

FOOD INSECURITY AMONG DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN ARMENIA DURING THE 2020 ARTSAKH (NAGORNO-KARABAKH) CONFLICT

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Background

In September 2020, Azerbaijan launched an attack against Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), an enclave with an indigenous ethnic Armenian population of 150,000. As a result of the conflict, thousands of Armenians were forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge in various cities across Armenia.¹

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that an estimated 90,000 Armenians were displaced from NK during the 44-day conflict.²

Displacement disrupts access to essential resources like food, exacerbating food insecurity, especially among vulnerable groups like children, pregnant, and lactating women.³ The sudden influx of displaced persons strains host communities' resources, further exacerbating food insecurity for displaced populations and their hosts. Limited access to food and proper nutrition can severely affect their health and well-being, leading to malnutrition, stunted growth, and increased susceptibility to diseases.³

Objective

To investigate the relationship between displacement status and food insecurity among populations affected by the NK conflict in Armenia.

Methods

Study Design: Secondary data analysis using the REACH ARM Database Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, a cross-sectional humanitarian needs assessment survey that was conducted between November 23 and December 21, 2020.⁴

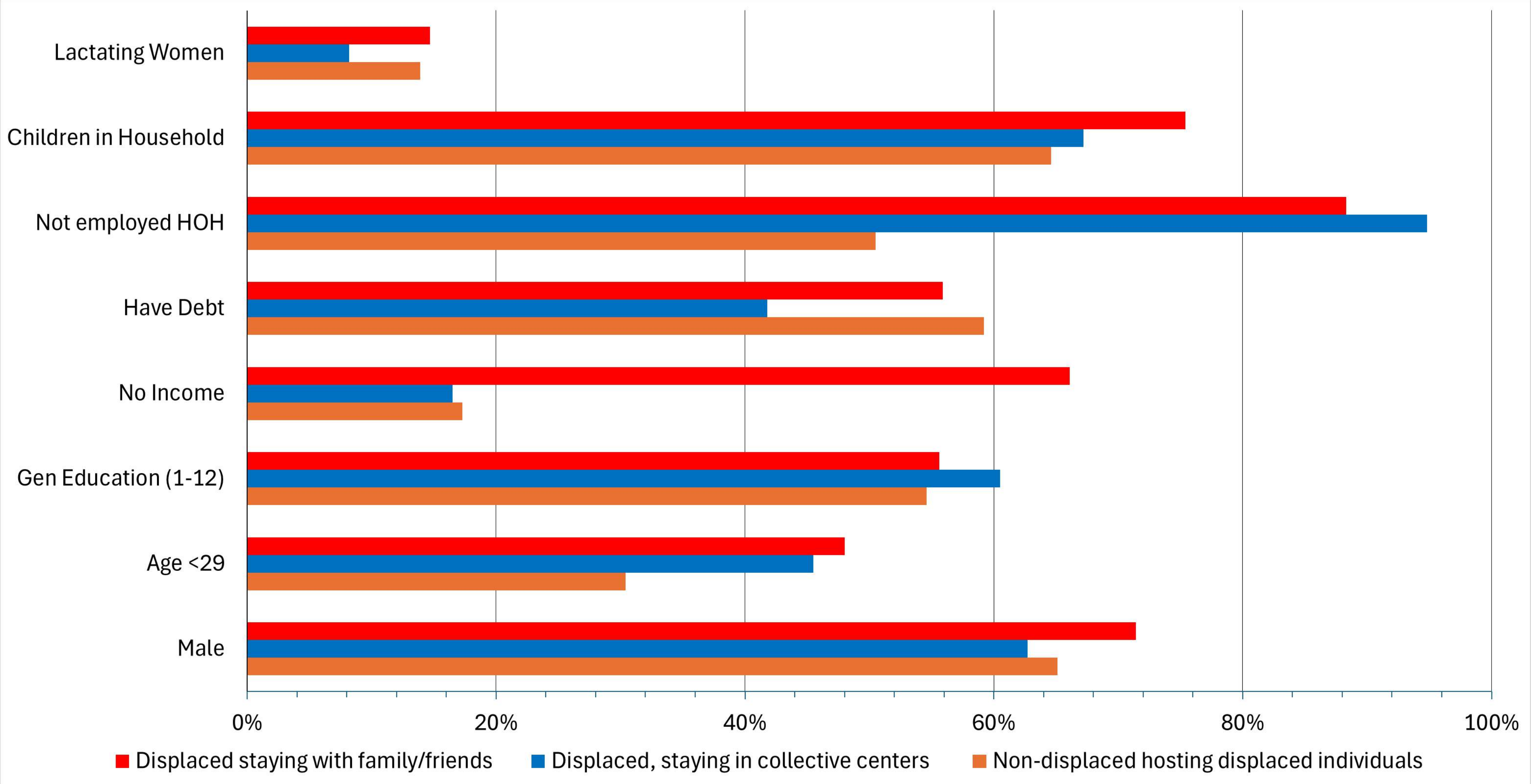
Sampling: Purposive sampling in six Armenian provinces, targeting non-displaced populations hosting displaced individuals, displaced populations in collective centers, and displaced populations staying with family or friends.

Outcomes: Food security is assessed through self-reporting reduced ability to purchase food and reduced portion sizes in the last 7 days due to the conflict.

Exposures: Primary exposure is displacement status; other factors include sociodemographic factors and household vulnerabilities.

Statistical Analysis: Conducted bivariate and multivariate logistic regressions to examine associations between displacement status and food insecurity outcomes. Multivariable logistic regressions were performed for reduced ability to purchase food and reduced portion sizes.

Household Demographics



Results

Displacement Status

Displaced individuals staying in community centers are ~4 times more likely to report a reduced ability to purchase food than those not displaced (OR: 3.89, 95% CI: 2.39–6.45, $p < 0.001$) and those staying with friends or family have 2.5 times higher odds (OR: 2.53, 95% CI: 1.87–3.42, $p < 0.001$).

Displaced individuals staying in community centers have twice the odds of eating reduced portions in the last 7 days than those not displaced (OR: 1.94, 95% CI: 1.12–3.29, $p = 0.016$).

Predisposing Factors

Households in debt have a 58% higher odds of experiencing difficulties purchasing food due to the conflict than households without debt (OR: 1.58, 95% CI: 1.24–2.03, $p < 0.001$).

Female-headed households were approximately 43% more likely to experience a reduction in portions consumed by anyone in the household compared to male-headed households (OR: 1.43, 95% CI: 1.02–2.00, $p = 0.039$).

Household Vulnerabilities

Homes with children (OR: 1.47, 95% CI: 1.12–1.93, $p = 0.006$) and lactating women (OR: 1.92, 95% CI: 1.33–2.83, $p = 0.001$) were associated with increased odds of reporting reduced ability to purchase food.

Households with lactating women were about 76% more likely to experience reduced portions consumed by anyone in the household than households without lactating women (OR: 1.76, 95% CI: 1.15–2.65, $p = 0.008$).

Conclusion

Displaced individuals in Armenia face significantly higher odds of reduced food access. Gender disparities underscore the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in addressing food access among displaced populations, including tailored support for breastfeeding mothers. Efforts to alleviate the burden of household debt and support households with dependent children are imperative to ensure equitable access to food resources during displacement.

In October 2023, Azerbaijan seized control and occupied the entirety of Artsakh, ethnically cleansing it of its indigenous Armenian population following a 9-month blockade, that had left them starving. The entire population of 150,000 was forcefully displaced to Armenia, exacerbating food insecurity further.⁵ Policies and programs should prioritize providing adequate support to displaced individuals, addressing gender disparities, and alleviating household vulnerabilities to ensure access to nutritious food for all.

Acknowledgments

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Resources



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Map of Artsakh and Armenia

