

PROTECTION MONITORING **ARMENIA**

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2020

REPORT #1

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

On 27 September 2020, fighting broke out along the line of contact between Armenia and Azerbaijan and progressively expanded to the territories around and inside Nagorno-Karabakh until a ceasefire statement was signed on 9 November 2020. As a consequence, tens of thousands of people fled from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia while tens of thousands of people affected by the conflict were also temporarily displaced within Azerbaijan.

According to the Armenian Migration Service, some 90,000 persons found themselves in a refugee-like situation in Armenia as reported in December, spread across the ten marzes (provinces) of the country¹ including the Yerevan communities. Of these, 88% were women and children.² Various sources have indicated that, since mid-November until mid-December, between 20,000 and 50,000 individuals have returned to Nagorno-Karabakh, although there is no clarity as to how many of these returns are permanent or of a more temporary nature.

The host community in Armenia welcomed the refugee-like population, sharing accommodation, food, and other available resources. However, previously socioeconomically stable households that hosted refugee-like families are now facing challenges to pay rent, utilities and provide food. In addition to being hosted by local communities, the new arrivals benefit from the communal accommodation provided by the Government. In its effort to address urgent needs of the affected population, the Government has been rolling out several cash-based support programmes, since mid-November 2020, for the affected population.

The conflict impacted the refugee-like population and host communities physically, socially, mentally, and financially, and is adding pressure on institutions and their capacity to coordinate, finance and fully address essential needs.

METHODOLOGY³

Protection monitoring is defined as a systematic and regular collection, verification, and analysis of information over an extended period to identify violations of rights and/or protection risks/priorities/needs for populations of concern. The results of monitoring can be used to achieve coherent and evidence-based community focused response and advocacy.

Protection monitoring in Armenia is conducted by UNHCR through different data collection tools, including individual/household interviews and key informants' interviews as well as observations. It also accounts for information and needs coming from other communication points including the help line and self-referral through UNHCR operated hotline among others. The principles of Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) are applied in the design of the Protection monitoring methodology to ensure the exercise duly informs the delivery of specialized protection response focused on an individual's needs, capacities, opportunities, and vulnerabilities. The protection monitoring questionnaire included individual, as well as household-level questions.⁴ For community-based responses some findings can be validated through technical assessments or focus group discussions to support the implementation of the community-based projects.

UNHCR's protection monitoring activities in Armenia during November-December 2020 consist of **regular protection monitoring and departure monitoring**.

¹ Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush, and Vayots Dzor.

² REACH Rapid Needs Assessment of Displaced Population from Nagorno-Karabakh, 10-20 October 2020 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83324>

³ Protection monitoring sits in the centre of the protection information and data ecosystem, with linkages to other information systems to achieve an effective response. Protection monitoring is shaped by UNHCR's points of communications with persons of concern (PoCs), regardless of the medium and UNHCR presence within the community

Regular monitoring started on 19 November 2020 and is conducted through household/individual interviews using questionnaire survey with the refugee-like population to gain an overview of their protection situation, needs and coping mechanisms. Departure monitoring is conducted at departure points in Yerevan through short interviews with the refugee-like population returning to Nagorno-Karabakh. The qualitative data elicited through this process supplements regular protection monitoring results and increases the understanding of the challenges faced by the population of concern.

REGULAR PROTECTION MONITORING IN ARMENIA

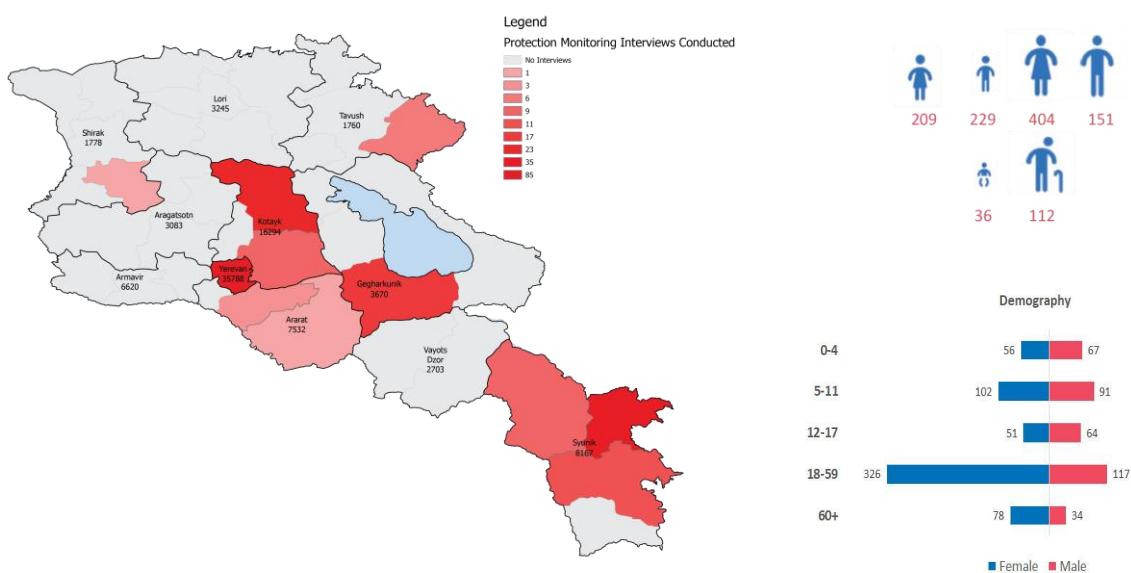
Highlights (Regular Protection Monitoring of refugee-like persons in Armenia)

- 984 individuals were interviewed, of whom 62% were women.
- 38% of the children of the households were out of school or kindergarten.
- Main priority needs expressed: shelter, cash, access to employment, access to food and healthcare.⁵
- 39% of households relied on humanitarian assistance to cover their expenses.
- 85% of interviewed adults mentioned signs of distress while they self-assess that 55% of the children within their households suffer from the same pains.
- More than half of the interviewed population mentioned that they are not aware of available SGBV protection measures.

During the reporting period UNHCR has conducted 248 household/individual visits to the refugee-like population displaced after 27 September 2020, with 984 individuals monitored overall.

Demographics

Of those interviewed, 45% were adults between 18 and 59, 44% were children and 11% were persons over 60 years of age. The gender composition was 62% female and 38% male. Some 99% of surveyed households mentioned that there were no unaccompanied or separated children residing with or known to them. Since the majority of the displaced population resides in the Yerevan, Kotayk, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions, the protection monitoring initially covered these locations.

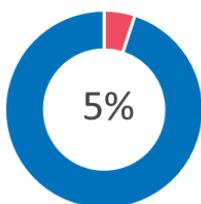


⁵ It was calculated based on weighted average of three priorities.

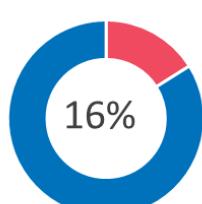
Vulnerabilities and Specific Needs

5% of the interviewed population reported to have disabilities, another 5% confirmed being pregnant or lactating women, 16% had a serious medical condition, 22% were women-at-risk⁶ and 38% were children or adolescents-at-risk.⁷

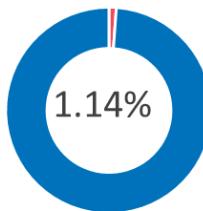
Pregnant or lactating woman



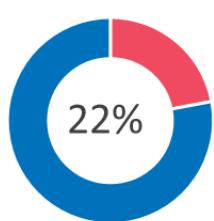
Serious medical condition



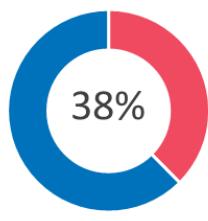
UASC



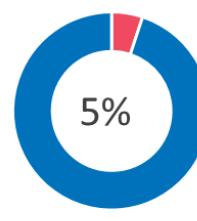
Woman at risk



Child or adolescent at risk

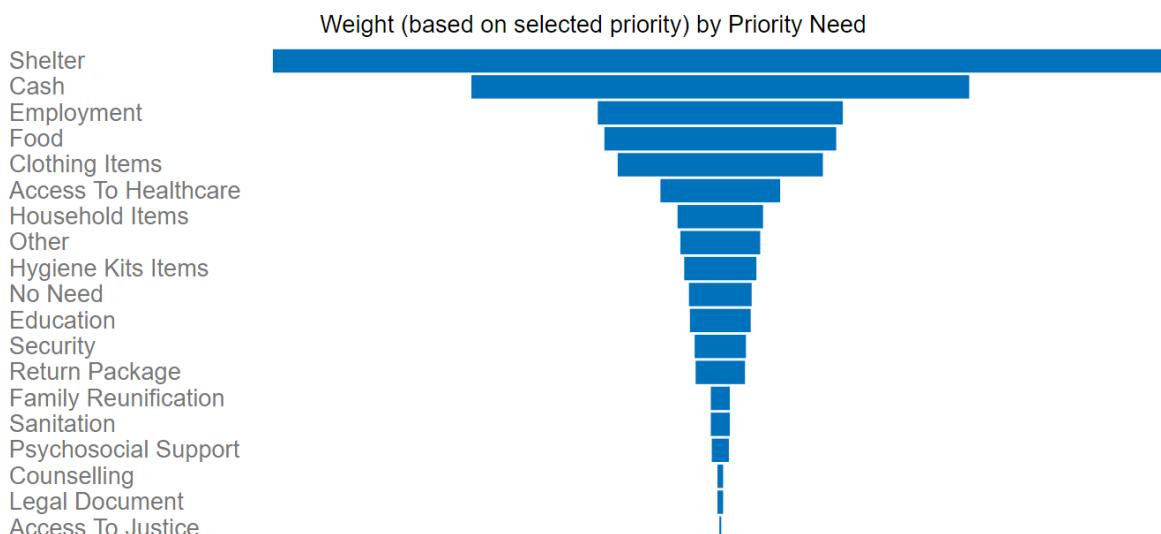


Persons with disability



Priority Needs

Interviewees expressed the following priority needs in order of importance: shelter, cash, access to employment, access to food, access to clothing items and healthcare. Only few expressed a need to access legal documentation or justice as a priority.

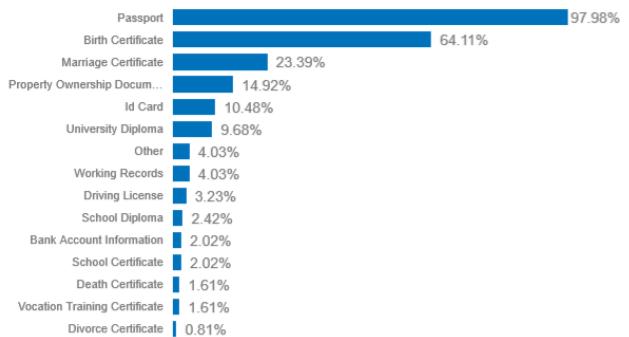


⁶ Woman of 18 years or above who is at risk because of her gender, such as single mothers or caregivers, single women, widows, older women, women with disabilities and survivors of violence

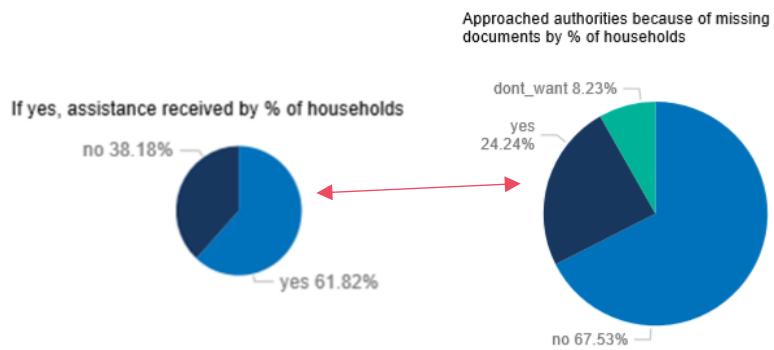
⁷ Person below the age of 18 who is at risk due to his/her age, dependency and/or immaturity

Documentation

Respondents have not reported serious problems regarding documentation. Most of the population interviewed had documents: 98% of population interviewed mentioned that they had brought passports, 64% birth certificates, 23% marriage certificates and 15% property ownership documents.



Of the interviewed population who did not have documentation, 67,5% mentioned that they did not approach authorities for missing documents. Only 24% have approached the authorities, and 62% of them have been assisted.



Movement to and within Armenia

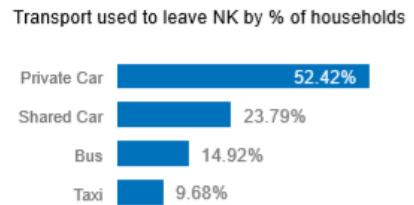
Most of the interviewed population fled to Armenia by car, either private or shared, by bus and by taxi.

Some 19% of the interviewed persons mentioned that they had entered Armenia via Vardenis, while 77% entered via Goris⁸.

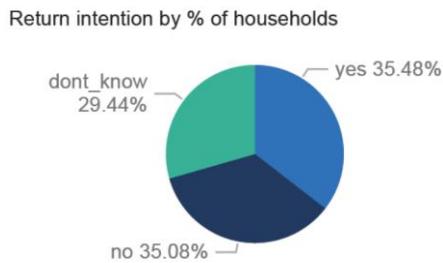
For 77% of interviewed families, this was their first time being forced to flee/forced to seek safety; 22% mentioned that they had been forced to flee in the past, before the latest 2020 conflict. Some 16% of interviewed persons mentioned that they were separated from household members while fleeing. Of those who reported being separated, only 38% mentioned that they had received reunification support.

Regarding the items that the interviewed population managed to bring with them to Armenia, two main categories reported were documentation (90%) and clothing (49%).

Some 35% of interviewees moved away from their first location of arrival in Armenia, mainly due to the shortage of accommodation. 77% of interviewed population mentioned that they have stayed in their current accommodation from 1 to 3 months.

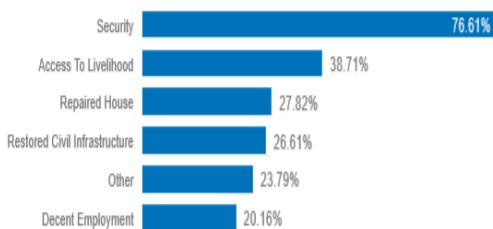


⁸ On 24th November 2020 the Martakert-Karvachar-Vardenis highway was closed; thus, the only operational route between NK and Armenia now is via the Lachin corridor.'



The assessed families were almost equally divided on their intentions to return: 35% were willing to return, 35% were not willing to return and some 30% did not know. Families willing to return mentioned that they were planning to travel in the very near future: within the next few days (the majority) or within the coming month.

Conditions for return by % of households



Some 77% of the interviewed households reported security as main condition for return, 39% mentioned access to livelihoods, 28% repaired house, 27% restored civil infrastructure, and 20% decent employment.

40% of the families interviewed had relatives in Nagorno-Karabakh and 96% of them were in contact with the relatives. Likewise, 40% mentioned to have relatives in other parts of Armenia, of which 93% are in direct contact with them.

Registration in Armenia

90% of the households assessed during the protection monitoring confirmed being registered with the municipality to where they were displaced.

Registered in current municipality

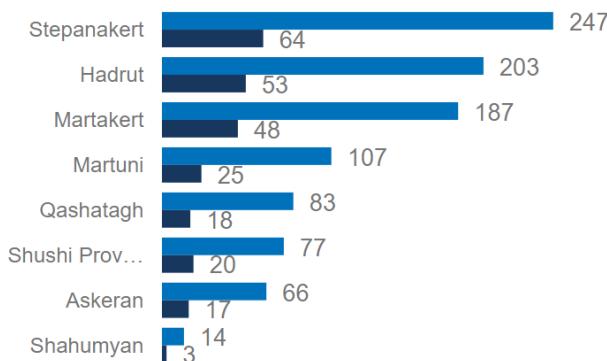


Most of the interviewed people came from Stepanakert, Hadрут and Martakert.

The majority, at the time of the survey, was residing in Yerevan and Syunik and Tavush marzes (provinces) in Armenia.

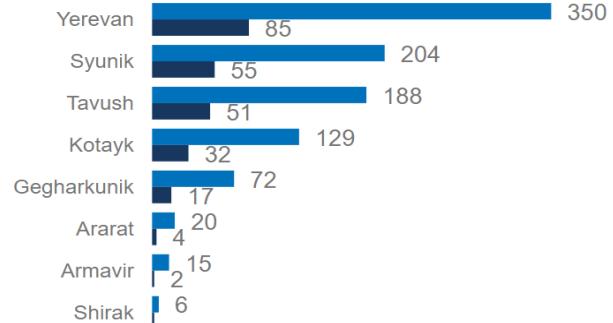
Place of habitual residence in NK

● Individuals ● Households



Place of residence in Armenia by Marz (Province)

● Individuals ● Households



Protection Concerns

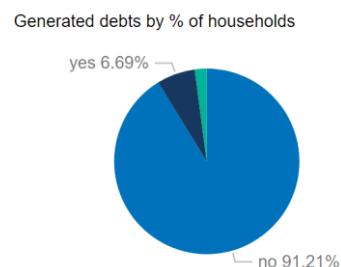
Social Cohesion Concerns: Persons were asked to report any incident related to social cohesion. 96% of households mentioned that they did not have any difficulties with host communities, and 88% mentioned that the host communities were very welcoming. As for expected challenges, 34% of interviewed households mentioned none, while others raised the issue of diminishing resources and risk of becoming an economic burden on host communities.

Security Concerns: 98% of interviewed households felt safe in their current location in Armenia and 98% had not faced any restrictions of movement. More than half of the interviewed population mentioned that they were not aware of available sexual and Gender-Based violence (SGBV) protection measures.

Living Conditions: Only 48% mentioned that they were sharing accommodation with another household. 84% of the assessed families were in a privately owned accommodation and were living either in apartments (shared or not) or hotels, while the remaining families lived in a publicly owned accommodation such as collective shelters, schools or other. 81% of assessed persons were not paying any rent although they could have been living in a privately owned accommodation.

Of the interviewees, 98% confirmed having access to electricity, 97% to running water (including 85% to hot water), 79% to heaters, 67% to furniture, 63% to bathrooms and 60% to cooking utilities. 42% were planning to remain in their current accommodation and 25% did not know. It is worth stressing that access to services is not for free and affected populations need support to afford these.

Livelihood and self-reliance: 39% of the interviewed households reported that they depended on humanitarian assistance and 27% on their pension allocation to deal with their daily expenses. Only 19% relied on their work salary to cover their expenses. Close to 7% of the households interviewed generated debt since arriving in Armenia.



Access to Services

Access to healthcare: 56% of interviewees mentioned of having a family member with some medical issue. From these households, 74% had sought help and assistance was provided in 62% of cases.

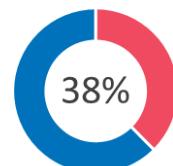
Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, 95% of the interviewed households mentioned that they were well-informed of the preventive measures and 90% confirmed that they had access to different protective equipment.

Access to psychosocial support: 85% of the interviewed adults mentioned signs of distress and they assessed that 55% of the children within their households were negatively affected by the situation, due to the then ongoing conflict (73%), loss of hope for the future (54%) and lack of access to their property (44%), livelihood (39%), shelter (36%). 83% of the interviewees reported that they had not sought psychosocial support, because they believed that there was no need for follow-up (42%) and because of lack of awareness on service availability (19%).

Access to education: 38% of the children of the households interviewed during the reported period were not attending school or kindergarten.

Children out of schools or kindergarten

Access to food assistance: 92% of the interviewed persons who needed food assistance informed that they received it. 65% of them reported that they had received the food assistance from the municipalities during the prior two weeks (34% during the past month and 27% during the last few days). 48% of the assessed households believed that the food provided meets their basic needs.

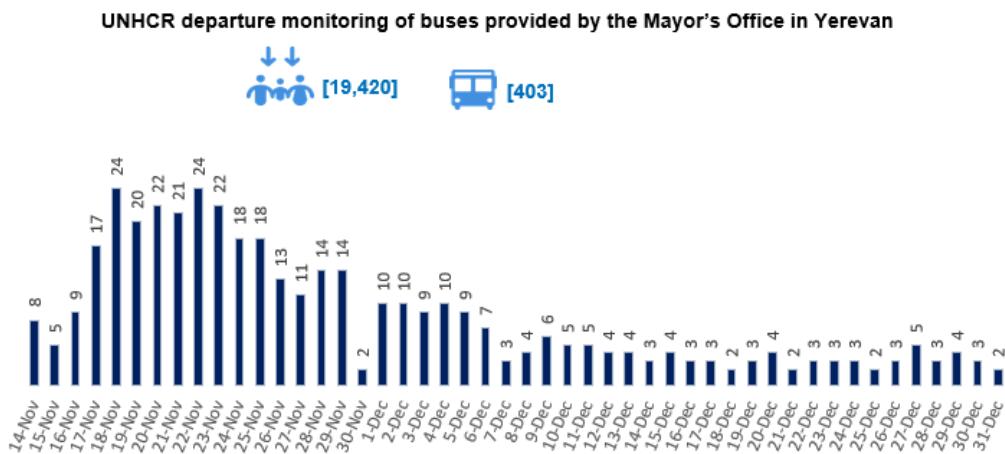


DEPARTURE MONITORING

Highlights (Departure Monitoring)

- Most returnees were women, children, and older persons.
- Buses are provided by the Yerevan municipality through a private company.
- Majority of returnees stated that they are returning home voluntarily, although they have little information on their immediate future. Some returnees stated that they are returning to resume employment held before the escalation of the conflict.
- Some returnees were returning permanently, while others were unsure, mentioning that they will decide later.
- The UNHCR team has observed that there is no pre-departure registration for departures.
- No priority boarding for older persons or persons with small children was observed by UNHCR; and there was no Police and Ambulance present.
- Basic COVID-19 protective and preventive measures were not promoted and followed.
- Interviewees' phone numbers were collected for further protection monitoring through structured phone interviews of returnees.

UNHCR Armenia had been monitoring departures of buses from Yerevan to Stepanakert, organized by the Yerevan Municipality starting from 14 November 2020. Through the reporting period, initially there were several departure points (Yerevan municipality, Shahumyan square and "Kilikia" bus station) but since 16 November 2020, departures have been taking place only from "Kilikia" bus station. The monitoring, which is conducted by UNHCR staff, is focused on the organization of departures, observation of the profile of returnees and their possible specific needs, use of COVID-19 preventive measures, collection of individual information through random interviews at the departure place.



During the monitoring period, the UNHCR protection team observed a daily average of 404 people boarded the buses from Yerevan to Stepanakert. During the same period, Russian Federation peacekeeping forces reported 910 arrivals to Nagorno-Karabakh per day on average. In addition, members of UNHCR Protection Monitoring team have indicated that, among those departing, some were only going back to check on their property and pick up belongings before returning to Armenia. The number of people departing based on UNHCR daily monitoring in Yerevan significantly decreased by the end of December, averaging about 148 individuals a day. Interviews at the departure also confirmed that some individuals travelled multiple times to Nagorno-Karabakh. The UNHCR monitoring team has also observed private merchants offering free transportation



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