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## Voucher-based winter support in Azraq Camp Update 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015

### Background

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014 NRC began distribution of cash-value vouchers to allow purchase of winter items in Azraq Camp, using funds from ECHO. The transfer from in-kind distribution to a voucher-based modality came as a result of an assessment, consultation and project design process that took place through 2014. Through this NRC established that the market and other necessary conditions for such a project are present in Jordan, and that a transfer would be welcomed by the beneficiaries, authorities and donors.

### Planning

A pilot project started in Za'atari on September 15<sup>th</sup>, replacing the in-kind distribution of hygiene kits for new arrivals and UNHCR referrals. Supply and voucher redemption contracts were signed with the two supermarkets in Za'atari, whereby a defined range of hygiene items would be made available at fixed low prices. Vouchers were designed to be 'low conditionality', i.e. they can be spent on any item in stock in the supermarkets (except tobacco products, as per NRC global policy), and vouchers are not tied to specific ration cards so they can be spent by friends on beneficiaries' behalf or sold to other refugees without undue difficulty. With this pilot project judged to be a success NRC extended the modality to a replenishment round in Za'atari and began preparations for voucher-based winter support in Azraq.

Some differences were required from the pilot project in Za'atari. NRC decided to restrict voucher redemption to people on the correct ration card. This was not to prevent voucher sale but rather to guard against potential theft of vouchers, which was assessed as a risk due to the higher value to be disbursed. The vouchers would still be valid for the purchase of any item (except tobacco products).

Based on the beneficiaries' surveyed item preferences, a supply contract was signed with Sameh Mall. The following items were made available for purchase –

Item	Specifications	Unit	Maximum Retail Price (including all relevant taxes) (JOD)
Gas cabinet heater	Crown KF-003A	Piece	60
Gas regulator	30 bar fixed	Piece	4
Gas splitter	Metal	Piece	1
Gas pipe including 2 metal screw tighteners	Saudi manufactured	Per meter	1.2
Screwdriver	Medium size, combined flat and cross head	Piece	0.5
Wrench	27mm	Piece	1
Medium thermal blanket	Min 160x220cm, acrylic or polyester	Piece	10
Carpet	Acrylic or polyester, insulative backing	Per meter	2.85
Plastic sheet	4m x 5m, min 0.035 mm thick, LPDE laminated both sides, stitched edges, eyelets	Piece	19
Cable ties	4.8mm x 380mm, pack of 100	Pack	3
Mattress	Medium density foam, 90x190x12cm, with waterproof cover	Piece	21
Foam insulation spray can	Dunlop 750ml	Piece	3.5
Jacket, adult	Zip closing, windproof, polyester fleece, medium and large sizes	Piece	20



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Jacket, child	Zip closing, windproof, polyester fleece	Piece	12
Hat and scarf set, adult		Set	5
Hat and scarf set, child		Set	1.5
Gloves, adult		Pair	2
Gloves, child		Pair	1.5
Winter boots	Rubber, high neck, size 39+	Pair	5
Winter boots	Rubber, high neck, size up to 38	Pair	3
Winter shoes, adult	Leather, low neck, steel toe	Pair	15
Winter shoes, child		Pair	12
Electric lantern	Laitu LT-766, hand crank, USB charger port	Piece	13
Hot water bottle	Rubber, large	Piece	3
Thermos	1.2L Shimizu	Piece	6
Raincoat, adult	Medium and large sizes, mixed colours (not military), zip and poppers closure, hood	Piece	8
Raincoat, child	Mixed colours (not military), zip and poppers closure, hood	Piece	5

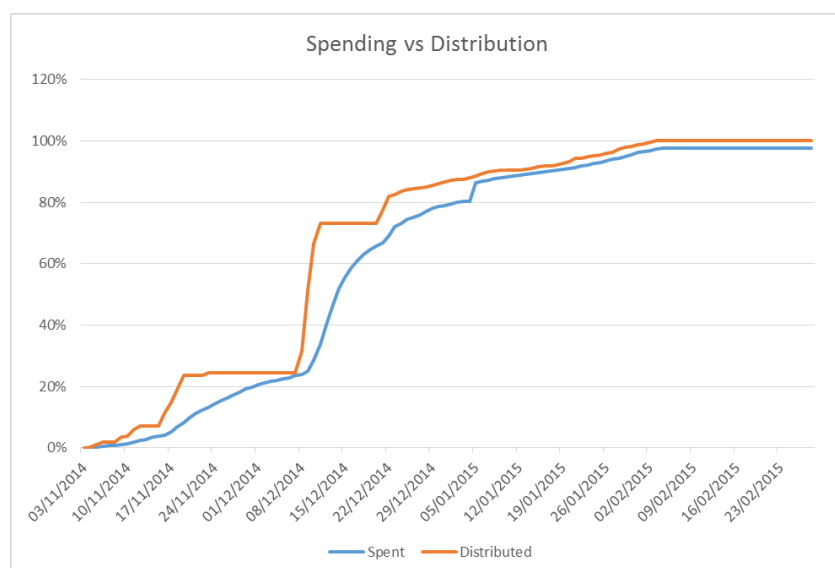
With reference to Working Group standards for winter distributions and complimentary items to be provided by other agencies, it was established that one voucher worth 15 JD would be provided for each family member in a first round of distribution in November. A second top-up distribution was scheduled for January 2015.

With the support of Camp Management and community services actors such as Care, messages were passed to community leaders and beneficiaries on the modality

### Distribution – round 1

Distribution of the first round of vouchers took place from November 3<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. Operationally this could have been done more quickly, but was spread out in an attempt to reduce pressure on Sameh Mall. Families attended the NRC replenishment site in order of family size. 8310 vouchers were distributed, with a total value of 124,650 JD.

At project design phase NRC arrived at a planning figure of 22,000 people living in Azraq and arriving at Azraq before the end of the year. Due to a low or zero arrivals rate since Eid, and continued departures from the camp, the number of people served was substantially lower. This had been identified as a risk at project planning stage.



### Spending patterns

By November 25<sup>th</sup> 4898 of the 8310 vouchers had already been redeemed at Sameh Mall. As the vouchers are valid until December 15<sup>th</sup> this represents an encouraging spend rate. The breakdown of items purchased was as below.

The single biggest category of spend was on food at 42%. This was somewhat higher than was recorded in the Za'atari projects. 'Other items' (anecdotally comprising mainly household/kitchen items) was the next biggest, followed by





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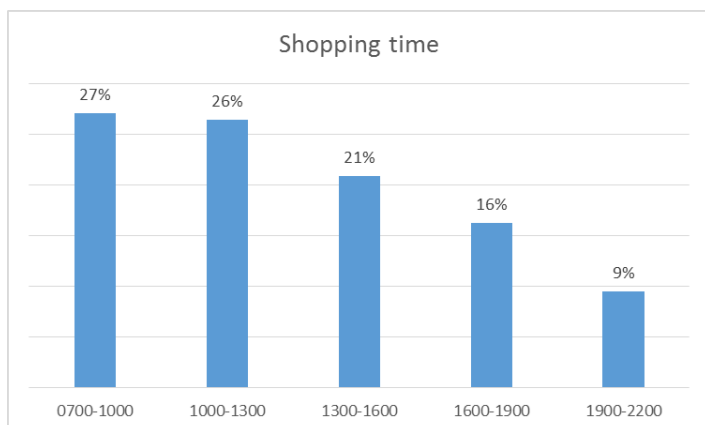
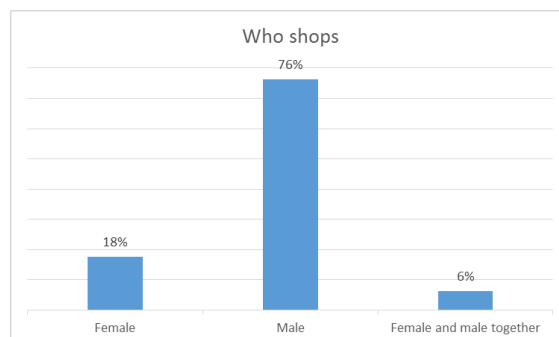
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## Shopping patterns

As a result of the rapid distribution shopping activity was very intense at Sameh for 4 days in particular, although new management there seems to have ensured fewer stock outages than during round 1. The high proportion of people shopping early in the day may be due to the stock outages.

Shopping was overwhelmingly done by men, despite 44% of the vouchers having been collected by women. This may reflect a perception that men would be safer at the very crowded shop, and so women may have entrusted male family members with the vouchers to do the shopping. The PDM did not uncover any complaints that women had been dispossessed of their vouchers.



As in round 1 food was prioritised, this time to an even greater extent. Between the two rounds together it accounted for 46% of the total spend. Household and hygiene items also sold well, as before. The sharp drop in proportion spent on winter items (from around 15% in round 1 to around 5% overall) is taken as an indicator that people may have considered their essential winter hardware needs to have been met, after which they were able to further prioritise food and household items.

## Usage Rates

New arrivals will continue to receive winter vouchers (30 day validity) until the end of February. With 98% of all distributed vouchers having spent to date there are grounds for optimism for a high final figure.

## Feedback

A small number of complaints were received in NRC's feedback boxes located at Sameh Mall and at the distribution site. Some were related to a specific issue with a member of Sameh Mall staff (swiftly remedied by Sameh Mall management) while others were concerned with a perception of high prices.

In the second round a small number of complaints were received in relation to the shorter spending period. As a result this was extended by five days, the maximum possible under the grant.

## Post-Distribution Monitoring

103 beneficiaries (61% female, 39% male, 50% village 6, 50% village 3) took part in PDM in late December and early January.

99 of 103 reported buying some food (a full range of items, the most mentions being for sugar, fresh fruit & veg and oil), 49 reported buying some hygiene items (mainly shampoo, laundry soap and

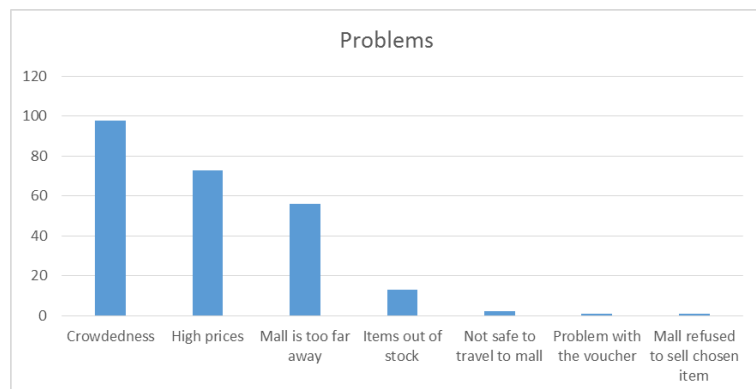


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dishwashing liquid), 35 reported buying some household items (mainly plates, cups, cutlery etc), 27 reported buying some winter items (mainly jackets and shoes).



On being asked the reasons behind their purchasing decisions, the following was reported –

- Need more money for food (57 times)
- Want to buy more expensive food items (17 times)
- Out of stock of other items (14 times)

The significantly reported problems people encountered were overcrowding and high prices at the mall, and dissatisfaction with the distance between their shelters and the mall.

102 respondents reported the mall as being safe, 1 said it is fairly safe, no-one said it is unsafe.

84% reported a good overall experience.

