



Final Evaluation Executive Summary

Armenia Population Movement Emergency Appeal

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Executive Summary

A final evaluation of the IFRC Emergency Appeal (EA) Armenia Population Movement was carried out between August and December 2025. The scope of the evaluation covered all interventions implemented under the EA between September 2023 and June 2025, across the entire country. The two main objectives of the evaluation are:

Objective 1: to assess whether the interventions of the IFRC Secretariat and ARCS were delivered in line with the operational strategy of the Emergency Appeal

Objective 2: to evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative working modality in maintaining service delivery during the institutional crisis

This evaluation used a mixed method approach collecting both primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data collection was supported by a secondary data desktop review of relevant internal project documentation and external documents and reports which yielded additional information were used where relevant.

For the qualitative data collection, semi-structured Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to gather impressions and ideas about the program from the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), IFRC, Partner National Societies (PNSs) and external stakeholders and affected population. For the quantitative data collection, a semi-structured web-based questionnaire was developed in KOBO Toolbox to be administered to a sample of the affected population. The evaluation included field work in selected field locations and was conducted between September 8 and September 18, 2025.

The findings from the evaluation highlight that at the onset of the crisis, the EA objectives appeared broadly aligned and relevant with the immediate and overwhelming needs of the affected population. Initial priorities were inferred from previous response experiences and passive data collection during registration interviews. While these data were not systematically analysed, the urgency and scale of the displacement meant that needs were initially universal: affected people required *'everything'* from shelter and food to psychosocial support.

As the response evolved, it became more challenging to maintain clarity around emerging needs and how effectively they were being addressed. Results from the survey with affected population suggest that while the early response was perceived as relevant, the program struggled to adapt to shifting needs, expectations, and contextual changes over time.

The EA's objectives and indicators were predefined without a baseline or an in-depth needs assessment, which may have aligned well with initial conditions but became more disconnected from the lived realities of affected population as the situation stabilized. In addition, many people served, having come from a context where their needs were comprehensively met, developed higher expectations that ARCS was not equipped to fulfil once they were resettled.

Livelihoods emerged as an area where further support could be beneficial. Despite being a critical need for long-term recovery, the livelihoods component had relatively narrow focus, benefiting a select group of participants. It was introduced late in the response and lacked the scale and depth required to support widespread income restoration.

Programmatic adaptations appeared to be driven more by internal budgetary constraints and institutional priorities than by real-time feedback from affected communities. This may be partly attributed to the weakening of CEA mechanisms during the crisis. Although CEA is a cross-cutting priority, the data collected suggests that it might have not been consistently operationalized across sectors. As a result, opportunities to gather, analyse, and act on community feedback were more limited.

Accountability mechanisms seemed to be underdeveloped or under-utilized. The affected population had relatively few avenues to access information or share feedback, and some challenges persisted around complaints handling, transparency, and information sharing. Much like what happened to CEA, protection issues and PGI in general were clearly integrated into the response framework and recognized as an overarching priority. However, follow-through was more fragmented. The institutional crisis within ARCS led to a loss of capacity and a shift in focus toward the hard implementation of concrete activities. As a result, protection planning was sidelined, and responsibilities remained unclear.

Most sectoral indicators outlined in the EA were reportedly met or even exceeded, with only a few exceptions pertaining to sectors which were mostly affected by the institutional crisis. In some cases, activities were deprioritized due to budget constraints, perceived relevance, or anticipated impact.

The institutional crisis was addressed very pragmatically following the guiding principle of continuing 'business as usual' so with the intent of re-establish operational normalcy and implement activities associated with the EA. While the consultant considers this to have been the only viable option under the circumstances, the chosen modality and approach appear to have been implemented in the absence of formal guidelines, standard operating procedures, troubleshooting tools, timelines, monitoring framework or communication strategy. This reflects

a broader gap in the Movement, as no established protocols currently exist for responding to institutional crises of a NS.

The crisis also presented a painful but valuable opportunity to rebuild ARCS's image and operational credibility, but also organizational and management culture, work environment and team dynamics.

The institutional crisis also required extensive support from the Surge staff. Their presence was instrumental in maintaining continuity, especially during the crisis and right after. However, their extensive use came at a high financial cost and, in some cases, was perceived as unnecessary, particularly in sectors where ARCS retained leadership and technical expertise. This reliance on external Surge support was interpreted by some as a sign of mistrust or a lack of confidence in ARCS personnel, rather than a strategic reinforcement of operational capacity. It remains unclear whether this perception stemmed from how Surge deployments were communicated or how they were integrated into existing structures. Moreover, this perception may have been exacerbated by the fact that not all Surge staff were equally well-prepared or effective in their roles.

Until early 2024 when the institutional crisis happened, the Movement's coordination setup in Armenia broadly aligned with the Seville Agreement 2.0. However, following the institutional crisis at ARCS, the IFRC assumed a dual role, taking on both strategic leadership and operational responsibilities within the Movement's three-tier coordination platform. This shift was necessary to ensure continuity and safeguard the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Internal communication and coordination among Movement partners were strong, with actors generally speaking with one voice. However, communication with ARCS appeared to be more fragmented and unclear, which at times created friction and made collaboration more difficult.

External communication with partners also suffered as often partners received fragmented, inconsistent, and at times contradictory messages from ARCS, contributing to confusion about roles, responsibilities, and strategic direction.

During and after the crisis, expected NSD results and activities could no longer be fully implemented due to the loss of resources, institutional memory, and operational capacity. In response, the focus shifted toward soft-skill investments to rebuild trust and re-establish basic functionality from the ground up. While this bottom-up approach was necessary to stabilize services and restore a sense of continuity, it came at the expense of strategic governance and

long-term institutional development, which are now urgently needed to provide direction, structure, and a clear trajectory and strategy for ARCS.

Much of the effort was concentrated on restoring what had been lost rather than advancing new capacities. Services were reactivated but not necessarily expanded or innovated. Although some capacity was eventually replenished, it became evident that ARCS's strength had historically resided in its people rather than in its systems. When key individuals departed, they took with them the informal systems, tools, and practices they had developed and relied upon, resulting in a partial loss of operational know-how.

This highlights a critical vulnerability: capacity was person-dependent rather than system-anchored. As a result, monetary and institutional investments were effectively lost. Moving forward, the development of sustainable systems that preserve knowledge, standardize practices, must be prioritized and ensure continuity regardless of personnel changes.

Recommendations for this evaluation are:

Recommendation n.1 to IFRC:

- The decision to adopt a hybrid modality following the institutional crisis of the NS was successful in ensuring continuity of services and mitigating risks associated with the governance uncertainty. However, the approach was implemented without the benefit of established guidelines, standard operating procedures, or troubleshooting tools specifically designed for such situations. **The consultant recommends the development of a comprehensive guidance package**, including a manual and troubleshooting guide to be used in cases of institutional crisis.

Recommendation n.2 to ARCS and IFRC:

- **Future operations should ensure that CEA and PGI are integrated from the outset and are still pursued even in time of crisis**, with dedicated resources, clear responsibilities, and practical tools to safeguard accountability, inclusivity, and community trust even in emergency contexts.

Recommendation n.3 to ARCS and IFRC:

- The NSD process is ongoing and has achieved notable results in restoring unity, credibility, and core functions. However, **it is now essential to focus on developing a clear strategy and defining the way forward for ARCS.** A forward-looking strategy will help consolidate gains, guide future capacity development, and position ARCS to respond effectively to emerging challenges and improve its emergency response.

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Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

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In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

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