

# 2021-2022 Regional Winterization Programme – Final Report

Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria

September 2021 – March 2022

UNHCR developed a [regional winterization plan for 2021-2022](#) based on the assessed most vulnerable needs of almost 3.3 million Syrian and Iraqi internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. With the generous contributions received by early December 2021, UNHCR was able to provide winterization support to close to 3.1 million people during the winter months.

The winterization programme was implemented from September 2021 to March 2022, with the majority of the assistance (both cash grants and winter items) distributed by December 2021. Early planning, preparation and procurement allowed UNHCR and its partners to reach beneficiaries and, wherever possible, to allow beneficiaries to receive their assistance on time to prepare for the harsh winter.

Multi-purpose cash assistance was the main modality used, allowing families to decide which expenditures and purchases to prioritize according to their individual and family needs, thus enhancing the efficiency of the support while also promoting dignity. Recipients were thus able to e.g. purchase winter clothing, fuel for heating, additional blankets, or make small home repairs as needed to help them better cope with the harsh and often freezing conditions. Cash support also reduces the need to resort to harmful coping mechanisms such as incurring debt to buy food, skipping meals completely, or supplementing income through child labour. UNHCR also provided seasonal core relief blankets such as high thermal blankets and winter clothing.



**3.1 million**

vulnerable people reached with winterization assistance including more than

**2.5 million Syrians**



**560,000 Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities**

**UNHCR's winterization programme is implemented directly by UNHCR, as well as through government agencies, partners, and community outreach volunteers, in coordination with the broader interagency response platforms.**

## UNHCR's winterization strategy focused 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 provision of seasonal cash assistance does not overlap with the provision of core relief items and shelter assistance for winter.

# SYRIA

People of concern assisted (as of 31 March)

Type of assistance

**Syrians**  **714,548** individuals reached\*

**in-kind 100%**

**Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities**  **18,444** individuals reached\*\*

**in-kind 27%**  
**cash 73%**

\* Includes 639,548 Syrian IDPs reached by UNHCR operations inside Syria and 75,000 IDPs through the cross-border operation from Gaziantep (Turkey).

\*\* Includes 13,392 individuals assisted in cash and 5,052 individuals assisted in kind.

- The UNHCR Syria winterization programme provided 639,548 people (139,600 families) with seasonal items, which were much needed as temperatures fell to zero degrees in many areas of the country. Distributed items included high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping bags, and winter clothing kits and were distributed to vulnerable Syrians in all 14 governorates in Syria. UNHCR prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable including those recently displaced, new returnees, people living in hard-to-reach or in newly accessible areas, and in sub-standard shelters who had not been assisted in the past.
- In Syria, all refugees registered with UNHCR received an unconditional multi-purpose cash grant intended to help families meet increased costs during the winter months. Between November 2021 and March 2022, some 4,900 refugee families (13,400 individuals) benefitted from the winter cash assistance through a cash-over-the counter modality. Some 1,400 asylum-seeking families (over 5,000 persons), were provided with essential winter items including high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping bags, and winter clothing.
- UNHCR's cross-border operation for north-west Syria supported around 75,000 people in need with winter core relief items including high thermal blankets, plastic tarpaulins, foam mattresses, hygiene kits, and carpets. The assistance helped people to protect themselves from the harsh winter conditions, which witnessed high levels of snowfall and storms. The winterization assistance was coordinated with the Shelter/Non-Food Item (NFI) Cluster to support most vulnerable and prevent any assistance duplication. The COVID-19 pandemic affected procurement processes and resulted in longer than expected delays, which in turn delayed the planned distribution of winterization core relief items.

## Monitoring in Syria

UNHCR monitored winter in-kind assistance distributions through regular field visits with partners. Overall, the feedback received was positive and most recipients requested additional items such as carpets, heaters, sleeping mats, boots, and cash assistance. In addition, some beneficiaries requested female winter jackets and larger-sized winter clothing. Logistical issues at the ports delayed the receipt of some core relief items, which in turn delayed the distribution to vulnerable populations.

UNHCR Syria will conduct post-distribution monitoring for the 2021-2022 winter cash assistance for refugees in May 2022. In north-east Syria, liquidity issues at banks and the closure of a bank branch in Al-Hasakeh were reported by refugees as constraints to receive their entitlements. Immediate feedback received from refugees is for an increase in the amount of cash assistance to mitigate the impact of increased prices and depreciation of the local currency. Nevertheless, refugees were appreciative of the cash assistance received.

## Monitoring of cross-border assistance

UNHCR conducted winterization assistance post distribution monitoring through more than 3,300 surveys in ten sub-districts of Aleppo and Idleb governorates. Findings showed that 99.5% of the beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality and 99.4% with the quantity of the assistance. High thermal blankets, carpets and foam mattress were reported to be the most useful items in the winter CRI kit. Nearly 50% of the beneficiaries expressed the need for additional items such as heating materials and solar panel. More than 95% of beneficiaries understood why they were selected to receive winter kits.

# LEBANON

People of concern assisted (as of 31 March)

Type of assistance

**Syrians**  **1,291,486** individuals reached

cash 100 %

**Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities**  **172,367** individuals reached

cash 100 %

- UNHCR was able to assist more refugees and vulnerable Lebanese during the 2021-2022 winter season than the previous year thanks to an earlier start of the programme as well as the timely, flexible and generous contribution of donors. A large-scale card distribution and validation exercise preceded the start of implementation to ensure that the targeted beneficiaries were eligible to receive cash assistance and were in possession of the correct card, which allowed some 276,017 Syrian refugee families and 3,195 refugee families of other nationalities to be verified for the programme.
- The programme covered three groups of beneficiary households: 1,291,486 Syrian refugees (273,684 families), 9,073 refugees of other nationalities (3,100 families) and 163,294 Lebanese vulnerable individuals (42,972 families). Refugee received assistance via the LOUISE cash card for a duration of three to five months. For vulnerable Lebanese families, three months of assistance was disbursed per family through cash over the counter providers.
- In addition to cash assistance, UNHCR provided seasonal core relief items to 54,468 refugee families (227,205 individuals), and 2,193 vulnerable Lebanese families (10,305 individuals) based on rapid needs assessments, primarily targeting informal settlements dealing with shocks caused by harsh weather conditions, floods, fire, or evictions.

## Monitoring in Lebanon

Data collection for the winter Post-Distribution and Outcome Monitoring (PDOM) started in March 2022, after the last instalment of assistance had been paid, to measure the full impact of the assistance. Data collection was finalized by 12 April and data analysis is currently underway. In addition, qualitative data collection through 6 focus group discussions in different settings, such as high altitudes, coastal areas, informal tented settlements, and urban settings, is taking place to understand the impact of the winter assistance and to triangulate information. Results of the qualitative component will be available by end of May.



UNHCR's emergency response during February 2022 snow storm in Saadnayel city, Lebanon. Photo: © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

# JORDAN

People of concern assisted (as of 31 March)

## Type of assistance

**Syrians**  **394,950** individuals reached

cash **100 %**

**Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities**  **32,004** individuals reached

cash **100 %**

- UNHCR Jordan provided 96,110 Syrian (394,950 individuals) and 8,000 refugee and asylum-seeker households of other nationalities (32,004 individuals) living in Jordan with winterization assistance between October and December 2021. Assistance for the out-of-camp population included a combination of cash assistance via virtual accounts and mobile wallets. The winterization taskforce, a sub-committee of the Basic Needs Working group which includes members from UN agencies, NGOs and other INGOs, developed the targeting criteria to identify the prioritized list of most vulnerable population in need of assistance and the assistance package. UNHCR was able to continuously deliver cash assistance throughout 2021 despite the limitations posed by the pandemic. The distribution of assistance was staggered to reduce crowds at ATMs and ensure physical distance whilst adhering to COVID-19 norms and at the same time reduced risks faced by women receiving assistance.
- The Jordanian economy has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic amid already low growth and high unemployment. According to the World Bank, in 2020 Jordan's economy contracted by 1.6%, with unemployment rising to 24.7% in the fourth quarter of 2020 and youth unemployment rates reaching an unprecedented 50%. The macro-economic challenges rendered assistance from UNHCR all the more timely.

## Monitoring in Jordan

Data collection for the 2021-2022 winterization programme PDM commenced in April. Preliminary results show that most respondents spent their COVID-19 emergency cash assistance on basic household necessities, with food (70%) and rent (69%) being the most-frequently cited expenditure among respondents. This is in line with the intended outcomes of this seasonal multi-purpose cash assistance programme. However, the data suggests that negative coping strategies among respondents is the norm, as 94% of respondents reported relying on less preferred or less expensive foods at least once in the week preceding the PDM assessment. Other negative coping strategies such as borrowing food (41%) and limiting adult food intake in order for children to eat (39%) were prevalent, if somewhat less-relied upon coping strategy. Most of the more severe kinds of non-food coping strategies were rare, with the exception of the 34% of respondents who state that they engage in dangerous work that puts them or their family members at risk of physical harm. Importantly, more than 93% of respondents reported that the multi-purpose (unrestricted) cash assistance contributed to reductions in their feelings of stress and household financial burden, and that it helped to improve their living conditions.



Winter assistance helps Syrian refugee families in Azraq refugee camp. Photo: © UNHCR/Lilly Carlisle

# IRAQ

People of concern assisted (as of 31 March)

## Type of assistance

<b>Syrians</b>  <b>217,078</b> individuals reached	 cash <b>100 %</b>
<b>Iraqis</b>  <b>234,970</b> individuals reached	 cash <b>100 %</b>
<b>Refugees of other nationalities</b>  <b>39,627</b> individuals reached	 cash <b>100 %</b>

- UNHCR Iraq began distributing winter cash assistance in October to ensure targeted families would receive it with ample time to plan and prepare for the extreme winter temperatures. Over the winter months, temperatures regularly reached 1 degrees Celsius and occasionally fell below zero, with snow across parts of Iraq in 2022; such temperatures can be perilous, especially in the absence of proper shelter, insulation, and heating.
- Over the 2021-2022 winter season, UNHCR provided winter cash assistance to a total of 491,675 individuals (126,968 households) including, 203,516 Syrian refugees (61,116 households), 20,759 asylum seekers and refugees of other nationalities (7,746 households), and 234,970 Iraqi IDPs/IDP returnees (46,994 households)
- The assistance consisted of a one-time cash grant, with the amount of assistance derived from an estimation made by the Shelter/NFI Cluster which determines additional winter needs and costs according to a market assessment.
- IDPs also receive a kerosene allowance from the Government of Iraq (the equivalent amount is deducted from the UNHCR winter cash assistance they receive to avoid duplication). For refugees and asylum seekers, assistance was provided through a financial service provider via a biometric authentication mechanism, while for IDPs and returnees assistance was provided through mobile money transfers using verified e-wallets.
- A lack of valid documentation is a persistent challenge as it means IDPs and IDP returnees are unable to register a mobile e-wallet and thus unable to receive assistance. In Iraq, it is estimated that as many as 28% of in-camp IDPs, 25% of out-of-camp IDP, and 16% of IDP returnee households lack at least one key civil or identity document.

## Monitoring in Iraq

A PDM exercise for the winterization programme is conducted each year. For the 2021-2022 programme, random sampling and data collection for the PDM exercise started in April 2022 with the results expected by the end of Q2.



Refugees and displaced Iraqis face winter hardships. Photo: © UNHCR/Ahmed Ayad

# EGYPT

People of concern assisted (as of 31 March)

		Type of assistance
<b>Syrians</b>	 <b>53,553</b> individuals reached	cash <b>100 %</b>
<b>Iraqis</b>	 <b>1,525</b> individuals reached	cash <b>100 %</b>
<b>Refugees of other nationalities</b>	 <b>59,864</b> individuals reached	cash <b>100 %</b>

- UNHCR Egypt’s 2021-2022 winter assistance programme supports refugees and asylum-seekers with a one-off cash assistance grant through the Egypt Post Office to cover the additional costs associated with the cold winter months. A total of 114,942 individuals were supported, of which 53,553 Syrians refugees (20,160 families), 1,525 Iraqis refugees (496 families) and 59,864 refugees of other nationalities (32,876 families). Additionally, 4,338 unaccompanied and separated children also received winter cash grants.
- Recipients were selected according to their vulnerability level determined using proxy indicators for socio-economic factors, based on data gathered through vulnerability assessments and UNHCR’s database, while the poverty threshold is informed by the national poverty line. Priority was given to families with heightened protection risks.

## Monitoring in Egypt

The PDM survey commenced after the disbursement period ended in March 2022 and is ongoing. Preliminary findings show that the majority (92%) of sampled households were either satisfied or very satisfied with the cash withdrawal process. did not face any risks or issues and felt safe while withdrawing the cash assistance and while spending it. The vast majority (95%) reported that they were able to find the goods and services that they needed on the market, whereas 93% asserted that there was an increase in prices of goods in the four weeks prior to the interview, especially for food items.

With regards to spending, at the time of data collection, 89% of the sampled households reported having spent all of the assistance received, while 8% had spent more than half of the assistance received. The three most frequently reported expenditure items among recipients were food (72 %), followed by rent (58%), and debt repayment (21%). Overall, beneficiaries reported that the winter cash assistance has improved their living conditions (80%), reduced the financial burden on their households (80%), reduced the feelings of stress/worry (80%) and helped them meet at least some of the basic needs of their households (77 percent). Finally, 74% of the respondents reported that they were able to identify at least one channel for complaints and feedback. The PDM report and results are scheduled to be finalized in May 2022.



UNHCR with its partners distribute blankets, mattresses and winter clothing to, and re-install tents for, families affected by the snow storm in north-east Syria. Photo: © UNHCR/Ahmed Shamou

## Donors:

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its operations in the MENA region with unearmarked and earmarked funds, including private donors.



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