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Women displaced from Syria seeking safe haven in Armenia

**A snapshot of their situation and the
protection challenges faced**

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Foreword

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has been granted the mandate to provide international protection to refugees and to assist states in finding durable solutions for them. This mandate, which has been expanded over time to include efforts serving the protection of other displaced populations and the prevention and reduction of statelessness has many dimensions which all relate to a common goal, namely the enhancement of the respect for and the protection and fulfilment of the rights of persons of concern. In pursuing its work UNHCR follows a human rights based and an “age, gender and diversity sensitive” approach.

One dimension of UNHCR’s protection efforts which requires and deserves particular attention is the protection of displaced women and girls and boys. Any protection response and measures must be based on a clear and thorough understanding of the situation and the particular protection challenges faced by the population of concern. Obtaining such understanding in a systematic way is not always easy in particular at the early phases of displacement and even more when it concerns most delicate matters such as traumatization or sexual and gender-based violence. In order to gain such better and more substantiated understanding of the situation of the increasing number of families, women and children displaced from Syria, who are seeking protection in Armenia UNHCR has engaged professional support of the “International Center for Human Development” a well-respected scientific institute in Armenia. We have entrusted a team of researchers from the Center to undertake an assessment on the differing needs, coping capacities, risks and challenges that families, especially women and children, faced and still face prior, during and following their flight from Syria to Armenia.

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, more than four million Syrians have become internally displaced and more than 2.4 million have sought refuge in surrounding countries, fleeing violence.¹ At the onset of 2014, the Republic of Armenia has become the country of asylum to more than 11,000 displaced persons from Syria.

This report offers a snapshot of the travel routes taken by two hundred families, their livelihoods, access to services, the schooling of children, and the protection risks women in Syria and Armenia formerly and currently face.

The UNHCR team in Armenia hopes very much that the report will not only enhance understanding of the plight of the displaced families, in particular women and children, but that its findings will also spark and inform a constructive and professional debate among all major stakeholders, among -, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, different UN agencies (such as UNHCR and UNICEF) and their implementing partners, local and international NGOs and the interested public, on how the identified needs and vulnerabilities and major integration challenges of the displaced families, can be better, more effectively and efficiently, addressed in the future.

Christoph Bierwirth

UNHCR Representative in Armenia

¹ UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> [accessed on January 25, 2014]

1 Research Scope

1.1 Background

The conflict in Syria has forced more than two million people out of the country, among whom Syrian Armenians, one of the significant Christian diaspora communities in the Middle East.² A growing number of Syrian Armenians find refuge in Armenia. According to the Ministry of Diaspora of Republic of Armenia (RoA), there are around 11, 000 Syrian Armenians currently residing in Armenia³.

In the Syrian context, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) has been singled out as one of the most salient features of the conflict.⁴ UNHCR Armenia commissioned a study within the Syrian community in Armenia in order to identify the forms and prevalence of SGBV among the women of the community.

Particularly, the study aimed at:

- Outlining the present and past livelihood strategies among the displaced Syrian community;
- Shedding light on the school attendance of displaced children from Syria;
- Profiling those who have already experienced violence and those most at risk among Syrians in Armenia;
- Identifying root causes of SGBV in the community;
- Revealing SGBV experiences of displaced women from Syria ;
- Identifying perceptions and attitudes of displaced women from Syria towards SGBV;
- Ensuring equal coverage of different socio-economic clusters of the displaced Syrian community;
- Identifying the general level of response and challenges faced by SGBV survivors.

1.2 Methodology

In order to address the above-mentioned objectives, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used, specifically a survey which involved face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. A standardized questionnaire was elaborated based on a list of key research questions to collect quantitative data. The instrument was designed to be user-friendly for the interviewers in the field, though it allowed gathering enough detailed data at individual, family and community levels.

The focus group discussion (FGD) technique was selected as a data collection instrument for obtaining qualitative data. Special emphasis was made on facilitation skills of moderators, in order to engage focus group participants in open and free discussions. It was crucial to receive honest responses on very sensitive issues, which would later be juxtaposed with the data from the survey to validate the findings.

To conduct the survey and FGDs, five interviewers with prior experience in implementing the mentioned research tools were selected. The survey team was trained by the project field coordinator, and followed a strict protocol to ensure sensitivity to the local context and confidentiality.

² UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> [accessed on January 27, 2014]

³ G.E., The Economist, "Home away from home?", <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2013/12/syrian-armenians-armenia> [accessed on January 27, 2014]

⁴ "National Situation Analysis Report: Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality" http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=9&id=428 [accessed on January 27, 2014]

1.3 Quality control

The following steps have been taken to ensure quality control:

- Research tools have been tested before their large-scale application during the main research.
- Only female qualified specialists who have received training on gender based violence and awareness raising on ethical issues related to this research, have participated in the data collection stage (field activities). Additionally, the qualified interviewers were provided with information leaflets on UNHCR’s implementing partners in the event of any requests for assistance by the female respondents and their families.
- Field interviewers were informed that any identified SGBV survivor can be referred to the UNHCR office in Armenia, upon the consent of the latter for follow-up response.
- Survey questionnaires were randomly selected to double check the data, and their accuracy has been verified through phone calls.

1.4 Limitations

- Language barrier (there is a difference between western Armenia and eastern Armenian dialects)
- The sensitivity of the research object
- Availability of enlisted refugees in Armenia

1.5 Quantitative Survey

Target group.....	Displaced women from Syria
Sampling methodology	The survey sample included 200 female respondents aged 18 and above, identified through multiple random selection steps out of 601 names of female respondents from the list of displaced families from Syria. The list was provided by the UNHCR Armenia office. Random selection was applied when the respondent was not available, refused to participate in the survey, or when the contact information was incomplete or outdated. (See Table 1.)
Total number of respondents interviewed.....	200
Total number of respondents not interviewed (due to various reasons).....	153
Interview venues	Collective accommodation in Darbnik and Nor Nork Reception centers. Individual accommodation in Yerevan and Aragatsotn region
Duration of one interview	Up to one hour
Field Interview period.....	November 2013

Table 1: Sampling

Target areas/sites	Desired sample size (#)	Interviews completed	Not available for interview	Refused to answer	Language barriers	Incorrect contact information	Left the RoA
1. Centre	82	82	15	28	10	18	11
2. Ajapnyak	13	13	0	0	0	0	0
3. Arabkir	36	36	7	6	0	2	0
4. Shengavit	13	13	5	5	0	2	3
5. Davtashen	3	3	1	0	0	0	0
6. Erebuni	16	16	5	3	1	3	0
7. Qanaqer -Zeytun	11	11	4	8	0	1	2
8. Nor Norq	8	8	4	1	0	0	0
9. Norqi 2rd district/social house	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
10. Malatia	11	11	4	1	0	2	1
11. Darbnik /Aragatsotn region	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
12. Ararat region	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	200	200	153				

1.6 Qualitative survey

Target group.....Displaced women from Syria

Sampling methodologyTotal of four FGDs were conducted with girls/women from Syrian emigrant families. Two of FGDs were conducted with already interviewed respondents, aiming at getting a deeper understanding of SGBV causes and effects. Participants of the other two FGDs were selected from the list of women/girls who were not interviewed, so that the data received from quantitative study could be further validated, enriched and clarified.

Number of participants12 in each focus group, total 4 focus groups

Venue of interviews.....ICHD office

Duration of interviewsup to 1.5 hours

2 Findings

2.1 Quantitative Survey

2.1.1 General information on families

According to the statistical analysis of face-to-face interviews, it was found that the majority of the female respondents were married (68 percent), 19 percent were single, 10 percent were widowed and three percent were divorced or separated from their partners. The mean age of women respondents was 41.9 years old.

In terms of education the situation is the following. More than eighty percent of women respondents completed either higher or secondary education (37 percent have completed higher education, 47.5 percent have graduated from secondary school (including high school)).

The interviews also revealed that 19 percent of surveyed women are the breadwinners of their families and another three percent mentioned that they jointly support their families with their husbands.

Among the respondents, three women (1.5 percent) have disabilities and one of them is currently receiving disability benefits.

In terms of family composition, interviewers noted that 60 percent of families have children (109 boys, 108 girls) and, each family has, on average, 1.9 children. From the interviewed sample, no children was found to be living separately from their families. The average number of family members was 4.2.

2.1.2 Residence

In Syria, 99 percent of respondents lived in urban areas, from which 5.5 percent were from capital city. In Armenia as well 99 percent of women-respondents' families live urban areas.

On average, lodgings for the displaced are consisted of 2.5 rooms (which include the living room and bedrooms), where five persons live. Thus, on average, two persons occupy one room. Every third family (35.5 percent) resides collectively, in the same apartment with other families.

2.1.3 Travel Routes

90 percent of family members have already moved to Armenia while the rest are still in Syria or other locations. The main part of families (65.5 percent) arrived in Armenia in 2012, every second family arrived in 2013 and only two percent arrived in 2011.

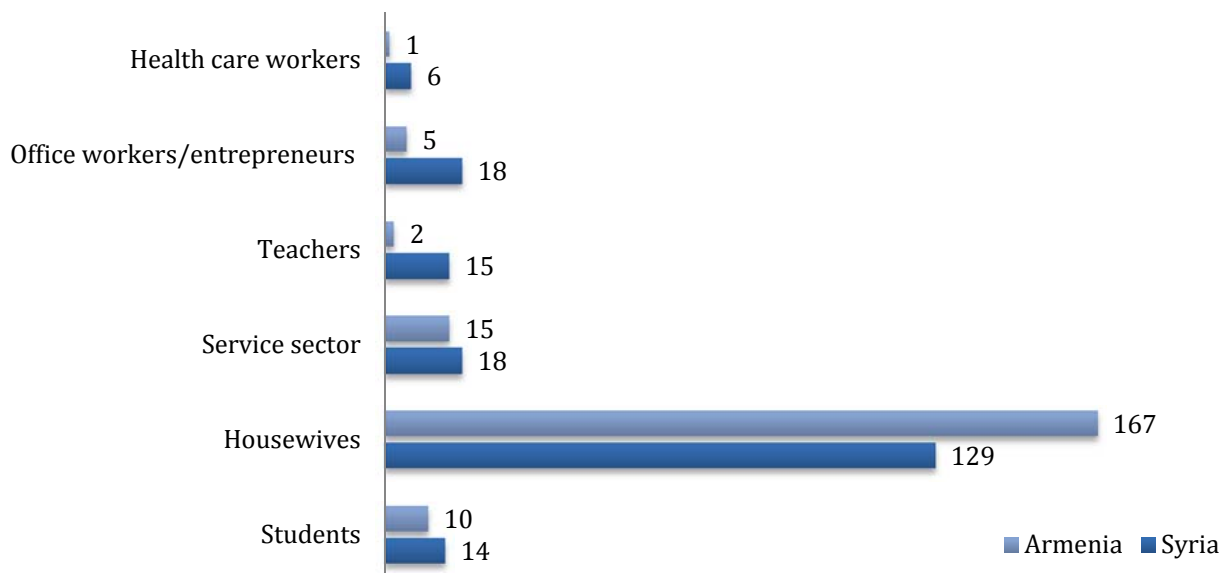
According to the survey data, the majority of families (65.5 percent) arrived in Armenia directly from Syria. 28.5 percent of them reached Armenia through Turkey and Georgia. Among them 33 families took the bus, and 25 families traveled by car. The rest of the families (six percent) traveled by air from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or Lebanon.

2.1.4 Occupation

Forced displacement can undermine livelihoods. Its impact stretches not only to the loss of livelihood resources, but can, to a larger extent, lead to a dramatic increase in the vulnerability of households. The findings on the occupation of the respondents revealed that unemployment stood at 83 percent among

women respondents in Armenia as compared to 64 percent in Syria, a 19 percent increase in unemployment. Prior to the conflict in Syria, 97 percent of the respondents at least had one employed family member. Only one male child was employed in the 15-17 year old age range.

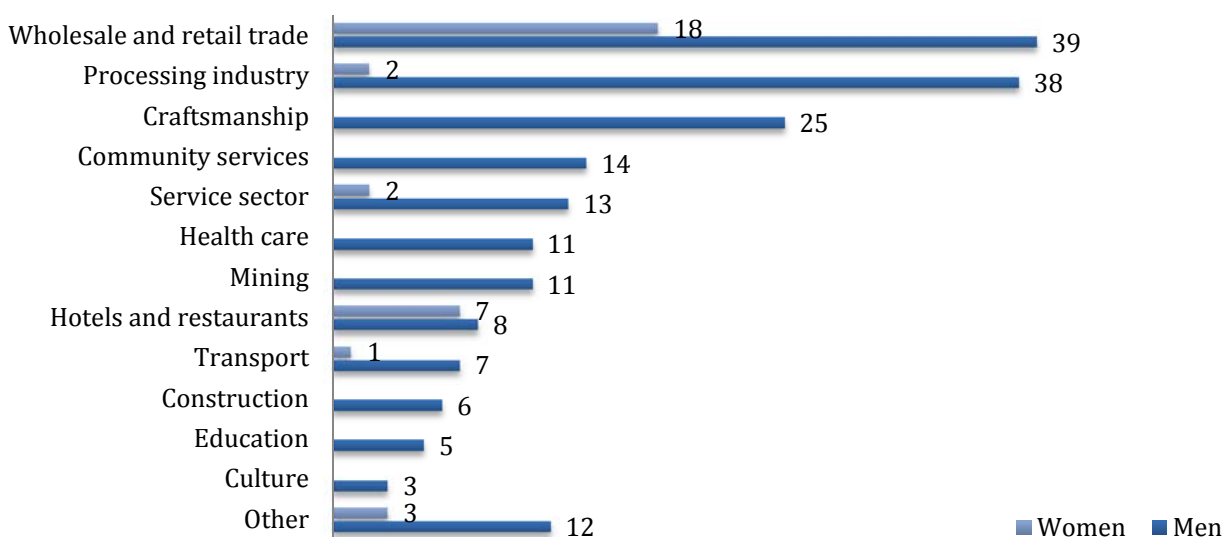
Figure 1. Main occupation of female respondents in Syria and in Armenia



As displayed in Figure 1, prior to the conflict, at least 25 percent of the women respondents were originally from families engaged in trade and 18 percent of the respondents' families were employed in the processing industry. The service sector (13 percent), craftsmanship industry (11 percent) and utilities sector (6 percent) were ranked third, fourth and fifth respectively.

In Syria, prior to conflict, the average monthly income of respondents working in the manufacturing and trade fields range between 300,000 and 370,000 AMD (after conversion) with an average income of 67,000 AMD per family member.

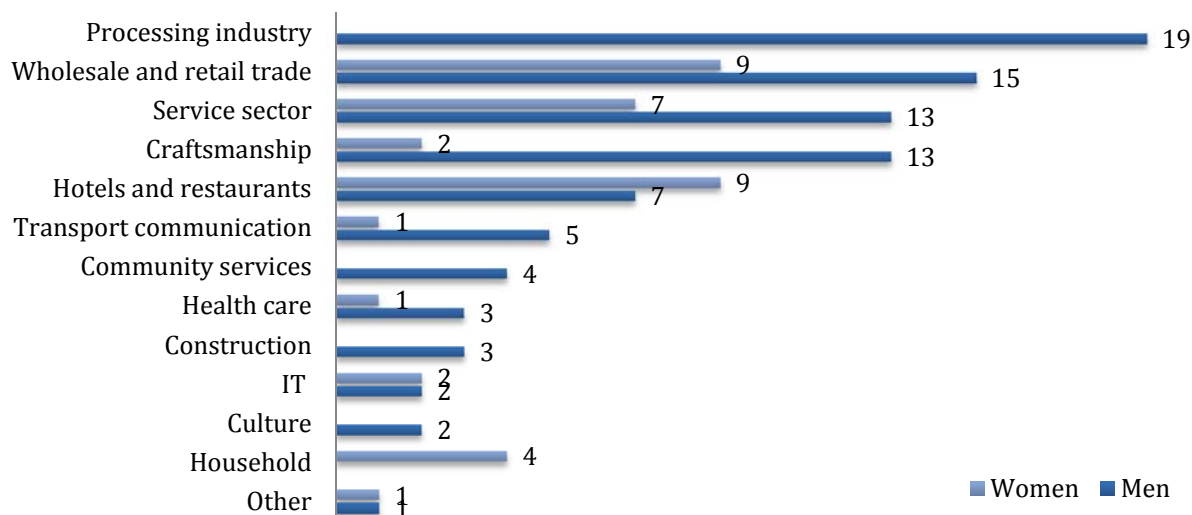
Figure 2. Occupation of capable members of female respondents' families by sectors (Syria)



Unlike the pre-conflict period where the 97 percent of the respondents at least had one employed family member, only 50 percent of the displaced families have at least one member of a family who is employed. Figure 2 shows the various sectors in which the female respondents' families engaged.

As exemplified by Figure 3, the female respondents' families are employed in the following sectors in Armenia.

Figure 3. Occupation of capable members of women-respondents' families by sectors. Armenia



In Armenia, however, some changes were noted in the three most popular employment sectors of women-respondents' family members. During the month preceding the survey, in October 2013, 29 percent of displaced families members from Syria were employed in the service sector in Armenia. Every fifth (20 percent) of the family members are engaged in trade. The next most popular employment sector is the processing industry with 16 percent of the family members engaged, followed by craftsmanship with 12 percent employment rate. In the 15-17 age group only two displaced male children (1 percent) were employed in Armenia, at the time of the survey.

In Armenia an employed person's average monthly income in the processing industry is almost three times less and amounts to only 100,000 AMD per month.

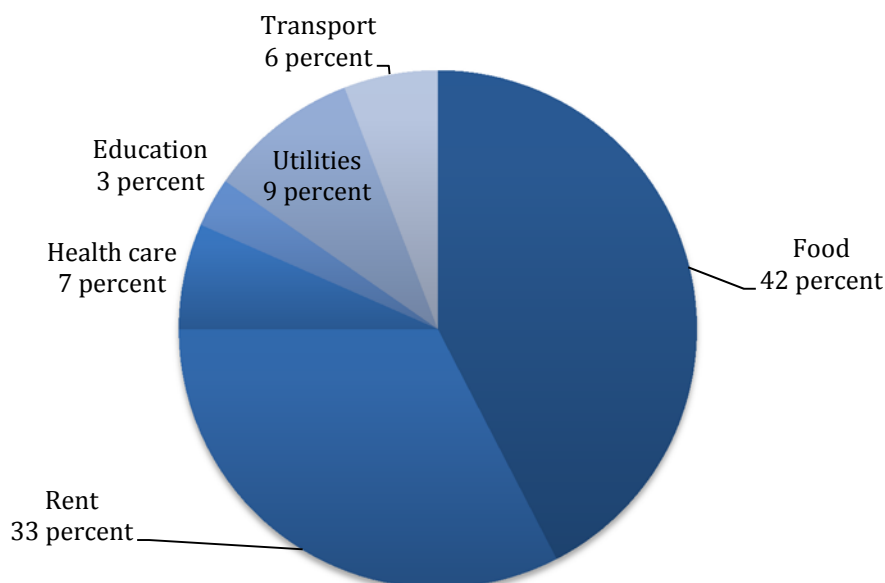
Meanwhile, in Armenia, during the previous month, the average monthly income per capita was two times less than in Syria, amounting to an equivalent of 33,000 AMD.

2.1.5 Expenditures

In terms of monthly expenditure,, during the previous month 66.3 percent of families continued to spend the funds which they had accumulated in Syria. Every fourth family (26.1 percent) received assistance from NGOs and every fifth family (19.1percent) received financial assistance from their relatives residing in Armenia, 17.6 percent got financial transfers from abroad and 6 percent benefited from governmental support.

The average monthly expenditure of a Syrian family in Armenia is an average of 252,000 AMD, which amounts to an average monthly cost of 75,259 AMD per person.

Figure 4. Ratio of family monthly costs



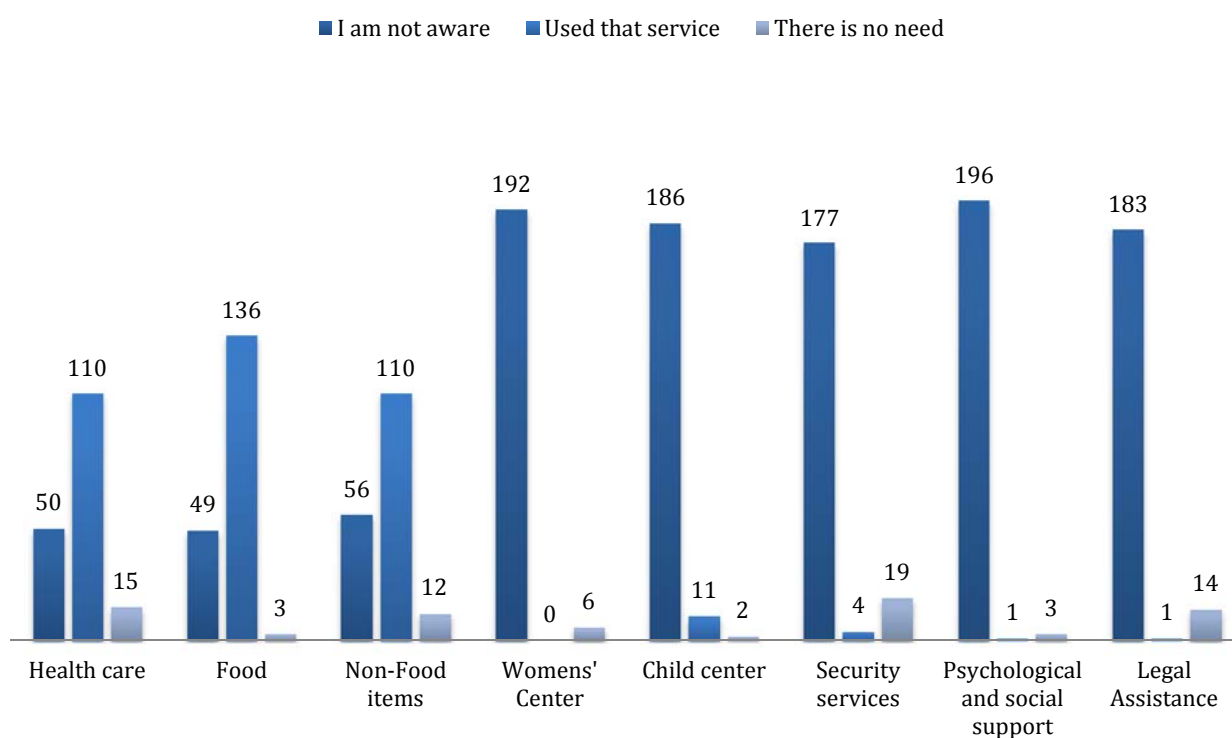
2.1.6 Services availability

In terms of services availability, female respondents are relatively better aware of free health services (62.5 percent), distribution of food (69.5 percent) and non-food items (61 percent) than other services available in Armenia. For instance, women's awareness of services such as women's or child centers, security or legal consultancy as well as mental health and psycho-social support centers is quite limited, with less than 12 percent of the respondents aware of such services.

In terms of the use of available services and assistance, 55 percent of the respondents use health care services, 68 percent received food assistance and 55 percent benefited from non-food supplies. 5.5 percent used services of child centers. Not more than two percent received briefing on security, mental health counseling and social-psychological support.

During the survey, interviewers found out that 12 percent of women-respondents needed health care but for various reasons have not benefited from them (three percent for the low quality of service, three percent were refused services, and the remaining for other reasons), 6 percent have not benefited from food distribution services (three percent revealed that they could not benefit from such services, one percent came across neglective attitude, and the rest for other reasons), 11 percent were not able to receive non-food supplies (4.5 percent were refused to be served, two percent have been registered but have not yet benefited from assistance, and the rest for more or less similar reasons.)

Figure 5. Availability of services in Armenia

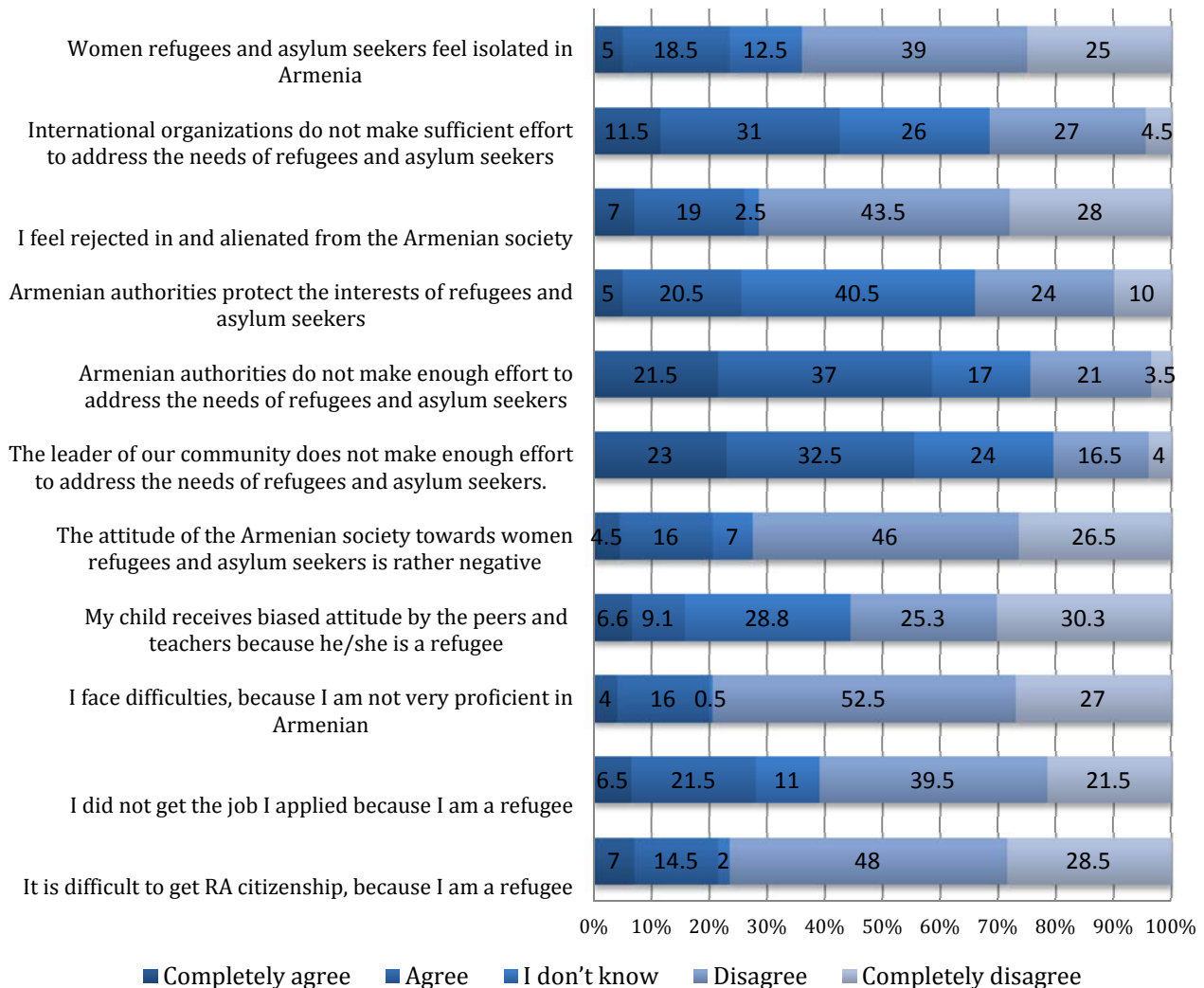


In terms of the educational services available, 86.4 percent of school age boys attend school. However, there is a higher rate of school enrolment among school age girls, with 95.8 percent of girls enrolled in schools. In general, parents justify the non-attendance of school due to issues related to documentation, transition, financial difficulties or a simple lack of willingness on the part of the child to attend school.

A number of judgemental statements were brought about regarding different aspects of Armenia's social life, to which the female respondents were given the options “agree” and “disagree”. Thus, 76.5 percent of women disagree with the statement, according to which it is difficult for a refugee in Armenia to receive citizenship in Armenia.⁵

⁵ The statements “disagree” or “completely disagree” or “agree” and “completely agree” are presented in the text in a generalized way - See Figure 6

Figure 6. Syrian Armenian women's general assessments of various aspects of their life in Armenia



As seen in Figure 6, while 61 percent of women disagree with the statement according to which they do not find employment because of being refugees, 28 percent of respondents agree with that statement.

Concerning bias, every second woman (55.6 percent) has stated that her child suffers from discrimination of peers and teachers because of their refugee status, 28 percent do not have clear position on this issue and only 15.7 percent disagree with that statement. On the other hand, the majority of women (72.5 percent) disagree with the statement, according to which Armenian society has negative attitude towards women refugees and asylum seekers and only every fifth (20.5 percent) agrees with this statement.

The majority of women (71.5 percent) do not feel rejected and alienated from Armenian society but at the same time every fourth woman (26 percent) feels alienated. Field interviewers also found out that 64 percent of women believe that female refugees and asylum seekers do not feel isolated in the Armenian society, while 25 percent agree with that statement.

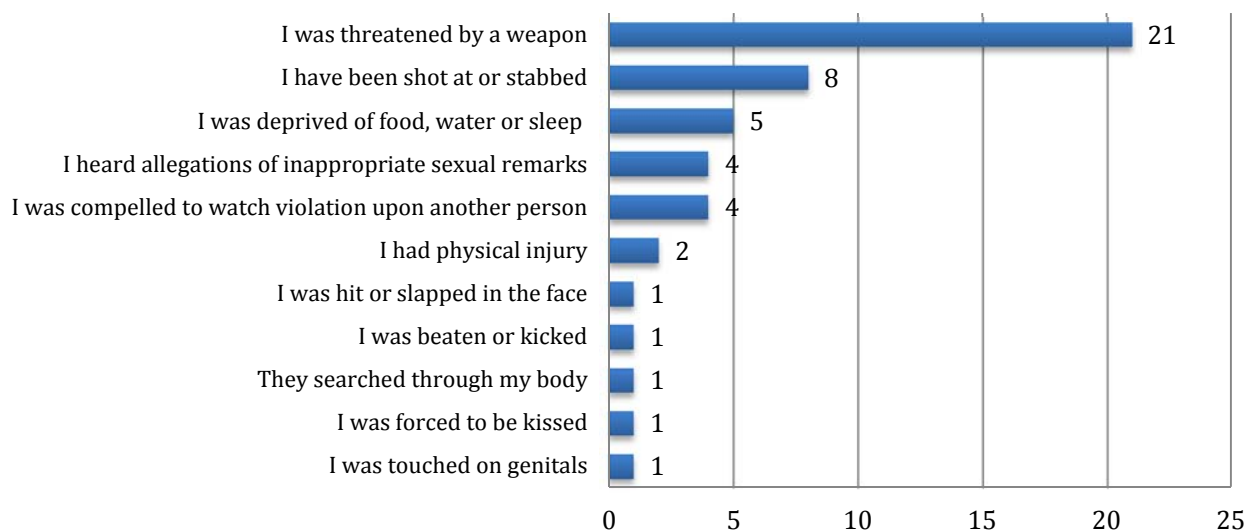
Every second woman (55.5 percent) believes that their community leader does not make sufficient effort to address the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, every fourth does not have clear approach in this and every fifth (20.5 percent) disagrees with this statement. Another 58.5 percent of the female respondents voiced that Armenian authorities do not channel sufficient effort to address the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, while 17 percent do not share that opinion. A similar picture can be observed for international organizations. Thus, 42 percent of women consider that, on a higher level, international organizations do not make mobilize enough effort to face the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, 26 percent has difficulties to answer, and 31.5 percent does not share that opinion. Women have different opinions and no identical approach to the question whether Armenian authorities protect the interests of refugees and asylum seekers or not. Thus, 40.5 percent of women were not able to respond to the above mentioned question, 34 percent have agreed and 25.5 percent disagreed.

2.1.7 Sexual violence

UNHCR’s guidelines for prevention and response of “Sexual and Gender-based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced persons” categorize Sexual and gender-based violence into five groups- sexual violence, physical violence, socio-economic violence, emotional and psychological violence and harmful traditional practices.⁶ As a result of the interviews, the following information was gathered on SGBV that occurred prior, during and after displacement from Syria.

Pre-displacement period: In Syria, 15 percent of the female respondents were subjected to violence at least once. In the vast majority of cases, violence was inflicted by representatives of Syrian rebel army (74 percent - 25 cases). While in 12 percent of the cases, perpetrators remain unknown, the rest of the cases were not typical and did not exceed one or two cases over a total of 34 cases.

Figure 7. Prevalence of violence prior to displacement (in Syria)



As exemplified by figure 7, 11 percent (21 cases) of the female respondents were threatened by weapons, four percent (eight cases) were either shot or stabbed and 3.5 percent (five cases) were deprived of food and water. Two percent of these women had faced allegations of inappropriate sexual

⁶ “Sexual and Gender-Based violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally displaced Persons- UNHCR Guidelines for Prevention and Response” <http://www.unhcr.org/3f696bcc4.pdf> [accessed on January 27, 2014]

remarks, another two percent were forced to witness physical violence inflicted upon others (four cases). According to the survey data, in the Syrian territory, none of the respondents experienced sexual violence except for one case when the perpetrators searched the female respondent's body.

Displacement period: Three cases of violence occurred in the territory of other transit countries, during the respondents' flight to Armenia.

Post-displacement period: Three percent of the surveyed women underwent violence in Armenia at least once. Three cases were allegations of inappropriate sexual remarks, and there were a few other registered cases of intended physical injury or touching genitals.

Post-violence psychological impact: Thirty women told about their fears and psychological complications that were the result of acts of violence they were forced to witness. Three women mentioned that they also went through physiological complications. 70 percent (twenty-three cases) of these women shared their stories with other people, the rest did not feel the need to share or preferred to forget. Only three women applied for medical support, nineteen women did not consider the significance of this problem, 4 women did not know where to apply and others did not want or were afraid to go out or they had financial difficulties.

2.1.8 Domestic violence

"Domestic violence can be any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship wherever and whenever the violence occurs, as well as between family members (for example, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law). Domestic violence may include sexual, physical, psychological or financial abuse.

*-Sexual and Gender-Based violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally displaced Person,
UNHCR May 2003 Guidelines for Prevention and Response*

During the interviews, five women (2.5 percent) confessed about violence inflicted by their current husbands. One of them mentioned that she is a survivor of almost all types of violence mentioned above. In this particular case, the woman appealed to the parents' help and she considers jealousy as the main cause of violence. In the other four cases, the women experienced prohibition to participate in community life, house arrest and lack of financial support from their husband; all of them were not considered as a serious issue by the women.

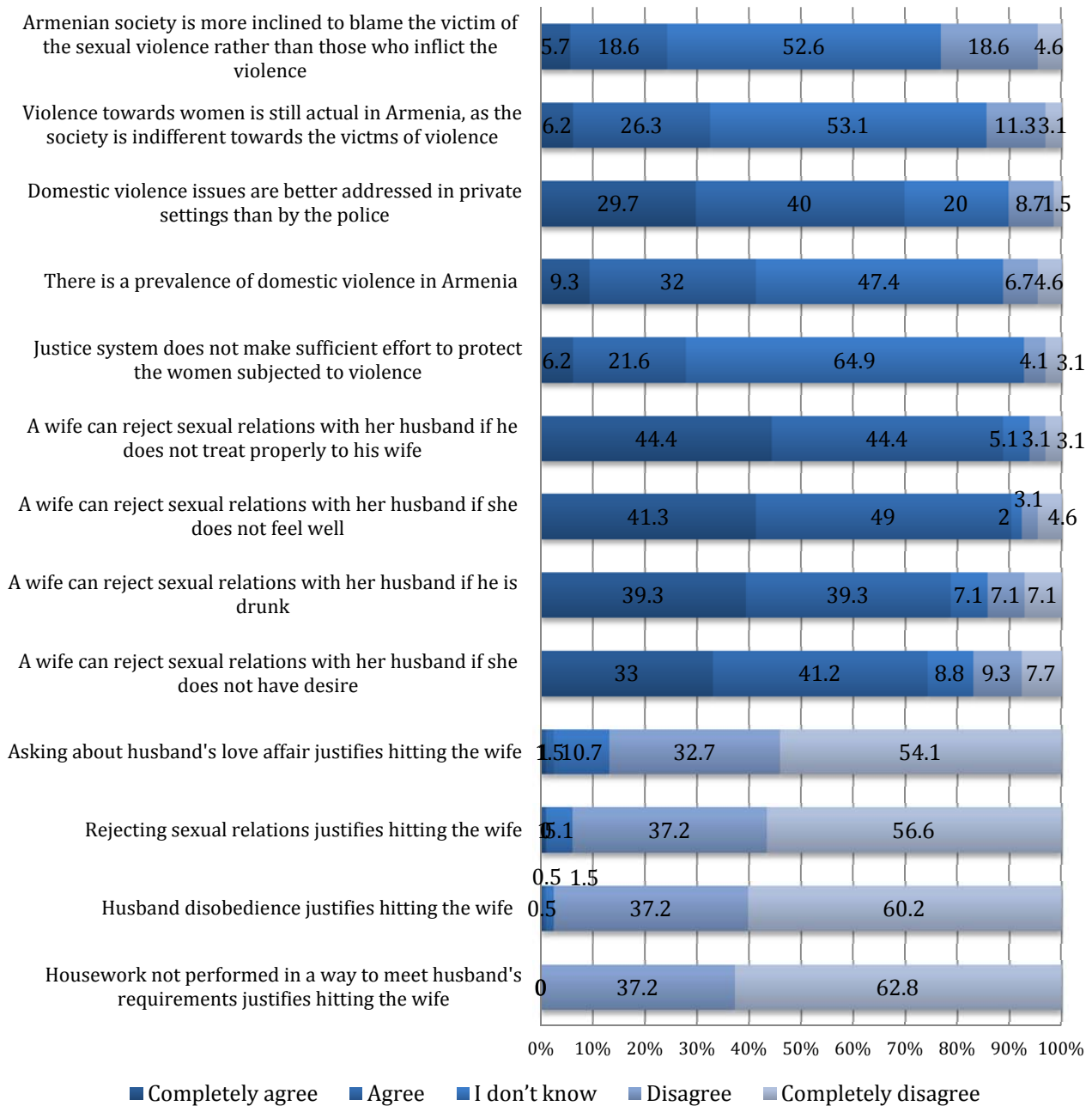
As seen in Figure 8. it was attempted to clarify the respondents' approach to different manifestations of domestic violence through different judgmental statements, to which they had to agree or disagree.

Thus, (100 percent) of women respondents disagree with the statements according to which housework not performed in a way to meet husband's requirements justifies hitting the wife. 97.4 percent disagree that husband disobedience justifies hitting the wife. 93.8 percent disagree that rejecting sexual relations justifies hitting the wife while 86.8 percent disagree that asking about husband's love affair justifies hitting the wife.

The majority of women consider that they can reject sexual relations with her husband if they do not have desire (74.2 percent) or do not feel well (90.3 percent), or if the husband is drunk (78.6 percent) or if he does not treat properly to his wife (88.8 percent).

In general, the majority of women (69.7 percent) believe that domestic violence is better addressed in private settings than by the police, 10 percent do not share this opinion, and 20 percent do not have a clear position on this.

Figure 8. General approaches of Syrian-Armenian women to domestic violence manifestations



Concerning the following statements, female respondents remain unclear. 64.9 percent of women do not know whether justice system makes sufficient effort to protect the women subjected to violence or not. Every second woman (53.1 percent) has no clear understanding whether the problem of violence towards women is still actual in Armenia or not. At the same time, every second woman considers that domestic violence is an actual issue (32.5 percent) as the society is indifferent towards victims of violence. Every second woman (52.6 percent) has no clear understanding whether the Armenian society is more inclined to blame the sexual violence victims rather than those who inflict violence, and the number of women who agreed or disagreed with this statement is almost equal (24.3 percent and

23.2 percent respectively). 41.3 percent of female respondents agree that there is a prevalence of domestic violence in Armenia, 11.3 percent disagree with that statement and more people do not have the answer to this question (47.4 percent).

2.2 Qualitative survey findings

2.2.1 Education

In the context of pre-school education Syrian-Armenian families mainly face bureaucratic red tape or problems connected with the placement of the child in the kindergarten.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— I have a daughter and a son of the kindergarten age, but they were not admitted. They told they have no place. We have applied to the district head but he also told there is no place and that I have to wait for one, or two years. But it's already a few years they tell there is no place. We have been applying since last year

— I have also heard of a similar case when they refused to place the child in the kindergarten. The child was three years old. I do not know the reason, she just told that the parents do not take the child to the kindergarten as they do not admit him there

In this issue the Syrian-Armenian families face different situations. According to some of the stories presented at the focus group discussions, the child is placed in the kindergarten without any problems, in other stories the parents have to wait for an indefinite time as the kindergarten directors refuse to place the child justifying it with shortage of places or the child's age.

There are also some cases when the families were able to address the issue of enrolling the child in the kindergarten with the help of the district Municipality and currently they go to the kindergarten.

No other problems connected with the pre-school age children were identified by the parents.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— From the beginning, when I was going to take my child to school, I was concerned with the possibility of my child being teased by the peers, but my children interact with both Armenian and Syrian children, and everything seems to be fine.

— Yes, we also had that problem. None of us speak Armenian, and the child has problems in studying. We have hired a tutor to give individual classess of Armenian, and the tutor wants 20,000 AMD to teach the child at least everyday lessons. Last year when the child was a first year student, we paid her 5500 AMD, but this year she wants 20,000 AMD as the child is a second year student and she does not agree to take less. It is very difficult, we hardly pay for the apartment rent, how can we pay this 20.000 AMD as well?

In the context of the secondary education, based on the focus group discussions, the problems are more diverse. In general the directors place the children in schools without creating any problems.

There are no problems in peer interactions either. Except for one or two described cases, the majority of the Syrian- Armenian children feel themselves in a friendly environment.

Problems are caused due to lack of knowledge of Eastern Armenian language and very often the parents have to pay additional amount of money to the teachers to have individual Armenian classes with their children. Besides the language issue, the quality of education, as well as the attitude of teachers towards

the displaced children from Syria was discussed at all the focus group discussions. According to some parents, as contrary to the Syrian schools, children's progress in classes is not prioritized in Armenian schools.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— I have a daughter who should be a seven year student, but she was not able to understand anything, neither she understood Armenian letters.. we took the books and came home but she understood nothing, she went to school for a week but was not able to continue. The relations with the children were good.

— The teachers would not put their heart in teaching, the older teachers were not enthusiastic at all. We did not like our "oriords" (teachers in Syria), but they were much better because they were strict and would teach us very well. Here people do not have the modest conversations we used to hear in Syria, here they are very rude. This is why the child does not attend school.

A department was opened for Syrian Armenians at Nar-dos school, but in a week we heard from them that the Syrians should not go because it is closed. Then, in three weeks we heard that we could go if we knew Armenian

Focus group women participants prioritize the attitude of school teachers towards children to promote their smooth integration in the learning process. There are teachers who are caring and there are others who are indifferent towards the problems of children. They set the same requirements to the Syrian children like to the others. A case when the mother had to take her daughter out of school for home education was presented.

According to the parents, there are different organizations that implement educational programs for Syrian-Armenians that provide trainings or partially cover university tuition fee

2.2.2 Employment

Based on the focus group discussions, there are two key problems connected with employment in Armenia: finding a job and low wages. Judging from the discussions, the fact of being refugees does not have any negative impact in finding employment for Syrian-Armenians.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— And Mr. Dumanyan told everybody that he wants to help and wants us to forget all the misfortunes we have witnessed, and feel us better here. He encouraged us to apply to him if we face any problems. I am a part-time worker, and when I approached him at a meeting and expressed my gratitude for having a job, I told I bow before you but how can I keep my family with 24000 AMD? Next day my boss received a call and I became a full time worker. Though not much was changed but still.. it's worth...

The employment is partially addressed by public structures. According to the focus discussion women participants, many of their family members have found employment with the support of ministries and municipalities.

State and international organizations have organized trainings such as tourism, accounting or computer trainings and some of the focus group participants have joined these trainings. In the remaining majority of cases discussed at the focus group discussions, employment issue is addressed either by the

families themselves or with the support of other displaced families who moved to Armenia at an earlier stage.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— *No one from our family members works, we use whatever we have brought with us. My daughter used to work at a vegetable store, but it is closed. I do not know where to apply for employment.*

— *My husband is the one who works in our family. He drives a taxi. Ever day he pays 5500 AMD, and keeps the rest for him, we hardly survive with that. He earns hardly 2000 AMD per day.*

— *When I came here, they sent me to study Armenian Program of accounting for free. The Armenian Program itself sent me for training, and I studied for 3 months.*

— *I also was looking for a job and I found it. It was connected with cooking, but my husband did not allow me as it was a night shift job. The working hours for some jobs are not convenient, it is not proper for a woman to work at such hours. A day shift work is not shameful, but to leave home at night for 2000 AMD when everything is so expensive. This is the reason my husband did not allow me. I stay at home and help him, when he needs my help; also I bring up my children at home.*

In the majority of cases when people were able to find employment, it refers to hairdresser's, car mechanics, restaurant workers or other similar jobs, wages are too low and do not meet families' daily needs. No discrimination or biased attitude was mentioned by the focus group women participants. They state that everybody at the workplace wants to be helpful to them when they learn about their status.

Another issue raised was irregular working hours. For example, in the restaurant business, women are required to work till late night, which is unacceptable in the Syrian Armenian culture.

As discussed in the FGDs, many of the families still fill the financial gap through savings they have made still in Syria.

2.2.3 Services availability in Armenia

It became clear from the focus group discussions, that the services and goods distribution process is carried out in not a very coordinated manner.

Few organizations contact Syrian-Armenians to inform them on provision of any support. Very often they learn accidentally about the distribution of assistance. Usually the families learn from word of mouth about available assistance.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— *I benefit from medications as well. Mission Armenia. My husband has problems and very month we buy a medicine which costs 20000 AMD, and as I work at a medical center, I bring a prescription as an evidence, and I give that prescription to Mission Armenia and they provide us with all the medicine we need.*

— *Previous year, and once this year they distributed us City cards. But the only problem we have is employment. Once we have a proper job, and we are able to pay the rent of the apartment, all the rest will be arranged. If not one of our friends, we would never know that we had to apply to the Ministry of Diaspora for my moter-in-law, and would have to pay a lot of money.*

Different needs assessment surveys conducted by different organizations cause confusion and futile expectations among the Syrian Armenians as after the survey they wait for a long time hoping to receive the goods or services mentioned by them.

During the focus discussions names of some organizations were mentioned which are involved in distribution of humanitarian assistance that makes us conclude that the families are rather informed on the organizations and ministries involved in provision of humanitarian assistance.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— I entered Armeno (shop) to buy shoes for my younger son, it was a voucher of 20000 AMD, while the cheapest boots cost 32000 AMD, so I had to add 12000 AMD to buy boots. With 12000 AMD I could buy boots for him from the mall, so again I did not buy anything for the younger one. I added 5000 AMD to that 20000 AMD and bought a jacket for my elder son. As for the remaining amount, I went to Zara and bought a blouse for me, and a woolen pullover for my younger son, and then no money was left. I bought total 4 items for 100.000 AMD, while from the mall I could buy everything for three of us for that 100,000 AMD. Anyway, they decided to help us in that way.

The focus group participants mainly mention about medicine, clothes, food, vouchers, tools, household supplies and other similar support. However, they are hardly aware of psycho-social or legal support and the families do not know where to apply in such cases.

All four focus group discussions' participants were unaware about the procedures or principles of distribution of the above mentioned items and services and no Ministry or service has ever explained them that system. Thus, for example, supermarket vouchers were given to the families irrespective of the number of family members. Concrete shop names were mentioned on the vouchers which are not accessible for the Syrian- Armenian families. As for medication, it is not clear what category of sick people can benefit from them and what category cannot. There is no information available on this issue either.

One of the most serious issues is provision of medical assistance. Though a few cases of free medical assistance were mentioned at the focus group discussions it was obvious that there is more need for it. Mainly those who are more proactive and informed and who can overcome the bureaucratic routine, benefit from the free medical assistance.

According to the focus group discussions, no inappropriate remarks or claims were faced by anybody during the distribution of assistance.

2.2.4 Sexual violence

The issue of possible sexual harrassments towards Syrian-Armenian women also was discussed at the focus group discussions. No such case was identified in the three focus groups; two cases of sexual harassment by the employers were identified in one of them only. Both cases were limited with the proposal.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— My friend went to an employment agency. They asked her to pay 4000 AMD to find a job for her, and my friend paid that amount. Then my friend was sent to a place called Ran Oil. I am not sure whether it was dealing with oil sale or was a factory. I know that there are a lot of such things in the city. Thus my friend went there to learn about the job conditions and she was told that she was there for him to "spend time with her". My friend was surprised but he asked

whether Mary hadn't told her beforehand that he would have some fun with her whenever he wanted. That person promised my friend to pay 300 dollars provided that she would do everything for him he wished. I don't know the end of this story as she was offended, but it was not my fault. She wanted a contact for an agency and I gave it to her.

Those who presented the cases have no clear position whether that proposal was conditioned with the job-seekers' status as a refugee or it was due to personal characteristics of the employer.

All the remaining cases referred to sellers or taxi drivers charging an amount exceeding the actual cost of the goods/services conditioned with the refugee status and not being familiar with the Armenian environment. Other described cases are when the employer delays salary payment or does not sign a contract.

2.2.5 Domestic violence

According to the focus group women participants, there is no prevalence of domestic violence cases in Syrian families as Syrian-Armenian community was very consolidated in Syria. Everybody knew each other in the community and as violence was considered to be disgraceful, such cases happened very rarely and were not publicly discussed.

In Syria, men used to work and women would stay at home and take care of their children. In Armenia the situation changed. Those who manage to find employment work. The normal lifestyle of Armenian families from Syria is drastically changed and any Syrian-Armenian man who stays at home tends to create tension.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— There is no such a thing in Syria, at least I don't remember, that a husband beats the wife or treats improperly to her, or maybe I don't know or I haven't witnessed in my settings(...) As for Armenia, it[domestic violence] definitely exists there(...) Maybe the reason is life style, it is difficult to live here. It also depends on the woman, if she allows the man to go too far, he will hit her once, but there is no such a practice in Syria to beat the wife every day, it never goes that far.

— It is so easy to live there [Syria], and there is no need for women to work (...) My husband would not let us work with Arabs, we lived among Arabs, nobody would allow their wives to work with Arabs, or work at a place where people sell clothes. My husband would never allow me, he would say "Arabs and Armenians might come there, you have nothing to do there(...) Here[Armenia], they have to work(...) I would say that both violence and divorces exist in Syria, but they are few. As for violence, it can be, but it is not evident, they try to conceal it. If you compare Syria and Armenia you feel that women are not respected in Armenia. For example, men always walk ahead of women, while in Syria they walk abreast. In Syria the concept of family exists, which lacks here.

The husband's example (the first quote above) of one of the women was intensively discussed at one of the focus group discussions. Women justify the tension and consider it natural as before men were used to make a lot of money and have a more active life style, while here they spend their days watching TV.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— One of the reasons is that religion is prioritized in our country and Christianity is prevailing and people fear God. Here people do not believe in God, and as they do not have God, they do not have fear of anything.

Another factor was considered to be the difference between the ideologies. Based on the focus group participants' opinion, women in Armenia are more educated as opposed to Syria. Syrian-Armenian communities in Syria were consolidated around the Christian values where the idea of solidarity and unity of families was prevailing as opposed to the personal freedom. It is opposite in Armenia where personal freedom is the prevailing value. For women in Armenia education is a priority value as opposed to Syria where family is the priority value. And this causes the main differences between the natures of domestic violence in two countries.

Quotes by the focus group participants

— We were ashamed of everything there, starting with not maintaining proper cleanliness. Tidiness and politeness were prioritized there, here they prioritize education, while in Syria education was not that important. Women had to keep traditions there and be excellent housewives. While here education and intellect are the primary values, you should have a number of certificates here, while the Syrian-Armenian women do not have plenty of certificates

However, during a private conversation with one of the focus group participants explained her perspective on the violence existing in Syrian-Armenian families. According to her, violence does exist in the Syrian-Armenian families and it is on a rather high level, which is due to the following reasons:

As cited by aforementioned women First of all, women mainly are not employed and are financially dependent on their husbands. Due to this, husbands take the opportunity to abuse their wives and their wives cannot withhold that, as their husbands will kick them out of house leaving without financial support considering that usually the property owner is the husband. Women are not employed as they get secondary education and no specialization.

On the other hand, the reason that women cannot withhold violence is because Armenian community is too small, everybody knows each other, and as the family values are too high, they know if they get divorced, they will be disgraced and will not be able to form a new family in the future. Thus, they adjust to the situation. At the same time, though everybody face the same problem, they conceal the manifestations of violence and pretend that they are happy.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Quantitative survey results summary

- In Syria 15 percent of women-respondents were subjected to violence once or more than once.
- 15 percent of women-respondents (30 cases) have mentioned about fears and psychological complications that were the result of acts of violence they had to witness and 1.5 percent have mentioned also physiological complications.
- 70 percent (23 cases) of women respondents who have mentioned about their fears, psychological and physiological problems, have shared their stories with other people; the rest did not feel the need to share or preferred to forget.
- 11 percent (21 cases) were registered to be threatened by weapon, 4 percent (8 cases) were shot or stabbed, 3.5 percent (5 cases) were deprived of food and water.
- In majority of cases the violence was committed by Syrian rebel army representatives (74 percent).

- In the territory of Armenia 3 percent of respondents were subjected to some kind of violence once or more than once.
- On the way from Syria to Armenia three cases (1.5percent) of violence were registered on the territory of other countries.
- According to the survey data, in Syria territory none of the respondents experienced sexual violence except for one case when they searched a woman's body hoping to find something.
- In Armenia also one case of sexual violence was registered (touching genitals).
- Five women (2.5percent) have stated that they were subjected to violence by their current husbands.
- In general the majority of women (69.7 percent) believe that domestic violence problems are better addressed in private settings than by the police, 10 percent does not share that opinion and 20 percent does not have a clear position to that.
- 64.9 percent of women respondents do not know whether justice system makes sufficient efforts to protect women subjected to violence or not.
- 41.3 percent of respondents agree that there is domestic violence incidence in Armenia, 11.3 percent disagree and more people (47.4 percent) do not have the answer to this question.
- Majority of women (72.5percent) disagree with the statement that Armenian society has negative attitude towards women refugees and asylum seekers and only every fifth (20.5 percent) agree with such a statement.
- According to 58.5 percent of women respondents, Armenian authorities do not make sufficient efforts to address problems of refugees and asylum seekers while 17 percent do not share that opinion.
- Women have different opinions and no identical approach to the question whether Armenian authorities protect the interests of refugees and asylum seekers or not. Thus, 40.5 percent of respondents were not able to answer the above mentioned question, 34 percent have agreed and 25.5percent have disagreed.
- Surveyed women (62.5percent) are comparably better aware in free health services, distribution of food (69.5 percent) and non-food items (61percent).
- Women awareness of services like women's or child centers, security or legal as well as mental health and psycho- social support centers is less than 12 percent.
- 55 percent of respondents use health care services, 68 percent received food and 55 percent benefited from non-food supplies.
- 5.5 percent used services of child centers.
- Not more than 2 percent received counseling on security issues, as well as mental health, psychological and social support.
- Majority of women (71.5 percent) do not consider themselves rejected and alienated from the Armenian society and at the same time every fourth woman (26 percent) feels herself alienated.
- Based on the quantitative survey data, every second woman (55.6 percent) has stated that her child suffers from biased attitude by the peers and teachers because of being a refugee. 28 percent of respondents do not have clear position in this issue and only 15.7 percent disagree with that statement.

3.2 Qualitative survey results summary

- In case of pre-school education the Syrian-Armenian families mainly face bureaucratic red tape

- Focus group participant women especially valued the teachers' attitude to promote children's fluent integration in the learning process
- According to the majority of employment related stories people who were able to find employment, mainly as hairdressers, car mechanics, restaurant workers, or other similar jobs, receive low payment or have low income which is not sufficient for meeting everyday needs
- It became clear from focus group discussions that distribution of services or supplies is carried out disorderly
- Few organizations contact Syrian-Armenians to inform them on provision of any support. Very often they learn accidentally about the distribution of assistance.
- Based on focus group discussions, no improper remarks or claims were made to anybody during the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

4 Bibliography

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Annex 1

What is the date of the family's arrival in Armenia?

	Frequency	Percent
2011	4	2.0
2012	131	65.5
2013	65	32.5
Total	200	100

Age of the respondent

Mean	41.8788
Minimum	18
Maximum	88

Respondent's family size

Mean	4.2150
Minimum	1.
Maximum	14
Sum	843

Headship of the household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	38	19.0	19.0
	No	156	78.0	78.0
	Equally	6	3.0	3.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

Respondent's Educational level

	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	2	1.0
Primary	26	13.0
Secondary	56	28.0
High School diploma	39	19.5
University	73	36.5
Master or above	1	.5
Vocational	3	1.5
Total	200	100.0

Respondent's marital status

	Frequency	Percent
Single	38	19.0
Married	136	68.0
Divorced	5	2.5
Widowed	20	10.0
Separated	1	.5
Total	200	100.0

Respondents Disability status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	3	1.5	1.5
	No	192	96.0	98.5
	Total	195	97.5	100.0
	System Missing	5	2.5	
Total		200	100.0	

If yes is she getting allowances from government?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	1	.5	33.3
	No	2	1.0	66.7
	Total	3	1.5	100.0
	System Missing	197	98.5	
Total		200	100.0	

Respondent's location before conflict

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	City	11	5.5	5.5
	Town	187	93.5	93.5
	Village	2	1.0	1.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

Respondent's location in Armenia

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	City	198	99.0	99.0
	Town	2	1.0	1.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

How many rooms does the house have?

Mean	2.23
Minimum	1
Maximum	5

Number of respondent's family members in Armenia

Mean	3.665
Minimum	1
Maximum	7
Sum	733

Do you live with any other family (ies) in your current residence?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	70	35.0	35.4
	No	128	64.0	64.6
	Total	198	99.0	100.0
	System Missing	2	1.0	
Total		200	100.0	

With how many families do you share your home?

N	Valid	85
	Missing	115
Mean		1.2824

Minimum	0
Maximum	3
Sum	109

In total how many people live in your home?

Mean	4.9078
Minimum	2
Maximum	10

Are there children (under the age of 18) in your family?

Boys			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 boy	57	28.5
	2 boys	23	11.5
	3 boys	2	1.0
	none	118	59
Total		200	100.0
Girls			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 girl	61	30.5
	2 girls	22	11.0
	3 girls	1	.5
	None	116	58.0
Total		200	100.0

How many school age boys in your family and how many of them attend school

	Frequency	Percent
Attend	70	86.4
Do not Attend	11	13.6
Total	81	100

How many school girls boys in your family and how many of them attend school

	Frequency	Percent
Attend	69	95.8
Do not Attend	3	4.2
Total	72	100

Itinerary of refugees from Syria

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Directly from Syria to the current place of residence in Armenia	107	41.3%	53.5%
Through other cities or villages in both Syria and Armenia	24	9.3%	12.0%
Georgia	58	22.4%	29.0%
Turkey	58	22.4%	29.0%
United Arab Emirates	5	1.9%	2.5%
Lebanon	7	2.7%	3.5%
Total	259	100.0%	129.5%

Main occupation of respondent before the conflict and now

	Syria		Armenia	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Student	14	7	10	5
Housewife	129	64.5	167	83.5
Service sector	18	9	15	7.5
Teacher	15	7.5	2	1
Office worker/businesswoman	18	9	5	2.5
Health worker	6	3	1	0.5
Total	200	100	200	100

How many of your family members had paid employment during the preconflict stage in Syria?

	Frequency			Percent
	Male	Female	Total	
Other	12	3	15	6.7
Culture	3		3	1.3
Education	5		5	2.2
Construction	6		6	2.7
Transport	7	1	8	3.6
Hotels and restaurants	8	7	15	6.7
Mining and quarrying	11		11	4.9
Health	11		11	4.9
Service	13	2	15	6.7
Utilities	14		14	6.2
Crafts	25		25	11.1
Processing industry	38	2	40	17.8
Wholesale and retail trade	39	18	57	25.3
Total	192	33	225	100

Did any one of your family members had paid employment during the past month in Armenia?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	100	50.0
	No	100	50.0
	Total	200	100.0

If there are family members who have had paid work in Armenia, what type of work were they involved in?

	Frequency			Percent
	Male	Female	Total	
Other	1	1	2	1.6
Home work	0	4	4	3.3
Culture	2	0	2	1.6
IT industry	2	2	4	3.3
Construction	3	0	3	2.4

Health	3	1	4	3.3
Utilities	4	0	4	3.3
Transport	5	1	6	4.9
Hotels and restaurants	7	9	16	13.0
Crafts	13	2	15	12.2
Service	13	7	20	16.3
Wholesale and retail trade	15	9	24	19.5
Processing industry	19	0	19	15.4
Total	87	36	123	100.0

Select other financial support if any

	Frequency		Percent of cases
	N	%	
Saving before traveling to Armenia	132	46.2%	66.3%
Armenian relatives	38	13.3%	19.1%
Armenian Government	12	4.2%	6.0%
NGOs	51	17.8%	25.6%
Remittances	35	12.2%	17.6%
Own small business	1	.3%	.5%
Relative's salary	5	1.7%	2.5%
Individual sponsor	2	.7%	1.0%
International organizations	2	.7%	1.0%
Salary	8	2.8%	4.0%
Total	286	100.0%	143.7%

Monthly expenses of family

	AMD	Percent
Food	107261	42
Rent	82320	33
Health	16770	7
Education	7803	3
Utility bills	23882	9
Transportation	14848	6
Total	252884	100

What types of services are you aware of in your place of residence in Armenia?

	Not Aware		Aware and used		Aware but was no need to use		Aware but was not able to use	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Health	50	25	110	55	15	7.5	25	12.5
Food	49	25	136	68	3	1.5	12	6
Non-Food Items	56	28	110	55	12	6	22	11
Women's center	192	96	0	0	6	3	2	1
Children's center	186	93	11	6	2	1	1	0.5
Security	177	89	4	2	19	9.5	0	0

MHPSS1	196	98	1	1	3	1.5	0	0
Legal Aid	183	92	1	1	14	7	2	1

Frequency of incidents of violence outside the family during displacement

	N	%
I was threatened with a weapon of any kind.	21	10.5
I was shot at or stabbed.	8	4
I was deprived of food, water, or sleep.	5	2.5
I was forced to watch someone being physically assaulted.	4	2
I was subjected to improper sexual comments.	4	2
I experienced physical disfigurement of my body.	2	1
I was touched on sexual parts of my body.	1	0.5
I was kissed	1	0.5
I was given internal body cavity searches	1	0.5
I was beaten or kicked.	1	0.5
I was slapped or hit.	1	0.5

Who was the offender of violence

	N	%
Rebels	25	74
Unknown people	4	12
Policeman	1	3
Gagik Khachikyan	1	3
Tax officer	1	3
Taxi driver	1	3
We were deprived of water due to war	1	3
Total	34	100

¹ Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support

Annex 2. Recommendations by Syrian-Armenians

1. Help with employment
2. Provide lodging
3. Help with apartment rent
4. Help with food
5. Help with covering utility expenses
6. Help with winter clothes
7. Help with money
8. Help with tuition fees
9. Help in receiving education
10. Equally distribute assistance
11. Not everybody is informed about the refugee programs
12. Help with starting a business
13. Provide psychologist support
14. Teach languages to the children
15. Increase salaries
16. Provide medicine
17. Help to leave Armenia
18. Organize meetings between the Syrian- Armenians and Armenians
19. Before starting employment promised a certain amount of payment but actually paid other amount
20. They collect money at schools
21. Increase financial assistance
22. Increase quality of services at hospitals
23. Create appropriate environment for women to interact with each other (parties, handicraft classes)
24. Make assistance more affordable and accessible
25. Provide children with free professional services
26. To exempt us from taxes
27. Help us bring other relatives to Armenia
28. Assistance entitled to us is given to others
29. Not to recruit boys to army
30. Let the UN itself monitor the distribution of assistance rather than delegate it to other organizations
31. Cover transportation expenses
32. Grant tax benefits for starting a business
33. Let the food assistance be individual for each family and not the same for everybody
34. Let the support be provided directly to the beneficiaries
35. Address the issues connected with the RA citizenship in a short period of time
36. Not to set knowledge of Russian language as a requirement in recruiting employees
37. Let them give us money instead of City cards
38. Local people and public servants do not treat us properly
39. Let the UN support refugees here in the same way it does in Europe
40. Do not call us a refugee
41. Increase quality of education
42. I have left my documents in Syria, I was a second year student at the University, here I am not able to continue my studies
43. Open a center for Syrian- Armenians where we will have a chance to meet and talk to each other, and where we will learn about our rights
44. We cannot eat the food provided to us. We suggest to give us money instead of food
45. There are no places available in the kindergartens for our children
46. Let them address the issue of registration. As we rent apartments we cannot get registered
47. Let them give us cash money instead of vouchers
48. Provide lodging for free
49. Be more supportive towards us
50. Help us with language studies
51. Provide psychological support
52. Lack of information
53. Allow the Syrians to open factories with their own funds
54. Open a kindergarten for Syrian-Armenian children
55. Many of them complain that they have applied to different places and have not received support (money, clothes, medicine, lodging, support connected with documents)
56. Many of them complain that the assistance envisaged for them is owned by the staff (they have witnessed that).