

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Final Report

Armenia: Supporting people affected by the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation	Operation n° MDRAM007
Date of Issue: 5 July 2021	Glide number: FL-2020-000171-ARM
Operation start date: 31 October 2020	Operation end date: 31 March 2021
Host National Society: Armenian Red Cross Society countrywide with 11 regional, 1 territorial and 52 community branches and with the support of over 3,500 volunteers.	Operation budget: CHF 501,485
Number of people affected: more than 90,000	Number of people assisted: 33,200
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners currently actively involved in the operation: The operation will be implemented by ARCS with the support from the IFRC. A coordination mechanism between the ARCS, the IFRC and the ICRC was established right at the onset of the crisis to coordinate all activities of the Movement partners. Regular meetings of movement partners are taking place already and will ensure complementarity in planning and implementation.	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Emergency Situation, Regional and local authorities	

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the disaster

On 27 September 2020, intense clashes started along the Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. As a result of heavy fighting that lasted six weeks, civilians, mostly the older people, women and children left their homes in the conflict-affected areas of Nagorno-Karabakh and spontaneously arrived to Armenia. The Government of Armenia provided them with shelter in hotels, boarding institutions for most of the people who arrived from Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), others are sheltered in the homes of their friends, relatives, and host families. Nagorno-Karabakh authorities estimated 90,000 of the 150,000 inhabitants left the NK and arrived spontaneously in Armenia. On 9 November, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a ceasefire agreement brokered by the Russian Federation.

In order to meet the needs of the people spontaneously arriving from the conflict-affected areas, the government (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Armenia, regional and local authorities) organised initial humanitarian aid supported by non-governmental organizations, as well as by the civilian population on a voluntary basis. Despite the cessation of armed conflict, the humanitarian needs of the affected people persist, hence additional support needs to be ensured.

From the first day of the escalation (27 September 2020), the National Society (NS) engaged in supporting the people arriving from the conflict-affected areas with food, household items, psychological support, first aid, running the hotlines, RFL and PSS. The humanitarian needs were growing and the NS, through its partners' support tried to support the spontaneous arrivals. The National Society was informed by high-level authorities, including the Prime Minister's Administration and the local authorities, about the urgent need of supporting the shelters both privately and authority owned, accommodating arriving people from NK with utility payments. Meetings with the shelter owners reflected and confirmed this urgent need.

The data provided by the Migration Service of Armenia on 9 December 2020 indicated that 90,640 displaced individuals were scattered across 593 settlements and communities. 74% of the displaced people were hosted in urban settlements.

39% of the displaced population were registered in Yerevan, 18% in Kotayk, and 9% in Syunik. While the actual number of arrivals of displaced individuals present in Armenia was highly dynamic and inconstant due to ongoing returns to Nagorno Karabakh and the backlog in Migration Service registration process.

The National Society carried out the initial needs assessment through the collection and analysis of secondary data obtained from the public authorities and the local and international organizations, and visits to the collective shelters accommodating the displaced individuals. Continuous needs assessment and observations necessitated the revision of the original operational plan in December 2020, which led to increasing the number of individuals to be reached with assistance, by decreasing the volume of assistance provided per household. (as outlined in [DREF Operation Update no. 1 - Armenia: Supporting people affected by the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict \(MDRAM007\)](#))

Summary of response

Overview of Host National Society

The Armenian Red Cross Society's auxiliary role to the public authorities in the humanitarian field is mandated by the 1993 Presidential decree. The mission of the organization is to reduce the vulnerability of the population through mobilization of the power of humanity, to be prepared to cope with situations, which may cause vulnerability among the population and to provide essential support by assisting people becoming vulnerable due to harsh socioeconomic conditions. ARCS implements its mission countrywide through its 11 regional, one territorial and 52 community branches and with the support of over 3,500 volunteers. ARCS focuses its activities on the spheres of health and social care, disaster preparedness and response, disaster risk reduction, population movement, youth and first aid among other activities.

Overview of Host National Society Response Movement Contingency Plan (MCP) was activated on **28 September 2020** and the President of ARCS declared the emergency status and nominated the Secretary General as the response Coordinator. Within the operation timeframe the ARCS called for three Movement coordination meetings to share information about humanitarian needs and shape the Movement response in accordance with the agreed lead role of ICRC in the frame of the MCP in this situation of armed conflict.

Coordination between the **Armenian Red Cross and the Government**, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, regional and local authorities, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Regional and local authorities, took place regularly. Regular updates of the situation and needs of the people who arrived in Armenia from the NK were provided by local authorities and through the IM platform established by IOM¹. The DREF Operational Plan was also submitted to the Government for VAT exemption, which was shortly granted.

ARCS initially responded to the crisis with the support from its partners **ICRC and UNHCR** by providing **non-food items** to 65,000 people with hygiene parcels, household items, blankets and furniture items. This assistance was continued throughout the winter (up to March 2021) with cash assistance for the families hosting displaced from NK.



Image 1 & 2: Sorting humanitarian aid items. Photo: ARCS

Further ARCS activities include **psychological support, first aid, running the hotlines, RFL (with ICRC guidance) and PSS**. Psychologists and first aid teams of the ARCS provided psychological assistance and psychological first aid to about **20,000 people**, including wounded soldiers in hospitals, their relatives, ARCS hotline applicants, citizens

¹ <https://dtm.iom.int/armenia>

involved in the process of identifying the bodies of those killed during the conflict, people sheltered in different institutions, to the relatives of the missing persons and captives.

At the initial stage of the DREF operation, **ARCS trained its 62 volunteers to work with 2,500 children living in temporary shelters** in schools, kindergartens, and hotels in 7 regions, organizing their daily lives and providing psychological support. With the purpose to prevent the separation of families as a result of the conflict and restore family links, the ARCS has activated its **Tracing Service** which has received about **3,860 calls up to date**.

Within the DREF operation, a total of 33,200 people (8,300 HHs) were assisted with food supplies for 15 days. Below, **Table 1 presents the distribution of food parcels within the DREF operation disaggregated by region.**

Name of the Region	Number of Individuals Reached
Syunik	1,300
Gegharkunik	5,058
Kotayk	8,074
Armavir	4,000
Aragatsotn	200
Tavush	1,000
Vayots Dzor	4,024
Ararat	700
Lori	500
Yerevan	8,344
Total	33,200

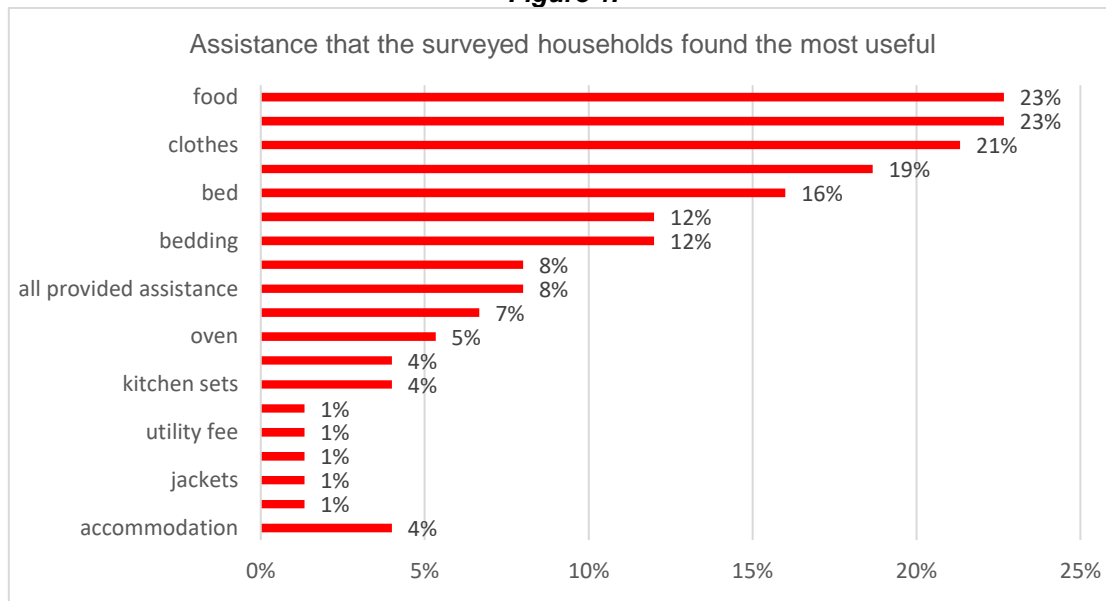
Table 2 below shows the contents of an individual food parcel for a 4-member household. The contents of the food parcel are in compliance with SPHERE standards.

Item	Unit	Quantity
Buckwheat	Kg	2
Wheat flour	Kg	7
Sugar	Kg	2
Canned meat	Pc	2 (550 g per piece)
Yellow peas	Kg	2
Lentil	Kg	2
Grain	Kg	2
Canned Fish	Pc	2
Pasta	Kg	2
Rice	Kg	2
Tea	Teabags	25
Coffee 200 mg.	Box	1
Jam 425 g.	Pc	1
Condensed Milk 375 g.	Pc	2
Biscuits 250 g.	Box	1
Oil 800 g.	Pc	1

The assistance was delivered to the municipalities and then it was provided to people in need by the authorities. In the selected cases the ARCS representatives from HQ or branches accompanied the distributions to provide support. The food parcels were handed over to the targeted households; the families residing in the collective shelters used the shelter cooking facilities to prepare meals. The ARCS and IFRC logos were placed on the boxes and packs of the commodities provided. The **post-distribution monitoring (PDM)**, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, was conducted jointly with ICRC, ARCS branches and local authorities. According to the PDM, the surveyed individuals found the food assistance timely and relevant. *Figure 1.* below presents the items the surveyed households found the most useful and relevant to their needs².

² Figure 1. presents the items provided both with ICRC and IFRC support

Figure 1.



[An article](#) was published on the ARCS website regarding the support provided to the conflict-affected communities within the DREF Operation.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

The ICRC being the lead Agency, supported the National Society in provision of household items to people arrived from NK to Armenia, whereas the National Society provides the support through the local authorities. Also, first aid and RFL were supported by the ICRC. IFRC supported the NS with food items through the DREF. The Partner National Societies of Monaco, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany supported the NS with provision of food and household items; complementing the food distribution activities implemented through this DREF operation.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

Coordination Structure:

Since the escalation of the NK conflict [35 local and international organizations](#) have worked in coordination to respond to the needs of the affected population, these include: ACTED, Action Against Hunger, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Armenian Progressive Youth, Armenian Progressive Youth and Care Caucasus, Asian Development Bank, Child Development Foundation, IOM, Medecins du Monde, Mission Armenia NGO, People in Need, Project Hope, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages Armenia, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP, World Bank, World Food Programme, WHO, World Vision Armenia, UNFPA, UNIDO, Kasa Foundation, Homeland Development Initiative Foundation, Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Armenia, UNESCO, APY, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, OxyGen. The support has been provided in the areas of cash, child protection, early recovery, education, food security and nutrition, health, protection and shelter/NFI.

Needs analysis and scenario planning

To inform further needs for assessments, its programming and the humanitarian response to the needs of people affected by the conflict escalation, in June 2021, the Armenian Red Cross Society, in cooperation with the IFRC conducted a rapid assessment of the affected population's needs, to identify their concerns, priorities, coping strategies, and required assistance.

The data collected through the assessment further verified the accuracy of the initial needs assessments, as well as the secondary data that informed the implementation of DREF operation and confirmed the relevance of support provided through this DREF operation. As the initial assessments suggested, food, household and hygiene items remain a priority among the people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and live in a refugee-like situation in Armenia. It is noteworthy, that 62.1% of the interviewed respondents indicated that they had to eliminate certain types of food per meal to cope with their current situation. 83.7% of the interview respondents identified food as their highest priority, 78.9% identified hygiene items and 78.9% -household items. This further confirmed the observations of the Armenian Red Cross Society, as well as the analysis of data collected through its hotline. 89% of the hotline callers requested food assistance, while 86% asked for hygiene items.

The initial findings were also corroborated by the analysis of data collected through the hotline of the Armenian Red Cross Society, which has been responding to the calls of the people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh since the very

first day of conflict escalation in September 2020. Throughout the response, more than 22,000 calls (up to 70% women) have been responded to.

Figure 2. below presents the hotline calls disaggregated by request:

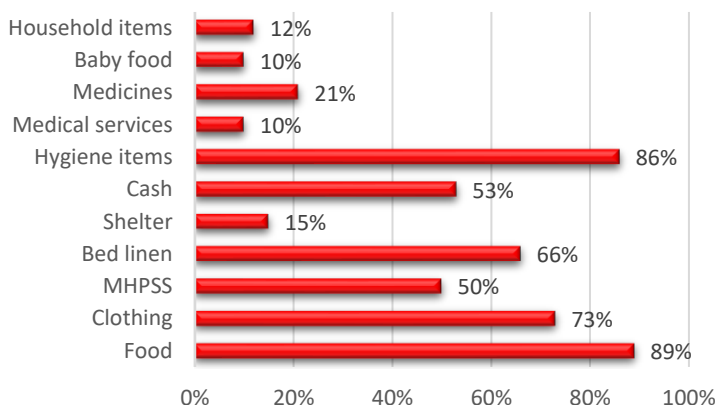


Figure 2. Hotline calls disaggregated by request

The abovementioned assessment and analysis efforts confirmed the relevance of support provided within the DREF operation and provided valuable insights for future programmatic decisions.

Risk Analysis

The main risk associated with DREF implementation was related to the exposure of the NS staff and volunteers, as well as the targeted communities to COVID-19, as the distribution of relief items coincided with the second wave of the pandemic in Armenia. To address this issue, the NS organized regular briefings with all individuals engaged in the response operation to remind them of the importance of practicing social distance, wearing PPE and following other COVID-19 safety rules. All staff and volunteers who took part in the DREF implementation were provided PPE, including the disposable face masks and hand sanitizers.

Another risk observed within DREF implementation was related to professional burnout of staff and volunteers engaged in the operation; during the initial months of response, the staff and volunteers had to work long hours, which took toll on their mental health and productivity. To address this issue, the NS established a rotation schedule ensuring that the engaged individuals had sufficient time to relax; furthermore, MHPSS was offered to all staff and volunteers engaged in the operation.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Implemented strategy

Within the framework of the initial needs assessment, the ARCS undertook field visits to the operation target regions to gather primary data regarding the needs of the affected communities. The visits were conducted in the collective shelters accommodating individuals displaced from the NK to collect observations to inform the programmatic decisions.

The Government of Armenia estimated that the number of people accommodated in host families and approximately 400 temporary shelters was about 90,000. The secondary data received from the public authorities suggested the following needs of the conflict-affected communities: food and non-food items, PSS/PFA, First Aid, healthcare, clothing, winterisation items including winter clothes and heating facilities, cash assistance, bedding and utility payments. Based on the secondary information provided by Government and local authorities the need of supporting the collective shelters with utility payments became obvious as shelter owners could no longer cover utility payments, which put the people living there at risk of being evicted or living in unheated and dark shelters. Therefore, access to electricity, water and heating became an urgent need to maintain or improve people’s health and well-being conditions for living temporarily in those collective shelters. Furthermore, between October 2020 – March 2021 Armenia experienced the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, putting the individuals housed in crowded collective shelters at a high risk of exposure to the virus; hence, PPE and information on COVID-19 safety was among the priority needs of the population. During the implementation of the DREF operation, the ARCS continuously coordinated its efforts with other stakeholders and exchanged information with them regarding the observed and changing needs of the target community.



Image 3: Conducting psychological group work with people displaced. *Photo: ARCS*

It is noteworthy, that according to the original workplan it was planned to support 6,800 people with food supplies for 2 months. However, continuous assessment and observation of the situation on the ground suggested that the post-escalation situation was changing rapidly, the people who originally arrived from NK moved from one community to another, and a large part of them decided to return to the NK. Thus, the decision was made to provide **food supplies to the targeted families for 15 days** instead of 2 months and target 33,200 individuals instead of 6,800 (as outlined in greater detail in [DREF Operation Update no. 1 - Armenia: Supporting people affected by the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict \(MDRAM007\)](#)).

The people accommodated in the collective shelters (mostly hotels, boarding institutions, schools and kindergartens) were targeted for this intervention. The lists of the assistance recipients were provided by the public authorities and cross-checked by the ARCS to make sure that the most vulnerable were reached.

A **complaints and suggestions mechanism** was established through the ARCS hotlines. The contact phone numbers were communicated with the targeted communities and partners. During the DREF operation 22,000 calls were received through ARCS hot lines. The calls mainly involved the requests of food and household items. ARCS also received written requests for additional assistance from the local authorities responsible coordinating the overall response. Upon the meetings with the beneficiaries the Armenian RC provided detailed description of the activities to be implemented, targeting criteria and assistance to be provided.

At the end of the project, a lessons learned workshop was organized with participation of 25 individuals involved in the operation, including ARCS staff and volunteers. During the workshop, the participants discussed and analyzed the implementation strategy, relevance of the response and the identified challenges and good practices. The workshop report was produced to ensure the institutional knowledge transfer for improved programming.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN



Livelihoods and basic needs

People reached: 33,200

Male: 11,620

Female: 21,580

Outcome 1: Displaced people are supported by food, hygiene items and household supplies

Indicators:	Target	Actual
Basic needs assistance is provided to the most affected communities	33,200	33,200
Output 1.1: Basic needs assistance for livelihoods security including food is provided to the most affected communities		
Indicators:	Target	Actual
Displaced people are supported by food for the period of 15 days	33,200	33,200

Narrative description of achievements

- Initial visits were carried out to Syunik region to assess the situation on the ground and observe the salient needs of the affected population.
- Secondary data was obtained from the public authorities and local and international organizations to identify the most urgent needs of the affected population.
- Lists of the displaced individuals accommodated in the collective shelters were obtained from the public authorities and crossed checked by the Armenian RC to ensure that the most vulnerable families were targeted.
- Tender for procurement of food was conducted, three suppliers offering the lowest prices were selected and, contracts were signed. The content of the food parcel was developed based on the Sphere standards. The food parcel composition was the same for everyone (see Table 2).
- Food parcels were distributed to 33,200 displaced individuals living in the collective shelters. The distribution process was organized by the public authorities, with the support from the ARCS staff and volunteers in the months of November 2020 – March 2021.
- To confirm the receipt of items by the target communities and examine the relevance of assistance provided, in April 2021, Post Distribution Monitoring was carried out by ARCS, in cooperation with ICRC, which suggested that the food items received were considered as the most needed by the target communities.
- Feedback and complaints were regularly collected and analyzed through the hotline of the Armenian RC.

Challenges

The biggest challenge faced by the ARCS during DREF implementation was associated with the registration of beneficiaries, which was not allowed by public authorities during the period of conflict escalation. To address this issue and ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the conflict-affected vulnerable families, upon the agreement with IFRC, the ARCS handed over the purchased items to the public authorities, who then delivered them to the affected families. Following this, in April 2021, the ARCS, together with the ICRC, conducted post-distribution monitoring to confirm that the assistance was delivered to the targeted communities by the local authorities, and it was relevant and served its purpose. The PDM suggested that the majority of households found the food assistance very relevant to their needs, and 23% of them evaluated it as the most needed form of support.

During conflict escalation period the demand for trucks was very high in Armenia, so it was difficult to always have a truck available from partner company (tender winner) for the delivery of goods to target locations. Often the NS key personnel had to use their personal connections to get the trucks for delivery of relief items. E.g. delivery organized through the local private company SPAYKA which offered ARCS free trucks in case of emerging need.

Another challenge was faced while acquiring VAT exemption from the government of the Republic of Armenia, as the bureaucratic processes associated with applying to the Humanitarian Commission of the Government for exemption of taxes took longer than initially anticipated.

Lessons Learned

During the implementation of the DREF, it became evident that the ARCS' financial guidelines on procurement procedures is not flexible for actions with strict time limitations during emergencies. The NS has decided to make

relevant revisions to its procurement procedures, to ensure timely and efficient delivery of aid to the vulnerable communities during the times of crises.

Strengthen National Society

Outcome 1: National Society capacity building and organizational development objectives are facilitated to ensure that National Societies have the necessary legal, ethical and financial foundations, systems and structures, competences and capacities to plan and perform

Output 1.1: National Societies have effective and motivated volunteers who are protected

Indicators:	Target	Actual
60 Volunteers to work with children have received basic training and equipment	60	62

Output 2.1.1: Effective response preparedness and NS surge capacity mechanism is maintained

# of lessons learned WS organized	1	1
-----------------------------------	---	---

Output S2.1.4: Supply chain and fleet services meet recognized quality and accountability standards

Output S3.1.1: IFRC and NS are visible, trusted and effective advocates on humanitarian issues

Output S4.1.3: Financial resources are safeguarded; quality financial and administrative support is provided contributing to efficient operations and ensuring effective use of assets; timely quality financial reporting to stakeholders

Narrative description of achievements

- Complete briefings were provided to the volunteers on their roles, safety and security rules and procedures.
- ARCS trained its 62 volunteers to work with 2,500 children living in temporary shelters in schools, kindergartens, and hotels in 7 regions, organizing their daily lives and providing psychological support.
- With the purpose to prevent the separation of families in the result of the conflict and restore family links in the ARCS has activated its Tracing Service which has received about 3,200 calls up to date.
- A lessons learned workshop was organized to discuss and summarize the challenges and best practices observed during the DREF implementation. Final report was produced and shared with different departments of the Armenian RC for institutional knowledge transfer.
- Due to complexity of the intervention, the operation was implemented in close cooperation and coordination of disaster management, humanitarian assistance, youth and volunteers, and health departments.
- Regular meetings with ICRC, Movement partners, UN and other stakeholders were held.

Challenges

No additional challenges to the ones described in the previous section were observed during DREF implementation.

Lessons Learned

During the implementation of DREF Operation, the need to develop ARCS' Financial Procedures for Emergency Procurement became evident. Additionally, in response to the observed challenges and institutional capacity gaps, the ARCS plans to undertake the following actions:

- Capacity building of regional branches and their involvement in all stages of the action
- Discussion of tax exemption privilege possibilities with the public authorities
- Allocate time for the needs assessment and verification of the lists of beneficiaries
- Establishing cooperation with all possible companies for transportation
- Support, including psychosocial support to staff and volunteers during emergency and relief activities

D. Financial Report

The budget for this DREF Operation was **CHF 501,485**. The amount was spent fully. [Please refer to the Final Financial Report for details.](#)

The major donors and partners of the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, German, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as DG ECHO and Blizzard Entertainment, Mondelez International Foundation, and Fortive Corporation and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the National Society, would like to extend thanks to all for their generous contributions.

DG ECHO and the Canadian Government has replenished the DREF in the occasion of this operation.

Contact information

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

In the Armenian Red Cross Society

- Dr. Anna Yeghiazaryan, Secretary General; email: redcross@redcross.am ; phone: +374 60 625050
- Nune Grigoryan, Head of Communication and Dissemination Department; email: info@redcross.am; +374 60 62 5060

In the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for South Caucasus

- Olga Dzhumaeva, Head of CCST, olga.dzhumaeva@ifrc.org , Tel. +995 322 259 010 | Mob. +995 591 703 273

In the IFRC Regional Office for Europe

- Seval Guzelkilinc, Head of Disaster and Crisis, seval.guzelkilinc@ifrc.org , +36 70 430 65 02
- Eszter Bakonyvári-Koós, Senior Officer, Partnerships and Resource Development, Eszter.koos@ifrc.org

In IFRC Geneva

- **Programme and Operations focal point:** Antoine Belair, Senior Officer, Ops Coordination, antoine.belair@ifrc.org
- **DREF focal point:** Karla Morizzo, Senior Officer, DREF – Disaster and Crisis Department; email: karla.morizzo@ifrc.org

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. 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.

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2020/10-2021/05	Operation	MDRAM007
Budget Timeframe	2020/10-2021/03	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 29/Jun/2021

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRAM007 - Armenia - Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Operating Timeframe: 06 Oct 2020 to 31 Mar 2021

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	501,485
DREF Allocations	501,485
Expenditure	-501,486
Closing Balance	-1

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction			0
AOF2 - Shelter			0
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	501,485	501,486	-1
AOF4 - Health			0
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene			0
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion			0
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	501,485	501,486	-1
SFI1 - Strengthen National Societies			0
SFI2 - Effective international disaster management			0
SFI3 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SFI4 - Ensure a strong IFRC			0
Strategy for implementation Total			0
Grand Total	501,485	501,486	-1

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2020/10-2021/05	Operation	MDRAM007
Budget Timeframe	2020/10-2021/03	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 29/Jun/2021

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRAM007 - Armenia - Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Operating Timeframe: 06 Oct 2020 to 31 Mar 2021

III. Expenditure by budget category & group

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
Contributions & Transfers	470,878	470,879	-1
Cash Transfers National Societies	470,878	470,879	-1
Indirect Costs	30,607	30,607	0
Programme & Services Support Recover	30,607	30,607	0
Grand Total	501,485	501,486	-1