

Armenia

April 2019

Armenia is a State party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol, the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. Armenia is a full member of UNHCR EXCOM since 2015. By its t Programme of February 2019, the Government of Armenia **commits to further strengthen refugee protection mechanisms and contribute to persons' of concern integration** into the society.

UNHCR is ready to assist the Government in the next steps of formulation of Action Plans and the foreseen changes in asylum, refugees and statelessness related legal and social frameworks, and migration policies currently pending adoption. **Insufficient reception capacity, penalisation of asylum-seekers for illegal entry and national security considerations** may hinder effective refugee protection.

The **swift development of a national comprehensive integration strategy**, inclusive of asylum-seekers, refugees and persons displaced from Syria, is key for supporting the national implementation of the Global Refugee Compact and in the context of Sustainable Development Goals in Armenia.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees and asylum seekers (by countries of origin)



* Refugees, asylum seekers and persons in refugee-like situation

Stateless persons **848**
(Source : Government, 30 April 2019)



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 2 International Staff
- 11 National Staff
- 5 Affiliated workforce, including national UN volunteers and an intern

Presence:

- 1 Country Office in Yerevan



Working with Partners

- **Government partners:** Migration Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Diaspora, National Security Service; Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Justice, the Police;
- **Other Institutions:** National Assembly, Human Rights Defender's Office, Public Defender's Office, Academy of Justice, SME-Development National Centre, State Employment Agency;
- **Civil society:** Mission Armenia, Armenian Red Cross Society, KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation, Fund for Armenian Relief - Children's Support Center, Armenian Caritas, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Centre for Coordination of Syrian-Armenians' Issues; "Aleppo" NGO, Syrian-Armenian Union, Oxygen, Women's Support Centre, Goris Youth Union, World Vision, American Bar Association-Rule of Law, Save the Children, Round Table of Churches; RePat Armenia;
- **International organisations:** UN Country Team, ICRC, ICMPD, GIZ, Sparkassenstiftung für internationale Kooperation; OSCE, Council of Europe;
- **Other:** The Yerevan Mayor's Office, Diaspora-based agencies, faith-based organisations and financial institutions, Media, schools, academia, experts, researchers, local youth and volunteers.

Main Activities

Protection

- advocate for legislative reform processes, promote and support implementation of the improved Law on Refugees and Asylum to be in conformity with the international refugee and human rights standards, notably the 1951 Geneva Convention, and UNHCR guidelines;
- support and provide advice to the Migration Service to maintain, improve and monitor access to the asylum system, basic reception conditions and quality of the Government asylum procedures, while promoting stronger (financial) engagement of authorities in addressing displacement challenges;
- provide training of judges and lawyers as part of strategic judicial engagement to enhance the capacity of courts and judges;
- provide legal aid and counselling services to asylum seekers and refugees; capacitate the Public Defender's Office to provide services to persons of concern;
- monitor reception and detention conditions by regular participatory assessments and missions to ensure that UNHCR's activities are rights-based and respond to actual needs;
- carry out systematic border monitoring to ensure access to territory and the asylum system, including capacity-building and training for border guards, staff of penitentiary institutions, and other NSS staff;
- help responding and preventing sex and gender-based violence and child abuse by providing complementary systems for persons of concern to bridge gaps in the government response;
- meet basic needs of the most vulnerable refugees through cash assistance;
- promote amendments to citizenship legislation and the establishment and implementation of a statelessness determination procedure.
- Support the Government in strengthening its capacity for preparedness and contingency planning.

Education

- further build on generous access to education opportunities for persons of concern to improve integration and self-reliance possibilities;
- provide Armenian and Russian language courses to asylum-seekers and refugees to promote integration;
- offer inter-cultural education and exchange facilitating cultural and social adaptation of refugees;
- promote self-reliance through provision of vocational training and distribution of income-generation tools.

Health

- advocate for inclusion of comprehensive state health services for all persons of concern to be provided in Armenia, including awareness raising among healthcare providers;
- provision of psycho-social support, and complementary health services to vulnerable persons, including medication and personalised care to elderly and bed-ridden refugees who lack family and community support.

Shelter and NFIs

- advocate for stronger State support structures for supporting reception and integration facilities for asylum-seekers, including providing technical support and advice to the Migration Service for a new Reception Centre to be constructed;
- provide needs assessed, limited cash-based assistance to the most vulnerable persons, including rental subsidies and multi-purpose grants, e.g. winterisation support, one time cash assistance for new arrivals to bridge existing gaps;

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- promote refugee inclusion through community mobilisation activities and establishment of refugee coalitions in host communities;
- vocational trainings, distribution of income-generation tools, microcredit loans and grants;
- promote youth advisory groups, self-help schemes, social fora and women's clubs;
- empower communities through information sharing and capacity building;

Durable Solutions

- advocate to shift the focus from a humanitarian response towards the promotion and facilitation of durable solutions, primarily by way of local integration;
- providing advice and support in the development of a government led comprehensive integration policy for refugees, displaced persons, migrants and returnees;
- advocate for realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals by promoting inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in development initiatives;
- mainstream refugees into state public services and employment mechanisms by strengthening cooperation and referral mechanisms;
- counter discrimination and promote tolerance and understanding in communities by organising workshops, meetings, awareness-raising and trainings.

External / Donors Relations

- seek to use strategic communication to support persons of concern and to create a more receptive host environment, through raising awareness of UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate in various media, including social media, and by means of public information products and community outreach;

- communicate with persons of concern to enhance their knowledge of refugee rights and duties and of available services through communication and ensure that they have access to the information necessary to make informed decisions affecting their future;
- organise regular donor briefings to provide updates on developments in the situation of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and displaced populations, as well as developments in UNHCR's strategic directions and operations in the country and globally;
- seek voluntary contributions from governments, UN and pooled funding mechanisms, international financial institutions and the private sector. Raise funds for programmes and address new emergencies as they occur;
- UNHCR activities are being implemented in partnership with the Government as well as other UN agencies, and national and international NGOs with over 48% of the overall country budget being implemented through local partners;
- The overall budget of over USD 4,425,325 is distributed among the different programmes with USD 4,305,572 (97%) allocated for the programmes supporting refugees and asylum-seekers, and USD 119,753 (3%) for stateless people.
- UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation in 2019 with special thanks to the USA, European Union, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Switzerland, as well as Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Indonesia, Monaco, Montenegro, Peru, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and some private donors.

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