

# ARMENIA

## INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1- 31 May 2021



### KEY FIGURES

**USD 62.1 M**

Total Financial Requirements for the Inter-Agency Response Plan (from October 2021 until end of June 2021)

**36,989**

Refugee-like population from NK (As of 01 June. Source: Migration Services, UNHCR, UNDP, IMPACT Initiatives, AASW, PIN, Mission East, Gegharkunik Church Leadership/Armenian Round Table, Kotayk Marzapetaran, and Syunik Marzapetaran.)

**54,908**

Beneficiaries targeted for cash support by 9 partners

**2,385**

Persons reached by the monthly food assistance

**2,680**

Persons reached through Protection Monitoring exercise

**5,569**

Persons benefited from NFI distributions

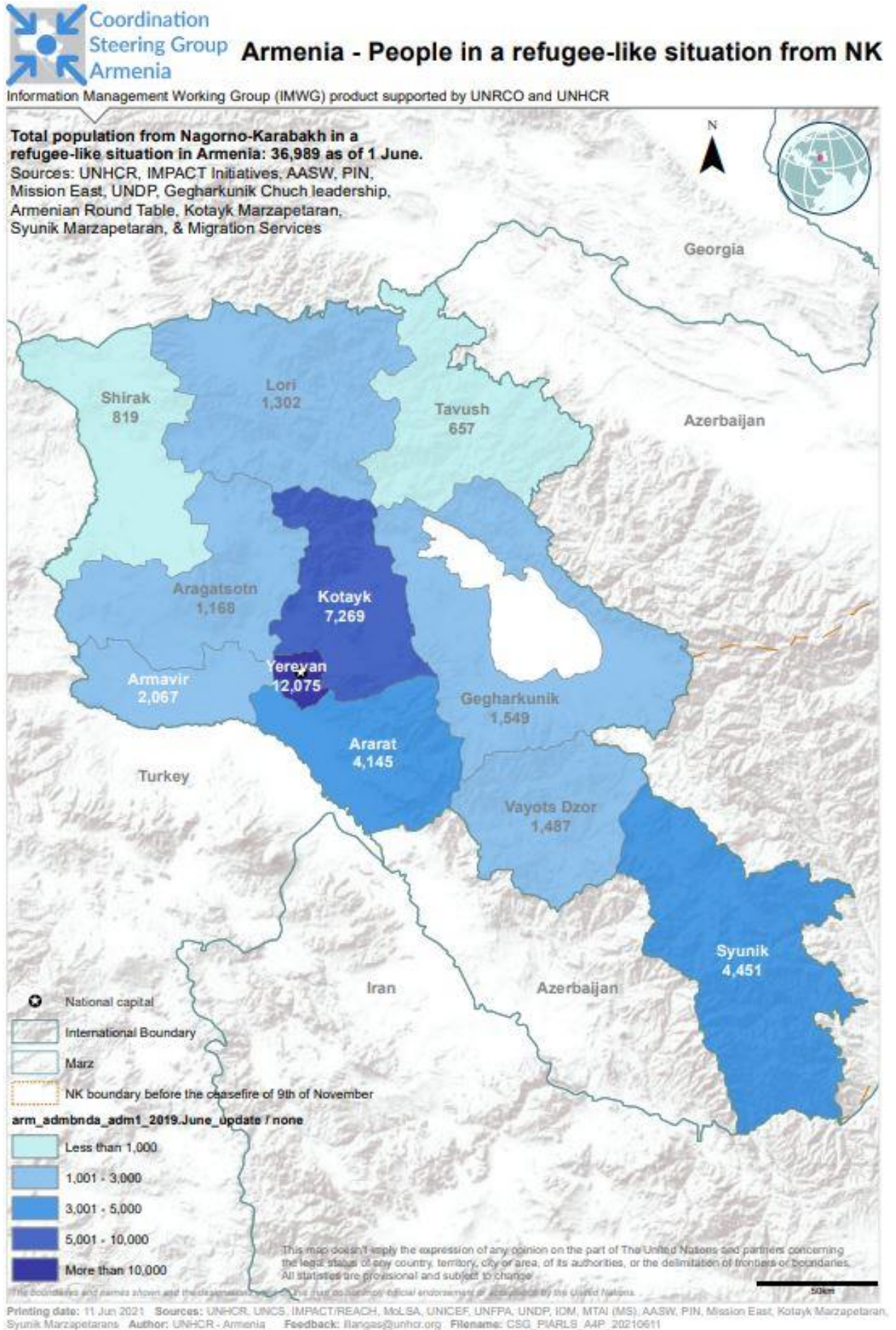
**11,100**

Persons benefitted from health interventions

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Coordination: The UN system in Armenia continues to operate with a coordination structure put in place under the lead of the Resident Coordinator's Office and UNHCR to coordinate humanitarian efforts and maximize the efficiency of the response in Armenia to the crisis in Nagorno Karabakh (NK).
- Daily monitoring of people departing from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. Thirty-two key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan in May. According to UNHCR's departure monitoring as of end of May, an estimated 32,700 individuals travelled to NK since mid-November, but the nature and sustainability of these returns are yet to be determined. The departure monitoring has identified certain gaps in the way departures are organized, and UNHCR continued its dialogue with the authorities to address them.
- Mission Armenia helped establish four child-friendly spaces (2 in Yerevan, 1 in Masis, and 1 in Hrazdan) for lactating women. These baby-friendly spaces will host pregnant women, mothers, and women who have children under the age of two.
- According Education Management Information System (EMIS) registry, under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS), 2,692 displaced students continue their schooling in Armenian schools with biggest concentration in Yerevan (861), Kotayk (494), and Syunik (313) and the smallest numbers in Tavush (60).
- UNICEF provided cash support to 5,000 displaced children (2,500 girls, 2,500 boys) residing in Armenia through the Treasury system to cover the portion of access to services within the 68,000 programme in the amount of 25,000 AMD per child.
- NFI partners Mission Armenia, Save the Children, and Mission East/Syunik Development NGO reached 1,019 families / 5,569 persons in 6 marzes and Yerevan through distribution of 3,143 NFIs such as cooking kits, hygiene kits, beddings, and other household items.
- IOM's mobile clinic carried out 37 visits to communities in May; 2,000 persons received mobile clinic assistance; 27 blood tests were done at Izmirlian Hospital; 590 individuals were referred to different specialists for further treatment
- Médecins du Monde (MdM) finalized the Gender Based Violence (GBV) referral pathway and organized 2 trainings on GBV for 36 social workers aiming at improving support for GBV victims/survivors.
- ERWG partners provided emergency jobs and on-jobs trainings to some 200 beneficiaries in Kotayk, Syunik, Gegharkunik, and Vayots Dzor marzes.
- Some 300 beneficiaries of Ejmiatsin community, mostly children, now have access to hot water supply as a result of 17 solar water heating systems installed in 5 community kindergartens.

Figure 1: Map of distribution of people in a refugee-like situation from NK in Armenia



# OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

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On 27 September 2020, hostilities broke out along the line of contact (LoC) and quickly expanded to other areas in and around Nagorno Karabakh (NK), until a nine-point tripartite statement was signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Federation of Russia during the night of 9-10 November. The 9 November tripartite ceasefire agreement is currently holding, with some incidents being reported from the new LoC.

The conflict caused significant displacement of civilians from the affected areas and as of 01 June, some 36,989 persons are still in a refugee-like situation in Armenia.<sup>1</sup> Distribution of population across the marzes are illustrated in *Figure 1* above. Despite the presence of several checkpoints, movement between Armenia and NK is relatively unrestricted for people living in a refugee-like situation, with Government of Armenia providing free bus services. As of 31<sup>st</sup> of May, number of individuals directly observed boarding buses for NK stands at 32,700 individuals, but nature and sustainability of those who have traveled to NK are yet to be determined. Then there are those who are likely to stay in Armenia for foreseeable future. Of the 36,989 persons in a refugee-like situation in Armenia, it is estimated that 24,818 persons are from the areas returned under Azerbaijani control and therefore unlikely to return to their place of origin.<sup>2</sup> This is supported by the latest round of Multi Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA)<sup>3</sup> that suggests that for the majority of refugee-like households, it is unlikely that they will return to their area of origin in the near future.

On the political front, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan tendered his resignation on 25 April, allowing further procedures to trigger early parliamentary elections that are set to take place on 20 June. A total of 22 parties and 4 alliances will be vying for at least 105 seats. The official 12 days of election campaigning will start from 07 June.

The month of May saw a drop in new COVID-19 cases, when compared with April. The highest daily number of positive cases reported in May was 267. According to Ministry of Health, as of 24 May, more than 26,000 people have been vaccinated. And from 01 June, mask mandate will be relaxed, with people no longer having to wear masks in outdoor settings.

Findings from the latest MSNA suggest that shelter, cash, and food are the main priority needs among the households in a refugee-like situation. The host community also have similar needs with cash and food being the top two needs. After the conflict, the share of unemployed households in refugee-like population has tripled, and proportion of those who held permanent jobs also decreased.<sup>4</sup>

The Government of Armenia (GoA), both at national and local levels, continued to respond to the needs of new arrivals, providing critical support. Among others, support from the host government included provision of communal shelters, health services and cash assistance programmes. On 31 March 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Armenia made a Humanitarian Appeal addressed to international partners to respond the humanitarian and socio-economic needs of people affected by the hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>5</sup> The Appeal calls for “urgent and comprehensive actions” to provide support to affected NK population by all humanitarian actors. However, it does not differentiate between the refugee-like population in Armenia and returnees in NK. For the latter population, Armenian inter-agency response lacks jurisdiction. The Appeal is expected to be supported by a comprehensive needs-assessment commissioned by the Government and carried out by the Anna Astvatsaturian Foundation in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Following the renewed fighting on 27 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General called for unimpeded access to humanitarian workers and delivery of humanitarian assistance and services to civilians in and around the NK conflict zone. Since the 9 November trilateral ceasefire statement, the UN has reiterated its readiness to deploy an initial independent inter-agency humanitarian assessment mission to NK and other conflict-affected areas. The UN continues to engage with all concerned parties to secure access to NK and discussions on the specific parameters and timing of the initial planned scoping mission continue.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Migration Services, UNHCR, UNDP, IMPACT Initiatives, AASW, PIN, Mission East, Gegharkunik Church Leadership/Armenian Round Table, Kotayk Marzapetaran, and Syunik Marzapetaran.

<sup>2</sup> The estimation of individuals unlikely to return is calculated from Migration Service data on refugee-like population residing in Armenia, as of March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> The survey was carried out by REACH from 29 March to 29 April covering 414 households in refugee-like situation and 249 hosting families, with funding support from European Union Humanitarian Aid.

<sup>4</sup> Due to the purposive sampling of the household survey, findings are not representative with a known level of precision and should be considered indicative only.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-releases/2021/03/31/fm\\_humanitarian\\_appeal/10876](https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-releases/2021/03/31/fm_humanitarian_appeal/10876).

# UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS



## Current Situation

The Protection Working Group (PWG) continued to coordinate protection activities at the national, regional and local levels, organizing interventions, seeking consensus on issues, creating partnerships and linkages for better prioritization of available resources with an overall goal of enhancing the protection of persons in a refugee-like situation (PRLS) from Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). The situation remains fluid and requires continuous monitoring at all levels.

## Identified Priority Needs

The results of ongoing protection monitoring have identified the following needs among the persons in a refugee-like situation (PRLS) from NK in order of priority during May:

Figure 2: Needs identified by Protection Monitoring Exercise conducted in May 2021



## Achievements and Impact

- The protection monitoring exercise with a new updated individual/household level questionnaire has been conducted since the beginning of February 2021. During May 2021, 2,680 individuals were reached through protection monitoring household interviews during field visits or by phone. Protection monitoring exercise also included 18 key informant interviews in collective/transitional shelters, and settlements. These interviews were conducted with local authorities, social workers, or community leaders and aimed at providing indications on return intentions, living conditions, access to services, financial challenges, and social cohesion, and security. Furthermore, 3,435 individuals were reached through the distribution of information leaflets and 4,553 individuals were reached through awareness raising campaigns on general protection issues.
- Daily monitoring of departures from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. Since mid-November, UNHCR, and starting from April 13th its partner Word Vision have observed some 32,700 individuals departing to NK. The monitoring is focused on the organization of the transport, observation of the profile of individuals going to NK and their possible specific needs, use of COVID-19 preventive measures, collection of individual information through random interviews at the departure place. During May, 32 key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan.
- For those who have already returned, 35 structured phone interviews were conducted in May to assess their living conditions and reveal challenges as well as major protection related issues.
- UNHCR staff continued on-line and on-site training sessions on the Key Informant Interviews and Protection Monitoring tools for the World Vision Armenia Staff to capacitate them in Protection Monitoring exercise.
- During the Protection Working Group meeting of 1 June 2021, the findings of the departure monitoring, conducted by UNHCR partner World Vision Armenia suggested 2-3 buses depart to NK from Yerevan on a daily basis in late May and that number of travelers had also decreased. SGBV case management system was presented by Armenian Red

Cross Society (ARCS). Mission Armenia presented the components of the 8 months project funded by UNHCR: (i) provision of NFI to collective shelters and households of those shelters; (ii) renovation of collective shelters: implementation partner- Action Against Hunger. Some partners provided feedback and raised questions on the future of Inter-Agency Response Plan.

- 75 individuals benefitted from Community Support Initiatives (CSIs), which are small-scale projects of different nature, from knitting to art therapy, conducted by Mission Armenia.
- 16 individuals received legal counselling on issues related to provision of cash assistance by government, loan payment obligations, University admission tuition fee discounts, business consultations from Mission Armenia. The issues related to provision of cash assistance were shared with the PWG for the referral to the Cash SWG.
- 558 individuals were provided with structured, sustained resilience or psycho-social group support by World Vision Armenia (508) and UNFPA (500). Moreover, 97 individuals were provided with a structured, sustained resilience, or psycho-social individual support by World Vision Armenia.
- 11 individuals received case management support for children with special protection needs, including UASC by World Vision Armenia.
- 4 individuals were provided with specialized services for elderly and 4 individuals were provided with specialized services for persons with disabilities by World Vision Armenia.
- WHO/Armenian technical group have initiated mapping of mental health and psychosocial activities around the country. The results were shared with the members of the PWG. Members of the PWG were also welcomed to join the upcoming webinars (with translation in Armenian) on best practices, guidelines, and counselling.

### Remaining Gaps

- The departure monitoring has identified certain gaps in the way departures are organized, such as lack of boarding priority and due considerations for persons with specific needs, absence of safety and security measures (presence of the police and ambulance).
- With no structured state engagement, the sustainability of private assistance currently being provided by host communities is a challenge in the medium to longer term and a more systematized approach is required to sustain interest and ability to host the refugee-like population in Armenia.
- Along with lack of clearly identified durable solutions, growing concerns are being reported by the people in a refugee-like situation, in particular those who arrived from regions recently handed over to Azerbaijan, about their status and rights in Armenia.
- Coordination of assistance at regional/local level is also a continuing challenge.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continue protection and departures monitoring activities.
- ⇒ In terms of durable solutions identification and response, continue to focus on collective/transitional shelter/centers visits and on self-referrals through the hotline and expand further/deeper to hosting communities.
- ⇒ Within the Accountability with the Affected Population framework, strengthen communication with communities and raise awareness on access to basic rights, available services, and assistance programs.
- ⇒ Engage and support the Government on the development of a mid and long-term response strategy, beyond June 2021, with primary focus on persons with specific needs and promotion of durable solutions and the PRLS who will not be able to return.

## Child Protection Sub-Working Group

### Current Situation

- Three new organizations joined the Child Protection (CP) SWG, taking the total number of organizations working in CP to 26.

## Identified Priority Needs

Continuous capacity building for professionals (social workers, social pedagogues, psychologists and other social service workforce professionals) in meeting the needs of affected population.

Community-based social services, including mental health and psychosocial support services to the population of borderline communities.

## Achievements and Impact

- Third phase of the project “Strengthening Stability and Resilience of the Bordering Communities in Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik and Syunik Regions” funded by the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (UK CSSF) has been approved and will be implemented in Syunik, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor marzes, tentatively from July 2021.
- Save the Children International launched protection and education needs assessment that will be conducted in Yerevan and 5 marzes, where Save the Children currently has ongoing projects.
- 240 individuals have received support on parenting skills, psycho-social first aid provision and prevention of abuse and neglect reported by Save the Children International.
- Besides the existing child-friendly spaces, Save the Children supported establishment of a mobile child-friendly space in Kornidzor of Syunik marz.
- 4 child-friendly spaces were established (2 in Yerevan, 1 in Masis, and 1 in Hrazdan) within the framework of Mission Armenia’s project for lactating women. These baby-friendly spaces will host pregnant women, mothers, and women who have children under the age of two. The beneficiaries are to be provided with group training sessions and private sessions with psychologists and breastfeeding experts.

## Remaining Gaps

- There is a general lack of capacity of professionals (social workers, social pedagogues, psychologists and other social service workforce professionals) in Armenia.
- Prior to the conflict there was limited coverage and accessibility of social services, including mental health and psychosocial support services to the population of borderline communities and the issue remains.

## Recommended Action

- ⇒ Efforts should be made towards transitioning of capacity building of social service workforce professionals engaged in state-run or state-supported organizations delivering social services, including mental health and psychosocial support services to the population of bordering communities within the United Nations Sustainable Development Country Framework (UNSDCF). For this, the e-learning platform equipped for distance learning courses, established earlier with UNICEF's support, will be made available for all professionals, apart from the face to face training opportunities.
- ⇒ Within the UNSCDF, establish and capacitate peer support volunteer groups in the most isolated borderline communities, where there are no other mechanisms for delivery of and access to support services.

## Education Sub-Working Group

### Current Situation

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) officially announced June 18 and 19 as the final dates of the 2020-2021 academic year and concluding exams in Armenia. According Education Management Information System (EMIS) registry, under the MoESCS, 2,692 displaced students continue their schooling in Armenian schools with biggest concentration in Yerevan (861), Kotayk (494), and Syunik (313) and the smallest numbers in Tavush (60).

### Identified Priority Needs

Remedial classes for filling the learning gap and psychosocial support for displaced children continue to be among the priority needs. Additionally, according ICRC needs assessment in the bordering communities, schools are asking for support to establish "safe rooms" where children and teachers can move during shelling/gunfire. WASH in border area schools is another identified priority, especially given the importance of hygiene and sanitation for COVID-19 prevention.

## Achievements and Impact

- WG members have finished providing basic learning supplies and ICT to displaced students. They continued psychosocial support (PSS) and recreation activities. Some 416 individuals were supported through education interventions in May 2021.

## Remaining Gaps

- Remedial classes, PSS, safe-rooms, and WASH support in schools located in border areas.

## Recommended Action

- ⇒ Fundraising for establishment of "safe rooms" and proper WASH interventions in schools located in border areas.



## Shelter and NFI Working Group

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### Current Situation

Shelter and NFI WG partners conducted shelter repairs and distributed, among other items, clothes, cooking kits, hygiene kits, foldable beds, and other bedding items throughout May. Partners started to take stock of their plans and achievements against the Inter Agency Response Plan (IARP) to prepare a comprehensive report on Shelter/NFI response by the end of June.

### Identified Priority Needs

Protection monitoring identified the following three main needs among the persons in a refugee-like situation (PRLS) from NK, in order of priority during May: cash, shelter, and household items. Clothing and Hygiene kits/items also featured in the top 10 needs identified. According to second round of MSNA, the top need identified by refugee-like population was shelter followed by food and cash. In terms of NFI, bedsheets, mattresses, towels, and blankets were identified as top needs.

### Achievements and Impact

- In May, NFI partners Mission Armenia, Save the Children, and Mission East/Syunik Development NGO, with funding support from Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNHCR, Save the Children, reached 1,019 families / 5,569 persons in Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Syunik, and Tavush marzes and Yerevan through distribution of 3,143 NFIs such as cooking kits, hygiene kits, beddings, and other household items.
- Besides NFIs covering basic needs such as hygiene items, bed linens and clothing, Mission Armenia also distributed disinfectant liquids, protective masks, and COVID-19 awareness raising leaflets to 205 families with financial support from Open Society Foundations and Save the Children.
- Médecins du Monde (MdM) distributed more than 600 hygiene kits in Kotyak marz.
- In May, shelter partners, IOM, UNHCR, and UNDP continued rehabilitation work in 15 collective shelters.

### Remaining Gaps

- Evidence from distribution sites suggests that by involving local and beneficiary groups, local authorities are able to share tasks and improve communication with the beneficiaries, resulting in smoother distributions.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continue to work directly with the social workers and municipalities and build their capacity to identify and collaborate with local groups and beneficiary leaders and volunteers to facilitate quick and timely distribution of items.



### Current Situation

The GoA has rolled out 18 cash support initiatives, which are at different stages of implementation. These programmes range from provision of recurrent support equivalent to the minimum wage (68,000 AMD) predominantly to women and children; persons displaced from territories returned under Azerbaijan control or to those whose properties have become uninhabitable; periodic support to families and legal entities hosting refugee-like population; cash for work programmes (public works and for gaining work experience); support to injured servicemen and support to employers employing injured and wounded servicemen. Some programme requirements have been revised, such as expansion of support to servicemen also to those who acquired a mental health issue/problem.

Overall, 9 partners have planned for cash support (food and nutrition, shelter/NFIs, early recovery and multipurpose) targeting some 54,908 beneficiaries (80% displaced, 20% host community) with a total budget of approx. USD 10 M.

The Cash SWG has regular participation from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), advisor to Minister and Cash Focal Point, ensuring constant communication and feedback on various Government cash support programmes, as well as ways that partners can contribute to those programmes.

### Identified Priority Needs

The total envelope of Government-led cash support programmes is USD 55 million (AMD 104 billion), with humanitarian partners contributing about USD 9 million to the Government approved programmes. While the Government had appealed to humanitarian partners for supporting cash support programmes, the recurrent 68,000 AMD support has been recently deemed funded by the MFA.

The second round of Multi-sector need assessment (MSNA) findings suggest cash as one of the main priority-needs among the HHs in a refugee-like situation, as their already limited resources/savings is diminishing and their basic income security has been badly affected. 31% of HHs in a refugee-like situation reported being dependent on aid or remittances. Host families also mentioned cash as their primary need, considering the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 combined with the economic stress placed by the arrival of the displaced population. 59% of the hosting households reported having debts.

Considering that most social assistance-type cash programmes are set to end in July 2021, there is a need to find sustainable solutions for those families, who are not able to return, focusing on shelter (e.g. rental subsidies, host family support), early recovery, including livelihood and early income generating activities, and food.

### Achievements and Impact

- Following a series of consultation processes with the members of the Cash SWG, the Government has approved special clauses on provision of support by national and international partners and individuals complementing Government-led cash support interventions, including written consent by MoLSA, bilateral/trilateral agreements with the Unified Social Service, and bank, as well as beneficiary data sharing. Applications for the programmes are predominantly submitted online through the Unified Social Service, while the distribution is done via post offices or banks, with the latter becoming the preferred modality of support. A system of grievance/feedback was already developed as part of online applications to address individual cases and complaints. Moreover, individual partners are establishing their own hotlines. Around 80% of beneficiaries have already given their consent during online applications, enabling the Unified Social Service/MoLSA to share beneficiary data with partners. Sample MoU, bank agreement and non-disclosure terms were finalized jointly by the Group and MoLSA, enabling harmonized and aligned support by development partners to Government-led programmes through various delivery mechanisms.
- WFP has proceeded the provision of cash support to cover the cash portion of food needs of displaced women and children residing in Armenia, thus contributing to the Government-led 68,000 programme. The support will be provided in 3 installments of 32 USD instead of previously planned 24 USD for 4 months, with the first instalment paid for the month of April to 13,350 beneficiaries in April-May 2021. For support provided in May, please refer to the food section of the report.
- Based on a successful financial micro-assessment of the Unified Social Service (low risk rating), UNICEF has provided cash support to 5,000 displaced children (2,500 girls, 2,500 boys) residing in Armenia through the Treasury system to



cover the portion of access to services within the 68,000 programme in the amount of 25,000 AMD per child. Post-distribution monitoring is underway.

- UNDP has completed its support to two Government-led cash for work programmes targeting 125 displaced persons (95 men, 30 women) through public works and 70 persons (19 men, 51 women) through cash for gaining work experience in 4 regions of Armenia.
- ICRC, through Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), disbursed cash support to 2,816 host families in Tavush and Syunik regions in April-May 2021.
- 274 persons received one-time cash assistance in the amount of AMD 68,000 by Mission Armenia NGO. The activities were funded by Save the Children.
- The World Bank signed the agreement with the Government of Armenia on 7 May 2021 to support 4 cash programmes through the Treasury system and jointly with MoLSA.
- UNHCR is finalizing contractual agreements with ARCS and MoLSA to support 14,000 displaced persons with one time 68,000 support.

### **Remaining Gaps**

- As voiced by the GoA, there is a financial gap for financing of Government-led cash support programmes, thus more involvement of partners is encouraged. At the same time, negotiations of MoUs and agreements take time, especially for UN agencies, which require development and acceptance of special clauses by the GoA and vice versa. Moreover, the GoA is encouraging partners to support cash assistance other than the 68,000-monthly assistance.
- There is a need to discuss follow-up actions to cash programmes that finish by end-June or beginning of July 2021. One option is to tie them to sustainable early recovery efforts and support those who are unable to immediately return, focusing on shelter, food, and basic livelihoods.
- Assurance is needed that the persons supported by the UN are indeed on the territory of Armenia, considering the jurisdiction of agencies is to assist persons in a refugee-like situation in Armenia. The Government is open to dialogue and consultation and flexible to the extent possible in accommodating requests, including cross-checking of information and verification of beneficiaries as per the provided beneficiary lists. So far, verifications have shown a positive record of accuracy of Government-provided data.
- Relatively limited scope of participation of group members and beneficiaries in the design of cash support programmes and determination of transfer modalities have created challenges in finalizing MoUs and agreements and identification of beneficiaries.

### **Recommended Action**

- ⇒ Regular communication with MoLSA, MFA, the Deputy Prime Minister's (DPM) office, CSG and Cash SWG on next procedural steps, including removal of potential challenges for cash rollout and support in conclusion of MoUs and agreements.
- ⇒ Receive more clarity from MoLSA and DPM's office on the number of individuals/households affected by NK conflict and in need of cash support, especially those who are currently in Armenia, including a discussion on the aftermath of cash programmes after end-June 2021.
- ⇒ Continuously provide information to donors on the developed mechanism and approaches for multi-purpose cash interventions complementing Government-led initiatives.
- ⇒ Finalize formal Standard Operating Procedures for supporting Government-led cash support programmes as part of the Cash SWG, as per identified lessons learned and in collaboration with MoLSA, thus institutionalizing the mechanisms for future shocks and crises.
- ⇒ Analyze the communities' capacities and needs in cash for work and establish an M&E system to monitor implementation of cash for work modalities at the ground.

### Current Situation

In May 2021, four partners were actively working to contribute to three priority areas for Food Security and Nutrition WG listed below. WFP's food assistance via cash transfer is ongoing. FAO is planning to deliver assistance to 489 households in Gegharkunik and Syunik to support them to protect the existence of livestock and poultry.

### Identified Priority Needs

Providing food assistance to refugee-like and hosting population that are food insecure in Armenia. Ensure adequate nutrition for at risk groups, including pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers and children. Protect, reconstitute, or create the means of existence of displaced and host communities in fragile environments following a crisis situation.

### Achievements and Impact

- WFP provided 2,269 individuals across Armenia with food assistance through a cash transfer modality to ensure access to various and nutritious foods.
- Action Against Hunger and Mission Armenia have been prioritizing infant and young child feeding support to prevent malnutrition and guide parents on best practices for child feeding in emergencies. Their support reached 116 caregivers of vulnerable infants and young children who received basic support on infant young child feeding (IYCF), childcare practices and psycho-social well-being.
- WFP is supporting 15 farmers in Tegh community of Syunik marz with agricultural interventions.

### Remaining Gaps

- There was a reduction in food assistance compared to April 2021. As per the results of the food survey, 1% of refugee-like population are food insecure and 15% moderately. More people are in need of food assistance than are being reached; and therefore, there is a need to increase assistance to reach more people, and to increase more sustainable resilience building type of assistance.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Targeted support to build the resilience of displaced people and the communities hosting them is required. This support should focus on building economic resilience and thus capacity to absorb future shocks and reduce the risk of the adoption of negative coping strategies.

### Current Situation

Under the initiatives of the Government of Armenia, primary health services are provided free of charge to all citizens of Armenian including the refugee-like population from NK. Under the government scheme, the refugee-like population can visit primary health facilities in the area of their temporary residence and be enrolled immediately without any special registration procedures.

The decrease in number together with the stabilization of movement amongst the refugee like population residing in Armenia simplifies project implementation by health actors. Yet, it remains difficult to quantify – and adequately respond to - persisting PHC needs nationwide. Accessibility and affordability of services vary from ideal to sub-optimal for refugee-like and host population alike, especially for those residing in remote areas. Eligibility for primary and secondary health services has been contested in recent weeks.

Partners have alerted the technical working group of a lack of basic and specialized medication at PHC level, in some cases paired with refusal of treatment for the refugee-like population. Multiple partners have supplied the Ministry of Health (MoH) with large quantities of medications and supplies that should have met the needs. Possible delays or inequalities in distribution of humanitarian aid are being mapped by WHO to liaise with MoH to resolve these issues.

Even with the significant reduction in COVID-19 cases in Armenia, all activities are planned and executed with stringent infection prevention and control measures in place.

## Identified Priority Needs

Understanding and designing medical pathways/systems for victims of Gender Based Violence has been a priority throughout the months, but victims coming forward and seeking medical assistance is a rarity and needs to be addressed in a holistic multi-agency effort.

Limited access to community rehabilitation and MHPSS services in rural settings to support host communities and the refugee-like population suffering physical and mental consequences from the armed conflict has been recognized and is being addressed from a system strengthening perspective.

ARCS national hotline received 4,813 calls in May. The bulk of the calls were requests for food and non-food support, cash, shelter, and psychological support.

## Achievements and Impact

- IOM's mobile clinic carried out 37 visits to the communities of Kotayk, Armavir, Aragatsotn and Gegharkunik region. During the visits 2,000 individuals were screened by the mobile team, 590 people were referred to different specialists for further treatment, 27 blood tests were done at Izmirlian Hospital, and 30 persons were referred to the Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation.
- Médecins du Monde (Mdm) provided 200 beneficiaries in Kotayk marz with medical support through the voucher system for medication and transportation. Mdm finalized the Gender Based Violence (GBV) referral pathway and organized 2 trainings on GBV for 36 social workers aiming at improving support for GBV victims/survivors.
- 2,000 pulse oximeters were distributed to 100 primary health care facilities across the country through a WHO donation to the MoH.
- WHO and MoH continued the coordination of the health technical working group. The meetings are structured to receive updates from MoH and partner agencies, identify and ensure routes of cooperation, and emphasize on dissemination of information of findings and assessments conducted by partners. The members of the health technical group voted towards a monthly meeting schedule starting in June.
- In an effort to strengthen trauma rehabilitation services in Armenia, the rehabilitation working group co-led by the MoH and WHO agreed on a regular meeting schedule. A WHO consultant was hired to coordinate the group, support with implementation of the rehabilitation system strengthening activities, and to expand efforts with partner agencies and ministries.
- UNDP in partnership with 'Homeland Defender Rehabilitation Center' supported capacity-building of 30 medical personnel, including ergo-therapists, physiotherapists, and rehabilitation nurses, engaged with rehabilitation services for veterans, as part of their post-conflict response package.
- UNDP in cooperation with the Yerevan State University's Center of Applied Psychology established the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre for Servicepersons and Victims of War. The center will assist via combined work by psychologists and psychiatrists, to provides the best way forward in overcoming mental health problems. The psychosocial needs assessment of 300 war veterans has been completed, and those, who require further treatment will be included in the programme.
- The Armenian Technical Reference Group (TRG) on MHPSS has focused on Global Mental Health Resources, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) MHPSS TRG resources, and M&E for MHPSS programs and activities during the month of May. Mapping of MHPSS service providers, initiated in April, is ongoing with most inputs already received.
- Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) continued its active engagement in MHPSS services and capacity building. Their trained psychologists continued provision of psychological assistance and psychological first aid to 1,500 individuals including wounded soldiers, their relatives, displaced people, and to ARCS hotline applicants. ARCS also provided trainings for 30 volunteers from Shirak and Gegharkunik marzes in MHPSS. The volunteers started implementing PSS activities while working with populations in remote communities.
- A ToT in Psychological First Aid was held, enabling participants to increase awareness, spread knowledge, skills and understanding among individuals in regard to MHPSS issues. In collaboration with ICRC, MHPSS training packages were provided to 10 volunteers. From those, 7 were selected as lay counselors for the implementation of activities in Syunik region to provide information sessions in schools, kindergartens, and regional municipalities.

- Volunteers trained by ARCS continue providing psychological support to 164 children living in temporary shelters (schools, kindergartens, and hotels) in Yerevan with the focus on organizing their daily lives.
- Through their Health in Emergencies Program, ARCS provided 6 First Aid and Psychological First Aid trainings to about 86 participants at community level in Shirak, Lori, Vayots Dzor, Syunik, Tavush marzes and in Yerevan.
- During May, ARCS hotline in Yerevan and the regions provided 4,813 individuals with information and psychological support, and if needed, onwards referrals.

### Remaining Gaps

- Whilst the number of people requiring mental health and psycho-social support is assumed to be high particularly among the refugee-like population and in remote regions, the awareness and need for specialized care (gynecological, neurological, and endocrinological) increases too. Low affordability of specialized medical services for the refugee-like population remains an area of concern.
- MdM emphasizes on equal provision of care to host communities and displaced persons alike to limit risks of inter-community tensions.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continuous mapping of the displaced people in cooperation with local authorities or via hotline.
- ⇒ Sharing of GBV pathway with interagency group and improve mapping by MdM.
- ⇒ Addressing of delays and accuracy in distribution of medications and supplies at PHC level with national partners.

## Early Recovery Working Group

### Current Situation

According to preliminary findings of the recent IMF mission, Armenia's economy is set to start recovering in 2021 from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the military hostilities that took place in and around NK. Nonetheless the double crisis continues to negatively impact the economic performance of the country. Amid the recent global food inflation and dram depreciation, inflation reached to 5.8% in March 2021, including considerable rise in food, apparel, healthcare and transportation prices. Assistance to crises affected people and communities and rolling out vaccinations as well as initiation of large-scale infrastructure projects are seen as major policy directions for the country to recover, coupled with principles and objectives of Building Back Better, increasing resilience of Armenia's social, economic systems and communities as well as green recovery. Maintaining strong policies and advancing fiscal and structural reforms in the months ahead will be critical to strengthen confidence and underpin a durable and inclusive recovery.<sup>6</sup>

The Government's Economic Response Plan continues to be the major short-term program and guiding policy to address the consequences of COVID-19 and hostilities in and around NK and establish the basis and preconditions for response and recovery in mid-term horizon. The Government (led by DPM's office) continues elaboration of Mid-Term Response Plan (MTRP), the first draft of which should be ready in June 2021. In particular, sections on health and economic response have been drafted and shared for feedback.

In May, four organizations – WFP, UNFPA, UNDP and Save the Children International reached 2,624 persons in a refugee-like situation and host communities in 7 regions and 20 admin level 3 communities for the month of May through one or a combination of the following activities- capacity building for community social cohesion, peacebuilding, and leadership, Support to livelihoods, income generation, and business (SME), Restoration of social infrastructure and services, COVID awareness and response, Veteran support and Capacity and Vulnerability Assessments.

### Identified Priority Needs

The priority needs in the ER sector remain broadly the same as reported previously. Findings of the second round of MSNA suggest that the employment status among the population in a refugee-like situation changed considerably after the conflict, with the share of unemployed HHs seemingly having tripled, while the share of those who had held permanent jobs has decreased noticeably. Overall, 31% of households in a refugee-like situation reported being dependent on aid or

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2021/04/21/pr21111-armenia-imf-staff-concludes-visit-to-republic-of-armenia>

remittances at the time of MSNA data collection, compared to 11% of hosting HHs.<sup>7</sup> Creation of decent jobs, upgrading skills to match labor market demand, as well as job creation especially among the youth and women, which comprises the most extensive demographic proportion amongst the refugee-like population, continue to be a priority.

Accommodation has been one of the significant challenges caused by the crisis, causing strain to existing public infrastructures and services. Longer term housing solutions for both people in a refugee-like situation and hosting communities are needed. Findings from the latest MSNA also indicate that shelter is one of the main prioritized needs among the refugee-like situation population. One of the factors affecting the ability of hosts continue supporting people in refugee-like situation with accommodation is the existing debt – 59% of host HHs reported having debts (median value is AMD 1 million).

According to MSNA findings, the perception of households in a refugee-like situation concerning the safety at the current place seems to have deteriorated a bit, especially in Syunik marz, where 10% of the HHs in a refugee-like situation reported not feeling safe at all; and 11% reported feeling somewhat unsafe. In Syunik marz, certain settlements faced new challenges of becoming a bordering settlement after the cessation of hostilities in and around NK. UNDP's interactions with those localities indicate that the street safety and security especially during the nighttime is considered by population as a priority need to address.

Other identified needs are fodder, pasture, and shelter assistance to support their livestock.

### **Achievements and Impact**

- Around 300 beneficiaries of Ejmiatsin community, mostly children, now have access to hot water supply as a result of 17 solar water heating systems installed in 5 community kindergartens. This has also led to increase in savings in energy cost for the community.
- Tegh community was supported with a solar station to power a community building. Alongside this, 17 female farmers also received agricultural inputs, seedlings and training to increase their productivity and profitability.
- Young beneficiaries (14 in total) from vulnerable groups have been trained on video and animation production for better social cohesion and future skills development. They produced 4 animations and 6 videos on Kapan community potential and challenges.
- A quick response volunteer team in Srashen village, Kapan of Syunik region, was formed and trained to improve the level of fire safety in the borderline communities. In addition, two firefighting corners in Srashen village (near the border), were equipped with firefighting supplies. 198 individuals benefited from these activities.
- In Yeghvard municipality in Kotayk marz, 6 and in Gorayk municipality of Syunik marz one quick response teams were formed and capacitated to support the municipality during the crisis time. The teams, among other things, participate in design and implementation of public awareness campaigns to better protect the population in emergency situations, initiate small-scale needs assessments in case of emergency, and lead small scale community initiatives.
- 60 displaced women and children in Vardenis municipality of Gegharkunik marz received clothing and psychological support as well as 20 women received sewing and culinary trainings.
- Emergency jobs and on-jobs trainings to some 195 beneficiaries have considerably contributed to the improved livelihoods, raised competitiveness and employability of the beneficiaries, enhanced their self-confidence as well as improved social cohesion at the community level aimed at smoother integration of displaced population in Kotayk, Syunik, Gegharkunik, and Vayots Dzor marzes.
- Overall, 100 women from refugee-like population were reached through livelihood development interventions with support from UNFPA Armenia. Business development, as well as vocational trainings, such as sewing, handicraft, hairdressing, and make up, were organized for women from NK now residing in Syunik marz. The handicraft and sewing skills allowed these women to prepare bedding for refugee-like families residing in the same marz. In May 2021, 15 women finished trainings and received certificates, necessary tools and materials for in-house (self-employment) and salon work. 2 out of 15 women already received jobs in Goris and Kapan, and 13 women continued to work in-house.
- Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment – the data collection for HH survey (around 1,800 interviews) has been completed in May, while the KIIs (service providers) will be concluded in early June.

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<sup>7</sup> REACH Armenia: Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) Round 2, Key findings, 27 May 2021.

- ER partners managed to complete a number of activities in May as part of COVID-19 awareness and response, in particular:
  - UNFPA distributed protective masks in Goris, in Syunik marz. Similarly, in Goris, Save the Children International completed production of other items to support awareness and response on COVID-19.
  - In various rural and urban communities of Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, and Shirak marzes, UNDP trained women and youth, operated community hotlines, assisted vulnerable groups, raised awareness, provided masks and disinfection materials, conducted preparedness and community resilience planning, and supported online education.

### **Remaining Gaps**

- Communities have considerable potential on energy savings but remain unutilized.
- There are challenges of engaging beneficiaries among the vulnerable groups in crisis response and recovery. Most of the wounded during the military actions are still in Yerevan in different rehabilitation centers. Family members of the casualties are still in very difficult psychological condition and are not ready for social activities. Also, many refugee-like people have yet to adapt to their new social milieu, and they have very vague plans about their future.
- Regarding community resilience and Disaster Risk Management (DRM), small settlements are not well prepared for fire prevention as most lack capacity, and there is lack of systemic approach to awareness raising on fire prevention.
- There is a considerable need to continue supporting jobs creation at the community level to mitigate negative consequences of the double crises. More income generation and livelihood opportunities as well as longer term shelter solutions for refugee-like population are needed. Measures such as the provision of immediate livelihoods can cushion the impact of crises and reduce vulnerabilities while long-term solutions to accommodation and shelter problems are developed.

### **Recommended Action**

There is a need to go beyond the current partners' activities, moving towards long-term developments across all working groups. ERWG partners recommend aligning ERWG priorities with the ones of the government and to set sights beyond immediate recovery to long-term recovery and development based on the RA Economic Response Plan, and other normative planning frameworks. This recommendation will shape the subsequent actions of the ERWG.

More specific recommendations are:

- ⇒ Continue to invest in local capacity building through conducting a series of targeted training for the local authorities and stakeholders; support the local authorities to implement green initiatives; and support installation of energy saving measures, as shelter solutions for the people in a refugee-like situation unable to return to NK.
- ⇒ For better engagement of beneficiaries in crisis recovery and response, engage with those who decided to stay or shows some interest and then slowly by building trust engage those who are undecided about their future.
- ⇒ Pay special attention to the bordering communities that are at risk of fire, including budget allocations for basic equipment of the firefighting corners. Institutionalization of the quick response groups and training in emergency situations. Create network opportunity for all quick response teams. Ensure flexibility of the implementing side (DRM fund) to adapt it to the context, for example, alternative scenarios for already established funds to address the needs of the community during the crisis.

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

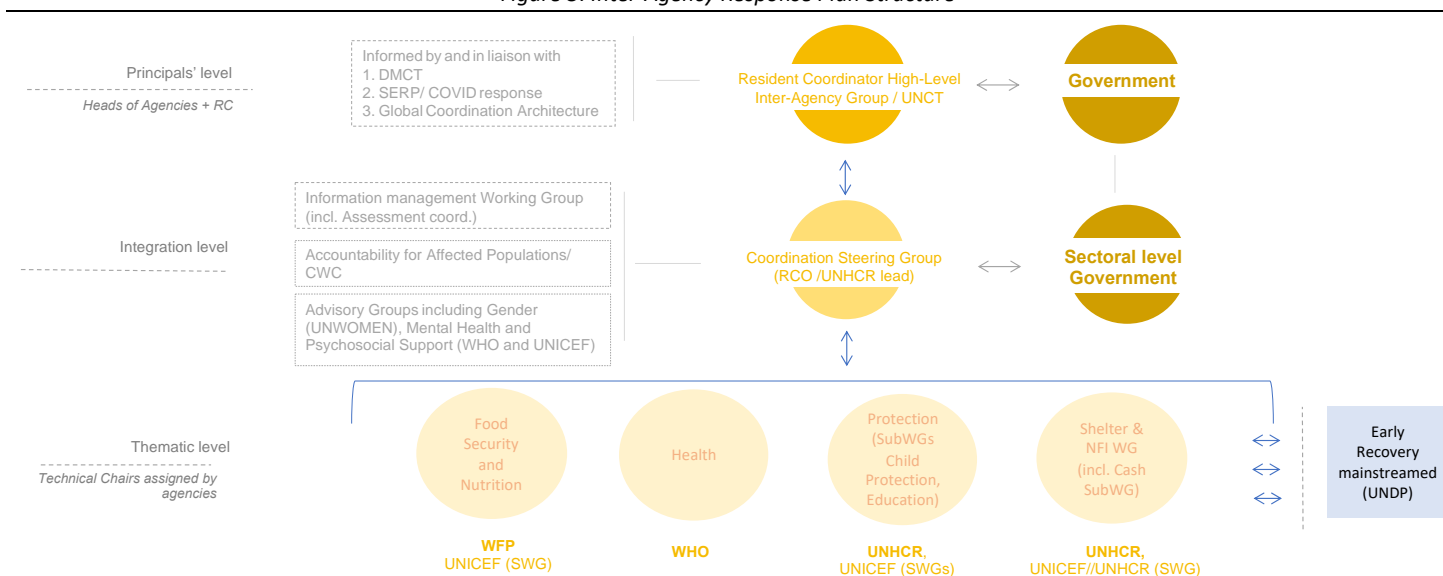
The UN team in Armenia established a coordination structure, which, at the technical level, is centred around four main humanitarian Working Groups (WG) – Shelter and NFIs, Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, and Health – as well as a fifth Working Group on Early Recovery allowing mainstreaming of longer-term initiatives to strengthen communities in Armenia. Additional Sub-Working Groups have been established for Child Protection, Education, and humanitarian cash transfer programming. These technical Working Groups form the backbone of the coordination of the humanitarian response and serve to mobilize and strengthen coordination and collaboration among the different UN agencies, international organizations, local and international NGOs with the ultimate goal to ensure provision of most efficient, swift and cost-effective humanitarian response to challenges generated by the conflict in NK. To date, 13 UN agencies, 22 international NGOs, 19 national NGOs, 2 intergovernmental organisations, 5 Government entities and 1 international organization are part of the coordination system.

Interagency coordination is ensured by the Coordination Steering Group (CSG), which is comprised of chairs of the activated WGs and co-lead by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and UNHCR. The CSG is supported by an Information Management WG to ensure a harmonized approach among agencies and partners in collecting information on activities and to facilitate data and information gathering as well as dissemination. A Technical Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support ensures a coordinated and effective approach on MHPSS activities across WGs.

At the Principals level, the coordination structure brings together the Resident Coordinator and Heads of UN Agencies to ensure overall alignment and clear guidance of the humanitarian response. The coordination model has been communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to all relevant stakeholders.

Given the fluidity of the crisis, the coordination modalities are reviewed continuously and adjusted according to the evolving situation on the ground, in full respect of globally established mandated roles and responsibilities.

Figure 3: Inter-Agency Response Plan Structure



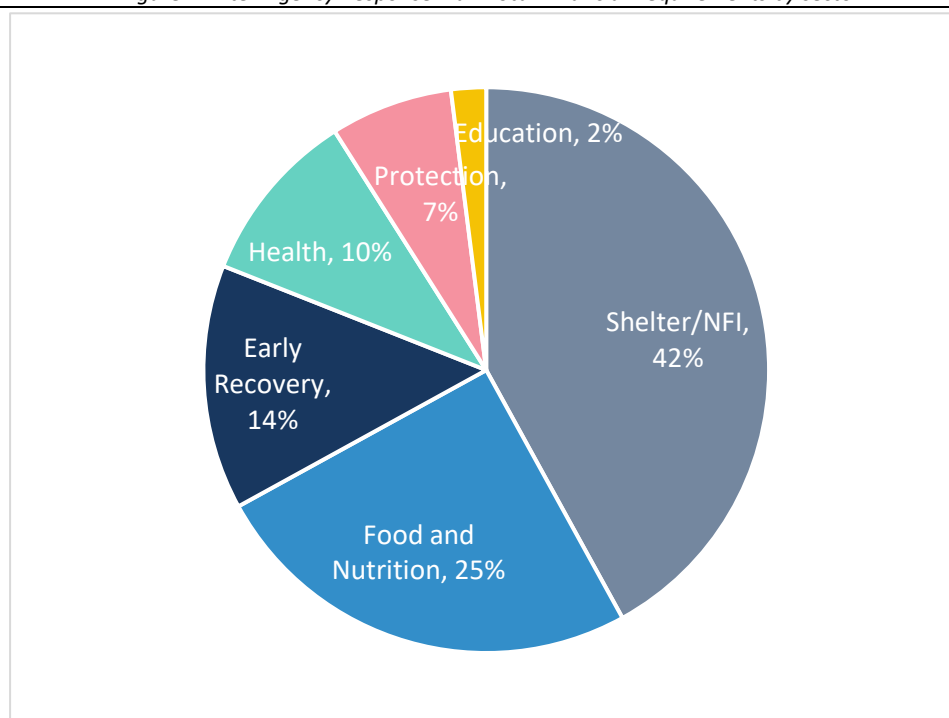
# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Under the leadership of UNHCR and the Resident Coordinator Office in Armenia, the Inter-Agency Response Plan 2020-2021 to address the broader humanitarian consequences of the NK crisis has been finalized and launched at Yerevan level on 22 January 2021 (after its endorsement by the GoA on 20 January). This country-specific plan covers a period of nine months (from October 2020 until end of June 2021), and will serve as a coordination, advocacy, and resource mobilization tool. It brings together 35 operational partners involved in the response (over 180 projects in total), **with total financial requirements amounting to USD 62,122,194** for the overall period. The Response Plan includes not only humanitarian activities (under Protection, Health, Food Security and Nutrition, and Shelter/NFIs) but also early recovery, resilience, and durable solutions components. The plan includes part of the host community, in addition to the displaced population from in and around NK in Armenia and also factors in documents such as the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) that strategically governs development initiatives of the UN in Armenia from 2012 to 2025 as well as other Crisis Response Plans such as the “COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan”<sup>8</sup>, which is already in place

The Coordination Team successfully applied for a Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) Rapid Response funding window. After extensive discussion with the CERF Secretariat, UNICEF, IOM, and UNHCR were awarded a total of **USD 2 M** in mid-January to cover lifesaving needs in three sectors (Protection, including child protection and education, Health and Shelter/NFI). It is to be noted that the amount requested constitutes around 3.2% of the overall financial requirements identified for all sectors, which - as per the Inter-Agency Response Plan.

The current funding level for the Inter-Agency Response Plan 2020-2021 stands at **USD 21,050,459**, which is equivalent to approximately **34 percent** of the requested amount. Contributions have been received from the USA, Japan, the European Union, France, Canada, and CERF.

Figure 4: Inter-Agency Response Plan Total Financial Requirements by sector



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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.un.am/up/file/SERRP.pdf>