



Children who are the only students in borderline school received school supplies from ARCS  
 Photo: IFRC, Yulia Bilenko

# FINAL REPORT

## Armenia, Europe Region | Population Movement

<p><b>Emergency Appeal No:</b> <a href="#">MDRAM012</a>  <b>Emergency Appeal launched:</b> 30/09/2023  <b>Operational Strategy published:</b> 26/10/2023</p>	<p><b>Glide No:</b>  <a href="#">OT-2023-000180-ARM</a></p>
<p><b>Final Report issued on:</b> 28/04/2026</p>	<p><b>Timeframe covered by final report:</b>        From 27/09/2023 to 30/06/2025</p>
<p><b>Number of people targeted:</b> 90,000</p>	<p><b>Number of people assisted:</b> 98,020<sup>1</sup></p>
<p><b>Funding requirements (CHF):</b>        CHF 15 million through the IFRC Emergency Appeal        CHF 20 million Federation-wide  <b>Funding Coverage:</b>  <b>CHF 8,974,061 (60 per cent)</b> – Please see further details in section D of this report</p>	<p><b>DREF amount initially allocated:</b>        CHF 1 million</p>

<sup>1</sup> The total number of people assisted under the Emergency Appeal reached its highest in the area of MHPSS, with 98,020 displaced individuals supported. This figure accounts for unique individuals who may have also received assistance through other interventions. In total, 234,393 forms of assistance and services were delivered to the displaced population. Further details are available on the IFRC dashboard: [IFRC GO - Emergency - Armenia - Population Movement](#).

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

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### Story of Rafik Avanesyan, a beekeeper

Back at home, Rafik was known as a lawyer with a strong passion for beekeeping. Since 1987, his legal career took him to various regions across Karabakh. During one of his assignments in the countryside, he decided to get a few beehives — a decision that marked the beginning of a lifelong hobby. In September 2023, along with many others, Rafik had to leave Karabakh, leaving behind both his home and his beloved apiary.

After moving to Armenia, Rafik settled in Davtashen village of Armenia with a commitment to rebuild his apiary. He heard from friends and relatives that the Armenian Red Cross was supporting people from Karabakh and, though not expecting much, he decided to apply.

“I had already managed to acquire several beehives on my own when I got the call from the Armenian Red Cross,” Rafik recalls. “The cash assistance and the business training I participated in gave me a chance to transform my hobby into an income-generating activity and significantly expand it. Beekeeping is not just a hobby for me anymore — it’s my life and something that gives me a sense of purpose and hope,” he adds. Beyond income, beekeeping remains a source of joy and purpose for Rafik, allowing him to maintain a connection to his past while building a sustainable future in Armenia.

Rafik Avanesyan is one of the many who benefitted from the livelihoods program of Armenian Red Cross implemented with the support of IFRC. For many like Rafik, the Armenian Red Cross livelihood support program has been a vital step towards rebuilding their lives and finding stability after leaving behind everything.

# Transition of Emergency Appeal activities to Unified IFRC Network Country Plans

This report presents the response activities implemented by the IFRC and ARCS in relation to the 2023 population movement, covering the period from September 2023 to June 2025. The response addressed the immediate needs of the displaced population through the provision of multipurpose cash assistance, support for livelihood restoration and income-generating activities, and initiatives aimed at fostering social integration through migration-related programming. Mental health and psychosocial support interventions were also implemented to promote the psychosocial well-being of affected individuals. In addition, the educational and psychosocial needs of displaced children were met, and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion approaches were integrated throughout the response. Despite these achievements, the needs of the displaced population remain significant, primarily due to ongoing challenges related to housing, employment, and social inclusion.

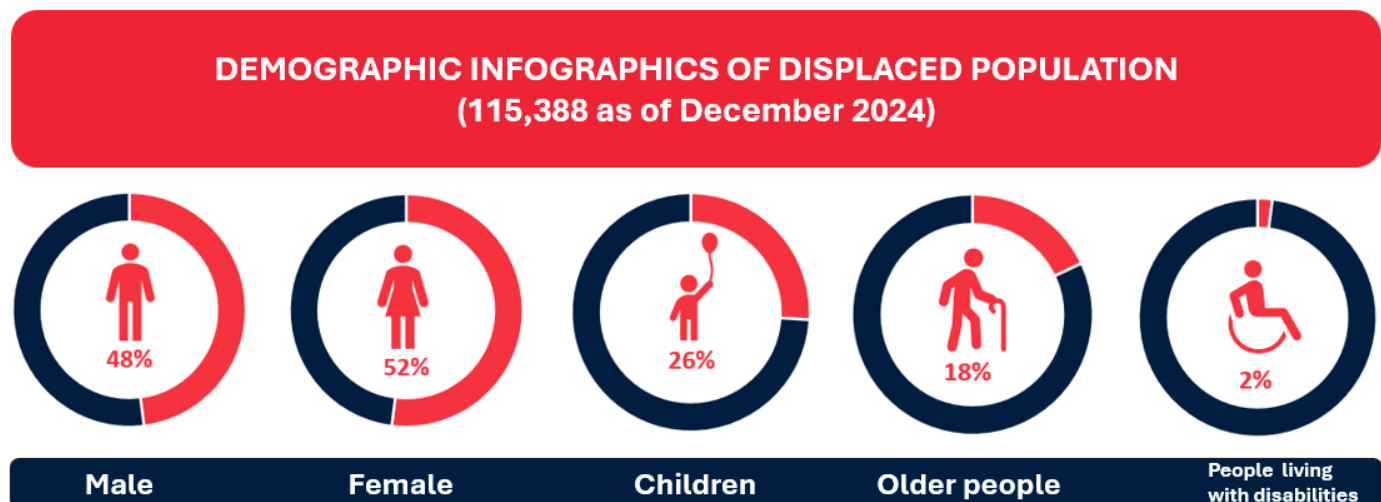
IFRC and ARCS have successfully achieved the objective of the operation by mobilizing CHF 8,974,061, of which an unearmarked balance of approximately CHF 1,598,105 remains. IFRC seeks to transfer the remaining funds to the [2025 IFRC Armenia Country Network Plan](#) to support the implementation of planned activities.

Utilizing the remaining funds presents a valuable opportunity to continue supporting vulnerable displaced populations through the implementation of life-saving activities. These efforts will include, but are not limited to, providing cash assistance to address essential needs such as housing, rent, health, and other basic services, as well as tackling ongoing livelihood challenges. Support will also be extended through migration-related interventions via established integration centres, with a focus on psychosocial well-being and the educational needs of displaced children. Additionally, ARCS will strengthen its preparedness and response capacities, with further emphasis on capacity building and the overall development of the National Society. A detailed outline of planned activities can be found in the [Armenia Country Network Plan 2025](#).

## A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

### Description of the Crisis

Since 19 September 2023, a total of [115,388 people](#) have arrived and been registered in Armenia as of 30 June 2025 following the escalation of hostilities in Karabakh. Among them, [over 100,000](#) arrived through Lachin corridor within the initial two weeks after the escalation. The displaced population accounts for nearly four per cent of Armenia's total [population of 3 million](#).



According to the [UNHCR data 2024](#), the majority (around 76 per cent) of the total displaced population are residing in Yerevan and its surrounding regions: almost 40 per cent of displaced individuals has settled in Yerevan with 16 per cent in Kotayk, 11 per cent in Ararat and 9 per cent in Armavir region, as seen on the map below.

Many displaced people choose to reside in Yerevan and nearest three regions, where they have existing family or social support networks, also considering better access to broader job markets, health care and better education opportunities. The latest data indicates that approximately [38 per cent](#) of unemployed displaced individuals express a desire to relocate to Yerevan. The influx of displaced people increased the demand for available and affordable housing, which in turn led to rising prices. Additionally, the government's housing programme contributed to this price increase, further impacting the affordability of housing for displaced individuals. Nevertheless, housing remains a priority issue for the displaced population. Most displaced individuals rely on government assistance due to significantly higher unemployment, which is [49 per cent](#) among the displaced compared to 14 per cent among the general Armenian population. Since October 2023 government launched assistance programme, including monthly rental support of AMD 50,000 (around CHF 125). Nevertheless, since early 2025, the Government has begun phasing out its assistance. The assistance will continue until July 2025. After that, it will be provided exclusively to vulnerable groups, including children, students, older adults, and people with disabilities, in the amount of AMD 30,000 (CHF 75) per month, through December 2025. While long-term support and pathways to self-sufficiency are essential, access to adequate housing remains a critical and urgent need for the displaced population. When this support ends, many families might face difficulties in paying rent or mortgage, increasing the risk of housing insecurity and heightening their overall vulnerabilities.

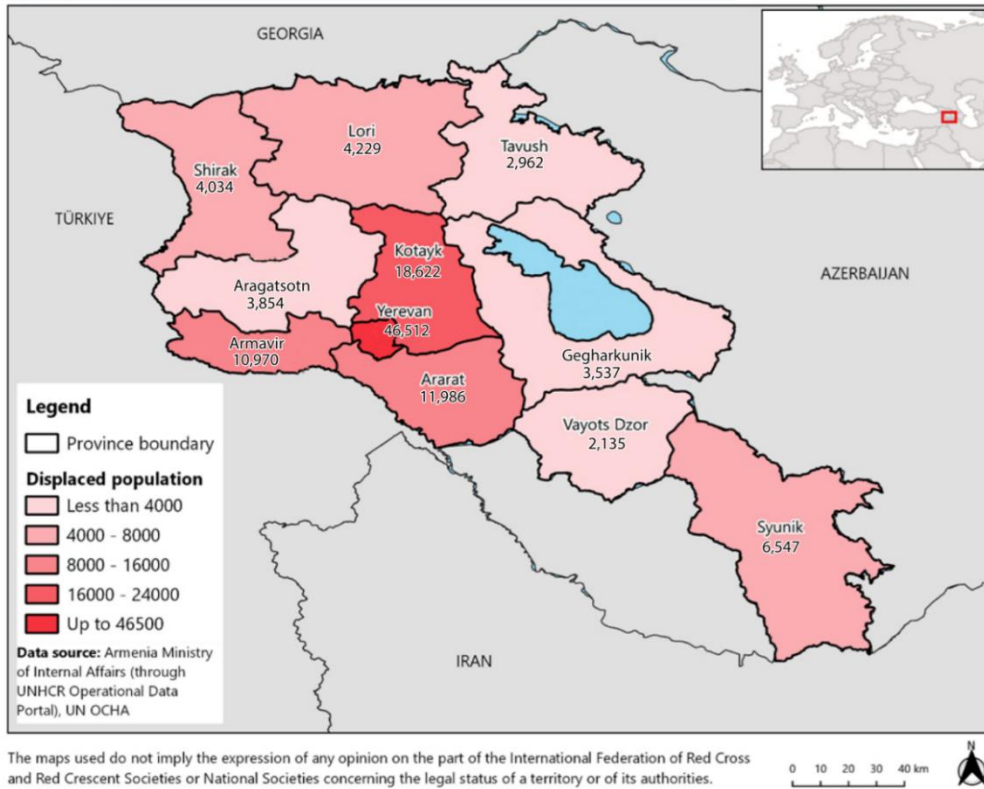
As part of a long-term housing strategy, the [Armenian government](#) has launched an additional housing support programme to aid individuals who fled from Karabakh, offering grants between AMD 2 million and AMD 5 million (about CHF 4,500 to CHF 6,700) for families with specific needs, including those with children or disabilities. Eligibility for the planned housing funding is limited to displaced individuals who apply for Armenian citizenship. The initiative is expected to benefit up to 25,000 families. Despite this, many displaced people are concerned that financial aid may not be enough to afford housing in desirable regions, given the rising property prices and living expenses.

Given the various challenges the displaced population faces, situation surrounding the status of displaced people in Armenia adds another layer of complexity. Although the Armenian Government has pledged to grant temporary protection status, which provides refugee-like rights and the option to apply for citizenship, confusion has arisen among many displaced people. The confusion stems from the fact that Karabakh Armenians were already holding Armenian citizenship, which over the years seems to have functioned more as a "travel document" rather than conferring citizenship. Initially, temporary protection was granted for a one-year period by Government Decree No. 1864-Ն, issued on 26 October 2023. On 17 October 2024, the Government of Armenia extended the temporary protection (TP) for displaced people from Karabakh until 31 December 2025 through [Decree No. 1649-Ն](#) (TP Extension Decree). Obtaining Armenian citizenship for displaced people from Karabakh is accessible and designed to be a straightforward process. As of 20 May 2025, 8,315 individuals have already been granted Armenian citizenship.

## Distribution of displaced people



As per December 2024, by Armenia Ministry of Internal Affairs



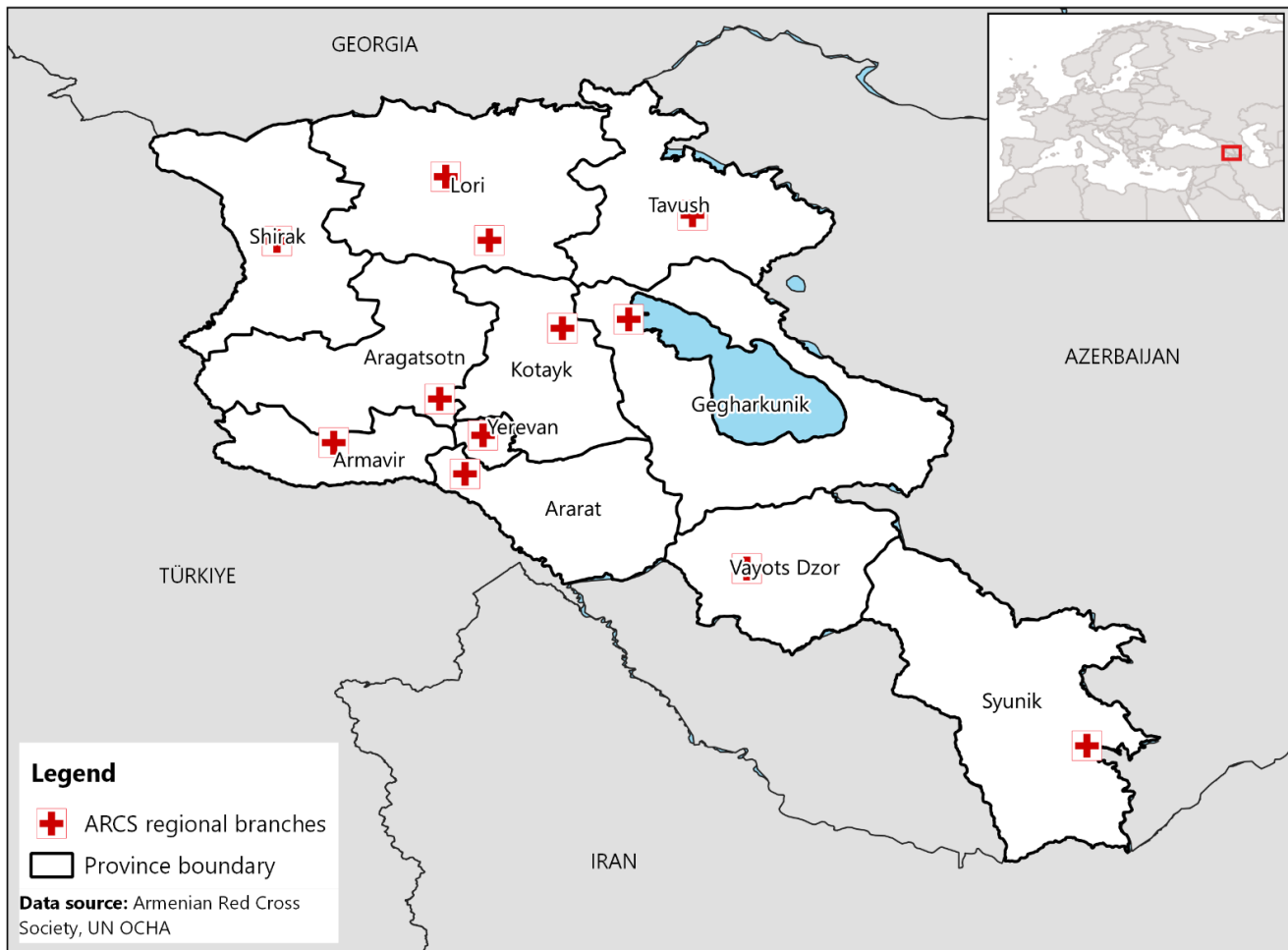
Adopted from the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#) as of December 2024. The map used does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the UNHCR or International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Almost two years has passed since the arrival of displaced people in Armenia, the country is now shifting from addressing immediate needs to prioritizing long-term support. Both the ARCS and the IFRC are aligning their strategies with this governmental approach. This includes not only fulfilling the urgent humanitarian needs of the displaced population - such as shelter, food, healthcare, and psychological support- but also facilitating their integration and inclusion into the country and creating [employment opportunities](#) through the distribution of seed grants for livelihood activities and migration support via the establishment of Integration Centres. Additionally, as stated in the UNHCR Refugee response plan, which was developed by the governmental entities and international organizations, access to livelihood opportunities is the key to find sustainable solutions to the displacement.

## Summary of Response

The Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) is the largest voluntary organization in Armenia, operating through a network comprising 11 regional branches and one territorial branch. With over 300 experienced staff and 9,028 dedicated volunteers, of which 1,792 have contracts concluded based on [the 2023 Law on Voluntary Work](#), which introduces contractual and insurance requirements for volunteers, ARCS enjoys a positive reputation and a high level of trust from both authorities and local communities. This enables ARCS to securely access all areas where displaced individuals have been located. During the initial critical days of the crisis, ARCS played a vital role in extensive registration efforts at registration centres, operating around the clock with staff and volunteers. They successfully registered displaced individuals and established temporary safe spaces, providing essential psycho-social support to those fleeing escalating hostilities in Karabakh. ARCS also distributed hygiene kits and installed bio-toilets at these sites. Their proactive engagement led to increased recognition as a humanitarian organization, resulting in numerous inquiries for support that informed the initial needs assessment and the planning of the Emergency Appeal (EA).

## Armenian Red Cross Society Branches



The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

ARCS branch locations. Source: ARCS/IFRC

The IFRC and Partner National Societies (PNSs) closely collaborated with the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) to navigate internal institutional challenges in 2024. IFRC's priority was to ensure uninterrupted assistance to vulnerable communities across Armenia. By coordinating closely with ARCS branches and local authorities, the IFRC made significant progress in delivering essential services, particularly to displaced people. IFRC remained dedicated to supporting ARCS through this challenge and will continue our joint efforts until the situation is resolved. Despite the challenges, commendable progress was achieved thanks to the temporary operating mechanism. Extensive capacity-building activities for ARCS took place, including additional training and workshops conducted in the country for staff members and volunteers. Furthermore, ARCS representatives were engaged in external meetings, such as the Preparedness for an Effective Response (PER) workshop for facilitators in Budapest, MHPSS training in Copenhagen, and the Statutory Meetings in Geneva, alongside representatives from 191 National Societies planned for the end of October. Additionally, the IFRC Country Office in Armenia got expanded, supported by surge personnel. The Joint Operational Task Force (JOFT) with the ICRC, IFRC, and Partner National Societies (PNS) continued its efforts, along with operational meetings involving ARCS heads of departments, IFRC, and PNS to coordinate operational business continuity.

Following the escalation of the Karabakh conflict, the ARCS, acting as an auxiliary to the public authorities of Armenia, provided urgent humanitarian assistance to displaced people, including food, clothing, hygiene items, and medical supplies.

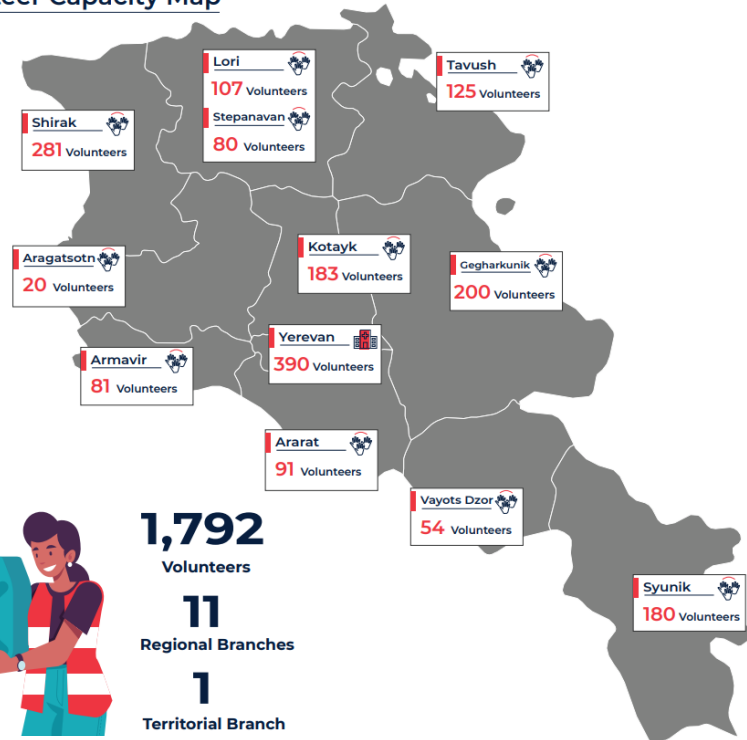


*ARCS staff member delivering aid to individuals. Photo credit: IFRC*



## Armenian Red Cross Society Volunteer Capacity Map

Last update:  
8 July 2024



ARCS volunteer capacity map, ARCS/IFRC

A total of 1,500 volunteers and around 50 staff members have been deployed within the response operation, working around the clock during the first phase, covering the end of September, October, and November 2023.

Volunteers were the primary driving force behind executing activities and providing services to displaced people, whose ongoing needs included basic household items, cash and voucher support, livelihood support for job opportunities, integration initiatives, continued mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and education services for both children and parents in Child-friendly spaces (CFS)<sup>2,3</sup>.

Response efforts are carried out with a commitment to quality assurance through the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) component while also considering gender-specific needs and safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse through the Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) component. Continuous efforts are being made to enhance the capacity of volunteers and staff across headquarters and ARCS branches in CEA and PGI.

The Emergency Appeal drew upon ARCS's extensive capacity and rich experience since its foundation in 1920; the EA was developed to address the wide range of identified needs of displaced people comprehensively. The initial needs were identified through interviews by phone or in person. Later, in May-June 2024, a livelihood needs assessment was conducted to identify long-term needs and design the recovery phase. Key findings from the report are presented further in the report.

Additionally, ARCS aligned with the Government's initiative for standardizing shelter support and food provision through the ["40+10" social assistance programme](#), which provided AMD 40,000 (CHF 100) for rent and AMD 10,000 (CHF 25) for utilities; and [a one-off multi-purpose cash assistance](#) (MPCA) of AMD 50,000 (CHF 125) designated for food and winterization needs reaching 20,290 people in total through cash assistance.

Continuing its MHPSS efforts, ARCS maintained activities with 912 trained staff and volunteers, reaching 98,020 people. Comprehensive measures were implemented through CEA to identify needs and amplify the voices of affected individuals in the response decision-making process. Additionally, PGI measures were considered to ensure that response efforts are accessible for everyone, especially for those in need and vulnerable. ARCS has been successful to reach overall, 23,133 individuals through PGI interventions and approaches.

The infographic below summarizes and highlights the key achievements of ARCS's response throughout the entire EA, from September 2023 to June 2025:

<sup>2</sup> [People In Need: Refugee Crisis in Armenia Rapid Needs Assessment Report](#).

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF

## Emergency Appeal response – Achievements as of 30 June 2025 Armenia | Population Movement

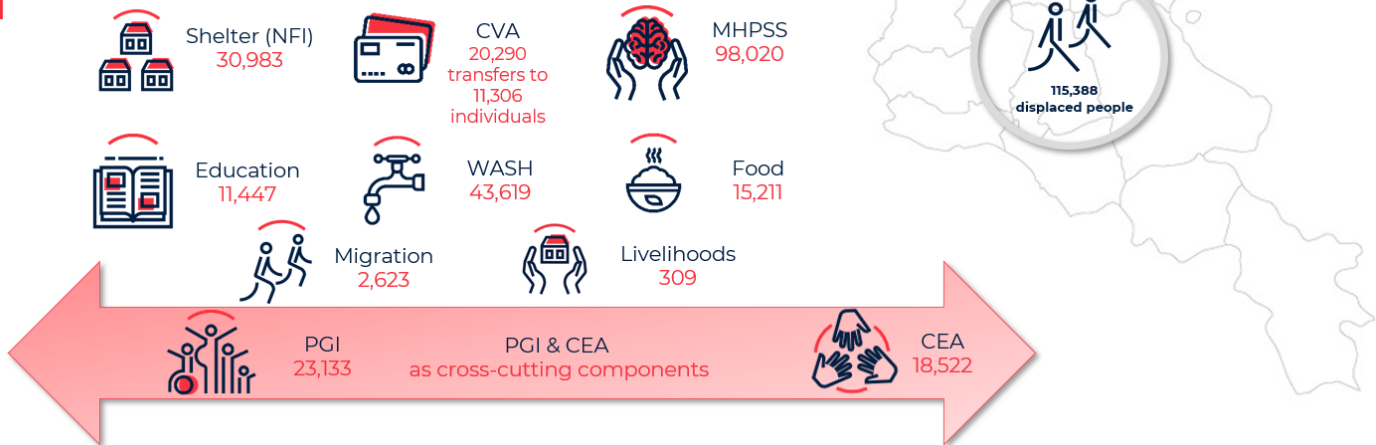


IFRC sought **15 million Swiss francs** to enable support to Armenian Red Cross Society to deliver emergency assistance and support the early recovery of displaced people.

**CHF 8,9 M**  
Emergency Appeal budget

To assist  
**90,000 people**

### STRATEGIC SECTORS OF INTERVENTION



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The ARCS had significant progress in both emergency response and National Society Strengthening. A National Society Development (NSD) inventory was conducted, leading to the development of a draft NSD Roadmap. The roadmap includes five strategic commitments aimed at strengthening the legal framework, enhancing Movement coordination, supporting branch development, and deepening volunteer and youth engagement to build a stronger, more agile organization. Additionally, ARCS conducted orientation sessions for newly recruited staff and volunteers.

In December 2024, a Branch Development Forum was organized, playing a crucial role in strengthening communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among ARCS branches. The forum gathered 34 participants from 11 branches and ARCS headquarters to explore development challenges and opportunities, contributing to the



ARCS Branch Forum. Photo credit: ARCS

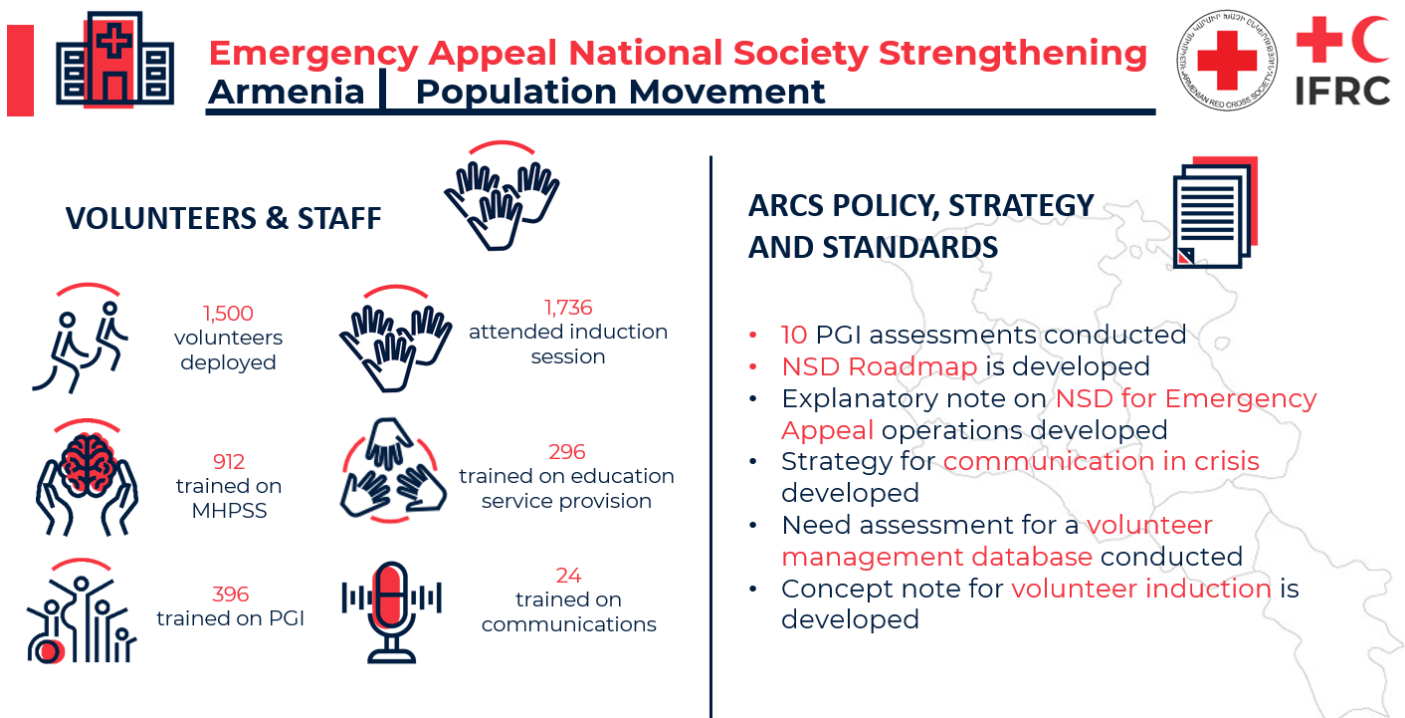
<sup>4</sup> The number reported under CVA refers to cash transfers provided to 11,306 individuals, while the figure under food assistance represents the number of households supported. The remaining figures reflect the number of individuals assisted or engaged under each respective sector

NSD Roadmap in branch development and volunteer management. It was also featured as a case study in IFRC's 2024 Branch Development report for Europe and Central Asia.

In parallel, ARCS remained committed to the ongoing capacity building of its staff and volunteers on various topics. This included MHPSS training for 912 staff and volunteers, PGI training for 396 participants, and education service provision training for 296 individuals. Notably, ARCS also supported the participation of youth leaders in various international events organized by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Furthermore, to improve service provision, ARCS revised and endorsed several key policies, including the HR Recruitment Policy and Code of Conduct, the Staff Well-being Policy, and the Onboarding and Offboarding Policy. These policy developments aim to promote staff well-being and ensure the delivery of high-quality services and effective response operations.

The following infographic presents the achievements in National Society Strengthening under the EA:





*A joint monitoring visit to impacted population. Photo: ARCS*

The team of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) supported ARCS in daily activity planning and implementation. A budget scenario plan was completed to align with the current funding status, prioritizing the distribution of household items, food parcels, cash and voucher assistance (CVA), MHPSS, educational activities within Smiley clubs, create employment opportunities for livelihood needs, establish integration centres for migration activities and national society strengthening, along with CEA and PGI as cross-cutting components.

In response to ongoing operational needs and institutional requirements, the **IFRC** and **Partner National Societies** (PNSs) actively supported ARCS in strengthening its implementation capacities. This collaborative effort was facilitated by a joint operational task force (JOTF) involving ARCS, IFRC, PNSs, and the ICRC. The JOTF met regularly to coordinate efforts, ensuring the functionality and support of the ARCS. These initiatives covered essential programs such as cash distribution, home-based and residential care, MHPSS, and educational activities in Smiley clubs<sup>5</sup>. Despite some implementation challenges, overall progress was commendable, ensuring that critical services reach vulnerable communities in Armenia, including displaced people. Close coordination with ARCS branches and collaboration among Secretariat and ARCS entities in-country remained pivotal. To strengthen the implementation capacity of the ARCS, the IFRC had increased its human resources capacity to support the response. For further details, please see the National Society Strengthening under Enabling Approaches section.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** scaled up its response, working closely with the ARCS to respond to displaced people's protection and assistance needs in border regions (Syunik, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor) and Yerevan. As part of its response, ICRC set up a helpline with the ARCS to support people finding their loved ones. Other services include providing hospitals with supplies, MHPSS, food and essential household items, multi-purpose cash, as well as support in capacity strengthening of ARCS branches to continue responding to the needs of affected people. Following the suspension of funding to ARCS, the ICRC conducted a due diligence assessment. After presenting and discussing the results with ARCS management in May 2025, the ICRC resumed its activities with ARCS.

**External humanitarian community and the Government of Armenia (GoA):** The GoA, under the coordination of relevant ministries overseeing Protection, Education, Basic Needs, Resilience, Health, and Nutrition sectors, collaborated with international organizations (including UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IOM, and FAO), international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as ACTED, Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children, and Caritas, as well as local NGOs like the Women's Support Centre, Armenian Progressive Youth (APY), Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), and Mission Armenia, among others, to address the needs of those who have arrived in Armenia. United Nations agencies co-led the GoA-coordinated technical working groups, with UNHCR taking the lead on both strategic and operational layers. A comprehensive approach and effective coordination among international and local stakeholders were imperative. Therefore, Movement partners (ARCS, ICRC, and IFRC) actively participated in coordination forums to ensure coherent efforts to support the affected persons and communities.

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<sup>5</sup> Smiley Clubs are child-friendly spaces operated by the ARCS, designed to support displaced children and those from vulnerable families in Armenia, aged 6 to 14. These spaces provide educational support, promote children's well-being, and offer opportunities for positive social interaction to foster integration and social cohesion.

## Needs Analysis

Initially, the most pressing needs included shelter, essential items, cash assistance, food security, health services, education, and MHPSS, as identified through data collected from the ARCS database, including inquiries to the helpline, direct contacts with ARCS HQ and branches, and the [inter-agency Rapid Needs Assessment](#) (RNA) conducted with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and partners. As we approach the end of the operation after nearly two years, the main needs continue to focus on long-term interventions, including livelihood support and enhanced social integration, informed by a multi-sector needs assessment conducted by MoLSA and UNICEF from March, findings from ARCS and IFRC two post-distribution monitoring (PDM) results from May and August, and an extensive livelihood needs assessment conducted by ARCS and IFRC in April-May. The key sources used to identify the current needs are as follows:

**Snapshot of immediate needs from the Rapid needs assessment (RNA):** The November [\(RNA\)](#) report outlined the immediate needs of displaced populations in Armenia during the early stages of the crisis. Mental health and psychosocial support needs were particularly concerning for children exposed to violence, while educational challenges persisted due to low kindergarten enrolment, infrastructure issues, and shortages of teachers and textbooks. Critical needs included food, shelter, essential household items, and cash support for rent and utilities. The need for employment support was emphasized, focusing on mid- to long-term interventions for social integration and economic empowerment.

**MoLSA and UNICEF's multi-sectoral assessment:** In March 2024, MoLSA and UNICEF shared a multi-sectoral assessment report identifying the various needs of displaced populations. The assessment prioritized employment support to help individuals secure income for accommodation and essentials. Additionally, challenges related to legal status and depleted savings highlight the need for enhanced mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and educational resources to aid in the integration of displaced individuals.

**ARCS and IFRC's livelihoods needs assessment of the displaced population:** Based on findings from the MoLSA and UNICEF multi-sectoral needs assessment, the IFRC jointly with the ARCS conducted a livelihoods needs assessment in April using the Household Economy Scale (HES)<sup>6</sup> methodology to evaluate the socioeconomic impact of displacement and identify primary needs. The assessment<sup>7</sup> revealed significant economic challenges, with employment support identified as the top priority for displaced populations, who primarily rely on government assistance, humanitarian aid, and savings to cover expenses.

**2024 labour force assessment conducted by IOM<sup>8</sup>:** In October 2024, IOM, in collaboration with MoLSA, conducted an assessment of the occupational and educational profiles of displaced individuals to support their economic integration. The findings revealed that only about 30 per cent of both employed and unemployed respondents intend to remain in their current location long-term. Intentions to relocate were notably higher in Tavush, Armavir, and Gegharkunik regions, with approximately 38 per cent of the unemployed population expressing a

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<sup>6</sup> The HES methodology is used to understand the socio-economic profiles of households by describing how they meet their immediate essential food and other basic needs; and how they can protect and sustain their livelihoods to be self-sufficient and economically secure in the long term. The HES guideline can be found here: [Household Economic Security \(HES\) guidelines: technical Guidance for Assessment and Analysis](#).

<sup>7</sup> The results of the assessment can be found in the Livelihoods section.

<sup>8</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), Report on the Results of the Labour Force Assessment Among Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenia, November 2024, available at: [https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/IOM%20Labour%20Force%20Assessment\\_ENG.pdf](https://armenia.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/IOM%20Labour%20Force%20Assessment_ENG.pdf)

desire to move to Yerevan. The unemployment rate is significantly higher among the displaced population, standing at 49 per cent, compared to 14 per cent among the local population. The highest unemployment levels are observed in Kotayk, Lori, and Tavush regions. Women are more affected by unemployment (53 per cent) than men (45 per cent). Among unemployed displaced individuals, the most frequently reported previous occupations include professionals (25 per cent), service and sales workers (19 per cent), members of the armed forces (11 per cent), and craft and trade workers (10 per cent). About 30 per cent of respondents indicated a willingness to pursue further training or education, with more women (34 per cent) expressing interest compared to men (17 per cent). The main motivation for seeking additional training is to secure employment, either in general or in a different field. This study played a key role in informing the continued implementation of livelihood interventions and provided valuable insights into the overall labour and livelihood situation among the displaced population.

## Operational Risk Assessment

The operational risk assessment for Armenia remained high, with primary focus on the following key areas of concern:

### 1. Conflict Resurgence

The security situation in Armenia remains sensitive amid ongoing regional dynamics and peace negotiations with Azerbaijan. In March 2025 it has been stated that negotiations and final [remarks around the Peace Agreement](#) have been concluded, nevertheless consultation process needs to be arranged for the signing of the agreement. While talks have progressed over a recent year, certain points of an agreement and proposals requiring adjustments in the Armenian legislation and national symbols have triggered public criticism in the country. In addition, tensions in the border area continue with reported [incidents of gunfire](#) that caused livestock damage and concern among residents, including the displaced people, for their safety. This dynamic creates uncertainty around the prospects for unimpeded implementation of the peace agreement.

### 2. MPCA related risks

Initially the state assistance was targeting all displaced individuals till March 2025. Although it has been extended till the end of 2025, it will now be limited to the most vulnerable families, including those with children under 18, older people, individuals with disabilities, displaced students, and families who have lost a breadwinner. This raised concerns within the displaced population and led to [several public gatherings](#), as at this point displaced families are not ready to cover their living expenses self-sufficiently.

A five-year rural housing programme has had a limited uptake, with only 900 families applying and just 100 purchasing homes (0.2 per cent) due to systemic barriers. Only 7 per cent of displaced people (8,568 individuals) have applied for Armenian citizenship as of April 2025. On top of that unemployment is the most pressing challenge, with a rate of 49 per cent among the displaced—far above the national average of 13.3 per cent for Armenia—and only 23 per cent (26,400 people) employed or running businesses. Structural barriers such as limited job opportunities and skills mismatch continue to drive poverty, exclusion, and mental health concerns, underscoring the urgent need for sustained integration support in Armenia. Given these risks ARCS will ensure effective coordination and communication with relevant stakeholders to help mitigate further risks following the closure of the operation.

### 3. Unclear Legal Status

The Government of Armenia's decision to grant [temporary protection](#) to the displaced population from Karabakh introduces complex legal dynamics. These individuals possess Armenian passports classified as "travel documents," which do not provide citizenship. Under Armenian law, refugee status is limited to foreign citizens or stateless individuals, complicating the status of those seeking protection. The temporary protection status, which was extended until the [end of December 2025](#), allowed displaced people to apply for citizenship. This situation raised significant implications for their integration into Armenian society, particularly regarding participation in future

military service and employment in government roles, given that many previously held such positions in their home regions.

The evolving legal status of displaced individuals, coupled with uncertainty regarding their rights, may have heightened risks to their integration and prompted some to seek opportunities abroad. While this risk had limited impact on the implementation of the intervention, ongoing advocacy for the rights of displaced populations remains vital to ensure their needs are reflected in national policies and programs. Additionally, strengthening community engagement will be essential to build resilience among displaced individuals and incorporate their perspectives into ongoing discussions about their future in Armenia.

#### **4. Tackling Financial Fraud Risks**

During the PDMs and assessments, participants expressed concerns about unauthorized transactions and theft from the bank accounts of displaced individuals. The Armenian government has established a requirement to open bank accounts to receive cash assistance. However, incidents of fraud have raised worries about the safety of these funds. Reports of bank card fraud among displaced people underscored a significant vulnerability at a time when many are trying to rebuild their lives. Addressing these issues throughout the implementation was essential for rebuilding trust in the support systems designed to assist displaced individuals. In response, ARCS developed and translated information materials aimed at preventing such incidents and advised individuals not to share confidential banking information, regardless of the caller's claimed identity.

#### **5. Constraints Posed by Armenia's New Volunteer Law**

[The new Volunteer Law in Armenia](#), effective October 2023, introduced several requirements that could significantly impact the ARCS ability to mobilize volunteers and respond to emergencies. Key provisions included the necessity for formal contracts outlining volunteer roles and insurance coverage, which aimed to enhance safety and accountability but also created administrative burdens. These requirements could slow the mobilization process and potentially reduce the number of volunteers, particularly among younger individuals, while diverting resources from humanitarian activities to compliance-related tasks. Additionally, ARCS will need to invest in staff training on the legal aspects of volunteer management and reassess engagement strategies to both attract and retain volunteers while ensuring compliance. Although the law aims to enhance volunteer safety and effectiveness, it poses significant challenges that ARCS must address to maintain its responsiveness during emergencies.

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

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### Story of Hersik Mirzakhanyan, founder of a greenhouse

After leaving their home in 2023, Hersik Mirzabekyan and her husband initially moved to Yerevan with their children. However, after years of rural life in Karabakh, they found it difficult to adjust to the pace and lifestyle of the capital. Both in their seventies and living on pensions, they were determined to stay active and support themselves. That's what led them to settle in the village of Vardanashen, in Armenia's Armavir region.

Looking for a way to support themselves, they started growing vegetables in the backyard of the house they had rented. They also worked in nearby greenhouses, putting their agricultural knowledge to use by helping neighbors. When they learned about the Armenian Red Cross livelihood support program, they applied — hoping to take the next step: building a greenhouse of their own.

"If we had stayed in the city, we would have suffered a lot. Work is what keeps us going, what keeps us out of depression," Hersik says. "Since the 6th grade, when I first started helping my parents in the garden, I've loved working with the soil. I'm used to eating what I grow myself." She speaks while offering freshly baked *Zhengyalov Hats*, a traditional Karabakhi flatbread filled with greens - all picked from her own garden.

Thanks to the livelihood support from the Armenian Red Cross, implemented with the support of the IFRC, the greenhouse has become a reality. Hersik and her husband have already planted potatoes, greens, and other vegetables, with plans to sell their harvest at the local market to generate additional income. But for them, the greenhouse is more than just a source of livelihood — it's a way to stay connected to their roots and a symbol of their resilience.

## B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

### Update On the Strategy


Since the [Operation Update #5](#), the following changes have been applied:

The target for the indicator under the Migration component, which is “Number of people reached by RCRC social cohesion activities to improve relations between migrants/people arriving in the country and host communities” has been revised from the initial 20,000 to 2,500 individuals. This adjustment was made because, as initially planned, migration-related activities were scheduled to begin only after the completion of the immediate response phase, as they fall under the early recovery framework. As a result, implementation started toward the end of 2024, limiting the possibility of reaching the original target within the available timeframe.

*Figures reported throughout the document reflect people reached by the IFRC Secretariat. If the reported number includes federation-wide reach, this is indicated in the narrative.*

## DETAILED OPERATIONAL REPORT

### STRATEGIC SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

	<b>Shelter, Housing and Settlements</b>	<b>People reached (phase 1): 21,825</b> <b>People reached (phase 2): 9,158</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Population arriving to Armenia and host communities restore and strengthen their safety, well-being and longer-term recovery through shelter and settlement solutions</i>		
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<b>Indicator</b>  <i># of people (and households) provided with household items that support the restoration and maintenance of health, dignity and safety and the undertaking of daily domestic activities in and around the home</i>	<b>Actual</b>  <b>30,983 people</b> <b>(7,746 households)</b>	<b>Target</b>  6,600 people (1,650 households)
<p><b><u>Household items</u></b></p> <p>ARCS has distributed the essential household items such as blankets, pillows, heaters, mattresses, kitchen sets, school bags and foldable beds, reaching a total of 7,746 households (30,983 people) to date.</p> <p>Funding from the initial Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), prior to launching the current EA, was allocated to procure essential household items for people affected. In 2023, the majority of non-food items were successfully distributed across all impacted areas, marking a strategic adjustment from previous operations.</p> <p>Based on actual needs of January-June 2024 the assistance was tailored to address only the most urgent requirements, identified through a coordinated verification process with the municipality. This coordinated needs-based approach enabled support for 7,746 households, a substantial increase from the original plan of 1,650 households.</p> <p>The distribution process was conducted on-site with active involvement from community representatives in Yerevan, as 40% of displaced individuals reside within the city or in nearby districts. Remaining items have been allocated to emergency stock, as information from ARCS branches and local municipalities indicates that the immediate basic needs of the displaced population are currently covered.</p>			


## Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In the early stages of the distributions, challenges were observed in managing the high concentration of affected population and ensuring on-site safety. To improve this, ARCS carried out SPHERE training and introduced new security procedures during relief distributions. These measures contributed to making the process safer and more dignified for the affected population. However, further training remains necessary for a number of staff and volunteers, so ARCS plans to continue and expand it in the coming months. At the same time, it became evident that certain distribution points faced challenges related to storage capacity and the organization of relief items, leading to delays. In response, ARCS initiated a review of warehouse layouts and stock management systems to enhance efficiency. Additionally, a standardized guide for setting up and managing relief distribution sites is being developed to support smoother and more effective future operations.

Another key lesson learned was the importance of integrating protection and community engagement throughout all stages of the response and ensuring that all volunteers are well trained and informed on PGI and CEA principles. To address this, ARCS has initiated targeted training on these topics and will continue to strengthen volunteer capacity on a regular basis. These efforts aim to make future responses more timely, safe, and inclusive.

### With the support of other funding sources:

- Distributions of pre-stocked items from other funding sources, including a pre-established IFRC-USAID's BHA project and a UNICEF partnership.<sup>9</sup>
- 315 households were supported with relief items, including food parcels in Yerevan, Sevan, Gyumri, Gegharkunik, and Shirak. Additionally, 315 households in the same locations received non-food items, including electric heaters, water boilers, blankets, and pillows.

	<h3>Multi-purpose Cash</h3>	<b>People reached: 20,290 transfers to 11,306 people</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Households are provided with unconditional/multipurpose cash grants to address their basic needs</i>		
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<b>Indicator</b>  <i># of targeted people reached with Multi-purpose Cash Assistance to address basic needs (new indicator)</i>	<b>Actual</b>  20,290 transfers to 11,306 individuals	<b>Target</b>  20,000 transfers to people

The Armenian government through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), launched several support initiatives outside the usual social assistance schemes to support displaced population. Among these initiatives, a featured Multi-purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) through two different schemes was implemented from November 2023 to April 2025. Several humanitarian organizations, including the IFRC and ARCS, joined two governmental MPCA initiatives; *N 1763-L*, and *N 1957-L* with the Resolution of 28 March 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Based on a pre-agreed ARCS-UNICEF partnership on preparedness and response, covering Child Protection, Education, WASH, Humanitarian Relief, Warehouse Management, Cash Assistance, and Communication, the following activities have been activated through formal letters in the current response: 10 bio toilets and hygienic supply have been installed at registration points; Case managers for child protection have been engaged in all branches, reaching 2,000+ children by now; 11 Temporary Learning Spaces (Child-Friendly Spaces) have been established; Blankets, schoolbags, diapers have been distributed to approx. 570 families.

The Government of Armenia issued several decrees to protect and support the displaced population by providing cash assistance aimed at covering their basic needs. The MPCA programs were also included and disseminated via official decree, including information regarding the amount of the assistance, targeting criteria and procedures for humanitarian agencies who wish to contribute. The selection criteria of ARCS and IFRC included the government's requirements, while IFRC also applied its own criteria, focusing on families with three or more children and persons living with disabilities.

Overview of the [decrees](#) issued by the Government of Armenia:

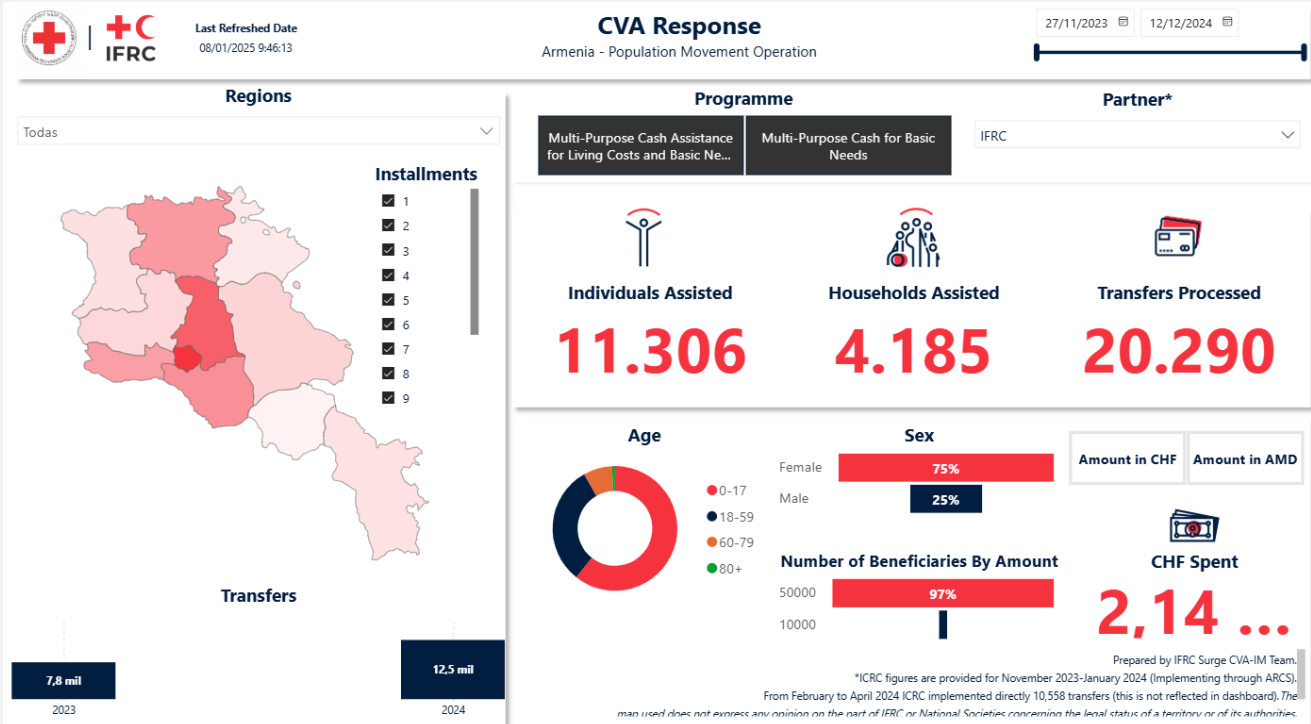
1. *Decision N 1675-L (issued on 3 October 2023):*  
Provides one-time cash assistance to displaced persons from Karabakh due to military actions and detailing the amount and eligibility criteria with an amount AMD 100,000 (CHF 223).
2. *Decision N 1763-L (issued on 12 October 2023):*  
Introduces a monthly cash support program for displaced persons to cover living expenses AMD 50,000 AMD (CHF 116) per individual except for those individuals who own a house receiving AMD 10,000 (CHF 22). There were no conditions or restrictions attached to the use of the multi-purpose cash assistance, which was implemented from November 2023 to March 2025. ARCS and its partners joined the programme from its inception until December 2024.
3. *Decision N 1957-L (9 November 2023):*  
Establishes additional cash support for essential consumption expenses for displaced persons, providing AMD 50,000 (CHF 116) per month per individual for two months (November/December 2023). As in the previous program, there was no condition or restriction on the use of assistance (MPCA). ARCS and its partners joined this program as well.
4. *Resolution (28 March 2024):*  
Amends previous support measures, extending deadlines, unifying financial support amounts to AMD 50,000 (CHF 116) per individual, and broadening eligibility criteria for displaced individuals, targeting also those displaced from Karabakh in 2020 with no restrictions of use. It was implemented from March to December 2024 and ARCS and its partners joined the program.
5. *Decision N 1833-L (21 November 2024):*  
Introduces new criteria, amount of the assistance and timeframe. From January to June 2025 the assistance amount is AMD 50,000 (CHF 104) and from July will be limited to people living with disabilities, older people and children. From July to December 2025 the amount of the assistance will decrease to 30,000 AMD (CHF 72) for the same target group.

The Government of Armenia is gradually reducing the amount of assistance provided for basic needs and shifting towards recovery-focused interventions aimed at promoting the self-sufficiency of the displaced population.

### **Multi-purpose cash assistance through IFRC and ARCS**

The IFRC jointly with the ARCS has distributed a total of 20,290 transfers to people since the beginning of the EA. These transfers have reached a total of 11,306 unique individuals, representing 4,185 households, who received between one and 13 installments each. Every month, the government of Armenia provided a list of families based on IFRC's selection criteria, which filtered families with three or more children or those with a person with a disability. Some recipients remained on the list, while others were adjusted based on their continued eligibility under these criteria. Prior to the transfers, ARCS volunteers conducted verification and validation of the lists of affected people provided by the Unified Social Service (USS) operating under MoLSA to ensure compliance with eligibility requirements. People who received support were informed about the transfer through SMS. Additionally, a helpline was available for affected people to raise complaints, ask questions, or provide feedback. Since the start of the operation, in collaboration with the Government of Armenia, IFRC has supported the affected population through the MPCA program, accounting for a total of CHF 2,140,000.

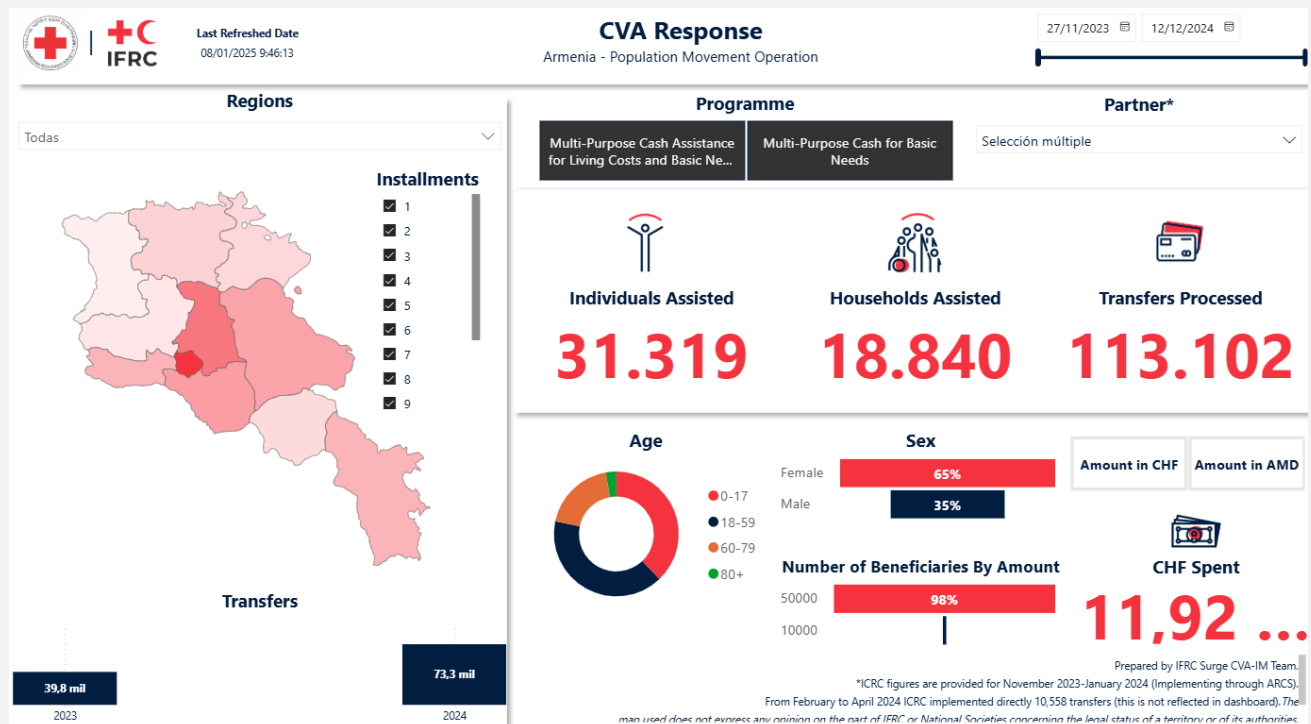
As the dashboard below indicates, 75 per cent of the recipients were female, while 25 per cent was male, which highlights a significant gender imbalance. Around 60 per cent of the recipient were children although only one adult per family receives the cash on behalf of all family members.



Source: IFRC GO, CVA Dashboard: [IFRC GO - Emergency](#)

### Federation-wide multi-purpose cash assistance:

In addition to the IFRC contributions, the ARCS implemented MPCA through bilateral funding from various partners. This included 3,954 transfers to people funded by the Swiss Red Cross, 5,500 transfers supported by the Austrian Red Cross, 61,400 transfers from UNHCR, 20,315 transfers funded by the ICRC and 1,643 with own funding. In total the Fed-wide MPCA program reached 113,103 transfers to 31,319 individuals (CHF 11,920,000).

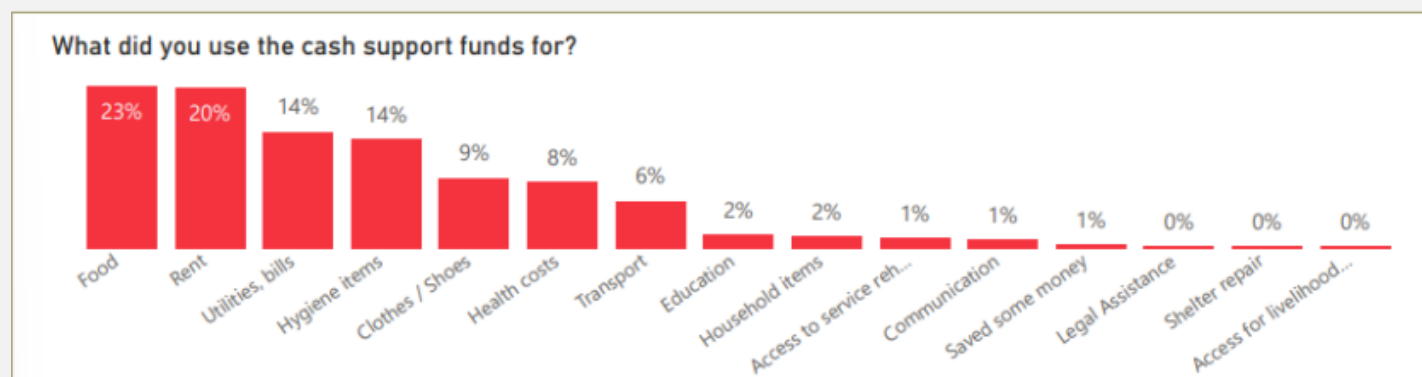


Source: IFRC GO, CVA Dashboard: [IFRC GO - Emergency](#)

To evaluate the impact of the MPC assistance, which was the largest intervention of the ARCS within the Federation-wide Emergency Appeal both in terms of the number of people reached and budget, two post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercises were conducted over a seven-month period.

The first PDM conducted in April-May 2024 included 208 participants, 60 per cent of whom were female and 20 per cent had a person with disability in the family. Most respondents (88 per cent) lived in rented accommodation, and the assistance primarily addressed essential needs such as rent, utilities, and food. Notably, 40 per cent covered their rent fully, and 73 per cent reported an improvement in their situation.

The second PDM, conducted in August 2024 with 239 households, found that 97 per cent confirmed receipt of cash assistance from ARCS. A significant 99 per cent indicated cash as their preferred form of assistance, and 55 per cent reported being able to fully cover their rent and utilities. Findings indicated that 23 per cent of the respondents spent the assistance to purchase food, followed by 20 per cent of the respondents spending it to cover rent, 14 per cent on utilities.. In total, 447 people have been interviewed, 4 per cent of the total 11,306 unique individuals who receive MPC. The representative sample size was calculated with 95 per cent confidence interval and 5 per cent margin of error.



*Spending patterns of the affected population following the receipt of cash assistance*

Overall, 54 per cent received assistance in a timely manner, and 98 per cent confirmed receipt of SMS notifications. Most respondents (82 per cent) were satisfied with the information provided, and nearly all indicated that the cash assistance alleviated their stress, underscoring its positive impact on their well-being.

In addition to PDMs, IFRC conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 25 people in Ijevan and Tavush, who received cash assistance. The purpose was to collect more detailed feedback on the effectiveness of the cash assistance, assess whether it covered their basic needs or improved their situation, evaluate if the assistance was provided in a timely manner, and understand the priority needs of individuals.



Similar feedback to PDM was received from the group discussion participants. The main findings indicated that all participants were living in rented apartments and rated their living conditions as average, due to lack of necessary conveniences.

All the participants noted that the assistance was on-time, without which they would have struggled to cover rent and utility expenses. Many participants also used the received amount to purchase food. Overall, the assistance helped them meet their basic needs.

*FGD in Tavush region. Photo Credit: IFRC/ARCS*

Nevertheless, government support is expected to end by the close of 2025. As most displaced individuals do not own property in the country, this presents a significant challenge for families in securing shelter once the government’s cash assistance program concludes.

### Challenges, Lessons learned and Recommendations

The response has been effective in meeting the basic needs of displaced individuals, including rent, utilities, and food consumption, with many displaced individuals able to cover more than half of their essential needs. The distribution of cash assistance was carried out in close collaboration with the MoLSA, as the list of eligible individuals was provided by the Unified Social Services (under MoLSA), followed by verification processes conducted prior to distribution. To ensure effective coordination, regular communication was maintained with MoLSA representatives. However, some challenges were encountered, particularly delays related to the signing of the MoU between IFRC, MoLSA, and the financial service provider. Despite this the IFRC and ARCS were able to successfully address the needs of displaced individuals within a short implementation period.

	<h2>Livelihoods</h2>		<p><b>People reached: 309</b></p>
<p><b>Objective:</b></p>	<p><i>Immediate response: People arriving to Armenia meet their food and other basic needs and protect their livelihood assets.</i></p> <p><i>Recovery: People’s capacities arriving to Armenia are enhanced for restoring their livelihoods and increasing their prospects for local integration</i></p>		
<p><b>Key indicators:</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator<sup>10</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Actual</b></p>	<p><b>Target</b></p>
<p><i># of people attending vocational/language/business trainings</i></p>		<p>300</p>	<p>50</p>

<sup>10</sup> Indicators have been modified based on needs analysis report.

# of people supported with participation in exhibitions	25	25
# of people, who received cash for livelihoods (including cash for child/elderly care or transportation)	309	300
% of people satisfied with received cash for livelihoods (including cash for child/elderly care or transportation)	100%	80%

### Food assistance:

The ARCS distributed food parcels to a total 15,211 households since the operation began. In addition, ARCS distributed wheat flour (50 kg per family) to families with more than seven members living in rural areas. Furthermore, 315 households (1,260 people) were supported with food parcels provided by the Kuwait Red Crescent in Yerevan, Sevan, Gyumri, Gegharkunik, and Shirak. In total, 15,526 households were reached with food support.



Cover page of the Livelihood assessment report.

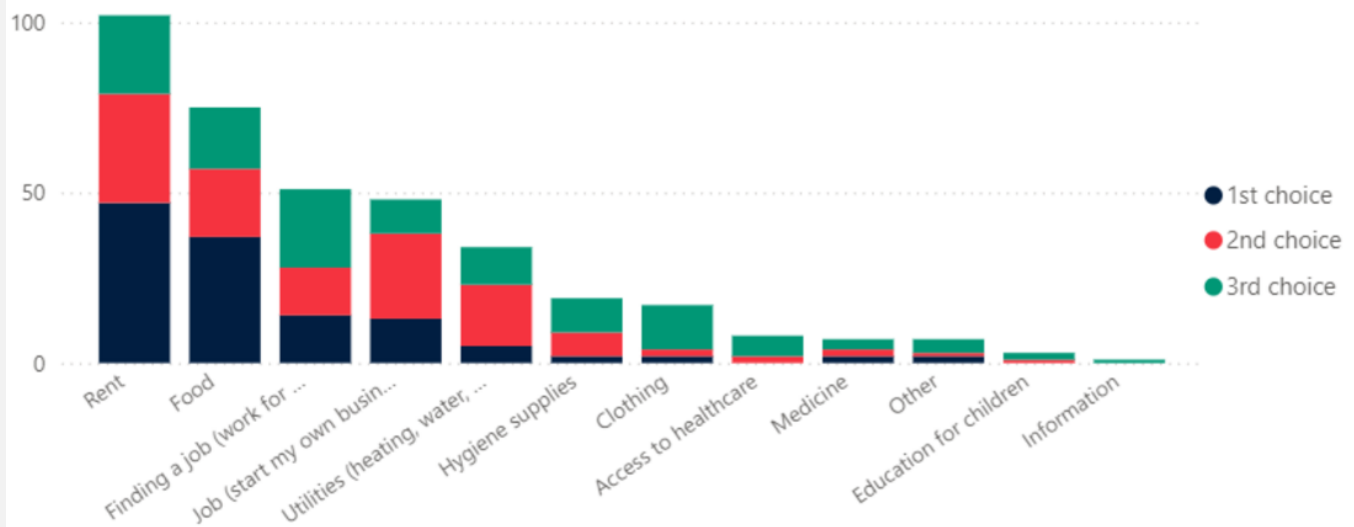
### Livelihoods:

A comprehensive Livelihoods Assessment was conducted in April and May 2024 to understand how displacement has affected household economies and identify the main current needs.

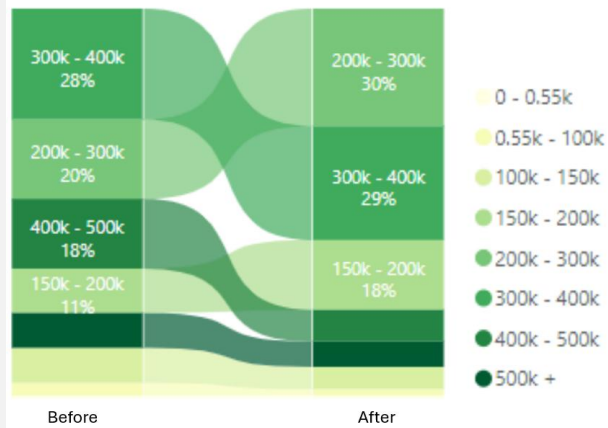
The Livelihoods Assessment employed the Household Economy Security (HES) methodology, integrating household surveys, key informant interviews, and FGDs. The findings revealed that securing employment is the foremost priority for the forcibly displaced community. On average, household income has dropped by 30 per cent, while expenditures on food, non-food essentials, rent, and other basic living costs have surged considerably. Vulnerable groups included families without a primary breadwinner and households with three or more children, or members with disabilities. Consequently, reliance on government assistance and savings has become the primary coping strategy. Among the most requested forms of support to revitalize livelihoods are seed capital for entrepreneurial ventures, job counselling, and job placement assistance.

Some of the key findings from the assessment are outlined in the graphs below:

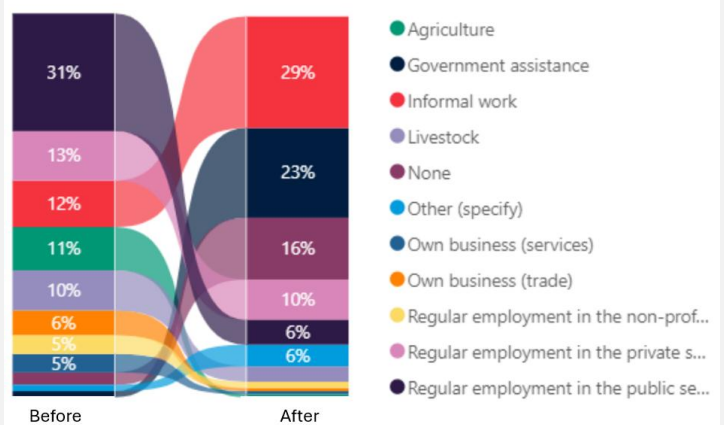
### Top priority household needs at the time of the assessment



### Monthly income before and after the displacement



### Main source of income before and after the displacement



### Compared to the previous situation in Karabakh, household income and expenses have changed as follows



Graphs showing key findings of the livelihood assessment

The Livelihoods program was launched in June 2024, with IFRC and ARCS promoting the initiative through multiple channels. This outreach generated two application cohorts: 1,611 submissions were received between 26 June and 31 July, and an additional 6,505 applications between 1 August and 30 September 2024 with most applicants seeking job placement or self-employment support.



Samples of posters developed to raise awareness and share information about the Livelihoods Initiative, available in both English and Armenian

From 5 August to 6 September 2024, ARCS and IFRC held 86 information sessions, both online and offline, to educate potential participants about the program’s activities, procedures, and application deadlines. These sessions attracted 1,048 attendees. Moreover, the IFRC and ARCS Livelihoods team provided essential consultation via the ARCS hotline, handling over 100 phone calls.

This comprehensive approach not only ensured widespread awareness of the program but also facilitated robust engagement with the communities it aimed to serve.



Group info sessions in Yerevan ARCS Office.  
Photo Credit: ARCS/IFRC



Group info sessions in Masis Town of Ararat Region jointly by ARCS/IFRC.  
Photo Credit: ARCS/IFRC

The deadline for business plan submissions was set for 13 September 2024, yielding 406 submissions. The initial shortlisting involved evaluating each proposal based on feasibility, sustainability, and social impact, resulting in 377 business plans making the preliminary shortlisted. Special priority was given to proposals from female-headed households, single parents, and households having persons with disabilities or multiple children.

To ensure transparency and prevent duplicative support, a Selection Committee was established to finalize the list of individuals for livelihood intervention. The committee comprised representatives from ARCS, IFRC, and USS under the MoLSA, as well as other NGOs involved in similar livelihood initiatives nationwide. After a thorough review process, 309 business proposals were selected for support under the IFRC EA framework. This close collaboration among government agencies and NGOs stands as a robust example of effective inter-agency cooperation.

Prior to the Selection Committee's review, ARCS verified cases (between 30 September and 15 October) to confirm the feasibility of each proposed business. Livelihood case managers physically visited individuals at their business locations to verify the availability of the inputs specified in their plans. They also provided support with completing and submitting business plans and helped facilitate participation in training sessions.

Ultimately, 309 individuals were selected to receive conditional cash assistance to launch their businesses. Additionally, assistance was provided through business training, participation in livelihood exhibitions, and individual monitoring and support. The distribution of interest areas among the selected proposals shows that agriculture and cattle breeding accounted for 20 per cent, followed by catering (17 per cent), the beauty sector (16 per cent), and beekeeping (14 per cent), with the remaining proposals falling under sectors such as sewing, repair services, and others.



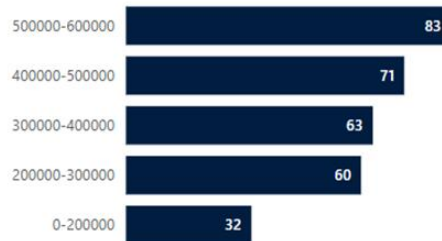
# Livelihood Program - 1st Cohort Applications

## Number of Beneficiaries

Applications Payments



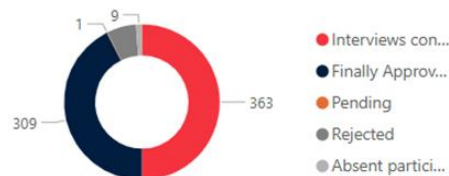
## Number of Beneficiaries by Cash Amount



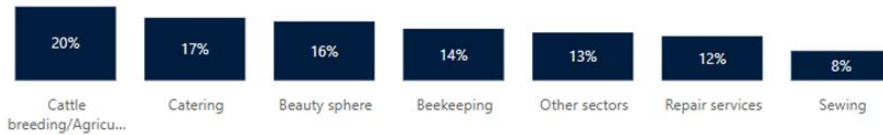
## Information about applications



## Information about selected persons



## Percentage by Field of Business



## Number of Training Sessions

12

## Number of Training Participants

300

## Number of Beneficiaries

309

## Total Amount of Assistance in CHF

296.65K

Information on selected applicants, including participants in business training and the main sectors covered.

Source: [IFRC GO Platform](#)

Businesses are geographically dispersed across the country, rather than being concentrated solely in the capital, Yerevan. While around 40 per cent of the displaced population resides in Yerevan, only 27 per cent (83 proposals out of 309) of the selected business proposals were from the capital. Priority was given to individuals residing in regional areas, where access to livelihood opportunities is more limited than in the capital. Subsequently, 80 proposals were selected from Ararat region, 69 from Kotayk, 28 from Tavush, and 21 from Armavir. These were followed by 15 proposals from Shirak, 11 from Aragatsotn, and 2 from Lori region.

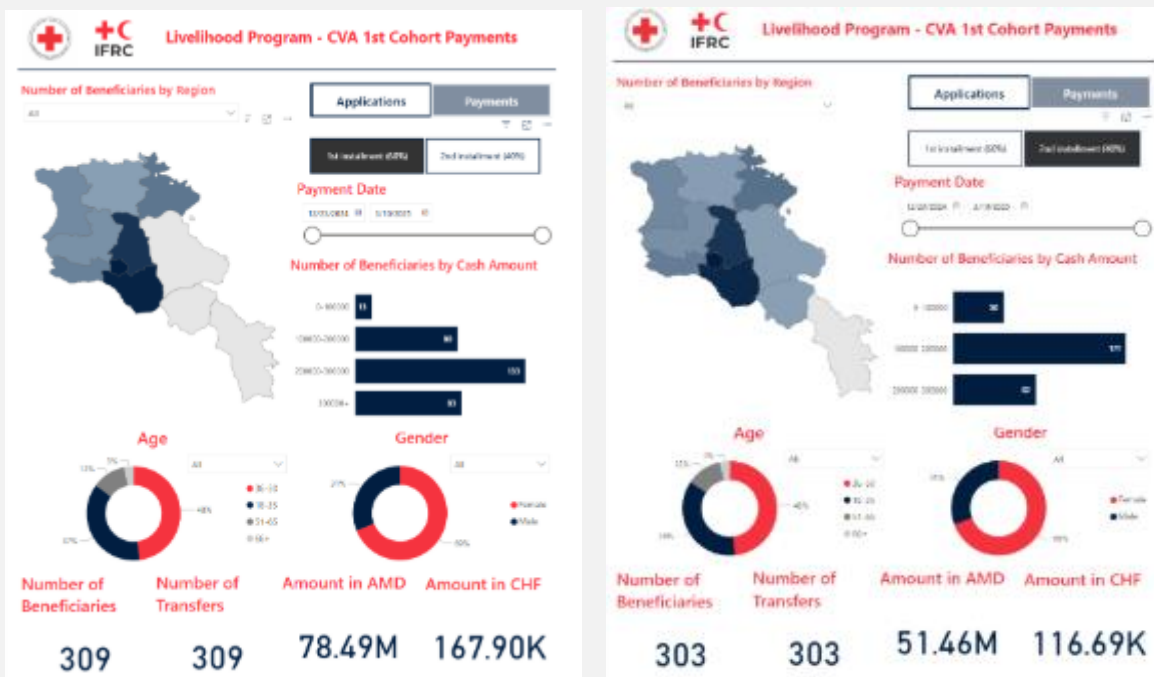
Out of 309 individuals 69 per cent was female and 31 per cent were male. Notably, 37 per cent of the selected individuals were between the ages of 18 and 35, 48 per cent were aged 36 to 50, 12 per cent were between 51 and 65, and 3 per cent were above 66 years old.

Regarding the amounts disbursed through the conditional cash for livelihood scheme:

- 309 received the first installment, amounting to a total of CHF 167,900,
- 303 received the first and second installment, amounting to CHF 116,690.

The cash assistance provided was up to AMD 600,000 (CHF 1,500) per person, and the average disbursed was CHF 921 per person. The conditional cash for livelihoods was designed to help displaced individuals acquire the essential tools, inputs and equipment outlined in their business proposals, thereby enabling them to start generating income.

Payments were disbursed into two installments, 60 per cent at the beginning, followed by 40 per cent upon completion of mandatory training and invoice verification. These transfers were executed via bank transfer in line with individually signed agreements, which specified key elements such as the assistance amount, the obligation to complete business training, the submission of purchase requests, the list of approved inputs, and the rights and responsibilities of the individuals to be supported.



*This infographic illustrates the first and second installments of cash assistance*

Before receiving their second installment, all individuals attended a mandatory three-day business training course. The training was designed to equip participants with practical and essential skills in three areas: small business management; marketing and digital literacy; and financial literacy and budget management. As of 30 March 2025, 303 individuals have successfully completed the course.



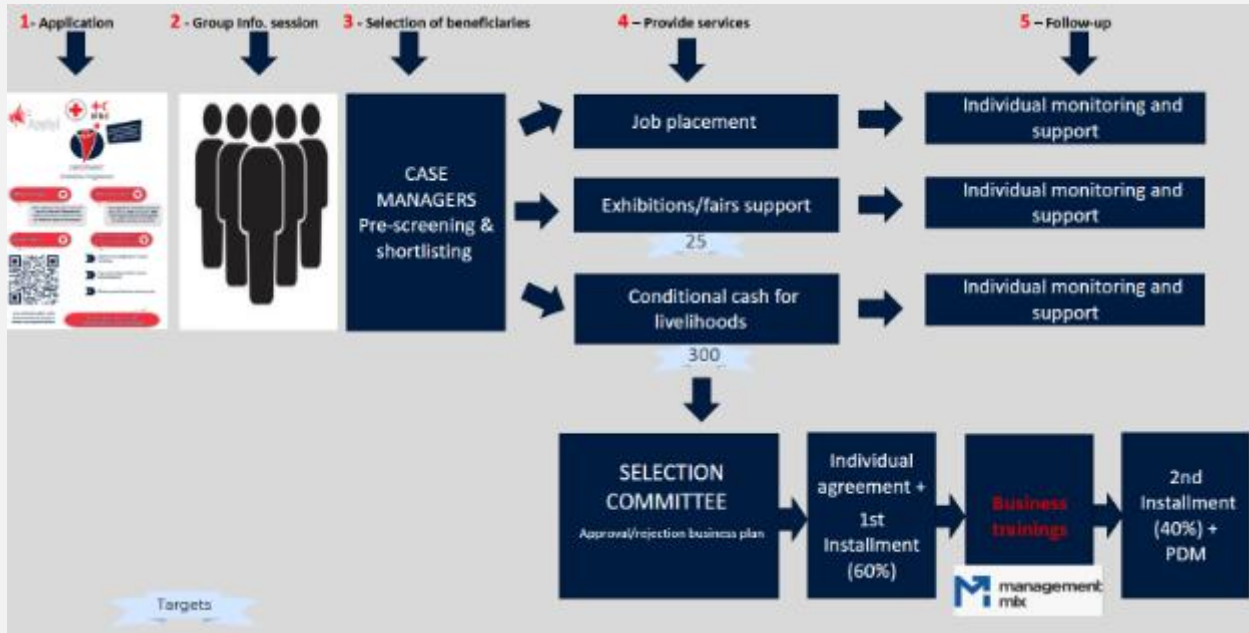
Participants were awarded certificates of completion following a three-day business training. Photo credit: ARCS/IFRC

In addition to business training and cash for livelihood, ARCS assisted displaced populations in participating in exhibitions to showcase their handmade products.



Individuals supported through the livelihood intervention participating in the Christmas exhibition. Photo Credit: IFRC

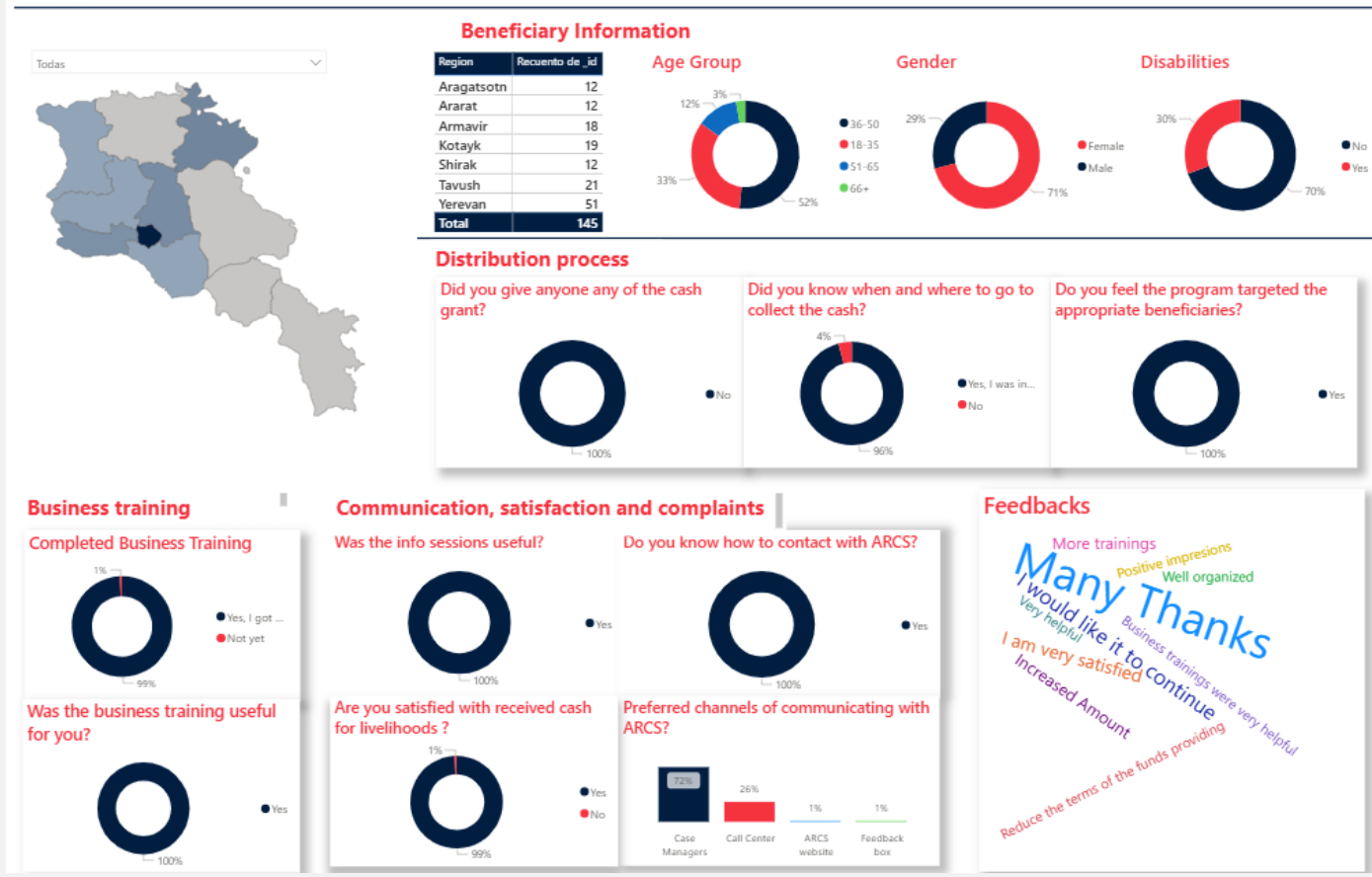
As part of the Federation-wide Livelihoods approach, IFRC, Austrian Red Cross, and ARCS are coordinating activities, addressing challenges and tracking progress through weekly meetings to. Job placement applicants are referred to the ARCS job placement program funded by the Austrian Red Cross.



*Project steps for employment activation*

To support informed decision-making for the implementation of livelihood activities following 60 per cent cash assistance payment, ARCS/IFRC conducted 2 post-distribution monitoring in February 2025 and April 2025. The goal was to assess overall progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

A total of 137 individuals participated in the first PDM. The results indicated that after the first transfer 80 per cent of individuals fully utilized the first installment of cash assistance to purchase essential tools and inputs for their businesses across various sectors, including beauty services, repair services, catering, handicrafts, and others. Around 18 per cent of the individuals spent the amount partially, and only two per cent of individuals did not spend it at the time of the data collection. A total of 145 individuals participated in the second PDM and the results were also highly positive; most individuals were able to re-start an income generation activity and increase their income. Beyond this, the charts below show their satisfaction with the support provided, from a case management approach and helpline to conditional cash, business training and encashment process.



Final PDM dashboard

Additional to two PDM, six FGDs were conducted to triangulate the information from the PDM. FGDs were conducted in Yerevan, as well as in Armavir, Ararat, Kotayk and Gegharkunik regions among 59 men and women.

**Some of the highlights from both PDM and FGDs are described below:**

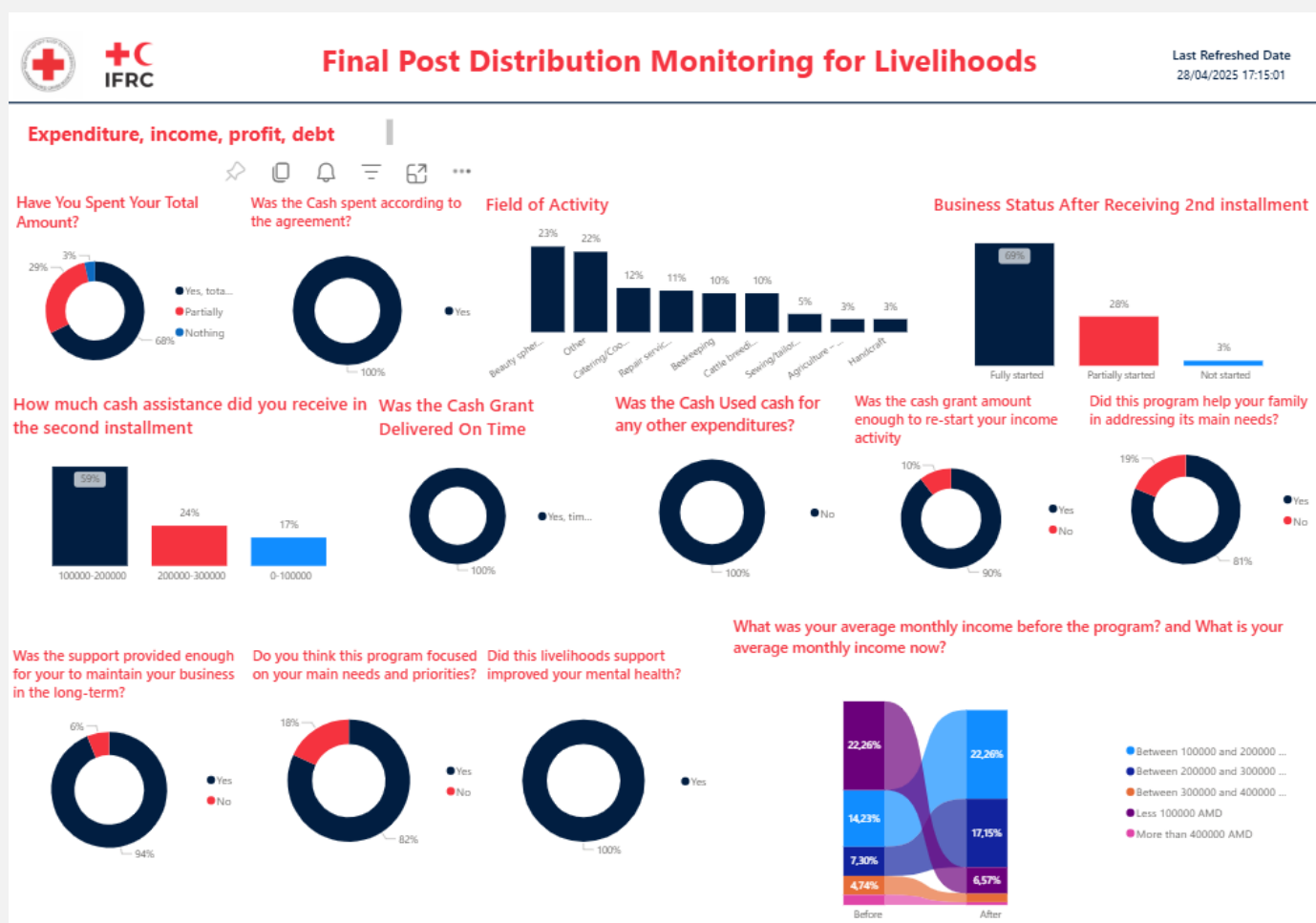
Related to the impact of livelihood support on mental health, results indicated that around 91 per cent of individuals reported improved mental health. This positive impact was also declared during FGDs and monitoring visits. The reason behind this improvement was the modality of the support, receiving cash assistance was perceived as a more dignified way of receiving help. Support also allowed individuals to feel more self-sufficient rather than dependent on external aid and they were able to cover the basic needs of their families. Additionally, improvements in mental health were also attributed to the opportunities for group connection, peer-to-peer support and networking.

The results of FGDs indicate that none of the supported individuals used the received cash for non-business-related household expenses, demonstrating full adherence to the intervention guidelines. Participants reported notable improvements in their socio-economic conditions when comparing their situations before and after the program. Many expressed a strong sense of satisfaction in having a job and a stable income, emphasizing that earning a livelihood was far more meaningful to them than relying on government assistance or benefits. Some of the participants responded, "Before the program we were waiting for the pension and other monthly sources of income," "I didn't have a job [before the program]," "Before the program I did not have anything, now I have 10 sheep." Additionally, participants expressed that the support contributed to their economic development and increased the income, mentioning that "Yes, we already have a sustainable income" and "Yes, I have an occupation and am helping my family."

During the discussion, the need for additional cash assistance was highlighted, with 34 per cent of participants requesting further support to expand their businesses. However, 14 per cent indicated that they did not require any additional assistance. Some participants expressed a desire for the program to continue, while others suggested ideas such as access to professional training and internship opportunities to further support their economic integration.

Participants in the FGDs agreed that both the selection process and the amount of funding were clearly and transparently communicated. Fifty-seven per cent of individuals identified cash assistance as the most useful component of the program. Thirteen per cent highlighted marketing support and business training as the most beneficial, while 11 per cent felt that all components of the intervention were equally useful.

Approximately 80 per cent of participants stated that the program fully met their needs, while 11 per cent reported their needs were only partially met, and around 6 per cent indicated that their needs were not met at all. Some of the individuals mentioned that “I bought all the necessary farming equipment.”



Final PDM dashboard

The project successfully achieved its goal by employing a structured approach that combined conditional cash transfers with mandatory business training and individualized support. PDM revealed that over 90 per cent of respondents reported increased monthly incomes, improved capacity to meet household needs, and enhanced prospects for long-term business sustainability. The program was notably inclusive, reaching women and other vulnerable groups, and was widely appreciated for its transparency, fairness, and supportive design. Given its demonstrated success and the evident unmet demand, scaling up this model with increased grant sizes, additional technical training, and stronger market links, is both warranted and essential.

**Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations:**

Several key lessons emerged from the implementation of the program:

1. *Effective Two-Stage Cash Transfers:*  
The program’s design, which disbursed funds in two installments contingent on training completion and receipt submission, ensured responsible fund utilization and reinforced accountability among supported individuals.
2. *Value of Individualized Case Management:*  
Ongoing support from dedicated case managers was highlighted as a crucial element. Their guidance not only boosted program outcomes but also greatly increased satisfaction of supported individuals.
3. *High Demand Suggests Scalability:*  
With over 7,000 applications for 309 supported cases, there is a strong demonstrated demand for similar interventions, indicating considerable potential for scaling the program through additional funding and partnerships.
4. *Importance of clear communication:*  
Thorough information sessions and effective engagement strategies ensured that almost all individuals were well informed about program procedures, eligibility criteria, and feedback mechanisms, thereby enhancing transparency and satisfaction.
5. *Significant Psychosocial Benefits:*  
Beyond economic improvements, many individuals who were supported within the intervention reported better mental health, a stronger sense of dignity, and renewed purpose through self-employment and peer engagement, underlining the holistic benefits of the program.

Livelihood activities also faced several challenges, particularly due to the temporary suspension of USAID funding. Specifically, the three-month waiting period resulted in delays and limited opportunities to include an additional 179 displaced individuals in the livelihood support activities who were already preselected by the ARCS. Following the implementation of the EA, ARCS has built the capacity to scale up the program. With additional funding, the support can be extended to reach more individuals, fostering not only economic self-sufficiency but also strengthening local economies and social cohesion, thereby ensuring a more sustainable and impactful recovery process for displaced people.

**With the support of other funding sources:**

As part of the Federation-wide Livelihoods approach, ARCS conducted job placement program funded by the Austrian Red Cross and job placement applicants were referred. To coordinate the activities, address challenges and track progress, IFRC, ARCS and Austrian RC had weekly coordination meetings.

	<p><b>Health &amp; Care</b> <i>(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)</i></p>	<p><b>People reached (phase 1): 85,902</b> <b>People reached (phase 2): 12,118</b></p>	
<b>Objective:</b>		<p><i>Access of affected populations to essential health services (emergency, primary, secondary, community/public health) is facilitated, including mental health and psychosocial support</i></p>	
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>

# of people who receive mental health and psychosocial services in emergency situations from RCRC (Phase 1: Arrival and Initial Support)	85,902	61,850
# of people who receive mental health and psychosocial services in emergency situations from RCRC (Phase 2: Long-term Support)	12,118	9800
# of people trained in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (including Psychological First Aid and other MHPSS related trainings)	912	350
# of people reached with health promotion activities related to NCD management in emergencies	De-prioritized	20,000
# of First Aid community volunteer teams	De-prioritized	50

ARCS as an auxiliary to the Government of Armenia, prioritized MHPSS as an essential and cross-cutting pillar of its response. ARCS implemented a nationwide MHPSS response grounded in the IFRC's MHPSS Framework and intervention pyramid, in alignment with the guidance of the [IFRC Psychosocial Reference Centre](#). ARCS's interventions were structured across multiple layers of the [MHPSS pyramid](#): Layer 1 – basic psychosocial support, Layer 2 – focused psychosocial support, Layer 3 – structured psychological interventions, and Layer 4 – specialized mental health care. This ensured a holistic and inclusive approach to addressing the psychosocial well-being of affected individuals. Interventions ranged from basic services and Psychological First Aid (PFA) to focused, non-specialized support, and referrals for individuals in need of specialized mental health care. Each level of intervention was designed to address specific needs and promote stabilization, recovery, and resilience.

### **Phase 1: Arrival and Immediate Psychosocial Stabilization (September – November 2023)**

During the acute phase of the emergency, ARCS deployed trained staff and volunteers to reception and registration points in Goris (Syunik region), Kornidzor (Syunik region), and Vayk (Vayots Dzor region). A total of 85,902 individuals received PFA, which helped to alleviate distress, reduce fear, and connect people to essential services.

A foundation of the early response was the ARCS Helpline, which offered immediate remote psychosocial support, accurate information, and referrals to essential services. It played a key role in reaching both displaced individuals and host communities during critical moments. Four additional operators were trained and deployed to ensure sufficient coverage and culturally sensitive support. The helpline also served as a central feedback and accountability mechanism, receiving and addressing individual and community concerns.

### **Phase 2: Recovery, Community-Based Support, and Systems Strengthening (December 2023–June 2025)**

In the second phase, ARCS expanded its MHPSS programming to include community-based and structured psychosocial support, tailored to age, gender, and specific vulnerabilities. These services were delivered across all levels of the IFRC [MHPSS pyramid](#), ensuring a comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally appropriate approach.

Under the basic psychosocial support activities ARCS focused on restoring social connections, safety, and access to information. Awareness-raising sessions were conducted in public spaces such as expos and universities, reaching over 1,000 people. An SMS campaign on World Mental Health Day delivered supportive messages to 17,000 individuals, encouraging self-care and help-seeking behaviour.

As for focused psychological support ARCS trained and mobilized frontline staff, volunteers, and non-Red Cross actors to provide Psychological First Aid (PFA), supportive listening, and empathetic behaviour. A total of 912 ARCS staff and volunteers received structured MHPSS training, out of which 133 teachers, parents, and community leaders were trained in PFA, enabling them to support psychosocial needs within schools, families, and communities.



*Psychological First Aid training for volunteers. Photo: IFRC*

Overall, under the EA 98,020 individuals received psychological support, which included 199 individual counselling sessions and group sessions for 1,115 participants. Interventions were need-based and included individual support upon request, group counselling, and community-based PSS events. These activities helped individuals process trauma, grief, and stress, while promoting mutual support and resilience. All services were delivered with attention to cultural and gender sensitivity.

For specialized mental health care, ARCS ensured referrals through a structured system, linking individuals to appropriate services. Additionally, external psychologists who were not involved in the service delivery of ARCS MHPSS activities provided professional supervision to support volunteers and staff, ensuring ethical, safe, and effective service delivery.

### **Community-based MHPSS**

Recognizing the importance of local capacity and cohesion, ARCS strengthened community-based MHPSS through several initiatives. In September 2024 eight regional MHPSS focal points were recruited. Focal points trained in PFA, and basic psychosocial support, which played a vital role in promoting mental health awareness, coordinating activities, and identifying individuals in need of additional support, and to further strengthen their work, ARCS procured 25 PFA kits for the focal points at ARCS HQ and branches. PFA kits contained stationery, stress-relief tools, and

creative engagement materials. Each set included colouring books for children and adults, crayons, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, and charcoal pencils, enabling self-expression and stress reduction. Interactive elements, such as board games (chess, checkers), Rubik's cubes, puzzles, and soft toys, were added to help foster a sense of normalcy and emotional resilience. These efforts ensure that ARCS response teams and MHPSS focal points are well-equipped to provide immediate psychological first aid, promote emotional stabilization, and address both emotional and practical needs in disaster-affected communities.

Additionally, strengthen disaster response capabilities, ARCS equipped nine Disaster Response Teams (DRTs) with 100 PFA kits, each designed to support 10-20 people. These kits, tailored to the Armenian context and informed by past disaster experiences, provide critical psychological support within the first two hours of an emergency. Each DRT PFA kit contains essential items for immediate emotional and practical relief, including PFA leaflets, stress-relief toys (such as large and small anti-stress toys and modelling clay sets), and board games to engage children and adults. Hygiene and self-care items, such as wet wipes, sanitary pads, children's diapers, aluminium water bottles, and disposable cups, were included to address urgent needs. Protective equipment such as PPE masks, gloves, and antiseptic wipes ensures the safety of both responders and supported individuals. The kits also feature notebooks, pens, A4 paper, and drawing albums for documentation and engagement, while thermal blankets and external batteries provide additional support during crisis situations.

Additionally, as part of the community-based MHPSS, ARCS expanded its Child-Friendly Spaces across 10 regions, delivering integrated psychosocial and educational programming for children and their caregivers. A summer program (July–August 2024) incorporated play, storytelling, emotional literacy, and life skills, promoting emotional expression and social reintegration. The inclusion of caregivers supported intergenerational healing and strengthened family systems. Children participating in these programs began interacting more positively with peers from host communities, fostering mutual understanding and social integration on both sides.

Range of PSS events were also organized for individuals, including visits to historical sites, museums, and sightseeing tours offering both psychosocial relief and cultural connection to the host country, which contributed to a sense of belonging and emotional recovery. In integration centres, MHPSS services were extended to both newly involved individuals, also those who have been supported previously, ensuring consistency and inclusivity.

### **Call Centre**

The ARCS Call Centre remained operational throughout the entire emergency response. Over 17,000 individuals accessed the service, receiving emotional support, crisis stabilization, and referrals, including the initial phase of the response and the recovery phase. This remote modality proved especially valuable for individuals with mobility issues, those in remote areas, or those hesitant to seek in-person support due to stigma or privacy concerns.

### **Staff and Volunteer Well-being and Supportive Supervision**

Acknowledging the emotional toll of emergency response, ARCS prioritized staff and volunteer well-being through participation in structured sessions focused on stress management, emotional regulation, and self-care. Mindfulness and peer support approaches were integrated to build personal resilience. Supervision was provided for helpline operators, PSS facilitators, and focal points by qualified mental health professionals, ensuring service quality and reducing the risk of burnout.

### **Quality Assurance and Standards**

Throughout the operation, ARCS ensured all interventions adhered to the IFRC's MHPSS Framework and the principles of the IFRC Psychosocial Reference Centre. Activities were monitored through internal reviews, supervision,

FGDs, peer feedback, and community input. Strong coordination with national ministries and humanitarian partners ensured integration with existing services and culturally appropriate delivery.

### **Impact of MHPSS services**

By the end of the EA, ARCS had reached over 98,020 individuals with MHPSS services, surpassing the initial target of 61,850. Individuals reported greater emotional stability, stronger social connections, and improved awareness of available support. Children benefited from safe spaces that promoted recovery through play and emotional expression. Teachers were trained in MHPSS techniques, enabling them to support students and understand common emotional reactions such as fear, uncertainty, aggression, and emotional withdrawal particularly among those who had lost homes and experienced trauma. Host communities also became more empathetic and inclusive toward displaced populations.



*Individuals taking part in psychological support group. Photo credit: ARCS.*

As a result of MHPSS interventions among children and according to parents, children demonstrated significant improvements in emotional and behavioural well-being. They became more communicative, slept better, and engaged in meaningful play. Enhanced interaction with host community children fostered mutual integration and understanding.

ARCS staff and volunteers strengthened their response capacity and confidence in delivering MHPSS, while incorporating self-care practices like mindfulness to support their own mental health. Communities became more open to discussing mental health and were better prepared to offer mutual support in times of crisis.

ARCS's work under this EA demonstrated the value of a layered, needs-based, and community-centred MHPSS response in emergencies. By building systems across all levels of the intervention pyramid, ARCS addressed immediate distress while laying the groundwork for long-term recovery, local ownership, and resilience.

Except of the service provision, the ARCS Social and Health Care Department staff participate in different meetings and discussions such as Interagency Working Group, WHO WG and Network of older people, to present ARCS services and to keep up to date on the MHPSS activities provided by other organizations.

### **Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations**

Through implementation low and stereotyped awareness, misinterpretation about MHPSS created some challenges for the service provision. For future similar operations digital tools and mobile outreach should be considered to improve accessibility of the services. Awareness raising should be conducted on a rolling basis.

Additionally, considering the heavy workload of the staff and volunteers, especially in the acute phase of the response, had a negative impact on the well-being of the staff and volunteers and put them under the risk of burnout. Hence, well-being of staff and volunteers should be prioritized continuously.

**With the support of other funding sources:**

With the support of Austrian Red Cross, ARCS continues to implement community group and individual activities in Ararat, Armavir and Kotayk regions with the funding from DG ECHO..



**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

People reached IFRC Secretariat: 43,619

**Objective:**

*Improve access of affected population to WASH services to reduce their immediate and medium-term risk of waterborne, water-related, and vector-borne diseases*

**Key indicators:**

Indicator	Actual	Target
# of people reached by WASH assistance	43,619	23,200

Since the beginning of the operation, 10,025 households received hygiene kits and 5,600 children received hygiene items, reaching 43,619 individuals in total.

Item name	Quantity distributed on the 1 <sup>st</sup> round	Quantity distributed on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> round	Quantity distributed on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> round	Total
Hygiene kits (HH)	7,400	450	2,175	10,025
Hygiene items (child)	2,000	3,600	0	5,600

During December 2023, more than 25,000 families received basic information on water sanitation and hygiene through trained community volunteers.

**With the support of IFRC Emergency Appeal funding:**

The initial DREF fund was used to procure hygiene material (1,150 HH hygiene kits and 4,033 hygiene items).

**With the support of other funding sources:**

- Distributions of pre-stocked items from other funding sources, including USAID funded preparedness project.
- 1,567 hygiene items for children procured with UNICEF support.
- 315 households in Yerevan, Sevan, Gyumri, Gegharkunik, and Shirak were supported with family hygiene kits, funded by the Kuwait Red Crescent.



**Education**

People reached (phase 1): 7,096

People reached (phase 2): 4,351

**Objective:**

*Support safe, continued, and equitable access to education for affected populations, especially children and young people, vulnerable and marginalized groups*

**Key indicators:**

Indicator	Actual	Target
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# of affected children, adolescents and young adults receiving any form of education support provided by RCRC in affected area (Phase 1: Arrival and initial Support)	7,096	-
# of affected children, adolescents and young adults receiving any form of education support provided by RCRC in affected area (Phase 2: Long-term Support)	4,351	3,700
# of teachers and education personnel (incl. volunteer facilitators) trained by RCRC in improved teaching and learning approaches in affected areas	296 <sup>11</sup>	450

### Smiley Clubs from the beginning

According to UNICEF data, over 30,000 children arrived from Karabakh after 19 September 2023, requiring immediate attention, including MHPSS activities such as art therapy, reading, dancing, and singing. Additionally, they needed supplementary education to aid in their adaptation process. In response, children and youth were assisted upon their arrival in September 2023 through Child Corners established by ARCS. These secure environments catered to 7,096 young individuals during their arrival and initial stage.

### Smiley Clubs as long-term support

As part of its long-term support, the ARCS actively advanced its initiative to establish more Child-Friendly Learning Spaces, called Smiley Clubs. A group of volunteers, mainly composed of schoolteachers, were recruited and trained to deliver Smiley Club services. The selection of schools, classrooms, volunteers, and students were then conducted using the Smiley Club selection criteria. Children aged 6-14 received homework support, PSS activities, as well as social and cultural events aimed at fostering the integration of children and cultivating a sense of community bond and social cohesion. Since January 2024 – May 2024, Smiley Clubs have reached a total of 2,732 children.

To support children during the 2024–2025 school year, ARCS provided volunteer leaders with an online refresher training on the role and function of the Smiley Clubs in late August 2024. This was built on comprehensive training previously conducted in December 2023 and January 2024. Overall, from September 2024 to May 2025, there was a total of 1,619 children from displaced and local families in around 33<sup>12</sup> Smiley Clubs. Despite various challenges, ARCS ensured that children continued to be supported through various activities. Children participate in a range of activities, including homework support and other educational sessions, as well as recreational activities such as drawing, dancing, singing, sports, crafts, and more. In addition to educational support, psychosocial support is also provided to promote emotional resilience and social inclusion. In addition to the activities mentioned, in September 2024, 378 children attended Healthy Lifestyle sessions.



Homework assistance sessions at Smiley Clubs in schools.  
Photo credit: IFRC

<sup>11</sup> Please note that the actual number reported in this report is lower than in the last Operation Update (OU No. 3) due to a counting error.

<sup>12</sup> The number of Smiley Clubs has constantly changed and presented differently in the previous EA Operational Updates, considering the funding changes.

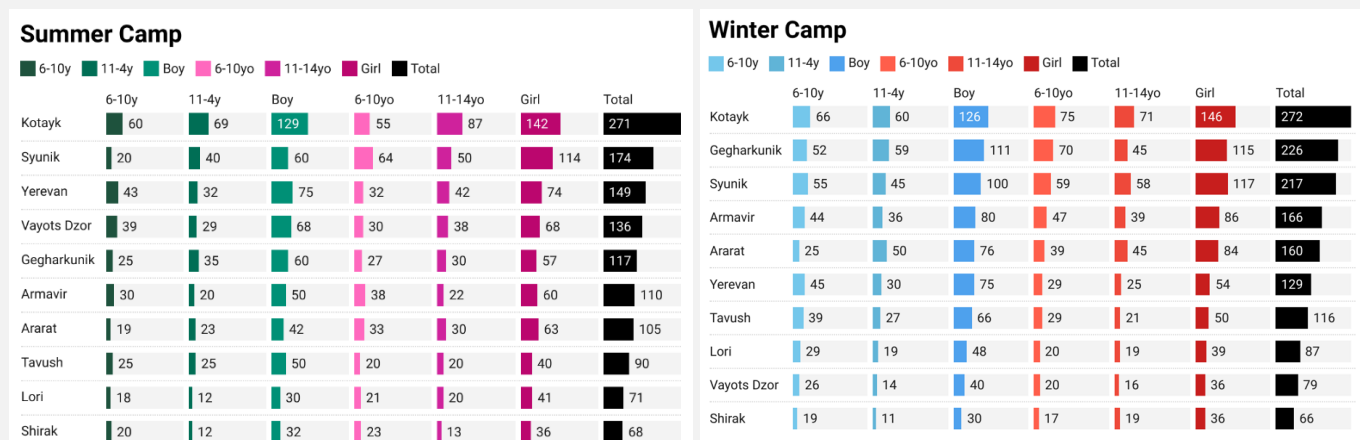
## Smiley Club Summer and Winter Camps

During the summer and winter periods, ARCS organized a series of yard camps in Smiley Clubs to engage children and their families in fun, psychosocial activities. These initiatives aimed to enhance well-being and strengthen connections between displaced and host community children, as well as between children, their parents, and volunteers. This non-formal well-being focused activity supports the Smiley Clubs to deepen relationships and improve overall child well-being. It additionally allows children to feel that the Smiley Club is a safe space, which will hopefully lead into greater educational gains and continued involvement in the Smiley Club throughout the school year.



Children taking part in winter camp activities. Photo credit: ARCS

The following chart presents the cumulative number of children who attended the summer and winter camps:



Infographic showing number of children participated in summer and winter camps according to regions

## Volunteer capacity building

To support children participating in 33 Smiley Clubs, a total of 238 active volunteers were engaged. To support these volunteers, ARCS has one Smiley Club coordinator and four field officers who manage the operation and provide assistance to the volunteers in the Smiley Clubs. To address ongoing challenges, ensure sufficient supplies, and facilitate experience-sharing, the ARCS Youth, Volunteering, and Education Department's Smiley Club field officers conduct weekly meetings with volunteers. These meetings support the effective implementation of weekly activities, while monthly field visits to the Smiley Clubs help strengthen relationships with partnering schools.

The ARCS Smiley Club team also provided capacity-building support to volunteers on essential topics such as Psychological First Aid (PFA), PSS for children, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), the Children's Rights Convention, the Child Safeguarding Policy, and volunteer safety and security. Trainings have been provided to 296 volunteers across Smiley Clubs. In addition to the previously mentioned training sessions, in September 2024, 80 volunteer teachers (75 women and 5 men) were trained to introduce them to the Healthy Lifestyle project and to prepare them for conducting individual sessions. Furthermore, on May 20–21, a training session was held for 35 volunteers and Volunteer Leaders of Smiley Clubs in the Kotayk Region. The training

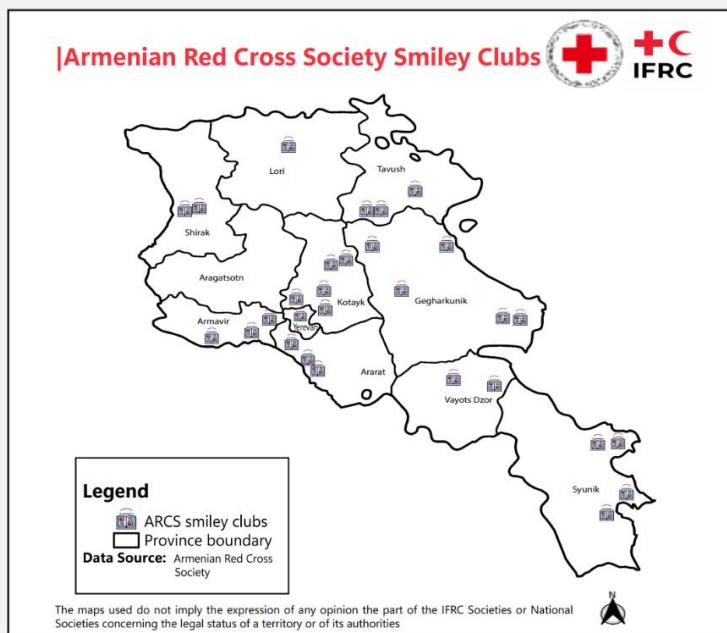
covered key topics such as lessons learned from previous Smiley Club activities, effective lesson planning and curriculum development, and an introduction to the history of the ARCS.

### Smiley Clubs renovations and upgrade

To foster a safer, more child-friendly learning environment, the ARCS renovated and equipped four Smiley Club rooms. Due to budget limitations, changes in institutional priorities, such as increased focus on children's recreational programs like seasonal camps and training volunteer leaders and limited time and related risks, the original renovation plans for the Smiley Clubs were scaled down. Eventually, four SCs were renovated in Gyumri, Vardenis, and Hrazdan communities. The upgrade of the rooms significantly improved learning environments, benefiting a total of 285 children, and new equipment has further enhanced the child-friendly learning experience within these revitalized spaces.

### Smiley Club Internal Review

To assess the effectiveness of the SCs, an internal review was initiated focusing on three key components of the program: educational access and attainment, MHPSS and social cohesion and integration. The review was conducted across 30 SCs and included input from 253 parents and caregivers, 102 volunteers and educators, 27 school directors, 13 teachers who interact with children daily were interviewed; however, they are not directly involved in SCs as facilitators, four Marzpetaran (regional administration) representatives, and more than 250 children aged 6–14. Overall, the findings indicate positive impact of the SCs.



Locations of Smiley Clubs Covered in the Internal Review

Parents highlighted educational and psychosocial benefits, emphasizing enthusiasm, improved academic performance, and positive behavioural changes in their children. Around 67 per cent of caregivers observed educational improvement, citing enhanced reading, handwriting, independence, and motivation. Many reported improvements in school performance, such as: 'was not good in English, but now it got better,'

'started learning well,' and 'grades have improved. Some of the parents mentioned "before attending the Smiles Club, they didn't read well, couldn't understand what they read, and would forget it. After starting to attend, they began learning with interest, reading more fluently and with comprehension." Some parents did not observe any educational changes but noted, "I struggle to answer the educational part, but my relationship with my child has changed."

#### Do you think attending the SC has had any impact on your child's performance in school?



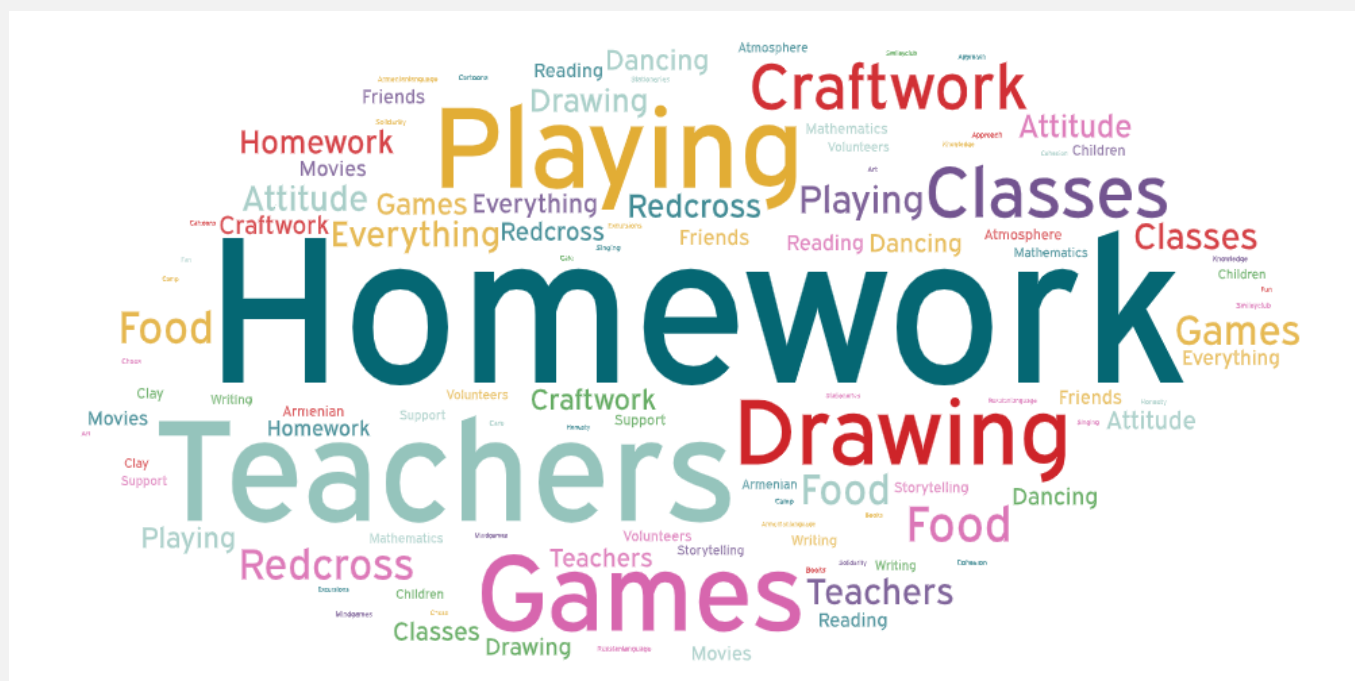
Impact of Smiley Clubs on Children's School Performance, based on caregiver opinion

Related to changes in emotional well-being, since participating in SC activities, 66 per cent of parents and caregivers observed improvements in their children's emotional well-being. According to parents and caregivers before attending SCs, children were "tense," "in fear," "depressed," "aggressive," "feeling down," "very bad," "not stable," "stressful," and "deeply discouraged." After participation, they were reported to be "calm," "more communicative/sociable," "adapted," "happier," "in a good mood," "more open," and "active."

Some parents also mentioned that this support has been very helpful, providing some with the opportunity to work and earn income, while allowing others to spend quality time with their children at home. One parent mentioned that *"I am a mother of multiple children - even one hour of support is a big help for me."* Another parent mentioned that *"this support has been very helpful for me. I'm unable to dedicate enough time to assist with homework, and it also allows me to save the money I would have spent on tutoring and redirect it toward other essential needs."*

School directors also emphasized the Smiley Clubs' positive effects on children's academic progress, emotional well-being, and social inclusion, along with their crucial role in supporting vulnerable families and the wider community. Similarly, teachers who interact with children daily but are not directly involved with the Smiley Clubs acknowledged these spaces as valuable for offering academic support, homework help, and recreational activities, especially benefiting displaced children and those requiring additional assistance. They noted significant improvements in students' academic readiness, literacy, confidence, and emotional health, with children coming to class better prepared and more engaged, which enables more personalized teaching and smoother lessons.

Feedback has also been collected from children who attend SC sessions. The feedback indicated that children enjoy their time spent in the Smiley Clubs. They appreciate doing homework, playing, engaging in crafts, and spending time with volunteers and educators. The following word cloud illustrates the responses received from children about what they enjoy most in the SCs:



Word Cloud: What Children Enjoy Most in Smiley Clubs

The review highlighted that ongoing capacity building for volunteers must be a priority and foundation for delivering quality services. Additionally, it emphasized that psychosocial intervention should be a cornerstone of the program, given the psychological and emotional needs of children, especially following displacement. Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on improving the visibility of the intervention, as well as enhancing coordination and communication with other stakeholders. Another key recommendation from the review was to establish and strengthen referral systems to ensure children can access comprehensive services within the Smiley Clubs.

### **Community Engagement and Accountability**

In parallel to Smiley Club activities community feedback mechanism has been implemented to ensure that the voices of children, parents, and volunteers are heard and respected. This system manages sensitive complaints and collects feedback in various ways:

- Child-friendly suggestion boxes are placed in Smiley Clubs, allowing children to anonymously share their thoughts, fears, wishes, and complaints. Additionally, children participate in needs assessment focus groups, providing insights that help tailor activities and services to better meet their needs.
- Parents' Feedback: Parent meetings and FGDs gather valuable input, as parents' perspectives play a critical role in shaping project activities and development.
- Volunteer Teachers' Feedback: Regular feedback sessions and informal discussions with volunteer teachers foster ongoing communication, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

According to the majority of feedback from parents, there was a need for greater arts and non-formal educational activities within the Smiley Club, therefore from September there is an increase in activities such as pottery, potterry, dance and other hobby groups. Feedback from both children and teacher volunteers suggested to organize entertainment with children during summer vacations, therefore in coordination with ARCS MHPSS team to the Smiley Clubs were able to fulfil this need through summer backyard camps and give children a new motivation to attend school in the new school year.

In terms of monitoring visits, field officers conduct monthly monitoring visits to ensure quality and assess the impact of the initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that the needs of the community are addressed in a comprehensive, responsive, and sustainable way, keeping children's well-being and development at the heart of the Smiley Clubs' mission.

### **Smiley Club Sustainability Planning**

The Smiley Club programme has been part of ARCS programming since 2003, and due to the success and capacity of ARCS to provide educational and psycho-social support through the Smiley Club model, it has been used to respond to the different emergencies in Armenia (2020, 2022, 2023). Nevertheless, considering the decreasing possibilities for funding for Smiley Clubs ARCS, along with its partners have begun to create a sustainability plan. The first stage of this planning was the Smiley Club evaluation, which seek to produce evidence of the benefits of the intervention, which can be used for learning and advocacy. In December 2024, the ARCS conducted a Sustainability Workshop as part of the ongoing development of the interventions. The workshop brought together field officers, CEA focal points, volunteers, and program managers to assess the current state of the program and identify sustainable, child-centred paths forward.

### **Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

The Smiley Club Review, conducted across nearly all Smiley Clubs, indicated that several improvements are needed to maintain and further enhance the quality of service provision. Specific emphasis should be done in the ongoing capacity building for volunteers since Child-friendly space facilitators play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children. Additionally, to better understand children's needs and identify program gaps, it would be beneficial to develop a variety of assessment tools to support evidence-based interventions.

Additionally, development of the referral mechanisms and increased collaboration of with the local communities will ensure greater impact of the program on the well-being of children.

The Volunteer Law adopted in October 2023 mandated formal contracts outlining volunteer roles and insurance coverage, aiming to strengthen safety and accountability. However, the requirement to sign contracts with both existing and new volunteers slowed down the engagement process, which in turn disrupted the regular organization of volunteer training sessions. As a result, ARCS was unable to train enough volunteers and did not meet the training targets set in the response.

**With the support of other funding sources:**

Alongside the EA, ARCS provided educational and psychosocial services to children with support from the Austrian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Lichtenstein RC, UNICEF and funding from DG ECHO.

With the support of Norwegian RC support, on December 18-20, 2024 Training for Smiley Club Facilitators: MHPSS and Playful Learning took place and The 3 day long training therefore looked to include elements of the core IFRC PS Centre MHPSS guidelines aimed at children - CRP, Child friendly spaces, the MHPSS collaborative Thriving through Play training, and the IFRC PS Center, A Hopeful, Healthy & Happy Living & Learning Toolkit: Guide for Teachers, to create and deliver a 3-day training for staff, volunteers (youth) and volunteer (teachers). The training covered key concepts of learning and MHPSS, techniques for learning through play and establishing a safe and playful learning environment, and introduced tools, resources, and games that can easily be used in the Smiley Club, both during peace and as a first response tool during an emergency.



**Migration**

**People reached: 2,623**

**Objective:**

*Specific vulnerabilities of populations arriving to Armenia and people on the move are analysed and their needs and rights are met with dedicated humanitarian assistance, protection, and humanitarian diplomacy interventions, in coordination with relevant stakeholders*

**Key indicators:**

Indicator	Actual	Target
<i># of people reached by RCRC social cohesion activities to improve relations between migrants / people arriving to the country and host communities</i>	2,623	2,500

ARCS has established four Integration Centers to support displaced individuals in rebuilding their lives and integrating into Armenian society. These centers were in Yerevan, Vagharshapat/Ejmiatsin (Armavir region), Hrazdan (Kotayk region), and Ijevan (Tavush region), each staffed by four Integration Officers and coordinated by a dedicated Migration Coordinator. The coordinator oversee weekly activities, including Civic Orientation Sessions (COS) and Socio-Cultural Events (SCE).

The centers in Yerevan and Ijevan operate within ARCS premises, while those in Hrazdan and Vagharshapat/Ejmiatsin are located in United Social Services (operating under MoLSA) buildings. This co-location facilitates referrals, supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ARCS and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

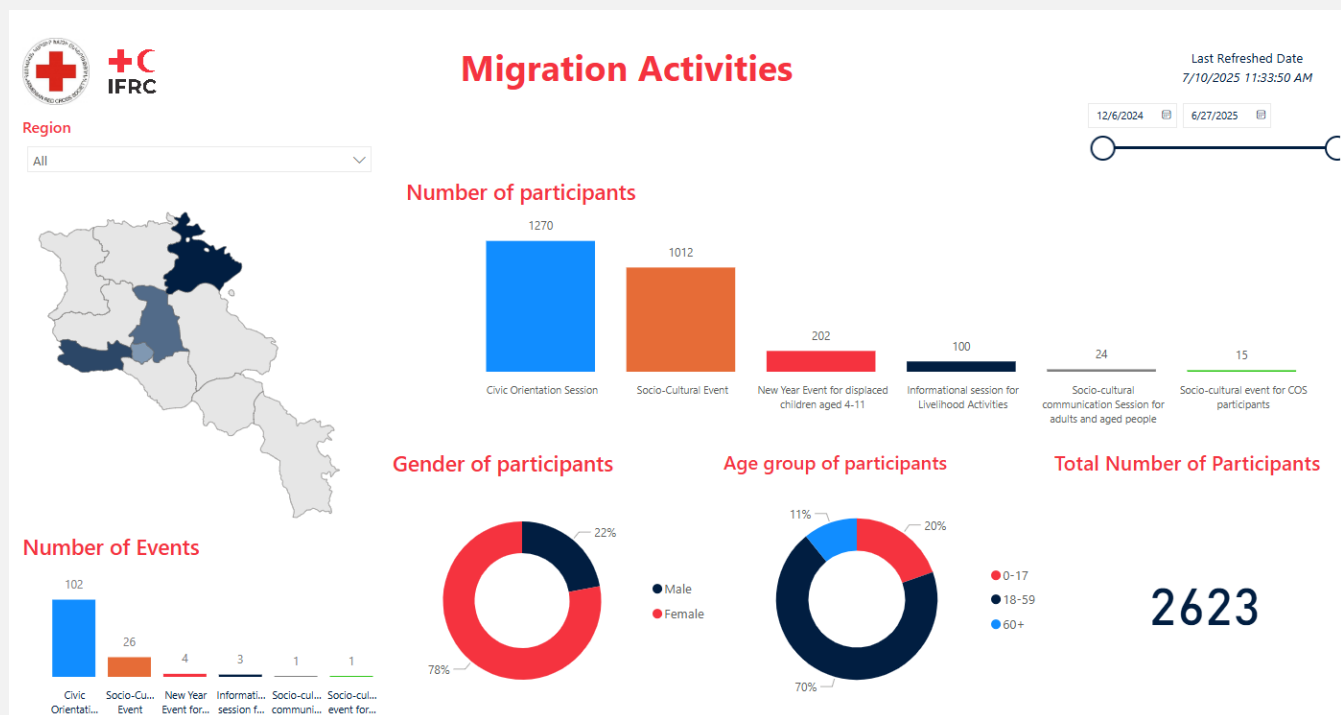


Photos of integration Center sign in Ijevan and Hrazdan. Photo credit: ARCS

With financial and logistical support from IFRC, including renovations, furnishings, and activity costs (e.g., staff salaries, session refreshments, transport for events) the centers provide essential services such as:

1. *Civic Orientation Sessions (COSs)* offer practical information on accessing public services, using online platforms for state assistance, navigating employment and entrepreneurship, and understanding Armenian infrastructure such as transport, finance, and taxation.
2. *Socio-Cultural Events (SCEs)* focus on Armenian traditions, holidays, cultural landmarks, museums, and child-friendly activities. A series of Easter-themed events were carried out in April, focusing on inter-generational cultural exchange and inclusive celebrations.
3. *Other:* including referrals (to USS, Legal services, language services, etc.), information on Livelihoods opportunities and MHPSS.

As a result, by the end of the operation, 2,623 individuals had participated in various activities organized by ARCS's four Integration Centers, as shown in the dashboard below:





Group information sessions. Photo credit: ARCS



Social-cultural session in ARCS Ijevan Integration center for host and displaced young people. Photo credit: ARCS



During social cultural activities, visits are organized to local historical places and museums. Photo credit: ARCS  
Visit to Garni Temple



Visit to Geghard Monastery



Easter Celebration in Ijevan

## Alignment with the IFRC Integration and Inclusion Framework for Europe and Central Asia

The ARCS Integration Centres embody the principles outlined in the IFRC Integration and Inclusion Framework by:

1. **Fostering Inclusive Environments:**  
Creating safe spaces that promote dignity, access, participation, and safety for all individuals, regardless of background.
2. **Promoting Social Cohesion:**  
Facilitating interactions between displaced individuals and host communities to build mutual understanding and respect.
3. **Enhancing Access to Services:**  
Providing information and support to navigate public services, thereby reducing barriers to integration.
4. **Encouraging Community Participation:**  
Engaging displaced individuals in the planning and implementation of activities to ensure their needs and perspectives are central.

By integrating these principles, ARCS ensured that its migration interventions are not only responsive but also proactive in promoting long-term inclusion and resilience among displaced populations.

## Integration and Inclusion Pillars and Elements



*The four pillars aim to provide a standardized structure to assist National Societies in designing, financing, and implementing integration and inclusion initiatives. The four pillars are not isolated silos; rather, they are interconnected components reflecting the holistic approach National Societies take in addressing diverse needs from multiple angles.*

## Alignment with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Strategy on Migration

- *Saving lives, ensuring dignity, and reducing harm:*  
The centers provide safe environments and life-enhancing support to displaced individuals, helping them regain control over their lives and navigate complex systems with dignity.
- *Enabling safe and inclusive access to essential services:*  
Through its Civic Orientation Sessions and referrals, ARCS ensures that migrants can access health, education, legal, and social protection services without discrimination or barriers.
- *Empowering migrants and displaced people:*  
The centers encourage community participation and capacity building, offering tools, information, and a platform for displaced individuals to actively shape their integration journey.
- *Building evidence and partnerships for action:*  
ARCS collaborates with local authorities and service providers (e.g., via MoUs with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), contributing to a collective and coordinated approach that is grounded in humanitarian principles and responsive to emerging needs.

This alignment underscores ARCS's commitment to principled humanitarian action, reinforcing the Movement's global stance that migrants, regardless of status, must be protected, supported, and empowered to thrive in their new communities.

To collect feedback from individuals, FGDs were conducted with 28 participants: adults in Yerevan, women in Ijevan (Tavush region), and children in Hrazdan (Kotayk region). The significant highlight is that all participants agreed that the integration centre helped them form new connections with their local community, fulfilling its primary aim.

Participants in the Yerevan discussion agreed that the civic orientation sessions were very useful. Among the most helpful topics, 40 per cent of participants indicated that all sessions were beneficial. One participant particularly appreciated the business program, two highlighted sessions that enhanced their employability, and another found the session on management most valuable.

Regarding additional topics of interest, several participants expressed a desire for classes specifically tailored to adolescents. All participants who attended the socio-cultural sessions reported enjoying the excursions and hikes. When asked about other activities they would like to participate in, five respondents expressed interest in more sightseeing opportunities, including excursions and concerts. One participant requested more vocational training and courses, while another mentioned interest in financial literacy sessions and English language classes.

FGD participants expressed their gratitude to ARCS staff for their friendly and inclusive approach. They also highlighted the positive impact of the integration centre's activities on their mental well-being. One participant noted that she started "*smiling again*". Another described ARCS staff, giving her "*hope and warmth after the displacement*". Another participant greatly related to the familiarity of the environment during the excursions, she felt "*like at home*". Two others regained their friends.

All the participants noted the crucial role and beneficial effect of psychological counselling sessions for their children and adolescents and asked for their continuation and increase in frequency, noting children's problems with fear and stress and the relief they get through these sessions.

Similar results were observed in Ijevan. Participants enjoyed activities such as excursions, tree planting, local cultural events, Easter celebrations, and more. When asked about additional activities they would like to participate in, five respondents expressed interest in more educational opportunities, three mentioned a desire for foreign language classes, and one participant requested additional job-related training. Participants also expressed interest in legal information sessions, particularly those related to citizenship and their rights.

Children who participated in activities at the Integration Centres also provided positive feedback, with all children reporting that they enjoyed the activities. Eighty-one per cent identified sightseeing as their favorite activity, while one participant preferred sports activities and another enjoyed all the sessions equally. All children reported enjoying playtime and socializing with others, and they all expressed feeling safe and happy throughout the activities.

All children expressed a desire to participate in integration activities again. Fifty-six children reported making new friends and connections within the local community. When asked about their favorite person at the centre and whether they would feel safe talking to them or other ARCS staff in case of a problem, children frequently

Did the Integration Centre activities help you form any new connections or network in the local community?



Did you like the integration centre's activities?



mentioned the coordinator of the Integration Centre and noted that they felt safe around all ARCS staff and volunteers. In response to whether they knew any peers who disliked attending the centre's activities, all participants said they did not know anyone. All children enjoyed playing and socializing with others and consistently reported feeling safe and happy during the activities.

**With the support from other funding sources:**

A case manager from Swiss Red Cross Integration center from Switzerland was invited to Armenia to support ARCS Population Department to find ways to sustain the integration centers post June 2025 when IFRC funding for the Integration activities will discontinue. Various integration programs currently being implemented in Switzerland were also presented as possible inspiration.

	<b>Protection, Gender and Inclusion</b>	<b>People reached: 23,133</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Dignity, Access, Participation and Safety are mainstreamed throughout the operation to ensure the unique needs of people from all groups, including marginalized groups, are met. An emphasis on keeping the people the IFRC network serves safe from harm in the form of violence, discrimination, and/or exclusion is ensured.</i>		
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>
	<i># of sectoral or PGI assessments conducted using the PGI Minimum Standards</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
	<i># of people trained on implementing the PGI Minimum Standards</i>	<b>396</b>	<b>200</b>
	<i># of people reached by protection, gender, and inclusion services</i>	<b>23,133</b>	<b>15,000</b>

Considering the cross-cutting nature of PGI, ARCS ensured that PGI approaches were integrated across all sectors of operations and programmes. While PGI considerations were embedded throughout the implementation of various activities. Since 2023 ARCS reached overall 23,133 individuals with PGI-related services. These individuals were supported in parallel with a range of activities, including:

1. *Cash hotline support:* ARCS hotline staff were trained in PGI principles, ensuring they could identify protection concerns, refer cases when need (e.g., GBV, Child Protection), and provide psychological first aid where appropriate.
2. *Livelihood assistance:*  
During the selection process, PGI criteria were applied to prioritize individuals with higher vulnerability, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Sessions were conducted in a safe, inclusive, and culturally appropriate manner.
3. *Livelihoods/job orientation sessions:*  
In parallel, livelihood activities were complemented by awareness sessions on rights, responsibilities, access to services, and protection mechanisms, tailored to the diverse needs of specific groups such as women, children, and the elderly.
4. *Civic orientation and one-on-one counselling sessions.*  
These sessions provided space to identify and respond to individual protection concerns, including psychological support needs and referrals to specialized services.

What is more important, ARCS has been actively involved in child protection cases, addressing a wide range of challenges within the field of child rights protection. On this matter, ARCS developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to address child protection cases which was fundamentally based on the ARCS Child Safeguarding Policy.

Throughout the response child protection case managers registered 62 child protection cases where 165 (100 girls and 65 boys) children were involved. The cases were referring to educational, medical, psychological and legal issues that have been addressed. The Child Protection Case Manager conducted house visits, prepared case descriptions and intervention plans, conducted best interest determination assessments and provided conclusions. Ensuring the comprehensive approach of the child protection, additionally to prevent and respond to child protection issues ARCS closely cooperated with Child Protection organizations to ensure forcibly displaced children protection issues were raised and solutions discussed. In addition, ARCS kept regular contact with the partners to ensure effective identification and effective case management for child protection cases.

ARCS organized a child protection case management meeting aimed to introduce child protection case management components, the updates on the available services to be provided in the field of protection of forcibly displaced children. The participants also brainstormed on the main challenges faced by forcibly displaced children focused on access to education, medicine and documentation issuing. The solutions to the issues were identified, and prospective follow-ups were suggested. The participants highlighted the importance of the child protection case management component in the context of the protection of the rights of children of concern. Presentation on Smiley Club activities was held. Besides, there was a discussion on programs implemented by partner organizations, their scope and continuity, as well as a discussion on challenges faced by forcibly displaced children.

In the framework of Child Protection Case Management meeting, ARCS strengthened the cooperation between the stakeholders, created a platform of information exchange between state and non-state organizations engaged in CP activities. As well as they gave the opportunity to raise the gaps and challenges (including legislative) faced by the children and discuss the solutions. All the issues raised during the meeting have been either solved or referred to appropriate organizations.

Forcibly displaced children have encountered educational, medical, psychological and legal issues:

- *Educational issues:*  
Pre-school, elementary, secondary, high school and special school registration, referral to appropriate institutions for collection of required documents, cooperation with the children's principals and schoolteachers to address various issues.
- *Medical issues:*  
Local polyclinic registration, medical examination arrangement, referral to appropriate institutions for collection of required documents to get disability category, cooperation with head of hospitals, rehabilitation centres and referral to field-related specialists.
- *Psychological issues:*  
Referral to appropriate specialists, MHPSS and follow-up cases.
- *Legal issues:*  
Cooperation with partner organizations and state bodies to address children's legal issues.

In addition to protection services provided to the affected population, ARCS translated and adapted the four-hour PGI induction course on PGI minimum standards making sure that it is relevant to the Armenian context. The course covered PGI DAPS framework (Dignity, Access, Participation, and Safeguarding, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), safe referrals, survivor-centred approaches, and sensitive feedback mechanisms. Additionally, ARCS PGI team collaborated with the CEA and capacity building fund (CBF) teams to develop SOPs for handling sensitive feedback. They remain actively engaged in this process and currently serve as the primary focal point for managing sensitive feedback. Since September 2023 a total of 396 ARCS staff and volunteers were trained on PGI minimum standards.



ARCS Protection Gender Inclusion (PGI) Officer providing Civic orientation session on Women's Rights in Yerevan ARCS premise. Photo credit: ARCS

Furthermore, PGI assessment analysis continues to be integrated into case management. PGI assessment of individual needs are conducted through requests that come to ARCS via email, helpline, and branches. Through this individual assessment, needs based on gender, disability and protection needs are evaluated to meet the specific necessities of each person. This may include providing furniture to institutions for vulnerable older people (complementing the renovations by UNDP) or providing specific mobility aids and medical equipment to individuals.

In March 2025, in honor of International Women's Day, ARCS organized and delivered a one-hour workshop exploring the history of the day, drawing comparisons between early women's movements and contemporary civic activism in Armenia. These sessions were conducted for a total of 118 displaced individuals from the Karabakh at ARCS Integration Centers in Tavush, Armavir, Kotayk regions and in Yerevan. Through the Identity Maps exercise, participants explored the different aspects of their identities and how these influence their lived experiences. Key discussion topics included:

- Loss of homeland and overcoming grief through community,
- Peer support and solidarity in activism,
- Women's rights in Armenia and their roles in families and society,
- Integration through open-mindedness and inclusivity.

The gender and age disaggregation of the participants is the following:

Participants per location	Participants	Male	Female	Ages 4-17	Ages 18-49	Ages 50+
Yerevan	33	0	33	2	17	17
Hrazdan (Kotayk region)	25	2	23	0	19	6
Vagharshapat (Armavir region)	23	4	19	1	14	8
Ijevan (Tavush region)	37	5	32	3	22	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>41</b>

Throughout the implementation period, ARCS and IFRC representatives actively participated in sectoral coordination working groups led by the Government of Armenia and co-led by UN agencies, including the Protection Working Group and the Child Protection Sub-Working Group. Through these platforms, ARCS contributed to information

sharing and coordination efforts, helping to ensure a harmonized approach among partners to address protection, gender, and inclusion needs on a case-by-case basis.

**Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations:**

Conducting PGI-specific and/or integrated assessments was challenging, as the government led needs assessment activities. The respective indicator, therefore, could be interpreted as integrated into analysis, such as case management, through internal assessments that were conducted during the PGI training, and individual activity assessments, for instance through the design of individual Smiley Clubs.

Limited staffing in the PGI component affected the continuity and smooth implementation of activities. This led to challenges in organizing events, ensuring effective information flow, and maintaining consistent oversight. For future interventions, prioritizing the recruitment and retention of a dedicated PGI Coordinator will be essential to ensure more structured and targeted delivery of sector-specific activities.

**With the support of other funding sources:**

Through PGI activities, ARCS supported 3,948 individuals, including those reached under ECHO funding through the Austrian Red Cross. In total, 27,081 individuals were reached with PGI support across the Federation-wide response. ARCS implemented Child Protection Case Management to ensure the timely identification and response to children’s protection needs within the framework of a UNICEF-funded project. Case managers for child protection have been engaged in all branches, reaching 4,475 children by the end of March. These case managers handled 1,251 child protection cases and provided support to 2,774 children (1,414 male, 1,360 female). The cases were referred to child protection through the ARCS helpline and directly from ARCS branches.



**Community Engagement and Accountability**

<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Strengthen engagement with and accountability to communities through integrating mechanisms for communication, participation and feedback and complaints within programmes and operations</i>		
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>
	<i>% of people surveyed who report receiving useful and actionable information</i>	89%	70%
	<i>Number and % of complaints or feedback about the RCRC operation which receive a response through established community communication</i>	97%	70%
	<i>% of community members who feel their opinion is taken into account during operation planning and decision-making</i>	87%	60%

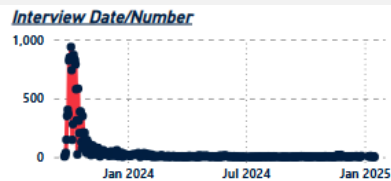
CEA was a crucial component of the IFRC EA in response to the 2023 displacement. CEA empowered affected individuals by actively involving them in decision-making processes, ensuring that humanitarian assistance was relevant, responsive, and tailored to their specific needs.

The response was designed with a commitment to understanding and addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of the displaced population, as gathered through CEA channels. Throughout the whole operation, a total of 17,669 interviews were conducted via phone and face-to-face interactions, reaching individuals who collectively represented

81,661 people. This registration process aimed to identify key needs and assess vulnerabilities, enabling the response to effectively target those most in need of support.

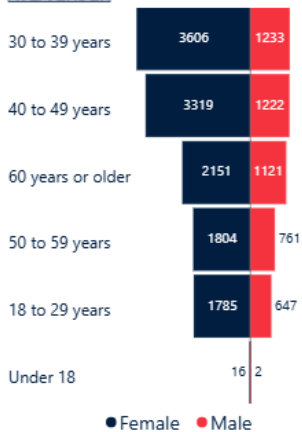


# Population Movement



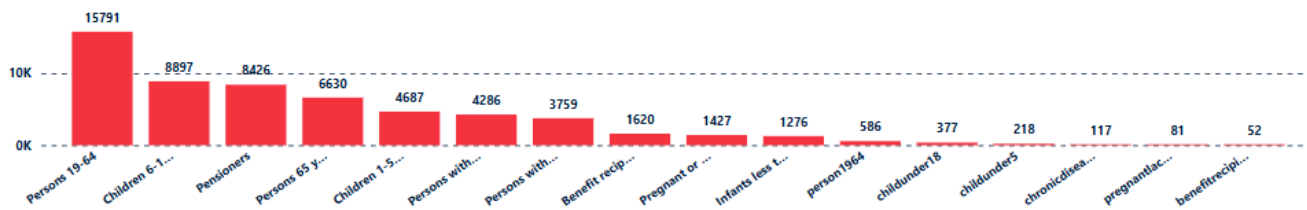
Region	Community	Gender	Vulnerability	Channel	Total # of Interviews	Total # of Family Members
All	All	All	All	All	<b>17669</b>	<b>81661</b>

## AGE/GENDER

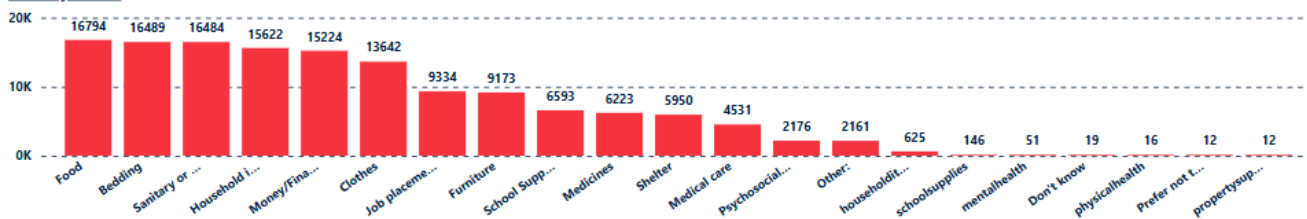


Region	# of People
Yerevan	8156
Vayots Dzor	89
Tavush	267
Syunik	195
Shirak	249
Lori	431
Kotayk	2989
Gegharkunik	570
Armavir	1192
Ararat	3003
Aragatsotn	528

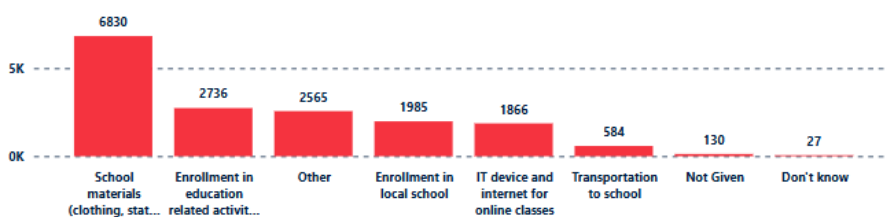
## Vulnerability/Groups



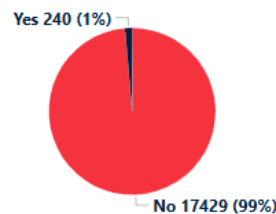
## Primary needs



## Education Needs



## Missing family member



Total number of people interviewed and registered disaggregated by sex, age and location.

Throughout the entire response operation, additional feedback was gathered through FGDs and post-distribution monitoring, involving 853 individuals. This brought the total number of individuals who provided feedback to 18,522.

Between September 2024 and June 2025, ARCS recorded a total of 1,303 interactions, conducted either by phone or face-to-face, 43 per cent (562 individuals) of whom were among those displaced from Karabakh. The helpline was the primary communication channel, accounting for 99 per cent of interactions, while all of those contacted identified having vulnerable family members, including pregnant and lactating mothers, women-led households, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities. Key issues raised included urgent needs for food, shelter, and essential household items (372 contacts, 66 per cent); cash and voucher assistance (CVA) (338 contacts, 60 per cent); livelihoods (260 contacts, 46 per cent) and health and social services (51 contacts, 9 per cent), MHPSS support (2 contacts, 0.4 per cent).

Types of feedback received included encouragement or praise (0.2 per cent), incident or concern including complaint (2.1 per cent), observations, perceptions and beliefs (0.9 per cent), questions (0.2 per cent), requests and suggestions (96.2 per cent).

## **Progress Against Indicators**

### *1. % of people surveyed report receiving useful and actionable information:*

A feedback survey conducted in January and February 2025 among 187 community members and supported individuals from the departments of Population Movement (48), Health and Social Care (15), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) (26), the Smiley Club program for children (50), and the call centre (48)—revealed that 80 per cent of respondents reported receiving useful and actionable information about the respective ARCS programs and operations. The number of surveyed community members included 24 men, 113 women, 50 children, among whom there were 18 people with disabilities. Indicators were also measured during the FGDs with Livelihoods and Integration Centre's beneficiaries, including 35 and 28 community members respectively. FGDs showed 94 per cent of individuals who received support through livelihoods program and all of Integration Centres' community members, taking part in FGDs, received useful and actionable information. Livelihoods' FGDs included 22 women, 13 men with eight people with disabilities. Integration Centres' FGDs were conducted in the integration centres of Yerevan - involving a group of 7 women and 2 men, among whom two had a disability; Ijevan - involving a group of 10 women, among whom two had a disability; Hrazdan - involving a group of 9 children with 7 boys and 2 girls, none of whom had disability.

### *2. % of complaints or feedback about the RCRC operation which receive a response through established community communication:*

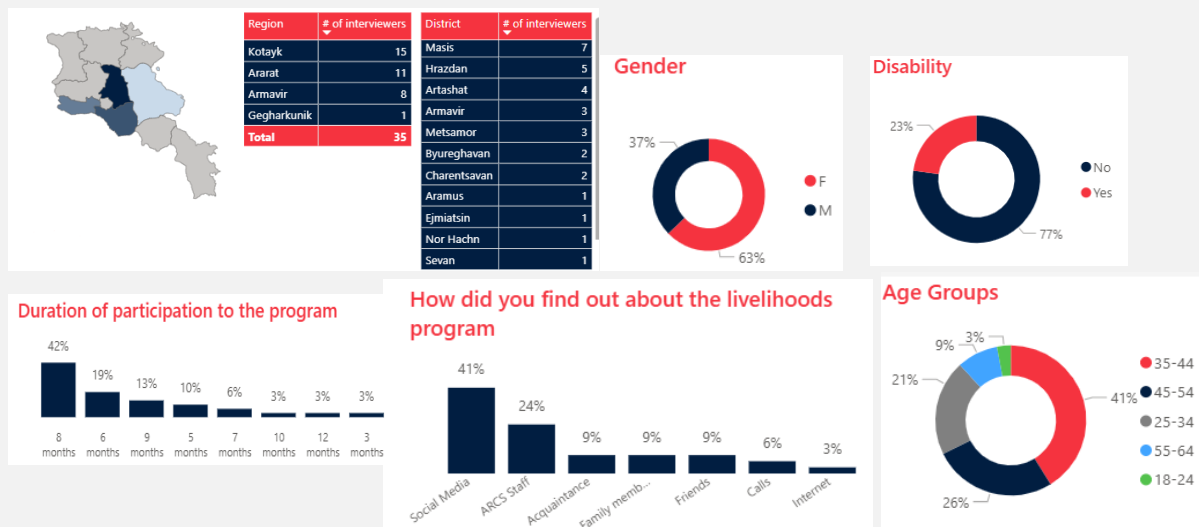
The same survey showed that out of 129 complaints and feedback 93 per cent received a response from ARCS staff. The number of respondents included 22 men, 76 women, 31 children, among whom there were 15 people with disabilities. FGDs among the individuals supported through Livelihoods program and Integration Centres also showed that all the respondents, who have used a mechanism to raise an issue or a concern, have received a response from the ARCS staff and were satisfied with the effectiveness of the response.

### *3. % of community members who feel their opinion is taken into account during operation planning and decision-making:*

Out of 187 community members 77 per cent felt that their opinion was considered during the program planning and decision making. The question was answered by 24 men, 113 women, 50 children among whom there were 18 people with disabilities. All individuals supported through livelihoods and Integration Centres' and have participated in the respective FGDs, perceived that their opinion was considered during the operation planning and decision-making with the exception of children (88% felt that their opinion was taken into account).

The feedback survey also examined individuals' preferred channels for providing feedback on ARCS programs and operations, revealing that face-to-face communication was the most preferred method (67 per cent), followed by phone calls (23 per cent) and social media (11 per cent).

Additionally, the PDM surveys among individuals supported under livelihoods activities were complemented with FGDs by IFRC and ARCS CEA staff, conducted after each instalment of payment of livelihood grants and consecutive PDMs in February and April 2025. The FGDs conducted in February, included two groups: one – among eleven women in Yerevan city and the other - among a mixed group of thirteen participants in Vaghharshapat city, including four men and nine women. The second round of FGDs conducted in April 2025 included thirty-five participants from diverse geographical areas (See the demographic data in the graphs below).



Further questions explored the individuals' opinion on whether they have received useful and actionable information, addressed complaints and feedback, as well as their perception of whether their opinion was considered during the programmatic decision-making:

- Most participants (94 per cent) except for two agreed that they received useful and actionable information about the program, with several participants citing: *"Of course, without their help I could not complete the business application"; "Received adequate knowledge about the business and the program"*.
- Regarding the question of using any mechanism to raise complaints or make suggestions, 85 per cent of respondents did not have any complaints, therefore did not use any mechanism to raise them. Fifteen per cent of participants used the mechanism and thought it was effective, and their suggestions were considered: *"Yes and it was effective. My suggestion was accepted."*
- All participants agreed that their opinion was considered during the program planning and decision making. One participant did not make any suggestions to be considered.
- Regarding the question of steps by ARCS staff in addressing their feedback, most of the participants were satisfied with the actions taken. They mentioned that their suggestions were considered and addressed, receiving advice and being referred to other services: *"Received a response to all my questions"; "They consulted with us and addressed the questions"; "My suggestion was accepted"*.
- To the question of whether the program addresses their real needs the majority (80 per cent) of participants said that the program covered their needs fully, 11 per cent were partially covered and about six per cent (two participants) mentioned that it did not cover their needs: *"Yes, it totally covered my needs"; "I bought all the necessary farming equipment"; "For the total coverage of needs it depends on time [whether the business will be successful]"; "With a little more help everything will be well"*.



Another FGDs was conducted by the IFRC CEA Coordinator during a cultural excursion and psychological counselling session organized by a psychological counsellor and staff from the ARCS MHPSS department. The session involved seventeen females. All seventeen women currently live in Yerevan. Five (29 per cent) of them had a family member with a disability. All of them have been involved with the program for 10 months at the moment of the discussion. Almost all participants reported receiving useful and actionable information about the program, except for one woman, who cited that the MHPSS activities and information are not as regular for their children. None of the participants used any mechanism for raising complaints or suggestions as they had not had any. All individuals preferred face-to-face interaction with ARCS staff and social media, particularly Facebook and Viber. Participants noted that they did not have any suggestions previously. However, they were enthusiastic about such cultural visits and counselling sessions and would like them to be implemented more frequently and would follow up to see if their suggestions are considered for further programmatic operations. Regarding the question of whether more community members need the MHPSS program, one of the participants mentioned that she had some acquaintances who would benefit from the program.

Additionally, as part of the ARCS Integration Centres program, the IFRC Armenia CEA Coordinator conducted three FGDs with 28 individuals: adults in Yerevan, women in Ijevan (Tavush region), and children in Hrazdan (Kotayk region). Across all groups, participants reported receiving useful information and knowing how to contact ARCS staff for complaints or concerns, though only one person had used feedback mechanisms and was satisfied with the response. Most (with an exception of one person) felt their opinions were considered in planning and decision-making, particularly in Yerevan and Hrazdan.

### **NSD component in CEA**

To ensure the efficient implementation of CEA, continuous support were provided to ARCS through various initiatives. These initiatives included building the capacity of staff and volunteers, digitalizing the feedback mechanism for easier tracking and data analysis, and developing handout materials for distribution within ARCS. Additionally, CEA channels and information boards were being established at ARCS activity sites, along with SMS notifications sent to cash assistance recipients. The CEA community of practice has been established with HQ and branch focal points, who have received CEA foundational training with further support visits by IFRC and ARCS CEA Coordinators to branches, enabling the CEA focal points to brief respective branch staff and facilitate the CEA knowledge transfer and practice in the communities.

### **Series of Trainings**

In September 2023, the ARCS CEA Coordinator conducted briefings for staff and volunteers on effective communication with communities during emergencies, enhancing their confidence in managing community interactions. A collaborative training with MHPSS addressed communication challenges during the registration of displaced individuals, equipping participants with necessary skills for better engagement. CEA focal points from HQ and Branches have been trained with the CEA foundation training. Further visits to two of the branches have been conducted.

### ARCS Call Centre

Initially, ARCS has been operating two separate helplines – one including the short number, answering general inquiries and another specific line for cash assistance. To ease and improve central feedback mechanism, plans of establishing and launching a general call centre within ARCS have been initiated. The hiring process of the call centre staff has been concluded, and the call centre staff has been trained in skills and areas of psychological first aid, community engagement, accountability and feedback collection, as well as protection, gender and inclusion and the practical training of digital engagement hub.



DEH training for Call Centre Staff. Photo credit: IFRC

### Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations

The following challenges were recorded throughout the implementation:

- *High Volume and Complexity of Inquiries:* The helpline experienced overwhelming demand, especially during the emergency phase, requiring rapid scaling and eventual adjustment of hours.
- *Communication Barriers:* Dialect differences and disabilities among displaced populations complicated registration and feedback collection, necessitating specialized training and adaptive communication strategies.
- *System Integration and Training:* Transitioning to new digital tools (EspoCRM, DEH) required significant customization, staff training, and development of new SOPs and workflows.
- *Institutional crisis and employee turnover:* The experienced institutional crisis and loss of trained staff required new capacity building measures.

### Lessons Learned

- *Adaptability is essential:* The ability to rapidly adjust helpline operations, communication channels, and staff training was critical to meeting evolving needs.
- *Feedback is central to accountability:* Systematic collection and analysis of community feedback improved program relevance and satisfaction.
- *Investment in digital tools pays off:* The successful adoption of the DEH and EspoCRM was contingent on thorough training, stakeholder engagement, and iterative system customization.
- *Inclusive communication builds trust:* Addressing language and accessibility barriers increased participation and trust, particularly among vulnerable groups.
- *Continuous Coordination Strengthens Response:* Regular collaboration and information-sharing among partners and branches enhanced accountability and resource use.

### Recommendations

- *Scale up call centre capacity:* Invest in infrastructure and staff to handle increased call volumes, especially during emergencies and major program changes.
- *Accelerate digital system rollout:* Prioritize the translation, piloting, and full deployment of the DEH and EspoCRM to all branches for harmonized feedback management.
- *Expand Training and Community of Practice:* Continue regular training for CEA focal points and volunteers, emphasizing inclusive communication and feedback handling.
- *Institutionalize feedback analysis:* Establish routine analysis and reporting of feedback trends to inform program design and accountability measures.
- *Maintain multi-channel engagement:* Continue offering diverse feedback channels (phone, digital, in-person) to maximize accessibility and responsiveness.
- *To ensure long-term sustainability and consistent practice,* ARCS should embed CEA principles and requirements into its core organizational policies, SOPs, and strategic planning documents. This includes mandating CEA training for all new staff and volunteers, integrating feedback management responsibilities into job descriptions, and establishing regular internal reviews to monitor CEA implementation across all branches and programs. By institutionalizing CEA in this way, ARCS can guarantee that engagement, feedback, and accountability to affected populations remain central to its humanitarian response, regardless of staff turnover or operational changes.

### **With the support of other funding sources:**

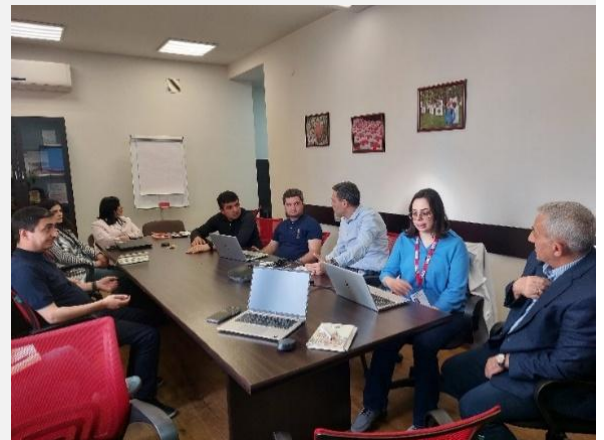
#### **CEA Digitalization**

With the support of the Capacity Building Fund (CBF), the ARCS has made significant progress in transforming its community feedback mechanism through digitalization. This transformation was anchored by the launch of the Digital Engagement Hub (DEH), an advanced feedback management platform co-developed by the IFRC, the Netherlands Red Cross (510 team), and the Norwegian Refugee Council. DEH integrates EspoCRM and Twilio, offering a sophisticated system for collecting, analyzing, and responding to community feedback.

This initiative directly addresses key gaps in ARCS's previous system, including the lack of data coding and mechanisms for closing feedback loops. Through the DEH, ARCS now ensures a more data-driven, responsive, and community-centered approach.

A key part of the DEH launch was the capacity-building effort aimed at ensuring that all key staff members were equipped to use the new platform effectively. The 510 team conducted a Training of Trainers for the IFRC CEA Coordinator, ARCS CEA Coordinator, and IFRC Armenia Senior IM Manager on championing DEH. Discussions and decisions were made regarding the settings of the user interface to conform with standard operating procedures such as processing sensitive feedback.

Separate training sessions were organized for call centre staff, who are responsible for managing cases and engaging directly with community members about health and social services, cash and voucher assistance, mental health and psycho-social support and other services provided by ARCS. These staff members are essential to the success of the DEH, as they will be the primary point of contact for receiving and addressing feedback. Further training sessions have been conducted for CEA Focal Points and ARCS Heads of Departments, ensuring widespread understanding and usage of the DEH system across the organization.



*DEH training for ARCS departments heads and CEA focal points. Photo credit: IFRC*



## Risk Reduction, climate adaptation and Recovery

People reached: 1,736

### Objective:

*Affected people are not put at increased risk, and their vulnerability to future disasters and crises is reduced, including to climate change impacts*

### Key indicators:

#### Indicator

**Actual**

**Target**

*# of branches that have the capacity to lead the operation at local level*

longer-term indicator

12

*# of volunteers involved in the response operation that have increased their skills in response and management of operations*

1,736

2,000

*Operational strategy is climate smart*

longer-term indicator

Yes

Since the start of the operation disaster preparedness sessions were conducted for 60 ARCS volunteers, with a primary focus on ensuring safety in humanitarian response operations and upholding minimum standards. These sessions are part of a broader effort to enhance the organization's capacity to respond effectively to crises. Overall, 1,500 volunteers and ARCS staff have been deployed in response to the crisis, with substantial capacity-building efforts accompanying these deployments. Around 236 volunteers newly recruited participated in Induction courses.

### Disaster management

To strengthen national disaster response capacity, the ARCS conducted a 5-day Disaster Response Team (DRT) training from 25 to 29 November in Aghveran. The training brought together 26 participants, including 18 experienced ARCS volunteers from regional and territorial branches, 5 staff members from ARCS Headquarters, and 3 observers from Movement partners, including IFRC and ICRC. The training covered essential operational modules such as First Aid, Psychological First Aid, needs assessment, safety and security, community engagement and accountability, internal and external communication, Movement coordination, and SHERE standards. A full-day simulation exercise, based on a severe winter storm and border-area tension scenario, allowed participants to apply skills in real-time, including triage, coordination, and reporting. The training significantly enhanced the operational readiness of national DRT teams and their alignment with ARCS contingency and preparedness frameworks.



ARCS DRTs during 5-day Disaster Response Team training field exercise. Photo credit: ARCS

To reinforce strategic and operational preparedness, ARCS conducted three distinct contingency planning workshops between October 2024 and February 2025. The first focused on strengthening ARCS's internal planning processes at the national level. It resulted in the update of the ARCS Contingency Plan for 2025–2026, prioritizing four key hazards where the National Society has minimum response capacity: population movement, wildfires,

urban floods, and explosion-related emergencies. This planning process aligned with ARCS's Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) Plan of Action and identified concrete preparedness gaps, including the need for pre-positioned stocks, volunteer mobilization protocols, and improved internal coordination mechanisms.

The second series of workshops localized preparedness across all 13 ARCS regional and territorial branches. Conducted in clusters between October and December 2024, the workshops brought together branch disaster management coordinators, local government representatives, and ARCS HQ facilitators. Through scenario-based planning, participants identified branch-level capacities and gaps, updated risk matrices, and drafted actionable response plans. These workshops ensured each branch had a tailored contingency plan aligned with the national framework and clarified their respective roles and resources in case of emergencies.

The third event, a Movement-wide Contingency Plan (MCP) Workshop, was held in Aghveran from 17 to 19 February 2025. This workshop brought together representatives from ARCS, IFRC, ICRC, and Partner National Societies including Austrian, Italian, and Swiss Red Cross. The workshop updated the Armenia Movement Contingency Plan to reflect emerging risks and operational lessons, including scenarios for earthquakes, border conflict escalation, refugee influxes, and health emergencies. Participants jointly reviewed roles, triggers, and coordination protocols under the Seville Agreement 2.0, and consolidated preparedness actions into a joint Movement Preparedness Plan of Action. This strengthened shared accountability and improved readiness for coordinated response during large-scale humanitarian crises.

In line with the priority of making the operation climate smart, ARCS established a dedicated Climate Change Unit at its headquarters. ARCS staff members had undergone foundational training to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate climate considerations into their programs and responses.

Additional, ARCS conducted logistics and procurement assessment, based on which several improvement recommendations were provided. These included strengthening ARCS's logistics systems, upgrading warehouse facilities, and introducing a digital inventory tracking system. An experience-sharing workshop was also proposed to build staff capacity. In line with this, ARCS implemented training courses on supply chain, warehouse management, and purchasing.

### **Challenges, Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

The implementation faced several challenges, particularly related to the training provided to volunteers. The Volunteer Law adopted in October 2023 had a significant impact, as it required formal contracts to be signed outlining volunteer roles and insurance coverage to ensure safety and accountability. Since these contracts needed to be signed with both existing and newly recruited volunteers, the process of volunteer engagement was slowed down. This, in turn, limited the ability to organize regular training sessions for volunteers.

Given the limited time for fully strengthening the logistics system, ARCS will continue to make consistent efforts to enhance its logistics capacity, including the pre-positioning of relief items in high-risk areas across the country. This will help ensure that essential supplies are readily available in areas most likely to be affected by natural disasters, thereby improving response times and the overall effectiveness of emergency operations.

## **Enabling approaches**



### **National Society Strengthening**

**Objective:**

*Further strengthen the ARCS' institutional and emergency response capacities, complementing and building on the ARCS's Country Plan and Master NSD Action Plan*

	<b>Indicator<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Key indicators:</b>	<i># of sessions conducted for NS leadership, staff, and volunteers;</i>	23	20
	<i>NSD plan developed and endorsed, with roadmap and branch development strategy</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i># of updated NS policies &amp; procedures aligned with IFRC standards, including code of conduct, recruitment procedures and procurement procedures</i>	5	8
	<i># of trainings on volunteer management, including database support</i>	10	10
	<i># of strategies developed / revised (incl. emergency communication strategy, first aid strategy, fundraising strategy, and corresponding PoAs)</i>	2	4

The ARCS has made significant progress in institutional strengthening, driven by a focused effort to maximize the impact of National Society Development (NSD). With the support of the IFRC network expertise, this progress reflected the ARCS's strategic commitment to enhancing organizational resilience, capacity development, strengthening accountability, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

In support of the EA operations, an Explanatory Note on NSD Activities was developed to define priorities essential to strengthen ARCS capabilities to deliver services. ARCS has also made progress in its broader institutional development. A comprehensive NSD inventory (2021-2023) was conducted, assessing capacity and outcomes to guide future interventions. This assessment led to the development of an NSD Roadmap. The *NSD Roadmap* includes five strategic commitments to strengthen legal framework, enhance Movement coordination, supporting branch development, and deepening volunteer and youth engagement to build a stronger, more agile organization. The NSD Roadmap framework was endorsed by the ARCS Governing board in December 2024 and in consultations and with the support of IFRC and Movement partners, the ARCS launched the NSD Roadmap implementation.

While consultations on short-, medium and long- term activities, the roadmap continues, the NSD roadmap has become a guiding document for ARCS and Movement partners to evaluate advances with ARCS institutional development. Following the NSD Roadmap short-term priorities, the ARCS Statute is under review by the Joint Statutory Commission (JSC). Upon receiving recommendations, the ARCS, IFRC, and ICRC Working Group will review them and draft by-laws for the ARCS Governing Board. ARCS improved coordination by convening Movement partners through *Movement Partnership Meeting* and launching the *NSD Coordination Platform* to support joint planning and aligned development efforts. In February 2025, ARCS hosted a Movement Partnership Meeting, chaired by its President, with IFRC, ICRC and PNSs working in the country. A key outcome was the establishment of the NSD Coordination Platform. Between March and June 2025, four strategic meetings aligned partners on NSD priorities, resulting in a shared work plan, endorsed Terms of Reference, core HR role mapping, financial analysis for post-EA support, and joint planning on institutional development initiate for the July–December 2025 transition phase.

To strengthen *ARCS governance and management support*, a series of orientation sessions were conducted for newly arriving ARCS management, staff, and volunteers by IFRC specialists. These sessions covered key organizational development topics including RCRC Statutory Meetings, Volunteer Management, Communication in Crisis, Movement Coordination for Collective Response (Seville Agreement 2.0), Organizational Capacity Assessment, and IFRC

<sup>13</sup> The indicator “National Society has successfully articulated short-term emergency and NSD objectives with long-term NSD ones” for easier tracking purposes was replaced by five indicators

practices in areas such as Human Resources and Procurement, among others, resulting in a total of 23 orientation sessions delivered.

*Branch Development Forum* organized in December 2024 played a crucial role in strengthening communication, knowledge-sharing and collaboration among ARCS branches. It brought together 34 participants from 11 Branches and ARCS headquarters team to discuss development challenges and opportunities, contributing insights to shape the ARCS NSD Roadmap in the areas of Branch development and Volunteering Management. The ARCS Branch Development Forum has been included as one of the case studies to IFRC 2024 Branch Development in Europe and Central Asia Region.



*Branch Forum Activity Session. Photo credit: ARCS*

*"Coming together to discuss our development challenges has served as a powerful reminder of the importance of unity within the Armenian Red Cross Society network. This event [ARCS Branch Development Forum] has also highlighted the vital role that stronger collaboration plays in overcoming the challenges we face. By connecting as branches, we deepen our understanding of each other's needs and strengthen our collective commitment. We need more opportunities like this to increase mutual understanding and build stronger bonds for future exchanges. Also, it is truly motivating to see our insights are acknowledged and considered, particularly in shaping strategic documents like the ARCS Development Roadmap." Nelli Hayrapetyan, Head of ARCS Yerevan Branch.*

In the area of *volunteer management*, ARCS conducted a needs assessment for a volunteer management database and collaborated with IFRC to draft a concept note for a volunteer induction process. This process includes introductory sessions on the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, CEA, PGI, PFA, and First Aid. In 2024, 145 ARCS volunteers participated in three training sessions focused on the Movement's mandate, enhancing their understanding of its roles and responsibilities. In February 2025, 24 ARCS volunteer Leaders from 12 ARCS branches were trained by IFRC staff to deliver induction sessions on the Red Cross mandate and principles to new volunteers. As a result, 1,736 ARCS volunteers received inductions on Red Cross mandate and principles between March and June 2025, underscoring ARCS's commitment to equipping its volunteers and staff to effectively respond to ongoing challenges.



*Training of Trainers for Youth Leaders and Volunteers. Photo credit: ARCS*

In addition, 1,500 volunteers and ARCS staff have been deployed in response to the crisis, with substantial capacity-building efforts accompanying these deployments. A total of 912 people were trained in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), while 296 individuals received training in Education Service Provision, and 396 in PGI.

In terms of human resources development, ARCS has supported the training of its HR specialists in national HR requirements and regulations. The ARCS revised and endorsed the HR Recruitment Policy and Code of Conduct. The ARCS Staff Wellbeing Policy, Onboarding and Outboarding Policy is being under revision. These efforts reflect ARCS's focus on improving internal processes and staff well-being.

ARCS has also invested in enhancing its communications capabilities. 24 Communication Focal Points across ARCS branches have received training in humanitarian content development, including photography, while a Communication in Crisis Strategy is being developed to strengthen the organization's outreach and response efforts. To increase public awareness of the Red Cross's role in addressing crisis, in collaboration with IFRC, the ARCS organized 3-day training for 12 media representatives from national and local TV channels and online news platforms to familiarize with Red Cross in Armenia and discuss the role of media in supporting humanitarian work during crises.



*Workshop for representatives of Mass media in Armenia. Photo credit: ARCS*

Youth engagement has been a priority, with ARCS supporting the participation of youth leaders in international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement events, including promoting climate change initiatives at national and international levels by ARCS Youth leaders. In addition, ARCS conducted 10 PGI assessments, ensuring that protection, gender, and inclusion remain integral to the Society's activities and response efforts. The findings from these assessments are being used to inform programming and enhance community-based interventions, particularly for vulnerable groups. Through these initiatives, ARCS continues to promote inclusive and youth-driven humanitarian responses.

ARCS has strengthened *financial sustainability* by improving accountability and enhancing the Finance Department's capacity. A new financial system was installed, and four staff were trained in national financial regulations. ARCS reactivated a CBF-supported CEA digitalization project, successfully completed in May 2025. To develop income generating activities that are locally led, ARCS submitted a business continuity report to the NSIA Commission and revived a commercial First Aid initiative. Dedicated implementation team was formed, technically supported by Netherland RC expert on Commercial First Aid to enhance revenue from Frist Aid services. The NSIA Steering Committee was also re-established with updated Terms of Reference and participation from key partners (IFRC, ICRC, Swiss RC) to oversee the project through 2026.



*Training of Trainers for Youth Leaders and Volunteers. Photo credit: ARCS*

**Factors affecting NSD indicators' achievement:**

Due to the multi-facet nature of institutional development processes, the indicators related to the number of developed policies, procedures, and strategies were achieved only partially. Developing such frameworks requires broad consultations, alignment with priorities and existing systems, and endorsement by ARCS governance, all of which take longer than initially anticipated. That also reflects the complexity of the National Society Development processes that involve multiple interdependent factors, where quality and ownership are essential for sustainable outcomes and require time.

At the same time, IFRC successfully mobilized Movement expertise to deliver a series of orientation sessions for newly appointed ARCS management and staff, aimed at strengthening organizational processes across key functional areas. These orientation sessions covered a wide range of topics, including: RCRC Statutory Meetings, the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) process, Youth Engagement Strategy 2.0, Seville Agreement 2.0, Volunteer Management and Volunteer Database, IFRC's role in supporting National Society Development, the NSIA pooled fund for long-term National Society development, the Capacity Building Fund (CBF), IFRC practices in Human Resources, Finance, Communication, Logistics and Procurement, NS core cost composition, Institutional Fundraising, as well as overviews of IFRC's

approaches to PGI, Health Programming, and Essential policies and strategies for National Society. In total, 23 orientation sessions were conducted.

Furthermore, In addition to all these efforts in June 2025 ARCS organized a [Unified Planning](#) (UP) workshop to discuss the activities to be implemented under the UP, which is a collective planning process across the Federation that incorporates the priorities and needs of each National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, bringing together emergency response and longer-term work. Movement partners, including IFRC CCD, IFRC Armenia CO, ICRC, Austrian RC, Italian RC and Swiss RC participated in joint discussions and mapping of activities. During the workshop ARCS presented and discussed specific activities under each strategic priority (SP), which are Climate and Environment (SP1), Disasters and crises (SP2), Health and Well-being (SP3), Migration and Displacement (SP4) and Values, power and inclusion (SP5). The discussion also covered activities under the enabling function which are Strategic and operational coordination, National Society development, Humanitarian diplomacy and Accountability and agility. Some of the key components under the EA such as MPCA, MHPSS, Disaster management activities, Migration activities, Education related activities, as well as NSD activities will continue under the Unified Planning.



*Workshop on Unified Planning 2026-2028 and mid-year reporting 2025, June 16-17, 2025. Photo credit: ARCS*

### **Challenges, lessons learned and recommendations:**

*A modernized legal framework*, encompassing statute revisions, by-laws, and the updating of key policies and strategies, is essential for institutional strengthening and improved governance. Achieving this, however, requires a broad internal consensus and alignment with national regulations as well as the principles and standards of the Movement. *The volunteer management system remains incomplete*, particularly in terms of developing a comprehensive volunteer database, highlighting existing resource constraints. *Differences in local resources and capabilities at the branch level* hinder uniform progress across the organization. *Diversifying funding sources* is key to autonomy of National Society. However, it requires considerable financial and technical investments. Digital tools are critical for organizational performance monitoring, yet rollout across various levels of organization require investment and staff training.

*Inclusive coordination* has emerged as a vital strength in the current ARCS context. NSD Platform has improved shared understanding, joint planning, and strategic alignment. The *NSD Roadmap* has proven to be an effective tool for guiding actions, tracking progress, and engaging partners. Similarly, the *Branch Development Forum* emphasized the importance of local engagement, showcasing how collaborative spaces foster motivation, ownership, and shared priorities. Efforts to institutionalize *volunteer induction* contribute to enhanced volunteer alignment and

capacity. *Media engagement* has also played a key role in improving public understanding and visibility of ARCS's work, demonstrating the importance of strategic communication in humanitarian contexts.

To sustain and accelerate progress, ARCS should continue enhancing the *NSD Coordination Platform* to maintain strong partner engagement and support the implementation of ARCS NSD Roadmap. *Finalizing the Statute review and by-law development* is essential to strengthen ARCS's legal foundation. Targeted investment in volunteer management, including the *completion of the volunteer database* and *initialization of volunteer induction processes* will improve volunteer alignment and retention. Ensuring *coherent operational readiness across all branches* requires resource allocation to support standardizations and continuous knowledge-sharing. Addressing disparities among branches requires assessment of existing capacities and tailored support for balanced branch growth. *Continued media engagement* will be essential in strengthening public awareness and trust. It is equally important to support *youth participation* in both national and international initiatives, particularly those focused on climate action, in line with broader Movement priorities. Advancing *locally led income-generating activities*, while mobilizing Movement expertise to support ARCS in assessing needs and *developing and/or revising essential institutional policies and strategies* will ensure alignment with Movement standards and reinforce long-term financial sustainability and organizational resilience. Finally, it is essential that *IFRC continues to mobilize Movement expertise and resources for organizational development initiatives* in response to the needs of the ARCS in strengthening institutional capacity.



## Coordination and Partnerships

### Objective:

*To guide the operation in accordance with the principles of Collective Movement Response, and strategically harmonize it with response efforts by the public authorities and other actors on the ground, ensuring efficiency and complementarity.*

The Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) remains steadfast in its mission to alleviate human suffering and uphold humanitarian principles, even in the face of recent challenges. As a vital member of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, ARCS continues to collaborate closely with the IFRC, ICRC, and Partner National Societies (PNSs) to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. ARCS renewed partnership meeting starting from the Movement strategic engagement to technical level.

In 2024, some partners temporarily scaled back their support; nevertheless, ARCS took active steps to rebuild trust and strengthen cooperation. With a renewed leadership team in place, the organization is prioritizing capacity building and operational effectiveness to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of critical humanitarian services.

ARCS is also reinforcing its commitment to transparency and accountability. A new public dashboard allows stakeholders to track progress and access key information. The organization is proactively gathering feedback from communities it serves and applying lessons learned to enhance future operations.

Following the internal crisis of February 2024, ARCS has focused on restoring and revitalizing strategic partnerships: both within and beyond the Movement. While some partners, such as the ICRC, have reactivated their support, and others like the Austrian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, and Swiss Red Cross have fully scaled funding and partnerships. In coordination with the IFRC, the new ARCS leadership is driving progress under the National Society Development (NSD) framework, with efforts aligned to the principles of the Collective Movement Response. This includes

continuing and building upon initiatives introduced by former leadership and completing a unified planning process to guide joint analysis of the 2025 plan and shape strategic priorities through 2028.

Discussions on a common accountability framework and harmonized resource mobilization are ongoing, and ARCS remains deeply committed to a collaborative, coordinated approach that ensures efficient and principled humanitarian action.

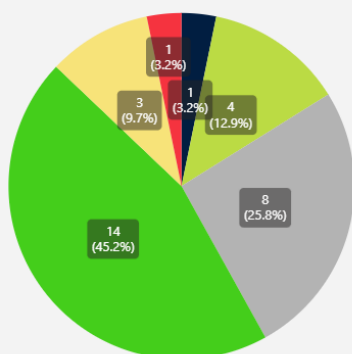
In 2024 and 2025 ARCS have signed several partnership agreements with NGOs in Armenia, the Russian-Armenian humanitarian response center, discussed continuation of Hungary aid cooperation as well as signed project agreement with Korean Government through Embassy in Moscow on strengthening local actions in 5 branches of ARCS. Iranian RC and ARCS agreed on main partnership direction through signed MoU, ARCS leadership visited French RC and had several strategic discussions with regions in France on cooperation in Armenia. ARCS has received official approval and obtained a license from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) of Armenia. The ARCS is now authorized to train care nurses and specialists in care-related professions.

These partnerships are crucial for delivering effective humanitarian assistance and are integral to compiling Federation-wide reports within the EA context that is available on a Dashboard ([ITT Dashboard - Power BI](#)).

To enhance transparency and showcase achievements, ARCS has created a dashboard that highlights interventions, and the number of individuals reached. This dashboard is updated monthly, with contributions from all partners involved in the response to displacement from Karabakh. A screenshot is provided below for Federation-wide coverage:

**Indicator progress**

● Achieved ● Close to ac... ● In progress... ● Overachie... ● Partially ac... ● Underachi...

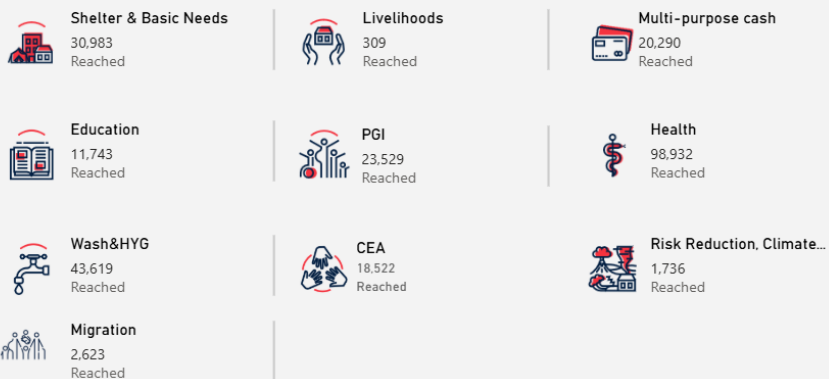


**Number of people displaced from Karabakh**

115,388

**Number of assistance provided**

234,393



Source: [IFRC Dashboard](#).

ARCS also actively participates in the Cash Working Group, a vital platform for inter-agency coordination with government bodies and UN agencies, enabling a comprehensive response to humanitarian needs. However, during the reporting period, there were no updates regarding ongoing cooperation with the Armenian diaspora and private enterprises.



**Secretariat Services**

**Objective:**

*IFRC Secretariat provides strategic orientation, facilitation, and coordination to enhance the ARCS response to the current situation and toward the long-term positioning and further capacity*

*development of the National Society. This will be done building on the existing Country Office and Country Cluster Delegation, toward strong stewardship and accountability for all programming. The IFRC Secretariat will facilitate channelling global resources to sustain the localized response and recovery efforts.*

Since the launch of the EA, the IFRC has actively supported the ARCS response in several key areas:

- **Strengthening response capacity:** The aim was to enhance the effectiveness of the response to the evolving humanitarian needs in Armenia, the IFRC has significantly expanded its team on the ground to support ARCS. This expansion has enabled to provide comprehensive support across various thematic areas, including Disaster Management, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), Livelihoods, Education, CEA, PGI, and National Society Development (NSD).
- **Collaboration with the Government:** The implementation of the response was closely coordinated with relevant national authorities. Building on an established partnership MoLSA, ARCS and IFRC further strengthened coordination through the joint implementation of several activities. The provision of cash assistance was well-aligned with the Ministry's efforts. Given its central role in supporting displaced individuals, MoLSA, through the Unified Social Services, shared the list of eligible individuals. Cash assistance was then provided following a detailed verification process conducted by ARCS. The implementation took place within the framework of a signed agreement between IFRC, ARCS and the Ministry, aimed at enhancing national capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance using CVA.

Additionally, the implementation of the Migration Program was the result of long-standing cooperation between ARCS, IFRC, and MoLSA. Migration Centres were established in four communities through close collaboration with the Ministry. In some cases, the physical premises of the Unified Social Services were utilized to host these centres, further reinforcing the partnership and ensuring accessibility for individuals. Additionally, MoLSA remained actively engaged and regularly informed about the ongoing activities. During the implementation of livelihood initiatives, ARCS and IFRC established a Selection Committee to ensure transparency and inclusiveness. Representatives from various humanitarian organizations supporting displaced population participated in the selection process to help avoid duplication of assistance. Representatives from the Unified Social Services were also present at all Selection Committee meetings, further strengthening coordination and accountability.

Since most of the Smiley Clubs were implemented in schools, the activity was coordinated with MoESCS at the ministry level, as well as through regional administrations, who were regularly informed about the implementation of activities.

- **Resource mobilization:** IFRC in the country, region and headquarter levels continues to be dedicated to mobilizing resources not only within the IFRC Membership but also from external donors, ensuring that ARCS has the necessary support for its activities.
- **Enhanced communication:** IFRC efforts to scale up communication with the global public include media engagement in Armenia and internationally, alongside strategic use of social media to raise awareness and garner support. The ARCS strategy for communication in emergencies has also been developed. Additionally, various communication trainings were implemented for the staff and volunteers engaged in the response.
- **Information Management:** IFRC prioritized improved information management and data analysis to aid the ARCS in effective crisis and disaster management, providing them with the human capacity and tools they need to respond efficiently. IFRC IM Senior Officer has supported ARCS throughout all stages of data collection, from developing and improving templates to assisting with data analysis and the presentation of findings.
- **Data visualization:** Utilizing from the information management capabilities, IFRC produced data analysis and visualization products that help inform decision-making and improve operational effectiveness, including the dashboards representing Federation-wide efforts made in response to the population movement. The detailed dashboard indicating the achievements of the response is available here: [IFRC GO - Emergency - Armenia - Population Movement](#).

### **Support in planning and reporting:**

- IFRC dedicated PMER focal points from the onset of the emergency, to support alignment with the best PMER practices from the design all through the emergency appeals. At the initial stage, IFRC SC CCD PMER focal point and Surge PMER Officer supported the quality assurance of the EA Operational Strategy, including the Plan of Action and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework aligned with the [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#). During the implementation, the PMER team supported ARCS in collecting relevant information to inform continuous monitoring and compile progress reports. In addition, the IFRC team assisted with the implementation of feedback collection through PDMs, FGDs including reviewing questionnaires, supporting data collection, analysis and compiling assessment results. Among others, IFRC supported ARCS in conducting a comprehensive internal review of Smiley Club activities implemented across the country. Regular knowledge-sharing and capacity-building sessions were provided to ARCS staff involved in the implementation of the response, contributing to enhanced program quality and accountability. [The IFRC Evaluation Guidelines](#) aligned final evaluation of the Appeal will be administered by IFRC and will inform the learning-based implementation of Country Network plan 2025, programming of Country Network Plan 2026-2028 and future EAs within the Federation. **Strategic positioning of ARCS:** IFRC jointly with Movement partners worked to strengthen the strategic position of ARCS, particularly in areas where it offers unique advantages and added value.
- **Coordination with partners:** Effective coordination with Movement partners and external stakeholders was essential. IFRC strived to align objectives and resources to maximize the impact of our collective efforts.
- **Knowledge capitalization:** IFRC enjoying its network around the globe emphasizes the importance of capturing learnings from its operations and broader programming in the country, ensuring that these insights inform future initiatives. By engaging experienced international staff with extensive knowledge of the RCRC Movement, lessons learned, and best practices of similar operations were effectively applied during the implementation of response activities. In addition, access to a comprehensive database of resources, materials, and courses contributed to a more informed and effective response, as well as the development of locally tailored interventions. Ongoing communication was maintained with the IFRC Cluster and Regional Offices to address implementation challenges in a timely manner. Regular capacity-building meetings and workshops were organized for staff involved in the response. Notably, a workshop on development of the Cash SoPs, CVA self-assessment exercise was conducted to develop a shared CVA vision and to identify key strengths and areas for improvement.

IFRC Armenia Country Office team, including the Operations Manager, DM Delegate, CVA/Livelihoods Delegate, and PMER Delegate participated in the Managing Operations training. The training focused on enhancing operational leadership and coordination in emergencies, covering DREF, Emergency Appeals, strategy development, logistics, and security. It also strengthened teamwork, decision-making, and communication, equipping ARCS representatives to lead and support humanitarian operations more effectively. Additionally, the case of Armenia has been presented and discussed during the training. The Armenia case was also featured in a workshop conducted for the Russian Red Cross Society, where an IFRC Armenia Country Office colleague shared insights on needs assessment, data analysis, and the project management cycle. Furthermore, one colleague from the IFRC Country Office, together with ARCS representative, took part in the PER workshop held in Budapest to deepen their understanding of the PER approach and enhance ARCS's preparedness.

It is important to note that the in-country presence of the IFRC, along with its active engagement in the implementation of activities and systematic information management, ensured a smooth recovery from the impact of the internal crisis and supported the effective continuation of the operation. Additionally, regular JOFT meetings and Movement Coordination meetings with PNS and ICRC took place in response to the EA and internal institutional crisis.

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

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### Story of Shushanik Soghomonyan, founder of a bakery

Shushanik Soghomonyan and her family moved out of Karabakh in September 2023 leaving behind everything, and a month later, they settled in Azatamut village of Armenia. With three young children to care for and unsure when she'd be able to return to her profession as a speech therapist, Shushanik knew she had to act quickly - that's when she decided to turn to her passion for baking.

"I've always loved baking," she says with a warm smile. "Back home, I would make cakes and sweets for friends and family. People always praised my baking skills. So, when we settled here, I thought - why not try turning that passion into something more?"

Shushanik began taking orders for traditional pastries and simple cakes. But working with basic tools made it difficult to meet the growing demand. When she heard about the Armenian Red Cross livelihood support program, she applied, unsure of what to expect. To her surprise, she was selected — and everything began to change. With the support she received, Shushanik was able to purchase a professional oven and the baking tools she had long dreamed of. "Business training provided within the program was ess for me.

Now, Shushanik can prepare a wide range of high-quality, beautifully decorated cakes for birthdays and special occasions, along with her signature éclairs and Karabakh-style pakhlava. The demand for her pastry has grown, so did her confidence.

"It's not only about income for me" she says. "It helps to keep my mind busy and not to drown in the memories of my home in Karabakh. Baking is my way of coping with this painful experience." – Shushanik adds.

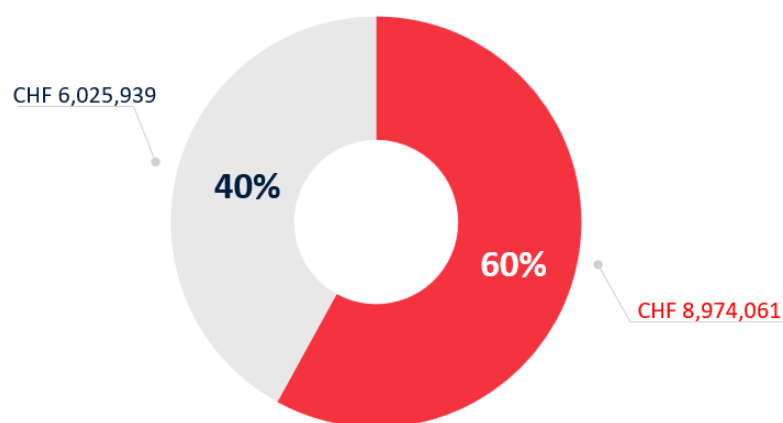
## C. FUNDING

As of 30 June 2025, IFRC has mobilized CHF 8,974,061 representing 60 per cent of the IFRC Secretariat's request of CHF 15,000,000. The remaining funds from the Emergency Appeal will be allocated to support activities under the Unified Planning to support vulnerable displaced population through migration related activities, food and cash assistance, livelihood, social and health, disaster and crises preparedness and response interventions as well as national society development..

**IFRC** **AS OF June 2025, THE IFRC HAS SECURED 60% OF ITS CHF 15 MILLION RESOURCES REQUIREMENT, TOTALING CHF 8,9 MILLION**

### EMERGENCY APPEAL ARMENIA | POPULATION MOVEMENT

■ Amount raised ■ Funding gap



#### PROGRESS ON FUNDING

With a funding requirement of CHF 15 million, this appeal is vital for ensuring that displaced populations receive the support they need to restore their dignity and begin rebuilding their lives. The appeal is 60 % funded, amounting to CHF 8,974,061 leaving a **funding gap of CHF 6,025,939**, highlighting the need for further contributions to sustain these critical efforts.

*Emergency Appeal funding requirement, IFRC*

## D. FINANCIAL REPORT

Out of total mobilized funding of CHF **8,974,061**, CHF **7,375,956** has been utilised for the implementation of the response activities. IFRC is proposing to reallocate the unspent **CHF 1,598,105** to the Armenia Country Plan 2025 to enable the implementation of activities outlined in the plan. Partners and donors who may have any questions regarding this balance are kindly requested to revert within 30 days of publication of this final report. Pass this date, the relocation will be processed as indicated.

Detailed expenditures of the response can be seen at the end of this narrative report. The donors and partners of this Emergency Appeal include Governments of France, Italy and Spain, USAID, DG ECHO and Finnish Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Slovenian Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, Taiwan Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross. IFRC on behalf of Armenian Red Cross Society would like to wholeheartedly thank all donors and contributors who have supported the people of Armenia through this appeal.

## Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

### At the IFRC

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- T'Nasha La Roche, Coordinator Resource Mobilization, Emergency, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, [tnasha.laroche@ifrc.org](mailto:tnasha.laroche@ifrc.org)

### For In-Kind Donations and Mobilisation table support:

- **Global Logistics Services,** Indra ECKSTEIN, Manager, Global Operational Procurement and Regional Supply Chain, Europe, [indra.eckstein@ifrc.org](mailto:indra.eckstein@ifrc.org)

### Reference documents



Click here for:

- [Link to IFRC Emergency landing page](#)
- [Previous Appeals and updates](#)
- [IFRC GO Platform](#)
- [Emergency Appeal](#)
- [Operational Strategy](#)

## How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief, the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, to **Principles of Humanitarian Action** and **IFRC policies and procedures**. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

# Operational Strategy

## INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/9-2026/2	Operation	MDRAM012
Budget Timeframe	2023/9-2026/2	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 28 Apr 2026

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

### MDRAM012 - Armenia - Population Movement

Operating Timeframe: 28 Sep 2023 to 30 Jun 2025; appeal launch date: 06 Jun 2024

#### I. Emergency Appeal Funding Requirements

<b>Total Funding Requirements</b>	<b>15,000,000</b>
<b>Donor Response* as per 28 Apr 2026</b>	<b>8,838,021</b>
<b>Appeal Coverage</b>	<b>58.92%</b>

#### II. IFRC Operating Budget Implementation

Planned Operations / Enabling Approaches	Op Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items	1,836,879	1,630,226	206,654
PO02 - Livelihoods	600,704	335,535	265,169
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash	1,295,879	1,296,064	-185
PO04 - Health	152,277	169,410	-17,134
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	99,213	0	99,213
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion	17,452	159	17,293
PO07 - Education	290,098	181,387	108,712
PO08 - Migration	18,943	5,632	13,311
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	262,975	102,041	160,933
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability	33,037	11,650	21,387
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability	0	0	0
<b>Planned Operations Total</b>	<b>4,607,457</b>	<b>3,732,104</b>	<b>875,353</b>
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships	0	0	0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	1,836,499	1,887,127	-50,629
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	1,906,602	1,756,724	149,878
<b>Enabling Approaches Total</b>	<b>3,743,101</b>	<b>3,643,852</b>	<b>99,249</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8,350,558</b>	<b>7,375,956</b>	<b>974,602</b>

#### III. Operating Movement & Closing Balance per 2026/02

Opening Balance	0
Income (includes outstanding DREF Loan per IV.)	8,974,061
Expenditure	-7,375,956
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>1,598,105</b>
Deferred Income	-3,772
Funds Available	1,594,334

#### IV. DREF Loan

* not included in Donor Response	Loan :	1,000,000	Reimbursed :	1,000,000	<b>Outstanding :</b>	<b>0</b>
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# Operational Strategy

## INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/9-2026/2	Operation	MDRAM012
Budget Timeframe	2023/9-2026/2	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 28 Apr 2026

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

### MDRAM012 - Armenia - Population Movement

Operating Timeframe: 28 Sep 2023 to 30 Jun 2025; appeal launch date: 06 Jun 2024

#### V. Contributions by Donor and Other Income

Opening Balance							0
Income Type	Cash	InKind Goods	InKind Personnel	Other Income	TOTAL	Deferred Income	
American Red Cross	373,806				373,806		
Austrian Red Cross			22,310		22,310		
Bloomberg	4,737				4,737		
British Red Cross			8,875		8,875		
Danish Red Cross	106,716		37,402		144,118		
European Commission - DG ECHO	192,910				192,910		
Finnish Red Cross	113,861				113,861		
French Government	2,849,172				2,849,172		
German Red Cross			42,413		42,413		
Italian Government Bilateral Emergency Fund	1,900,332				1,900,332		
Italian Red Cross	103,183				103,183		
Japanese Red Cross Society	29,917				29,917		
On Line donations	378				378		
Slovenian Red Cross	9,667				9,667		
Spanish Government	193,564				193,564		
Swedish Red Cross	83,243				83,243		
Swiss Red Cross			15,690		15,690		
Taiwan Red Cross Organisation	8,812				8,812		
The Canadian Red Cross Society	38,452				38,452		
The Canadian Red Cross Society (from Canadian Gov	25,907				25,907		
The Netherlands Red Cross			9,373		9,373		
The Netherlands Red Cross (from Netherlands Govern	476,793				476,793		
United States Government - USAID	2,326,549				2,326,549	-3,772	
<b>Total Contributions and Other Income</b>	<b>8,837,998</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>136,063</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,974,061</b>	<b>-3,772</b>	
<b>Total Income and Deferred Income</b>					<b>8,974,061</b>	<b>-3,772</b>	