

FLASH UPDATE #1 ON THE RESPONSE TO SEVERE WINTER WEATHER IN NORTH-WEST SYRIA

27 January 2022

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

HIGHLIGHTS

- Heavy snowfall and snowstorms between 18-23 January 2022 affected at least 229 IDP sites in Idlib and Aleppo governorates, NWS
- Over 500 tents have been destroyed and an estimated 9,200 tents have been damaged by the severe winter weather
- A multi-sectoral response to the incidents is ongoing, including road rehabilitation actions to provide access to the affected sites, but further interventions are urgently needed



Heavy snowfall impacts the displaced population in north-west Syria.
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SITUATION OVERVIEW

There are an estimated 2.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in NWS. As of December 2021, there were around 1,400 displacement sites in NWS hosting 1.7 million IDPs, according to [information](#) collected by the CCCM Cluster. Of this population, 80% are women and children, and almost 46,000 IDPs are reported to be people with specific needs.

Heavy snowfall in late January has exacerbated the already dire needs of the IDP population, including food, shelter and NFIs. Urgent needs include improved access to displacement sites through road clearance, relocation of people to safer places, securing means for heating, replacing destroyed tents and providing food and NFIs. As severe winter weather is a regular occurrence in this season, 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 currently coordinating to quickly respond to the urgent needs of the affected population.

UNHCR RESPONSE

In January 2022, the UNHCR cross-border operation from Turkey started the trans-shipment of winter core relief items to around 75,000 Syrians (15,000 families) in NWS. Items being provided include mattresses, blankets, and plastic sheeting. UNHCR also provided around 250,000 people (50,000 families) in north-west Syria with high-thermal blankets in 2021. In addition, in 2021, UNHCR supported vulnerable people to prepare for the harsh winter weather through site improvement projects in IDP settlements across NWS. These projects included ground insulation for family tents, road gravelling as well as the construction of drainage and sewage networks with particular care for stormwater management. Internal drainage systems for flood mitigation were also installed in areas at risk of flooding. In total, 23,520 tents insulations were completed, benefitting over 118,650 people in 193 IDP sites. Under the site improvement project, a total of 55 kilometres of roads, 49 kilometres of drainage and sewage lines, and the installation of almost 580 solar streetlights were implemented, benefitting over 53,000 people in 28 IDP sites.

UNHCR CO-LED CLUSTER UPDATES

CCCM: The CCCM Cluster continues to coordinate and follow-up on incident reports. Following the heavy snowfall and snowstorms that took place on 18-23 January 2022, the CCCM Cluster received reports of 229 incidents in IDP sites in NWS. Incidents in 83 IDP sites in Aleppo Governorate and 146 IDP sites in Idleb Governorate were reported, mainly in the districts of Afrin, Azaz and Harim. As a result, 545 tents have been destroyed while 9,200 tents have been damaged, along with many personal belongings. A multi-sectoral response to the incidents is ongoing, including road rehabilitation actions that provide access to the sites. However, further interventions are still urgently required to:

- Open roads affected by the snow.
- Relocate the affected families to safe locations.
- Secure means for heating.
- Replace destroyed tents.

Protection: Protection Cluster partners are engaging with affected communities via outreach modalities to identify families and individuals in situations of extreme vulnerability and requiring specific interventions and support. The weather conditions and limited resources

continue to impact Cluster members' ability to meet protection needs. Cluster members have raised concerns over family separation and associated risks of children being sent to other families to try and secure warm living conditions. Findings of an assessment conducted by a local partner in various displacement sites highlighted physical and mental well-being concerns among communities who have been left without shelter and basic belongings. Women also face increased protection risks given overcrowding and in a cultural context where privacy is important. The Cluster continues to monitor for potential protection issues resulting from the severe winter weather.

SNFI: Cluster members are actively responding to the emergency shelter needs of the affected population as well as re-directing ongoing winter assistance to vulnerable people in the affected areas. Humanitarian partners are targeting 10,000 families with a range of shelter and NFI support. Out of these families, 5,000 are being supported with winter cash assistance amounting to \$150 per family. Cluster members have approximately 4,000 tents in stock, but the supply may be insufficient to cover the needs in the coming days and months. Another concern is the potential flooding when the accumulated snow begins to melt.