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FAMILIES DISPLACED FROM NAGORNO-KARABAKH AS A RESULT OF THE 2020 KARABAKH WAR

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT



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VANADZOR, 2021





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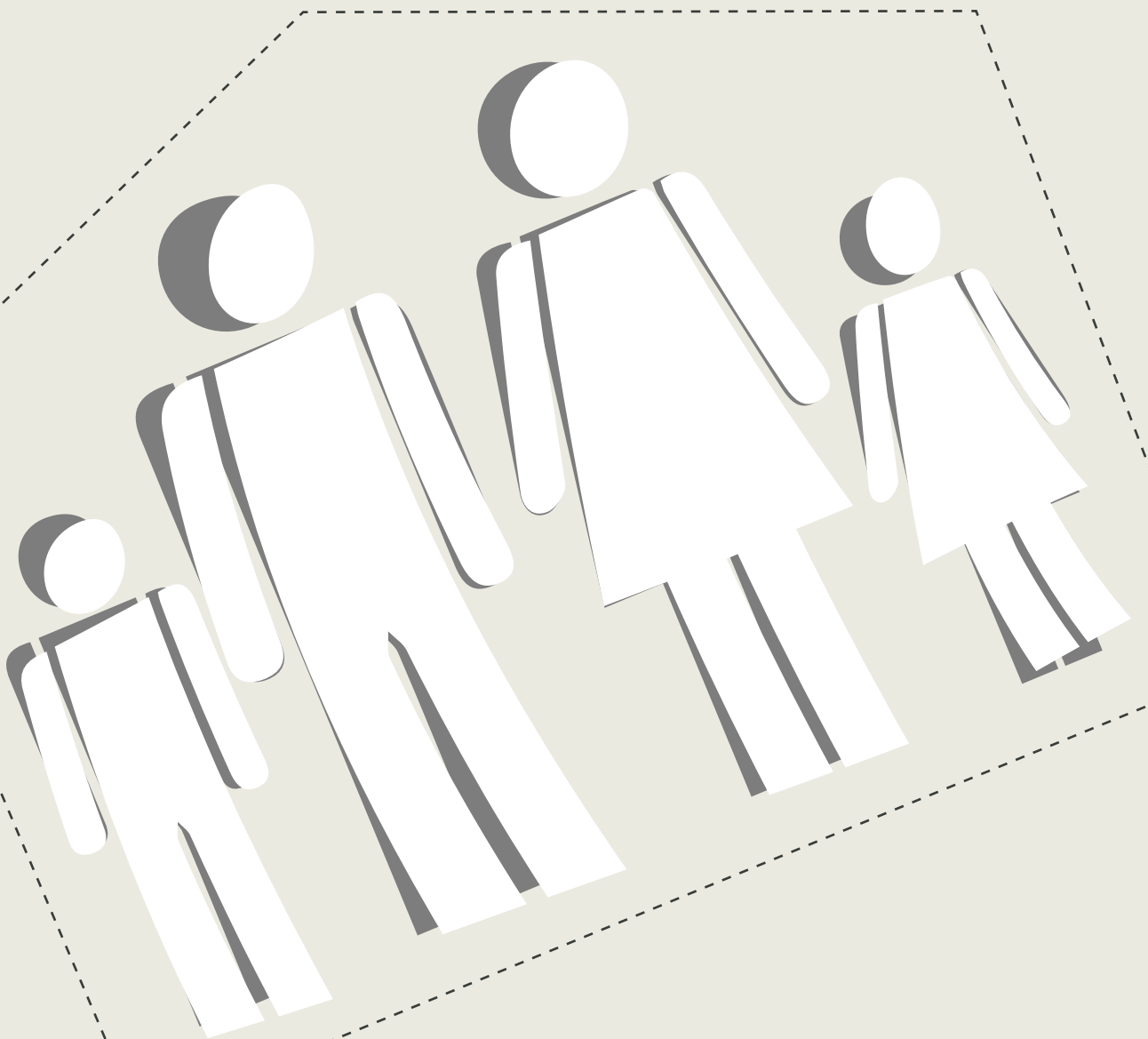
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BRIEF STUDY DESCRIPTION

On 27 September, 2020, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched a large-scale missile, artillery and aerial attack along the entire Karabakh-Azerbaijani contact line. Martial law and general mobilization were declared in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Forty-four days of heavy and bloody fighting ended with a trilateral agreement (between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) signed on 10 November and mediated by the Russian Federation. According to the agreement, the conflicting parties remained in the positions they were in at the moment of signing the ceasefire. This agreement also set deadlines, during which the Armenian side undertook to withdraw the Armenian armed forces from the seven Azerbaijani regions adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result of the war and the signed agreement, the Hadrut region (except for the villages of Hin Tagher and Khtsaberd, whose situation changed a month later, after an incident on 13 December) as well as Shushi town with adjacent villages came under the control of Azerbaijani armed forces. A total of 120 settlements previously inhabited by Armenians remained under the Azerbaijani control at the time of the ceasefire. Russian peacekeeping forces were deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh.

From the very first day of the military actions, thousands of residents were evacuated from the above-mentioned settlements, as well as from other communities of Nagorno Karabakh, including the capital of Stepanakert. The displaced people found refuge in different settlements of the Republic Armenia's regions.

The current study was conducted by Peace Dialogue NGO in order to identify the needs of those displaced as a result of a large-scale armed attack on Nagorno-Karabakh on 27 September, 2020. It aims at finding out the issues related to human rights (including the right to life, property, health, education), as well as legal, gender and peace-building spheres that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh faced during and after the evacuation to their temporary or permanent residence.

IN THE SCOPE OF THIS STUDY THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE CONSIDERED:

The process of evacuation:

- Who organized and assisted with the evacuation of the respondents?
- Did the displaced families have the opportunity to be reunited with other family members who were not evacuated to Armenia with them?

Access to documents of all kinds and legal aspects:

- Did the displaced people have the opportunity to take their IDs, other types of documents, valuables and clothing during the evacuation?

- Have the displaced persons received any status and any official document confirming that status?
- Have they encountered legal issues in their current places of residence?

Social-economic situation

- Have families who have had a family member injured, dead or missing as a result of military operations received adequate state support?
- What health, education and food services have the displaced families received at their place of residence?
- Do the displaced persons have jobs or are they engaged in any other type of economic activity? What is their current source of income?

Effects of the war on the displaced persons

- Have any psychological problems been observed among the displaced family members?

Future perspectives

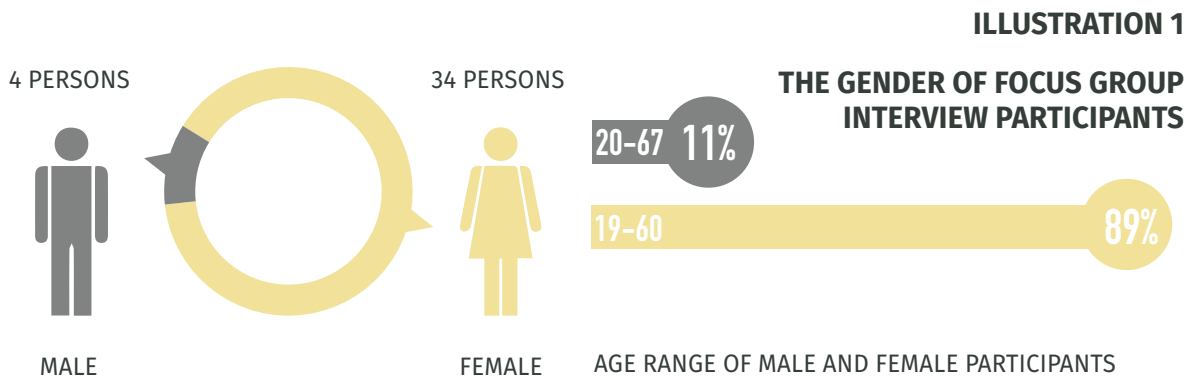
- Are they going to return to their former settlements (if possible) or settle in another place in Nagorno-Karabakh?
- Do they consider the coexistence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations possible in the near future or later?
- What expectations do the respondents have regarding the final resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?
- What are the main issues that the respondents have faced or may face as women or men?

STUDY DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

According to the observations, several thousand displaced people found shelter in different settlements of Lori and Tavush regions of Armenia. The study was conducted based on interviews with the representatives of thirty-eight (38) families residing in a number of settlements in the above-mentioned regions (including the towns of Vanadzor, Spitak, Dilijan, as well as villages near Spitak, Vanadzor, Stepanavan). The interviews were carried out with four focus groups. One representative from each family took part in the survey. Thus, the needs of 38 families displaced as a result of the war (approximately 228 people) were assessed through these focus group interviews.

The formation of focus groups was based on the principle of the representation of women and men of different age groups, as well as the representation of inhabitants of the settlements that remained both under and beyond the control of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the war.

Of the 38 respondents who participated in the interviews, 34 were women aged 19 to 60, and only 4 were men aged 20 to 67. **(See illustration 1).**

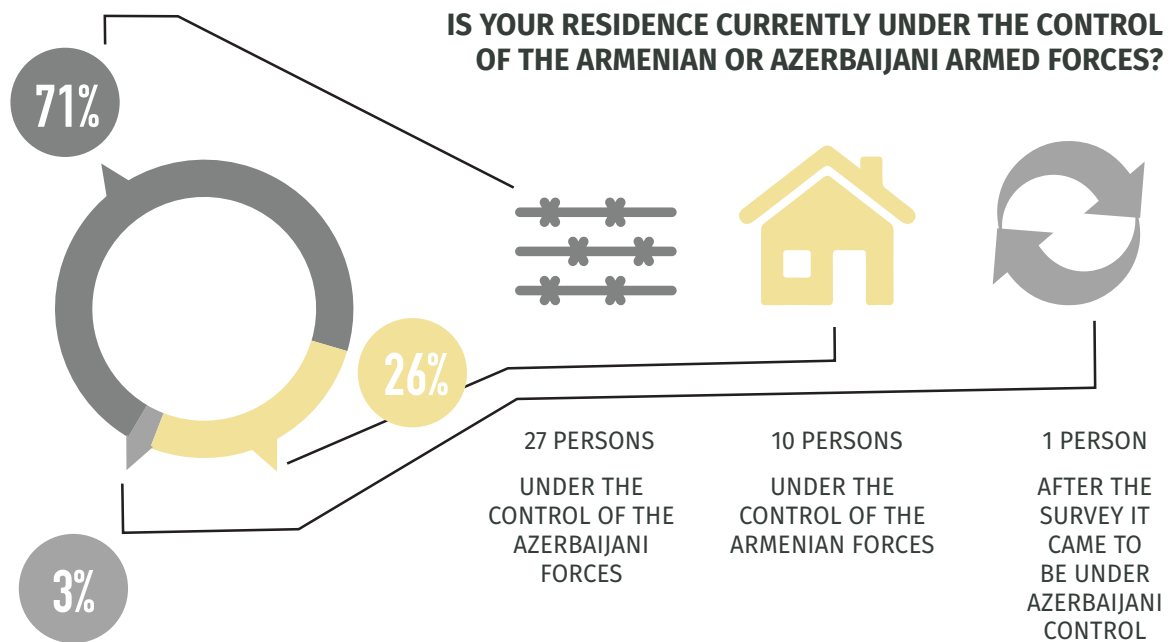


Such a disproportion of gender representation was due to the fact that during the organization and conduct of the interviews (November-December, 2020), women, minors and the elderly made up a large number among the displaced population from Nagorno-Karabakh settlements who found shelter in Armenia. Young and middle-aged men were mostly in Nagorno-Karabakh, participating in military operations or serving in the army (including compulsory and contractual military service).

Eleven (11) of the focus group participants were individuals whose former residences were under the control of the Armenian side at the time of the survey.

On 13 December the Azerbaijani side launched an attack on the villages of Hin Tagher, Khtsaberd in the Hadrut region of Nagorno-Karabakh and fortified its position in these settlements. As a result, the two villages were removed from Armenian control in a new map released by Russia of its peacekeeping deployment. Therefore, the settlement of another (1) of the above-mentioned 11 persons appeared to be out of the control of the Armenian side. **(See illustration 2).**

ILLUSTRATION 2



STUDY RESULTS

Interviews indicate that in the very first days of combat, people from Nagorno-Karabakh mainly organized the evacuation of families (mostly women and minors) by their own means. Men mostly stayed in Nagorno-Karabakh due to work or service (including compulsory and contractual military service), and some returned to work or volunteered to partake in military operations immediately after moving their families to Armenia. Surveys indicated that at the beginning of the war there was no tendency to move the older generation from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, which was due to the underlying idea that military actions may be short-term, so the elderly were mostly accommodated in shelters in order not to cause them inconvenience. Nevertheless, as military operations escalated, they were also evacuated.

Most of the displaced families organized the transportation with their own cars, or one of a relative's or a friend's. The evacuation of community residents was rarely organized and carried out by an administrative body or a community leader. Only one case was recorded, when the chief of the community being informed about a possible attack, on 26 September, organized and systematically evacuated (probably on his own initiative) about 50 residents of the village, taking them to Vardenis in his own "Ural" car (Shahumyan district, village Charektar).

There have been cases when people reached the Armenian border, mainly the cities of Vardenis and Goris, by their own means, and from there they were transported (mainly to the capital of the republic) by minibuses provided on a voluntary basis.

It is worth mentioning that according to two (2) of the respondents, their 17- and 18-year-old male children (not drafted at the time of the evacuation) were not allowed to cross the Nagorno-Karabakh border during the evacuation. One of the interviewed women tried to find out the basis of the above-mentioned ban from the Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Defense.



She was told "it is an internally made decision, according to which at least boys of that age should stay in Artsakh to protect their homes if necessary."

Most of the respondents were able to take their identity documents, children's birth certificates with them before the evacuation, but only half of them managed to get other types of documents (including ownership certificate, diploma, driver's license, etc.), as well as one or two pieces of clothing. Most of the respondents were not able to take valuables and money with them and only two (2) were able to evacuate certain household items. Citizens note that along with

the fact that the military operations and the fire were so intense that they could only think about saving lives, they also had the perception that this time too the military operations may be short-term and they would soon return to their normal lives, as it happened during the four-day April war in 2016.

It should be highlighted that almost a quarter of the respondents mentioned that they always kept the documents in one place; in a bag, because they always feared that one day they would have to leave their place of residence, because they always had the possibility of war resumption in mind.



“I always kept the documents in a bag. When the shootings started, I gave the bag to my daughter and told her that no matter what, you should never lose it. I remember very well in 1992, when I was a little girl, I came out of our house holding the bag of documents that my mother had given to me,” says one of the women evacuated from Mataghis.

Twenty-three (23) of the respondents stated that their apartment and houses were mostly intact at the time of leaving. Some of their cars were damaged by explosions, but in most cases the cars were also intact. Two (2) of these people lived in rented apartments, and the residence of eighteen (18) of the respondents came under the control of Azerbaijani forces. Since leaving their place of residence, they have received no further information about the condition of their property.

Eight (8) of the respondents stated that their apartments, cars and other property had already been destroyed/partially-destroyed or damaged at the time of leaving. Moreover, the places of residence of only three (3) remained under the control of the Armenian side, one of whom was living in a rented apartment in Stepanakert when the war started.

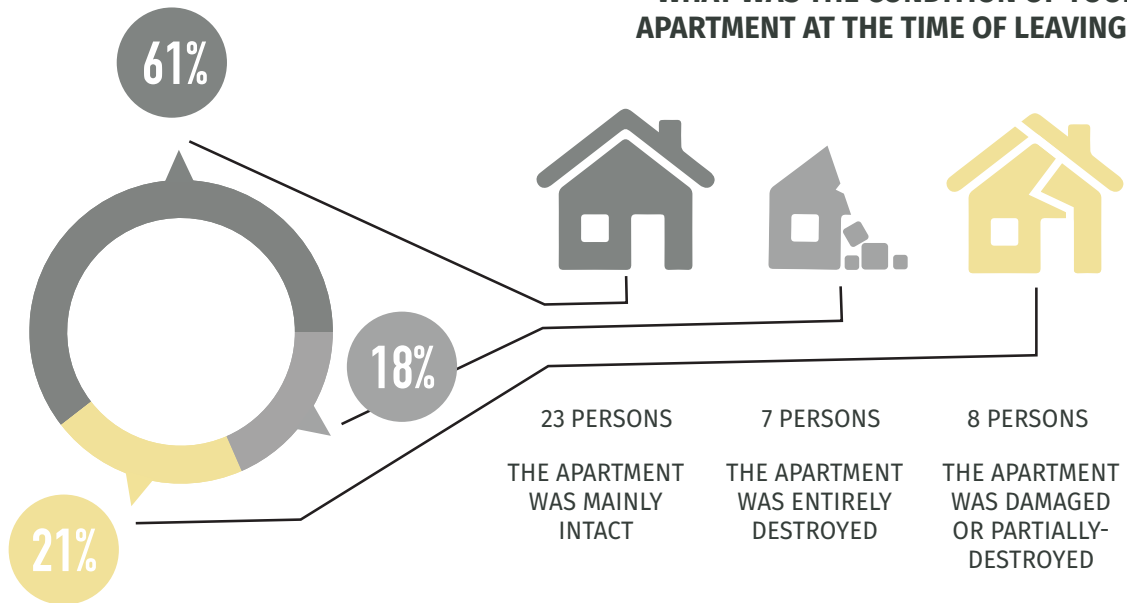
Seven (7) of the respondents said that their apartments were completely destroyed. There are very few cases of their cars being intact (only about four). The place of residence of only two (2) of these people is under the control of the Armenian side. **(See illustration 3).**

Respondents stated that at the time of the survey (November-December 2020) they had not yet received any compensation or assistance for lost property.

All the respondents gave a negative answer to the question whether their status had been clarified and a relevant document had been given by any state body at that moment. They mentioned that they were only invited to regional administrations, in some cases also to municipalities and village administrations, where they registered in order to be provided with food, hygiene products and clothing.

ILLUSTRATION 3

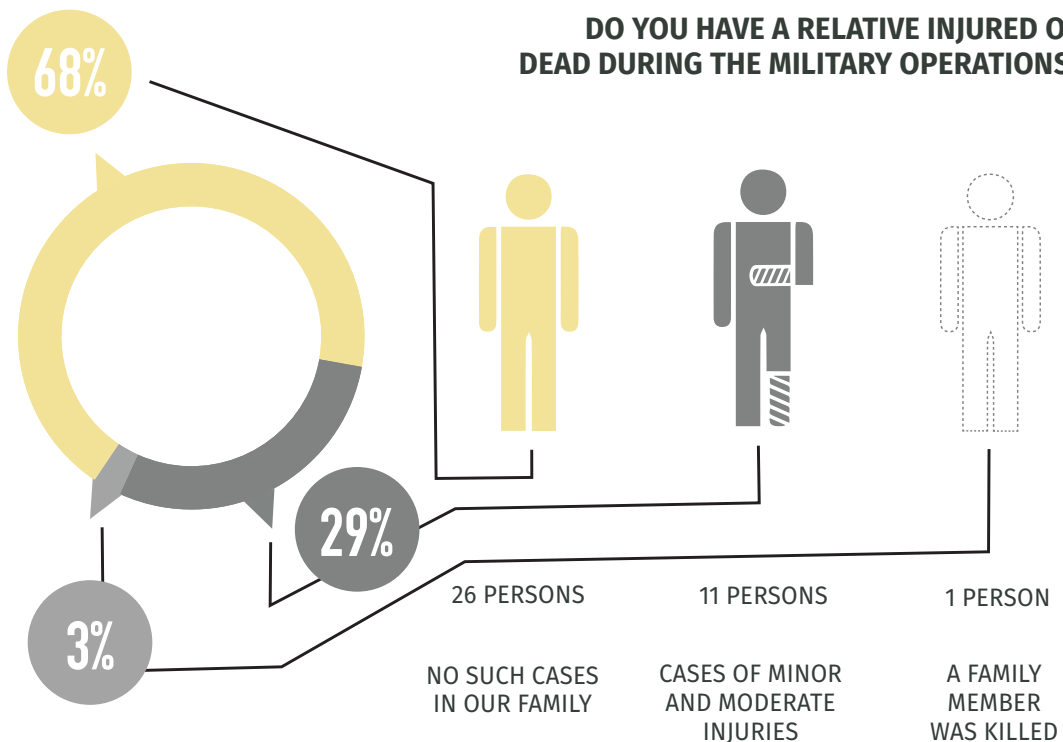
WHAT WAS THE CONDITION OF YOUR APARTMENT AT THE TIME OF LEAVING?



They were also offered to use the services of a psychologist if necessary. In the families of 11 of the respondents there were people who received minor and moderate injuries as a result of military operations and one lost her husband. **(See illustration 4).**

ILLUSTRATION 4

DO YOU HAVE A RELATIVE INJURED OR DEAD DURING THE MILITARY OPERATIONS?



All those who sustained minor injuries received first aid in medical facilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh. In the most severe cases people were transferred to Goris, then to Yerevan, where they were provided with proper and full medical care. The interviewees mentioned that all surgeries and other types of medical assistance, even food and necessary medicine were provided free of charge in hospitals.

Almost all the respondents reported stress and anxiety, nervous tension and depression. Some of the female participants even mentioned that they had physiological problems - sharp fluctuations in blood pressure, fever. Many also had insomnia. The children also mainly experienced irritability, fear of sounds and darkness, depression, in some cases, memory problems, fainting and bed-wetting.

One of the respondents added that everything happened so fast (meaning the beginning of military operations and the evacuation of people) that many of the children did not even have time to fully understand what was happening. This respondent also said that according to her observations her 17-year-old son seemed to have overcome his former fear of blood, because while working in a military canteen, he saw many wounded people during the war and was even able to help them.

The male members of the displaced families at the time of the survey were still in Nagorno-Karabakh due to various circumstances. In a small number of cases when men had already reunited with their families, women also noticed a number of problems among men, including nervous tension and irritability. Some also mentioned that men became more silent, more self-contained, did not want to talk to their families about what had happened, were triggered by even the slightest sound and had insomnia.

Nobody wanted to use the services of a psychologist offered by the regional administrations at the time of the survey. During the interviews, it became apparent that the refusal of services of a psychologist is more driven by sociocultural reasons, as in Armenian culture, even family members' mental health problems are preferred to be solved within the family, on their own, avoiding visibility and public discussion, regardless of the factors that caused such problems.

Only three of the respondents (3) mentioned that they had tested positive for Covid-19 and received proper medical assistance. The respondents have not had any problems with the healthcare system and the necessary medical care. Moreover, in all the observed cases, the medical care was provided free of charge, both in state and private medical facilities.

There were no particular problems with food either, as the provision of food was organized not only by regional administrations and municipalities, but also

with the support of the diaspora and the population of the Republic of Armenia, especially by the residents of the settlements where the displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh found refuge.

Most of the respondents also had no problem placing school-age children in the schools of the communities where they took refuge. Some also mentioned that the children were accepted to schools even in the absence of identification documents. They were provided with necessary books and stationery. There have been cases when children had difficulties understanding the literary Armenian language during the lesson, however the teachers expressed their willingness to conduct additional classes with those children.

The survey indicates that the Nagorno-Karabakh evacuees are not engaged in any economic activity in the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The problem is that as a result of the war and displacement, people have mostly lost their jobs and sources of income or are in danger of losing their jobs.

The main reason for the loss of jobs and sources of income is the fact that their former settlements where they ran their own farms, engaged in gardening, animal husbandry or where they were employed, came under the control of the Azerbaijani side. Currently, the majority of respondents' incomes are generated mainly from state subsidies or pensions. Only a very small part of the respondents still keep their jobs in Nagorno-Karabakh.

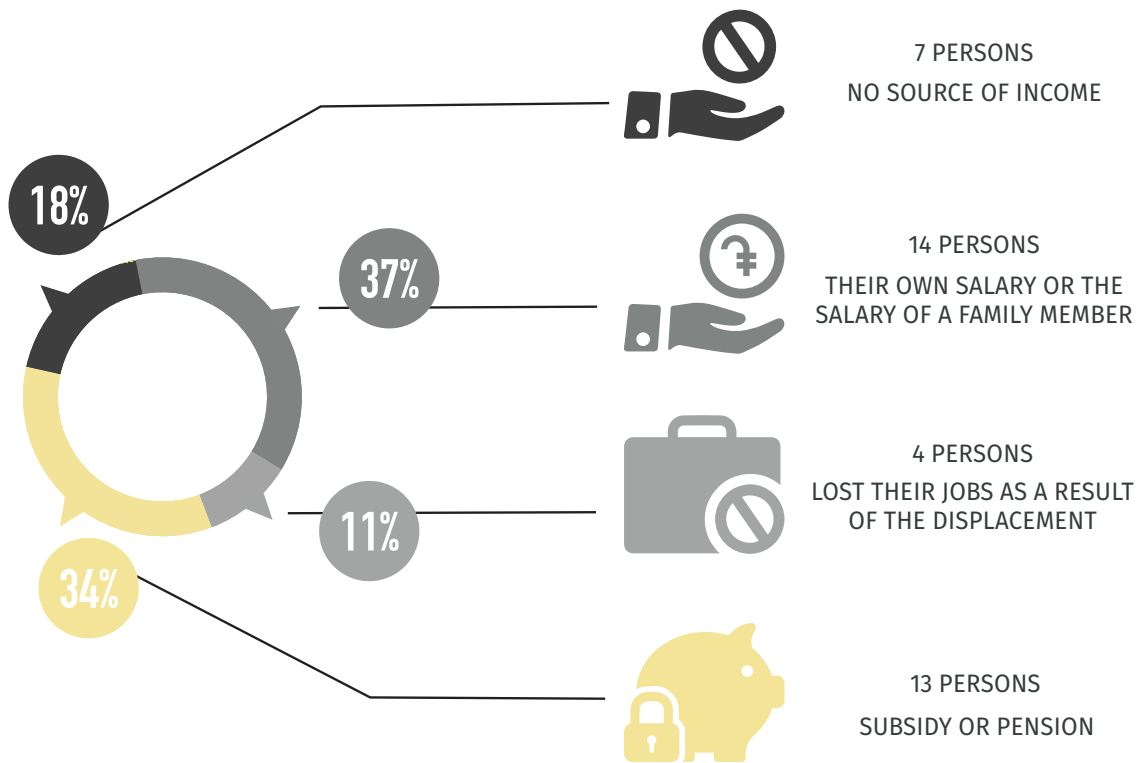
Thus, there were only fourteen (14) respondents, whose source of income was their own or another family member's salary. Four (4) of the respondents stated that they had lost their jobs as a result of displacement. Financial resources of thirteen (13) respondents are formed from subsidies or pensions. Only seven (7) indicated that they had no source of income at the time of the survey. **(See illustration 5).**

There were no other activities or actions (economic or voluntary) in which the respondents could be involved. Only one respondent mentioned that during the war he and his school-age brother had volunteered to weave military netting for the army at school.

Some of the female interviewees mentioned that they had received job offers from the pastry and "Gloria" sewing production unit through the mediation of the Lori regional administration, however they could not accept the job offer because they are mothers with many children and they are mainly the ones who take care of the children. The women also mentioned that the "Armenian mothers" charitable non-governmental organization, again through the Lori regional administration, offered to recruit women and organize trainings for all of those, who want to engage in economic activity and acquire relevant skills. The women added that no practical steps were taken as of the moment of the survey.

ILLUSTRATION 5

THE RESPONDENTS' SOURCE OF INCOME



The results of the interviews show that displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh faced a number of problems in the legal and social spheres. For instance, they had problems submitting online applications for social assistance provided by the Republic of Armenia due to the lack of data in the state register. The system did not recognize the data of the identity documents, as a result of which it was impossible to submit an application. The problem mainly arose when entering the data of minors.

To solve the aforementioned problems, the citizens were offered to either go to Nagorno-Karabakh or submit written applications for registration in the system. It takes a while to receive a reply when submitting a written application, and there is a deadline set for applying for social assistance programs.

Thus, there is a risk of being deprived of social assistance.

Among the social issues, some were related to receiving post-natal allowances for women who gave birth in the territory of Armenia during the war, as well as issues related to the registration of minor children. Some respondents had problems with the payment of their vehicle's property tax and obtaining a tax certificate, as the community where the vehicle was registered came under the control of Azerbaijan. Another citizen had a problem receiving alimony.

Most of the respondents also mentioned that they raised the need for support with utility payments or utility discount programs. In this regard, they mainly approached the municipalities of their settlements, but did not receive an exhaustive answer, as they were told that this issue was not within the municipalities' authority.

We had the following image as to the question whether the respondents intend to return to their former settlements, if it is under the control of the Armenian side or settle in another place in Nagorno-Karabakh. **(See illustration 6).**

Only six (6) respondents mentioned that their families were planning to return to the former place of residence.

Another four (4) mentioned that they would return if the state provided a house in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Four (4) respondents said that they would only go back to Stepanakert, as any other place is no longer safe, since Nagorno-Karabakh is blocked on four sides, and there is a security issue.



“We cannot be sure that one day they will not enter our house and kill us,” said one of the respondents.

Moreover, the last two (2) groups are the people who have lost their places of residence.

Sixteen (16) respondents answered that it was not clear yet what they would do. Many of these people mention that they were very concerned about the safety of children, and that any settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh is no longer safe, as even Stepanakert is blocked. One of the respondents mentioned that if it was possible to return the regions of Shushi and Hadrut in the future as a result of negotiations, perhaps it would be a little safer and they would like to return. Some feel that their former place of residence is still in danger of being bombed at any moment. The prevailing opinion of this group is that even the settlements under the control of the Armenian forces are so close to the Azerbaijani settlements, and the positions of the latter are so favorable that the issue of security becomes the number one reason preventing people from returning. In this group there are residents of Stepanakert who are also not sure that it is expedient to return. The reasons are different - from the lack of access to proper education for children to health issues.

One of the respondents answered that she and her husband would return to Nagorno-Karabakh for work, but would not take the children. They will buy another house in one of the villages of Armenia and try to live in two places.

Four (4) respondents answered that they would never take their children to Nagorno-Karabakh under any circumstances.

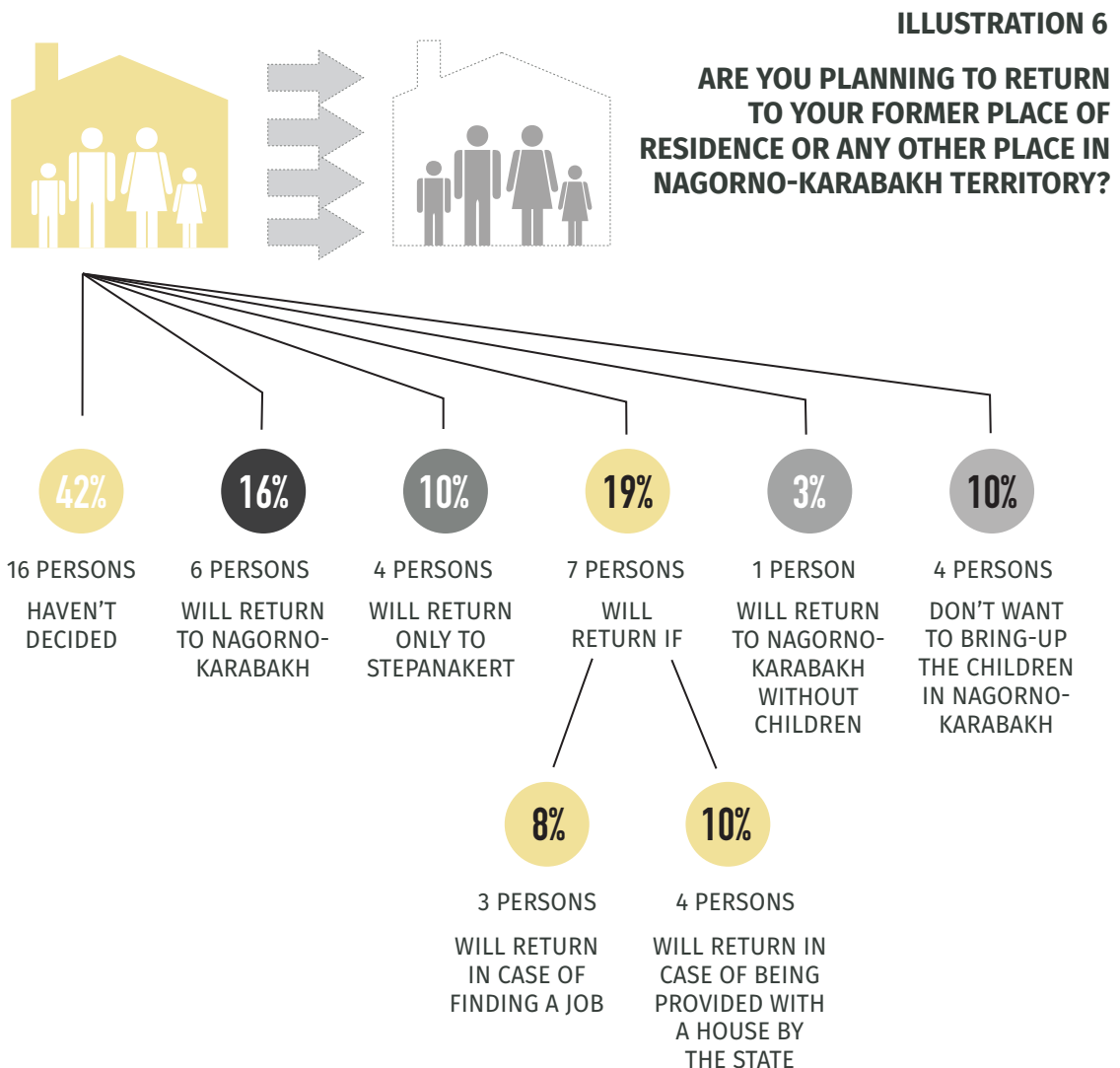


“Even if my parents return, I will not go anywhere from Armenia,” says one of the respondents.



“I am becoming a refugee for the fourth time. If every time I build a house and plant a garden but not have the time to harvest and enjoy the good, I will never return,” says one of the women.

Three (3) women respondents state that their choice of further residence largely depends on their husband’s place of work. Women say that they will return to where there is work, especially as it is rather difficult to find a job in Armenia today. The places of residence of these people came under the control of Azerbaijani forces.



Thirty-two (32) of the respondents think that the Armenian and Azerbaijani nations cannot live next door to each other as good neighbours.

Four (4) people said that it was difficult to answer unequivocally. Some people think that it has not been possible until today, they cannot say what will happen in the future.

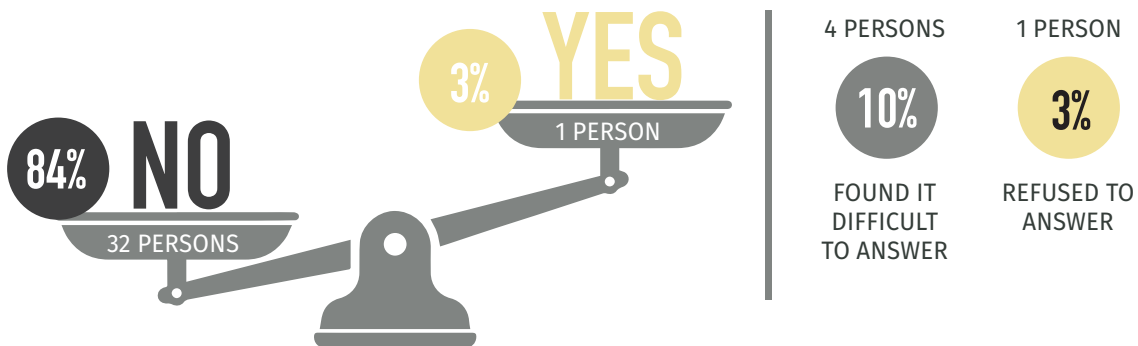
“ Some said, “now - no, but maybe in 2-3 generations it will become possible.”

One (1) notes that although it is difficult to foresee now, nothing should be ruled out.

One (1) person refused to answer the question, and only one (1) mentioned that it would be possible. **(See illustration 7).**

ILLUSTRATION 7

DO YOU CONSIDER THE CO-EXISTENCE OF ARMENIAN AND AZERBAIJANI NATIONS POSSIBLE?



For the Armenian side, according to the respondents, there are more good reasons not to trust the Azerbaijanis, especially after what people experienced during the escalation in 2016 and especially during the last war in 2020. **Such an opinion is mostly justified by the videos of people being captured, beheaded, mistreated and humiliated and these videos are actively spread on the Internet by Azerbaijani users.**

Eleven (11) respondents think that the resolution of the conflict and clarification of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh can be achieved through war. According to many of them, war is inevitable regardless of whether it will take place in 3 years or later. It is noteworthy that people who can envisage the settlement of the Na-

gorno-Karabakh conflict through war believe that this time Azerbaijan and Russia will be at war. Even if it does not happen with direct participation of Russia, then Armenians would be fighting with the support of Russia.

“Russia will not be satisfied with such a small area. To me first of all Russia will think about the security of its borders. So, in my opinion, war is still ahead,” said one of the respondents.

According to another participant of the survey, no patriotic person can agree with such borders and status of Nagorno-Karabakh, even if its independence is recognized internationally.

“At least Shushi, Hadrut, Lachin, and Karvachar must be within the borders of Artsakh, as in 1992. This can be achieved only through war, but now with the intervention of Russia. As a result, it’s true, we will already be part of it (Russia), under its control,” the participant said.

For one respondent, it is “unacceptable and dishonest” that all seven Azerbaijani regions are returned under the November 10 ceasefire agreement (even those areas that did not come under Azerbaijani control directly by force during the recent war but were transferred as part of the agreement, meaning Shahumyan and Kashatagh regions, and Aghdam), while the Armenian side does not raise the issue of returning those parts of Nagorno-Karabakh proper taken by Azerbaijani forces by force (meaning Shushi, a part of Martuni and Hadrut).

According to another participant, war is inevitable, and this time even if Russia supports the Armenian side, Turkey will definitely support Azerbaijan.

“Since both countries are powerful with their human and military resources, it seems to me that this clash will lead to a world war,” the respondent concluded.

Fifteen (15) of the respondents think that it is possible and necessary to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through diplomacy. In their opinion, no matter what the war will look like and what parties will be involved, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh will be the most affected, as military actions will again continue in this area, and Armenians will be killed again.

“We have already sacrificed three generations in the war. In case of another war, we can immediately surrender to the Turks, that’s it,” said one of the respondents.

It is noteworthy that most of the people who share this view also mention that even in case of the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh independence, they do not agree with the current borders. According to them, it is necessary to bring back at least the territories within the administrative borders of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) through negotiations.

“I do not want a war. It will be terrible. But at least a few of the territories shall be returned through negotiations. Karabakh will become part of Russia. God willing, let Armenia also enter [Russia] and live a little normal life. One way or another, 80% of Armenians already live in Russia,” said one of the respondents.

Interestingly, the above-mentioned groups, having different approaches to the settlement of the conflict, consider that no Armenian can be satisfied with the current situation. The problem concerns the administrative borders of Nagorno-Karabakh. The participants of the focus groups think that there should be an attempt to restore at least the administrative territory of the former NKAO by both military and diplomatic means. At the same time, there are people who claim that the Shahumyan and Kashatagh regions cannot remain outside the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, as they are also considered historical and vital areas of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as guarantees for secure borders.

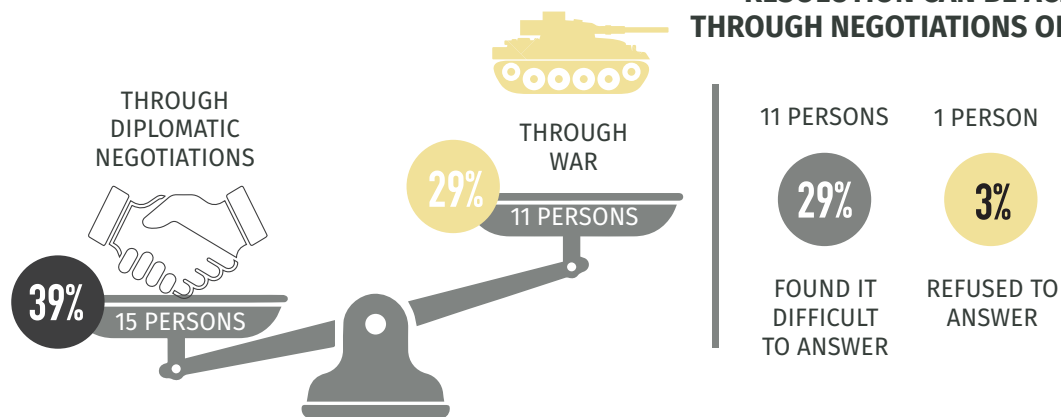
Eleven (11) of the respondents found it difficult to answer, and only one did not want to answer the question as to how they imagined the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and the clarification of the status. Eight of the above-mentioned 11 respondents stated that they had no idea as to how to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and 3 said that the issue may be resolved over time, but they do not know how. **(See illustration 8)**. According to them for thirty years Nagorno-Karabakh has not received international recognition and it is also unlikely to be recognized after this, and anyway, each state acts in its own interest, and the current chaos is due to Russia.

“Both the Russian and the international community need Artsakh without people, because there is gold in the mountains. Now the Russians will help for their own benefit. The Artsakh issue will not be resolved. Artsakh is the apple of discord. We just have to manage to survive,” highlighted one of the respondents.

“Armenians have fought for their independence all their lives... I am against becoming part of Russia. If now the Russians say that Russia came to help us, it is not so, it does everything for its own benefit. If peace were so easy...,” said another woman interviewed.

ILLUSTRATION 8

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT RESOLUTION CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS OR WAR?



When asked what are the main issues that the respondents faced or may face as women or men, half of the respondents (19 people) mentioned the issue of security, emphasizing existential security. **(See illustration 9).**

The women surveyed mainly emphasized the physical security concerns they had as mothers and wives for their children and families, talking about the insecurity of the roads on the way from one settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh to another or the Berdzor (Lachin) road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Only one of the women highlighted gender-based security, noting that she is mainly concerned about possible sexual harassment by Azerbaijanis. She believes it may be risky for her to return home from work alone in the evening, as they will live in Nagorno-Karabakh in the immediate proximity of Azerbaijani settlements.

A group of women expressed their concern as to not being beside their husbands and not taking care of them.

One of the women mentioned that the most important problem for her is the separation of the family. According to her, everything can be restored, rebuilt, but it is painful when due to work and other circumstances, the children are here in Armenia and the husband remained in Nagorno-Karabakh and could not see how their children were growing.

For eight (8) of the respondents the biggest concern is uncertainty. Having left and lost what they have created over the years, left these respondents in great uncertainty thinking about what their future holds for them.

Eight (8) respondents said that it is difficult to single out specific problems, as they are too numerous.



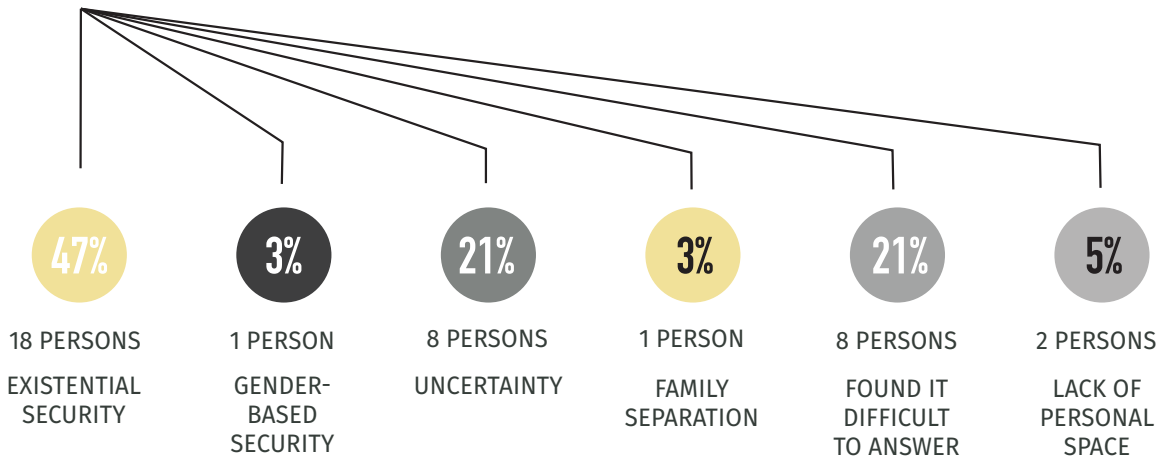
“We are adapting to the situation, as long as our family members are healthy. Now we only try to solve the problem of our daily bread,” the women say.

Two (2) mention that the lack of personal space is an important issue for them as women, especially when they now have to live with many relatives, moreover in the latter’s homes.

ILLUSTRATION 9



WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES THAT THE RESPONDENTS HAVE FACED OR MAY FACE AS WOMEN OR MEN/YOUNG PEOPLE?



CONCLUSION

Thus, as a result of this study, we have observed the following situation.

From the first day of the war until the signing of the agreement on 10 November 2020, as well as the evacuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh population from the territories to be handed over to the Azerbaijani side, the evacuation was largely organized and carried out by the male members of the families. Mainly by their own means or with the support of their relatives, the men evacuated the women and children, and later the elderly, to the Armenian border, mainly to Goris and Vardenis, or to different settlements in Armenia, after which they went back to Nagorno Karabakh. **Thus, the role of the state bodies in organizing evacuation in the cases we have studied is minimal.**

The interviews indicate that the people displaced were mainly able to take their and other family members' identity documents with them before the evacuation, but only a few managed to take other types of documents as well, including ownership certificates, diplomas, driver's licenses, etc. **Almost all of them did not manage to take valuables, money, or enough clothing with them. At the same time, the respondents mentioned that their savings are mainly kept in their card accounts, and the cards are mainly preserved.**

None of the interviewed families had yet received compensation for lost or damaged property at the time of the survey. There were verbal promises or interpersonal conversations about possible compensation or the provision of a new apartment. *Nevertheless, on 22 November 2020, a decision entered into force of the Armenian Government to support citizens registered in the communities left under the control of Azerbaijan as a result of military action. It aims at providing social assistance to the Nagorno-Karabakh citizens displaced as a result of the war, currently residing in Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh. The assistance will be provided to those who are registered in the communities of the above-mentioned areas and had actually lived there for at least 3 months by 27 September 2020, the day the war started. The social assistance will be in the form of a one-time financial aid of 300,000 drams (approximately 575 US Dollars) to each beneficiary.*

The interviews indicate that the persons displaced as a result of the war were not given any status and any document confirming that status by relevant authorities.

Among the respondents, eleven (11) families had members who were injured and received first aid in Nagorno-Karabakh medical facilities. The people with more severe injuries were taken to Republic of Armenia medical facilities. **According to the respondents, they received all the necessary treatments, surgeries and care**

free of charge in any medical facility of the Republic of Armenia.

The only respondent who had lost a family member: her husband, had not yet received any state support at the time of the survey.

The respondents found it more difficult to talk about psychological problems. However, the atmosphere of trust created, and the fact that participants in 3 of the 4 groups were exclusively women, allowed them to identify many psychological problems faced both by themselves, the respondents, and almost all the members of their families. **As a rule, almost everyone had observed certain psychological problems among themselves, as well as their family members, including fear of sounds, nervous tension, anxiety, unrest, and in some cases fear of the dark, bedwetting, fainting, physiological problems, unwillingness to talk, and so on. Despite the diverse psychological problems listed above, none of the respondents wanted to use the services of a psychologist. They mainly received such offers during the first days of relocation, and in some cases during the placement of children in schools.**

The interviews showed that the displaced people generally did not face any problems regarding food, basic hygiene products and clothing. They did not encounter problems during the placement of school-age children in schools in their new settlements. **Support in the form of food, basic necessities and clothing was organized and implemented by regional administrations, often also by community administrations. The support of the Armenian population and the Armenian diaspora was also significant.**

There were no issues connected with the placement of children in schools either. **In fact, the school administration and teaching staff in the communities created an appropriate environment to integrate schoolchildren displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. The children were provided with the necessary books and stationery.**

As a result of the survey, it became clear that one of the most important issues for the displaced people is finding a job and the necessary means for living.

The observations showed that the displaced people had a number of problems related to social issues in their current place of residence. **The issues were mainly related to submission of online applications for social assistance provided by the Republic of Armenia, the lack of data on some of their family members online, the deadlines for submitting applications for assistance, namely, the unreasonable deadline set for applying for social assistance programs. As a result, there is a risk of being deprived of social assistance.**

Focus group interviews show that the number of people who want to return to Nagorno-Karabakh is not so large, and that people cannot confidently make the

decision to return. **Only ten (10) families of the respondents expressed a desire to return to their former places of residence in Nagorno-Karabakh or another place. They include both families whose places of residence remained under the control of the Armenian side and families whose places of residence came under the control of the Azerbaijani side.**

Fifteen (15) families are still in a state of uncertainty and do not have a clear idea of where and how they will continue to live. **These are mainly people who lost their places of residence and work and the main reason for not settling in Armenia is the difficulty of finding a job and no housing.**

Only four (4) of the respondents firmly decided not to take their children to Nagorno-Karabakh anymore, being convinced that peace is not possible in the near future and that the war can resume at any moment. It is noteworthy that those who do not want to return or are still hesitant are concerned that safety can no longer be ensured and there is no confidence in tomorrow anymore. There is also no trust in the Azerbaijanis living in the immediate neighborhood. **According to the interviewees, even in the territories under the control of the Armenian side, it is not possible to ensure the proper security of the population.**

There are also concerns that in such conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh it will still be impossible to provide quality education and proper healthcare for a long time. Those are perhaps one of the most important current needs of the thousands of people injured in the war and in need of physical and psychological support.

Among some families, the hesitation of whether or not to return is linked to the possibility of finding work there.

The majority of the respondents think that the Armenians cannot live in immediate proximity of Azerbaijani settlements. **32 out of 38 respondents think that it is impossible anymore, because of a deep distrust, hatred and hostility towards each other accumulated over the years.**

Only a few respondents mentioned that they think that perhaps over time (after 2-3 generations) these two nations will be able to live next to each other. Only one respondent is convinced that living together is possible.

Almost a quarter of the respondents, ten (10) people think that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be resolved by military means and the war is an acceptable way for them. It is noteworthy that this group of people also perceives Russia as a warring party, as they perceive Nagorno-Karabakh as a zone of Russian influence.

Fifteen (15) of the respondents consider war an unacceptable means. They

believe that the issue can be resolved through diplomacy. This group of people think that the Armenian side no longer has the resources to wage war, and that the war may have irreversible consequences for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

It is worth mentioning that people who share the view with the above-mentioned two groups are not against the increase of Russian influence in the region, especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, and think it would be acceptable to consider Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous region within Russia.

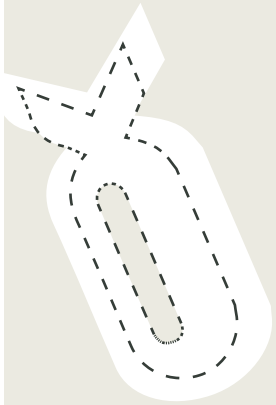
Eleven (11) interviewees have no idea how the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be resolved. This group is skeptical in the sense that the conflict has not been resolved for decades and will hardly be resolved in the foreseeable future, as there is no will of the international community to do so. In their opinion, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was created and maintained by the big players as a lever to bargain with each other over more global issues. **People who share this point of view are generally against the increase of Russian influence, as they think that Russia is the actor mainly responsible for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This group of people do not have confidence in Russia and its policy.**

Finally, surveys have shown that the most pressing issues for the displaced are related to their own and their families' existential security and the uncertainty of their present and future. It is noteworthy that the respondents did not speak directly about social issues and wellbeing. However, it was obvious that among the priority issues of concern are the difficulties related to employment and finding a job in Armenia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration the needs of the persons displaced as a result of the war observed in the current study and conclusions drawn on the basis of its findings, we present the following recommendations:

- It is necessary to clarify the legal status of the persons displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the war in 2020, in order to clarify the legal relations between the state (in this case the Republic of Armenia) and the displaced, thus the obligations of the state towards the displaced persons.
- Efforts should be made by the Government of the Republic of Armenia to meet the social needs of those displaced as a result of the war by providing them with jobs or other forms of economic engagement, thus alleviating both the burden of the state's social obligation and the dire social condition of the displaced.
- Systematic measures should be taken on a gender-sensitive assessment of the situation.
- Using international human rights protection mechanisms, an attempt should be made to restore the rights of people affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh war.
- Experts should be trained to work to develop the capacity of children from displaced families and accelerate their integration in new settlements.
- Awareness-raising activities on the importance of mental health should be organized and conducted by civil society and state bodies so that people do not avoid using the psychological and psycho-social services.
- Long-term comprehensive programs of reconciliation, transitional justice, and trauma therapy should be developed and implemented with the participation of displaced family members.
- Empowerment programs that will identify potential among women and young people displaced as a result of the war, should be developed and implemented, and entrepreneurship and business capacity building courses should be organized, especially ones targeting displaced women.
- Those displaced as a result of the war should be provided with free legal and social counseling assistance.



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