PROTECTION WORKING GROUP MEETING

MINUTES

6 JULY 2021
VENUE: Yerevan, ARMENIA (via MS Teams)

Participating organizations:

On 6 July 2021, 21 participants attended the twenty-second meeting of the Protection Working Group (PWG).

Meeting agenda:

- Updates by Child Protection Sub-Working Group (SWG) on protection activities and issues
- Updates by Education SWG on protection activities and issues
- Updates by participating organizations on protection activities and issues
- Presentation of protection monitoring and departure monitoring by UNHCR
- Findings of the 2nd round of Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) by REACH
- Miscellaneous updates and issues.

Updates by Child Protection SWG on protection activities and issues:

There was no Child Protection SWG meeting the previous month. It was mentioned that a new information management colleague has joined UNICEF, who will be helping with both information management, data collection and humanitarian emergency preparedness for NK and Covid-19. The members of the group have been contacted in respect of the future of Inter-Agency Response plan.

Updates by Education SWG on protection activities and issues:

Last meeting of the Education SWG was conducted on the 23rd of June. The main agenda item has been the future of the Inter-Agency Response Plan after June 2021. Inputs were received and consolidated from the most active members of the group. The main issue raised was the future for the membership of the Education SWG members to the PWG as there is a decision to lighten the processes of coordination and reporting after June. It was mentioned that there are several major donors who are not represented in the Protection WG (ADB, World Bank, Open Society Foundations). It was stressed that during the previous cycle of coordination, some of the recipients of major funds were not highlighting the names of the donors and they were not appearing in the Inter-Agency Response Plan, which is a big concern for them.

Updates from the participating organizations:

Save the Children International:

- A report on achievements was shared with the members of PWG and Education SWG.
- On the 6th of August the NK Response Team will be closed out. Activities will be handed over to local partners.
- The child-friendly spaces established with the support of Save the Children International will be maintained and supported through ECHO 2nd phase granted project to local partners of Save the Children: Mission Armenia and Partnership and Teaching NGO.
- Catch up classes and summer camp activities are organized for the children from NK.
- Needs assessment on education and protection needs has been finalized. Currently the team is working on the report, findings, and recommendations. After finalization the results will be presented to the PWG members.

Mission Armenia NGO:

- 660 persons of concern received referral or counselling services by Mission Armenia social workers. Issues brought up by persons of concern were related mostly to social protection, health care, provision of assistance by the Government. They were referred to community policlinics, territorial social security agencies, local NGO-s (mainly ARCS), local self-government bodies, civil registration offices of the Ministry of Justice.
- 271 families in Yerevan and Kotayk received food parcels with financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France and with assistance of Action Against Hunger.
- 130 families received clothing items with financial support of Aznavour Foundation and with help of Action Against Hunger.
- 131 families received school stationery packs in Yerevan, Kotayk, and Ararat.
- Mission Armenia lawyers provided counselling services to 9 individuals related to provision of cash assistance by the Government. Issues were mainly technical, such as eligibility criteria, application procedure.
- Mission Armenia psychologists in Yerevan, Ararat, Kotayk, Gegharkunik, and Shirak run group meetings for psychological counselling, but they are also available for individual consultations. The members of PWG were encouraged to refer the individuals in need of psychological counselling to Mission Armenia.

Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS)

- ARCS continues its activities.
- Through hotline ARCS is supporting the NK displacement for humanitarian support. The direct distribution is conducted through the regional branches and Yerevan branch. In June ARCS have provided humanitarian assistance (food packages and hygiene packages) to around 1000 families.
- ARCS continues to fundraise through their main donors and partners, especially IFRC, to be able to continue early recovery projects for the persons in need.
- Thanks to UNHCR, ARCS has an opportunity to support the persons in a refugee like situation in Armenia with financial assistance. Bank transfers are already in progress, and one-time cash assistance will be provided to around 14,000 individuals. ARCS will be supporting those individuals who need help with one-time cash assistance. In addition, UNHCR hotline and ARCS hotline will be supporting the individuals who might need any help with one-time cash assistance. Before transferring the money, the recipients will be informed by an SMS.
- Post distribution monitoring will be conducted after one month, and reports will be shared with UNHCR and partners.

World Vision

- 2000 case management cases were launched by World Vision social workers. Psychologists are also included in the system of case management. There is a close cooperation with local municipal bodies and social protection authorities for the restoration of rights of persons in a refugee like situation.
- Policy for departures has changed. There is a limitation that only 50 individuals can depart per day. There is a mandatory pre-registration procedure for departing.

Presentation of protection monitoring and departure monitoring by UNHCR.

- UNHCR shared with PWG the dashboard on monitoring of departures from Yerevan to return areas as of 30 June 2021. It was highlighted that the map on the dashboard for June includes the population estimations from UNHCR. The estimations provided on the dashboard are gathered using one methodology on a regular monthly basis starting from January 2021. It was emphasized that UNHCR population estimation number is different from the estimations of IMWG, and UNHCR PWG chair does not agree with the numbers presented to CSG. Discussions will be continued with IMWG in this regard.

- The figures of persons reached through protection monitoring (PM) activities in June 2021 (help line calls, PM during field visits and PM by phone) were presented.
- Protection Monitoring Report 3 covering March-April will be released soon.
- Currently UNHCR is working also on mid-year Protection Monitoring Report.

Findings of the 2nd round of Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) by REACH

REACH presented the key findings from the 2nd round of the multi-sector needs assessment conducted in Armenia. The key findings were concentrated on protection, education, movement dynamics and some cross-cutting issues. Surveys were conducted with 414 households in a refugee like situation and 249 hosting households across all regions of Armenia. It was highlighted that because of using purposive sampling the findings are not representative and should be considered only indicative. The results of the findings were shared with the group both as a report, frequency tables and a presentation in the PWG chat.

Miscellaneous updates and issues:

- UNHCR Senior Protection Officer, Mr. Umar Yakhyaev mentioned that there are ongoing discussions in respect of lightening the coordination structure and soon there will be a decision by UN heads of agencies in the framework of the UN Country Team on the way forward in respect of the future of Inter-Agency Response Plan. Still there is no final decision, but the latest discussions were considering to combine within the PWG Child Protection and Education SWG-s and have a very strong emphasis on GBV mainstreaming within the PWG and have it co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR. This approach is fully acceptable by UNHCR and positively indicated by UNICEF colleagues. In this regard the ToR and strategy of the PWG should be reviewed and updated. It was highlighted that as soon as there is a final decision, all the members of Education and Child Protection SWG-s are welcomed to join the PWG. The final decision on the way forward will be shared in an email with all members of PWG and they would be asked if they would like to remain in the PWG.
- UNHCR Senior Protection Officer, Mr. Umar Yakhyaev noted that there are some evictions (planned or announced) from collective shelters or transitional shelters of people from NK. UNHCR currently is aware of 4 such transitional centres. Information was provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA). UNHCR colleagues have visited the transitional centres to deal with announced plans of evictions. UNHCR has decided to support the individuals affected by planned or expected evictions. The support will include rental subsidy support for several months. The final decision and corresponding details will be clear after the discussions with MLSA.
- Together with ARCS, UNHCR is providing financial support (one-time cash assistant) to around 14,000 individuals in a refugee like situation in Armenia from NK.

UNHCR Armenia
July 2021