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Final Report

Armenia: Winterization

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

DREF operation final report	Operation n° MDRAM008;
Date of Issue: 28 September 2022	Glide number: OT-2021-000206-ARM
Operation start date: 23 December 2021	Operation end date: 30 April 2022
Host National Society: Armenia Red Cross Society (ARCS)	Operation budget: 628,367 CHF
Number of people affected: 20,139	Number of people assisted: 7,158 via DREF
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners currently actively involved in the operation: The operation was implemented by ARCS with the support from IFRC, Swiss Red Cross, ICRC.	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Unified Social Service of Armenia, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia, UNHCR Armenia.	

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the disaster

The September 2020 escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan resulted in the influx of up to 90,000 people from the affected areas across Armenia, the vast majority of whom are older people, women and children. By the time the operation was initiated, more than 20,000 displaced people were still living in the displaced situation in Armenia, sheltering with host families, collective shelters, and rented accommodation across 11 regions. While the absolute majority of the displaced population were already facing needs in the areas of shelter, livelihoods, household items, employment, and food, the winter season further exacerbated their living conditions due to the increased expenses associated with heating and purchase of winter apparel, inflation on the housing market in Armenia, decreasing support from the host communities and the changes of the Government cash assistance programs. Data¹ shows vulnerabilities among the displaced population, including approximately 14% having disabilities/special needs, 11.5% infants (0-59 months), 24% children aged 5-17 years and 12% older people (50+). To prevent the humanitarian crisis and to ensure the gradual transition from humanitarian-aid to longer-term recovery interventions, the DREF Operation was launched by the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), with the support from the IFRC, envisioning the provision of unconditional cash assistance to 6,120 individuals, including the people with disabilities and children under 18, to help them meet the basic winterization needs of their households, according to their priorities.

Summary of response

Overview of Host National Society

As an auxiliary organization to the public authorities in the humanitarian field and the largest voluntary organization in the country, Armenian Red Cross Society has a network of 11 regional, one territorial, and 52 community branches, over 60 experienced and committed staff, and over 3,000 volunteers.

From the onset of the crisis, the Armenian RC has been responding to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict escalation with the support from the Movement partners, including the IFRC and its member NSs and ICRC. Coordination and information exchange between ARCS and the Government, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, regional and local authorities, and the Ministry of Emergency Situation, occurs regularly. ARCS is a part of the national response mechanism, which was set up under the management of the Deputy Prime

¹Protection Monitoring Armenia Snapshot, UNHCR, August 2021, (Retrieved from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88902>)

Minister. ARCS has safe access to all areas where people who arrived from areas affected by the escalation reside. ARCS has a proven track record of cooperation and partnership with the public authorities, state and non-state relief organizations, and the local communities. Based on that, the NS has successfully cultivated a positive reputation, and enjoys a high level of trust from both authorities and communities.

Summary of DREF Operation

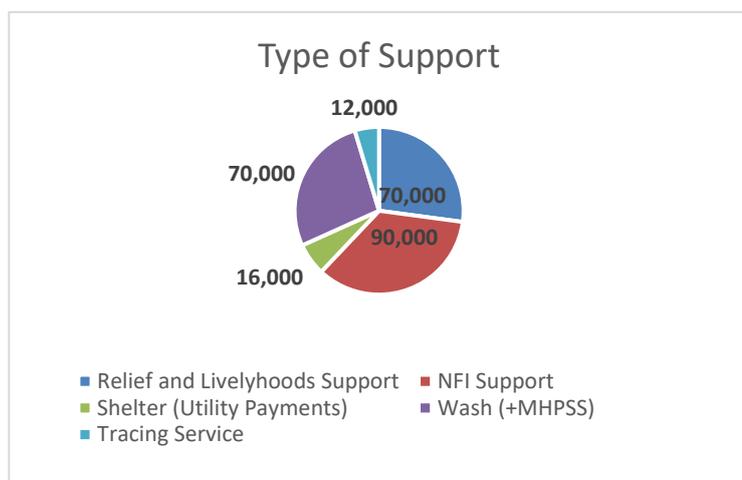
The DREF operation was implemented within the Government cash assistance scheme with pre-defined criteria and transfer values. In January 2022, the Government Decree was issued extending the cash assistance program and amending the amount of cash assistance per person. According to the decree, the transfer value for the people with disabilities was reduced from AMD 50,000 (CHF 94) to AMD 40,000 (CHF 75). As for the children under 18 it was reduced from AMD 40,000 (CHF 47) to AMD 25,000 (CHF 37). The described change in the operational context prompted some minor amendments to the DREF EPoA, making it possible to reach 7,158 people with cash assistance, instead of initially planned 6,120.

During the operation inception and final stages, the NS conducted a livelihood assessment aiming at identification of the specific needs of target population and a detailed PDM assessment to verify the purposefulness of the intervention and outline long term solutions for the sustainable recovery of the targeted people

Broader National Society Response

Overall, the ARCS' response has been characterized by four key elements:

- 1) Improving access to basic needs
- 2) Cash Programming disbursed through three key mechanisms: a) coverage of utilities fees for shelters, b) coverage of urgent rent and utilities for displaced persons; and, c) unconditional cash assistance, which was primarily used to cover rental expenses; and
- 3) training of volunteers supporting or working with children; and,
- 4) Development and implementation of information collection tools including a hotline and an online feedback mechanism.



The ARCS' 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 per the agreed lead agency role of ICRC in the frame of the MCP in this situation of armed conflict.

Access to Basic Needs

From October 2020 to November 2021, with the resources allocated by the RCRC movement partners, including IFRC DREF allocation for the response to the conflict Escalation, has enabled the

ARCS to assist around 90,000 conflict-affected individuals in the areas of relief and livelihoods, health and WASH, shelter, protection, and education, of which 7,185 have benefitted directly from the DREF operations. The Armenian Red Cross hotline operated in an emergency mode, providing the conflict-affected population PSS/PFA essential information and referral to the state and non-state services.

Cash Programs

Apart from the contributing into improving the access of the vulnerable displaced communities to the basic needs, ARCS started delivering cash programs to support the displaced population with meeting their prioritized needs, including provision of utility fees of the shelters where people displaced from conflict affected areas were accommodated. In total, ARCS covered the utility fees for 545 shelters throughout Armenia, reaching over 16,000 people with a total budget of 370,5 million AMD (676,248 CHF) in close cooperation with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia.

ARCS contributed into the Government of Armenia rolled out cash assistance scheme to the host families aimed at supporting their efforts of solidarity, relieving their financial burden, and creating a dignified shelter environment for displaced people. The displaced people who lost their homes were the primary targets of the scheme. The cash transfer

value based on the program objectives was AMD 30,000² per hosted individual, to support their urgent utilities and rent needs following the displacement from their places of origin. The program assisted a total of 6,184 host Households and 17,538 hosted individuals with a total budget of over CHF 1,000,000.

Another cash assistance program launched by the Government was AMD 68,000³ to the displaced people. In support of the mentioned program, 14,000 displaced people were provided unconditional cash assistance by the Armenian RC with the UNHCR support with a total budget of approximately CHF 2,000,000. 91% of the assisted individuals used the money to cover the rental expenses.

The Swiss RC provided cash assistance to 15,029 people through the Armenian RC, of whom, 13,321 vulnerable people from the affected areas and 1,500 host community members received ARM 15,000 (CHF 28) to cover utility fees (water, electricity, gas) for the winter months. ARCS received the list of the beneficiaries from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. To reduce tension in the same communities, people from the host community as well received 15,000 (CHF 28) to cover utility fees. The amount was defined by the Government of Armenia based on the average monthly utility costs per household. The lists of the beneficiaries were formed by ARCS using the ARCS hotline database, based on the following selection criteria: unemployment, families with many children, lonely elderly and renting people.

Training of Volunteers in Child Support

At the initial stage of the response operation, ARCS trained its 62 volunteers to work with 2,500 children living in temporary shelters in schools, kindergartens, and hotels, organizing their daily lives and providing psychological support.

In total, the ARCS mobilized CHF 9,188,090 (USD 9,982,390) to respond to the needs of the displaced population and the host communities.

Information Collection Tools

Armenia RC continues operation of the hotline to receive collect and act upon the information, feedback or complaints submitted by the persons living in displaced situation.

Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

Since the emergency response operation to the 2020 September escalation of the conflict, the IFRC reopened its physical office (embedded in the ARCS HQ in Yerevan) with dedicated and extended support from the South Caucasus Country Cluster Delegation (CCD). Partner National Societies including the Swiss Red Cross, and Austrian Red Cross are present in Armenia, and ICRC has a Country Delegation. Italian Red Cross and Danish Red Cross provide technical support and guidance to Armenia Red Cross from its headquarters and frequent visits to the country. Monaco Red Cross provides its support via the Swiss Red Cross. All Movement partners in the South Caucasus have agreed to work together in the spirit and mindset of the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) agreement, with the Council of Delegates Resolution (CD/17/R1, Antalya 2017) as a core guiding document.

Throughout the Movement response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict escalation, efforts were put in place to ensure efficient coordination of the Movement Partners' activities, including but not limited to the establishment of a Tripartite Movement Platform for coordination and information exchange; development of a Movement Roadmap establishing response milestones, communication key messages and outlining the operational complementarity; regular meetings of the technical working groups to discuss the Armenian RC National Society Development Plan, RFL, First Aid, preparedness, MHPSS, and cash assistance; joint trainings on CEA, cash assistance programming and EcoSec, Tracing Service in Emergencies and other relevant topics; regular meetings with the PNSs for coordinated Movement response.

Throughout the response to the escalation in 2020, the PNSs have extended their support to the Armenian RC to assist the conflict-affected communities in the areas of relief and livelihoods, shelter, health and WASH, education, protection, as well as organizational development of the NS.

ICRC maintains a strong presence in Armenia for over 30 years since the initial onset of the conflict, with 21 international and 120 national staff in Armenia. ICRC supports the National Society in its institutional and organizational development, mainly strengthening the capacities of the regional and community branches in four bordering regions. In response to the escalation in fall 2020, ICRC provided services within their mandate and acted as a neutral intermediary to support affected people. It carried out continuous needs assessments to define the impact of hostilities on people's lives, livelihoods, and mental health. During the conflict escalation and afterward, ICRC mainly provided the emergency humanitarian response. It supported hospitals and medical facilities and helped affected civilians with food and non-food items. At the beginning of 2021, ICRC facilitated resilience programming and supported displaced individuals and

² Approximately CHF 55

³ Approximately CHF 126

host families. It has expanded their presence in Armenia by opening two sub delegations in Ijevan and Goris regions to ensure their proximity to the affected population living along with the conflict areas.

The ICRC winterization project for exposed communities in the 2 impacted regions was implemented through ARCS. Within the program, more than 1,685 households received AMD 280,000 until the end of December 2021. In addition, 4,754 unemployed men and women and pensioners (not targeted within the DREF) were provided unconditional cash assistance in the amount of CHF 48 (AMD 20.000) and/or CHF 75 (AMD 40.000) for two months (January and February) by ARCS with the ICRC support.

Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

Since the initial escalation of the conflict, 36 local and international organizations (Inter-Agency Response Plan Partners) 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.

To generate an in-depth understanding of the longer-term recovery needs of this particularly vulnerable population within the context of a transitioning humanitarian response, Economic Resilience Assessment (ERA) was undertaken by the REACH to inform ongoing, and future cash and voucher assistance and in-kind transfers and livelihoods support to the displaced population and host communities by identifying the main obstacles for the defined population groups in terms of getting a job/finding an income-generating activity, their intentions related to livelihood development and self-reliance, and possible support needed⁴.

Needs analysis and scenario planning

Key factors driving increased need and vulnerability over the winter season include:

- 1) Decreased seasonal work, which has been a key industry of employment for much of the displaced population
- 2) Increased cost related to utilities and heating with the approach of winter
- 3) Inflation within the housing market
- 4) Depleting resources of the host communities

Immediate Needs

ARCS identified the needs of the targeted population based on a complex analysis of primary and secondary data, including the continuous needs assessment and community engagement efforts of the Armenian RC and the desk review of the assessment reports of REACH, UNHCR, and other international organizations.

The analysis has revealed that the displaced population is facing the following priority winterization needs: shelter, household items, employment, and food. 95% of the UNHCR protection survey respondents reported they were renting and accommodation⁵. Most of the displaced population rely on state assistance and seasonal labor. While some of the displaced population (mostly men) has been able to engage in irregular, non-formal, or daily paid jobs, most of these activities had a seasonal nature and are expected to terminate in winter⁶.

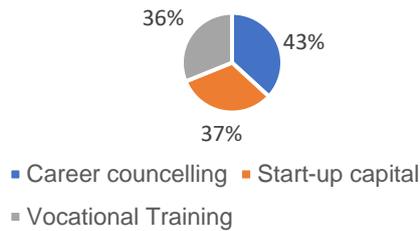
Approaching winter season was expected to put the displaced population under a dire financial and social strain; on the one hand, due to the increasing expenses associated with heating and the need for winter apparel, and, on the other hand, due to the inflation in the housing market, which in some regions reached up to 3.3% by the time of the operation start, compared to the prices of November 2020. Based on the Statistics Committee "Armstat" data, the displaced population were likely to face increased rental expenses in the coming months too. Given that the displaced population was already facing financial hardships before the winter season, having a hard time covering basic livelihood needs and trying to find a balance between such needs as utility payments, food and clothes, healthcare, and education costs, the imminent winter season will exacerbate those difficulties, precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis.

⁴ Economic Resilience Assessment of the displaced population in Armenia, REACH, September 2021 (Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_ARM_Report_ARM2102_ERA_September-2021.pdf)

⁵ UNHCR Protection Monitoring Report (July-August 2021)

⁶ Economic Resilience Assessment of the displaced population in Armenia, REACH, September 2021 (Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_ARM_Report_ARM2102_ERA_September-2021.pdf)

Rapid Needs Assessment of the Respondents, ARCS



The host communities have played a critical role in welcoming the displaced population and providing shelter and livelihood support for them. However, with the time the resources of the host communities started to deplete as well. With the increased expenses associated with the winter season, their support is likely to decrease.

The **increasing winterization needs** of the displaced population have been further confirmed by the continuous needs assessment and community engagement efforts of the National Society. 3,518 people were registered for assistance by the Armenian RC's hotline from January 2021 to the start of the operation. 90% of the applicants asked for the cash assistance,

as most of them were renting accommodation and could not cover all expenses, particularly during the winter season.

In combination with these factors, the Government support to the most vulnerable displaced groups is gradually decreased. Since the onset of the escalation in the fall of 2020, the Government of Armenia, at both the national and local levels, has provided critical support to the new arrivals, including space in communal shelters and hotels and different cash assistance programs. However, with the increasing impact of the conflict on the public spending, the government has terminated cash assistance program targeting the most vulnerable cohorts within the displaced population, including the PWDs, children under 18, pensioners, and economically vulnerable women and men, in November 2021. Subsequently, the Government of Armenia has appealed to the international and local humanitarian actors with the request to support the particularly vulnerable displaced population with unconditional cash assistance to enable them to meet their diverse needs associated with the winter season.

Medium Term Needs

The precipitated humanitarian crisis was expected to take a significant toll on the displaced population's physical, social, and mental well-being. With the increasing winterization costs, food security is becoming an issue of concern, especially in ensuring proper dietary diversity for all family members. Moreover, the economic and social challenges were expected to have a detrimental effect on displaced communities' mental and psychological well-being. It is noteworthy that, around 50% of the incoming calls to the Armenian RC hotline have requested psychosocial support.

The most vulnerable cohorts, including older people, people with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, children under 18, and economically vulnerable women, were expected to be hit hardest during the approaching winter season, due to the limited employment and income-generating opportunities, social isolation and limited access to information about the availability and accessibility of existing state and non-state support services.

Long Term Needs

While meeting the winterization needs of the displaced population is the most urgent priority, the longer-term livelihoods and recovery needs of the people unlikely to return to the affected areas have been confirmed by the assessments undertaken by different humanitarian and development actors. The rapid needs assessment of people affected by the escalation conducted by the Armenian RC in June 2021 revealed that the displaced families are interested in longer-term solutions to their economic challenges, involving the recovery of their income and livelihoods.

The Economic Resilience Assessment conducted by REACH underscored that, given the continued stay in Armenia and need for longer-term self-reliance, the displaced population was found to be more actively seeking jobs or income-generating activities than during the first months of displacement. Notwithstanding the job-seeking efforts, the displaced population has been mostly unable to find stable employment opportunities due to multiple barriers limiting their access to the labour market, including, but not limited to the mismatch between their skills and the labor market demands, discrimination due to belonging to the displaced population, care responsibilities (identified mainly by women), legal barriers limiting the eligibility of the displaced population for different support programs, lack of productive assets, lack of information about the available employment support programs, and other factors.

While the operation primarily focused on addressing the urgent winterization needs of the targeted population in the immediate term through the provision of unconditional cash assistance during January 2022, it will also work toward longer term goals including the institutionalization of the community engagement tools and practices to proactively engage with the displaced communities and identify their livelihoods needs, to devise a longer-term vision and strategy towards ensuring the effective transition from the humanitarian aid-focused activities to longer-term recovery and development interventions.

Scenario Planning

Scenario	Humanitarian Consequence	Development Status	ARCS Response
Government Cash Assistance Programs are terminated due to the lack of public funds.	The displaced population relying on state assistance cannot meet their basic shelter and livelihoods needs. Food security becomes a significant concern.	The government provided cash assistance programs phased out gradually.	<p>The immediate and medium-term needs of the target population were covered through Swiss RC, ICRC, and IFRC (DREF) between December 2021, January 2022 and throughout the winter season.</p> <p>In parallel, ARCS conducted a detailed PDM and in-depth assessment to develop a livelihood recovery strategy and other sectors at the final stage of the DREF. The findings outline long-term solutions and strategies to support the displaced individuals with the sustainable recovery of their livelihoods.</p> <p>The assessment is integrated into the unified planning to inform the programming 2023 onwards, considering the lingering scenario of this particularly vulnerable group.</p>
Displaced people temporarily accommodated in the hotels are evicted.	The evicted households have to rent accommodation. Hence their financial situation worsens, and the humanitarian crisis deepens.	ARCS has not received any feedback confirming the scenario development	There has not been a need to implement a mitigation strategy.
Further escalation of the conflict, leading to the influx of people from the affected areas to Armenia.	The humanitarian crisis exacerbates; the newly arriving displaced population requires assistance to meet their shelter, livelihoods, and basic needs.	No medium- or large-scale escalation has incurred by the time of reporting.	Although small scale incidents continue to flare up, November 2020 ceasefire agreement is likely to prevent larger scale hostilities in the foreseeable future. ARCS keeps the resources, mechanisms and SoPs on standby to respond any urgent needs of newly displaced people.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Impact (1 to 5)	Likelihood (High, Medium, Low)	Development/ Mitigation strategy
Heavy hostilities along the LoC leading to an influx of displaced people from the affected areas, resulting in a largescale humanitarian emergency	5	Medium	Increased hostility has not been observed.
The new wave of COVID-19 infections due to the Omicron variant led to tightened government measures, hindering operational continuity.	3	Medium	Tightening the restrictive measures has not happened during the operation.
The NS staff and volunteers are exposed to COVID-19, and the operational continuity is disrupted	2	Medium	No exposure of the NS staff and volunteers has affected the operation.

Failure to effectively communicate the scope and scale of operation, selection criteria, and other relevant matters to the targeted community, damaging the reputation of the Armenian RC	4	High	ARCS prevented the risk by making sure to maintain clear communication messaging and utilizing multiple tools and channels such as hotline service, IM capacity establishment, volunteer management on CEA principles to keep the target communities informed and manage their expectations.
Natural/geophysical disasters leading to the humanitarian crisis, overstressing the Armenian RC's financial and institutional capacities to respond	4	Medium	No disasters have affected the budgeting of the operation.

Operational risks which were monitored and managed including the occurrence of protection risks such as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) at community levels. Cash and Voucher Assistance-related risks, such as corruption, extortion, and theft, were also closely monitored during intervention design, implementation, and monitoring stages.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Proposed strategy

The overall objective of the DREF operation was to support the displaced population residing in Yerevan and the regions of Armenia, including Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Syunik, Tavush, and Vayots Dzor to meet the basic needs of their households in view of the winter season, according to their priorities, through unconditional cash assistance. The operation targeted the most vulnerable displaced groups (PWDs and children under 18) registered within the Government Cash Assistance program, who, due to exhausted public funding, have not received adequate assistance since November 2021. The operation envisioned a one-off distribution of cash assistance in the amount of CHF 85 (45,000 AMD) per person to 6,120 people. The amount of assistance was determined by the Unified Social Services of Armenia, calculated based on the (national) minimum expenditure basket for food per person per month.

The cash assistance was delivered directly to the bank accounts of the affected people. In the cases where the children were the assistance beneficiaries, the money was transferred to the accounts of their primary caregivers⁷. The assistance intended to allow the displaced population to prioritize and take care of their families based on their preferences and decisions. It supported the affected people to address a wide range of winterization needs such as rent, heating, apparel, household supplies, food, and other identified priorities. All the people on the payment lists received SMSs about the assistance being transferred onto their bank accounts. ARCS maintained close communication with the provider banks to follow-up on the cases if the assistance was not withdrawn – mostly, for the older people and person with limited access to IT. ARCS made sure to offer alternative information provision to the persons not responding to SMS notifications.

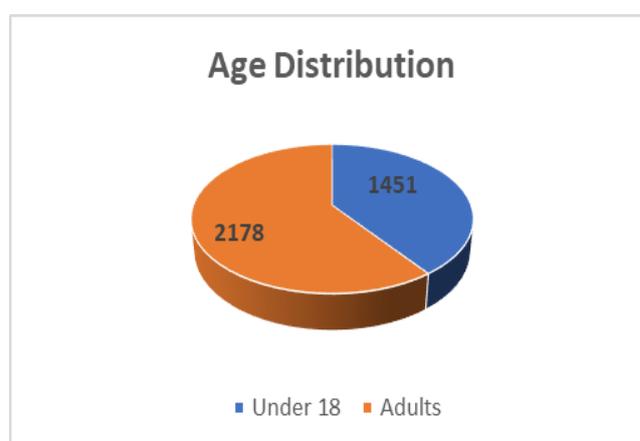
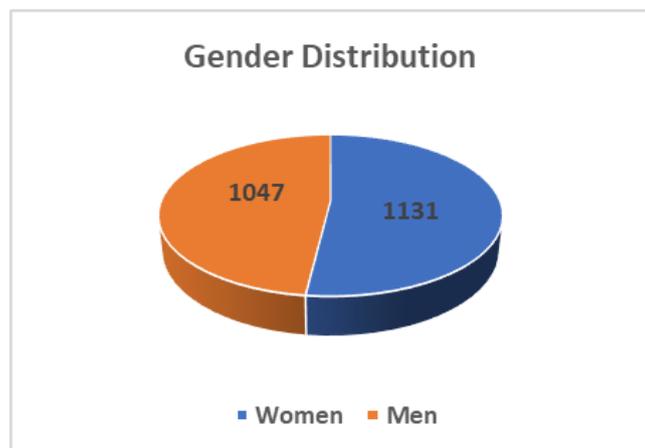
In addition to provision of the cash-based humanitarian assistance to the displaced population, within the DREF Operation, the ARCS focused on identification of the longer-term livelihoods and recovery needs of the affected people and devised a livelihoods and recovery strategy. The operation will also ensure the capacity development of the NS in the areas of Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) trainings with the support of the IFRC CC expertise, and IM hiring and NS development as part of the surge exit strategy.

The intervention implementation mostly followed its original timeframe with several minor changes in the timeframe, prompted by the delays in provision of beneficiary lists by the public authorities. Due to the changes in the government cash programme design, ARCS was able to retrieve the lists of the population to be assisted in the beginning of February 2022 from the authorities.

To verify the credibility of the lists, the ARCS referred to the findings of the verification survey that was conducted within the programme “Cash Assistance for the Utilities to People Displaced from the Affected Areas and their Host Population” funded by Swiss Red Cross. The programme aimed at provision of conditional cash assistance to 15,000 displaced individuals to cover their utility bills. Verification calls were made to 698 households to validate the lists of targeted

⁷ Decree of the Government (1709-L 18.10.2021), <https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/37679/>

population provided by the public authorities and gather the demographic data of the target population. The average size of families is 5.2 members, hence the verification covered 3,629 people. 98.42% of the interviewed respondents confirmed that they need financial assistance.



C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN

	<h3 style="color: #e91e63;">Livelihoods and basic needs</h3> <p>People reached: 7,158**8 Male: 3,049 Female: 4,109</p>						
Outcome 1	Communities, especially in disaster and crisis-affected areas, restore and strengthen their livelihoods.						
Indicators:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 70%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%;">Target</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Actual</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>% of assisted households who report being able to meet the basic winterization needs of their households, according to their priorities</td> <td style="text-align: center;">80%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">92%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Target	Actual	% of assisted households who report being able to meet the basic winterization needs of their households, according to their priorities	80%	92%
	Target	Actual					
% of assisted households who report being able to meet the basic winterization needs of their households, according to their priorities	80%	92%					
Output 1.1: Households are provided with unconditional/multi-purpose cash grants to address their basic winterization needs							
# of people who successfully received cash for basic needs after being identified and processed for transfer	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">6,120</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">7,158</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		6,120	7,158			
	6,120	7,158					
Narrative description of achievements							
<p>IM delegate (fully covered by the Netherlands Red Cross) helped in designing the verification of the lists of the people to be assisted and the PDM/needs assessment.</p> <p>A briefing session was organized for volunteers to sensitize them about the operation, their respective roles and questionnaire validation. A feedback mechanism has been set up for registering and following-up on CVA Hotline calls (including the queries received regarding the cash for utilities operation supported by Swiss RC and the present DREF).</p> <p>Feedback systems including ARCS hotline numbers and social media sites are in place and functioning to improve the operation as needed. People have also been informed about the interventions through press releases jointly shared by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) and ARCS. Through the Feedback collection mechanism, 9.599 appeals have been registered. The calls required a follow-up or referral were duly attended.</p> <p>CVA/Livelihoods delegate was deployed by British RC as staff on loan to contribute in sensitization of the operational strategy of the DREF. A local CEA focal point has been identified as candidate to support the Cash focal point on doing (bi)-weekly reporting on the feedback to inform about potential program adjustments</p>							

**8 Due to the absence of the verifiable statistics, gender segregation is inferred based on the general gender distribution of the target population.

ARCS took a lead role and ensured continuous Coordination with the public authorities, mainly with the MLSA and the Unified Social Services (USS), as well as selected FSPs was ensured throughout the intervention. Through their auxiliary role, the NS has been very influential and instrumental in troubleshooting issues with beneficiary data and permitted access to affected people for monitoring purposes, and further assessments carried out during the operations.

PDM/Satisfaction survey was conducted to verify the purposefulness and effectiveness of the intervention. A group of 5 trained volunteers interviewed 366 people on via the phone. According to the response analysis 92% of assisted people deemed the assistance as helpful to cover their prioritized winterization needs.

The livelihood assessment targeting the bordering regions of Tavush, Gegharkunik and Syunik was concluded to determine household profiles of the affected population, including their current livelihoods and coping strategies, skills, barriers and opportunities for integration into the labor market, as well as their needs in terms of tailoring their skillset to the existing labor market requirements. Highlights from the findings suggest that high level of unemployment (58% people fit for work and not working) and low income (1/3 lives with < AMD 68,000 ~ CHF 147, 58% with < AMD 100,000 ~ CHF 216) is often paired with the stress linked to uncertainty, lack of acceptance of the reality and absence of the motivation to restart the life (in "limbo" where people wait for housing support or compensation for assets/properties lost).

A lessons learned workshop was organized at the final stage of the intervention to discuss the successful practices and challenges of the operation. The workshop was facilitated by IFRC DREF Capacity Building Delegate and Acting Interim Head of PMER from RoE for two consecutive days, which was attended by representatives from ICRC, IFRC, Swiss RC, ARCS HQ and branches, including staff and volunteers. The objective of the lessons learned workshop was to reflect on the operations and identify challenges and lessons and how they are linked to response mechanisms. The workshop was structured around five areas of the PER: (1) Policy, Strategy and Standards; (2) Operational Capacity; (3) Operational Support; (4) Analysis and Planning; and (5) Coordination and the results are used by the ARCS to revise its PER Plan of Action, and the ICRC and IFRC change the Movement Contingency Plan for Armenia.



This family in Syunik, Goris town, with three minors was forced to vacate a rented house as they were not able to continue paying the rent and reside into the building with no essential living arrangements. The family used ARCS provided cash assistance to put the windows on the facility and take the cover from the dire winter conditions.

© ARCS

Challenges

ARCS had to respond to the number of inconsistencies in the Government provided beneficiary lists, including the names, age distribution and other related discrepancies. ARCS made sure to provide the feedback to the authorities in parallel to taking measures to resolve the discrepancies.

Getting access to data was challenging at the beginning of the DREF intervention, delaying the work of IM and Livelihoods delegates to support the preparation of the cash distribution list. The Challenge occurred due to the government regulations on handling the personal data of beneficiaries as the then-effective agreement between the government and ARCS permitted only ARCS official staff to handle and manage beneficiary data through their official email addresses. An intermediary solution has been agreed on how practical personal and sensitive data of beneficiaries by the IM delegate, in close working partnership with ARCS staff controls. For future interventions, ARCS leadership has agreed to add the IFRC as a party to the MoU signed with the government and allow technical staff for operational reasons to handle the data directly, which should be feasible.

ARCS also sought to mitigate this challenge by conducting validation calls. Based on the results of the validation calls made by ARCS volunteers, the NS decided to exclude from the payment lists 9 beneficiaries who have returned to the affected areas.

Lessons Learned

Based on the findings of the operations review, conducted at the end of the operation, ARCS has identified the need of activating advocacy efforts towards state authorities to receive stronger or more reliable access to the necessary data, including beneficiaries' personal data, so that the NS is able to promptly verify and respond to the target community needs. This will increase the trust within communities towards the NS and public authorities equally.⁹

ARCS was able to promptly respond to the risk of delays in the financial transactions as a consequence of sanctions against its financial service provider VTB Bank - from the onset of the sanction publications, the NS terminated the contract with the provider. As a lessons learned, the NS will seek out the contractual agreements with multiple alternative providers, whenever possible.¹⁰

The approach of the government taking full control on targeting of the beneficiaries shall be considered a particular case due to the conflict-specific situation and shall not be intended to be the standard practice for future programming. Balanced approach needs be agreed with the public authorities about exchanging the information on the vulnerability and defining the commonly acceptable criteria of selection.¹¹

Strengthen National Society

S1.1: 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

Indicators:	Target	Actual
% of volunteers involved in response who are trained on PDM	100%	100%
% of volunteers involved in the response who are insured	100%	0
Output S1.1.4: National Societies have effective and motivated volunteers who are protected		
# of volunteers trained on Post-Distribution Monitoring + Livelihoods assessment	28	56

Narrative description of achievements

Staff and volunteers were regularly provided the PPE and information on COVID-19 protection measures.

Staff and volunteers were regularly updated on the operation progress, received regular training and instructions directed to their IM and VM capacity enhancement, and improvement of data literacy.

The NS IM officer was trained on creating surveys through Kobo via a hands-on exercise. Together with the IM delegate, he successfully managed to create a baseline survey for another IFRC project and supported the monitoring of the data collection. He also provided timely corrections to the form and enumerator instructions where necessary to improve data quality.

Crash Course was organized for 11 HQ staff (9 women; 2 men) of the Armenian Red Cross Society covering the introductory concepts of PMER and introducing hands-on monitoring tools and reporting tips and suggestions. PMER capacity development alternatives were discussed with the Head of the Organizational Development Department.

IM Surge delegate delivered beyond his scope and in the spirit of NS development, has contributed to the Introduction of Microsoft Office 365 services as part of the NS operations a significant development towards enhancing the productivity of ARCS, facilitating digital collaboration, ensuring data protection and creating a professional digital workplace. Within the frames of the operation, the NS was able to get a non-profit status and 10 free licences of the MS365 to try the products out.

The NS IM officer has taken over control of the feedback mechanism that was established for the CVA, fully comprehending the different components of the system. Once this feedback mechanism is expanded as a general one and M365 is fully operational, the IM officer will migrate it to the NS Microsoft environment.

⁹ Operations Review finding

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

A cooperation between NLRC 510 IMCASH Services (an international data team initiative of the Netherlands RC) and the ARCS has been established to help the latter with IM capacity building for cash/cash preparedness and programme design including ad-hoc operational support. The initiative will also provide support for the application process to the Capacity Building Fund (CBF) for digital transformation, including set-up and training of a NS data team. Key stakeholder interviews were conducted for this cooperation and the preparation of a report on the way forward is ongoing.

Challenges

In the light of the Ukraine Crisis, the AMD has depreciated by about 10% against the USD in two weeks-time (24/02-10/03, 2022). Given the strong links with Russia, Armenian economy was adversely impacted by the Ukraine Crisis through trade, remittances, commodity prices, and foreign investments. There has been an impact during the operation period due to losses incurred in currency exchange from CHF to AMD that were transferred to NS and earmarked for cash distribution. The loss amounts to approximately CHF 7,000, which had to be replenished by saving on some budget lines within the DREF budget.

Lessons Learned

Following the- implemented NS PMER capacity building enhancement activities it has become evident that the further development of the PMER capacity will increase the effectiveness of the ARCS work. To that end, the NS has made a decision to pursue a dedicated staff responsible for the PMER mandate within the organization.

Inflexibility of MOLSA to adjust the beneficiaries lists based on the NS feedback, showcased the need of engaging with MOLSA on systems development and IM systems that could allow the target population to register/apply on online platforms/offline (videos, webpages, face-to-face meetings) based on RC practices.¹²

International Disaster Response

S2.1: Effective and coordinated international disaster response is ensured

Indicators:	Target	Actual
Output: Effective and respected surge capacity mechanism is maintained		
# of surge missions or deployments	2	2
Output: NS compliance with Principles and Rules for Humanitarian Assistance is improved		
Community feedback and complaints mechanism is established and operational	Yes	Yes
The operational staff of the NS is briefed on the principles and rules of DREF procedures and Emergency Response Framework	Yes	Yes
Operational decisions or changes made based on community feedback	Yes	No

Narrative description of achievements

Coordination with the public authorities, mainly with the MLSA and Unified Social Service (USS), as well as the selected FSPs was ensured throughout the operation. *ARCS auxiliary role is very influential and instrumental, which is a huge enabler for the operations, and whether it is for troubleshooting purposes, access to beneficiaries or other, it is pretty evident, and that is quite different for any other organization delivering assistance or implementing activities in Armenia*

Regular discussions continued to be held with the Movement partners involved in the Winterization Response including the ICRC, IFRC Secretariat, Swiss RC, etc. ARCS completed the implementation of the cash project funded by Swiss RC with an aim to provide cash assistance to cover utility bills of people displaced from the conflict affected areas and their host population, reaching a total of 15,019 people. Through two cash assistance interventions funded by IFRC and Swiss RC, ARCS ensured a comprehensive approach to the winterization needs of the displaced people.

Challenges

Specific surge profiles related to Livelihood and Recovery are difficult to source and identify. It took a serious effort from IFRC Secretariat while engage with global surge colleagues, partners national societies and personal networking within then the Red Cross space. We have succeeded through British RC to find a quite fit profile.

Lessons Learned

¹² Operations Review finding

Surge is with a specific scope and time-bound operations. The emergency deployment is a response model, and having sound technical expertise is essential. Having the right spirit of people that have a good understanding of the RCRC operations and comprehend the national societies' missions as an auxiliary is vital. However, surge personnel with the mindset of willingness to do the utmost for the NS to benefit from their experiences and create an environment for the development leave great legacies. It has been the case with the deployments of these operations where the aspirational plans and need to develop CEA, IM and PMER are becoming a reality. The NS took over the seeds, and strategies are evolving.

Effective, credible, and accountable IFRC

Outcome S2.2: The complementarity and strengths of the Movement are enhanced

Indicators:	Target	Actual
Movement coordination mechanism is described and active	Yes	Yes
Output: In the context of large-scale emergencies, the IFRC, ICRC and NS enhance their operational reach and effectiveness through new means of coordination		
# of movement coordination meetings conducted	8	2
Output: Staff security is prioritized in all IFRC activities		
% of operational staff for IFRC receive security briefings (target 100%)	100%	100%
Narrative description of achievements		
Volunteers were regularly sensitized throughout the operation on the mandate of the operation and use of the questionnaire to verify the list of people to be assisted		
Challenges		
During the operation, challenges were encountered with the Unified Social Services (USS), related to information sharing that lead to a delayed inception or adjustment of the operational activities.		
A number of complaints that were received from the targeted population were resolved through the feedback and complaints mechanism.		
By the end of the operation, ARCS provider Converse Bank keeps a total amount of AMD 240,000, the lump sum that bounced back from the accounts of 3 persons, who did not cash out the allowance. This amount will be returned to ARCS account, as it was not possible to reach the beneficiaries because of incorrect personal data collected by the USS.		
Lessons Learned		
To ensure the quality and accountability, the NS will seek to integrate additional communication channels for feedback, such as face-to-face communication, office drop-ins, social media, etc. protocols for analysing, sharing and acting on feedback in its future operations. ¹³		

D. Financial Report

The total budget for the DREF operation was **CHF 628,367**. After finalizing the operation, there remains a balance of CHF 3,377 which is returned to the DREF account. [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, Germany, 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.

¹³ Operations Review finding

Contact information

Reference documents



Click here for:

- [Emergency Plan of Action \(EPoA\)](#)

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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

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2021/12-2022/7	Operation	MDRAM008
Budget Timeframe	2021/12-2022/4	Budget	APPROVED

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Prepared on 30/Aug/2022

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRAM008 - Armenia - Winterization displaced population

Operating Timeframe: 23 Dec 2021 to 30 Apr 2022

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	628,367
DREF Allocations	628,367
Expenditure	-624,990
Closing Balance	3,377

II. Expenditure by planned operations / enabling approaches

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items			0
PO02 - Livelihoods		577,370	-577,370
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash	620,912	47,621	573,292
PO04 - Health			0
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene			0
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion			0
PO07 - Education			0
PO08 - Migration			0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery			0
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability			0
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			0
Planned Operations Total	620,912	624,990	-4,078
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			0
EA02 - Secretariat Services	7,455		7,455
EA03 - National Society Strengthening			0
Enabling Approaches Total	7,455		7,455
Grand Total	628,367	624,990	3,377

DREF Operation

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2021/12-2022/7	Operation	MDRAM008
Budget Timeframe	2021/12-2022/4	Budget	APPROVED

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

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MDRAM008 - Armenia - Winterization displaced population

Operating Timeframe: 23 Dec 2021 to 30 Apr 2022

III. Expenditure by budget category & group

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
Logistics, Transport & Storage	1,500	1,445	55
Transport & Vehicles Costs		1,445	-1,445
Logistics Services	1,500		1,500
Personnel	42,000	42,853	-853
International Staff	42,000	42,853	-853
Workshops & Training		39	-39
Workshops & Training		39	-39
General Expenditure	5,500	1,492	4,008
Travel	4,500	1,239	3,261
Information & Public Relations		72	-72
Communications		16	-16
Financial Charges	1,000	165	835
Contributions & Transfers	541,016	541,016	0
Cash Transfers National Societies	541,016	541,016	0
Indirect Costs	38,351	38,145	206
Programme & Services Support Recover	38,351	38,145	206
Grand Total	628,367	624,990	3,377