SEVERE WINTER WEATHER RESPONSE IN NORTH-WEST SYRIA

FLASH UPDATE #4

1 March 2022

This update provides a summary of the response to severe winter weather since mid-January 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.
- More than 10,000 tents have been destroyed or damaged by the severe winter weather and a multi-sectoral response was activated.
- To respond to the current emergency, UNHCR has transshipped and distributed some 15,000 winter core relief item (CRI) kits, trans-shipped 2,400 tents and installed more than 900 tents.

Affected IDP sites in Alshiekh Bilal Camp in Rajo, Afrin. 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.

The harsh weather conditions have affected some 250,000 people across several IDP sites in north-west Syria; UNHCR and its partners monitored at least 294 incidents (172 in Idleb and 122 in Aleppo), including 162 snowstorms, 118 floods and 14 incidents of highspeed winds. The inclement weather damaged 9,583 tents and destroyed some 939, resulting in greater suffering for 67,000 people. The most affected sites are in Dana, Maaret Tamsrin (Idleb Governorate) and Afrin (Aleppo Governorate).

While snowfall has settled, response to the impact of the harsh weather has been ongoing. As snowfall blocked roads, access to camps was limited and transporting IDPs to new shelters was challenging. Lack of proper infrastructure in IDP sites posed a concern due to the risk of flooding.

Urgent needs including cash assistance, flood prevention, means of heating, repairs to damaged tents and replacement of destroyed tents have been addressed. However, raising awareness about fire hazards resulting from improper use of fuel sources remains a top concern.

UNHCR RESPONSE

UNHCR, through its partners and three active clusters, has been closely monitoring the situation on the ground and continuously liaising with partners to identify and address emerging risks and needs. In addition to the regular winterization programme that UNHCR implements each winter, an emergency plan to respond to the severe weather conditions was also adopted.

Since the beginning of the winter emergency on 18 January until 22 February, UNHCR has trans-shipped 1,200 emergency CRI kits, 15,000 winter CRI kits and 2,400 tents, estimated to have assisted 93,000 people in need, through the Bab Al Hawa border crossing point. As of 25 February, UNHCR has distributed more than 15,000 CRI kits and installed more than 900 tents as part of the winter response. Items provided include carpets, mattresses, high thermal blankets and plastic sheeting.

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 still coordinating and responding to the urgent needs of the affected population.

CCCM

In addition to facilitating planning and programming, the CCCM Cluster has been focused on monitoring, reporting, and coordinating the response to incidents, as well as advocating and planning to resolve some of the underlying challenges related to these incidents in Aleppo and Idleb Governorates. Incident summary reports have been produced on a monthly basis to provide analysis on the causes and challenges faced by the CCCM Cluster. The Cluster coordinated with actors on the ground, including NGOs and Site Monitoring Teams, to monitor and follow-up on the provision of assistance. A multi-sectoral response is still ongoing, including efforts to re-establish access to affected sites, distribute winter cash assistance, prevent fires, raise awareness, secure means for heating, and provide mattresses, blankets and plastic sheeting for the affected population. Further interventions are required to clear roads from snow and commence repairs, as well as repair or replace damaged tents.

As of 31 January 2022, CCCM Cluster tools provided a multi-sectoral analysis of key findings from data collected through key informant interviews across 1,322 IDP sites. A major gap was reported in access to fuel in winter, with 83% of IDPs living in sites that lack access. The analysis highlights that sufficient and appropriate sources of fuel improve the living conditions of IDPs and also helps to mitigate fire incidents.

Protection

Cluster partners have been engaging with affected communities to identify people in situations of extreme vulnerability and requiring specific interventions and support. Protection partners have been distributing cash assistance of $100 per family from the Emergency Case Fund to support the main emergency, protection and referral needs of children, including shelter, health, WASH and transportation, including transportation services to school.

Protection Cluster partners continued delivering case management and psychosocial first aid interventions in Idleb city, Harim in Idleb Governorate, and Azaz and Jarablus in Aleppo Governorate. Despite weather conditions and limited resources impacting ability to address protection needs, cluster partners have been distributing winter clothing for children and providing 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 IDPs in the affected areas. The SNFI Cluster has been coordinating 15 member organizations responding to the most affected sites and made available an interactive online tool for sharing plans and updates. The Cluster also engaged in daily discussions with responding organizations, following up on the progress and challenges faced in the field. Furthermore, the Cluster initiated an advocacy campaign with infographics highlighting the severe weather conditions and needs.

In response to snow and flood incidents, SNFI Cluster members have replaced some 840 tents, distributed 850 emergency shelter kits and provided almost 8,000 households with complementary plastic sheeting in some 120 IDP sites. More than 7,500 households received multi-purpose cash transfers coordinated through the Cluster.

Emergency winter kits distribution in Abo Aljolan Camp in Azaz, Aleppo. 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)
- Severe Winter Weather Response in North-West Syria, Flash Update #3 (10 February 2022)
- UNHCR Global Focus

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