

PROTECTION MONITORING ARMENIA

MARCH-APRIL 2021

REPORT #3



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 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 2020 and who at the time were residing in ten marzes (provinces) of the country¹ including in the capital. Of these, 88% were women and children.² According to the population data from the Migration Service of Armenia, 66,051 persons (73%) in a refugee-like situation have remained in Armenia as of 22 March 2021. Among the refugee-like population who remained in Armenia, the gender distribution was 59% female (38,736 individuals) and 41% male (27,113 individuals).³

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 for themselves and for those whom they host. 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 2020.⁴

METHODOLOGY⁵

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 informant interviews as well as observations. It also accounts for information and needs coming from other communication points including self-referral through the 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. 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 aimed at strengthening of community

¹ Aragaatsoin, 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 Government data on persons from NK in a refugee-like situation in Armenia, available at : <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85884>

⁴ Government assistance programmes finish at the end of June 2021. The Government of Armenia is discussing a possible extension of the assistance programmes beyond 30 June 2021.

⁵ 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

mobilization and promotion of peaceful coexistence. The analysis contained in this report is mostly based on individual/household interviews and key informant interviews conducted throughout March-April 2021.

UNHCR's Protection monitoring exercise started on 19 November 2020 and is conducted through household/individual interviews using a questionnaire survey with the refugee-like population to gain an overview of their protection situation, needs, and coping mechanisms. In addition, starting from January-February, key informant interviews and observations are conducted in collective/transitional shelters, with settlements' authorities, social workers, humanitarian workers, and community leaders. Departure monitoring in Yerevan is conducted through short interviews with the returning population.

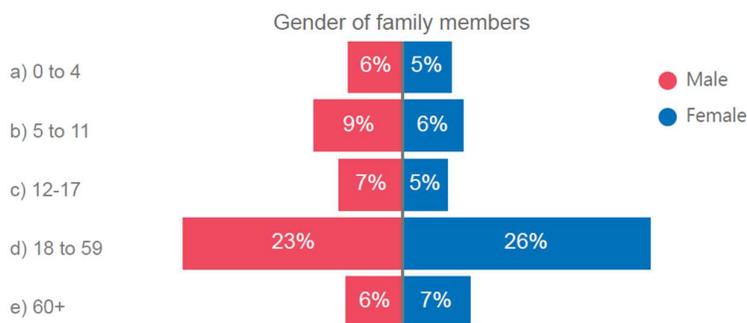
PROTECTION MONITORING IN ARMENIA

Highlights

- 1,907 individuals were interviewed during the reporting period through 437 Protection monitoring interviews. Among them, 51% were women and 49% were men.
- Seventy-one percent (71%) of the children represented in the interviews were registered and attending schools or kindergartens.
- Eight percent (8%) of interviewed children aged 6-8 were not attending school.
- Main priority needs expressed: shelter, cash, household items, access to employment, and clothing items.
- Seventy-two percent (72%) of the interviewed individuals reported that they or someone else in their family were showing signs of stress, while 55% of parents noticed signs of stress in their children including changes in their routine behaviour.
- Thirty-two percent (32%) of households confirmed that they generated debts since their arrival in Armenia, and in 63% of such cases the amount of debt was more than 150,000 AMD.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of the interviewed population reported that they were unemployed during the previous month.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of the families relied on humanitarian assistance from the Government, local authorities, and NGOs.
- Thirty-six percent (36%) of the interviewed individuals mentioned that they had no income.
- With regards to the intentions to return nineteen percent (19%) of the interviewed households expressed wish to return, 31% did not know, 45% were planning to relocate within Armenia, and four percent (4%) wanted to go to a third country. This indicates an eleven percent (11%) decrease in the number of interviewed households who want to return compared to the previous reporting period.

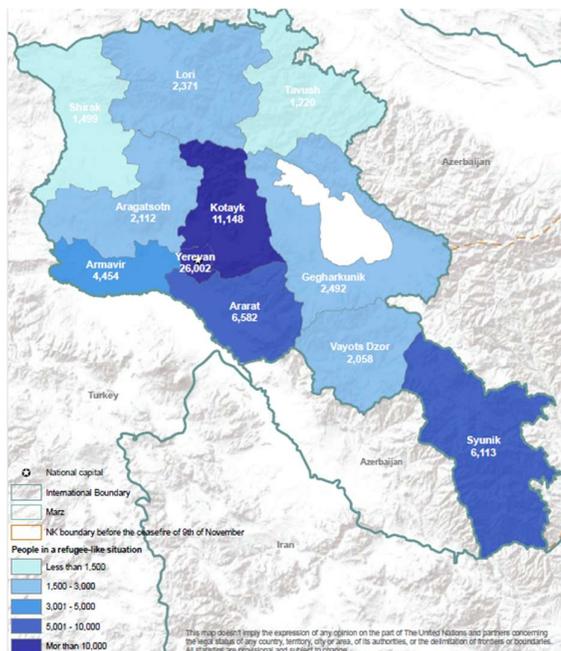
Demographics

During the reporting period UNHCR protection monitoring exercise covered 1,907 individuals in a refugee-like situation displaced to Armenia after 27 September 2020 through 437 Protection monitoring interviews. The average number of individuals per family is 4.4. The questionnaire used included questions related to the situation of individuals interviewed as well as their family members.



Forty-nine percent (49%) of those covered by the Protection monitoring are adults between 18 and 59 years of age, 38% are children (under 18 years old) and 13% are over 60 years old. There was no noticeable change in the demographics in comparison to the previous report (January-February).

From March to April 2021 the interviews were conducted mostly in the city of Yerevan and provinces of Kotayk, Ararat and Syunik, since the majority of people in a refugee-like situation were residing in those regions as of the end of March, as represented in the map.⁶ Based on the triangulation of data by UNHCR 36,340 people in a refugee-like situation remain in Armenia as of 30 April 2021.⁷

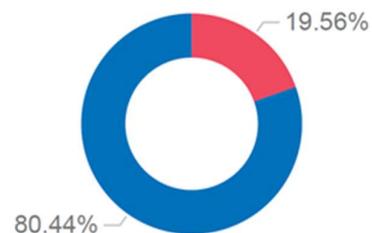


Among those interviewed, 53% confirmed having secondary education, 30% tertiary or university education, 12% postgraduate, and 5% other. Respondents were asked about their previous occupation, and 21% of the interviewed responded that they used to work in education/health system, 18% were formally employed, 15% were busy with housekeeping/childcare, and 14% were unemployed.

Vulnerabilities and Specific Needs

Twenty percent (20%) of interviewed individuals are persons with specific needs, including persons with disability, single women, persons with serious medical conditions⁸ without access to treatment, elderly at risk⁹, pregnant or lactating women, unaccompanied or separated children¹⁰, and children in extended families¹¹ or children spouses¹².

Individuals with specific needs



⁶ The Government data on persons from NK in a refugee-like situation in Armenia as of 22 March 2021. This map doesn't apply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNHCR concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or its authorities, or the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries. All statistics are provisional and subject to change. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

⁷ Disaggregation by marzes: Shirak - 819, Lori - 1,302, Tavush - 657, Aragatsotn - 1,168, Kotayk - 6,170, Yerevan - 14,166, Armavir - 2,479, Ararat - 3,304, Gegharkunik - 1,442, Vayots Dzor - 1,515, Syunik - 3,318.

⁸ Serious medical condition, a condition that requires assistance, in terms of treatment or provision of nutritional and non-food items, in the country of asylum. It includes: mental illness, malnutrition, difficult pregnancy, chronic illness, critical medical condition, other medical condition, addiction.

⁹ Elderly at risk, a person of 60 years old or above, with specific need(s) in addition to his/her age. This includes single older persons and older couples. They may be the sole caregivers for others, suffer from health problems, and have difficulty adjusting to their new environment, and/or otherwise lack psychological, physical, economic, social or other support from family members or others.

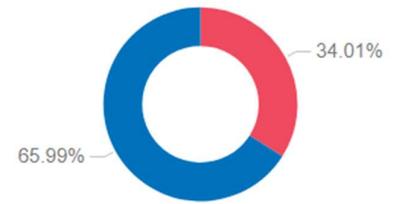
¹⁰ Unaccompanied or separated child, a person below the age of 18 who is currently not under the care of either parent or other legal or customary primary caregiver.

¹¹ Extended family, a family which extends beyond the nuclear family to include grandparents and other relatives.

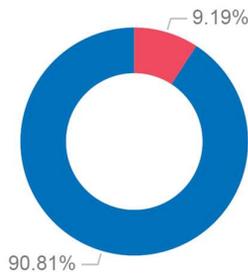
¹² Child spouse, a person below the age of 18 who is married.

There is a slight increase (10%) in the number of individuals age 60 and above who are at risk. In January-February twenty-four percent (24%) individuals age 60 and above were reported to be at risk, while during March-April thirty-four percent (34%) of monitored individuals age 60 and above category were found at risk, including those who have extensive medical needs (93%), with psychosocial needs (5%) lacking family or community support (2%).

Individuals in the age 60 and above who are at risk



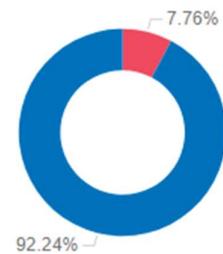
Child in an extended family or child spouse



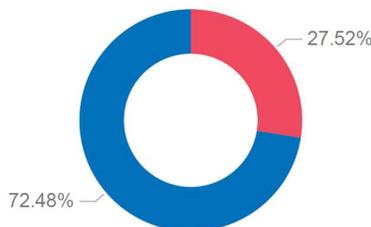
Hundred percent of the families interviewed mentioned that there were no unaccompanied or separated children residing with or known to them, while 9% reported to have a child in an extended family or a child spouse in the household. In most of the cases (63%) the child in the extended family was reported to be the grandchild of the interviewed individual or his/her sibling (29%).

Eight percent (8%) of the interviewed population reported to have different types of disabilities, mostly of a physical nature. The Protection monitoring exercise revealed that the number of the individuals with serious medical condition has slightly decreased from 26% (in January – February 2021) to 23% (in March – April 2021).

Individuals with a disability



Women at risk

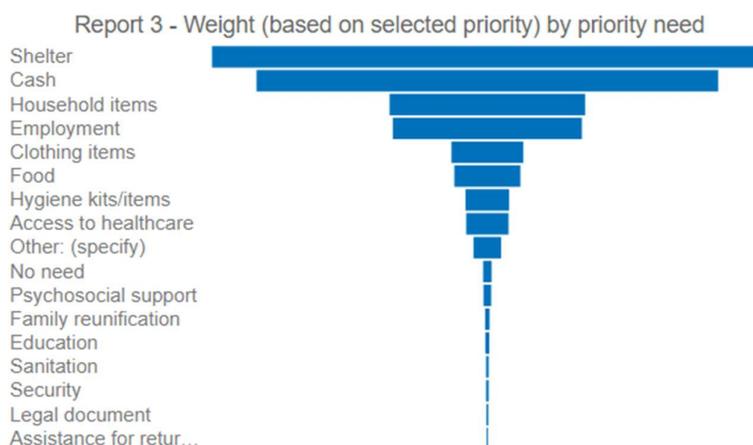


The number of the women at risk¹³ has increased during the period of March-April 2021 compared to January – February 2021 by 5% (22,59% during January-February). Five percent of the interviewed women in a refugee-like (age 13-55) population are pregnant, and 4% of them reportedly have not received the required assistance for pregnancy.

Priority Needs

The top priority needs as expressed by persons interviewed are: **shelter, cash, household items and access to employment**. When compared with the results of the previous reporting period, UNHCR observed that shelter, cash, household items and employment remain the most relevant priorities for the population in a refugee-like situation.

¹³ 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



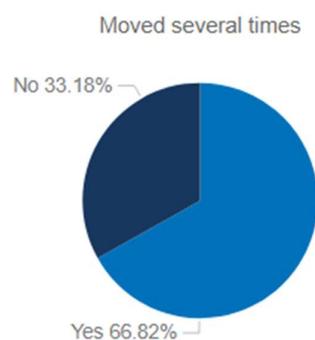
Documentation

Based on the analysis of the findings of the first Protection monitoring report,¹⁴ the Protection monitoring team decided to analyse more deeply the issue of documentation by collecting information on passports and Identification Cards for all individuals and birth certificates for all children. Starting -February 2021, additional questions were included regarding the availability of those documents. During March-April, 97% of adults responded they had passports with them. It is also worth noting that 99,86% of children had birth certificates.

The interviewees were also asked questions about the availability of the following documents: property ownership document, marriage certificate, school diploma, driving license, death certificate, divorce certificate, residency card. In 36% of cases, the interviewed individuals mentioned that they did not miss any documents. Among those missing, 25% were related to property ownership, 9% marriage certificates and 8% school diplomas while 2% reported missing driving licence, death certificate (1%), divorce certificate (0.2%), residency card (0.2%), and other/not specified (3%). Of the interviewed population who were missing some documentation, 42% mentioned that they did not approach authorities for missing documents due to the following reasons: lack of information about the location where to obtain the documents (39%), lack of resources to cover expenses (30%), lack of relevant authority in the location (9%), whereas 22% mentioned other reasons.

Movement within Armenia and return intentions.

There was a slight increase in the number of people in a refugee-like situation who had to move from their first accommodation in Armenia since their first displacement. During March-April 2021, 67% of respondents mentioned that they had moved several times (including changing different types of accommodations). About three quarters, 78% of interviewed population mentioned that they have stayed in their current accommodation for 3 months or more. Three main reasons for moving from previous accommodation were reported as following: overcrowded

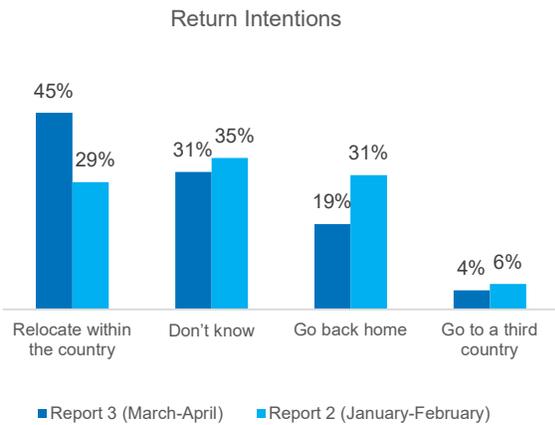


¹⁴ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86256>

commonly shared premises (34%), lack of alternative accommodation (32%) and reportedly requested by authorities (12%).

“It’s high time for us to start regarding the host community as our home - we cannot stay as guests forever... If only granted the opportunity, we can work, create and contribute, and feel happy again.”

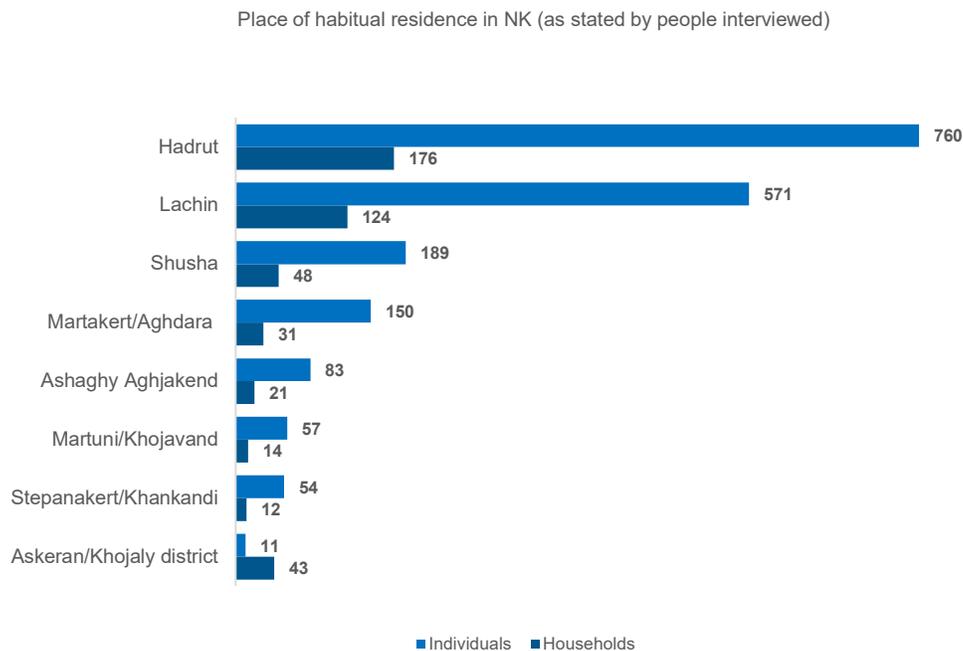
~a young woman searching for a job in the host community Jermuk



During the third Protection monitoring exercise, 19% of interviewed households wanted to return, 31% did not know, 45% were planning to relocate within Armenia, 4% wanted to go to a third country. This indicates an 11% decrease in the number of interviewed households who want to return compared to the previous reporting period.

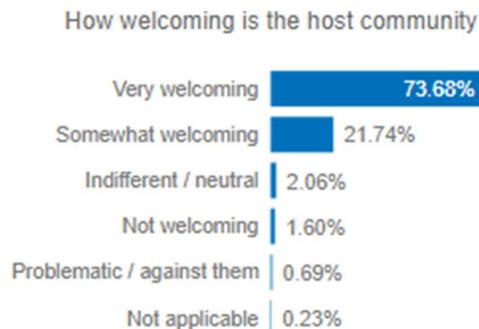
Perceived risks upon return: Among concerns upon return the following ones were reported: security risks (30%), no access to the area of origin/former habitual residence (30%), damaged property (16%) and lack of access to livelihood (15%).

Place of former habitual residence prior to the displacement to Armenia, as stated by the people interviewed: Most of the interviewed people during the March-April Protection monitoring exercise were from Hadrut, Lachin, Shusha and Martakert/Aghdara, and there were few interviewees from Stepanakert/Khankandi. This trend could indicate that many people from Stepanakert/Khankandi may have already returned by March-April 2021.



Protection Concerns

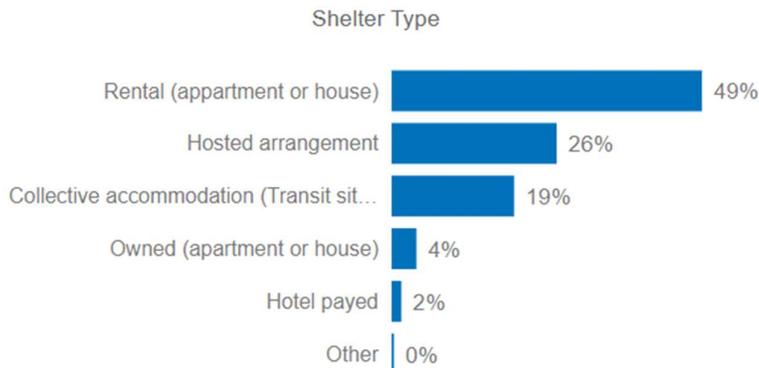
Social Cohesion Concerns: During the third protection monitoring exercise seventy-eight percent (78%) of interviewed households felt safe in their current location, which indicates a 14% decrease against the number of interviewed individuals who reported that they felt safe in their current location during the previous reporting period. Persons were also asked to report any incidents related to social cohesion. Ninety five percent (95%) of households mentioned that they did not have any incidents with host communities, and 74% mentioned that the host communities were very welcoming.



“Despite the inconvenience and the hardships, we are still going through, we enjoy the harmony and peace we’ve attained in the host community, Kapan.”

~ an older couple living in a collective shelter in Kapan

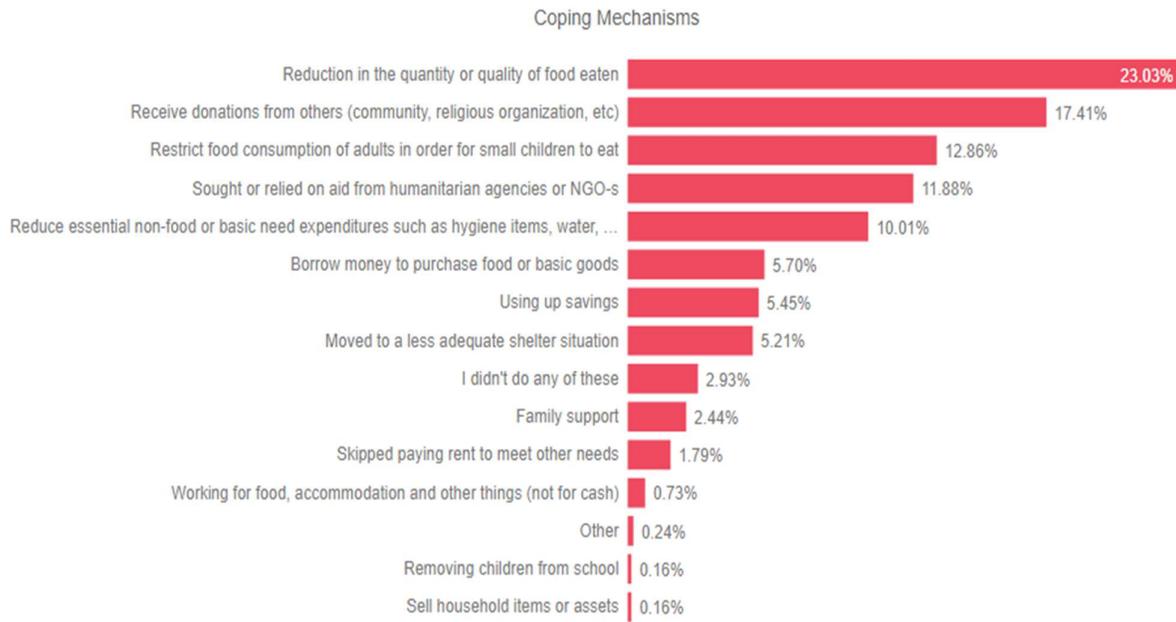
Living Conditions: In the previous reporting period (January-February 2021), 67% of the interviewed population were living in rental apartments or houses. In the current reporting period, 49% of the interviewed population were living in rental apartments or houses, and 53% were paying rent. Only 9% of the interviewed households reported that they received cash assistance for rent.



Despite the fact that during the reporting period the number of people living in collective shelters decreased compared to previous months, the number of collective shelters’ residents reached and interviewed has increased from 8% in January-February to 19% in March-April. Of the interviewees, 99% confirmed having access to electricity, 94% to water inside their dwellings, 61% to private toilets. 58% of the individuals confirmed that they are planning to stay in current accommodation, 25% planned to leave their current accommodation and 17% did not know. It is worth stressing that access to services (electricity, gas, water, etc.) is not provided free of charge and affected populations require financial support to pay for utilities.

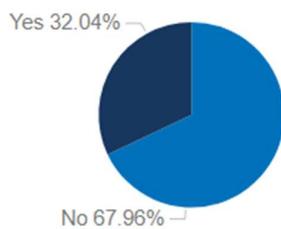
Coping mechanisms and livelihood: Coping mechanisms used by interviewees as a result of displacement include reduction of the quantity or quality of food, spending savings, receiving donations from community, faith-based organizations, etc., seeking or relying on aid from humanitarian agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGO), portioning food consumption of adults, borrowing money, and relying on family support. Twenty-three percent (23%) of those interviewed said they had reduced the quantity or quality of food (this indicates a 7% increase in comparison to the previous reporting period), 17% were receiving donations from

community, religious organizations, etc., 13% had to restrict food consumption of adults to benefit small children, 12% sought or relied on aid from humanitarian agencies or NGO, 10% had to reduce essential non-food or basic needs expenditures such as hygiene items, water, baby items, etc., 6% had to borrow money to purchase food or basic goods, 5% were spending previously owned savings and another 5% had to move to a less adequate shelter. A few risky coping mechanisms identified by UNHCR included child labour (1) and sending children to live with other families (4).

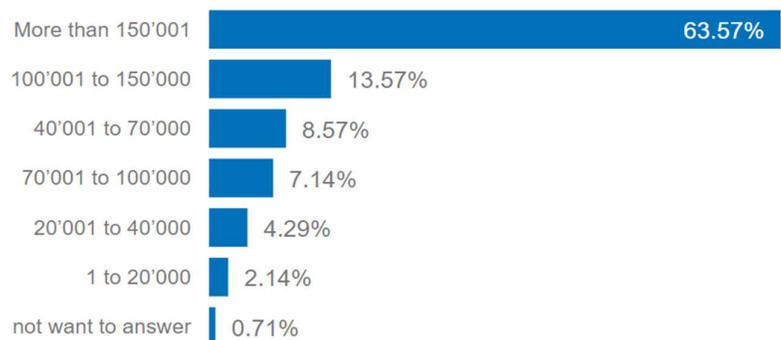


The findings of the third reporting period revealed that there was an increase of debts among the interviewed population in a refugee-like situation. In comparison with the second reporting period, when 28% of the households interviewed confirmed having generated debt since arriving in Armenia, in March-April 2021, 32% of households confirmed that they generated debts since their arrival in Armenia, and the amount of debt in 64% of such cases was more than 150,000 AMD (approx. 300 USD). Seventy-six percent of the interviewed population reported that they were unemployed during the previous month. Forty-six percent of the families relied on humanitarian assistance from Government, local authorities, and NGOs as one of the sources of their income, 31% on pension, 24% on employment, support from families abroad 3%; and report no income 36%.

Has your family generated debt since arriving to Armenia?



Amount of debt generated



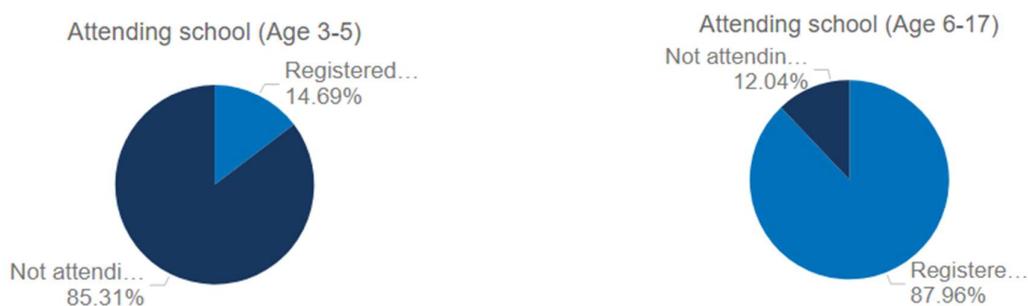
Access to Services

Access to healthcare: Forty-eight percent (48%) of the persons interviewed said they or their family member had some health-related issues since their arrival to Armenia (e.g. physical or mental health, suffered an accident, or chronic illness). From the 48% reporting family members with health issues, 88% approached health facilities, and 96% received different types of medical assistance – a very encouraging indicator for access to health care. Some of the obstacles in accessing medical assistance mentioned by respondents include lack of financial resources to cover expenses, lack of information on where to access services, and lack of supporting documents.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, 98% of the interviewed households mentioned that they were well-informed of the preventive measures and confirmed that they had access to different protective equipment.

Access to psychosocial support: Seventy-two percent (72%) of interviewed individuals reported that they or someone else in their family were showing signs of stress, and 55% of respondents have noticed signs of stress in their children including changes in their routine behaviour. Not being able to return home (17%), loss of property (16%), loss of hope for the future (14%), lost livelihood (12%), lack of shelter (12%), being separated from their community (12%) and ongoing conflict (8%) were reported as the main reasons of stress by the interviewed households. However, only 23% of interviewed households have sought psychosocial support, which indicates a 6% decrease in comparison to the previous reporting period.

Access to education: Seventy-one percent (71%) of the children from families interviewed represented by the sample were registered and attending a school or a kindergarten. Specifically, 85% of the children aged 3-5, were not attending kindergarten, while 88% of the children, aged 6-17 were registered and attending schools.



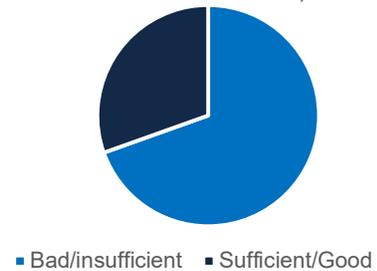
Children were reportedly not attending kindergartens/schools due to facts such as closure of the school/kindergarten due to COVID-19 situation, limited space in local schools/kindergartens, some registration issues, lack of information on the procedures for enrolment, no school/kindergartens in the neighbourhood, the uncertainty about the duration of stay in Armenia, and others.

Access to food: Seventy-six percent (76%) of interviewed households reported that their household has access to 3 meals a day, 21% have access to 2 meals a day, 1% to 1 meal a day and another 1% to more than 3 meals a day. Vast majority, 91% of the interviewed households mentioned that they needed food assistance and 95% of interviewed households reported that they had received food assistance after displacement. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of households received the food assistance several days before, 31% in the previous month, 14% several months before and 14% in the month the interview was conducted.

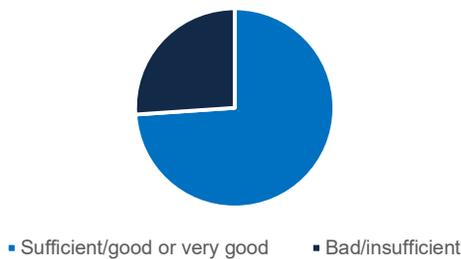
Access to social assistance: Ninety-one percent (91%) of interviewed households reported that they or one of their family members have received social assistance since their arrival to Armenia. Of those who have received social assistance, 95% reportedly received special assistance (financial) for refugee-like population from NK.

Key Informant (KI) Interviews: UNHCR Protection monitoring team conducted KI interviews to get more insight into the situation of the refugee-like population displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh after 27 September 2020. Among the KI were community volunteers, humanitarian workers, representatives of the local authorities, and the site management. During March-April 2021, 46 KI interviews were conducted. Seventy percent (70%) of the interviewed KI rated the accessibility of “Shelter” (finding accommodation) in their community/collective shelter as bad or insufficient and only 30% as good or sufficient.

Accessibility of Shelter (finding accommodation)



Accessibility of Health Services



Seventy-four (74%) percent of the interviewed KI reported that in their community/collective shelter the accessibility of health services is sufficient, good or very good while 26 % mentioned that the accessibility of health services is either bad or insufficient, and 83% of interviewees mentioned that there are hospitals/clinics within walking distance.

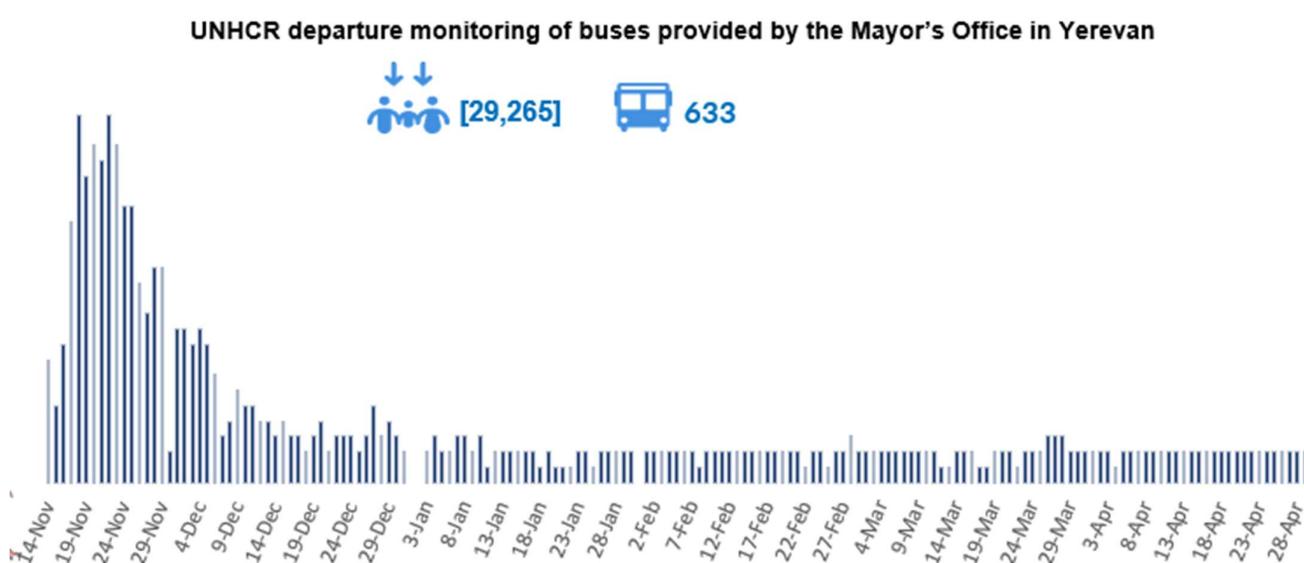
The accessibility of education was rated as good by 69% of the interviewees, sufficient by 24% and insufficient by the rest. Also, 91% of the interviewed KI mentioned that there are schools and kindergartens in walking distance. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the interviewed KI rated the accessibility of food in their collective shelter/community as bad or insufficient, while 43% mentioned that the accessibility of food is either sufficient or good, and fifty-four percent (54%) of interviewees mentioned that they have a food assistance in their community/collective shelter. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the interviewed KI rated the accessibility of sanitation in their community/collective shelter as sufficient or good, while 35% mentioned that the accessibility of sanitation is either bad or insufficient. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of interviewed KI rated the accessibility of water in their community/collective shelter as good or sufficient. Forty-five percent (45%) of interviewed KI mentioned that they don't have separate facilities for male/female in the community/collective shelter. Seventy-two percent (72%) of interviewed KI reported that in their community/collective shelter they have access to public transportation always or often, 11% sometimes, while the rest mentioned that they have access to public transportation hardly or never. The three priority needs mentioned by the KI were: **housing, livelihood, and financial support.**

Three Priority Needs



DEPARTURES MONITORING

UNHCR Armenia had been monitoring departures of buses from Yerevan to Stepanakert/Khankandi, organized by the Yerevan Municipality starting from 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 2021. However, UNHCR continues monitoring the results of the departure monitoring KoBo toolbox and preparing departures monitoring dashboards. 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 daily departure monitoring is focused on the organization of departures, observation of the profile of returnees and their possible specific needs, use of COVID-19 preventive measures, and collection of individual information through random interviews at the place of departure.



During the monitoring period there were no changes in the number of people departing Armenia. Both in January-February 2021 and March-April 2021, UNHCR Protection team observed a daily average of 82 people.

As a result of UNHCR advocacy, starting from 30 March 2021 masks were distributed in the "Kilikia" bus station. During the reporting period, passengers were provided with masks from the American University of Armenia (AUA), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and Yerevan Municipality.

In addition, during the reporting period UNHCR Protection monitoring team conducted structured interviews with some individuals departing from the "Kilikia" bus station. During March-April 2021, 91 key informant interviews were conducted at the departure point in Yerevan. The findings of interviews showed only 6% of the interviewed individuals were returning to Nagorno-Karabakh for the first time since 27 September 2020. For 38% of interviewees, this was a second trip to Nagorno-Karabakh, while the rest (56%) went more than twice. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the interviewed individuals mentioned that they were going to stay in Nagorno-Karabakh, 17% did not know, and 28% were not planning to stay there. Responding to a question on their accommodation in Armenia, 13% mentioned that they were going to stay in collective shelters in Armenia.



A UNHCR colleague interviewing a displaced woman in refugee-like situation in a collective shelter in Dilijan, Tavush province of Armenia.
Photo by UNHCR



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