

UNHCR Regional Winterization Assistance Plan 2020-2021

September 2020 / Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt

There are over 10 million Syrian and Iraqi internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. **UNHCR estimates that 3.8 million people need timely and substantial help to properly prepare for the forthcoming winter.**

USD 211.3 million is needed to ensure that life-saving winterization assistance is in place before the often harsh and challenging winter season starts.

For many, this will be the tenth consecutive winter in displacement, with families facing even greater hardships this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact.

The winterization programme covers the period from September 2020 to March 2021. **Most of the planned interventions will be in the form of cash assistance, with a small component of winter items.** Significant investment is also planned in preventative measures, such as insulating and repairing shelters and improving drainage in camps.



3.8 million¹
 Syrian and Iraqi IDPs and refugees (including refugees of other nationalities) assessed to be in need of winterization support



211.3 million
 total requirements

Syria situation	Overall	By Country				
 Planned population	3.1 million Syrian IDPs and refugees	 EGYPT 85,500	 IRAQ 187,500	 JORDAN 340,000	 LEBANON 1.1 million	 SYRIA 1.4 million ²
 Budget (USD)	182.9 million	 EGYPT 3.2 M	 IRAQ 15.4 M	 JORDAN 27.7 M	 LEBANON 54.3 M	 SYRIA 82.4 M ³
Iraq situation ⁴	Overall	By Country				
 Planned population	544,876 Iraqi IDPs and refugees	 EGYPT 4,033	 IRAQ 474,000	 JORDAN 45,000	 LEBANON 7,843	 SYRIA 14,000
 Budget (USD)	23.5 million	 EGYPT 151.2 K	 IRAQ 16.6 M	 JORDAN 5.2 M	 LEBANON 495.2 K	 SYRIA 1.1 M

¹ UNHCR plans to reach all 3.8 million people in need with winterization assistance, subject to funding received.
² This includes 1.35 million people assessed to be reached with assistance from inside Syria and around 50,000 people to be reached through the Turkey cross-border operation.
³ This includes USD 81 million for operations inside Syria and USD 1.4 million for the Turkey cross-border operation.
⁴ This also includes refugees of other nationalities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria covered under the Iraq situation. In Iraq and Egypt, **an additional USD 4.86 million is needed to provide critical winterization assistance to some 109,000 refugees of other nationalities**; the figure is included within the USD 211.3 million total requirements.

UNHCR's winterization strategy focuses on three broad areas of intervention:



Provision of seasonal cash assistance for vulnerable families to meet their additional needs during the winter months.



Provision of core relief items specific to winter such as high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, and winter clothes.



Winterization of shelter including shelter weather-proofing and repairs, improvements to drainage systems and other infrastructure in camps and informal settlements.

The winterization programme is implemented through UNHCR's own staff, government agencies, partners, and community outreach volunteers in coordination with the broader inter-agency response platforms.

The provision of seasonal cash assistance does not overlap with the provision of core relief items and shelter assistance for winter.

SYRIA

- UNHCR aims to assist 1.4 million Syrian IDPs with winterization assistance from UNHCR hubs in Syria and Gaziantep (Turkey). Starting in September, UNHCR Syria plans to provide winterization assistance to 1.35 million IDPs, returnees and host communities (around 270,000 families) across the country depending on funding and access for delivery of aid. The assistance will be prioritized for newly displaced vulnerable families (including people displaced multiple times), people living in hard-to-reach areas and in sub-standard shelters, spontaneous returnees, as well as people in newly accessible locations who have not been assisted in the past. Persons with specific needs and vulnerabilities (including unaccompanied minors or elders, female headed households, persons with disabilities or mental health issues, and persons with serious medical conditions or chronic diseases) will also be prioritized. Families will receive seasonal winter items including high thermal blankets, plastic sheeting, sleeping bags, winter clothing kits and winter jackets. A contingency stock will be maintained to respond to any potential new emergency or to respond to people in newly accessible areas. Monitoring of the programme will be conducted by UNHCR and partners through post-distribution monitoring exercises (PDM) and monitoring by UNHCR field staff visits during the distribution. UNHCR Syria will continue to strengthen coordination with other agencies within the Whole of Syria approach, including joint sector planning, information sharing and progress reporting.
- In addition, UNHCR Syria plans to support all registered refugees in the country including from Iraq and other countries. A total of 14,000 refugees (around 5,000 families) will be supported with unconditional one-time cash transfers per person to cover additional expenses during winter, such as for fuel, electricity, blankets and clothing. A market assessment will be conducted in order to establish the final transfer value. The transfers will be done through ATM cards or cash over the counter as an alternative delivery mechanism.
- Cross-border assistance from Gaziantep, Turkey, will include core relief item (CRI) kits for 50,000 Syrians IDPs (10,000 families), targeting people in most need in Aleppo and Idlib governorates, north-west Syria. The CRI kits will be trans-shipped through the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing point and distributed by UNHCR partners to beneficiaries. The distribution will start in October and UNHCR will deploy a commercial third-party company for onsite PDM, in addition to partner PDM.

Lack of funds will result in the significant reduction of winter assistance for the most vulnerable 1.4 million IDPs and returnees, exposing people to harsh weather conditions and protection risks, as well as health concerns especially in light of the COVID-19 outbreak and the socio-economic impacts stemming from economic and financial difficulties.

Winter cash assistance is particularly important for refugees in Syria. Underfunding would affect refugees' ability to meet increased expenditures during the winter season and contribute to deteriorating living conditions due to increased inflation in Syria.

LEBANON

- UNHCR intends to provide winterization assistance to 1.1 million Syrian refugees (over 270,000 families) and 7,843 (3,268 families) Iraqi refugees and refugees of other nationalities. Lebanon has been facing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis that has undermined the subsistence capacity of already vulnerable Lebanese and refugees. Individuals and families are falling deeper into poverty due to high inflation, rising food prices and loss of income. In addition, on 4 August, the city of Beirut was hit by a devastating explosion which flattened most of the city's port. It left almost 300,000 people without or a damaged home, including many refugees. The overall situation in the country has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak by reducing people's access to food, livelihood opportunities and other basic services. Based on the most recent surveys, some 73 per cent of surveyed Syrian households reported the reduction of food consumption as their coping mechanism, especially among older people and persons with disabilities. Some 60 per cent of refugees stated lack of food as their most critical need, rising to 80 per cent among persons with disabilities. Reports also suggest that refugees living in collective sites are more severely affected by rising food insecurity, followed by those living in informal settlements. With the rising prices, household debt is also increasing with shops that still accept credit. Refugees are reporting having to incur new debt during the last three months. The inability to pay rent has also been reported by many refugee households, leading to an increase in evictions and eviction threats.
- For the 2020-2021 winter campaign, UNHCR is planning to distribute LBP 173,000 (equivalent to USD 45) per month per family. Due to the high level of inflation, depreciation of the local currency and unavailability of USD in Lebanon, cash assistance transfer value is now determined in Lebanese Pounds. For families classified as highly vulnerable or severely vulnerable and not receiving monthly multi-purpose cash assistance, UNHCR is planning to distribute five months of winter assistance (USD 225 in total); and for families receiving monthly multi-purpose cash assistance, UNHCR will distribute three-month winter assistance (or USD 135 in total). Winter assistance will be provided as a one-off transfer between October and December 2020. A dedicated Winter Assistance Q&A, carefully tested with refugees to inform appropriate counselling, is already in place but will be updated to respond to queries from the community. Outreach volunteers and other relevant refugee groups will be trained and tasked to communicate about the winter assistance programme with communities.
- To plan the winter assistance programme, UNHCR will continue using updated data and findings of the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASYR) and the Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees of Other Nationalities (VARON). Furthermore, in order to prioritize the targeted group, UNHCR will follow the Targeting Framework for basic needs, which predicts the socio-economic vulnerability of the overall refugee population and triangulates data related to the different cash programmes, as for previous winter assistance programmes.
- The targeting methodology for winter continues to be reviewed in a consultative process among all actors at the Basic Assistance Working Group composed of UN agencies, NGOs and the Government. In terms of modalities and process to deliver, UNHCR relies on the LOUISE (Lebanon One Unified Inter Operational System of e-Cards) multi-agency framework. The operation will undertake a dedicated PDM exercise for the winter assistance programme which normally takes place in February-March the following year.

Underfunding will leave almost 1.1 million vulnerable Syrian refugees (270,000 families) without the means to meet their survival needs during the winter period. UNHCR anticipates a further deterioration of the economic and protection environment in the second half of 2020. The vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are likely to further increase due to cumulative factors in this protracted situation, which has been further exacerbated by the economic crisis and COVID-19. At a time of dramatic increase in vulnerabilities and enormous unmet needs under the existing safety net, the winter campaign is an opportunity to provide refugees with a lifeline during the hardest period of the year.

For Iraqi refugees and refugees of other nationalities, underfunding will leave 7,800 vulnerable refugees (3,700 families) without the means to meet their survival needs during the winter period.

JORDAN

- UNHCR aims to reach 340,000 Syrians refugees (over 79,000 families) in Jordan with winter assistance in the form of cash assistance. This includes around 120,000 individuals (24,000 families) in the refugee camps of Azraq and Zaatari and around 220,000 individuals (55,000 families) in urban areas. UNHCR will aim to provide assistance before cold weather conditions begin in November.
- In urban areas, winterization assistance will target the most vulnerable Syrian refugees and will be provided through a combination of virtual accounts and mobile money wallets. A combination payment modality will ensure social distancing norms required by the Government of Jordan. The majority of refugees in urban areas live in dilapidated houses and hence need additional resources to procure winterization materials such as blankets, gas cylinders and refills. For the Syrian refugee population in camps, UNHCR plans to provide cash assistance for essential heating gas. In addition, an unconditional cash grant will be provided per individual to procure essential items including clothing and other non-food items needed for winter. The planned assistance for refugees living in the camps is around USD 70 per person, while the planned assistance for refugees living in urban areas is around USD 90. These amounts will be subject to funding received. Similar to previous years, UNHCR will co-chair the inter-agency Winterization Task Force to coordinate interventions. Each partner will be responsible for carrying out their PDM and sharing reports at the end of the implementation period.
- Jordan's non-Syrian population group includes several different nationalities including Iraqis, Yemenis, Somalis, Sudanese and others. UNHCR adheres to a one-refugee approach policy and plans to include all vulnerable refugee groups in the winterization assistance. For the forthcoming winter, assistance is also needed for 45,000 vulnerable Iraqi refugees and refugees of other nationalities (15,000 households). Payments will be staggered to avoid crowds at ATMs and ensure proper social distancing. The Winterization Task Force will develop a pool of eligible beneficiaries who are identified as the most vulnerable. UNHCR remains one of the few agencies that continues to provide assistance to non-Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Without funding, around 340,000 Syrian refugees (79,000 families) in urban areas and camps will be unable to meet their increased needs of the winter season, driving vulnerable households to take on debt to meet urgent needs and potentially leading to worsening health conditions.

As there are few avenues for support available to non-Syrian refugees, it is unlikely that another organisation will be in the position to assist those that UNHCR cannot support due to a lack of funding, leaving 45,000 vulnerable Iraqi refugees and refugees of other nationalities (15,000 families) without any means of assistance during the winter season.



A Syrian refugee family fled their home in Daraa, Syria, in 2012 and now lives in Jebel Hussein, Amman. With winter approaching, the family will rely on UNHCR cash assistance. "Winter cash assistance is so important. It helps my family a lot. It will mean I can bring gas or a heater. Even though I have other needs and rent that need paying, I know this winter the basic thing I need to do is keep my children warm. I don't have a heater at the moment. The one we had last year broke, so it needs replacing. If we don't receive the winter cash assistance it will be a disaster." Photo by UNHCR / Lilly Carlisle

IRAQ

- UNHCR aims to assist some 474,000 Iraqi IDPs (79,000 families), 187,500 Syrian refugees (37,500 families) as well as 17,500 refugees of other nationalities (3,500 families) with winterization assistance. All assistance will be cash-based, allowing families to decide for themselves how to spend the money on their most urgent needs during the difficult winter months. Winterization assistance of IQD 480,000 (around USD 400) will be provided per refugee family as a one-time cash grant. For IDPs, a one-off winterization assistance payment of IQD 240,000 (around USD 200) per family will be provided by UNHCR in line with the 2019 Shelter/Non-Food Item (NFI) Cluster recommendations for winter assistance.
- Beneficiaries are identified using a socio-economic vulnerability desk formula. In both the IDP and refugee responses, UNHCR coordinates closely with all UN agencies and other humanitarian actors through the inter-agency working groups, as well as with government authorities, to maximize the efficiency of the assistance provided and to avoid duplication of activities.
- The assistance is provided when the mobile wallet is successfully created/confirmed under the name of the eligible beneficiaries and the identity of the beneficiary has been verified by the financial service provider through the regular Know-Your-Customer (KYC) process or the identity of the beneficiary has been authenticated through “Iris payment authentication”. Beneficiaries will receive all relevant information via SMS and follow-up calls.
- In addition, as part of its COVID-19 response, UNHCR has recently introduced a new digital money option in collaboration with World Food Programme and financial service providers. IDPs can use the cash assistance to purchase winter items from selected merchants that accept digital payments thus avoiding contact with physical cash, and the amount is transferred from the beneficiary’s e-wallet to the merchant’s e-wallet. Beneficiaries have the option to utilize all or part of the assistance in digital transactions.
- Once distributions are complete, UNHCR will conduct PDM through phone surveys. In addition to the standard methodologies of household interviews, the operation will work with the partner to see if the focus group discussions and key informant interviews can be organized under the current movement and gathering size restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. PDM allows UNHCR to improve the quality of its service delivery and to ensure accountability to its persons of concern.

UNHCR’s winterization assistance programme remains vital to ensure that over 474,000 vulnerable IDPs (79,000 families), 187,500 Syrian refugees (37,500 families), as well as 17,500 refugees of other nationalities (3,500 families) in Iraq are well equipped with the necessary resources to survive winter’s harsh conditions.

In some mountainous areas of Iraq, especially in the Kurdistan region where 99 per cent of Syrian refugees reside, temperatures can drop to below freezing during winter months. The majority of people rely heavily on winterization assistance, which addresses the basic needs of IDPs and refugees to survive through the severe winter conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the living conditions of persons of concern, heightening their protection risks and socio-economic situation.



Two young IDPs stand at a damaged balcony in a building in Daben city, a housing estate with five buildings. Residents face multiple dangers including the cold, falling from floors or staircases or being hit by debris. There are 1.4 million IDPs in Iraq since January 2014, as well as 4.7 million returnees as of 30 June 2020. Photo by UNHCR / D. Nahr

EGYPT

- UNHCR Egypt plans to provide 85,500 Syrian refugees (28,600 families), 4,033 Iraqi refugees (2,132 families), and 91,200 refugees of other nationalities (48,000 families), primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa, with one-off winter cash assistance. Despite the continuous increase in inflation, UNHCR will still pay an amount of USD 37.5 per person totalling USD 3.35 million, which is similar to previous years. UNHCR is planning to disburse the winter grants from October 2020 to February 2021 through the Egypt Post Offices. The process entails targeting of vulnerable groups and communicating with communities to inform them about the winterization programme and the disbursement mechanism.
- UNHCR works closely with relevant partners in Egypt, including UN agencies. The Basic Needs and Cash Working Group continues to be the main forum for planning, coordination and information sharing. Following the suspension of vulnerability assessments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR will utilize categorical criteria and protection interviews to identify the most vulnerable families in need of winterization assistance. Criteria will include at-risk groups such as older persons, single women and parents, persons with disabilities or serious medical conditions, unaccompanied children and other children-at-risk, and individuals at heightened protection risk. At the end of the distribution cycle, a third-party entity will carry-out PDM within four weeks of distribution. The PDM will collect data on market access, utilization of the assistance, and unmet needs.

The required funds will cover the needs 85,500 Syrian refugees (28,600 families), 4,033 Iraqi refugees (2,132 families), and 91,200 refugees of other nationalities (48,000 families). Failure to provide winter assistance will impair the ability of vulnerable households to cope with lower temperatures resulting in high risk of harm to their physical and psychological well-being and/or causing them to resort to other harmful coping strategies. They may also resort to redirecting their already meagre income to address the winter elements that otherwise would be used to cover for basic needs, rent, education and other essential needs.



*A Sudanese refugee gets her UNHCR cash assistance in a Post Office in Cairo after being identified by iris scanning system.
Photo by UNHCR / Pedro Costa Gomes*

Additional information:

For the impact of the 2019-2020 UNHCR Winterization Assistance Programme, please refer to the final report:

[2019-2020 Regional Winterization Programme - Final Report](#)

For more details, please contact UNHCR MENA Director's Office in Amman (Jordan) at: MENAreporting@unhcr.org