 12.5 million funding gap. This assistance is critical through the winter months; reducing or ending the programme early would have negative consequences for the almost 80,000 refugees who benefit.

Through inter-agency coordination, other challenges have already been addressed. For example, the cross-cutting Cash Working Group, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA), have standardized voucher values and identified geographical gaps and overlaps in voucher assistance, which are being addressed.

Multi-Purpose Cash and Voucher Assistance

Multipurpose cash and voucher assistance is a proven and dignified modality of support for refugee families. Cash and voucher assistance activities have been implemented in very close coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) to maximize the level of support and avoid duplication. Special mechanisms for supporting government-led cash programmes have been put in place, including agreements, tripartite contracts, and data sharing arrangements. The mechanism for voucher assistance is simplified. All partners are abiding by these arrangements (for vouchers-applicable for all planned and ongoing programmes). Inclusion of the local population and all displaced population since 2020 is encouraged by MLSA to foster social cohesion. Three humanitarian partners have secured or are negotiating funding to also target vulnerable host population with their voucher programmes.

Government two-month winter-season cash programme:



Multi-purpose winter-season voucher assistance:

