

WINTER ASSISTANCE

SYRIA AND IRAQ SITUATIONS

(Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Syria)

26 January 2015



Grandmother Jalila, aged 55, (left) and Aunt Fatieh tend to the newborn triplets in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Jalila raised 12 children of her own. "I'm scared for these children, they have God and me and their father," she says. "I will keep them warm and hopefully God will have mercy on them."
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A severe winter storm swept across the Middle East in January 2015, bringing heavy snow, rainfall, high winds and freezing temperatures to the region. UNHCR strengthened its winter assistance to keep vulnerable refugees and internally displaced people warm and protected from the harsh conditions.

UNHCR and partners worked as fast as possible to replace damaged tents, provide repair kits, deliver emergency supplies and offered alternative temporary shelter for those forced to abandon their homes due to the snow storm.

UNHCR has been providing winter assistance to the most vulnerable people in the region for the past four years. Planning and implementation begins well before the winter. Assistance includes cash to help refugees purchase needed items, shelter upgrades, and the provision of fuel, stoves, blankets and weatherproofing kits.

Despite the best efforts of governments, local authorities, and UNHCR and its partners, the situation across the region remains precarious for many, particularly given the extremely poor conditions in which refugees are living in.

TURKEY

Distribution of winter assistance began in November 2014 and was accelerated in response to the onset of snow and heavy rains since late December. The distribution of winter clothing is complete in Viransehir, Oncupinar, Ceylanpinar, Elbeyli, and Islahiye 2 camps. The remaining 17 camps are expected to receive the winter clothes between 22 and 24 January. Distribution of winter clothes also took place for non-camp refugees.

LEBANON

UNHCR and partners continued to provide winter assistance targeting up to 132,000 refugee families (660,000 people) across the country. Assistance includes cash, weather-proofing kits, stoves, blankets and fuel vouchers.

UNHCR's priority has been refugees living at high altitudes in insecure shelters such as tents and other makeshift structures. Some 55 per cent of refugees in Lebanon are estimated to live in sub-standard shelters, including more than 144,000 refugees living in informal settlements in the Bekaa Valley who are among the hardest-hit. Since November, 36,000 families living in high altitudes received fuel vouchers. Cash support for winter has been provided to 44,000 families (220,000 persons) living between 500 and 1,000 meters altitude.

Some 305,000 people received high thermal blankets. Sealing-off kits containing plastic sheeting, wood, and basic tools to keep accommodations well insulated have been distributed to some 48,000 families (240,000 individuals) living in unfinished buildings and informal settlements. Heating stoves were provided to 3,000 families and winter clothes to 130,000 individuals. Fuel provided to 583 public schools helped around 155,000 children to stay warm.

JORDAN

UNHCR together with humanitarian partners carried out operations nationwide to support hundreds of thousands of refugees who struggled for shelter and warmth in both urban areas and camps.

In the camps, the contingency plans were activated in advance of the storm, making available emergency shelters where required, repairing damaged infrastructure, and ensuring that essential services were maintained during the harsh weather. Refugees were provided with clothes, gas and gas heaters, vouchers and cash grants.

Of the some 90,000 blankets donated by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 29,780 blankets were distributed to residents in Azraq camp while the rest were delivered to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for distribution to urban refugees. UNHCR also dispatched an additional 20,000 blankets from its contingency stockpile throughout the country for urban refugees of all nationalities, as well as vulnerable Jordanians. As of 14 January, 15,072 blankets were distributed and a balance 4,928 blankets remains with CBOs for case by case distribution.

Overall, a total 217,530 blankets (including close to 90,000 from the UAE and 20,000 from UNHCR's emergency stockpile) have been delivered in Zaatari and Azraq camps as well as urban areas. This includes 109,130 blankets provided in a 96 hour period during the Huda storm, with staff, partners and community organizations working 24 hours a day to ensure that the blankets were delivered.

As of 21 January 2015, 106,000 UNHCR-funded vouchers of 10.25 JD each (approx. US\$15) have been distributed in Zaatari camp (out of 120,000 planned). The vouchers can be spent on gas refills from trucks, new gas bottles, heater sets or any other items on sale in the supermarkets. UNHCR also made available two hotlines for refugees to report emergency needs, allowing for quick and effective referral to service providers. UNHCR and partner staff have maintained a presence in the camp 24/7, ensuring timely response to any emergencies.

IRAQ

UNHCR is providing 420,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) with basic domestic items for winter. Assistance includes the distribution of blankets, plastic sheeting, stoves, kerosene, jerry cans and weatherproofing kits. UNHCR has completed distribution of winter kits in Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) with 40,249 IDP families reached. In addition, 19,022 families in southern and central Iraq received winter kits. A total of 4,101,600 liters of kerosene were provided to 23,295 families across Iraq.

Of the ten additional camps being constructed to provide shelter support to more than 200,000 IDPs, eight are currently open and two are under construction.

The recently displaced families from the Yazidi religious community currently accommodated in Mamilian camp, Dohuk governorate were provided with winterization kits to ensure that the families are equipped to face the harsh winter.

For Syrian refugees in camps in the KR-I, distribution of special winter kits and kerosene is complete. In Al Obaidi camp in Anbar province, winter assistance for Syrian refugees is ongoing with 200 families provided with special winter and tent insulation kits, and more than 130 families received an increased quantity of kerosene (100 litres per family).

EGYPT

UNHCR has provided over 47,000 vulnerable individuals (an increase of around 20,000 than the initial target of 28,000) across Egypt with cash assistance, to the total amount of close to US\$ 1.4 million. Refugees who did not receive winterization support at the beginning of 2014, as well as some of the most vulnerable individuals who do not receive regular cash assistance, were provided with US\$ 29 per person.

SYRIA

UNHCR and its partners responded urgently after the snowstorm and provided over 10,000 extremely vulnerable individuals in Damascus and rural Damascus with supplementary winter package with plastic sheeting, mattresses, sleeping mats, winter clothing, and high thermal blankets. In coordination with the partner agency, UNHCR also distributed winter clothes to 31,120 individuals in hard to reach areas of Idleb as well as urban and rural Tartous.

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