AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

SYRIAN ARMENIANS IN ARMENIA: PROBLEMS AND RESPONSES

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide is above 45 million. Each year, conflict and persecution forces an average of 23,000 people per day to leave their homes and seek protection in other places, either within the borders of their countries or in other countries. Developing countries host over four fifths (80%) of the world's total refugees.

The Syrian crisis that is in its third year continues to contribute to the growth of refugee outflows. More than 2.7 million Syrians have fled their homes (Syria) since the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011, taking refuge in neighboring countries or within Syria itself. According to UNHCR, over 1 million Syrians have fled to neighboring Lebanon, 750,000 to Turkey, 600,000 to Jordan, and even 230,000 to Iraq. Another 140,000 Syrians were accounted for in Egypt (UNHCR 2013). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 6.5 million Syrians have been displaced within the country itself. The civil war has killed more than 150,000 people over three years.

While the country of origin and the driving force moving people away from their home country may vary a great deal, this study will focus on the issue from the perspective of policies in 'receiving' or host countries accommodating groups of refugees and asylum seekers. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) *"Refugees and asylum seekers are a diverse group, with one thing in common: they are subject to forced migration, and are fleeing from persecution in their countries of origin."* Persecution could also mean fleeing a war-torn homeland.

The fundamental questions that ensue pertain to related policies in the 'receiving' or host countries with respect to caring for and accommodating refugees that arrive in their

respective countries. The degree to which refugees adjust to their new conditions and environment depends, to a large extent, on the policies of the host country with respect to facilitating the accommodation and acclimatization process. This research reviews refugee-related conventions and other policies adopted by international organizations with respect to tackling the issue of refugees. More specifically, the research studies the case of Syrian-Armenian refugees in Armenia: what has the Armenian government done? How is it handling the refugee issue? Were there refugee-related policies and mechanisms in place before the flow of refugees became relatively more significant in 2013? Apart from these questions, the study also reviews whether various assistance programs for Syrian-Armenians implemented in Armenia by governmental and non-governmental organizations have reached their objective of easing the difficult conditions that refugees face, but particularly if help has arrived in time to vulnerable groups of Syrian-Armenians.

The refugee problem is one the most complex issues all over the world. Because of reasons associated with political, religious and other types of persecution and conflict, thousands of people are forced to leave their homeland every year and seek asylum in other countries. For many decades, international organizations and several receiving countries have been tackling the issue of refugees and asylum seekers. This ongoing problem has concentrated the efforts of many countries and agencies to come up with a comprehensive framework of regulations dealing with the problem. The most dominant event driving people to flee their homeland is political instability and persecution of minorities and/or some segment(s) of a population.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

From the perspective of the Republic of Armenia, the civil war in Syria represented a totally different dimension of refugee hosting. Before the Syrian crisis, about 70,000 Armenians lived in Syria representing one of the strongholds of the Armenian Diaspora in the Middle East. There is no question that the crisis in Syria has had an indisputable adverse impact on the Armenian populations in Aleppo and Damascus, the former being relatively more intense in terms of the quality and quantity of fighting and aggression affecting the local Armenian communities.

Armenians living in Syria are mostly loyal to the Syrian government and have not taken part in the civil war. However, the continuous clashes between rebels and government forces have disrupted the peaceful life of Syrian-Armenians causing damage as well as human lives. Over the past three years, over one hundred Armenians were killed and a few hundred were injured. Nearly half of the Armenian population in Syria fled to other countries: 11,000 have moved to Armenia, 13,000 to Lebanon and 10,000 to other countries. Most of them still hope that they will soon return to their homes left behind in Syria. The April-May 2014 events in Kessab, Syria are changing the demographics further pushing more Armenian families out of Kessab and amplifying the doubt whether or not there will be "a return home" ever.

This research is an effort to explore and discuss the major problems Syrian-Armenians encountered in Armenia. In that context, the study aims to understand how the government of the Republic of Armenia (RA) and mostly the RA Ministry of Diaspora dealt or is trying to deal with this issue. In this regard, it is also valuable to find out how the different types of assistance programs implemented mostly by different NGOs were organized.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ_1: What are the major problems encountered by Syrian-Armenians in Armenia?

RQ_2: Are Syrian-Armenians satisfied with the process of receiving aid?

RQ_3: What types of assistance have Syrian-Armenians received?

RQ_4: Do Syrian-Armenians plan to stay in Armenia?

RQ_5: Are local Armenians supportive towards Syrian-Armenians?

HYPOTHESES

H_1: The Ministry of Diaspora is doing its best in tackling issues concerning Syrian Armenians.

H_0: The Ministry of Diaspora is not doing its best in tackling issues concerning Syrian Armenians.

H_2: The process of aid provision is properly organized.

H_0: The process of aid provision is not properly organized.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in two cities of Armenia (Yerevan and Gyumri) using a survey in order to answer the aforementioned research questions. Yerevan was selected because the vast majority of Syrian-Armenians have settled in the capital. Gyumri was

chosen as another big city far from the capital where there also are several Syrian-Armenian families.

CHAPTER 2 — LITERATURE REVIEW

WHO IS CONSIDERED A REFUGEE?

Since this research paper deals with issues concerning refugees, the term shall be defined as follows: a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. According to Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention the term 'refugee'

> *"shall apply to any person who "as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it ..."* (p. 14).

According to the dictionary of military and associated terms, refugee is a person who, by reason of real or imagined danger, has left their home country or country of their nationality and is unwilling or unable to return (DOD 2009).

War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. That is the reason why we find that often there is confusion between the concepts of refugee and asylum seekers. However there is a clear difference between these two concepts: an asylum seeker is someone who has asked the host country government for protection under international law and has not yet received a ruling. Once the status of the asylum seeker is confirmed, the person is considered a refugee and gets protection under the

provisions of Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Protection or as set forth by the host country.

Many international lawyers who deal with refugee protection issues differentiate between international laws relating to refugees, i.e., between refugee law and asylum law. Of these two, the law on refugees provides primarily, though not exclusively, provisions related to international human rights or humanitarian law. Modern refugee law came to existence after World War II with the establishment of UNHCR and the drafting of its statute following the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees. Although the term 'refugee' has a different legal meaning in various states' legal systems, with the term 'refugee law' one generally understands a relatively uniform international system of definitions and protection of refugees. In contrast, asylum law is considered a matter of national rather than international provision or sovereign discretion (Kennedy 1986). So far, international protection has concentrated mostly on refugee law rather than on asylum law.

A LOOK INTO REFUGEE STUDIES

At first glance, the norms, rules, principles and decision-making procedures that govern refugee protection appear relatively straightforward and generally based on the 1951 UNHCR Convention and its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR has responsibility for overseeing the international regime set forth in those documents. However, over time, the proliferation of new global governance instruments has led to a range of institutions that exist in parallel or overlap with certain elements of the regime. New parallel and overlapping institutions have emerged in relation to two areas, previously not regulated: internally displaced persons and international migrants. This institutional proliferation has affected individual state strategies on refugees and asylum seekers, as well as international organizations' position and *modus operandi* in relation to refugee protection (Betts 2009). These new institutions have offered

states a range of new instruments through which they can meet their interests in relation to the movement of people fleeing persecution, while bypassing the 1951 Convention and UNHCR. The proliferation of these new parallel institutions is a significant factor in explaining recent changes in international politics of refugee protection. This is what has contributed to changing the role of UNHCR and has had a potentially negative effect on the quality of protection available to refugees (Martin et al 2005, Betts 2009).

Scholars argue that the 1951 Refugee Convention has become outdated and irrelevant. In particular, the 1951 Convention has been criticized because of its inflexibility in the face of different migration challenges. Feller (2001) lists the most important challenges that make the 1951 Convention inapplicable in current situations. Firstly, he argues, that the 1951 Convention should be much more flexible in its application due to the rapidly changing environment. Secondly, there is a need to clarify the responsibilities between the UNHCR and the receiving states with regard to their respective competencies in protecting refugees and asylum seekers. Thirdly, efforts should concentrate on developing new legal frameworks for tackling the refugee issue at the regional level, which somehow puts into question the international applicability of norms and regulations. In short, while the 1951 Convention remains the basis and foundation for protecting refugees, its application has become more problematic. Currently, the principal concern is the reinforcement and reinvigoration of its inclusive application (Feller 2001, Martin et al 2005, Baloch 2006, and Quinn 2011).

The field of refugee studies has grown dramatically over the second part of the twentieth century, in parallel with the significance of the phenomenon of forced migration itself. This institutional development in the field has links with policymakers, though there are no significant policy implications in this cooperation. The author argues that research by different scholars have not received proper attention from policymakers. As a rule, they

neglect the opinions of scholars trying to tackle refugee issues from the perspective of their self-interests (Black 2001).

Several scholars indicate that the main challenge in tackling the refugee issue is the lack of cooperation and inability of international organizations and humanitarian actors to adapt their strategies to the reality of refugees today. The international community is failing to respond adequately to the significant unmet protection needs of refugees and other displaced persons (Betts 2009, Sa'Da and Serafini 2013, Kawakibi 2013). Some also argue that international law is insufficient to address the needs of the wide range of forced migrants seeking international assistance and protection that is why it needs to change (Martin et al. 2005, Guild & Moreno-Lax 2013). Others state that the inability and inefficiency of UNHCR comes from not only its policy but mainly from the lack of support from developed states (Hakovirta 1993, Whitaker 2008).

In contrast to authors who claim that states are the dominant actors in the international political system and, therefore, international organizations mostly serve the interests of donor governments, a group of scholars believe that this fact doesn't undermine the autonomy and independence of international organizations such as UNHCR. They state that UNHCR has not been an instrument in the hands of states to achieve state interests. More correctly, UNHCR policies are driven by the interests of both donor states and by organizations acting independently (Loescher 1992, Goodwin-Gill 1999, Frohardt et al. 1999).

Some scholars claim that the challenges to refugee assistance and protection come not from the lack of actions on the part of one or two actors; rather they have resulted from failure to act by the whole system. The challenges to refugee protection engage not only UNHCR, which is the main provider of international protection to refugees, but also host states, regional organizations, other international agencies, non-governmental organizations

and, of course, the refugees and displaced people themselves. Though UNHCR has a dominant role in articulating the international refugee protection regime and specific responsibilities, but it is also dependent on donor states, on other implementing partners within the United Nations, as well as non-governmental actors, including refugee advocates at home and abroad. The whole system is interrelated and all of its levels should act in congruence in order to have a well-functioning international refugee protection system. In legal terms, UNHCR must find support in the UN membership, in institutions of government, including national courts and tribunals and among the right-protecting mechanisms established at universal and regional levels (Goodwin-Gill 2001, Martin et al. 2005).

Yet another humanitarian problem concerns the transparency of international organizations. The absence of adequate and reliable information about the capabilities, plans, and objectives of various agencies undermine their coordination efforts. As Vayrynen (2001) argues, UNHCR is less transparent in disclosing its financial information than other UN institutions, such as UNDP and UNICEF. The lack of coordination and the limitations of transparency are mainly connected to the undeniable rivalry between governmental and non-governmental humanitarian agencies competing for the same sources of public and private funding (Pugh and Cunliffe 1997, Landgren 1998, Vayrynen 2001).

Refugee protection is generally viewed as a humanitarian rather than a development issue, and one that is most appropriately addressed by humanitarian actors (Crisp 2001). This view is based on the assumption that refugee movements in the developing world generally originate from short-term humanitarian emergencies and that if the immediate needs were met, longer-term solutions would be found to address displaced people's conditions. The reality, however, demonstrates that the majority of the world's refugees remain in exile in the developing world long after the initial phase of crisis is over (Betts 2009).

There are a few lasting or permanent solutions for the majority of the world's refugees who remain in their country of origin. Normally, ongoing conflict limits the prospects for repatriation. Further, the reluctance of host states to provide resources to non-citizens limits integration and assimilation with the host society. And, finally, the reluctance of third countries outside the region to accept significant numbers of refugees lowers the opportunity for resettlement in a third country. In consequence, most refugees find themselves in extended refugee situations (Loescher and Milner 2005, Loescher et al 2008).

There is an ongoing debate about which states and how they should provide refugee protection. Nevertheless, over the last few years states are exploring new ways of managing refugee movements and improving refugee protection. A logical question ensues regarding the obligations of states with respect to refugees and asylum-seekers under international law and what specific responsibilities states have for them? This question seems very basic, but the answer is definitely not simple. Though the 1951 Refugee Convention has a great contribution to defining states' responsibilities towards refugees, there are still some important shortcomings and gaps in the international protection regime (Martin et al. 2005, Phuong 2005).

Goodwin-Gill (2001) states that the human rights dimension of the movement of people and mainly refugees have been increasingly downplayed. States and international organizations have failed to effectively deal with and respond coherently to large movements of refugees or to manage the changing character of causes, to make effective and satisfactory decisions, to set strategic goals, and to determine tactical steps and means for assisting refugees. At present the obligation of states are taken less seriously (Goodwin-Gill 2001, Martin et al 2005, Betts 2009).

One of the difficulties encountered by refugees is the existing gap between the 'right to asylum' as articulated by the 1951 Refugee Convention and the lack of a corresponding framework for states to grant asylum. Many governments argue that the decision to grant asylum is not a state obligation, but, they continue to be bound by the principle of *non-refoulement* as defined in Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. According to that principle, no refugee will be returned to any country where his/her life or freedom is threatened. This principle applies not only to people who accept 'refugee status' upon arrival in a host country, but also to all asylum-seekers without legal status.

This last point has been a subject of disagreement by many states. Often they are reluctant to admit and give temporary asylum to asylum seekers. In the early 1990's a number of states started to use the practice of transferring the responsibility of examining asylum applications to *safe third countries* (based on bilateral agreements between them and the other host country). These states are thus able to justify their actions arguing that the principle of non-refoulement has not been violated, because the asylum-seekers were not returned to their country of origin where they fear persecution. It is obvious that the 1951 definition of 'refugee' has been interpreted differently by different countries, i.e., a person is recognized as a refugee in one country and not in another (Lauterpacht and Bethlehem 2001, Phuong 2005, Stotanova 2008).

The policy responses to mass influxes of refugees have varied considerably. Some host countries respond in relatively generous ways, while other governments act more restrictively. Some provide assistance and guarantee the refugees' safety, others try to prevent refugees from entering, or treat them harshly, restricting movement and grouping them in special camps. Jacobsen (1996) classifies policy alternatives available to receiving governments and set several important factors influencing refugee policy formation. These

factors include: the costs and benefits of accepting international assistance, relations with the sending country, political calculations about the local community's absorption capacity, and national security considerations (Jacobsen 1996).

The responses to these challenges by most governments have relied on the adoption of more restrictive policies and practices that have largely changed the balance between immigration control and refugee protection. States have introduced a series of measures in order to prevent the arrival of people who are asking for refugee status. These measures include stricter visa requirements, sanctions on carriers, pre-boarding documentation checks at airports and readmission agreements with transit countries, as well as interdiction and mandatory detention of asylum seekers. While governments have the right to control entry and enforce border safeguards, the legal instruments pertaining to refugees and human rights bind them to protect their borders without breaching the right of persons in need of protection or asylum. As some scholars argue, in reality the restrictive measures that have been adopted through policy-making and recent immigration enforcement initiatives in most EU member states do not sufficiently distinguish between asylum seekers and other kinds of migrants, thereby failing to safeguard the right of refugees to seek protection (Loescher and Milner 2003, Loescher et al. 2008).

Another important question is the duration of the period of refugee protection. As is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention, the provision of asylum applies as long as there is a well-founded fear of persecution. It means that if there is no such fear and a person is not considered to be a refugee any longer, it is the right of the host state to decide whether to provide permanent asylum or to return the refugee back to his/her country of origin. In practice, almost all countries choose the second variant deporting those who lose their refugee status back to their countries of origin.

States also encounter problems with large numbers of refugees. The overarching question that arises is whether or not states' duties under the 1951 Refugee Convention vary with the number of asylum seekers in a certain time period (Phuong 2005). This is an important question nowadays with the number of Syrian refugees fleeing to neighboring countries exceeding 2 million. Because of this unpredictable mass influx states have often refused to meet the terms of the Convention to the letter. In other words, in spite of the obligation of states to allow protection to all incoming refugees, this provision has become impossible to honor merely due to the high number of refugees.

Further, host countries are facing yet another inconvenient situation. There is a large number of people seeking asylum or refugee status without necessarily meeting the key requirements — e.g., being forced out of their home country or forced to leave because of persecution, war, or violence. Such people often choose to leave in order to improve their economic wellbeing. Scholars argue that since the late 1980s "there has been significant abuse of the asylum system by those who are economic migrants but claim to be persecuted." As argued by a number of researchers, this perception is evidence of a pervasive 'culture of mistrust' in asylum seekers (Finch 2005, Watters 2008, Aspinall and Watters 2010).

States often resort to providing temporary protection when facing a large influx of refugees or asylum seekers. Temporary protection has no generally accepted provisions under international law. This concept is often used to describe a short-term strategy towards a mass influx of people seeking refugee status. Some authors argue that the 1951 Convention does not encompass all migrants who need international protection. They claim that formalization of temporary protection could fill the perceived gap in international legal standards, and provide a comprehensive framework to substitute current international law and practice (Fitzpatrick 2000, Akram and Rempel 2004, Edwards 2012).

Generally, temporary protection is an interim response to mass influx. Its primary objective is provision of physical safety to refugees while a more permanent solution is found. There are several reasons why temporary protection is widely spread in international practice. First and foremost, temporary protection is an attractive option precisely because it does not impose a lasting obligation on the host state. States usually opt for bypassing internationally established requirements and this approach provides for that deviation. Many countries consider this concept as an alternative to shifting refugee protection from the realm of law to that of politics and voluntary humanitarian assistance. And secondly, temporary protection is often associated with sharing responsibility effectively, possibly involving the physical transfer of asylum seekers and various schemes for providing financial assistance to formal refugees (Fitzpatrick 2000, Goodwin-Gill 2001).

The issue of providing durable solutions to refugees has remained one of the most debated topics by different scholars and authors. Stein (1986) argues that durable solutions are political solutions. Yet, traditional forms of durable solutions have not been changed throughout the past decades. There are three durable solutions to protracted refugee situations: local integration, repatriation and resettlement. The UNHCR paid comparatively less attention to local integration in 1990's when the actions of UNHCR and donor governments were directed to deal with the huge influx of refugees through immediate and short-term responses. From the beginning of the new millennium, UNHCR has put more emphasis on this approach, implementing development aid programs in the refugees' places of origin. Contrary to local integration, the 1990s was a 'decade of repatriation'. This approach was the most preferable by UNHCR and donor states. The third solution, to which not much attention was paid by states and UNHCR, though it has been spreading in the last decade (Stein 1986, Troeller 1991, Loescher and Milner 2003, Martin 2005, Collyer 2006).

While scholars argue that refugees and asylum seekers bring many problems concerning their protection and assistance to their respective host countries, research studies have looked into the question as to how host countries could benefit from them. It is an undeniable fact that refugees impose a variety of economic, social, security and environmental burdens on host countries, which demand significant material and non-material resources. However they represent a huge flow of resources in the form of international humanitarian assistance, economic assets and human capital. These resources can be an important contribution to the host countries in their state building efforts. Refugee resources may be helpful for developing different parts of the country, creating new fields of economy and generally increase the welfare of citizens (Crisp 2000, Sperl 2000, Jacobsen 2002).

The United States is the leader in global refugee resettlement efforts, having taken about two-thirds of the refugees who were resettling in the industrialized world by the UNHCR. For the past three decades the U.S. has resettled more refugees from around the world than all other developed countries combined. The majority of Cold War refugees admitted to the U.S. were labeled so only because the U.S. declared them as such neither by any common-sense definition of the term "refugee" nor by any UN-established standard (Barnett 2006). The U.S. refugee protection system, which includes refugees, asylum seekers and similar populations, has become less robust over the last two decades. The U.S. Refugee Admission program, a mainstay of this system, faces significant challenges. A dramatic decrease has been noticed in asylum filings and corresponding grants since 2001, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The U.S. has limited the legal tools to admit and offer temporary protection to persons who do not meet the strict refugee standards (Kerwin 2011).

The large foreign-labor bill passed by the U.S. Senate in May 2006 (S.2611) included Senator Sam Brownback's "Widows and Orphans Act," allowing federal refugee contractors to represent "widows" and "orphans" from around the globe into the U.S. refugee program bypassing most U.S. government controls. Under the bill, the term "widows" does not mean an actual widow, but it refers to any female who has a "credible fear of harm related to her sex; and a lack of adequate protection from such harm." "Orphans" are not real orphaned youth either, but individuals under "18 years of age … for whom no parent or legal guardian is able to provide adequate care; … who faces credible fear of harm related to his or her age. … And for whom it has been determined to be in his or her best interest to be admitted to the United States" (Barnett 2006).

One of the most prevailing issues in the U.S. immigration law, for example, is the defensive asylum claim raised by an immigrant facing deportation. The government has obscured the line between immigration law and refugee law, applying stricter and more rigorous immigration practices — such as the use of more stringent visa requirements, questionable detention practices, and the criminal prosecution of asylum seekers for entering the country with false documents — to deter refugees (Lim 2013).

Contrary to the U.S. asylum and refugee policy, the EU common policy on this issue is still in the process of development. The common European Asylum System has now reached a second phase of consolidation of the asylum "acquis", which paves the way for a reassessment of the whole system with the view to ensuring a genuine common asylum policy. However, the recurrent process to tighten migration controls in times of recession raises the question of its impact on the current consolidating phase of the EU asylum policy. The EU asylum policy system has four main strategic pillars: preventing access to EU territory, combating asylum-shopping, criminalizing failed asylum seekers and enforcing

their return, and promoting the integration of refugees (Betts and Milner 2006, Chetail and Bauloz 2011).

Returning to the issue of Syrian refugees, it is very important for the receiving state(s) to demonstrate quick response with respect to providing aid (assistance in multiple forms) to new arrivals. These people have left all property in Syria and have fled to different countries in search of safety without any vision of the future. The only thought that crosses the minds of refugees is to find safety — to leave as soon as possible — without taking into consideration the types of difficulties they may face in the host country. As a rule, refugees are concentrated in special areas of the host country — usually in camps or temporary dwellings — until they are granted official status for staying in country or they are deported to other countries or back to the country of origin. One of the basic needs for refugees is primary healthcare. Health problems, such as parasitic and nutritional diseases, are widespread within different refugee groups (Karmi 1992, Jones & Gill 1998). Yet most refugees also suffer from psychological problems. Jones and Gill (1998) argue that mental health problems are likely influenced by various factors including language difficulties, family separation, hostility or aggression by the host population, and traumatic experiences before displacement.

One of the major problems that refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants face in the host countries is that there is a huge difference between the expectations and the reality which leads to stress and shock. New environment, language, social structures, norms and values are the reasons of traumas and stresses of that process, usually referred to as cultural shock (Segal 2002, Lum 2003, Segal and Mayadas 2005).

Thus the host countries should provide sufficient social and emotional support to refugees and immigrants, which will make the process of adaptation and adjustment easier

and less painful. According to several authors, when tackling the aforementioned problems host countries should first assess such factors as the level of sociocultural integration by refugees and immigrants, as well as problem-solving abilities, transferability of work skills, their motivation for adaptation and learning abilities. Afterwards, host countries should identify appropriate intervention techniques which are directed to achieve the following goals: economic self-sufficiency, equitable functioning in society, civic participation, empowerment, good education, community organizations and others (Segal and Mayadas 2005).

Aside from dealing with the reluctance of host countries to receive and assist them, refugees and asylum seekers also have to deal with the negative attitude of the citizens of the host country. According to psychological theories of intergroup relations, a central role is given to the threat and competition in predicting intergroup attitudes and their negative consequences regarding attitudes towards refugees (Quillian, 1995, Jackson et al. 2001). Threat is mostly discussed through realistic and symbolic approaches. The first one refers to tangible threats emerging as a consequence of scarce resources, economic activity, employment opportunities, and the symbolic approach reviews the differences in norms, beliefs, and values (Stephan and Stephan 1996). Other authors discussing this term refer to it as "zero-sum beliefs," meaning that the more resources are available to out-groups (refugees and asylum seekers), the less is accessible to native citizens (Esses, Dovidio and Hodson 1998, Stephan et al. 1999, Esses et al. 2001).

Both adults and children have the same basic needs for security, health and nutrition. However, in most instances, children need more attention than adults. Refugee children, more than any others, are likely to live in temporary accommodation, and find themselves in economically poor conditions. In addition, they face the problem of learning the official

language of the host country and are targets for being bullied, often of a racist nature, and isolated in schools (Melzak and Warner 1992, Blackledge 1994, Rutter 2001, Candappa and Igbinigie 2003 Leavey et al. 2003). They also have other special needs that deserve attention.

Similarly, Kawakibi (2013) classifies the needs of children into four groups: medical needs, such as basic hygiene; good health, which preempts children from attracting different infections and illnesses; nutritional needs (fresh water and sufficient quantity of bread and other nutrients); schooling needs (after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria major part of children went without education because of closed schools and lack of teachers); and psychological needs, to which people pay less importance (Kawakibi 2013). These points are also applicable to Syrian-Armenian children.

To conclude, international refugee law strongly highlights that refugees should be protected by host countries by all means often with the help of different international organizations. States are reluctant to provide asylum to huge numbers of refugees (sometimes even by closing the borders) because of lack of hosting capacity for meeting basic needs of refugees. The international refugee system is often unable to provide adequate and sufficient humanitarian aid to refugees and displaced persons, because any of the reasons stated above.

THE MAJOR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO SYRIAN-ARMENIANS

Syrian-Armenians started to move into Armenia early on, starting from March 2012. According to official data, nowadays about 11.000 Syrian-Armenians are living in Armenia, mostly in Yerevan and nearby regions, also in other cities of Armenia (Gyumri, Ashtarak, Abovyan, Echmiadzin and others). Dozens of families moved into Nagorno-Karabakh and settled in Kovsakan, Berdzor and Stepanakert. The majority of Syrian-Armenians living in Armenia are living in hard conditions and need more attention and assistance.

From the beginning of the flow of Syrian-Armenians into Armenia, the government took a series of measures to make Syrian-Armenians settlement into Armenia easier for them. According to a presidential decision of RA all the assistance programs are coordinated by the RA Ministry of Diaspora. Starting from the summer of 2012, a work group for dealing with Syrian-Armenians' issues was established under the direction of the RA Ministry of Diaspora. According to the Prime-minister's decree a pan-ministerial committee for coordination of Syrian-Armenians' issues was established with the direction of the Minister of Diaspora. The decree states that the committee should meet monthly and each ministry should present what was done in that month. Nevertheless only 14 meetings have been held so far (Ministry of Diaspora 2014).

The Armenian government has also changed some of the legal documents of RA pertaining to Syrian refugees. Those measures include: receiving Armenian visa for entrance at the border check points, exemption from the state tax on receiving Armenian visa for entrance or residency, simplification of obtaining of RA citizenship, obtaining of RA passport in Embassies and Consulates in Syria and Lebanon and others. In 2011-2013, about 8,000 Syrian-Armenians have obtained Armenian citizenship (Ministry of Diaspora 2014).

Besides various types of governmental programs, assistance was provided by different NGOs in some cases with the financial support of other governments. For example, Armenian Red Cross Society, by the finance of Austrian Development Agency and with the support of Austrian Red Cross is implementing "Relief for Syrian Armenians" project, from October 2013 to June 2014. 300 Syrian Armenian families are involved in the project: 1,250 people overall. The assistance included distribution of hygiene parcels per month till May 2014, winter clothes and shoes, and medication for beneficiaries with chronic diseases. Apart from this, vulnerable families have being supported to build up their livelihood and generate

their own income. The ARCS also organized a camp for refugee children from Syria, realizing the impact of the camp for their rehabilitation, integration, and rest and recreation. The camp took place on 1-7th August 2013, in a camp near Stepanavan for 30 Armenians, including refugee children. The project was implemented by the financial assistance of The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Armenia (ARCS 2013).

In the early stages of the Syrian-Armenian migration to Armenia, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) provided monthly stipends of $100-150 to support individuals and families with their rental fees for a period of three months. Other assistance to vulnerable Syrian-Armenians was provided by the Armenian Caritas. Starting from December 2012 the Guest House of the Armenian Catholic Church accepted the first group of 45 Syrian-Armenians (15 families). So far overall 57 families Syrian-Armenians have been given shelter in the Guest House with the financial assistance of German Caritas. As most of them came from Qamishli and they did not understand Armenian, there was a need to organize Armenian language lessons for them. Besides, from November 2013 to August 2014, 100 most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families (approximately 400 persons) receive social and humanitarian assistance (monthly vouchers for food, household and hygiene items; bank vouchers for house-rent and utility payments according to their payment receipt; legal consultations; information on available flats and/or houses, house rental agencies, job vacancies, schooling for the children, medical services, trainings, etc.) (Armenian Caritas 2013).

There are 53 Syrian-Armenians taking Eastern Armenian language courses and another 60 Syrian-Armenians taking Russian language courses. All the courses are held by the RA Ministry of Diaspora and the UNHCR Office in Armenia. The UN World Food

Program (WFP) provided assistance to 5,000 Syrian-Armenians displaced from Syria who have sought protection in Armenia. The 6-month-assistance project is funded by the government of the Russian Federation (UNHCR 2013).

15 million AMD will be allocated for continuing to address the social, healthcare, and education needs of Syrian-Armenian families currently residing in Armenia. Program beneficiaries have been selected by the Ministry of Diaspora. Contributions from the Brazilian, Argentinian, and Swedish affiliates have been used to cover the tuitions of 110 Syrian-Armenian students attending various colleges and universities in Armenia (68 for 2012-13 and 44 for 2013-14 academic years); to pay for heart surgeries of six Syrian-Armenian individuals; and to cover the cost of funerals for three others. The amount of 10,000 dollars raised by the U.S. Western Region affiliate has been donated to Yerevan's Kilikian School, which was opened for a one year period for children from Syrian-Armenian refugee families in 2012 (Ministry of Diaspora 2014, Masispost 2013).

In the early stages of the Syrian-Armenian migration to Armenia, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) provided monthly stipends of $100-150 to support individuals and families with their rental fees for a period of 3 months. In December 2012, the Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation (ART) provided assistance to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees ART was able to efficiently provide life-saving assistance to 200 families (Act Alliance 2013).

To solve Syrian-Armenians issue of housing two construction projects have been set up. The first project has been implemented by the Armenian government. The latter approved the construction of the "New Aleppo" district in Ashtarak city and the City Council allocated more than 11 acres of land to the CCSAI for the "New Aleppo" housing project. According to initial estimates, the project will cost around $25 million and will feature 22-30 apartment

buildings, swimming pool, garages, playgrounds and other amenities. From the outset the RA Ministry of Diaspora announced that this was not a social assistance program and the costs should be covered by the RA government on one side, by donors on the other side and by Syrian-Armenians who'd choose to purchase an apartment in that housing project. Syrian-Armenians have to put up a preliminary sum for the apartment and then cover remaining balance over several years. Almost 650 Syrian-Armenian families had submitted registration forms to the CCSAI. However, the construction of the district was suspended because Syrian-Armenians refused to pay their part of the investment. The second project is being administered by the "Help Your Brother" NGO which is planning to construct a building in Davtashen, Yerevan. According to this project, two-hundred Syrian-Armenian families will be able to purchase apartments there at minimal cost. Taking into account that the previous project was unsuccessful, the possibility of construction of this one is under question (Armenian Weekly 2014).

CHAPTER 3 — RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this study is mixed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Exploratory research design was chosen to get a thorough understanding of the topic. The mixed approach was used in order to make possible the use of multiple data collection instruments aimed at analyzing the effectiveness of the programs of assistance to Syrian-Armenians, as implemented by both the RA Ministry of Diaspora and other organizations. The research also measures the level of satisfaction of the Syrian-Armenians with the assistance programs.

For the quantitative part, a structured survey questionnaire was designed that also included open-ended questions. The quantitative method was chosen because it helps to gather primary data that are easy to compare and analyze. The data collected from the surveys are crucial because the analysis of the current research is mainly based on those results. Descriptive statistics were conducted on several characteristics of the people surveyed along with inferential statistics.

The qualitative part of the study included content analysis of documents and notes obtained from semi-structured interviews with government official on the current state and with the coordinators of assistance programs in various organizations.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Three data collection instrument were used for the current study, including surveys, expert interviews, documents and secondary sources of data. The survey was conducted in

two cities (Yerevan and Gyumri) and measured the extent of satisfaction of the respondents with their current state of living and the effectiveness and openness of the assistance process. In addition, five semi-structured interviews were conducted to get to know how the assistance programs were implemented and what the criteria were to receive assistance.

TESTING OF SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

The survey was tested with 15 Syrian-Armenians: students studying at the American University of Armenia (AUA) and people outside. The questionnaire was modified and improved based on the responses, suggestions, differences of understanding among the test takers, and clarification questions during the testing.

SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

As mentioned above, the survey was administered in the two largest cities of Armenia (Yerevan and Gyumri). 90 responses were received of which 82 were valid (8 surveys were incomplete). The survey was conducted both online and through visits of different public places and homes of Syrian-Armenians. Stratified random sampling was selected for this study and all the respondents were Syrian Armenians who came to Armenia since the beginning of the civil war in Syria. Only one household member was asked to fill the survey.

The list of experts interviewed included the head of the department of Armenian communities of the Near East and Middle East of the RA Ministry of Diaspora; the president of "CCSAI" NGO; three NGO coordinators of programs assisting Syrian-Armenians in "Armenian Caritas", "Armenian Red Cross Society" and "Help Your Brother."

DATA ANALYSIS

The primary data gathered from the survey was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies and descriptive analysis and other analytical operations to find cause-and-effect relationships. The latter included cross tabs of several variables and correlation analysis between different variables using two-tailed tests with Pearson R at a confident level of 95%. Additionally, content analysis was performed of documents and notes from expert interviews. All the narratives were organized codified by descriptors identified at the outset and derived from the research questions of the current study.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The main assumption of the study is that the Syrian-Armenians are satisfied with the level of support and assistance from non-governmental organizations. In addition, the current study assumes that the RA Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has a variety of limitations such as time constraints, lack of access to all the documents of both the RA government and other non-governmental organizations and the size of the sample. It would have been more appropriate to include in the survey Syrian-Armenians living in the other cities of Armenia.

CHAPTER 4 — DATA ANALYSIS

INTERVIEWS

In the section below, the content analysis of in-depth interviews is discussed. For this part of the analysis, several descriptors were identified from the outset and were used to codify interview notes and measure the expert's position on each of the descriptors on a scale of 1 to 5, based on the responses provided by them. The descriptors are the following:

1. The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families.

2. The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.

3. The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.

The Degree to Which Assistance is Provided to the Most Vulnerable Syrian-Armenian Families (Mean is 3.8)

The interviews conducted with the experts revealed that in most cases the government and some organizations which provide assistance are aware of the social welfare and state of living of the beneficiaries. According to the interviewers assistance programs are based on certain criteria. Each organization has developed certain standards and the interviews revealed that these criteria are mostly the same for all of them. Among those are to include families with many children, people with disabilities, single elderly, unaccompanied children, single women heading households. Almost all the experts stated that they use the database of CCSAI which is the largest one. The president of CCSAI asserted that they know everything about the Syrian-Armenians registered in that database. Thus, it is not difficult to identify which families are the most vulnerable.

The representatives of two organizations explained that in the first phase they register all the applicants who wish to receive assistance and then try to curtail the list identifying the most vulnerable families. One of the interviewees did not exclude the possibility that families with better conditions might receive assistance. Another interviewee stated that they have social workers who pay visits to probable beneficiaries' houses trying to decrease the shortcomings of the selection procedure used.

Another important issue raised by the group interviewed is the problem when a family can receive help from several organizations. Though they are cooperating with one another, sometimes it is difficult for these organizations to identify the families who have already been assisted by another organization. On this question, one of the interviewees stated that at present the UNHCR Office, with the cooperation of other organizations, is trying to create a unified database of all Syrian-Armenians. She believes that in that case if a family receives assistance from one organization, the information will be automatically available to all organizations in the shared database.

The Level of Availability of the Assistance Provided to All Syrian-Armenians (Mean is 3.0)

The availability of provided assistance to all the beneficiaries was measured by the percentage of Syrian-Armenians who are registered in one or another organization and have their contacts. The president of CCSAI mentioned that 5,800 Syrian-Armenians or almost 60% of Syrian-Armenians in Armenia are on their list and they possess the necessary information on those families. However contact information of the other 40% of Syrian-Armenians are not available. She stated that those Syrian-Armenians have not registered with them, and that is the reason why they don't have them in their database.

This question remains unresolved in other organizations because, as stated above, others use the database of CCSAI. Another interviewee mentioned that Syrian-Armenians are more connected and if one of them knows about any program of assistance he/she will inform the others. All of them claimed that they try to distribute the information for upcoming assistance through different sources using online sites, in particular, through social media networks. Though some measures are undertaken by these organizations, it is insufficient to draw conclusions about the level of visibility to all beneficiaries.

The Level of Relevant Need-Based Assistance to Syrian-Armenians (Mean is 4.4)

All the interviewees were unanimous on this issue confirming that the assistance provided mostly corresponds to the needs of Syrian-Armenians. Two of them were aware of the needs of Syrian-Armenians very well. One of the experts also identified the lists of problems that most Syrian-Armenians encountered in Armenia. The interview with others also demonstrates that the assistance provided by their organizations also corresponds to the needs of the beneficiaries. One of the interviewees stressed that Syrian-Armenians registered with them were asked beforehand to identify the type of assistance they would need most.

Some of the interviewers stated that the only problem which can be identified is the size of the assistance provided. According to them it is understandable that most Syrian-Armenians are living in severe conditions and the size and frequency of assistance could cause dissatisfaction and complaints by the beneficiaries. Overall it can be inferred from all the interviews that the type and level of assistance rendered to Syrian-Armenians corresponds to the needs of beneficiaries.

SURVEY

The survey conducted in Yerevan and Gyumri has revealed interesting data for further discussion. Descriptive statistics was performed to understand the differences among respondents segmented by gender, age, and occupation. The data collected from the survey reveals the following gender distribution of the 82 responses received. The number of male respondents is slightly higher: 46 of them were men and only 36 were women, 56% and 44% respectively (see the accompanying Graph 1).

The distribution of respondents by age group depicts the following picture (as shown in Graph 2): 17% or 14 people are less than 25 years old, the vast majority or 53 respondents (65%) are middle-aged and 15 people or 18% are older than 50.

Graph 1: The number of respondents by gender

Graph 2: The number of respondents by age group
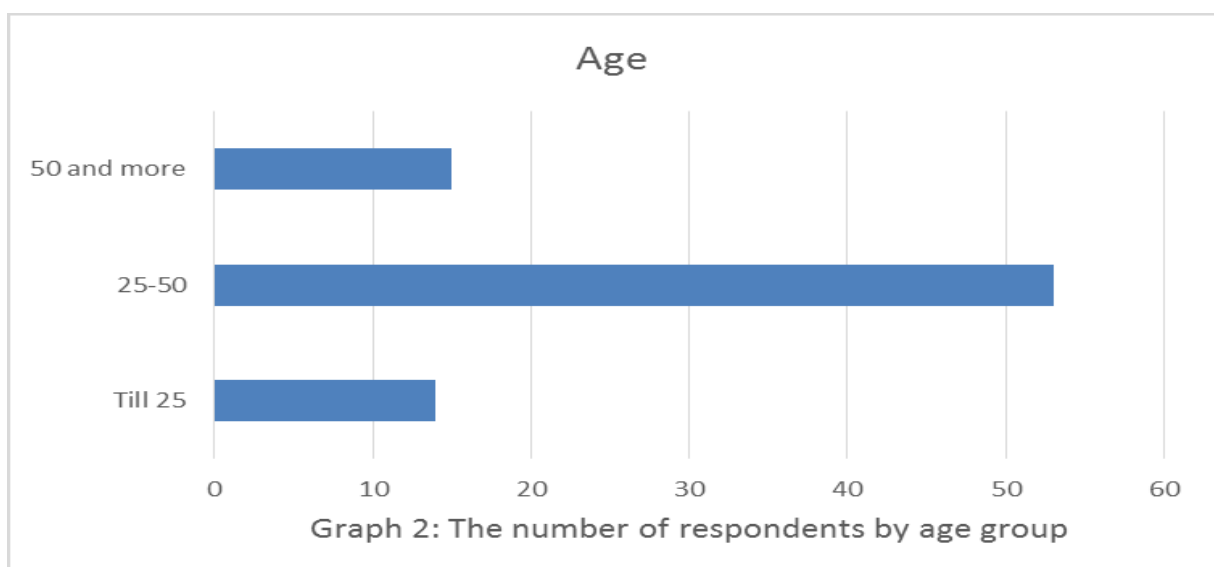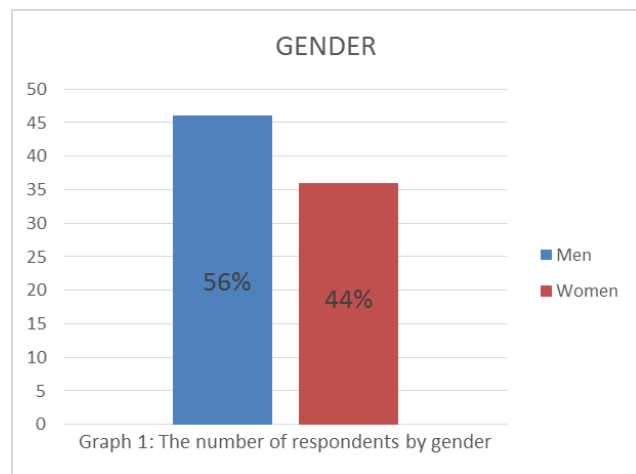
Almost two third of respondents said that they are not currently employed and only 34 or 39% of Syrian-Armenians responded positively. From this chart it can be inferred that finding a job is one of the major issues for Syrian-Armenians in Armenia.

Graph 3: Respondents' Working Status
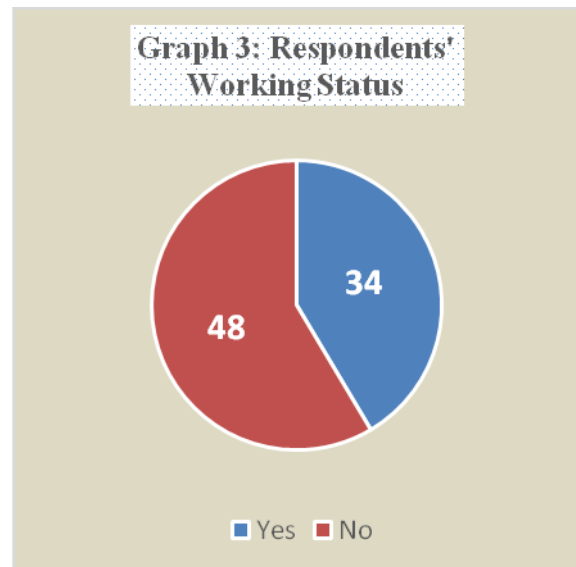
The first cross tabulation was performed on two variables: gender and whether he/she is working. This helped understand whether the relative proportion of working men and women. As depicted in Table 1, there is a huge difference between men and women currently employed. The majority of men have a job while only 14% of women are currently working.

Gender * Are you working? Cross-tabulation				
Count				
		Are you working?		Total
		yes	no	
Gender	Male	29	17	46
	Female	5	31	36
Total		34	48	82

Table 1: Cross-tabulation between gender and employment

The next descriptive analysis was performed to understand the legal status of respondents in Armenia. Graph 4 shows that the vast majority of Syrian-Armenians in Armenia (71%) are RA citizens, 22 people or 27% of respondents are residents and only 2 people do not have legal status other than being a refugee.

The next analysis related to the length of stay of Syrian-Armenians in Armenia.

| Correlations			
		Are you planing to stay in Armenia?	How long are you in Armenia?
Are you planing to stay in Armenia?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.417[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	82	82
How long are you in Armenia?	Pearson Correlation	-.417[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	82	82
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2: Correlation on length of stay and future plans

Graph 5: Length of stay in Armenia
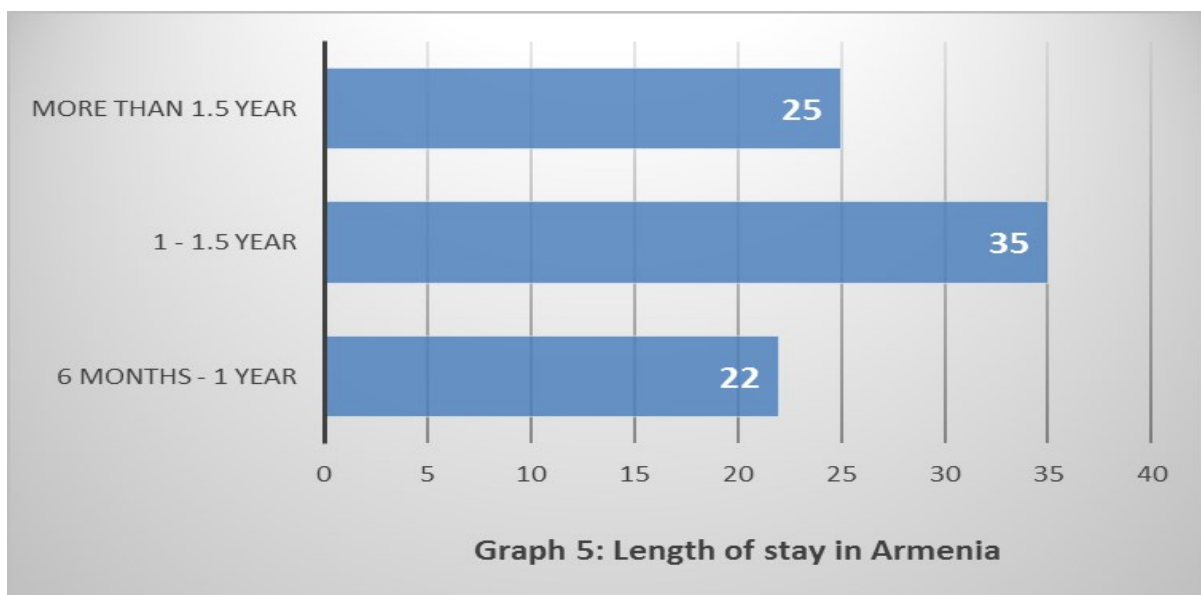
As Graph 5 depicts, most respondents have been in Armenia for 1-1.5 years, 26% of respondents moved to Armenia less than one year ago and 30% have been in Armenia longer. Graph 6 shows that almost an equal number of Syrian-Armenians want to leave or stay in Armenia (52% and 48% respectively). In order to understand the relationship between those that want to stay and their length of stay in Armenia, a correlation analysis was performed. Table 2 shows that there is a strong correlation between these two variables, which is statistically significant at a 0.01 level of significance and a correlation value of - 0.417. In

addition, the picture above indicates that there is a negative relationship between variables. It means that an increase in value of one variable leads to decrease in value of the second.

Graph 6: Do you plan to stay in Armenia?


Graph 7: Did you get any assistance?
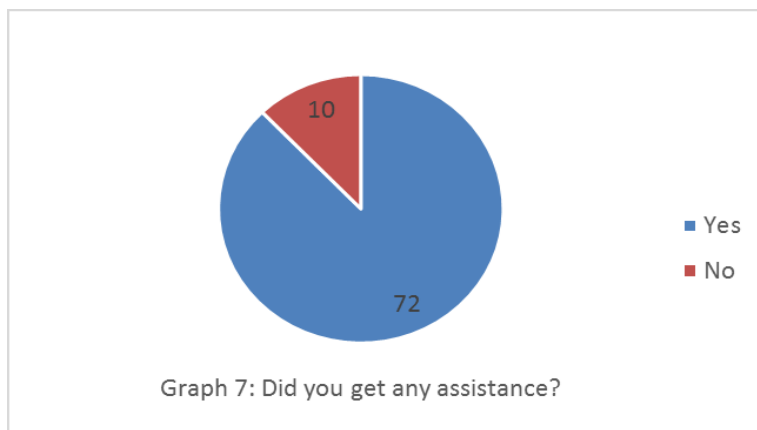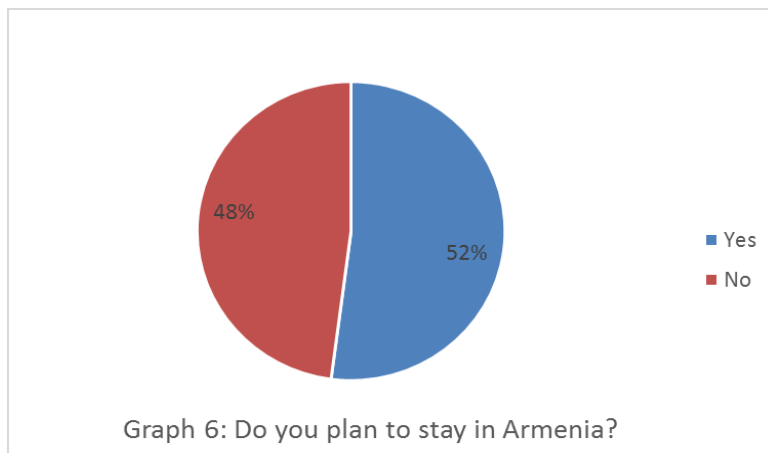
According to the survey results, the major problem that Syrian-Armenians have encountered in Armenia is finding a job. The second most important issue for them is finding an apartment. All the respondents are living in rental apartments, which is apparently why this continues to be a huge problem for them given that most do not have income. They mostly complain about the rent and finding a comfortable and affordable apartment. The third inconvenience that they have presented is adjusting to the new environment. Though Armenia is their *homeland*, there adaptation to the new environment takes a long time for most Syrian-Armenians in Armenia. The last problem that was frequently mentioned is the process of receiving available aid. As shown in Graph 7, about 90% of all respondents mentioned that they have received or are still receiving assistance from different organizations.

Graph 8 shows the organizations that are providing the bulk of assistance to Syrian-Armenians. As the picture indicates most of the respondents mentioned that Armenian

Graph 8: Which organizations?
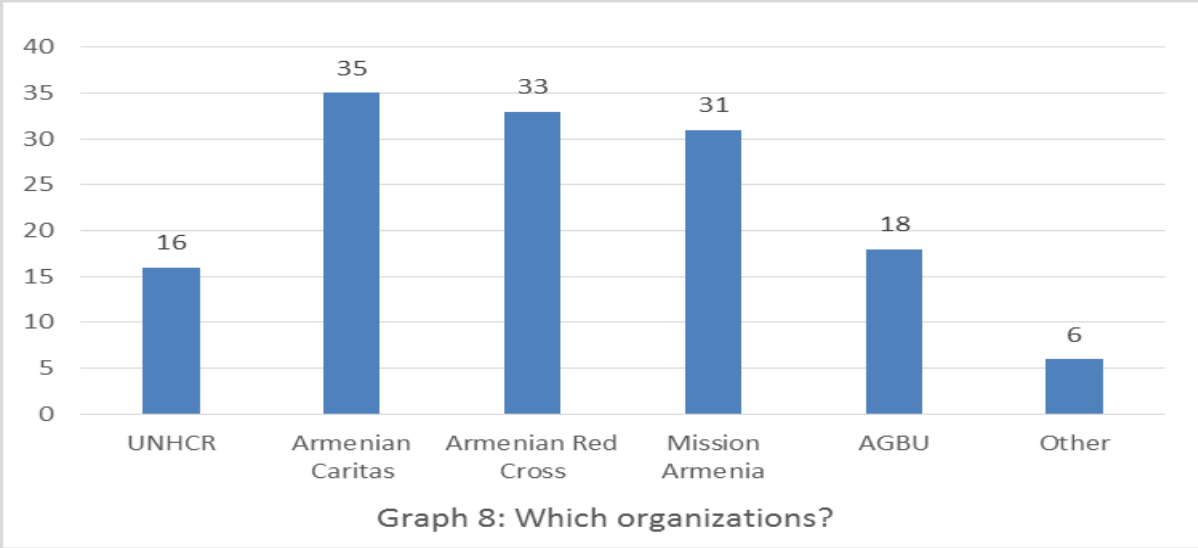
Caritas, Armenian Red cross Society and Mission Armenia are among the leaders in providing assistance to Syrian-Armenians in Armenia. It is also relevant to mention that an interesting trend was noticed during the analysis that if a person receives aid from one organization, there is a high possibility that he/she also gets assistance from at least one of

Graph 9: The Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation
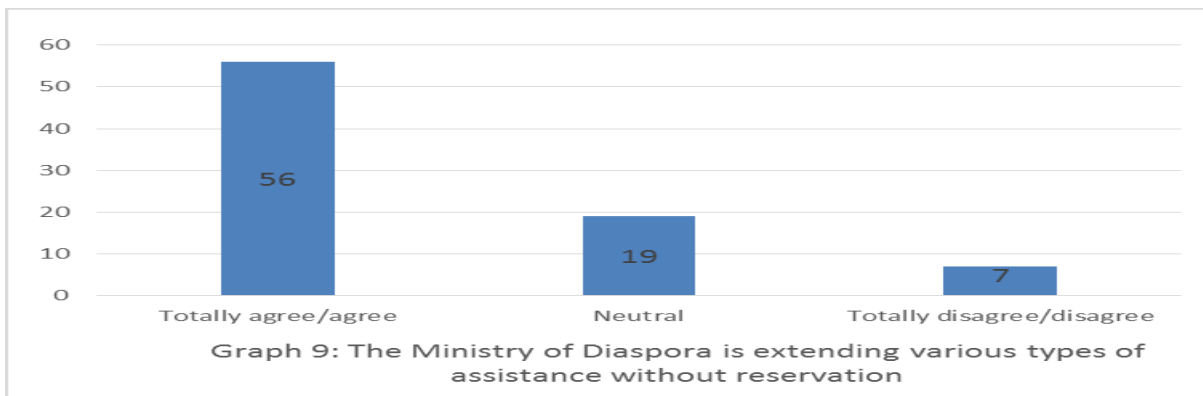
those remaining two.

To understand the level of satisfaction of surveyed Syrian-Armenians they were asked to evaluate the work of the RA Ministry of Diaspora and the process of assistance provision. Graph 9 shows the degree to which respondents are satisfied with the RA Ministry of Diaspora. According to the survey results the vast majority (62%) agreed that different types of programs have been extending without reservations. Graph 10 depicts the level of satisfaction with the process of aid provision. Again more than half of respondents agreed

Graph 10: The process of providing aid is properly organized
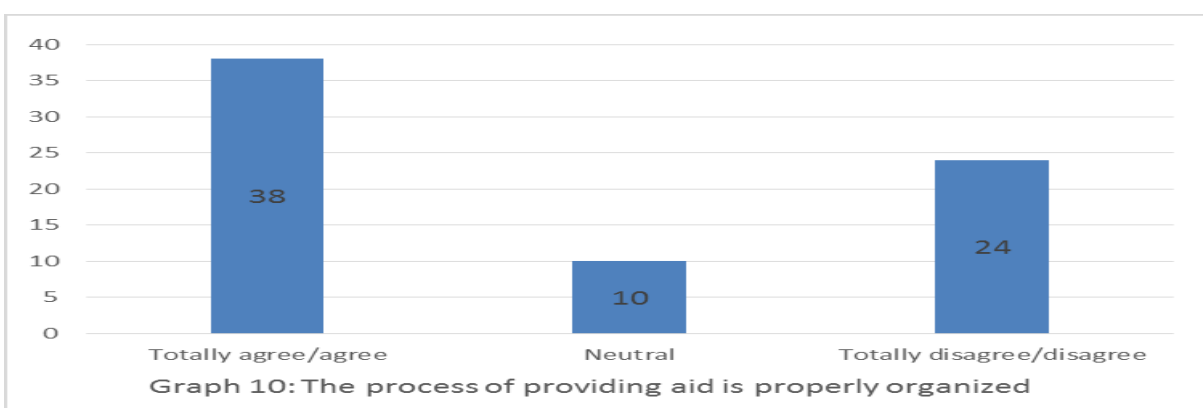
with the statement, though the number of dissatisfied respondents is relatively high (34%).

Graph 11: I am satisfied with my current living situation
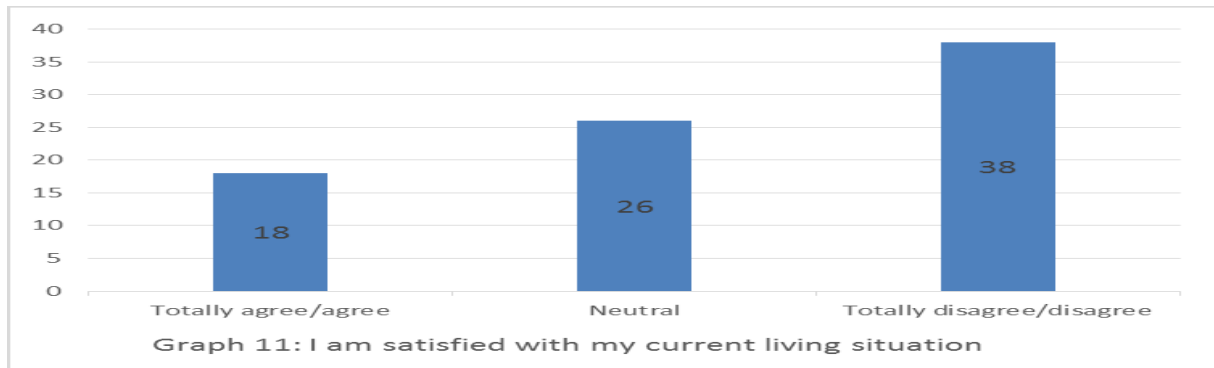
Further, the results to the questions whether respondents were generally satisfied with their current living conditions, as shown in Graph 11 indicate that 46% are not satisfied and only 22 % are satisfied with their current living conditions.

Graph 12: Local Armenians are ready to help me, if I ask for
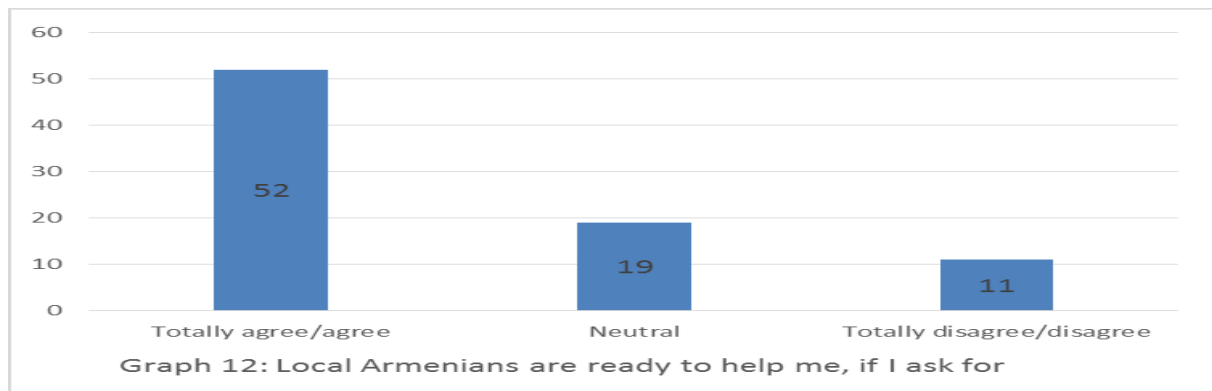
Graph 12 shows the level of moral or other support by local Armenians to Syrian-Armenians. According to the vast majority of Syrian-Armenians in Armenia (62%) local Armenians are very supportive, with only 12% of Syrian-Armenians disagreeing.

Correlations				
		Gender	The Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation	The process of providing aid is properly organized
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.186	-.191
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.206	.199
	N	82	82	81
The Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation	Pearson Correlation	-.186	1	.459**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.206		.001
	N	82	82	81
The process of providing aid is properly organized	Pearson Correlation	-.191	.459**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	.001	
	N	81	81	81
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 3: Various Correlations

Table 3 shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the variables measuring the RA Ministry of Diaspora's work in extending various types of assistance to Syrian-Armenians and the organized process of providing aid. But the level of significance of the correlation is not high with a value of -0.191 at a 99% level of significance.

Correlations				
		Are you working?	I am satisfied with my current living situation	Local Armenians are ready to help me, if I ask for
Are you working?	Pearson Correlation	1	.301*	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.038	.651
	N	82	82	82
I am satisfied with my current living situation	Pearson Correlation	.301*	1	-.329*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038		.022
	N	82	82	82
Local Armenians are ready to help me, if I ask for	Pearson Correlation	.067	-.329*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	.022	
	N	82	82	82
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

Table 4: various Correlations

And finally, Table 4 above shows a positive correlation between the first two variables with a correlation value of 0.301. Another negative correlation exists between the second and the third variables, the strength of which is more than the previous one -0.329.

The next cross tabulation helps us to identify whether there is any relationship between the respondents' satisfaction of their current situation and satisfaction with the work of RA Ministry of Diaspora. Table 5 shows that those who mostly agree with the statement

I am satisfied with my current living situation * The Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation Crosstabulation					
Count					
		The Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation			Total
		agree	neutral	disagree	
I am satisfied with my current living situation	agree	12	4	2	18
	neutral	19	3	4	26
	disagree	25	12	1	38
Total		56	19	7	82

Table 5

that RA Ministry of Diaspora is extending assistance programs without reservation are inclined to be dissatisfied with their living conditions. This result shows satisfaction with the work of the Ministry is not a matter of having better living condition.

Are you working? * I am satisfied with my current living situation Crosstabulation					
Count					
		I am satisfied with my current living situation			Total
		agree	neutral	disagree	
Are you working?	yes	13	11	10	34
	no	5	15	28	48
Total		18	26	38	82

Table 6

The data analysis in Table 6 reveals if there is any relationship between employment and satisfaction with current living conditions of respondents. The picture depicts the following trend: those who are not working, are more inclined to express dissatisfaction with their living conditions.

CHAPTER 5 — SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The first major finding this study achieved is the identification of the major issues that Syrian-Armenians are facing. More importantly, to be able to rank order the problems by their respective importance. Summarizing this point it is relevant to say that all major problems are connected with the lack of adequate financial resources or social assistance available from the RA government, in spite of the government's expressed readiness to do so. These are, generally speaking, the same types of issues often raised by local citizens.

Another important finding is that more than half of Syrian-Armenians currently in Armenia would like to settle in other, more developed countries. This is connected with the difficult conditions they have encountered in Armenia. Also, difficulties associated with adjusting to their new environment could be another reason, as mentioned in the scholarly literature reviewed. The other half tries to accept reality and strive to integrate into Armenian society.

The third major finding revealed that the majority of respondents express their satisfaction with the work of RA Ministry of Diaspora and the process of aid provision. Although most of the respondents are living in hard conditions, they were satisfied with the level of work by the Ministry. This means that the Ministry is doing its best objectively. Regarding the process of aid provision, there were some issues raised, although all the organizations have expressed their desire to make the process more open and transparent.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis is accepted on the basis of the responses from interviewees confirming that RA Ministry of Diaspora continues to deal with issues of Syrian-Armenians making relentless efforts in coordinating and organizing various programs. In addition, the survey results revealed that the vast majority of respondents support and express satisfaction with the work of the Ministry.

The second hypothesis is accepted partially, because both interviewees and survey respondents have identified shortcomings in the provision of assistance to refugees. Although the majority of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the organization of assistance but they also cited deficiencies in the process.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Tackling the issues of Syrian-Armenians is a high priority for Armenia. In this respect the RA government has announced that Syrian-Armenians will be treated as compatriots and not like refugees or newcomers independent of their legal status. Though the RA government and many charitable organizations are doing their best in dealing with the issue of refugees, the current state of affairs has many flaws, the assessment of which are both objective and subjective.

Putting aside those problems there is one circumstance which should be taking into consideration. The most important priorities for Syrian-Armenians are not those issues that were identified and discussed above, but the psychological side of being a refugee. Those Syrian-Armenians who were able to overcome the psychological barriers caused by fleeing their country of origin are easily integrating into the local Armenian community. Of course, the process of assimilation and integration is sometimes long and painful, but the efforts of

support and willingness of local communities are key components that would help the refugees in this process.

Although the major flow of Syrian-Armenians coming to Armenia has ended, there is some possibility of new flows of people considering the most recent events in Kessab, Syria (which took place near the conclusion of the current study). Protection of the Armenian identity is one of the fundamental points in the RA Constitution. The best way of promoting that is creating favorable conditions for repatriation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the most important topics for future research is the continuation of this research over a longer period of time (through time-series data collection) to test whether Syrian-Armenians currently in Armenia will stay and establish themselves in Armenian society having overcome the psychological effects of being refugees. Such a study could also be done on a comparative basis, surveying Syrian-Armenian refugees in other more developed countries where there may be more organized refugee assistance programs.

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APPENDIX

Survey sample

1. Gender
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. Age
   - ☐ Below 25
   - ☐ 25-50
   - ☐ 50 and more

3. Are you working currently?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

4. Members in the household

   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5   ☐ More

5. How many in the household are working?

   ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ More

6. If you are working, are you …?
   - ☐ Self employed
   - ☐ Working in a private company
   - ☐ Working in the government
   - ☐ Other _____

7. What are/were the obstacles you face, when looking for a job?

   _____

   _____

8. What is your political status in Armenia?
   - ☐ Citizen of RA
   - ☐ Residency
   - ☐ Refugee
   - ☐ Asylum seeker

9. When did you come to Armenia?
   - ☐ 6 months ago
   - ☐ 1 year ago
   - ☐ 1 – 1.5 years ago

☐ More than 1.5 years ago

10. Are you in a rental apartment
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

11. Would you take an advantage of government assistance for buying an apartment in "New Aleppo" quarter in Ashtarak?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

12. If no, what is the reason?

    _____

    _____

13. Rank order the obstacles that you encountered in Armenia from most difficult [1] to [6]
    ☐ Adjusting to a new environment

    ☐ Language

    ☐ Receiving aid

    ☐ Finding a job

    ☐ Finding an apartment

    ☐ Identifying appropriate educational institution (for the children)

    ☐ Other _____

14. Have you received any assistance from other (non-governmental) organizations?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

15. If yes, which organizations?
    ☐ UNHCR Office
    ☐ AGBU
    ☐ Armenian Red Cross Society
    ☐ Armenian Caritas
    ☐ Mission Armenia
    ☐ "Hayastan" All Armenian Fund
    ☐ Other _____

16. What kind of help did you receive/ are still receiving?
    ☐ Food

☐ Clothes
☐ Job
☐ Financial assistance
☐ Other _____

17. Do you play to stay in Armenia permanently?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No

18. If no, why and what are your plans?

_____

_____

For the following statements indicate the degree to which you fully agree [1] or fully disagree [5] with them

Statements	The degree of consent				
1. The RA Ministry of Diaspora is extending various types of assistance without reservation	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
2. I am satisfied with my living situation in Armenia	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
3. The process of providing aid is properly organized	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
4. Local Armenians are reluctant to help me, if I ask for help	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

Expert interviews' descriptors

Expert interview N1

The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families				✓	
The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.				✓	
The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.					✓

Expert interview N2

The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families				✓	
The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.			✓		
The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.					✓

Expert interview N3

The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families				✓	
The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.			✓		
The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.				✓	

Expert interview N4

The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families				✓	
The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.			✓		
The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.				✓	

Expert interview N5

The degree to which assistance is provided to the most vulnerable Syrian-Armenian families			✓		
The level of availability of provided assistance to all Syrian-Armenians.		✓			
The level of relevant need based assistance to Syrian-Armenians.				✓	