

ARMENIA EMERGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE

Inter-Agency Update 13 October - 19 October



Refugee grandmother with her grandchildren who have just arrived at a temporary shelter in Verishen community in Goris, Syunik province. ©UNFPA

Overview

Situation Overview

As of 19 October 2023, according to data from the Government of the Republic of Armenia, 101,848 refugees have been registered by the authorities, of which 48,964 are males and 52,884 are females; among them, 9,000 people are people with disabilities, 12,000 older persons (+65 years) and 30,000 children.

The refugees are in various regions across Armenia, with the highest numbers residing in Ararat, Kotayk, and Yerevan. Most refugees settle in areas where they have family, and social support networks, and can access services.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, as of 20 October 2023, 15,388 children refugees were enrolled in schools.

Data provided by Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure indicates that as of 20 October 2023, more than 55,000 refugees have found accommodation through government support. Compared to the previous Inter-Agency update, out of 80,000 refugees who were staying in accommodation provided by the government, more than 25,000 people have found a new place of residence. The government reported about 1,000 people had left hotels and guesthouses and moved to other places of residence of their choice.

Inter-Agency Response

On 17 October 2023, the first Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) was convened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tigran Khachatryan, together with the UNHCR Director for the Europe Bureau, Mr. Philippe Leclerc. The Forum focused discussions on the current refugee situation, urgent priorities and needs as well as the refugee coordination mechanism to deliver the response. The government-led



Yerevan, 17 October 2023. Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan chaired the coordination meeting on Refugee Coordination Forum with the attendance of the Ministries, UN, humanitarian, and development partners. ©Government of Armenia

RCF is co-led by UNHCR, working closely with the RCO, and supports the government response by providing technical advice and coordination support. The RCF is composed of five sectors, namely Protection (including child protection and GBV); Health and Nutrition (including Sexual and Reproductive Health), Basic Needs (including Non-Food Items, Shelter and Food Security), and Resilience.

On 17 October 2022, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vahe Grigoryan and the UNHCR Director for the Europe Bureau, Mr. Philippe Leclerc, jointly launched the [Armenia Interagency Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#) in Yerevan. The launch was attended by some 100 participants from the Government, embassies, UN agencies, NGOs and refugee-led organizations (RLOs). The RRP emphasizes emergency protection and assistance, while at the same time also focusing on inclusion, resilience, and solutions, targeting both refugees and host communities.

CROSS CUTTING: CASH

UNICEF and UNHCR, as co-leads of the Cash Working Group, agreed with the Nork Social Services Technology and Awareness Center, Unified Social Service (USS) and MLSA to develop a protocol on data deduplication that will guide partners contributing to the Government-led cash programmes.

SECTORAL RESPONSES



PROTECTION (including GBV and Child Protection)

UNHCR conducted protection monitoring visits to four government-run humanitarian coordination centres in Armavir and Kotayk provinces to observe access to registration, information, and reception conditions, as well as identify the main protection concerns and needs of refugees. During the visits, UNHCR provided counselling to families residing in shelters and private accommodations. Referrals were made to local authorities and social protection services for assistance. Among priority needs, refugees reported need for permanent accommodation, beds and bedding items, kitchen sets, household items, heaters, as well as winter clothes.

From 25 September to 19 October 2023, 1,056 calls were made to the UNHCR hotline by refugees, who requested information and support regarding shelter, clothes, bedding items, blankets, household equipment, financial support, hygiene items and food to cover their basic needs.

On 18 October 2023, UNHCR discussed small grant opportunities with three RLOs to support the refugee population. Following that discussion, the RLOs are expected to submit project proposals outlining their planned activities to enhance services support for refugees. By working together, UNHCR and the RLOs aim to create a more cohesive protection environment for newly arrived refugees.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

An additional 1,000 dignity kits, including sanitary pads, soap and shampoo, tissues and napkins,

toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other items have been distributed in the reporting period by UNFPA to women and girls in reception centres in Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Kotayk and Ararat regions. So far, 14,000 dignity kits have been procured and distributed in reception centres in Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Kotayk, Ararat and Gegharkunik regions for refugee women and girls and other vulnerable refugees. Dignity kits raise included awareness-raising leaflets about [SafeYOU application](#), as well as existing government services and programmes for the refugee population.

During the reporting period, 113 women and girls received services within two UNFPA-supported Women and Girls Safe Spaces operating in Syunik region in partnership with WINNET Goris. Services provided included psychological support and provision of dignity kits for breast-feeding and pregnant women, older persons, young girls and children. As a result of cooperation with local medical institutions in the Syunik region, refugee women and girls received support accessing medical healthcare services, including referrals and accompaniment twice daily, via the Safe Spaces.



CHILD PROTECTION

During the reporting period, UNICEF reached over 1,000 children with mental health and psychosocial support(MHPSS) and psychological first aid (PFA) services, child protection case management, and case management support for caregivers. Over 3,000 children and caregivers were reached with psychological first aid and MHPSS interventions.

To date, 76 social workers from Syunik region have received training from UNICEF on child protection in emergencies and case management.



EDUCATION

During the reporting period, UNICEF prepositioned and started distributing School-in-a-box kits. The kits contain school supplies and materials for one teacher and 40 students for up to three months, to cater for the needs of at least 1,400 children. Early childhood development (ECD) kits were also distributed to cover the needs of 1,800 young children. In addition, UNICEF and its partners are distributing a first batch of 1,000 schoolbags with stationary for children and are procuring additional 2,000 schoolbags.



Oksana and Ashot, who've found safe haven in Armenia, are among the first to start attend school in their host community. ©UNICEF



HEALTH

As of 13 October, 134 mental health and psycho-social sessions have been provided in hospitals to patients with severe burns, within the scope of WHO assistance programmes.

Between 13 - 19 October, the Intra Mental Health Centre provided trainings for 64 psychologists and primary health professionals from Yerevan and Lori regions on psychological help.

With the support from WHO, Ambra Mental Wellbeing Center NGO has re-established a psychological support hotline, which originally started operating in May 2020 to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on mental health and provide urgent psychological support and information about mental health services. As of 13 October, with the support of UNHCR, Ambra Mental Wellbeing Center has provided mental health services, including psychological, psychiatric, and social-psychological support for 200 refugees in Goris.



The WHO and the Ministry of Health coordinated medical evacuations of burn survivors to Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States to receive specialized treatment. ©WHO

As of 17 October, specialized emergency medical technician (EMT) teams have been deployed to Armenia, including Samaritan's Purse EMT, which has carried out 170 medical interventions, including escharotomies, skin grafts, surgical debridement, and dressing changes in the National Center for Burns and Dermatology and the Armenian Republican Medical Centre. During the reporting period, a UK-Med EMT has started helping in the Mikaelyan Institute of Surgery, and an Italian EMT has started working in Yerevan Scientific Medical Center.

To date, WHO has also supported the medical evacuation of 19 patients to Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States.

WHO delivered 10 burn modules from TESK kits to support advanced care needs for 500 burn patients, in addition to ten noncommunicable diseases' (NCD) modules comprising medicines and insulin that will cover three months of treatment for up to 50 000 people. Since mid-September, WHO has dispatched 1,672 kilograms of medical supplies valued at over US\$ 71,300.

During the reporting period, with UNAIDS support, the NGO "Real World Real People" started delivering minimal hygiene packages for 100 refugee women living with HIV and providing social-psychological support for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and their family members. In addition, 13 PLHIV received food packages, three received assistances for transportation for annual blood examination, and three PLHIV were referred for treatment and antiretroviral therapy.

As of 13 October, 600 people were provided health care and psychological services by the mobile health teams, consisting of a paediatrician, nurse, psychologist, and other medical staff, with IOM's support. The mobile health teams are also providing primary health care services including health screenings, symptomatic treatments and referrals to hospitals or local ambulatory services for further treatment.



Refugees waiting to see medical workers at IOM's mobile clinic in Goris. ©IOM

During the reporting period, with the support from UNFPA, around 40 healthcare providers in the Syunik region, including obstetricians/gynaecologists, midwives, and nurses were trained in the provision of psychological first aid and stress management. During the reporting period, UNFPA partner organization assessed the psychosocial needs of 400 refugees, including women and girls, who received psychological first aid and psychiatric consultations.

As of 13 October, in coordination with the MoH and regional health authorities UNICEF has deployed 20 mobile paediatric units, including paediatricians, a nurse and a psychologist, with the capacity to reach 10,000 children and their caregivers in 5 regions and address the immediate needs of refugees and host communities. The teams will conduct identification and screening of children with mental health issues, traumatization and other health and nutrition problems, while also referring children to psycho-social support and healthcare services and providing parents with age specific counselling on positive childcare practices.



RESILIENCE

UNDP initiated a renovation of two collective shelters under the Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance (MLSA) leadership, which will accommodate up to 200 single older persons among vulnerable groups. In addition, two municipal buildings in Ararat region will be renovated to provide dignified living conditions for up to 120 people (some 25 families).



UNDP has kicked off Early Recovery projects in host communities – reconstruction and renovation works are now in full swing in Masis region of Ararat province. ©UNDP



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

WFP has so far supported the government's immediate response providing food assistance to 16,831 refugees, including delivering over 18,000 hot meals and lunch boxes to more than 8,000 refugees staying in crisis centers and facilities in Ararat, Lori, and Syunik regions. In line with the government's planning, WFP is also preparing to expand its response modalities to include cash-based assistance via food cards.

UNICEF finalised the procurement of 3,000 food boxes for young children to be delivered to 4 regions and 1,500 ready to use therapeutic biscuits ready for immediate distribution amongst children most in need.



Refugee families, among them older people and people with special needs, found safety and solace upon arrival in Armenia, welcomed by care and some hot meals offered by WFP. ©WFP



SHELTER/ NFI

The Shelter / NFI partners have distributed over 45,000 non-food items (NFIs) between 7 - 19 October, including bedding items, hygiene kits, kitchen sets and solar lamps.

UNHCR has been scaling up its NFI response, distributing more than 10,000 items from 13 - 19 October, including folding beds, bed linen, mattress, blankets, pillows, towels, kitchen sets and solar lamps. In coordination with MLSA, UNHCR is focusing on 10 regions, responding to needs identified by Municipalities jointly with UNHCR protection teams.

UNICEF and the Armenian Red Cross Society installed 15 mobile bio-toilets in proximity of registration centres in Goris and Vayk communities, to address the immediate needs for sanitation in those areas.

UNICEF delivered family hygiene kits to 100 families who had initially registered at the recently established Unified Social Services (USS) coordination centre in Parakar, in proximity to Yerevan.



NAME is one of the refugees who have received kitchen sets as part of UNHCR's core relief item distribution in host communities. ©UNHCR