

ARCS staff and volunteers providing support to affected people. Photo: ARCS

Appeal: MDRAM015	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 84,039	Crisis Category: Yellow	Hazard: Other
Glide Number: OT-2025-000082-ARM	People Affected: 850 people	People Targeted: 850 people	People Assisted: 802 people
Event Onset: Sudden	Operation Start Date: 23-06-2025	Operational End Date: 30-09-2025	Total Operating Timeframe: 3 months

Targeted Regions: **Gegharkunik**

Description of the Event

Date of event

06-11-2025

What happened, where and when?

What happened:

On the morning of 11 June 2025, a powerful gas explosion struck a multi-story residential apartment building in the town of Chambarak, located in Gegharkunik province, Armenia. According to preliminary information, the explosion was most likely caused by a gas leak, though investigations are still ongoing to confirm the exact circumstances. The force of the blast caused a significant structural collapse, resulting in the complete destruction of the building. In addition to the direct collapse, the explosion caused substantial damage to nearby residential buildings, expanding the scale of the emergency and the number of affected residents.

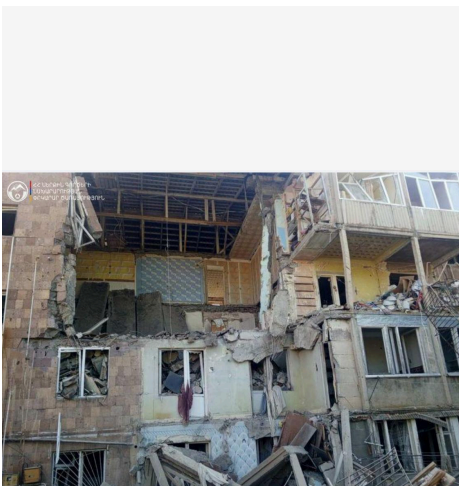
The sudden and violent nature of the incident has had a severe humanitarian impact, causing not only physical injuries and loss of life but also significant emotional and psychological trauma for survivors, affected families, and the broader community.

Where:

The incident took place in Chambarak, a town situated in the Gegharkunik province of Armenia, with an estimated population of around 6,000 residents. The town is considered socially and economically vulnerable, with many households relying on seasonal work, agriculture, or remittances. The region has limited local infrastructure and services, and faces additional strain due to past population movements, including displaced families from Karabakh. Its remote location, harsh winters, and limited emergency resources further increase its vulnerability to disasters. The explosion has placed a heavy burden on a town already facing significant socio-economic challenges, highlighting the need for targeted humanitarian support.

When:

The explosion occurred in the early morning hours of 11 June 2025. Search and rescue operations have now been finalized. According to official reports, a total of six fatalities have been confirmed. Eighty-six people were injured as a result of the explosion, with 40 people requiring hospitalization, including 20 children. In total, 126 people have lost their homes due to the destruction of the building. Including those affected by damage to adjacent buildings, approximately 500 people have been directly impacted and are receiving assistance coordinated by local authorities, the Armenian Red Cross Society, and other responding agencies.



The building after the gas explosion.
Source: ARCS



The ARCS is registering affected population for support provision.
Source: ARCS



DRT teams delivering essential household items. Source: ARCS

Scope and Scale

The gas explosion in Chambarak had a serious impact on many people in the town. Six people lost their lives, and 86 were injured, including 40 who were taken to hospital and 20 children. One apartment building was completely destroyed, leaving 126 people without homes. Another 500 people from nearby buildings were also directly affected due to damage to their homes or because they had been temporarily evacuated. While this DREF operation focused only on the immediate needs of those who were directly affected—those who lost their homes, were injured, or lost loved ones—the explosion also caused stress and fear in the wider community. Many residents saw the destruction and emergency response up close, which caused shock, anxiety, and emotional trauma, especially for families with children and older people. The explosion also damaged nearby buildings, with broken windows, cracked walls, and heating and water systems that were not working properly. These conditions made daily life harder for many families.

Under this IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operation, the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) provided emergency shelter items, food, basic household items, and psychosocial support for a total of 850 people, with 200 people also receiving cash assistance to meet their urgent needs. While authorities responded, they did not have enough resources to meet all immediate needs. Repairs and long-term recovery efforts were not part of this DREF operation and needed to be addressed separately by government agencies and other partners. This DREF was focused only on helping affected people meet their most urgent needs in the first weeks after the explosion.

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. CivilNet	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5M5nUSCS0c
2. ARCS post	https://www.instagram.com/p/DKwktNRt-h-/?igsh=bXo5bTM5MWFxcWlu
3. ARCS post about response	https://www.instagram.com/p/DKzU9FUt3ze/?igsh=MXhzCDFkYXVtZjZuNw%3D%3D
4. 5 TV channel Gas explosion	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5M5nUSCS0c
5. 1Lurer.am Gas explosion	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5M5nUSCS0c

National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?	No
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IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	<p>The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) maintains a Country Cluster Delegation for the South Caucasus, based in Tbilisi, Georgia, which provides coordination and technical support to the National Societies in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. For this operation, the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation has provided technical support remotely, mainly focusing on coordination, guiding needs assessment processes, and providing assistance in the preparation and review of operational plans, including DREF procedures.</p> <p>The IFRC has a Country Office in Armenia which, for this response, oversaw the overall implementation of activities, conducted regular monitoring visits, and provided</p>
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	technical support in collecting inputs, drafting narrative reports, and closing the DREF operation. More broadly, the IFRC continuously supports ARCS in strengthening its capacities through various trainings and workshops for headquarters and branch staff members and volunteers, as well as through the review and enhancement of policies and strategies.
Participating National Societies	Partner National Societies, including the Austrian Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross, have a presence in Armenia, with offices based in Yerevan. The Italian Red Cross operates a delegation based in Tbilisi, Georgia, covering both Armenia and Georgia. The Swiss Red Cross has confirmed their interest in supporting ARCS's response efforts if needed with technical support via a delegate.

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been consistently partnering with the ARCS since 1992. Since 2020, it has further enhanced its support in the areas of communication, restoring family links (RFL), disaster management (DM), dead body management, first aid, preparedness for emergency response, access to education, weapon contamination, and significantly strengthening the capacities of the regional and community branches in four international border (IB) areas exposed to conflict. Currently, the ICRC is not involved in the operation.

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	Yes
National authorities	<p>Immediately following the incident, national and municipal authorities activated emergency response mechanisms under the leadership of the EMS. Search and rescue operations were launched at the site, with specialized teams deployed to locate and assist victims trapped under the debris. The EMS coordinated medical evacuations, ensuring that injured individuals were transported to medical facilities for treatment.</p> <p>The municipality of Chambarak, with support from national authorities, coordinated the relocation of displaced families into temporary shelter arrangements. Public services, including utilities, health facilities, and emergency services, were mobilized to stabilize the situation on the ground.</p> <p>The Ministry of Health provided medical care for the injured, while the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure facilitated coordination of early recovery measures. Given the scale of the disaster for a small town, national-level coordination mechanisms were activated to oversee planning, resource allocation, and prioritization of assistance.</p> <p>Municipal authorities are leading the local emergency committee, where the Armenian Red Cross Society actively participates alongside government agencies. Despite these efforts, national authorities have formally acknowledged that available domestic resources are insufficient to fully meet the scale of humanitarian needs, and additional support from national and international actors has been requested.</p>
UN or other actors	No UN agencies or other international actors were involved in the response. The operation was led by national authorities, with humanitarian support provided by the Armenian Red Cross Society.
Are there major coordination mechanism in place?	



The ARCS was fully integrated into both local and national coordination platforms. Locally, ARCS actively participated in the Chambarak Emergency Committee, sharing data from rapid needs assessments, verifying affected population lists, and aligning MHPSS and CVA activities with municipal decisions. At the national level, ARCS coordinated closely with the Rescue Service, the Unified Social Service, and line ministries to ensure that its response complemented government-led efforts. While the ARCS did not hold a formal lead or co-lead role, the organization's technical expertise—particularly in MHPSS, needs assessments, volunteer mobilization, and CVA—positioned it as a key operational partner. No major overlap or duplication was identified, though the limited presence of other humanitarian actors narrowed sectoral coverage, particularly in long-term shelter recovery and specialized protection services. Strengthening multi-actor coordination platforms and expanding sectoral representation would help reinforce preparedness and response capacities in future emergencies.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Shelter Housing And Settlements

The explosion caused full destruction of one apartment building and damage to nearby structures, leaving many families without safe shelter. The most urgent needs included immediate access to safe temporary accommodation, essential household items (such as sleeping sets, heaters, and basic household items), and assistance for vulnerable individuals during relocation. While ARCS had provided initial support to 125 people, including sleeping sets and assistance for those with limited mobility, additional support was urgently needed to cover remaining emergency shelter needs, particularly for displaced households that were unable to secure adequate housing on their own.



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

In addition to urgent shelter needs, many affected households struggled to meet their most basic daily needs. Families had lost essential household items, personal belongings, and basic necessities such as food, drinking water, clothing, and hygiene items. While the ARCS had provided initial support with household equipment such as heaters and boilers, further assistance was still required. Many households also faced income loss as small businesses, services, and farming activities were disrupted following the explosion. Additional support was urgently needed to help families meet their immediate survival needs.



Multi purpose cash grants

The needs assessment indicated that many affected households faced a variety of urgent needs, including food, shelter, household items, clothing, winterization, and healthcare. Cash assistance was identified as an effective and preferred modality to allow households to cover their most urgent and diverse needs based on individual household priorities. According to assessment data, 80 per cent of respondents from 10 households (38 people) reported cash assistance as their preferred form of support, and 70 per cent indicated they felt comfortable receiving and using cash assistance.

At the same time, some households faced minor barriers to accessing cash assistance (such as security, financial literacy, or technical issues). These were addressed through proper targeting, information sharing, and technical support where needed. Cash assistance helped prevent negative coping mechanisms, ensured flexibility for affected households, and complemented in-kind assistance provided during the initial response phase.



Health

The explosion resulted in serious physical injuries and widespread psychological trauma. A total of 86 people were injured, including 40 people who were hospitalized, among them 20 children. National health services provided immediate medical care; however, some patients continued to require follow-up treatment and longer-term rehabilitation. Beyond physical injuries, the explosion had a major psychological impact across the entire community, not only among directly injured and displaced persons, but also among families who lost relatives and the broader population of Chambarak.

At the time of the incident, there were no existing MHPSS services available locally to meet such large-scale needs. Following a request from national authorities, the Armenian Red Cross Society rapidly deployed its MHPSS teams to provide immediate psychological first aid to hospitalized individuals and families of the deceased. These services continued on-site, covering both individual and group support.



Due to the scale and nature of the event, extensive MHPSS needs were expected to continue for several months. Many affected families experienced acute distress, anxiety, grief, and trauma reactions. Sustained MHPSS interventions were critical to stabilize the mental health of affected individuals, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, elderly people, and relatives of those who lost their lives. Additional support was needed to ensure continuity of care and community-based MHPSS services throughout the recovery phase.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

The explosion had a significant impact on groups in vulnerable situations within the affected population. The needs assessment showed that 50 per cent of assessed households included persons with disabilities and 50 per cent included people with chronic illnesses. Unaccompanied minors were also identified in some households. Older people, pregnant and lactating women, and households with limited financial resources were among those facing additional protection risks due to displacement, loss of livelihoods, limited mobility, and emotional distress. Many affected people required targeted support to ensure safe shelter, access to services, and psychosocial care. People with disabilities and older adults needed assistance for evacuation, relocation, and daily care. The risk of neglect, isolation, and unmet protection needs remained elevated as families coped with displacement and emotional trauma. All response activities applied a protection, gender, and inclusion lens to ensure that vulnerable groups were reached and supported according to their specific needs.



Community Engagement And Accountability

The needs assessment indicated that while most affected households (90 per cent) had access to information about available assistance, some gaps remained, particularly regarding safety concerns, housing conditions, and future recovery plans. Several families expressed a need for more frequent updates and clear information about the safety of their residences. To support two-way communication, the ARCS had activated its hotline to provide affected people with a direct channel for information and inquiries. However, additional efforts were still needed to strengthen structured feedback mechanisms, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations such as older people, persons with disabilities, and those with limited mobility. Improving transparency, participation, and accountability helped ensure that assistance remained relevant, needs-based, and responsive to the evolving situation.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The overall objective of the operation was to ensure that the urgent humanitarian needs of 850 people affected by the explosion in Chambarak were effectively addressed through a well-coordinated response by the ARCS. This included providing emergency shelter support, essential household items, and multipurpose cash assistance for approximately 200 people to cover basic needs and support their recovery. Comprehensive health services were provided, with a particular focus on mental health and psychosocial support. The MHPSS intervention included continuous psychological first aid and individual counseling, and the deployment of professional MHPSS consultants to address ongoing psychological needs across different groups. ARCS strengthened volunteer engagement by mobilizing and training volunteers to deliver relief and psychosocial services, while community engagement and accountability mechanisms ensured that affected people received accurate information, could share feedback, and actively participated in shaping the response. Altogether, the operation aimed to address immediate needs and reduce vulnerabilities of the affected community.

Operation strategy rationale

The ARCS had developed a comprehensive response plan to address the most urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the gas explosion in Chambarak. This strategy was based on findings from the rapid needs assessment, which identified significant gaps across multiple sectors, including shelter, livelihoods, health, mental health and psychosocial support, protection, cash assistance, and community engagement.

ARCS mobilized staff and trained volunteers from the Chambarak branch, headquarters, and nearby branches to initiate immediate assistance. Emergency stocks prepositioned through the Armenia: Population Movement 2024 (MDRAM014) DREF operation were released and used in the first days to cover part of the immediate needs for shelter and essential household items, such as sleeping sets, heaters, and boilers.

Given the available resources, this operation focused on covering the most critical priority needs; however, not all urgent needs could be fully addressed at that stage. Multipurpose cash assistance was provided to approximately 200 people in vulnerable situations, enabling them to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, utilities, and temporary housing. This cash intervention complemented the in-kind assistance already provided. Cash was provided on an individual basis rather than by household, as household sizes varied greatly, ensuring fairer support to those most in need.



Mental health and psychosocial support remained a key priority due to the widespread emotional impact of the explosion. ARCS MHPSS teams were deployed within the first 24 hours, and ongoing support included psychological first aid, group and individual MHPSS for approximately 300 people, and specialized consultations for at least 150 people. These interventions aimed to address both immediate distress and longer-term psychosocial needs within the community.

Volunteer capacity was strengthened through targeted trainings to ensure quality service delivery. ARCS also activated its hotline to facilitate two-way communication, provide information, and collect feedback from affected households.

All activities were implemented in coordination with municipal and national authorities. The national Rescue Service remained responsible for search and rescue operations, site management, debris removal, and technical safety inspections. ARCS ensured its humanitarian response was aligned with government actions and complemented the ongoing work of rescue teams on the ground.

Targeting Strategy

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The selection of people supported through this operation was based on a needs-based and vulnerability-focused approach, using data from the rapid needs assessment conducted by the ARCS in Chambarak.

Priority was given to people whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged in the explosion, particularly those without access to safe or alternative shelter. The targeting focused on people with limited capacity to recover without assistance, including older adults, persons with disabilities, single-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, children, and individuals with chronic health conditions. Special consideration was also given to those previously displaced from Karabakh, who were now facing a second crisis and were at even higher risk of exclusion. Individuals experiencing psychological distress due to the incident, such as hospitalization, bereavement, or loss of property, were also prioritized for psychosocial support.

The rationale for this approach was to reach the most vulnerable people who faced the highest barriers to recovery and were least likely to access assistance independently. The decision to provide cash assistance directly to 200 people, rather than households, ensured greater flexibility and inclusiveness, particularly for those living alone or with specific needs.

Total Assisted Population

Assisted Women	-	Rural	100%
Assisted Girls (under 18)	-	Urban	-
Assisted Men	-	People with disabilities (estimated)	10%
Assisted Boys (under 18)	-		
Total Assisted Population	802		
Total Targeted Population	850		

Risk and Security Considerations (including "management")

Does your National Society have anti-fraud and corruption policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policy?	Yes



Does your National Society have child protection/child safeguarding policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have whistleblower protection policy?	Yes
Does your National Society have anti-sexual harassment policy?	Yes

Please analyse and indicate potential risks for this operation, its root causes and mitigation actions.

Risk	Mitigation action
Logistical challenges due to remote location. Chambarak's geographic location may create transport delays for supplies, staff, and specialized personnel.	Relief items were pre-positioned at local level; local suppliers were used; transport and logistics plans remained flexible to adapt to changing conditions.
Exposure to natural hazards (earthquakes, landslides, and floods). Chambarak and the wider Gegharkunik region are prone to natural disasters, including seismic activity, landslides, and seasonal floods, which may cause further damage or complicate response and recovery operations.	To mitigate these risks, ARCS pre-positioned relief items at the local level and stored them at the ARCS warehouse to ensure rapid mobilization when needed. Local suppliers were engaged to reduce transport time, and logistics and transport plans were kept flexible to adapt to changing conditions. Regular communication with national and regional Rescue Service structures ensured timely updates on road accessibility, weather conditions, and hazard alerts. As a result, all planned assistance was delivered effectively and without delays.
Severe winter conditions may affect displaced and vulnerable households. Chambarak is located in a mountainous region where winter brings freezing temperatures, snowfall, and strong winds. Displaced households, particularly those living in temporary shelters or damaged homes, face serious risks to their health and safety without adequate winterization.	Although the explosion occurred in June, temperatures in Chambarak are still relatively low, with daytime temperatures ranging from 18°C to 26°C and nighttime temperatures dropping to 5°C–12°C. Considering these conditions, ARCS provided boilers, electrical heaters and bedding items to displaced and vulnerable households, ensuring that affected families had essential winterization support in place ahead of the colder months.
Increased security risks due to potential escalation of regional tensions. The wider South Caucasus context remains fragile, with ongoing tensions and border incidents between Armenia and Azerbaijan posing a risk of sudden escalation. Any deterioration may create new humanitarian needs or complicate response operations.	The monitoring confirmed that the security environment in Chambarak remained stable, with no incidents affecting staff safety or program implementation. As a result, distributions were conducted in an organized and controlled manner; relief items reached the intended recipients without loss, misuse, or disruption.
High pre-existing vulnerability due to poverty and previous displacement. Chambarak is among the most economically vulnerable regions in Armenia, with limited employment opportunities and high poverty levels even before the explosion. The area is also hosting displaced persons from Karabakh, adding additional strain on already limited resources.	To ensure a fair and needs-based response, ARCS conducted a rapid needs assessment in coordination with the Chambarak Municipality to identify households most affected by the explosion. The assessment gathered data on the extent of damage, loss of property, injuries, and specific household vulnerabilities through KOBO questionnaires and field verification visits. Lists of affected individuals were obtained from the community and cross-checked with local authorities to confirm accuracy. Pre-existing vulnerabilities—such as low income, disability, elderly household members, and single-headed families—were prioritized in the selection process to ensure that assistance reached those in greatest need. For 15 individuals severely affected by the explosion, ARCS doubled the intended cash support to help them cope with total loss of property, destroyed homes, or injury and death in the family.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation:



The operation took place in a generally stable area, but several security and safety risks remained present and required continuous monitoring. Chambarak is located near the eastern border of Armenia, a region historically sensitive to tensions related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Although no active conflict occurred in Chambarak itself, any escalation of regional tensions could have indirectly affected the security situation or restricted access for response teams.

The affected area included mountainous and remote terrain, which posed physical safety risks for staff, volunteers, and affected populations.

Operational health and safety risks for staff and volunteers arose while working in damaged structures or unstable buildings during relief distributions or needs assessments. There was also a need to ensure proper mental health support for staff and volunteers involved in the response, given the emotionally distressing nature of the incident.

The ARCS applied standard security protocols for all field activities. Staff and volunteers received regular safety briefings, followed safety and access guidelines, and coordinated movements with local authorities. ARCS continued to monitor the security situation in close coordination with the national Emergency Management Service and local authorities. IFRC security protocols were also applied, and contingency plans were maintained in case the security situation deteriorated. As a result no security incidents occurred, and all relief activities were conducted safely despite the remote and mountainous terrain.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

Yes

Implementation



Shelter Housing And Settlements

Budget: CHF 10,650

Targeted Persons: 1,000

Assisted Persons: 344

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
ARCS has procured and pre-positioned essential household items for 200 households, which were stocked.	200	68

Narrative description of achievements

After the disaster, essential shelter items were distributed to 125 individuals (44 households) directly affected by the gas explosion. The multi-story apartment building had been severely damaged, leaving many families without shelter and forcing them to relocate quickly to rented apartments or stay with relatives. To address the immediate needs of affected families, ARCS provided essential household items, including blankets, bed linen sets, pillows, and electric water boilers. These items were drawn from existing prepositioned stocks, last replenished under the MDRAM014 Armenia Population Movement operation. Since that operation had not escalated, these stocks were available for use in this response.

The distribution was conducted in close coordination with the Chambarak municipality, using lists of affected individuals provided by local authorities.

To ensure preparedness for future disasters, ARCS procured additional essential household items to replenish prepositioned stocks. A total of 344 individual bedding items and 354 blankets were procured and stocked, sufficient to cover approximately 68 households. This includes replenishment of items previously distributed to 44 affected households, as well as additional items to support a further 24 households. The initial target was based following the initial needs assessment.

Lessons Learnt

Prepositioned stocks enable rapid response. The availability of existing supplies from the MDRAM014 operation allowed ARCS to provide immediate assistance to affected families, eliminating delays and ensuring timely support.



It has been evident that strong coordination with local authorities enhances accuracy and efficiency in response efforts. Working closely with the Chambarak municipality enabled ARCS to verify beneficiary lists, ensure assistance reached the right households, and reduce the risk of duplication.

Challenges

During the planning stage of the operation, challenges in identifying the directly and indirectly affected population made it difficult to define clear operational targets, resulting in initially higher targets compared to the number of affected people identified as the operation progressed.



Multi Purpose Cash

Budget: CHF 22,685

Targeted Persons: 200

Assisted Persons: 199

Targeted Male: 84

Targeted Female: 115

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Percentage of people surveyed by PDM who report being able to meet the basic needs of their households, according to their priorities	85	95
Percentage of surveyed people who feel treated with respect by ARCS staff and volunteers	85	97
Number of people provided with unconditional cash assistance	200	199

Narrative description of achievements

To support those individuals who have been directly affected by the gas explosion and assist them to cover their basic needs, ARCS supported 86 households, comprising 199 individuals out of whom 115 female and 84 males. Each individual received AMD 46,500 to help meet these needs. Fifteen individuals whose houses were severely damaged and who experienced significant losses, including injury or death of family members, received double the amount of assistance in consideration of their vulnerability.

The overall distribution of cash assistance was organized in three phases. During the first phase, in July 2025, 66 individuals (43 households) received support during the initial months of the operation. This phase targeted people who had been severely affected and had lost their homes: those whose houses were destroyed or severely damaged.

During the second phase, in August 2025, 91 individuals (29 households) were supported. This phase targeted vulnerable families affected by secondary types of damage, including broken windows due to the explosion, as well as psychosocial issues and stress.

During the third phase of cash assistance, 42 individuals (14 households) were assisted. This list included people who reached out to ARCS through the cash hotline or via the municipality to request assistance. Before being included in the assistance list, ARCS conducted a needs assessment through its case managers and municipality social workers.

The operation was implemented in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) through the Unified Social Services in Chambarak, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI), and local authorities, including Chambarak municipality. Prior to the operation, ARCS informed all relevant stakeholders through meetings and formal communication and planned the joint implementation of activities and timeframes.

Prior to the distribution of assistance ARCS conducted verification of the lists to ensure transparency and accountability confirming the eligibility of families for assistance, that they met the selection criteria, and preventing duplication. Following the verification at the initial stage, three individuals were found to lack valid identification documents due to losses in the explosion, and they have been included in the second phase of the assistance after restoring the identification documents.

The cash assistance was distributed through HayPost (Armenia Post) to ensure easy access for individuals as it has representation across country. At the beginning of 2025, as part of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) preparedness efforts, the ARCS conducted the selection



of Financial Service Providers (FSPs) in accordance with the finalized ARCS CVA SOPs. The banks selected according to the FSP were located far from Chambarak, requiring individuals to travel for up to two hours to receive cash assistance. However, since HayPost was also included as an FSP option, it was chosen to enable cash distribution as quickly as possible. The decision was also based on HayPost's extensive experience in distributing cash through various state programs and the operation was implemented after signing the framework agreement.

ARCS staff and volunteers from the Chambarak branch were present at the distribution sites to monitor the entire process. They addressed individuals' questions on the spot, assisted with the distribution, responded to concerns, and collected feedback, while also ensuring ARCS's visibility in the field. ARCS psychologists were present as well to provide psychological first aid when needed.

To assess the effectiveness and relevance of the response and get feedback from supported individuals, after the completion of the cash distribution ARCS conducted Post distribution monitoring (PDM) with 75 individuals covering around 87 per cent of the total population who have been supported through cash assistance.

The data collection was conducted by ARCS volunteers who, prior to contacting supported individuals, were sensitized and briefed to ensure clarity, consistency, and quality in data collection. Approximately 73 per cent of the respondents were female, reflecting their active role in household recovery efforts, and around 75 per cent were heads of households. In addition, about 36 per cent of respondents reported having family members with disabilities. The results of the PDM indicated that 96 per cent of supported individuals confirmed receiving clear information prior to the cash distribution. Furthermore, 97 per cent stated that they received a phone call regarding the cash assistance, while the remaining respondents confirmed receiving information through the municipality. Regarding collection timelines, 43 per cent of individuals received their assistance from HayPost on the same day they were notified, while 56 per cent received it within one week, demonstrating efficient access to assistance. In terms of accessibility, 91 per cent of individuals reported no issues in receiving assistance. Only around five people mentioned transportation challenges, and approximately five per cent faced minor procedural issues at the post office.

Fifty-two per cent of individuals indicated that they used cash assistance for food, while 40 per cent reported spending it on medicine. Additionally, 53 per cent used the assistance to cover other essential needs. A very small number (around four per cent) reported using assistance to cover rent expenses. Overall, 74 per cent of respondents stated that they were very satisfied with the assistance, 21 per cent were mostly satisfied, around four per cent reported partial dissatisfaction, and one per cent did not provide any response. Importantly, 61 per cent of individuals mentioned that the assistance helped them reduce their stress levels, while around 36 per cent said it mostly helped. In addition, 84 per cent of respondents reported being aware of ARCS feedback and complaints channels, including the ARCS hotline and direct communication with case managers.

Lessons Learnt

Haypost proved to be a reliable partner for CVA implementation. Their performance ensured timely and high-quality distribution, delivered excellent customer service, followed up on individual cases, and reached beneficiaries who were unable to visit the Haypost branch in Chambarak.

Additionally, Continuous feedback collection from affected individuals and ongoing needs assessments proved to influence decision-making throughout the intervention, as new vulnerabilities were identified and taken into consideration during the operation.

Challenges

The identification of secondary affected families was somewhat challenging. These families contacted ARCS directly and were included in the assistance list after a needs assessment was conducted by ARCS case managers and municipality social workers.



Budget: CHF 18,638
Targeted Persons: 550
Assisted Persons: 603
Targeted Male: -
Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
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Number of (temporary) safe spaces established or operated by the National Society for the purpose of learning, psychosocial support or recreation.	1	1
Number of people reached with mental health and psychosocial activities (MHPSS) from the National Society.	550	603
Number of participants of MHPSS trainings	60	128
Number of people receiving PFA and basic support by trained staff/volunteers	200	200
Total number of individualized MHPSS sessions delivered	120	275

Narrative description of achievements

An initial assessment was conducted with representatives from 10 affected households through a coordination meeting and a needs survey. The assessment identified critical needs, including access to housing, cash assistance, bedding, warm clothing, food, and psychological support. As part of the DREF operation, six trained ARCS volunteers actively provided MHPSS services. In parallel, five outsourced consultants with a background in psychology were engaged. The consultants received specialized training in emergency MHPSS, completed ARCS courses on MHPSS in emergencies, and were equipped with PFA manuals, standard intervention guidelines, reporting templates, and supervision/technical support to ensure consistent and safe service delivery.

The psychological state of both directly and indirectly impacted individuals was fragile. Many experienced persistent fear, heightened anxiety, chronic stress, and grief due to displacement and disruption of their daily lives. Children showed emotional and behavioral challenges, including fear, aggression, anxiety, and withdrawal. These signs were noted by both caregivers and professionals during psychosocial support sessions, highlighting the urgent need for targeted, sensitive mental health interventions.

MHPSS services were delivered through both in-person and online modalities, including individual and group counseling, psychological well-being sessions, community-based psychoeducational activities, psychosocial events and interventions, as well as the provision of PFA to teachers, volunteers, and community members.

PFA was provided to those affected by the explosion, including individuals who had been hospitalized and those who had lost a family member. The intervention methodology was based on the ARCS training module and adhered to its standards, covering topics such as emotional stabilization, practical support, identification of needs, risks, and capacities, and prioritization of high-risk groups. The approach was tailored to address issues identified through the initial assessments and during the sessions themselves. Services were delivered on-site, offering both individual and group support based on identified needs. On average, each participant attended 6–8 sessions, although some chose to discontinue, reporting that they no longer required further support.

The support was well received by the community and considered both timely and appropriate. Overall, 275 individuals out of whom 107 children (51 Female, 56 Male) and 168 adults (162 Female, 6 Male) directly benefited from psychosocial services, including individual counseling, group sessions, stress-management activities, and recreational or therapeutic exercises, delivered either individually or in groups according to beneficiary preferences. Additionally, 200 individuals (162 Female, 38 Male), including 199 CVA recipients, received PFA during field visits. These sessions were facilitated by trained staff and volunteers who provided emotional support, active listening, and coping strategies to reduce distress and promote stability. The impact of these services included reduced emotional distress, improved coping strategies, enhanced resilience, strengthened social support networks, and greater confidence in managing daily stressors. Children reported feeling safer and better understood, while adults gained tools to regulate emotions and support their families. Overall, the community experienced noticeable improvements in psychosocial well-being and readiness to engage with ongoing support activities.

Furthermore, 128 community members, including 62 teachers (58 Female, 4 Male), 28 medical staff (26 Female, 2 Male), 23 Chambarak community representatives (16 Female, 7 Male), and 15 Rescue Service representatives (all Male) participated in MHPSS trainings to support 200 residents directly affected by the incident. In addition, 52 ARCS staff and volunteers (42 Female, 10 Male) took part in a dedicated PFA training to strengthen their capacity to provide immediate psychological support during emergencies. The training covered both practical and theoretical skills, including stress management, self-regulation, first aid, and PFA. A key achievement of this training was its sustainability, as the trained participants continued to serve as trainers within the community. Evaluation forms indicated that all participants were highly satisfied with the trainer and the training content, and they suggested continuing such initiatives while providing more in-depth information and techniques on stress management.

In total, 603 people were reached through MHPSS and PFA activities, not including 52 staff and volunteers who participated in psychological well-being sessions. To promote the well-being of both affected individuals and service providers, the IFRC Well-being Guideline, translated into Armenian, was distributed to the majority of MHPSS participants. The guideline provides practical advice and



tools to help individuals cope with stress, maintain emotional balance, and support both their own mental health and that of others. It includes guidance on recognizing stress reactions, practicing self-care, offering basic psychosocial support, and knowing when and how to seek professional help. In addition, all MHPSS beneficiaries received PFA leaflets with well-being instructions and were referred to the 8184 Call Centre for further guidance.

Services were delivered in a designated safe space within Chambarak municipality, provided free of charge by the local authorities as a result of strong cooperation, ensuring a secure and protective environment for beneficiaries. Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) standards—such as safety, dignity, equal access, and participation—were fully integrated, ensuring interventions were safe, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of the population. Interventions were adapted to be safe and accessible for all participants, regardless of age, gender, or disability. The interventions were considered dignified because they respected people's privacy, choices, and cultural norms. Beneficiaries were treated with respect, their concerns were listened to without judgment, and activities were conducted in a way that preserved their self-respect and sense of agency, ensuring they felt valued and empowered rather than stigmatized or exposed. Participants were given choices between group or individual sessions, and online or offline formats, respecting their privacy and personal preferences. Confidentiality was strictly maintained. Equal and full participation was promoted across age groups, with specific efforts to include children, adults, and elderly beneficiaries. Four persons with disabilities out of whom two female and two male, including two children, were actively engaged and received equal access to psychological assistance.

Community, engagement, and accountability (CEA) principles were also applied through active involvement of the Chambarak community at all stages of the response. Chambarak community was actively involved in assessing needs, shaping activities, and providing feedback on services. The ARCS Call Centre number was also provided so community members could share concerns or suggestions directly, ensuring the response remained relevant and responsive to their priorities. Community members helped identify training venues, provided a child-friendly space for MHPSS sessions, and supported the CVA process by sharing initial lists of affected individuals. In addition, the community committed to supporting the dissemination of key messages on disaster risk reduction and early warning to promote life-saving behaviors implemented in September 2025. CEA principles were applied throughout all stages of the response—from the initial assessment and planning to implementation and post-distribution feedback—ensuring continuous two-way communication and accountability to the affected population.

The MHPSS team's intervention in Chambarak went beyond immediate crisis relief, it fostered long-term emotional recovery, trust, and awareness within the community:

- **Human-centered support:** The team provided continuous psychosocial care, helping individuals and families process shock, grief, and fear with dignity and compassion.
- **Change in perceptions:** Community attitudes toward mental health shifted noticeably. People who were initially hesitant began to recognize psychosocial support as a vital part of recovery, not a sign of weakness.
- **Breaking stigma:** By engaging teachers, healthcare workers, and local leaders, the team helped normalize conversations about mental wellbeing and emotional care.
- **Strengthened trust:** ARCS's consistent presence in hospitals, temporary shelters, and community spaces built deep trust and credibility among affected residents.
- **Empowered local actors:** Trained volunteers and community representatives gained confidence to identify stress reactions and provide basic emotional support, ensuring sustainability beyond the initial response.
- **Enhanced coordination:** Close collaboration with local authorities, health services, and humanitarian partners ensured a holistic response where psychosocial needs were addressed alongside material ones.
- **Community resilience:** Through dialogue, shared activities, and safe spaces, the response strengthened social bonds and collective coping mechanisms, reinforcing the community's resilience to future crises.
- **Staff and volunteer wellbeing:** The team also prioritized self-care and reflection, recognizing that emotionally supported responders are essential for effective humanitarian action.

Lessons Learnt

Importance of rapid deployment of trained staff and volunteers: Rapid deployment ensures that affected individuals receive timely emotional, practical, and informational support when stress and shock are at their peak. Early presence helps stabilize reactions, prevent escalation of distress, and connect people quickly to essential services. It also fosters trust from the outset, demonstrating that help is available and accessible, which enhances coping, restores a sense of safety, and supports more effective recovery outcomes.

Need for stronger community awareness on safety, risk reduction, and MHPSS: Raising community awareness proved essential in helping people recognize psychological well-being as a key part of recovery. Increased awareness reduced stigma, encouraged timely help-seeking, and promoted preparedness, enabling communities to respond more effectively during and after emergencies.

Early integration of psychosocial support in emergency response: Including psychosocial support from the very first phase of the response ensured that emotional needs were addressed alongside physical and material assistance. This approach contributed to a more holistic, effective, and sustainable recovery for affected communities.

Effective coordination with local authorities and partners improves impact – collaboration avoided duplication and ensured that resources were used efficiently.

Continuous feedback from affected communities strengthens accountability – regular feedback kept interventions responsive to evolving needs, enhanced transparency, and built community trust in humanitarian actors.



Challenges

Initial reluctance to discuss emotional distress: Some residents were initially hesitant to talk about emotional distress or seek psychosocial support. This challenge was gradually addressed by building trust through consistent presence in the community, using simple, non-clinical language, providing informative sessions, and introducing support activities in a friendly, low-pressure manner. Over time, as people felt safer and better understood, they became more willing to engage with MHPSS services.

Rapid integration of MHPSS with medical and relief operations: Organizing MHPSS support alongside ongoing medical and relief activities required quick coordination and flexibility. This was addressed through the immediate deployment of trained PFA volunteers, rapid branch-level briefings, and close collaboration with relief teams, enabling psychosocial first aid to be provided on-site from the earliest stages of the response.

Ongoing psychological impact beyond the emergency phase: The psychological effects of the crisis persisted after the initial response, requiring sustained engagement and support. To address this, follow-up online sessions were organized, regular phone contact with beneficiaries was maintained, and the MHPSS hotline was shared to allow continuous access to support. This approach ensured emotional stability and continuity of care, responding directly to the needs and feedback of the community.



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

Budget: CHF 5,325

Targeted Persons: 850

Assisted Persons: 475

Targeted Male: -

Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
ARCS has procured and pre-positioned essential household items for 200 households, which were stocked.	200	95

Narrative description of achievements

To promptly address the immediate needs of affected individuals, ARCS distributed 44 hygiene kits to 125 people (44 households) directly impacted by the gas explosion. The kits were drawn from existing prepositioned stocks, last replenished under the MDRAM014 Armenia Population Movement operation. Since that operation did not escalate, these stocks were available for use in this response.

The distribution was conducted in close coordination with the Chambarak municipality, using lists of affected individuals provided by the local authorities.

To enhance preparedness for future disasters, ARCS procured additional essential household items to replenish prepositioned stocks. A total of 475 hygiene kits were procured, sufficient to support 95 households. This includes replenishment of items previously distributed to 44 affected households, as well as additional kits to support a further 51 households. The initial target was based following the initial needs assessment.

Lessons Learnt

Prepositioned stocks facilitated quick response, as having supplies already available from the MDRAM014 operation enabled ARCS to deliver prompt assistance to affected families, avoiding delays and ensuring timely support.

Challenges

During the planning stage of the operation, challenges in identifying the directly and indirectly affected population made it difficult to define clear operational targets, resulting in initially higher targets compared to the number of affected people identified as the operation progressed.





Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation And Recovery

Budget: CHF 2,663
Targeted Persons: 850
Assisted Persons: 9,000
Targeted Male: -
Targeted Female: -

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of people reached with disaster risk reduction and warning key messages	850	9,000

Narrative description of achievements

To strengthen community awareness and preparedness, the project designed and printed 5,000 booklets and 400 posters with practical guidance on gas leak safety. The materials explained how to recognize warning signs, take immediate protective actions, and implement key household prevention measures. Clear instructions were provided on what to avoid—such as using electrical switches, open flames, or mobile phones indoors and the safe steps to follow: turning off the gas valve, opening windows, leaving the house quickly, and calling 104 or 911/112 from outside.

The risk education materials were distributed across Chambarak city and the wider community. Municipality representatives, supported by ARCS volunteers, delivered the materials to residential buildings, public institutions, and other public spaces, reaching an estimated number of 9,000 residents. The number of people reached was calculated based on the total number of residents in the city.

Additionally, at the request of the Chambarak community, ARCS provided 70 fire extinguishers to address gaps in schools and municipal buildings. This initiative enhanced local preparedness and safety by ensuring that key public institutions were better equipped to respond to fire incidents. Readily available fire extinguishers allowed school staff and municipal employees to take immediate action during emergencies, reducing the risk of injuries, property damage, and disruption of services.

Lessons Learnt

Involving local representatives and volunteers in the distribution of materials ensured wider reach and increased trust in the messages. This approach strengthened community ownership, as people were more receptive to information delivered by familiar and trusted local figures. Volunteers and representatives understood the community's context, language, and specific needs, making communication more effective and culturally appropriate.

Addressing multiple needs simultaneously was effective: Combining risk education with tangible support, such as providing fire extinguishers, strengthened overall community preparedness.

Challenges

No challenges were recorded throughout the implementation of this activity.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 3,195
Targeted Persons: 850
Assisted Persons: 0
Targeted Male: -
Targeted Female: -



Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of monitoring visits conducted	3	3

Narrative description of achievements

The IFRC Country Office in Armenia supported the operation through regular field monitoring visits to ensure the quality of service delivery. Alongside ARCS colleagues, IFRC staff were present at the cash distribution points, starting with the first distribution in July, observing the overall process and monitoring the delivery. It was evident that the distribution was organized in an orderly manner, and the service providers' capacity ensured that cash was distributed efficiently and without any issues.

IFRC conducted another monitoring visit in September, this time with the ARCS MHPSS team to Chambarak in September.

Children's group session: The session was held in the Municipality building, in a room previously prepared and furnished by the team. It was part of a series of activities using games and interactive methods to help children express emotions, build coping skills, and strengthen peer connections. The children actively participated and clearly enjoyed the session, demonstrating positive engagement and comfort with the facilitators.

Training for municipality staff: Conducted simultaneously in the same building, this session was dynamic and highly meaningful. Participants reflected not only on the recent Chambarak gas explosion but also on personal challenges related to the broader context, including the province's proximity to the Azerbaijani border, family members serving in the army, and the general sense of instability and fear in the region. The session provided a valuable space for emotional expression and peer support among local staff.

Alongside regular monitoring activities, the IFRC Country Office team supported the ARCS by providing technical assistance throughout the operation. This included observing the overall implementation of activities, collecting data from the field, analyzing the findings, and contributing to the development of the operational strategy for the DREF operation, as well as supporting the collection of inputs and reporting processes. Additionally, the IFRC Country Cluster's Disaster Management Delegate co-facilitated the Lessons Learned workshop together with a representative from the Swiss Red Cross.

Lessons Learnt

Field monitoring of the operation allowed everyone involved to see the tangible impact and progress of activities, while also promoting transparency and accountability.

Challenges

No challenges were recorded throughout the implementation of this activity.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 20,885

Targeted Persons: 40

Assisted Persons: 40

Targeted Male: 32

Targeted Female: 8

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
Number of volunteers involved in the response operation that have increased their skills in response and management of operations	40	40



Narrative description of achievements

Volunteers played a central role in the ARCS response, working alongside staff to deliver timely and effective assistance. The Chambarak Disaster Response Team (DRT), together with local volunteers, was actively engaged in supporting affected residents. Trained volunteers from the Chambarak branch, headquarters, and nearby branches—many of whom had previously completed essential training in PFA, lifesaving skills, and emergency response—were among the first to mobilize, initiating immediate assistance at the incident site.

During incident site visits, trained staff and volunteers provided emotional support, active listening, and practical coping strategies to help reduce distress and restore a sense of stability. Volunteers also applied PGI principles during registration and service delivery to ensure safety, dignity, and equal access for all. In total, the operation involved 40 ARCS volunteers (8 females and 32 male), who mainly supported activities in the child-friendly space, working in shifts to ensure that children had ongoing support.

On September 18, 2025, 31 participants took part in the Lessons Learned Workshop, representing the following organizations: IFRC (7), ICRC (1), Swiss Red Cross (1), Austrian Red Cross (1), ARCS (15), HayPost (1), Chambarak Municipality (1), and community representatives (4). The workshop aimed to reflect on the ARCS Chambarak DREF response operation through generating feedback from key stakeholders, including local partners (government representatives, schools, affected community representatives, financial service provider for a cash component), relevant departments of the ARCS and its branch in the affected area, as well as from the RCRC Movement partners. The workshop intended to review main achievements of the operation, best practices, opportunities for replication/maintenance, as well as to record key challenges, lessons and recommendations.

What worked well:

- Early response, timeliness of the ARCS mobilization of resources (volunteers, prepositioned stocks) due to investments in the National Society's preparedness
- Quality needs assessments informed quality emergency response plan, further contributing to timely DREF request and approval processes
- Unique and effective services by the ARCS due to the organization's solid operational capacities in its strategic/mandated areas and the National Society's adaptability, needs-based / people-centered approach
- Sustainability through continued presence of the ARCS in affected areas

Challenges:

Overall, the operation did not face major challenges and those that were encountered by the ARCS were context-specific and were related to the region's pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. A few challenges raised included the following:

- Information on beneficiaries sometimes was not accurate and needed to be double-checked, verified, resulting in longer-than-planned processes.
- Affected population's longer-term needs (including longer-term accommodation, rental needs, MHPSS) could not be addressed by this particular operation. While relevant government agencies are in the process of ensuring assistance, there are challenges with available resources.
- School preparedness, community preparedness, general community-based disaster risk reduction activities, if implemented, would have had a positive impact in such cases.

Collaboration with local communities, local partners need to be strengthened on a continuous basis to ensure effective partnerships during emergencies.

Lessons Learnt

The active involvement of Red Cross volunteers in assisting affected communities demonstrated the value of volunteer engagement and inspired local youth to join ARCS, highlighting the importance of visible field presence for strengthening future volunteer mobilization.

Challenges

One of the challenges was that number of volunteers initially deployed was insufficient given the scale of the explosion. To address this gap, volunteers from nearby communities were mobilized and integrated into the response, which helped strengthen the overall support efforts.

Additionally, Coordinating activities posed challenges due to the ARCS office being located in Sevan rather than Chambarak. However, assigning a representative in Chambarak helped facilitate coordination and improve communication with local stakeholders.

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

MDRAM015 - Armenia - Gas Explosion

Operating Timeframe: 23 Jun 2025 to 30 Sep 2025

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2025/06-10	Operation	MDRAM015
Budget Timeframe	2025	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 13/Jan/2026

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	84,039
DREF Response Pillar	84,039
Expenditure	-81,959
Closing Balance	2,080

II. Expenditure by planned operations / enabling approaches

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items	10,000	10,650	-650
PO02 - Livelihoods			0
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash	21,300	22,685	-1,385
PO04 - Health	17,500	18,638	-1,138
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	5,000	5,325	-325
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion			0
PO07 - Education			0
PO08 - Migration			0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	7,629	2,663	4,967
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability			0
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			0
Planned Operations Total	61,429	59,960	1,470
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	3,000	1,115	1,885
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	19,610	20,885	-1,275
Enabling Approaches Total	22,610	22,000	610
Grand Total	84,039	81,959	2,080

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