SEVERE WINTER WEATHER RESPONSE IN NORTH-WEST SYRIA

FLASH UPDATE #3

10 February 2022

This update provides a summary of the response to the recent severe winter weather in north-west Syria by UNHCR and the UNHCR co-led Clusters of Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and Shelter/Non-Food Items (SNFI).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Extreme winter conditions since 18 January 2022 have affected more than 250,000 people across hundreds of sites in Aleppo and Idleb governorates, north-west Syria.
- Some 10,000 tents have been destroyed or damaged by the severe winter weather and a multi-sectoral response is ongoing.
- To respond to the current emergency, UNHCR has distributed some 6,500 winter core relief item (CRI) kits, installed 910 new tents, and trans-shipped 15,000 CRI kits to respond to the current emergency.

Tent installment in Koknaya, Idleb. Photo: ©Watan Foundation

SITUATION OVERVIEW

There are an estimated 2.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in north-west Syria. Around 1.7 million IDPs are hosted in some 1,400 displacement sites, of whom 80% are women and children, and almost 46,000 IDPs are reported to have specific needs.

Since mid-January, severe winter conditions including storms, strong winds and freezing temperatures have resulted in additional hardships for some 250,000 people across more than 120 sites in Aleppo and 170 sites in Idleb governorates. Two young children aged 7-days and two-months, residing in Al-Laith camp in Harbanush, north of Idleb, and Sheikh Bahr Camp in Armanaz, Idleb countryside, have died reportedly of hypothermia amidst the freezing temperatures.

Cash assistance, means of heating, food rations, repairs to damaged tents and replacement of destroyed tents remain priority needs.

UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR, through its three active clusters, is closely monitoring the situation on the ground and continuously liaising with partners to identify and address emerging risks and needs. As of 7 February, UNHCR has distributed some 6,500 CRI kits and installed 910 new tents as part of the emergency response to harsh weather conditions. Items provided include carpets, mattresses, high thermal blankets, plastic sheeting and hygiene kits. Between 1-9 February, UNHCR trans-shipped 10,000 CRI kits and 1,200 tents, estimated to assist 43,500 people in need, through the Bab Al Hawa border crossing point. Trans-shipments of an additional 6,400 winter CRI kits and 3,700 tents are expected to be completed by 16 February.

In 2021, UNHCR supported vulnerable people to prepare for the harsh winter weather through site improvement projects in IDP settlements across north-west Syria. These projects included ground insulation for tents, road gravelling, as well as the construction of drainage and sewage networks with particular attention on stormwater management. Internal drainage systems for flood mitigation were also installed in areas at risk. In total, 23,520 tent insulations were completed, benefitting close to 120,000 people in 193 IDP sites. As part of site improvement efforts, a total of 55 kilometres of roads, 49 kilometres of drainage and sewage lines, and almost 580 solar streetlights were installed, benefiting more than 53,000 people in 28 IDP sites.

UNHCR CO-LED CLUSTER UPDATES

As severe winter weather is a regular occurrence, all UNHCR co-led clusters – Protection, CCCM and SNFI – along with other clusters had already developed winterization response plans to minimize the impact, and all three clusters are coordinating to quickly respond to the urgent needs of the affected population.

CCCM

The CCCM Cluster continues to follow-up on incident reports in IDP sites in Aleppo and Idleb Governorates. A multi-sectoral response is ongoing, including efforts to re-establish access to the sites, distribute winter cash assistance, secure means for heating, and provide mattresses, blankets and plastic sheeting. Further interventions are urgently required to clear roads from snow and commence repairs, as well as repair or replace damaged tents.

Protection

Cluster partners are engaging with affected communities and identifying people in situations of extreme vulnerability and requiring specific interventions and support. Some 550 families received cash assistance of $100 per family from the Emergency Case Fund. Case management services and psychosocial first aid were also carried out in Azzaz and Jarablous, and winter clothing for children are being distributed. The weather conditions and limited resources continue to impact cluster partners' ability to address protection needs. However, partners continue to provide awareness-raising sessions, transportation to relocate families at risk to warmer and safer locations, and referrals to other services.

SNFI

Cluster partners continue to address the emergency shelter needs of the affected population and provide winter assistance to the IDPs in the affected areas. Currently, around 20,000 households (100,000 individuals) are targeted for humanitarian assistance by the SNFI cluster, including tent repair and replacement. Around half of the targeted population are being supported with cash assistance for winter needs, amounting to $150 per family. Flood prevention has become an emerging concern as accumulated snow begins to melt.

Displaced population in NWS receiving emergency winter kits. Photo: © Maram Foundation

Additional resources:

- UNHCR Regional Winterization Assistance Plan 2021-2022 (August 2021)
- UNHCR 2021-2022 Regional Winterization Programme Progress Report (September - December 2021)
- Severe Winter Weather Response in North-West Syria, Flash Update #1 (27 January 2022)
- Severe Winter Weather Response in North-West Syria, Flash Update #2 (3 February 2022)
- UNHCR Global Focus

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