

ARMENIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1- 28 February 2021



KEY FIGURES

USD 62.1 M

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

68,050

Refugee-like population from NK
(Source: Armenian Migration Services)

85%

Women and children among spontaneous arrivals

15,738

Individuals reached by the monthly food assistance

1,595

Persons reached through Protection Monitoring exercise

13,434

Beneficiaries reached through health interventions

32,310

Winter clothes distributed

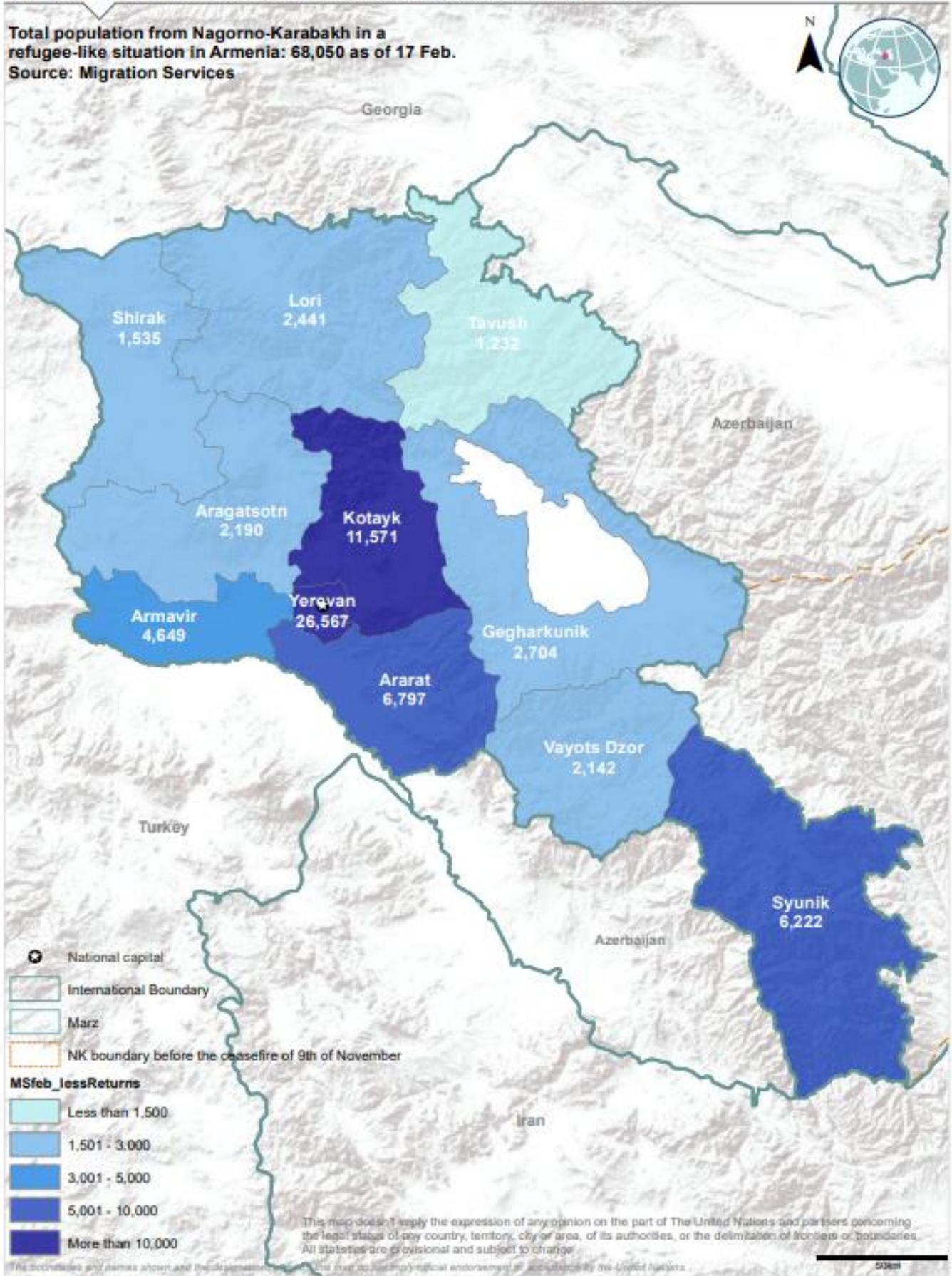
HIGHLIGHTS

- 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).
- To date, 13 UN agencies, 22 international NGOs, 13 national NGOs, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 5 Government entities, and 1 international organization are part of the coordination structure and engage across five operational working groups (Shelter & NFI, Protection, Food Security & Nutrition, Health, Early Recovery) and three sub-working groups (Child Protection, Education, Cash). Two Working Groups (WG) are co-led by NGO partners.
- Daily monitoring of people departing from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. More than 60 key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan. According to UNHCR's departure monitoring as of 28th February 2021, an estimate 24,267 individuals travelled to NK since mid-November, but the nature and sustainability of these returns are yet to be determined. The return monitoring has identified certain gaps in the way returns are organized, in particular lack of boarding priority and due considerations for persons with specific needs, absence of safety and security measures (presence of the police and ambulance), and COVID-19 preventive measures, which are not promoted and followed.
- A Government decree on recurrent cash support for persons in refugee-like situation was approved on 18 February 2021. It included clarification of specific clauses that facilitate support by national and international partners and individuals. For details, refer to Cash-Sub Working Group section of the report.
- Emergency support activities to ensure continuity of education for refugee-like population continued. In addition, UNICEF-ARCS completed the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) project and plans are underway to scale up the intervention through CERF funding, reaching some 5,000 beneficiaries. See Education Sub-Working Group section for details.
- A FAO designed programme targets 600 households in the provinces of Gegharkunik and Syunik with support for existing poultry and livestock preserve means of local food production.



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

Total population from Nagorno-Karabakh in a refugee-like situation in Armenia: 68,050 as of 17 Feb.
Source: Migration Services



Printing date: 19 Feb 2021 Sources: UNHCR, UNCS, REACH, MoLSA, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, MoTA (MS) Author: UNHCR - Armenia
Feedback: ilangas@unhcr.org Filename: CSG_SA_CC_MAP_20210218a

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

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 ceasefire agreement was signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Federation of Russia during the night of 9-10 November. Six weeks of conflict resulted in significant civilian casualties and destruction of many houses and public infrastructure in the NK conflict zone, including schools, roads and communication networks. As a result, it is estimated that at the peak of the crisis the majority of the population living in and around NK had fled to Armenia.

The ceasefire agreement is currently holding with no confirmed incidents being reported from the LoC. Despite the presence of several checkpoints, movement between Armenia and NK is relatively unrestricted, with Government of Armenia providing free bus service to the refugee-like population. As the winter season draws to an end and given the relative calm in many areas of NK, the number of refugee-like population returning remains steady. On average, a couple of buses departed from Yerevan to NK in February.

According to the Armenian authorities' figures released on 17 February, some 68,050 persons¹ are still in a refugee-like situation in Armenia, of which 85 percent are women and children. They live across all ten marzes/regions of the country² and Yerevan. Number of individuals directly observed boarding buses for NK stands at 22,634 individuals³, but nature and sustainability of those who have traveled to NK are yet to be determined. Most of the returnees originated from Stepanakert, followed by Martuni and Askeran in NK. The vast majority of individuals observed boarding on the buses for Stepanakert in Yerevan were adult females (approximately 80 percent), while children only accounted for 10 percent of those who returned.

The impact of the conflict on host communities and refugee-like populations, includes physical, social, mental and financial aspects, and is adding pressure on Government institutions and their capacities to coordinate, finance and address essential needs. Host community households that had previously been socioeconomically stable may face significant challenges in covering the cost of rent and utilities and providing food as a result of hosting refugee-like families from in and around NK. For the first time a few incidents of friction between host community and refugee-like population was reported in February, but generally, the social cohesion between the refugee-like population and the host community continued to be warm, with latter continuing to share their accommodation, food and available resources.

Despite the fragile socioeconomic situation that has been compounded by the impact of COVID-19, 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. During the reporting period an increase in active participation of ministerial representatives in the various Working and Sub-Working groups was widely observed.

Key findings from the different need assessments and from the protection monitoring exercise, conducted since the begin of the crisis, indicate that the most immediate needs of the refugee-like population are related to shelter and housing solutions and cash assistance. Between December 2020 and February 2021, the affected population have also reprioritized their needs, for instance, in February, refugee-like population prioritized basic needs items over employment (see figure 1). Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are other areas that require increased and sustained attention, as many have been traumatized by the aftereffects of conflict, displacement, COVID-19, and loss of livelihoods.

¹ As of 17 February 2021.

² Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush, and Vayots Dzor.

³ Source: Armenian authorities. Top 3 places of return- Stepanakert, Martuni, Askeran.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS



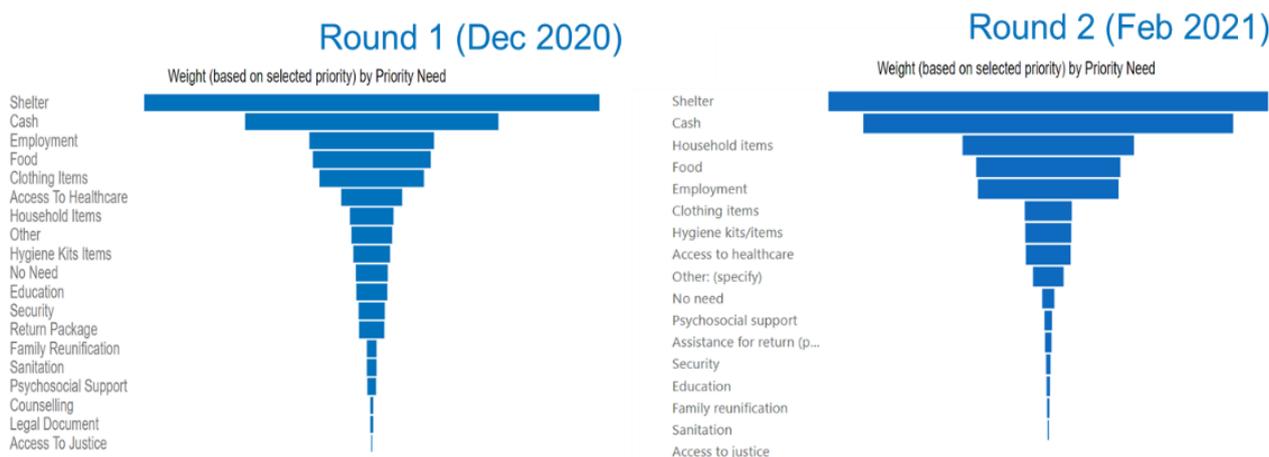
Current Situation

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 refugee-like persons from in and around NK. The situation remains fluid and requires continuous monitoring at all levels. At the onset of crisis, it was observed that females heavily outnumbered males among the refugee-like population. Today, there is a more balanced breakdown between the sexes, as according to Migration Services data many females have returned to NK. While hosting communities are still mobilized in receiving persons from in and around NK, sharing accommodation and offering support, information was received in February 2021 on relocations in certain communities following requests to vacate certain shelters such as hotels and hostels.

Identified Priority Needs

The results of second round of protection monitoring conducted in February have identified shelter, cash, household items, food, employment, clothing items, hygiene kits, and access to healthcare as the main needs among the persons in refugee-like situation from in and around NK in order of priority.

Figure 1: Comparison of priority needs between the first two rounds



As evident from Figure 1 above, while the top two needs of refugee-like person have not changed since December, more families prioritized household items over employment, suggesting the community is struggling with basic needs and necessities.

Achievements and Impact

- The protection monitoring exercise with a new updated individual/household level questionnaire has been conducted since the beginning of February 2021 with a total of 325 households/1,595 individuals in refugee-like situation being interviewed (face-to-face or by telephone) resulting in more than 300 individuals who were identified for referrals to protection services. In addition, 147 families were identified for referrals to protection emergency cash assistance. 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 shelter renovation and in-kind assistance.
- Daily monitoring of people boarding the buses to travel from Yerevan to Stepanakert is ongoing since 14 November 2020. Since mid- November, UNHCR has counted some 24,267 individuals, as of end of February, during the course of departures monitoring to NK, but the nature and sustainability of these returns are yet to be determined. 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. In February, more than 106 key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan.

- For those who have already returned, remote interviews continued 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. 94 phone calls were conducted in February.
- Representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MoTAI) and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) joined the PWG as permanent members, which will lead to better coordination of activities between the PWG and the Government.
- Based on the analysis of the household level protection monitoring interviews a report was prepared and shared to support the targeting of the most vulnerable with cash assistance.
- Efforts were undertaken to strengthen coordination of protection assistance and overall response at all levels. During the PWG meeting, the new template of 5W table (who, what, where, when and why) and the newly updated service mapping tool in KoBo were presented. The service mapping tool will be used for creating a 3W table to avoid duplications and strengthen referral mechanisms.
- In Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik and Syunik marzes a skill-improvement project that provides on the job training was implemented (cash for work programme whereby a salary of AMD 100,000 is provided over the course of two months). In coordination with the MoLSA and the State Employment Agency, 70 persons have been matched with employers. Skills development is supported by a mentor who receives a salary for each beneficiary of the programme. The project will run until the end of March. An analysis of the main areas of the economy where refugee-like population are being engaged will be carried out and used as a basis for further programming in the respective marzes.
- 10 privately owned hotels, accommodating around 500 displaced persons, were supported throughout Yerevan and Vanadzor with food, hygiene items as well as their staff basic salaries. The activities are aimed to provide the continuity of the provided services in those collective shelters.
- Legal counselling and referrals were offered to 304 persons via phone and in person in Yerevan including on health care and cash assistance. Referrals were made to local self-governing authorities, NGOs, and polyclinics.
- Psychosocial support offered through a hotline to more than 19,000 persons (the number may include nationals as well). Furthermore, 260 children and 150 adults also received similar support through group work and individual consultations.
- More than 120 parents participated in positive parenting sessions on child health care and GBV.

Remaining Gaps

- The monitoring of people departing to NK has identified certain gaps in the way bus services are organized, in particular lack of boarding priority and due considerations for persons with specific needs, absence of safety and security measures (presence of the police and ambulance), and COVID-19 preventive measures, which are not promoted and followed. UNHCR continues to liaise with Yerevan Municipality with the aim of improving safety and protection for those who access transportation services between Yerevan and Stepanakert.
- 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.
- The results of the second round of protection monitoring exercise revealed the generation of debt by the refugee-like population has increased in comparison to the first round both in the percentage of the debtors and the amount of debt. In December, around 7 percent of households reported to have generated debt since arriving to Armenia. This number increased to 28 percent in February.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continue protection and return monitoring activities, with a particular focus on collective/transitional shelter visits and on self-referrals through the hotline.

- ⇒ Strengthen communication with communities and raise awareness on access to basic rights, available services and assistance programs.
- ⇒ Identify if refugee-like population have problems with access to the state assistance programs and applications processing as well as access to other rights and services; provide individual legal assistance and support and undertake advocacy to address the systemic issues.
- ⇒ 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 refugee-like individuals who will not be able to return.

Child Protection Sub-Working Group

Current Situation

The child protection response for the reporting period included case management support, MHPSS and capacity building of local social service professionals, paraprofessionals and volunteers to ensure scaled up and continuous support at community level. In parallel to mental health and psycho-social services to the affected population, there is more focus on strengthening the existing community-based services through establishment of child friendly spaces and provision of support to professionals. MoLSA in cooperation with CSO partners is conducting assessment of child friendly spaces to identify the coverage and scope of services, as well as the gaps. Since mid-November, UNICEF and its Child Protection (CP) partners have reached 32,306 children and adolescents, UAM, parents, social workers out of 37,500 targeted.

Identified Priority Needs

Ongoing activities such as group and individual MHPSS services; positive parenting; support through child friendly spaces; legal aid counselling; and education on explosive ordnance risk education are all based identified needs. Moreover, based on the general mine awareness assessment conducted by UNICEF and UNDP, jointly with the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise in Syunik marz interventions on family strengthening and prevention of family separation should be prioritized.

Achievements and Impact

- As of end of February, Save the Children, Armenian Red Cross Society, Child Development Foundation and SOS Children Village Armenia reached a total of 4,638 individuals were reached, including 2,771 children.
- Interventions by the four aforementioned organizations included group MHPSS services for children and their caregivers; individual MHPSS for Children and Caregivers; support for parents and caregivers on parenting; establishment of Child Friendly Spaces (or other mobile interventions) to provide psycho-social assistance to girls and boys; legal aid counselling; support adolescents to organize peer to peer support activities. Yerevan and Tavush, Kotayk, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Armavir and Ararat marzes were covered by the CP interventions.

Remaining Gaps

- Identification of regions/communities/settlements with low or no coverage of child protection interventions in emergencies.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Fact finding missions on general mine awareness to three other marzes with contaminated areas (Tavush, Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor) are pending. Joint preparations with UNDP are in process.

Education Sub-Working Group

Current Situation

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) in Armenia continued to monitor and support education continuity of displaced students. In mid-February, the COVID-19 prevention and control measures for schools and

preschools were relaxed; yet majority of preschools remain closed and those that are open are not functioning in their full capacity.

Identified Priority Needs

According to the findings of MSNA conducted in December 2020, 5 percent of HHs in refugee-like situation reported that none of their children were attending school in Armenia. Conflict situation was cited as the main reason for non-attendance in these HHs. Moreover, almost half of the HHs in refugee-like situation had children that were not going to school. About 40 percent of HHs with school-aged children reported that their children did not have necessary school supplies for education. Families also reported of lack of seasonal clothes and shoes as well as lack of finances to support education.

Achievements and Impact

- 8,383 children and adolescents reached through various activities such as non-formal education for adolescents; distribution of school supplies, early childhood development corners for children under the age of 5, and distribution of school equipment such as furniture and consumable items that enable good learning environment.
- Education Sub-Working Group members continued to provide emergency support activities to support education continuity to refugee-like population. UNICEF-ARCS completed the emergency Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) project with the focus on risk education activities through trainings, information sessions and direct outreach in Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, Syunik marzes reaching around 5,000 beneficiaries. Plans are underway to scale up the intervention through CERF funding targeting more borderline communities.
- A box of learning and teaching material aptly named “school in a box” and a recreational kit was distributed to a school in Kotayk that hosts around 116 students from refugee-like population. Moreover, the education partners also distributed 22 tablets and 70 school packs.

Remaining Gaps

- EORE activities need to be expanded widely, especially to the communities living near the border areas.
- MoESCS participation in the sub-working group remains irregular, due to competing priorities.

Recommended Action

⇒ Advocacy with MoESCS to encourage consistent participation in and contribution to sub-working group.



Shelter and NFI Working Group

Current Situation

There are about 20 Shelter/NFI partners active across 10 marzes/regions and Yerevan. Besides conducting shelter repair, they have been distributing, among others, warm clothes, cooking kits, hygiene kits, blankets, and other bedding items. Much of the Shelter/NFI response are planned to be implemented using cash-modality and are awaiting government approval.

Identified Priority Needs

Throughout the winter period, the priority needs remain winter-related items, particularly heating for shelters and warm clothing for children and adults.

Achievements and Impact

- In Yerevan and Kotayk, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush and Armavir marzes, UNHCR, through partner Armenian Red Cross Society (31,006) and Save the Children (1,306) distributed 32,310 winter clothes.
- During the reporting period, 2,271 cooking kits and 476 blankets along with other bedding items were also distributed to needy families.
- During the reporting period, NFI/Shelter partners supported 8 collective shelters that included 3 shelter repairs and NFI distribution in the 5 remaining shelters.
- Utility payments project is ongoing for state and non-state shelters.

Remaining Gaps

- During the monitoring of winter clothes in Gyumri, it was observed that the Municipality staff that are in charge of distribution lack of knowledge and experience in refugee/humanitarian issues; they lack of information and awareness on profiles of the persons of concern; and they did not adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures.
- An agreement was reached between MoLSA and UNHCR, for MoLSA to provide a list of 10 shelters where renovations should be implemented.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Continue advocacy for more favorable conditions for cash-based interventions in order to transfer in-kind provision of NFIs into cash for NFIs in close coordination with the Government, including on adequate targeting.
- ⇒ Continue to work directly with the social workers/municipalities and building their capacity to identify the needs of families and support with a quick distribution of items.
- ⇒ Continue efforts to get regular updates with accurate disaggregated data from the Government to better inform the humanitarian response.



Cash Sub-Working Group

Current Situation

The GoA continued rolling out 17 cash support initiatives. These programmes ranged 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 refugee-like situation; one-time support to persons displaced from areas under Azerbaijani control or to those whose properties have become uninhabitable; periodic support to families hosting refugee-like population; support to other persons affected by the September conflict; reimbursement of tuition fees; one-time support for preschool age children; two cash for work programmes (public works and for gaining work experience); and support to injured servicemen.

The Government has approved clauses outlining the procedures for supporting Government-led cash support programmes by national and international partners and individuals, including clauses on beneficiary data sharing. Applications for the programmes are predominantly submitted online through the Social Security Service, while distribution is done via Haypost/Artsakhpost 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. Majority of the beneficiaries give their consent during online applications, enabling the Social Security Service to share beneficiary data with partners.

MoLSA is also conducting rapid needs assessment of affected families, which should inform further potential cash based and in-kind support programmes. The results will be shared with humanitarian actors, once the ministry finalizes data analysis.

Identified Priority Needs

Priority needs include supporting housing and economic security for people in a refugee-like situation and their hosts with cash for winterization (utilities, warm clothes), as well predictable and long-term needs-based support to those families, who will be unable to return both in the short-term and long-term. Provision of cash for rent is also being considered. To complement government's cash programmes, special needs of children, including children with disabilities, children under 5, female-headed households and others, as well as other vulnerable groups should be considered in the design of cash interventions, including payment modalities. A sound disaggregated beneficiary dataset by location is required as it is quintessential in determining eligibility criteria and designing cash interventions.

Achievements and Impact

- Following a series of consultation processes with the members of the Cash SWG, the Government has approved a decree enabling 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 Social Security Service and bank, as well as beneficiary data sharing. Sample MoU, bank agreement and non-

disclosure terms have been developed jointly by the Group and MoLSA. This will enable harmonized and aligned support by development partners to Government-led programmes through various delivery mechanisms.

- The Cash Sub-Working Group 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.
- ICRC, through Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), has already concluded an MoU and a tripartite agreement with MoLSA, Social Security Administration (SSA) and banks to support the Government-led programme on assisting host families in Tavush and Syunik marzes.
- The World Bank will be supporting Government-led cash support programmes, focusing on two cash for work programmes, i.e., host family support and recurrent payments to persons in refugee-like situation. The grant that amounts to USD 3.7 million will be implemented directly through MoLSA, Social Security Service and the Treasury system.
- UNDP is supporting two cash for work programmes, implemented in line with Government's recovery approach: on-job training with employers, and public works in Kotayk marz (Hrazdan and Charentsavan communities). Disbursement of cash to the beneficiaries is expected to start from March.
- 5Ws have been drafted for the Cash SWG and will be shared with partners for completion.

Remaining Gaps

- 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 on the territory of Armenia, considering the jurisdiction of agencies is to assist persons in a refugee-like situation in Armenia. Although discussions are underway with MoLSA, systems for cross-checking information and verification of beneficiaries are needed. The Government is open to dialogue and consultation and flexible to the extent possible in accommodating requests.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Regular communication with MoLSA, MFA, the DPM's 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, including those who are currently in Armenia.
- ⇒ Include verification and risk mitigation measures in UN agreements for cash interventions.
- ⇒ Improve communication with donors on the developed mechanism and approaches for multi-purpose cash interventions complementing Government-led initiatives.



Food Security and Nutrition Working Group

Current Situation

Food assistance to refugee-like population and hosting families is ongoing; and in February, three out of eleven districts were covered with in-kind food assistance.

To better understand the changing needs of the population, the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group members are contributing to the revision of the questionnaire of the second Multi-Sector Needs Assessment conducted by REACH-Initiative so that we remain abreast of the changing needs of the population.

Identified Priority Needs

Immediate priority is to save lives by providing food access for food insecure arrivals to the Republic of Armenia from in and around NK and the communities hosting them. At risk groups, including pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers and children need adequate nutrition. Moreover, the working group members will work to protect, reconstitute, or create the means of existence of refugee-like population and host communities in fragile environments.

Achievements and Impact

- Four Food Security and Nutrition Working Group partners reached 15,738 individuals with in-kind food assistance. Those reached include individuals in refugee-like situations and individuals from households hosting them.
- Protection of existing food generating assets is critical to food security in the medium term, and FAO has designed programming targeting 600 households to support existing poultry and livestock owned by their households. Targeting is ongoing in the provinces of Gegharkunik and Syunik and the results will both support livelihoods at the household level and preserve means of local food production.

Remaining Gaps

- Food assistance reached only 20 percent of those estimated as being in need, demonstrating gaps in the response.
- Specialized assistance targeting at-risk groups of malnutrition, including women, children, and the elderly was reported as wholly under funded by the two Food Security and Nutrition Working Group members actively fundraising for this type of assistance (Action Against Hunger and UNICEF). This leaves significant gaps nutrition activities.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Completion of MSNA in collaboration with reach to understand priority needs to align resources to priorities.



Health Working Group

Current Situation

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

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 drugs and other medical supplies. The number of people requiring mental health and psycho-social support remains high particularly among the refugee-like population. Access to NK continues to be limited but the partners remain ready to support the most affected people on site. All health partners are aware and remain vigilant about COVID-19 transmission. Activities are planned and executed with stringent infection prevention and control adherence.

Identified Priority Needs

The identified priority needs include the continuation of essential services through primary and secondary health care; MHPSS at all levels; the provision of medical equipment and medicines for COVID-19 management and patients with chronic diseases from the refugee-like population; and the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hygiene items.

Mapping of available services, especially those in remote areas or provided by local actors will be prioritized for the month of March. At special request of the Ministry of Health (MoH), WHO has launched a joined mission to assess (trauma) rehabilitation services. The mission will last for 3 weeks with the main objectives to assess the existing rehabilitation services for wounded and injured during the conflict and to develop a roadmap for strengthening services in the country.

Achievements and Impact

- 13,434 beneficiaries reached through various health-related activities. Both the refugee-like population and host community benefited from the provision of essential health services from the Ministry of Health (MOH) with support from health partners.
- IOM's mobile clinic teams treated 753 patients in 15 communities in Armavir and Kotayk marzes, prescribed adequate treatment and where necessary, referred individuals to respective specialists for further treatment.

- ARCS continued its provision of care with their psychologists and first aid teams to address psychological assistance and psychological first aid to the affected population, including wounded soldiers and relatives. First aid kits and personal protective equipment such as masks and hand disinfectant, as well as assistive devices (arm crutches, walkers, wheelchair) were successfully distributed.
- WHO received positive feedback from MoH on the donated surgical and trauma kits, which were found especially useful in health facilities located in border areas. This donation enabled local providers to actively provide care during the aftermath of the conflict. The trauma and surgical kit content benefited some 1,200 patients.
- Medicine du Monde (MDM) has successfully assessed and identified needs, key locations and local partners to roll out implementation of their activities to about 7,000 beneficiaries. The results will be shared later in March.
- IOM continued to deliver COVID-19 and MHPSS related messages via the Social Media Campaign “Sincere Talk”.
- The ARCS Post-Traumatic Rehabilitation Center provided physical and psychological rehabilitation treatment for 125 wounded servicemen.

Remaining Gaps

- An in-depth health needs assessment of refugee-like population is needed, however given the mobile nature of the population, locating and identifying them is challenging.
- Due to the current COVID-19 context, it is difficult to organize capacity building and trainings.
- People with visible distress signs are reluctant to seek MHPSS care themselves, possibly because of associated stigma; but they won't hesitate to ask support for their children. Furthermore, MHPSS is also required for service providers.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Better cooperation and coordination with local authorities are needed to map and better understand movement and trend of refugee-like population.
- ⇒ Address organizations to look after their own staff on MHPSS (help the helpers) and regarding Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) for direct care providers. Build capacity of PHC professionals to be able to recognize and address the most common MHPSS needs.



Early Recovery Working Group

Current Situation

Early recovery activities were implemented across 10 marzes. The Early Recovery WG has so far focused its efforts on developing programmes and activities to support energy saving solutions (to generate savings that can be used for the payment of utility bills), temporary jobs scheme for 300 individuals in selected communities, grant scheme for NGOs and individuals for community recovery and resilience, and support to COVID-19 awareness raising activities in host communities. Accommodation in private housing, hotels and public facilities has challenged the communities from various perspectives, including accommodation conditions, increased utility bills and sustainability of the accommodation arrangements. Unemployment and limited access to benefits (especially for informal workers), given the COVID-19 post-conflict situations, are the most pressing livelihood issues. At the same time the capacity of the local economy to provide jobs for the refugee-like population is limited. In several communities, particularly the ones close to the Line of Contact, economic and agriculture activities, have been negatively impacted.

Although people in a refugee-like situation have already started to return to NK, many women from refugee-like community still reside in Armenia and are looking for jobs to secure income generation. Local manufacturing companies prefer to hire employees having certain level of competence. Women who wish to work in the textile/apparel sector and lack prior training are provided with opportunities to get the required skills and knowledge and further be hired by apparel manufacturers.

As part of its overall response to crisis, in February the Government:

- Adopted a 6-month Economic Recovery Plan, incorporating specific economic measures to boost economic activity, attract investments and envisaging specific crisis related initiatives.

- Amended the Law on Social Protection according to which a new structure of integrated social services will be introduced from 1 April 2021. The purpose is to achieve a better coordination between social assistance and employment services.

Identified Priority Needs

Priority needs at this stage include supporting housing and economic security for people in a refugee-like situation and their hosts. Specific ER needs focusing on public services will be identified through the anticipated Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment. The assessment will target both host and displaced population as well as selected service providers to identify capacity gaps and vulnerabilities of both supply and demand side of public services. It will cover Kotayk and Syunik marzes and Yerevan, the three locations where most people in refugee-like situation reside.

There are also emerging needs for reintegration and social cohesion, as reports of tension between communities have been increasing.

Other specific priority needs are:

- Inclusion of women and youth in early recovery processes; for example, consideration of gender aspect of the public works and the ways to include women in these work schemes.
- Technical assistance to enhance access to employment and social services through design and implementation of integrated assessment procedures and services delivery.
- Support to facilitate the beneficiaries into relatively quick and smooth reintegration into the labor market.
- Support livelihood of mobile population through business creation schemes.
- Engage diaspora to support longer term, sustainable solutions, particularly in settlements of refugee-like persons in Armenia.

Achievements and Impact

- In February, 1,521 individuals from 632 households were assisted with early recovery activities.
- Under the emergency employment initiative, two projects are implemented in line with Government's recovery approach: on-job training with employers, and public works in Kotayk marz (Hrazdan and Charentsavan communities). 70 people are directly benefiting from on-job trainings that run from February until March. Further 125 unemployed people will also benefit from 3-month public works for the period between March and May.
- On-job training for 75 refugee-like persons from in and around NK in Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor and Syunik marzes.
- Renovation of a kindergarten in Goris (replacement of windows and doors) is at its final stage (number of beneficiaries is 60).
- Self-protecting and fast response group is formed, and the capacity building trainings are delivered in Dsegh, Lori. 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
- Awareness raising campaign was implemented for about 600 community members; 500 protective masks were produced with the logo of the community and were distributed among the vulnerable groups of the community.
- Sewing operator training/ gaining sewing operator skills to be able to work for local apparel manufacturing companies or provide in house sewing services thus generating income for their families. 13 trainees received their graduation certificates on 19/02/2021 and started visiting local manufacturing companies to undergo interview process, so the final impact will be assessed within few weeks when they complete their factory visits
- Budget review of Social Protection expenditures has been initiated though support by a national consultant, guided by international expert.
- In several shelters, 10 Early Learning Corners were established. These corners allow the mothers to engage in income-generation opportunities.

Remaining Gaps

There are growing recovery needs of host communities and service providers, specifically:

- The main beneficiary groups of the COVID-19 related campaign were elderly people; hence, there is a need to engage more young people in COVID-19 response activities.

- The need to support and reinforce coordination between social assistance and employment programs.
- The link between cash assistance programs and employment services has not been established.
- Lack of capacity of the staff for providing integrated social services.

Recommended Action

- ⇒ Strengthen initiatives aimed at local economic development and building local resilience. Support to economic and agricultural activities and energy saving solutions in bordering communities should be considered (e.g. related to livestock: fodder, pasture, access to markets etc.)
- ⇒ Increase provision of access to measures for the socio-economic engagement and income-generating activities to ensure a dignified living for the refugee-like population.
- ⇒ Launch the early recovery needs assessment (Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment) to provide a common analysis and better understanding of existing and emerging early recovery needs in Armenia and evidence for stronger early recovery interventions.
- ⇒ Support government partners to develop a green recovery agenda as part of its general crisis response and recovery, in cooperation with other development partners and institutions.
- ⇒ Labor and employment:
 - Improve effectiveness of active labor market policies, specially targeting unemployed and disadvantaged groups such as youth, migrant workers and women, and extending services to self-employed and informal economy workers
 - Support government's ongoing reform efforts to re-design social protection programs and create links with employment policies.
 - Align ILO's support to State Employment Agency (SEA) with the COVID-19 package of responses for employment activation and job preservation.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

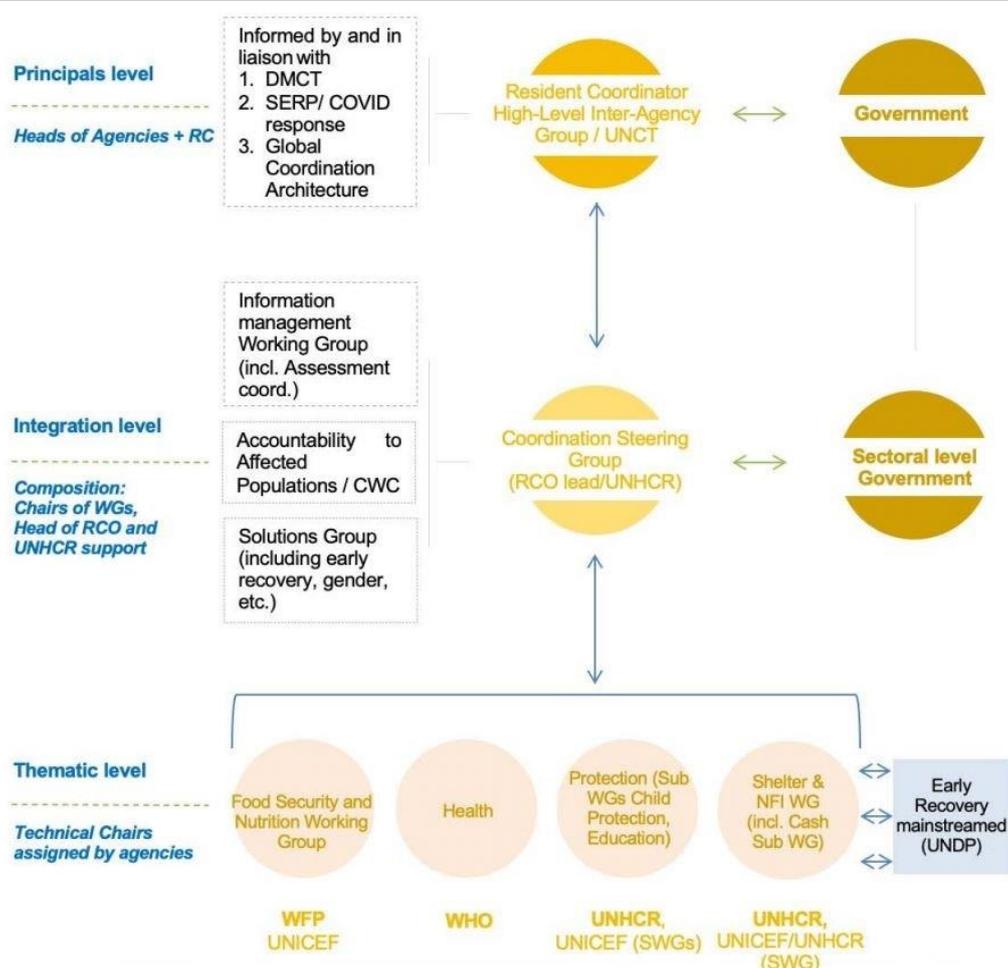
The UN team in Armenia established a coordination structure, which, at the technical level, is centered around four main humanitarian Working Groups (WG) – Shelter and NFIs, Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, and Health – as well as a fifth Working Group on Early Recovery allowing mainstreaming 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 2: Inter-Agency Response Plan Structure



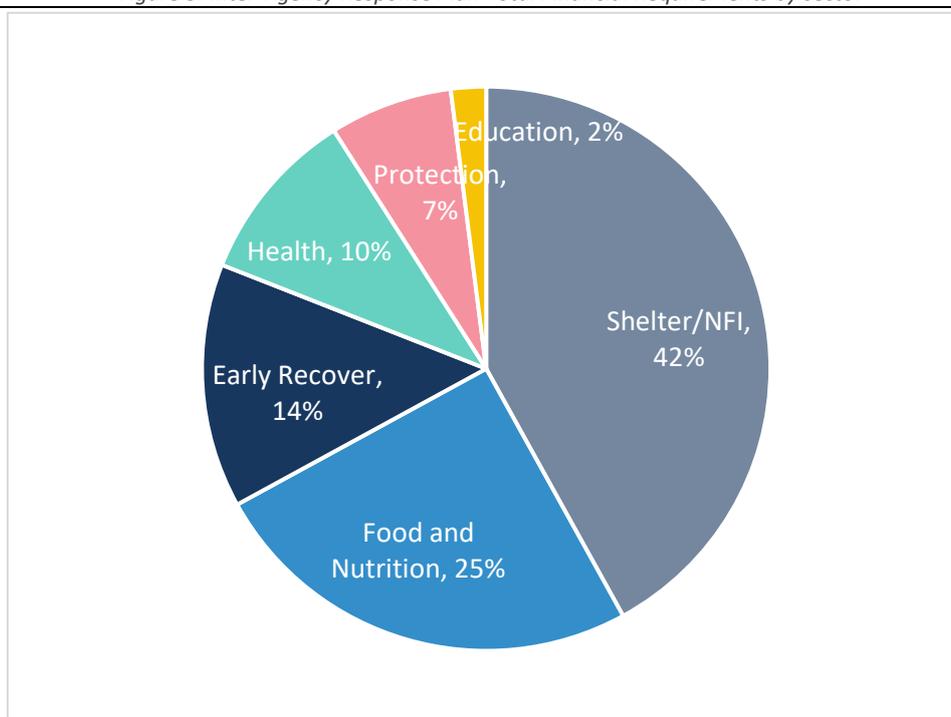
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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 (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”⁴, 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 2M** 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 8,794,260** which is equivalent to approximately **14 percent** of the requested amount. Contributions have been received from the governments of the USA and Japan, the European Union and CERF.

Figure 3: Inter-Agency Response Plan Total Financial Requirements by sector



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⁴ <https://www.un.am/up/file/SERRP.pdf>