

**MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

State and Peace-Building Fund:  
Armenia Support to Conflict Affected Families Project

**Stakeholder Engagement Plan  
(SEP)**

Draft

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction/Project description

The six-week conflict that ensued during September-November 2020 in the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) between Armenia and Azerbaijan wounded and killed thousands of Armenians and displaced about 90,000 NK residents (more than 60 percent of the population) in Armenia and NK. Registration of displaced people in Armenia (88 percent of which are women and children) has so far been carried out by the Government of Armenia (GoA) at the municipality level, and the official data is now available at the State Migration Service. A majority of the NK displaced people in Armenia are being hosted with relatives and host families, or being placed in hotels, old sanatoriums, kindergartens and communal buildings with poor or non-existent heating, water, and sanitation facilities, putting great pressure on the local communities' provision of basic services.

**The proposed project** responds to the request of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA) of the Republic of Armenia and builds on the regular discussions under the sub-working group on Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programming including 22 organizations among which are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), World Vision, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Armenian Caritas, People in Need, Save the Children, the World Bank, Action Against Hunger (ACF), and Mission Armenia. The sub-working group on Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programming is part of a broader structure put in place by the UN to coordinate humanitarian efforts in response to the crisis in NK in the areas of shelter, food, non-food items, health, education, and payment of utilities. While the UN agencies and NGOs have provided non-cash humanitarian assistance, the GoA is leading the implementation of cash-based assistance.

**The Project development objective** is to improve the resilience of families affected by the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and to promote the social cohesion in their hosting communities.

The objective will be achieved through the four programs that will be supported by the grant, that is, through the provision of cash transfers to displaced individuals in Armenia and to their hosting families, and through the implementation of a public works program and internship program for displaced individuals in Armenia. The majority of the displaced beneficiaries are expected to be women, in accordance with the profile of the displaced population. It is expected that the cash assistance granted to both displaced individuals and their hosting families will help in improving the resilience of families affected by the conflict, as they have lost their livelihoods, property, and other possessions. The cash payments to displaced people will help them meet their basic needs on a day to day basis, whereas the cash payments to hosting families will incentivize Armenians to host displaced people. The internship and public works program support displaced individuals with respect to economic and labour market integration, further helping them meet their basic needs. Finally, through the provision of monetary assistance to

hosting families, the grant also aims to foster social cohesion among hosting and displaced populations. In particular, the cash grants aim to help displaced people feel welcome in their hosting communities and mitigate any resentment from hosting communities towards displaced newcomers. The project development objective will be measured using four indicators. It is expected that there will be an increase in the share of displaced people reporting that they have enough to meet their needs (in this case, specifically food, given that this is the indicator for which a baseline has been collected). At least 20 percent of participants in the internship program are expected to have found a job within 2 months of the program ending. Finally, the majority of displaced beneficiaries should report they have the same economic opportunities as their hosting communities, whereas the majority of hosting beneficiaries should report that displaced people are welcome in their communities. The Project has two components:

## 1.2 Component 1. Cash assistance for conflict affected families.

This component supports temporary cash benefits to NK displaced people in Armenia and their host families. Cash assistance supported under this component has the objectives to provide temporary income support to affected families to smooth basic consumption and support the labor market inclusion of displaced persons of working age. Displaced populations typically need repeated injections of cash benefits to recover their human and physical capital base. The importance of cash as a preferred modality of support has been raised by the Government, the displaced people, and the host families since the first days of the conflict, and was confirmed by a survey conducted by REACH and People in Need. While non-cash humanitarian support has been provided by the UN and NGOs since October 2020, the GoA expressed its willingness to manage the delivery of cash-based assistance and to coordinate donors' contributions.

Specifically, the component will support programs # 1, 6, 9, and 10 (Table 1) which have been already adopted by the GoA as part of a broader package of support to conflict affected people. The support under this component is meant to complement other development partners' support.

**Table 1. The number of beneficiaries per each activity**

#	Support Program already adopted by GoA	Estimated number of Beneficiaries (in Armenia)	Estimated number of beneficiaries supported by the grant
1	Cash benefit to NK displaced people in Armenia (AMD 68,000);	42,000 individuals	5,000
6	Monthly cash benefit for hosting families in Armenia	15,000	4,000 individuals (about 1600 hosting families)
9	Employment subsidies for unemployed NK displaced people and employers in Armenia	1052 individuals	936
10	Public works for NK displaced people who are in Armenia	250 individuals	115
	<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>10,051</b>

**1.3 Component 2:** This component will ensure proper implementation of the grant including fiduciary aspects, monitoring & evaluation (M&E), as well as compliance with the World Bank environmental and social standards during project implementation. A project audit will be also financed under this component as well as other operating costs such as personal protective equipment for project contracted workers, translation and office equipment. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU), already established in the MLSA to support the implementation of the SPAP II project, will also support the implementation of this project grant. The existing time-based contracts of the PCU coordinator, financial management (FM) specialist, social/M&E specialist, and environmental specialist will be amended to allow them to support implementation of grant activities.

**Expected outcomes** include increased resilience of conflict affected families through cash assistance support and improved social cohesion in host municipalities.

## 2. Implementing Agency

The project will be executed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the GoA<sup>1</sup> through the Unified Social Service (USS).<sup>2</sup> MLSA is responsible for coordinating donors' contributions from UN agencies and NGOs order to ensure a coherent approach in the implementation of the different temporary cash transfers for conflict affected families. Cash transfers programs 1 and 6 – cash benefits to displaced people in Armenia and their host families - will be implemented by USS. These benefits receive parallel financing by UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, ICRC and People in Need. The public works (program #10) and employment subsidies (program #9) will be implemented by USS.

The MLSA develops the policy of the sphere and legal acts by which USS are responsible for the outreach, screening, evaluating applications and providing benefits, as well as day to day information and support to potential beneficiaries.

So far, applications to the proposed benefits #1 and 6 have been submitted through the online platform of the SSA as well as with support of Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS) and hotlines. Applications for benefit #9 and # 10 are submitted in person through the SEA platform. Eligibility verification is done by MLSA together with the Migration Service which hosts the integrated database of NK displaced people registered with host municipalities. The Social Security Agency hosts all the databases of the NK population which are used to verify information in the application forms. Payments have been transmitted via “Haypost” and are expected to be transmitted via bank accounts under the project. As of early March 2021 about 92,000 displaced people in the country have received the first payment of benefit #1.

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<sup>1</sup> The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) within the Ministry will have direct responsibility for coordination and oversight over all project activities.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to April 1, 2021 USS has consisted of two separate agencies: Social Security Administration (SSA) and State Employment Agency (SEA)

The MLSA is a close World Bank partner implementing the Armenia Social Protection Administration II Project (SPAPII, P146318). The MLSA and staff involved under Project Coordination Unit (PCU) of SPAP II have extensive experience of implementing projects financed by international organizations, including the World Bank. SPAP II PCU implemented World Bank “Social Protection Reforms” implemented within 2004-2010 and Social Protection Administration Project - Additional Financing (SPAP AF) implemented within 2010-2013 and currently implements Social Protection Administration Second Project.

### 3. Purpose of the SEP

The purpose of the present Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is to outline the key stakeholders of the project “Support to conflict affected families and capacity building”, identify the methods of stakeholder engagement, introduce responsibilities in the implementation of stakeholder engagement activities and enable channels for Project beneficiaries to submit their suggestions and grievances, if any. The intention of the SEP is to ensure awareness of project beneficiaries on its activities and on their eligibility to benefit from the project, as well as ensure informed participation of stakeholders during the process of implementation of the project.

Specifically, SEP serves the following purposes:

- I. stakeholder identification and analysis;
- II. planning engagement modalities and effective communication tools for consultations and disclosure;
- III. defining roles and responsibilities of different actors in implementing the SEP;
- IV. defining the Project’s Grievance Mechanism (GRM); and
- V. providing feedback to stakeholders;
- VI. monitoring and reporting of the SEP.

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be disclosed and open to feedback and consultation. Feedback from stakeholders will be incorporated in the final version of SEP.

### 4. Stakeholder identification and analysis

**Project stakeholders** are defined as individuals, formal or informal groups and organizations, and/or governmental entities whose interests or rights:

- I. are impacted or likely to be impacted directly or indirectly, positively or adversely, by the Project (also known as ‘affected parties’); and
- II. may be interested in the Project implementation (‘interested parties’). They include individuals or groups whose interests may be affected by the Project and who can influence the Project outcomes in any way.

#### 4.1 Methodology

Drawing on best practice approaches, the project will apply the following principles for stakeholder engagement:

- **Openness and life-cycle approach:** public consultations for the Project will be arranged during the whole life-cycle, carried out openly, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation;
- **Informed participation and feedback:** information will be provided to and widely distributed among all stakeholders in an appropriate format; opportunities are provided for communicating stakeholders' feedback, for analysing and addressing comments and concerns;
- **Inclusiveness and sensitivity:** stakeholder identification is undertaken to support better communications and build effective relationships. The participation process for the Project is inclusive. All stakeholders at all times are encouraged to be involved in the consultation process. Equal access to information is provided to all stakeholders. Sensitivity to stakeholders' needs is the fundamental principle underlying the selection of engagement methods. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth, the elderly. Special attention will also be given to the cultural sensitivities of diverse ethnic groups.
- **Flexibility:** if social distancing inhibits traditional forms of engagement, the methodology will adapt to other engagement forms, including various internet communication (See Section 5.2 below).

As per the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, Environmental and Social Standard 10 (ESS10) on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure, stakeholders may be categorized into:

- **Affected Parties** – These are persons, groups, and other entities that are directly influenced, actually or potentially, by the Project. Affected parties may have been identified as most susceptible to change associated with the Project.
- **Other Interested Parties** – These are individuals, groups, and other entities that may not experience direct impacts from the Project but who consider or perceive their interests as being affected by the Project or who could affect the Project and the process of its implementation in some way.
- **Vulnerable Groups** – These are persons who may be disproportionately impacted or further disadvantaged by the Project compared with any other groups due to their vulnerable status. Vulnerable groups may require special engagement efforts to ensure equal representation in the consultation decision-making process associated with the Project.

#### 4.2. Affected parties

The project has multiple stakeholders from government, private sector, local communities, civic society, displaced people in Armenia and the general public. For the purposes of this SEP document, stakeholders who are likely to be directly affected by, and involved in the implementation of the Project, are classified as affected parties. These include, among others, relevant governmental entities, among them the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Unified

Social Service (USS), PCU of SPAP II, Complex Social Services Territorial Centers, local municipalities, business entities, families and communities hosting displaced people from NK. In general, it is expected that the project will have positive impact on those groups.

The project's target beneficiaries include the NK displaced people in Armenia and their Armenian host families. Specifically, the project aims to reach approximately 5,000 displaced people and 1,600 host families via direct cash benefits, about 936 displaced people via the subsidized temporary employment program, and 115 displaced people through the public works program. Registration of displaced people in Armenia (majority of which are women and children) has been carried out by the GoA at the municipality level. The official data is available at the State Migration Service.

#### **4.3. Other interested parties**

The Projects' stakeholders also include parties other than the directly affected individuals, groups or organizations, including:

- i. Residents of other settlements within the territory of Armenia that can benefit from improved services, employment, training or business opportunities stemming from the project;
- ii. Civil society groups and regional, national, and local levels non-governmental organizations;
- iii. Business owners and providers of services, goods, and materials within the Project area that will be involved in the wider supply chain or be considered for the role of Project's suppliers in the future.
- iv. Mass media and associated interest groups, including local, regional, and national printed and broadcast media, digital/web-based entities, and their associations.
- v. International donor organizations or humanitarian organizations supporting or co-financing projects in the area of Grant activities (e.g. UN, USAID, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, the ICRC, People in Need, etc.)

#### **4.4. Disadvantaged/vulnerable individuals or groups**

It is particularly important to understand whether disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups are properly informed about and engaged in the project activities, who often do not have a voice to express their concerns or understand the project's impacts. It is also important to ensure that awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement with disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups on grant activities are adapted to consider such groups or individuals particular sensitivities, concerns, and cultural sensitivities. Awareness raising and stakeholder engagement should enable a full understanding of project activities and benefits. The vulnerability may stem from a person's origin, gender, age, health condition, economic deficiency and financial insecurity, disadvantaged status in the community (e.g., minorities or fringe groups), dependence on other individuals, spatial isolation such as living in a remote or rural area, etc. Engagement with the vulnerable groups and individuals often requires applying specific measures and assistance to facilitate their participation in the project-related decision making so



that their awareness of and input to the overall process is proportional to those of the other stakeholders.

Within the project, the vulnerable or disadvantaged groups may include and are not limited to the following: poor, unemployed, socially disadvantaged citizens, elderly, persons with disabilities or their caregivers, single parents, representatives of ethnic, religious, or language minorities, women, children, among others. With support from a grant from the State Building and Peace Trust Fund, the World Bank support MLSA raise awareness and share information on to the extent possible so that such groups may receive information, access services, access public consultations, provide their feedback to project activities, and access the grievance mechanism. During SEP implementation special attention will be paid to the engagement of vulnerable groups through conduction of tailored outreach activities for such groups and their representatives. Description of engagement methods that will be undertaken by the project implementing entities is provided in the following sections.

## 5. Stakeholder Engagement Program

### 5.1. Summary of stakeholder engagement done during the project preparation

During project preparation, online consultation meetings were conducted with all the organizer, donor and stakeholder parties, including the representatives of the MLSA, USS, WB, UN institutions, etc. Based on a rapid assessment conducted by REACH and People in Need with support from USAID, the main priorities for conflict affected and displaced populations are warm clothes, shelter, food, medicine, cash and hygiene items. Host communities also requires assistance in terms of shelter, non-food items, food and WASH to continue hosting. The National Institute of Labor and Social Research with support from UNICEF is conducting an assessment of the provision of social assistance to socially vulnerable families affected by the long-term economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises.

The Governmental support programs for conflict affected families, among them cash benefits targeting displaced people in Armenia, and benefits to host families and employment support programs, have been widely advertised and broadcasted through various media outlets including traditional TV outlets (H1 Public television). General public, among them especially displaced people from NK are well aware about the available support programs, especially about those related to the cash assistance as evidenced by the high number of applications received for the AMD 68,000 benefit: 101,852 people have been informed and applied (an higher number than the estimated number of affected people of 90,000), out of which 99,355 have been paid by the GoA (as of data from MLSA).. The local networks and support groups, among them NGOs, are also active in providing displaced people with information on the available support programs and assistance.

Table 2 presents the prior stakeholder engagement activities.

**Table 2: Prior stakeholder engagement activities**

Activities	Stakeholder engagement method	Target Stakeholders	Stakeholders engaged
<b>1. Cash benefit to NK displaced people in Armenia (68,000 AMD)</b>	1.1. <i>A rapid need assessment conducted by the National Institute of Labor and Social Research and UNICEF</i> 1.2. <i>TV Interviews</i> 1.3. <i>Press conferences</i> 1.4. <i>Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA) and social media pages</i>	Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia  Approximately 42,000 individuals	MLSA <i>(Information and Public Relations Division) National Institute of Labor and Social Research within MLSA, REACH, People in NEED, UNICEF, USAID, WB</i>
<b>2. Monthly cash benefit to support host families in Armenia (30,000 AMD monthly per each adult hosted per six months)</b>	2.1 <i>A rapid need assessment conducted by the National Institute of Labor and Social Research and UNICEF</i> 2.2 <i>Interviews</i> 2.3 <i>Press conferences</i> 2.4 <i>Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA) and social media pages</i>	<i>Individuals who own residential real estate in the Republic of Armenia (including joint or shared ownership) who provide accommodation to the guests from December 2020 to May 2021</i> Approximately 25,000 hosting households in Armenia	MLSA <i>(Information and Public Relations Division) National Institute of Labor and Social Research within MLSA with support from REACH, People in NEED, UNICEF, USAID, WB</i>
<b>3. Employment subsidies for unemployed NK displaced people and employers</b>	3.1 <i>TV Interviews</i> 3.2 <i>Press conferences</i> 3.3 <i>Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA, SEA) and social media pages</i> 3.4 <i>Installation of information boards/panels in Territorial Employment Centres (TEC-s) and operating Complex Social Services Territorial Centres (CSSTC-s)</i>	<i>Employers of unemployed people from NK</i> <i>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</i>  More than 3,000 have been informed and applied; 250 individuals expressed interest so far, out of which 44 are women	MLSA of GoA <i>(Information and Public Relations Division), SEA</i>
<b>4. Public works for unemployed NK</b>	4.1 <i>TV Interviews</i> 4.2 <i>Press conferences</i> 4.3 <i>Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA, SEA) and social media pages</i> 4.4 <i>Installation of information boards/panels in Territorial Employment Centres (TEC-s) and operating Complex Social Services Territorial Centres (CSSTC-s)</i>	<i>Employers of unemployed people from NK</i> <i>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</i>  More than 3,000 have been informed and applied; 1,052 individuals expressed interest so far, out of which 800 are women	MLSA of GoA <i>(Information and Public Relations Division), SEA</i>



## 5.2. Summary of project stakeholder needs and methods, tools, and techniques for stakeholder engagement

Strong stakeholder engagement is a precondition for the effectiveness of the Project. Two general vectors of stakeholder engagement under the Project will be carried out as follows:

- Awareness-raising activities on the Project activities
- Consultations with stakeholders and feedback collection throughout the entire project cycle

Generally, the following stakeholder engagement activities are proposed:

### Project preparation stage

- *Consultation meetings with the key stakeholders and interested parties engaged*
- *Dissemination of project-related information via different official and non-official platforms*

### Project implementation stage

- *Consultation meetings with the key stakeholders and interested parties*
- *Disclosure of project-related information (e.g. Environmental and Social Management Plan, SEP, user-friendly guides on support project eligibility criteria and application, media materials, etc.)*
- *Established Grievance Mechanism*
- *Day-to-day interaction and assistance with regional officers of the USS*
- *Hotlines of MLSA*

### Grant completion stage

- *Dissemination of information on project completion and outcomes.*

## 5.3 Mitigation of COVID-19 risks during SEP implementation

A precautionary approach will be taken to the consultation process to prevent infection or contagion, given the highly infectious nature of COVID-19. The following are some considerations for selecting channels of communication in light of the current COVID-19 situation:

- Avoid public gatherings (taking into account national restrictions or advisories), including public hearings, workshops, and community meetings;
- If smaller meetings are permitted/advised, conduct consultations in small-group sessions, such as focus group meetings. If not permitted or advised, make all reasonable efforts to conduct meetings through online channels;
- Diversify means of communication and rely more on social media and online channels. Where possible and appropriate, create dedicated online platforms and chat groups appropriate for the purpose, based on the type and category of stakeholders;

- Employ traditional channels of communications (TV, newspaper, radio, dedicated phone-lines, and mail) when stakeholders do not have access to online channels or do not use them frequently. Traditional channels can also be highly effective in conveying relevant information to stakeholders and allow them to provide their feedback and suggestions;
- Where direct engagement with Project affected people or beneficiaries is necessary, identify channels for direct communication with each affected household via a context-specific combination of email messages, mail, online platforms, dedicated phone lines with knowledgeable operators;
- Each of the proposed engagement channels should specify how stakeholders can provide feedback and suggestions.
- For the public works all the norms and regulations recommended by the WHO and adopted by the Government will be maintained.

In line with the above precautionary approach, different engagement methods are proposed and cover the different needs of the stakeholders as below:

**Table 3. Beneficiaries and Stakeholders of “Support to conflict affected families and capacity building” project**

Project component	Activities under each component	Beneficiaries per each activity	Stakeholders engaged per each activity	Other interested parties
<b>Component 1. Cash assistance for conflict affected families</b>	# 1: Cash benefit to NK displaced people in Armenia (68,000 AMD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</li> </ul>	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the RA (MLSA), Unified Social Service (USS), Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS), State Migration Service , commercial local Banks	WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, the ICRC, People in Need, other donor organizations and NGOs
	#6: Monthly cash benefit to support host families in Armenia (30,000 AMD monthly per each adult hosted per six months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families hosting NK displaced people and their families,</li> <li>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</li> </ul>	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the RA, Unified Social Service (USS)Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS), State Migration Service , commercial local Banks	
	#9: Employment subsidies for unemployed NK displaced people and employers in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers of unemployed people from NK</li> <li>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</li> </ul>	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the RA (MLSA), the State Migration Service, Unified Social Service (USS), local businesses, commercial local banks	
	#10: Public works for unemployed displaced people from NK in hosting municipalities in Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers of unemployed people from NK</li> <li>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</li> </ul>	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the RA, the State Migration Service, local municipalities hosting people from NK, Unified Social Service (USS), commercial local banks	
<b>Component 2. Project management</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MLSA and The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) staff, Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS), USS</li> </ul>	WB, State Migration Service, local municipalities, , commercial local Banks, local municipalities, local businesses, displaced population and host families in Armenia	

**Table 3. Stakeholder Engagement Plan**

Components	Activities	Stakeholder engagement method	Target Stakeholders	Objective of stakeholder engagement activity	Topic of consultation / message	Responsibilities
<b>Component 1. Cash assistance for conflict affected families</b>	1. Cash benefit to NK displaced people in Armenia (68,000 AMD)	<p>1.1. TV Interviews</p> <p>1.2. Press conferences</p> <p>1.3. Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA) and social media pages</p> <p>1.4. Local networks of displaced people in Armenia, social workers and NGOs working with displaced people in Armenia and vulnerable groups</p>	<p>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</p> <p>Approximately 42,000 individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness among the beneficiaries on the available support</li> <li>Promote beneficiaries to apply for the support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information on availability of the support to NK displaced people</li> <li>Eligibility and application procedures`</li> </ul>	MLSA (Information and Public Relations Division).

		1.5. Provision of information through hotlines, State Migration Service, USS local offices, local municipalities				
2. Monthly cash benefit to support host families in Armenia (30,000 AMD monthly per each adult hosted per six months)	2.5 Interviews 2.6 Press conferences 2.7 Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA) and social media pages 2.8 Local networks of displaced people in Armenia, social workers and NGOs working with displaced people in Armenia and vulnerable groups 2.9 Provision of information through hotlines, State Migration Service, USS local offices, local municipalities	Individuals who own residential real estate in the Republic of Armenia (including joint or shared ownership) who provide accommodation to the guests from December 2020 to May 2021  Approximately 25,000 households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist hosting families who report that NK displaced people are welcome in their communities</li> <li>▪ Raise awareness among the beneficiaries on the available support</li> <li>▪ Promote beneficiaries to apply for the support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide information on availability of a six-month social assistance program to reimburse the costs of temporary hosts to adult citizens registered in communities outside the control of the Republic of Artsakh</li> <li>▪ Eligibility and application procedures`</li> </ul>	MLSA (Information and Public Relations Division)	
3. Employment subsidies for unemployed NK displaced people and employers	3.5 TV Interviews 3.6 Press conferences 3.7 Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA, USS) and social media pages 3.8 Installation of information boards/panels in Territorial Employment Centres (TEC-s) and operating Complex Social Services Territorial Centres (CSSTC-s) 3.9 Local networks of displaced people in Armenia, social workers and NGOs working with displaced people in Armenia and vulnerable groups 3.10 Provision of information through hotlines, State Migration Service, USS local offices, local municipalities	Employers of unemployed people from NK Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia  400 individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness among the beneficiaries on the available support</li> <li>• Promote beneficiaries to apply for the support</li> </ul>	Provide assistance to unemployed citizens of the Artsakh Republic, who were displaced as a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, to gain work experience. Eligibility and application procedures	MLSA of GoA (Information and Public Relations Division), SEA.	
4. Public works for unemployed NK	4.5 TV Interviews 4.6 Press conferences 4.7 Media materials and news on online press, official websites (GoA, MLSA, USS) and social media pages	Employers of unemployed people from NK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Raise awareness among the beneficiaries on the available support</li> </ul>	Paid public works for displaced citizens from Artsakh Republic Eligibility and application procedures	MLSA of GoA (Information and Public	

		<p>4.8 Installation of information boards/panels in Territorial Employment Centres (TEC-s) and operating Complex Social Services Territorial Centres (CSSTC-s)</p> <p>4.9 Local networks of displaced people in Armenia, social workers and NGOs working with displaced people in Armenia and vulnerable groups</p> <p>4.10 Provision of information through hotlines, State Migration Service, USS local offices, local municipalities</p>	<p>Displaced people from NK currently living in Armenia</p> <p>1,600 individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote beneficiaries to apply for the support</li> </ul>		<p>Relations Division), USS,</p>
<b>Component 2. Project management</b>		<p>5.1 Information sharing and consultation meetings</p>	<p>The MLSA and The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) staff, State Employment Agency (SEA), Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS), Social Security Administration (SSA)</p>	<p>Enabling key stakeholders to provide their opinion, feedback, suggestions on the Project activities, its progress and possible improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regular updated on project activities, its progress, monitoring outputs, grievances raised</li> </ul>	<p>MLSA of GoA</p>



## 5.4. Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

The following principles will be applied when disclosing information on project activities:

- The project will ensure that information to be disclosed is comprehensible and easily accessible and will be delivered to the stakeholders in a timely and qualitative manner,
- Information disclosure processes will be initiated at the very beginning of the project and will be continued through the entire circle of its implementation,
- Diverse information portals will be used for information disclosure including but not limited to the official websites, social media, news outlets, etc.

Information Disclosure Preliminary Strategy is presented on Table 4.

**Table 4. Information Disclosure Preliminary Strategy**

<b>Project stage</b>	<b>Target stakeholders</b>	<b>Information to be disclosed</b>	<b>Methods and timing proposed</b>
<b>Preparatory work for project implementation</b>	<i>Government entities; local communities; NGOs working with displaced people from NK, other donor organizations working in the area, other stakeholders</i>	<i>Project purpose and coverage, SEP, GRM procedure, update on project development</i>	<i>Dissemination of information via MLSA website and social media, PCU website and social media, Public notices; Electronic publications via online/social media and press releases; direct emailing, posting information posters in the administrative buildings of local municipalities, State Migration Service, USS local offices</i>
<b>Project implementation stage</b>	<i>Government entities; local communities; NGOs working with displaced people from NK, media representatives, Project beneficiaries, other stakeholders</i>	<i>Project purpose and coverage, implementation progress, eligibility and beneficiary selection criteria, user-friendly guidelines, application procedures, Project GRM, etc.</i>	<i>Dissemination of information via MLSA website and social media, PCU website and social media, Public notices; Electronic publications via online/social media and press releases; direct emailing, posting information posters in the administrative buildings of local municipalities, State Migration Service, SSA and SEA local offices</i>  <i>Conduction of public consultation meetings with the beneficiaries and NGOs if needed</i>  <i>MLSA hotline (114), phone numbers for USS and their local offices (beneficiaries can access contact information through broad web-search or "Spyur" Information system )</i>
<b>Project completion and closure</b>	<i>Government entities; local communities; NGOs working with displaced people from NK, media representatives, Project beneficiaries, other stakeholders</i>	<i>Progress reports, GRM reports, SEP monitoring report, success cases</i>	<i>Dissemination of information via MLSA website and social media, , Public notices; Electronic publications via online/social media and press releases; direct emailing, posting information posters in the administrative buildings of local municipalities, State Migration Service, USS local offices</i>

### **5.3. Proposed strategy to incorporate the view of vulnerable groups**

The importance of cash as a preferred modality of support has been raised by the Government and was confirmed by the vulnerable groups during the rapid need assessment conducted by the REACH Armenia as of January 2021.

The overall project targets vulnerable people as the main beneficiaries of the project include displaced people in Armenia who suffered from six-week war in the region and their hosting families. However, among those groups there are people who might be more vulnerable due to their social, economic or physical condition, e.g. poor, unemployed, socially disadvantaged citizens, elderly, persons with disabilities or their caregivers, single parents, representatives of ethnic, religious, or language minorities, women, children, among others. To engage those groups the following methods/principles will be applied: (i) the stakeholder engagement team will closely work with the local USS offices, TOSS and local social workers to ensure that vulnerable groups in their area of activities are properly provided with Project-related information. This may happen through usage of local networks, information dissemination through local social workers who mainly work with vulnerable groups and through engagement of NGOs working with displaced people in Armenia (ii) ensure that shared information is accessible to all groups, including people with disabilities. For this purpose various means of information dissemination and outreach will be used at the different locations and through different channels (e.g. voice information through TV, news and interviews, printed information through posters and announcements, etc.). (iii) ensure that needs-identification and prioritization mechanism are sensible to reflect needs of the most vulnerable groups. This will be applied during end-line survey of the project or any other need assessment activity to be conducted during project implementation phase (iv) ensure that grievance redress mechanism (GRM) are sensible towards vulnerability of the applicant. Information on vulnerability status of the application will be involved in the grievance application form and where feasible those grievances will be addressed in shortest deadlines (v) ensure that vulnerable people, especially people with disabilities and elderly are able to submit on-line applications. For this purpose USS local offices, TOSS and local social workers will provide assistance to people who need assistance to use ICTs to submit their applications. Application those methods are important to ensure that vulnerable groups are properly engaged in the project activities and are benefiting from the project equally.

### **5.5. Reporting back to stakeholders**

Stakeholders will be kept informed as the project develops, including reporting on project environmental and social performance and implementing the stakeholder engagement plan and grievance mechanism.

### **6. Grievance Redress Mechanism**

The project will successfully adopt and replicate the existing Grievance Mechanism (GM) available at the PCU level. Specifically, the GM under Social Protection Administration Second

Project (SPAP II) will be replicated and adapted. The contact channels created at PCU level will be advertised via websites, Facebook, and in the regional integrated territorial offices of social services (TOSS centers). used to collect feedback, questions, or grievances. At the local level the GRM will use the local capacities of SEA (local offices) to collect grievances related to the Internship program and Public Works (activities #9 and #10 respectively). For the activities #1 and #6 Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS) will be designated to collect grievances from the beneficiaries at the local level. Besides, the hotline of the MLSA (114), a well-publicized and functional channel of communication with the citizens on social issues, will be used to receive and register Project-related grievances.

The project GM is a project-based administrative process to deal with and resolve complaints and grievances aiming at ensuring good environmental and social practice of the Project activities during the whole Project implementation cycle. The main objective of a GM is to help resolve complaints and grievances in a timely, effective, and efficient manner that satisfies all parties involved. Specifically, it provides a transparent and credible process for fair, effective, and lasting outcomes. It also builds trust and cooperation as an integral component of broader community consultation that facilitates corrective actions. Specifically, the GM:

- Provides affected people with avenues for making a complaint or resolving any dispute that may arise during the implementation of projects;
- Ensures that appropriate and mutually acceptable redress actions are identified and implemented to the satisfaction of complainants; and
- Avoids the need to resort to judicial proceedings.

The following core principles are embodied in the GM:

- Grievances will be treated confidentially, assessed impartially, and handled transparently.
- The Project beneficiaries may use a range of contact options (telephone number, e-mail address and postal address, etc.). The GRM is accessible to all stakeholders.
- The GRM is designed to be responsive to the needs of complainants.
- All grievances, simple or complex, will be addressed and resolved as quickly as possible. The action taken on the grievance will be swift, decisive, and constructive.
- The GM includes a protocol and dedicated awareness-raising of all staff involved of safe and confidential handling of grievances related to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH).

The data gathered through the operation of GM will be used not only to address the complaints and grievances arisen during the course of project implementation, but also to contribute to the continuous improvement of the project performance through the analysis of trends and lessons learned.

The PCU within MLSA, through their grievance mechanisms, will respond to all types of citizen concerns and feedback about the Project. Data on citizen concerns and the resolution of grievances will be collected helping to promote greater accountability and responsiveness. PCU is responsible to verify that grievance redress mechanisms are present and properly advertised,

that all grievances are responded to and addressed within an established timeframe, and that all grievances are recorded in a consistent manner at the local level (local offices of USS) and at the project level (PCU). The Territorial Offices of Social Services and local offices of USS will receive grievances at local level. All the grievances will be properly registered in a consolidated log (created through an online shared document). The PCU Social specialist will be in charge of regular review of log and assessment

### **6.1. Description of GM**

Grievance collected but not addressed at local levels (through USS local offices) will further be directed and addressed at PCU and MLSA level.

#### **Intake and Record:**

Project affected persons (PAP) dissatisfied with Project-related activities can give their feedback or convey complaints at any stage of the process. Complaints can be made in writing, verbally in a face to face manner at the PCU office or through one of these channels:

- PCU phone number: +374 10 528702
- Project Website (Special section for the complaints and feedbacks) [mlsa.am](http://mlsa.am),
- Project Facebook Page
- E-mail address: [infospap@mlsa.am](mailto:infospap@mlsa.am)
- Special Complaint/Feedback Boxes at the Project Sites (during some Project Activities)
- Regular Post Mail (Government bld. 3).
- MLSA hotline - 114

The focal point (FP) for the GM is the Social Specialist involved in the Project, who is in charge of receiving, screening, recording and documenting all the complaints. In addition the hotline of MLSA (114) will be used to collect Project-related grievances and complaints. All grievances and complaints received through MLSA hot line will be transferred to PCU focal point for registration and further processing. The GM Focal Point reports all the recorded cases to the Project Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (M&ES) and Environmental Specialist (ES) no later than during 1 day after the case registration.

After PCU focal point records the case the screening of the complaint begins. The FP establishes the eligibility of the received complaint by the following criteria: a) the complainant is identifiable and has provided a name and contact details, b) the complainant is affected by the project, c) the complaint has a direct relationship to the project, d) the issues raised in the complaint fall within the scope of the issues that the GM and the Project Team is mandated to respond. Received grievances will be classified: typology will be based on the complainant's characteristics (e.g., vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities, people with language barriers, etc.) and the complaint's nature.

The GM will also allow anonymous grievances to be registered. They should be reported to Project Manager and based on the circumstances can be reviewed to prevent any risks related to Project operation.

### **Review, Investigation and Resolution of Grievances**

The case review is being processed by the Social Specialist under the guidance and support of the Project Manager. Based on the need other members of the Project Team can be involved in the reviewing process to assist the Social Specialist in the final decision making. Case Review cannot take more than 5 working days after the registration.

All the registered complaints pass a further assessment to identify their significance, classified in terms of high, medium, or low levels based on its impact on both the complainant and the project. The assessment criteria include the following: a) severity of the problem, b) potential impact on the well-being of an individual or group, c) potential impact on the project, and d) public profile of the issue.

Additional support or information may be gathered from any other sources in order to describe the cause and effects of grievance more clearly, its level of urgency or severity and its relationship to the Project. The FP is authorized to contact the Complainant during the reviewing process, if any additional information or clarifications are needed for making a fair and relevant decision.

All complainants should be contacted by the FP within five working days of presenting a case to be informed of the final answer/resolution or regarding the status of the case. In special cases where a resolution cannot be provided in five working days (when more time is needed for additional information and involvement of other stakeholders, including MLSA) the complainants will be informed about the additional time required for their case, which according to the RA Law on Freedom of Information cannot be longer than one month.

Responses can be either oral or written, depending on whether the grievance was received orally or in writing. Regardless of its form, the claimant and the response should be registered.

The response at least should include the following information: a) acceptance or rejection of the complaint, b) if rejected, the reasons for the rejection and possible referrals, if any, c) if accepted, the next steps and timeframe for the resolution.

In the framework of the current Project the possible approaches to complaints resolution can include: a) mediation through local and traditional institutions and/or community-based organizations, b) direct negotiations and dialogue between the PAP and the relevant agency or agencies; c) facilitated negotiations through a third party; d) investigation of a complaint

through review of documents, field investigation, and/or interviews of different parties; e) referrals to other judicial and administrative processes. Depending on the nature and the severity of the complaint/s, the FP and Project Manager in consultations with the MLSA should identify and decide on an approach for grievance resolution.

#### **GM Log:**

The Safeguards specialist of the PCU will maintain a GM log (IT-based or manual). A complaint by any channel should be recorded in the complaints logbook or grievance excel-sheet/grievance database. PCU will be responsible for periodic (minimum monthly) check and consolidation of grievance redress logs and maintaining an up-to-date grievance log for the whole Project. The grievance will clearly show summary of question/grievance/feedback received, date and name/contact of complainant if available, date of response, status of resolution, and next steps or pending actions.

#### **Close out and Follow up of Grievances:**

A grievance is closed out when no further action can be or needs to be taken. The grievance cannot be closed out, until the response has not been communicated with and approved by the Complainant. If the Complainant is satisfied with the outcome, then the grievance is closed out and is being registered in the Grievance Register as Resolved case. The Complainant provides his/her written agreement as confirmation.

The GM will provide an appeal process if the complainant is not satisfied with the complainant's proposed resolution. Once all possible means to resolve the complaint have been proposed and if the complainant is still not satisfied, they should be advised of their right to legal recourse.

If the Complainant rejects or appeals twice with the same claim, then the closure status of the complaint is being recorded and entered into the Grievance database as unresolved. The case is regarded as unresolved if it has not been possible to reach an agreed resolution and the case has been authorized for close out by the Project Advisory Expert Group. The grievance can be closed also in cases where the attempts to contact the Complainant have not been successful for 30 days following receipt of formal grievance. These cases are registered as abandoned.

As per the Republic of Armenia's legislation, Project affected people may at any stage refer to court. Opening a Court Case means stopping all the activities regarding the grievance within the Project GRM system. Once the case is opened, only decisions made by the Court are becoming obligatory both for the Applicant and the Project.

## **6.2 Handling of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH) issues**

The SEA/SH risk of the Project activities have been screened and assessed as low. The GRM will be sensible in terms of receiving and handling of SEA/SH grievances, putting in place mechanisms for confidential reporting with safe and ethical documenting of GBV issues. Further, the GRM will also have processes to immediately notify both the MLSA and the World Bank of any GBV complaints, with the survivor's consent, strictly keeping his/her confidentiality. The protocol will be accompanied by training for 114 Call Center staff under MLSA on using the protocol. The Project will use SPAP II experience, awareness-raising and training materials and protocols of handle GBV (SEA/SH) cases reported.

## **6.3 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluating a Grievance Mechanism**

The PCU Social Specialist with the support of the M&ES is responsible for tracking and monitoring the process of grievance redress and the implementation of the decisions made and of seeing that redress is granted to PAPs in a timely and efficient manner. The monitoring includes the progress of implementation of grievance resolutions and the timeliness of grievance redress, follow up grievances to be sure they are attended to, and document details of complaints received and the progress in solving them. The overall effectiveness and the impact of the GRM will be evaluated monthly by the M&ES and the evaluation results are being used to improve the performance of the GRM and overall Grant activities. The Monitoring and evaluation of the GRM can be done both through the quantitative/statistical data analysis and qualitative methods, including interviews with and feedback from the PAPs involved in the GRM procedures.

GM status reports will be included in regular progress reporting to the World Bank. The status reports will include a summary of complaints, types, actions taken, and progress made to resolve pending issues.

## **6.4 Publicizing Grievance Redress Procedures**

The PCU GRM Focal Point gives necessary instructions to all the Staff members engaged under the Project on the GRM of the Project and illustrates to them the procedures and formats to be used including the reporting procedures. The Project team in the frames of their project-related responsibilities are in charge to inform the beneficiaries on the Project GRM and provide necessary explanations on the procedure to be used, if they wish to file a complaint.

The GRM-related information will be available in Armenian and English both on the PCU web platforms and MLSA web-site. Specifically, it will be published on the PCU and MLSA webpages, and also information releases on the GRM (with relevant contact data) will be distributed through social media and media outlets. Besides, Project GRM-related information will be placed in the administrative buildings of USS local offices. Leaflets including GRM-related information will be shared with the beneficiaries during signing a contract on Internship or Public Works. The

Information releases will include information on the following: how to access the GRM, when (in which cases / eligibility) and how to make a complaint, procedure, and timeframes for the GRM, etc.

The Project team based on the needs can also use other available means to raise awareness about the Beneficiary Feedback & Grievance Redress Mechanism.

#### 6.5 The MLSA Call Center Capacities (114 hotline)

The Call Center has capacity of 300 operators to receive and answer the calls of the citizens. Due to COVID-19 conditioned critical situation in the country another hot line number 011 300 114 was added to relieve the work overload of the Ministry's initial hot line number answering the calls of the citizens every working day from 9:00 to 18:00. By calling this phone number, the citizen can follow the voice messages; select the field to which the question refers. The system will direct the call to the relevant specialist of the relevant department, who will answer the citizen's question.

Generally the MLSA Call Center will provide advisory support to the beneficiaries. The delivery of these services will be organized and coordinated by the MLSA. The MLSA will provide additional training to the call center staff on the Project activities to enhance the effectiveness of the support provided to the beneficiaries. All calls received through the Call Center will be properly registered. Any calls requiring follow-up advice or containing actual grievance related to the Project will be transferred to the PCU focal point.

## 7. Resources and Responsibilities for implementing stakeholder engagement activities

The Project will be executed by the MLSA through the PCU, the and USS. The MLSA is responsible for the identification and outreach of potential beneficiaries. The Ministry, with technical support by PCU of SPAP II project, will be in charge of stakeholder engagement activities, described in this document. All costs related to SEP implementation which include salary for M&E and social specialist, and may include small costs related to communication, printing, organization and other activities will be covered through budget allocated for the Component 2 of the Project. The stakeholder engagement activities described in this document are a core part of the Project implementation.

Focal points from the PCU within MLSA will be assigned to coordinate and ensure efficient and operative implementation of Project-related activities. Designated staff within MLSA and PCU will be responsible for implementation, monitoring and reporting of the activities described as per this SEP. As these staff members from MLSA and PCU receive reimbursements from the state budget or other loan project (in case of PCU) and implementation of stakeholder engagement



activates are core part of their job responsibilities, no additional reimbursement lines will be designated for coordination of stakeholder engagement activities under this SEP.

A more detailed account of these actions will be prepared as part of the update of this SEP, which is expected to take place within 30 days after the project approval date. The SEP will be continuously updated throughout the project implementation period, as required.

## 8. Monitoring and Reporting

The SEP will be periodically revised and updated as necessary in the Project implementation course to ensure that the information presented herein is consistent and the most recent. The identified engagement methods should be revised to remain appropriate and adequate for the project context and specific development phases. Any significant changes to the Project-related activities and its schedule will be duly reflected in the SEP.

The MLSA will be responsible for the overall M&E of project activities and providing progress reports to the World Bank. Monthly summaries and internal reports on public grievances, inquiries, and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions, will be collected by responsible staff of USS. Afterwards the collected information will be referred to the senior management of the Project and summary reports will be submitted to the WB on a quarterly basis. The quarterly summaries will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and the nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner.

Information on public engagement activities during the project implementation process will be conveyed to the stakeholders via virtual or face-to-face meetings and via the MLSA and PCU Facebook page. Local media outlets will also be engaged in crucial project milestones.

Several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be monitored by the Project regularly, including the following parameters: number of public hearings, consultation meetings and other public discussions/forums conducted within a quarterly reporting period; frequency of public engagement activities; the number of public grievances received within a quarterly reporting period and number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline; the number of press materials published/broadcasted in the local, regional, and national media. In addition, to monitor project outcomes related to economic wellbeing and social cohesion of the beneficiaries, the Project will use available survey for baseline and will conduct end line study among the target beneficiaries. Particularly, the project will use Rapid Needs Assessment Survey conducted by National Institute of Labor and Social Research and UNICEF in January 2021 for the baseline. For the end line a survey on a random sample of displaced people and people living in hosting communities will be conducted.