

# ARMENIA

## INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE



1- 30 April 2021

### KEY FIGURES

**USD 62.1 M**

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

**36,882**

Refugee-like population from NK  
(Source: *Armenian Migration Services*, 25 May)

**85%**

Women and children among the people in a refugee-like situation (PRLS)

**11,081**

Individuals reached by the monthly food assistance

**649**

Persons reached through Protection Monitoring exercise

**1,720**

Beneficiaries reached through education activities

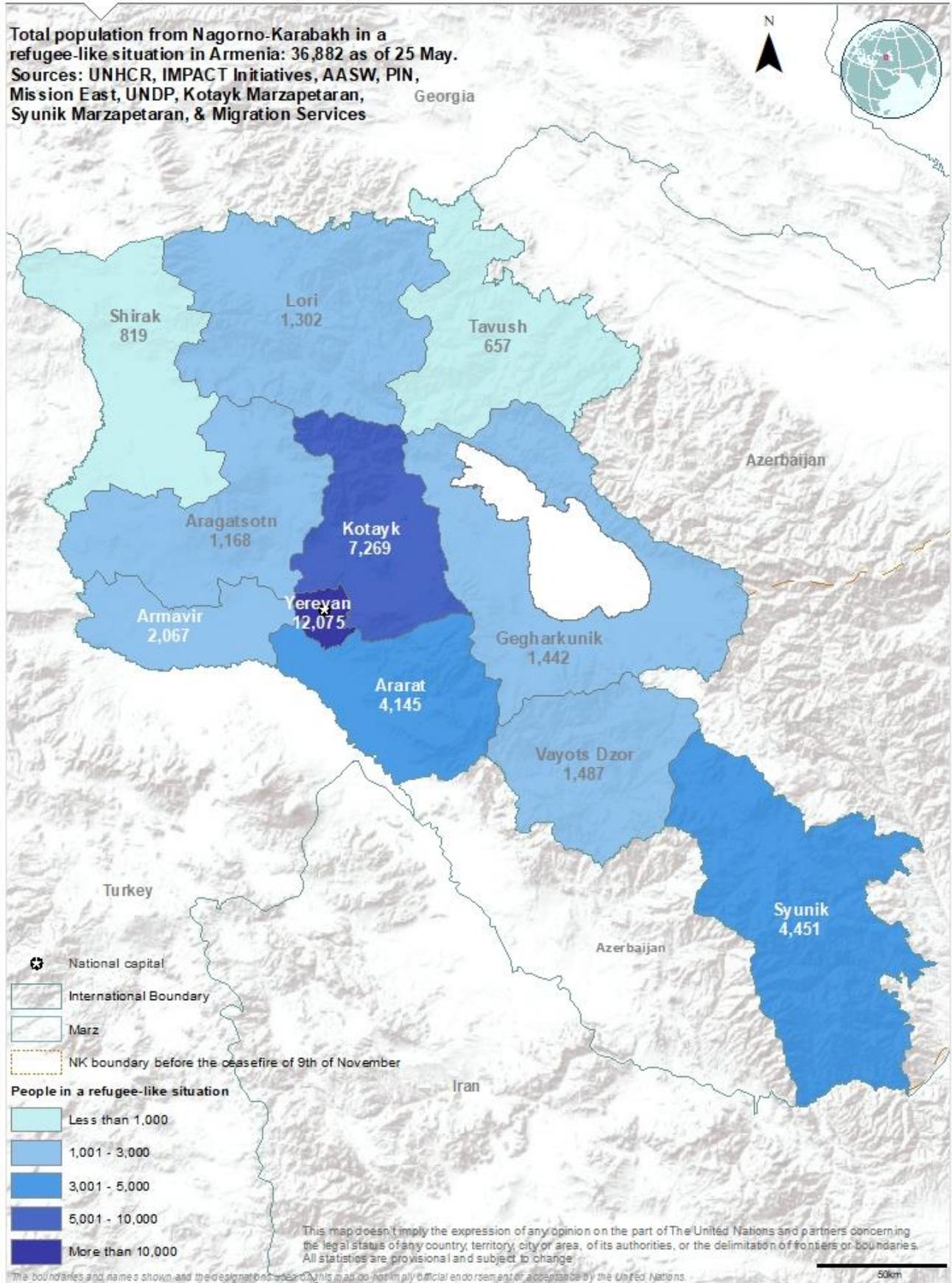
### HIGHLIGHTS

- **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).
- **Protection:** Daily monitoring of people departing from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. Twenty-three key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan in April. According to UNHCR's departure monitoring as of end of March, an estimated 29,265 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.
- **Education:** Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization covered the tuition fees of 97 scholarships to universities for displaced students.
- **Shelter and NFI:** People in Need distributed hygiene kits to 2,600 families, blankets for 2,554 families, and wood for heating to 500 families; and IOM distributed hygiene kits to 2,300 individuals.
- **Cash:** In April ICRC, through Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), disbursed cash payments to 2,585 host families who has 12,544 displaced adults. Save the Children in collaboration with Mission Armenia supported 273 displaced beneficiaries with focus on families with more than 3 children in Yerevan, Kotayk, and Ararat.
- **Food Security and Nutrition:** 13,155 people were reached with food assistance under a cash programme by WFP, and 104 caregivers were assisted by Action Against Hunger with nutrition assistance. The monthly ration provided by WFP is 24 USD for a period of 4 months (totaling 96 USD). This will be disbursed in three instalments – in April, May and June.
- **Health:** 39 visits to communities were carried out during the month of April; 2,106 people received mobile clinic assistance; 45 blood tests were done at Izmirlian Hospital; 785 individuals were referred to different specialists for further treatment; and 51 people were referred to the Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation for treatment.
- **Early Recovery:** A needs assessment was completed among 1,300 war veterans for physical and psycho-social rehabilitation and completed procurement of prosthesis equipment, tools and materials in April. The procured tools and materials have already been delivered for further handover to the newly established Prosthesis Centre in Yerevan. UNDP also initiated the set up and construction of the "Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre for Servicepersons and Victims of War" in Yerevan.

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

**Coordination Steering Group Armenia - People in a refugee-like situation from NK**

Information Management Working Group (IMWG) product supported by UNRCO and UNHCR



Printing date: 25 May 2021 Sources: UNHCR, UNCS, IMPACT/REACH, MoLSA, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, MTAI (MS), AASW, PIN, Mission East, Kotayk Marzapetaran, Syunik Marzapetaran. Author: UNHCR - Armenia Feedback: illangas@unhcr.org Filename: CSG\_PIARLS\_A4P\_20210525

# 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.

According to the Migration Services (MS) that is under the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI) and as of 25 May, some 36,882 persons are still in a refugee-like situation in Armenia, while 24,707 have registered in NK for cash/assistance. Distribution of population across the marzes are illustrated in *Figure 1* above.<sup>1</sup>

The 9 November tripartite ceasefire agreement is currently holding, with some incidents being reported from the new LoC. 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. At the onset of the spring season and given the relative calm in many areas of NK, the number of refugee-like population returning remains steady, yet modest. Number of individuals directly observed boarding buses for NK stands at 29,265 individuals, but nature and sustainability of those who have traveled to NK are yet to be determined. On average, a couple of buses a day departed from Yerevan to NK in March. Furthermore, of the 66,051 persons in a refugee-like situation in Armenia, as cited by MS, it is estimated that 24,615 persons are from the areas returned under Azerbaijani control and therefore unlikely to return to their place of origin.<sup>2</sup>

On the political front, on 25 April, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan resigned to trigger early parliamentary elections. On 26 April, the President of Armenia signed the respective decree, accepting the resignation of the Government. On 3 May, the Parliament voted down the acting Prime Minister in the first round of vote in order to trigger early elections, set to take place on 20 June. Despite the fragile socioeconomic situation that has been compounded by the impact of COVID-19<sup>3</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 14 April the Government vaccination roll-out was launched in Armenia, with AstraZeneca and the Russian Sputnik V vaccines.

On 31 March 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 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>4</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. The results are expected to become available end of May 2021.

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> The MS data is the most comprehensive refugee-like population dataset that is available to humanitarian assistance partners. However, population estimates from other sources such as, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), “de-facto authorities” in NK, regional/local authorities, non-governmental organizations, etc. put the actual number in Armenia to be much lower. The Information Management Working Group (IMWG) will continue to communicate with relevant sources and humanitarian partners to triangulate and verify the population figures.

<sup>2</sup> These are the latest figures available from Migration Service, from 24 March.

<sup>3</sup> 7 day daily average case was recorded at 922 on 31st March. Source: John Hopkins COVID-19 data.

<sup>4</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



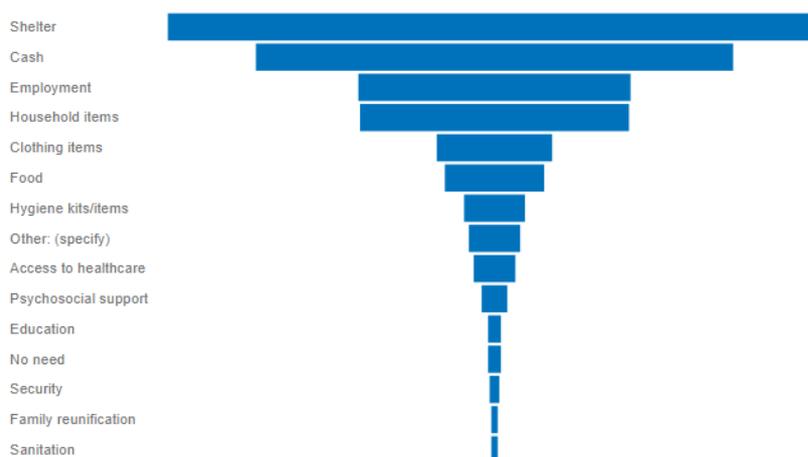
## Current Situation

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 April:

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



## Achievements and Impact

- The protection monitoring exercise has been conducted since November 2020. Updates on the questionnaire have been conducted in February 2021, to, amongst other aspects, capture the number of persons in a refugee-like situation (PRLS) willing to go to a third a country. During April 2021, 166 individuals in a refugee-like situation were living in collective/transitional sites where protection monitoring site level assessment was conducted and the information materials were distributed including the UNHCR hotline number for self-referrals. In April, 483 individuals were reached through protection monitoring household interviews during field visits or by phone; 281 individuals were identified for referrals through protection monitoring household interviews and 93 individuals were referred for specialized support; 2,572 individuals were reached through the distribution of information leaflets; and 3,221 individuals were reached through awareness raising campaigns on general protection issues. Protection monitoring exercise also included key informant interviews in collective/transitional shelters and settlements. These interviews were conducted with local authorities, social workers, or community leaders. These exercises aimed at providing indications on return intentions, living conditions, access to services, financial challenges, and social cohesion and security. In the collective/transitional shelter, referrals were made to support some of the collective shelters with renovation and in-kind assistance, also in-kind assistance aimed at the individuals living in collective/transitional shelters was provided. As a result of follow up the renovation assessment work in 12 collective shelters is taking place by UNHCR partner Mission Armenia NGO. As of 26 April, UNHCR team has visited 29 collective shelters and transitional centres.
- Daily monitoring of departures from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. The daily departure monitoring visits to "Kilikia" Bus station were handed over to UNHCR partner World Vision Armenia starting from 13 April; however, UNHCR will continue monitoring the results of the departure monitoring in Kobo toolbox and preparing departures monitoring dashboards. Since mid-November, UNHCR, and starting from 13 April its partner

World Vision has observed some 29,265 individuals departing, as of end of April, during monitoring of departures 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.

- As a result of UNHCR negotiations starting from 30 March, masks were distributed in the “Kilikia” bus station. The first 1,000 masks were provided by American University of Armenia (AUA); then they were provided by MoLSA and Yerevan Municipality. During April, 23 key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan.
- For those who have already returned, remote interviews continue to provide information on the challenges they face as well as their living conditions. Structured phone interviews were conducted with returnees in the NK to assess the situation and to reveal major protection related issues. In April, 19 phone calls with households were conducted.
- UNHCR staff conducted training sessions on the Key Informant interviews and Protection Monitoring tools for the World Vision Armenia Staff, so the World Vision staff involved in the Protection Monitoring exercises are fully capacitated.
- During the period of 6-9 April, UNHCR visited Syunik province, namely Sisian, Goris and Kapan towns. In Sisian, UNHCR staff met with the municipality of Sisian town and community-based organizations (World Vision, ARCS, Mission Armenia, Adult Education Center Foundation and Art & Development Center) that are engaged in the provision of assistance to persons displaced from NK. The meetings were aimed at identifying and assessing the protection needs and gaps, challenges and priority needs of the local authorities, NGOs, and persons in a refugee-like situation. In Kapan, UNHCR participated in a coordination meeting organized by World Vision Armenia Kapan Area Programme with state agencies and community-based organizations engaged in child protection. In Goris UNHCR visited Women’s Development Resource Center NGO, Partnership and Teaching NGO, and Goris Youth Union NGO to get familiar with services provided by these organizations to persons displaced from NK and identify gaps in the community needs and possible areas of support. Relevant outcomes of the mission and further steps, which include technical and competency-based capacity building activities, will be discussed by UNHCR Armenia and will be shared with relevant partners.
- UNHCR delivered technical assistance (desktop computers, printers, and laptops) to the above listed municipalities and to the Children’s Support Center under Kapan municipality. These needs were identified during the mission of 15-18 March 2021, after which UNHCR decided to provide technical capacity building to state authorities and community-based organizations working with the population of concern to UNHCR in Armenia.
- During the Protection Working Group of 3 May 2021, UNHCR shared the findings of the second protection monitoring report with PWG members and addressed questions from the PWG members concerning persons with specific needs (determining criteria); tensions between the refugee-like and hosting populations which are reportedly rising in the last months due to shortage of resources, insufficiency of available assistance and accumulation of debts; and communities where children not attending school reside. The report and the presentation were shared with the PWG members in an email of 5 May 2021.
- The findings of the departure monitoring being conducted by UNHCR on a daily basis were also presented covering the period from 14 November 2020 until 30 March 2021.
- The 5W-s dashboard ([Link to PWG 5W-s Dashboard](#)) as of 30 April 2021 was also presented to the PWG by UNHCR and was shared in an email of 5 May 2021.
- In April, 223 individuals benefitted from Community Support Initiatives (CSI-s) conducted by Mission Armenia NGO.
- In April, 114 individuals received support on parenting skills, psycho-social first aid provision, and prevention of abuse and neglect by Save the Children International.
- Access to health care and support to health promotion is being implemented for displaced persons in Kotayk, Ararat, Armavir, and Yerevan by Médecins du Monde with 2 implementing partners: the Armenian Association of Social Workers and the Woman Support Centre. Activities have been launched a month ago. One component is NFI provision (hygiene and cleaning kits, towels, and beddings), and another component is the provision of medication vouchers and transportation to health facilities for the most vulnerable persons and for the services which are not provided for free by the government. The third component is access to information on social benefits and free of charge services provided by the government. Leaflets and posters are produced for this component.

## Remaining Gaps

- The departure monitoring has identified certain deficiencies in the way departures are organized, in particular lack of boarding priority and due consideration for persons with specific needs, absence of safety and security measures.
- 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 displaced persons. Coordination of assistance at regional/local level is also a continuing challenge.
- Growing concerns are being reported among the displaced population, in particular those who arrived from regions recently handed over to Azerbaijan, about their status and rights in Armenia.

## Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continue protection and return monitoring activities, in the coming weeks continue to focus on collective/transitional shelter visits and on self-referrals through the hotline and expand further to hosting communities.
- ⇒ 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 with primary focus on persons with specific needs and promotion of sustainable development solutions and the PRLS who will not be able to return.

## Education Sub-Working Group

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### Current Situation

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS) has officially announced the dates for the end of classes in secondary schools. Last day of classes varies for different grades and are staggered from 4 to 19 June. In April, schools continued to operate following COVID-19 prevention measures and hosting children from NK.

### Identified Priority Needs

The MESCS needs distance education platform to provide uninterrupted education in emergency situations. In this regard, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is supporting the MESCS to establish a learning management system that allows to enhance quality of distance learning and track children's online learning participation during emergencies.

According to SWG partners' reports there are still identified needs for school supplies in some locations.

### Achievements and Impact

- Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization covered the tuition fees of 97 scholarships to universities for displaced students and completed the selection of the first 10 participants for Social Media Marketing training.
- During the reporting period, Education SWG partners distributed 51 school bags with stationery materials and 156 tablets.

### Remaining Gaps

- Capacity building for schools (teachers, students, and other users) on the use of the new distance learning platform with special focus on the most vulnerable groups. Institutional and regulatory reforms for the effective and efficient use of the new platform are also needed.
- MHPSS is needed in schools for teachers and displaced students along the border areas in Syunik and Gegharkunik marzes.
- Remedial classes for displaced students to fill the learning gap.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Capacity building for schools (teachers, students, other users) on digital skills and MHPSS in schools.
- ⇒ Remedial classes for displaced students who have learning gap.

### Current Situation

Shelter and NFI WG partners conducted shelter repairs and distributed, among other items, warm clothing, cooking kits, hygiene kits, foldable beds, and other bedding items throughout April.

### Identified Priority Needs

Protection monitoring identified the following main needs among the persons in a refugee-like situation (PRLS) from NK, in order of priority during April: Shelter, Cash, Employment, Household items, Clothing, Food, and Hygiene kits/items.

### Achievements and Impact

- IOM distributed hygiene kits to 2,300 persons and continued renovation of 3 collective centres with a total of 77 residents.
- Mission Armenia continued renovation of 9 collective centres with a total of 137 residents and distributed 460 sets of miscellaneous items like kitchen sets, domestic equipment, and jerry cans.
- Mission Armenia and Save The Children distributed 1,602 kits of NFIs covering 1,488 persons. Each kit contained one of each: foldable bed, linen, mattress, blanket, pillow, and bedcover.
- Save The Children distributed 813 kits including bedding items, pillows, and shoes, covering 937 beneficiaries.
- Furthermore, 200 families received NFI assistance in the form of bed linens, disinfectant liquids, protective masks, and school and hygiene items in Kotayk, Ararat, Gegharkunik and Lori marzes (126 in Kotayk, 69 in Ararat, 2 in Gegharkunik and 3 in Lori) from Mission Armenia. Provision of NFIs was financed by Save the Children, and some clothing items were provided from the Mission Armenia reserve-fund.
- UNDP conducted repair of two collective shelters with 90 refugee residents.
- People in Need distributed hygiene kits to 2,600 families, blankets for 2,554 families, and wood for heating to 500 families.

### Remaining Gaps

Some of the recipients noted that hygiene-items could be distributed more often as they run out rather quickly. Refugees from collective shelters also commented that their self-sustainability could be realized faster if an individual, private shelter were provided to them. Evidence from other 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 the needs of families and support them with a quick distribution of items.



## Cash Sub-Working Group

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### Current Situation

The GoA has rolled out 18 cash support initiatives. These programmes range from provision of recurrent support equivalent to the minimum wage (68,000 AMD) predominantly to women and children, the elderly and persons with disabilities in a refugee-like situation; one-time support to 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; support to other persons affected by the military hostilities which erupted in NK conflict zone on 27 September; reimbursement of tuition fees; one-time support for preschool age children; two 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 extension of 68,000 AMD support to pensioners – men aged 18-63 - and family members of deceased servicemen that receive state supplements/bonuses, and inclusion of families of missing and captured persons in one-time cash support programme to

civilians affected by the NK conflict; and expansion of support to servicemen wounded during the recent hostilities, as well as those with mental health issues arising from the conflict.

Overall, nine partners have planned for cash support (food and nutrition, shelter/NFIs, early recovery and multipurpose) targeting approximately 70,284 beneficiaries<sup>5</sup> (79.5% displaced, 20.5% host community) with a total budget of approximately USD 10 M.

The Cash SWG has regular participation from the 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 55 billion AMD (104 million USD). To date, the total amount of funds disbursed to the displaced population has been 33 billion AMD (62.5 million USD). According to the approved programmes, 22 billion AMD (41.5 million USD) more support will be provided, where the contribution of partners is particularly timely and crucial within the inter-agency response to persons residing in Armenia, especially for the recurrent 68,000 AMD support, support to host families, and cash for work programmes.

Cash assistance was ranked second among the most urgent needs by families in refugee-like situation (after shelter) as per the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment in December by REACH and by February and March rounds of protection monitoring findings by UNHCR, as their already limited resources were diminishing, their basic income security has been shattered and they fear becoming a burden on their hosts. Host families have also mentioned cash as the primary need, considering the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic combined with the arrival of the displaced population, who have placed additional burden on host communities in terms of their capacity to address their needs, and maintain order and social cohesion.

A sound disaggregated beneficiary dataset by location is quintessential in determining eligibility criteria and designing cash interventions. Moreover, as most programmes are set to finish by end-June 2021, there should be a discussion on remaining needs, vulnerable groups and sustainability of interventions, thus transforming into early recovery.

### **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.
- An MoU was signed between WFP and MoLSA on 12 April 2021 with the aim to contribute to the Government-led 68,000 AMD programme and provide support to the portion of cash to cover food needs of displaced women and children residing in Armenia. Considering the results of the latest food security needs assessment from March 2021, the support will be provided in three installments of 32 USD instead of previously planned 24 USD for 4 months, noting that beneficiaries increasingly resort to negative coping strategies, such as borrowing/taking out credit loans to cover food needs. (See also additional details provided below under the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group).
- An MoU was signed between UNICEF and MoLSA on 16 April 2021 with the aim to provide cash support to 5,000 displaced children residing in Armenia, to cover the portion of access to services within the 68,000 AMD Government programme in April-May 2021. Support will be provided through the Treasury system and following a reimbursement

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<sup>5</sup> The figures may include double counting of beneficiaries, as some agencies cover a portion of 68,000 AMD, for example, while others may complement; or there are multiple payments envisaged. These figures are being regularly updated.

modality. The logistical arrangements and financial micro-assessment of the Unified Social Service (USS) are underway.

- Save the Children, in collaboration with Mission Armenia, signed an MoU with MoLSA on 3 May, together with other contractual agreements with banks; 273 beneficiaries, mostly families with more than 3 children, were supported in Yerevan, Kotayk and Ararat.
- ACTED has signed an MoU with MoLSA on 22 April and has almost finalized contractual arrangements with the USC and the bank to proceed with payments in May 2021.
- ICRC, through Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), had started disbursement to host families in Tavush and Syunik regions in February 2021; 2585 host families were supported in April 2021, hosting 12,544 displaced adults.

### 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, plus the GoA is encouraging partners to support cash assistance other than the 68,000 monthly assistance.
- Challenges include the relatively limited scope of participation of group members and beneficiaries in the design of cash support programmes and determination of transfer modalities, which create challenges in finalizing the MoUs and agreements and identification of beneficiaries.
- 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.
- There is a need to discuss follow-up actions to cash programmes, once most of them finish by end-June 2021, thus tying them to early recovery efforts and more sustainable solutions and support especially for those who are unable to immediately return.

### 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.
- ⇒ 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, in collaboration with MoLSA.
- ⇒ Organize a lessons-learned event with Government partners and Cash SWG by end-June 2021 and open a dialogue for institutionalized solutions to humanitarian cash transfer programming for future crises.



## Food Security and Nutrition Working Group

### Current Situation

In April 2021 the number of active partners implementing food security and nutrition related activities reduced against previous months. Three partners only were working actively in support to arrivals from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia.

### Identified Priority Needs

Priority needs remain food assistance to food insecure households from both the arriving population, and the hosting population. In advance of launching a programme in Syunik and Gegharkunik that protects food generating assets FAO surveyed 398 households to understand what share of households moved their farm animals and what the needs were

for support. Only 7.9% of households reported moving their agricultural assets to Armenia; 22% of households informed that they had to sell their livestock; and 14% had to slaughter their animals. Priority needs included employment opportunities and the availability of agricultural lands. Only 19.6% of people reported that they had seasonal job opportunities. The top priority for support was housing and shelter; however, 53% of respondents wanted to be supported with livestock and fodder. FAO is planning to deliver assistance in May and June to 489 households in response to these needs.

### **Achievements and Impact**

- In April 2021 WFP launched a food assistance programme for women and children from displaced populations from Nagorno-Karabakh who spontaneously arrived and are currently residing in Armenia. Cash assistance was transferred to 13,155 women and children as a contribution to the Government's 68,000 AMD programme by transferring the portion of cash to cover food needs. The monthly ration provided by WFP is 24 USD for a period of 4 months (totaling 96 USD). This will be disbursed in three instalments: in April, May and June. The decision to provide three instalments is to mitigate negative coping mechanisms of high rates of borrowing/taking out credit loans that was identified in recent needs assessments. In April Action Against Hunger completed various nutrition related activities including four baby friendly centers furnished and equipped in Hrazdan (Kotaik), Masis (Ararat), Avan and Masiv (Yerevan); a Training on Breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) completed for the institutional staff of the centres (nurses, psychologists, social workers); 8 beneficiary groups of caregivers (13 mothers each) registered at the centers.

### **Remaining Gaps**

- 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.
- Draft Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials on IYCF has been produced but is pending validation from the government.

### **Recommended Action**

- ➔ Based on the findings for the REACH MSNA agree as a CSG on the number of people affected, and how we calculate the number of people in need.



## **Health Working Group**

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### **Current Situation**

Partners of the Health Working Group together with the Ministry of Health continue to support the response in Armenia by providing services to the people affected by the conflict through primary health care provision, risk communication and community engagement, procurement and distribution of equipment and free drugs and other medical supplies. The number of people requiring mental health and psycho-social support remains high particularly among the refugee-like population.

No major changes in the situation related to the health needs of the refugee-like populations residing on the territory of Armenia and the populations hosting them were encountered in the reporting period. The refugee-like population is eligible for primary and secondary health services available on the territory of Armenia similar to the host community; however the accessibility and affordability of these services is not optimal, especially for those residing in remote areas and also given that the health system is overburdened with the third wave of the Covid-19 epidemic. These issues require systematic approach to improve country's overall health system. Health facilities that provide services to refugee-like population still experience higher patient flow and lack some essential medicines and supplies to meet the basic needs. Discrepancies in numbers and locations of the refugee-like population complicates continuous care and follow up for many organizations and their implementing partners.

### **Identified Priority Needs**

- Specialized medical services are overstressing out-of-pocket payments for most of the refugee-like population. Under the initiatives of the Government of Armenia, primary health services are provided free of charge to all citizens of Armenia including the refugee-like population from NK. Persons in a refugee-like situation (PLRS) are equally served by the national health services yet these services have generally limited capacity. In response to that, partners are:

- Ensuring access through procurement and donation of equipment and drugs to MoH whilst lobbying for equitable distribution.
- Referring individuals diagnosed with eye problems or disorders to the Armenian Eye Care Project. Beneficiaries referred by mobile clinics were diagnosed and have received eyeglasses, cataract surgery, diabetic retinopathy laser treatment, and other care for free.
- Absence of community rehabilitation services in rural settings to support the injured patients discharged from the hospitals as a result of the armed conflict.
- Absence of mental health services on community level as well as limited access to specialized MHPSS services in rural settings to support both host and refugee-like populations.
- Absence of in-depth information on health needs of the population residing in NK.
- ARCS hotline received 3,981 calls in April. The bulk of the calls were requests for food & non-food support, cash and shelter, and psychological support.

### **Achievements and Impact**

- 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.
- IOM's mobile teams also carried out Psychological First Aid screenings in, Ararat, Tavush, Kotayk, Aragatsotn marzes. The teams have trained psychologists to ensure that MHPSS issues are identified, followed up and referred to appropriate support services.
- Médecins du Monde (MdM) organized a MHPSS training for 18 Social Workers on how to address trauma and trained 4 psychologists as trainers for 'Helping the Helpers'.
- UNFPA distributed Emergency Reproductive Health Kits to MoH to supply 12 maternity hospitals in Armenia, ensuring uninterrupted provision of reproductive health services to the refugee like and host population.
- WHO responded to the need for free medication and supplies at primary healthcare level and donated 2,000 pulse oximeters and kits of non-communicable disease medication sufficient for 134,000 individuals to the MoH.
- MoH distributed an additional 20 basic modules (set packages) of the Interagency Health Emergency Kits (IHEK) - procured by WHO - to secondary health facilities across the country.
- ARCS hotline received 3,981 calls in April. The bulk of the calls were requests for food and non-food support, cash and shelter and psychological support.
- ARCS psychologists continued providing psychological assistance and psychological first aid to affected population, including wounded soldiers, their relatives, displaced people and to ARCS hotline applicants.
- Under ARCS capacity building program, 30 volunteers from Gegharquniq and Shirak marzes were trained on Psycho-Social Support. Volunteers will start implementing PSS activities while working with population in remote communities. In addition, ARCS conducted ToTs for 41 volunteers, including First Aid and Psychological First Aid in Shirak, Lori, Vayots Dzor, Syunik, Tavush regions and in Yerevan.
- Premiere Urgence International offered capacity building in MHPSS to local NGOs and trained 28 individuals.
- Project Hope eventually got their emergency drugs, consumables and surgical masks customs cleared, and started nationwide distribution.
- Based on the results of the MoH and WHO rehabilitation assessment mission in Armenia, a technical task force has been set up to strengthen trauma rehabilitation services nationwide. Under the leadership of the MoH and MoLSA and with the involvement of a broad range of national and international organizations, the group is committed to work jointly on development and implementation of a roadmap for rehabilitation services in Armenia. WHO Country Office has recruited a consultant to assume the coordination role of the group on behalf of the organization.
- UNICEF conducted capacity building exercises for PHC health providers on acute respiratory infections and pneumonia, as well as COVID immunization in Lori marz and will expand these activities to all other marzes.
- IOM's mobile clinic visited 39 communities during the month of April; 2,106 people received medical assistance; 45 blood tests were done at Izmirlian Hospital; 785 individuals were referred to different specialists for further

treatment; and 51 people were referred to the Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation for treatment. IOM contracted Seda Ghazarian Mental Health Foundation to undertake the treatment and follow up of MHPSS cases referred by the Mobile Teams. The Intra Mental Health Centre provides free of charge, specialized, quality psychological and psychiatric services to those identified by IOM teams as needing more specialized care.

- IOM's social media campaign "Sincere Talk" encouraged families to be aware of and understand what services are available in the community to overcome reluctance to seek MHPSS support.

### Remaining Gaps

- Understanding of a holistic SGBV care pathway, in coordination with protection partners.
- Limited and quickly changing information on actual health needs of the refugee-like population complicates the tailored health response.
- ARCS identified the risk of burn out of their specialists which is addressed through internal mechanisms.
- MDM identified capacity building needs on privacy and confidentiality in case management (identified during trainings) for social workers.
- UNFPA encountered very slow procedures for custom clearance - even in emergency situations.
- IOM identified stigmatization due to the misperception that seeking MHPSS implies a person has "mental health issue" as a main challenge to provision of psychological support to communities. This translates in a general reluctance to seek assistance for stress and social issues related to the conflict, lack of work, Covid-19, etc.

### Recommended Action

- ⇒ Organizing support for MHPSS well-being of humanitarian workers and volunteers in order to prevent burn out, such as identification of synergies and partnerships to ensure sustainability of 'helping the helpers' activities.
- ⇒ Updating/sharing the existing mapping of medical services - in cooperation with local authorities or via hotlines - available to refugee-like and host population to improve the referrals mechanisms and/or identify gaps.
- ⇒ Identifying and addressing remaining gaps in health care provision – such as holistic SGBV care pathways.
- ⇒ Whilst adults fear stigmatization and hence display reluctance to access MHPSS services, IOM has identified that children are being encouraged to participate in therapeutic activities to reduce stress symptoms associated with the conflict, which is proving to be of benefit to many families. Efforts to encourage families to be aware of and understand what services are available for them in their communities needs to be expanded.
- ⇒ The integration of MHPSS services in health programming (SRH, Trauma rehab, etc.) is highly recommended by ATRG-MHPSS with great interest by MoH.

## Early Recovery Working Group

### Current Situation

Recent demographics from the Migration Service for March 2021 (not updated in April) of refugee-like population following the recent war show a majority (59%) of the refugee-like population in Armenia is female;<sup>6</sup> 36% (23,772) of the refugee-like population is of working age (18-59 years of age), while just over half (51%) are of ages 0-17 years. Additionally, 13.4% (8,836) are elders (60 years of age and above). The largest percentage of the refugee-like population live in Yerevan (39%, 26,000 people), followed by Kotayk (17%, 11,148 people), Ararat (10%, 6,582 people) and Syunik (9%, 6,113 people).

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 (compared to March 2020), including considerable rise in food, apparel, health care, and transportation prices.

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. To bridge between various interventions and establish more coherent and

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<sup>6</sup> Migration Services Data as of March 2021 presented at <https://bit.ly/3fDy1Vg>

comprehensive response plan (in addition to economic component), the Government (led by DPM's office) started consultations and elaboration of Mid-Term Response Plan (MTRP), the first draft of which should be ready in June 2021.

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.

### Identified Priority Needs

There has been a significant number of returns of people in a refugee-like situation to NK, yet there is still the need provide livelihoods to both people in a refugee-like situation and hosting communities. Over 50% of populations that do not return to the NK soon are women and children. There is a need to tailor interventions to women who stay in Armenia.

Job creation, especially among the youth and women, which comprises the most extensive demographic proportion amongst the refugee-like population, continues to be a priority. Due to economic exigencies, temporary jobs should be offered to generate immediate income with an emphasis on hosting communities where the largest concentration of refugee-like populations resides.

Accommodation has been one of the significant challenges caused by the crisis, causing strain to existing public infrastructures and services.<sup>7</sup> Longer term housing solutions for both people in a refugee like situations and hosting communities appears to be a top priority need beginning April 2021, as movement dynamics stabilizes. More specifically:

- Insufficient or lack of accommodation facilities predisposes the refugee-like population to private housing and temporary accommodation shelter that is not always affordable. An estimated number of 24,818 people in a refugee like situation is unlikely to return to NK.<sup>8</sup>
- Early data from MSNA second round show that shelter is the most pressing need (data from 5 regions), implying that additional measures and support in Armenia to address this need should be implemented.<sup>9</sup>

Comparing the report of Multi-Sectorial Needs Assessment of November/December 2020 and Food Security Vulnerability Assessment of WFP in March 2021 there has been a significant reduction of food insecurity. Only one percent are severely food insecure in Armenia, while in February-March 2021, 22 percent of hosting families and 15 percent of PRLS were moderately and severely food insecure.<sup>10</sup> The report also indicated that "two-thirds of both households of PRLS and hosting families applied crisis and emergency coping strategies (68 and 65 percent respectively)". This finding may imply future possible worsening of livelihood conditions of both host and people in a refugee like situation and requires appropriate planning to mitigate the risk.

There is apparent drive to support food production, that inevitably requires focus on supporting the rural economy for agri-based, business, and non-farm livelihoods, with which the increased role of the private sector should be considered.

ER partners also observed the need to enhance the resilience of apparel manufacturing companies.

Increased utility bills and reduced income sources continue to be significant challenge to both the refugee-like and host populations. Energy-saving solutions to help reduce the cost of energy are an immediate priority.

In Syunik region, certain settlements face new challenges of becoming a bordering settlement after the cessation of hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. The street security especially during the night-time became a pushing necessity for the community life. In addition, some public collective centres (kindergartners) host spontaneous arrivals from Nagorno-Karabakh amid the pandemic in facilities with poor energy efficiency constructions, with no or poor heating systems.

### Achievements and Impact

- In April, 3,131 individuals and 108 families out of 2,913 individuals and 108 families targeted, respectively, were reached; and 117 children were reached, out of 247 children targeted. Two organizations - UNDP and UNIDO -

<sup>7</sup> Armenia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, December 2020. REACH Initiative.

<sup>8</sup><https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJoiMwVvZkZTYyNTItYWZmZS00NGEOLWJjNTEtNWUwM2Q4ZDgxMzIhliwidCl6ImU1YzZM3OTgxLTY2NjQ0tNDEzNC04YTBlTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9&pageName=ReportSection890a6d9879cd097d0038>

<sup>9</sup> Such as the initiative proposed by "National Social Housing Association" NGO, aimed at improving shelter conditions for people displaced from Hadrut region of NK and currently residing in Armenia. The proposal entails a subsidized rental housing (social housing) solution for affected people to avoid poverty trap and increase their economic and social resilience.

<sup>10</sup> WFP Food Security and Market Monitoring, April 2021: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86189>

reached PRLS and host communities in seven regions and 13 admin level 3 communities for the month of April through one or a combination of: 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.

- Needs assessment was completed among 1,300 war veterans for physical and psycho-social rehabilitation and completed procurement of prosthesis equipment, tools and materials in April. The procured tools and materials have already been delivered to Yerevan for further handover to newly established Prosthesis center. UNDP also initiated the set up and construction of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre for Servicepersons and Victims of War in Yerevan.
- Installation of energy-efficient street luminaries completed to enhance public security and generate community expense savings on electricity in two settlements of Syunik region, Vorotan and Shurnukh, with all the population benefitting from the initiative (433).
- Installation of new windows and heating systems completed in the kindergartens of Goris and Tegh settlements, Syunik region, benefitting in total 83 people in a refugee like situation.

### **Remaining Gaps**

- Inclusion of women and youth in early recovery processes. The main beneficiary groups of the campaign were elderly people, hence there is a need to engage more young people in COVID-19 response activities.
- More income generation and livelihood opportunities as well as longer term shelter solutions for refugee-like population, as mentioned above. 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.
- There are gaps in the needs of both the refugee-like populations and host community and the capacities of service providers to deliver the much-needed services. In this regard, UNDP has commissioned a Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment (CVA). The CVA was launched in March, while the data collection will start in May 2021.
- Concerning the veteran support initiatives, there is a need to consolidate the results of various needs assessments related to different aspects of support to veterans, conducted by many organizations (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, UNDP, Yerevan State University, other public non-commercial organizations). Needs assessment results should be consolidated in a unified format to ensure more comprehensive data availability which should lead to more coordinated and better-informed interventions by different partners engaged in this area.
- There is a significantly high number of refugee-like population especially women that remain and with no foreseeable plan for moving to NK. In addition to high unemployment rates within the host communities, local manufacturing companies need support to be able to hire employees. Women who wish to work in the textile/apparel sector have a possibility to learn required skills and further be hired by apparel manufacturing companies. This has been the basis for UNIDO's Training Center in operation in Yerevan.

### **Recommended Action**

- ⇒ The recommended action in March report is still valid, that there is a need to go beyond the current partners' activities, moving towards long-term development 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 Working Group.
- ⇒ Consolidate various needs assessment results/reports with a unified approach and analyze the data to give a comprehensive picture of veteran support needs and priorities. The main actions and priorities will be identified, and relevant stakeholders shall be involved in the process to ensure evidence-based recovery response.
- ⇒ Monitor energy saving and re-investment of the funds saved in rehabilitating community infrastructure.
- ⇒ Continue monitoring the needs of public collective shelters in renovation and rehabilitation, as well as installation of energy saving measures, as shelter solutions for the people in a refugee-like situation unable to return to NK.

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

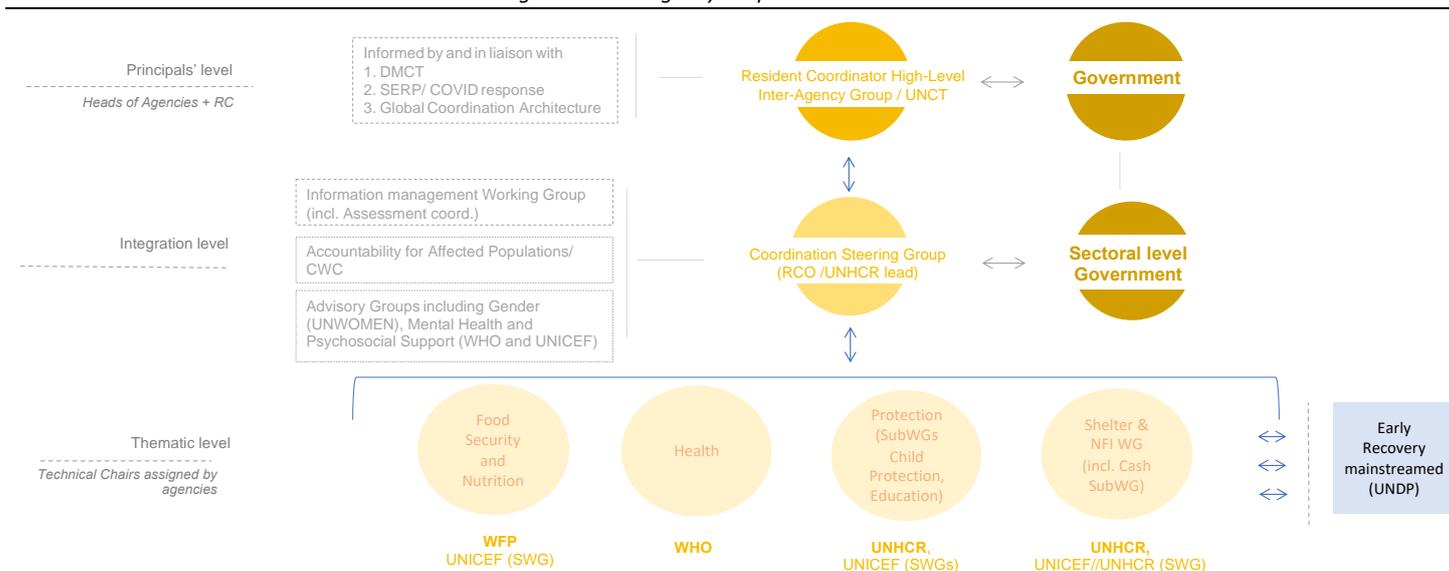
The UN team in Armenia established a coordination structure, which, at the technical level, is centred around four main humanitarian Working Groups (WG) – Shelter and NFIs, Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, and Health – as well as a fifth Working Group on Early Recovery allowing mainstreaming 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



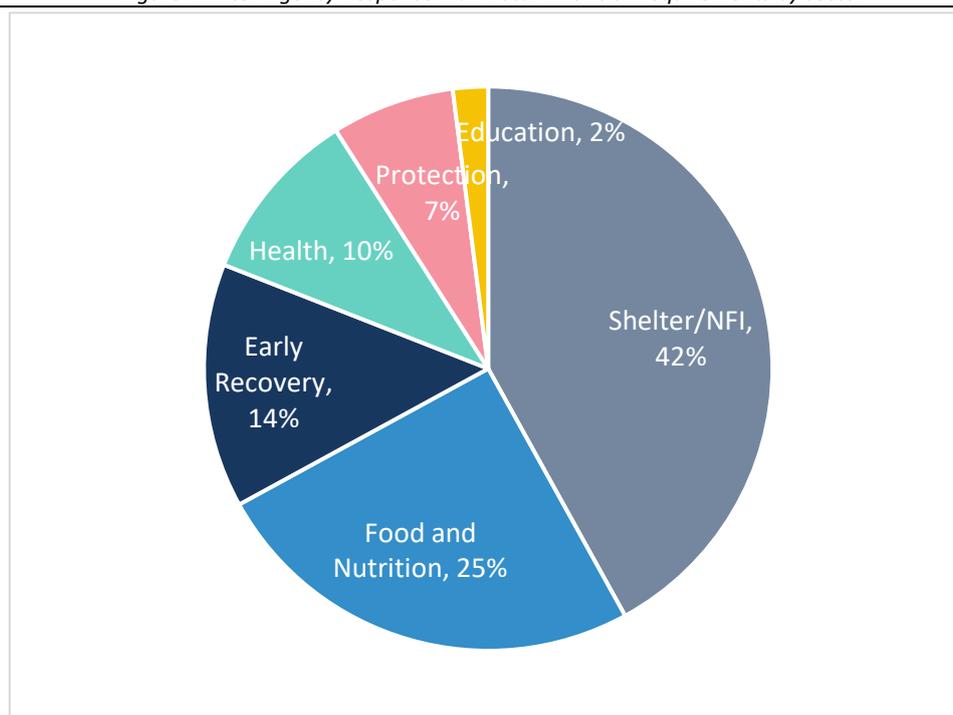
# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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>11</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 13,335,919**, which is equivalent to approximately **21.5 percent** of the requested amount. Contributions have been received from the USA, Japan, the European Union, and CERF.

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



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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.un.am/up/file/SERRP.pdf>