

2022-2023 Regional Winterization Programme – Final Report

Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria*

October 2022 – March 2023

*UNHCR Egypt planned for but was unable to deliver winter assistance for the 2022-23 winter season due to underfunding

As the winter season set across the Middle East and North Africa region, UNHCR continued to assist refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to cope with their winter needs. Despite reprioritizing resources and generous contributions from donors, only 41% of the \$250 million required was funded for this winter period. As a result, UNHCR was unable to deliver winter assistance in Egypt at all, while other country operations revised the transfer values of cash assistance to be in a position to reach as many vulnerable refugee and IDP families as possible to minimize the impact of winter on their households. Across the region, less than **2.6 million** vulnerable Syrians, Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities (**77%** of the overall target) were reached as of 31 March 2023 — a sizable reduction from UNHCR's winterization response in 2021-2022 where 3.1 million individuals were reached (88% of the target).



\$250 million total financial requirements for winter 2022-2023

3.4 million individuals in need of winter assistance, including:



3,018,274 Syrians

395,211 Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities

2.6 million individuals reached (**77%**), including:



1,805,298 Syrians

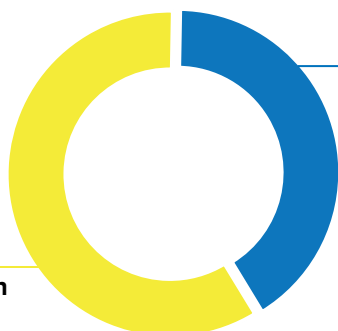
49,113 Iraqis and refugees of other nationalities



1.86 million supported with cash assistance



704,507 supported with core relief items (CRIs)



Funded:
\$103.2 million
(41%)

Gap:
\$146.7 million
(59%)

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 CRIs specific to winter such as high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping bags and winter clothes.



Shelter weather-proofing and repairs, improvements to drainage systems and other infrastructure in camps and informal settlements in preparation for winter.

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







Morae, 45, is a father of two who returned to his home in Maskaneh in eastern rural Aleppo, Syria after being displaced for five years. In December 2022, Morae and other internally displaced Syrians received winter items from UNHCR, including blankets, clothing and other CRIs. "These items came to us at the perfect time, as my family and I face these difficult winter conditions." Photo: © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

SYRIA

Targeted individuals planned vs. reached

Type of assistance

Syrians 	917,500 individuals targeted* 614,658 individuals reached (67%)**	 In-kind
Iraqis 	14,122 individuals targeted 17,727 individuals reached (126%)***	 Cash

* This includes 842,500 people to be reached with assistance from inside Syria and around 75,000 people in north-west Syria reached through the cross-border operation from Türkiye.

** This includes 562,030 people reached from Syria and 52,628 reached through the cross-border operation from Türkiye.

*** UNHCR had planned to reach an estimated 14,100 individuals. The number of people reached reflects the actual number of individuals who received assistance. Overall, 6,230 families (17,727 individuals) were reached, exceeding the planned target.

- UNHCR Syria's winter programme began in November 2022 and was completed by mid-March 2023. UNHCR provided core relief winter assistance to over 562,000 vulnerable Syrian IDPs and returnees (121,600 families) across all 14 governorates. UNHCR also provided winter cash assistance to more than 17,700 refugees and asylum-seekers (6,230 families). In total, some 579,800 people were reached by UNHCR with winter assistance in Syria (excluding north-west Syria).
- Most of the distribution of core relief winter items¹ to Syrian IDPs and returnees took place in November and December 2022, with the remaining small portion distributed during the first months of 2023. In addition, sleeping bags were distributed to the most vulnerable people residing in camps in the north-east. The assistance delivered was essential to help vulnerable families withstand the harsh weather conditions during winter. UNHCR prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable, such as those recently displaced, new returnees, and families residing in hard-to-reach and newly accessible areas, among others. Most live below the poverty line and are unable to meet their most basic needs.
- Limited funding was among the challenges observed in UNHCR's 2022-2023 winter programme. Based on the available resources, UNHCR had to prioritize winter core relief item assistance to 562,000 vulnerable Syrians (121,600 families) out of an initial planned target of 842,500 Syrians (168,500 families). Meanwhile, the fuel shortage which was especially dire in December 2022 and the challenging security situation in parts of north-east Syria also affected UNHCR partners' ability to deliver seasonal items and caused some delays in distributions.
- Refugees and asylum-seekers received unconditional cash assistance to help them cope with additional household expenses during winter, particularly in light of the deteriorating economic situation in Syria. Cash assistance was distributed in two instalments between November 2022 and February 2023 across all governorates. The total amount of the grant varied depending on family size, with an average of \$449 per family.² Some 17,727 refugees and asylum-seekers (6,230 families) benefitted from the winter assistance, which was provided in cash at the counter, reaching 87% of scheduled individuals.
- UNHCR's cross-border operation for north-west Syria supported some 52,628 individuals (10,000 families) with 10,000 winter core relief item (CRI) kits, including high thermal blankets, plastic tarpaulins, foam mattresses, hygiene kits, and carpets. The winterization assistance was coordinated with the Shelter/Non-Food Item (NFI) Cluster to support the most vulnerable individuals and prevent any duplication in assistance provided. Distributions were conducted by UNHCR partners in two governorates in north-west Syria with the allocation of 5,050 kits in Aleppo and 4,950 in Idlib governorates. UNHCR has also provided 2,500 stoves to 11,408 individuals in IDP sites in north-west Syria.

¹ The winter kit for a family of five comprises high thermal blankets, winter jackets, plastic sheets and winter clothing kits.

² The first instalment was disbursed in 2022 at an exchange rate of USD 1 to SYP 3,000 SYP. The second instalment was disbursed in 2023 at an exchange rate of USD 1 to SYP 4,500.

UNHCR Syria and partners started post-distribution monitoring (PDM) for the core relief winter assistance programme in January 2023. Beneficiaries identified the distributed seasonal items as an essential support during the harsh winter season, particularly given rising prices caused by the country's economic crisis. The lack of fuel also hindered availability of certain products in markets, especially in hard-to-reach locations. During the PDM, beneficiaries also highlighted the importance of receiving plastic sheets, which were used to cover broken windows or doors, as well as an additional layer to cover cold floors and surfaces.

UNHCR Syria will conduct PDM for the 2022-2023 winter cash assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers in May 2023. In north-east Syria, liquidity issues at banks and know-your-customer regulation (the process of verifying a client's identity) that prevented refugees from accessing cash through ATMs continued to pose challenges. As such, UNHCR planned a staggered distribution over a longer period than in other governorates. Beneficiaries were informed of the collection date via SMS, with UNHCR monitoring distribution closely.

In north-west Syria, UNHCR conducted PDM for winterization assistance through more than 1,287 households surveyed in 4 districts across Aleppo and Idlib governorates. Findings showed that around 99% of beneficiaries interviewed expressed satisfaction regarding the overall quality of the winter kits. High thermal blankets, carpets and foam mattresses were reported to be the most useful items in the winter CRI kit. 90% of beneficiaries interviewed stated that the winter kits addressed their needs well. However, the majority of beneficiaries stated that they were in need of additional winter assistance, including cash and fuel for heating.





UNHCR staff distribute winter core relief items to displaced families in Homs governorate, Syria. Photo: ©UNHCR/S. Sawas.

LEBANON

Targeted individuals planned vs. reached

Type of assistance

Syrians 	1.4 million individuals targeted 1.4 million individuals reached (100%)	<div>Cash and in-kind</div>
Iraqis 	10,365 individuals targeted 9,220 individuals reached (89%)	<div>Cash</div>

- In Lebanon, UNHCR was able to reach a total of 1.36 million (some 296,180 households) Syrian refugees and refugees of other nationalities with winterization cash assistance. Winter cash assistance was provided to refugees for up to five months, in accordance with the [Lebanon Basic Assistance Sector guidance](#), to mitigate the impact of the socio-economic crisis and harsh winter conditions on vulnerable refugee families in Lebanon. A large part of the cash assistance was disbursed between November 2022 and February 2023.
- To complement UNHCR's cash assistance, and further support refugees and host communities living in areas affected by harsh winter conditions, UNHCR distributed 111,421 CRIs such as high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, and sleeping bags, to over 76,500 people (29,000 households) including vulnerable refugee and Lebanese families.
- For the 2022-2023 winter programme, data collection for the winterization assistance post-distribution and outcome monitoring (PDOM) began on 23 March 2023 and was completed by 12 April. The PDOM was conducted through phone surveys to a representative sample of refugees receiving winter cash assistance³. Preliminary findings show that the vast majority of respondents were able to find all or most of the items and services needed in the markets and shops, while nearly all respondents reported that cash assistance improved their living conditions (98%), reduced their financial burden (98%), and reduced feelings of stress (97%).

UNHCR piloted the distribution of biomass solid fuel (pellets and briquettes) targeting 1,189 refugee households living in makeshift shelters located in informal tented settlements (ITS) and supported 133 vulnerable Lebanese families relying on their wooden stoves for heating their premises. Over 520 tons of pellets, made of organic waste from forest cleaning campaigns, were procured in 2022. The majority of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line in Lebanon, with their dependency on energy aggravated by the declining economic situation and sporadic access to electricity. The use of biomass offered an opportunity to produce environmentally friendly solid fuel for stoves used by refugees, while simultaneously tackling the issue of disposing tremendous quantities of vegetable waste. Post-distribution monitoring reflected an overall of positive result and feedback from beneficiaries, notably related to ease of use, impact on the temperature of the premises, reduction in daily fuel consumption, as well as safety with regards to fire-related risks.



Snow covering informal tented settlements where many refugees currently reside. Aarsal, Bekaa Valley, February 2023.
 Photo: © UNHCR Lebanon

³ Data was assessed through indicators on expenditures of assistance, shelter conditions, food consumption and coping mechanisms. The post-distribution component also included analyzing indicators related to ATM access, distribution of assistance process and knowledge of existing complaint mechanisms.

JORDAN

Targeted individuals planned vs. reached

Type of assistance

Syrians 	391,400 individuals targeted 434,723 individuals reached (114%)*	
Iraqis 	11,454 individuals targeted 9,671 individuals reached (37%)	

* The operation opted to increase the number of individuals receiving the reduced assistance, and once later additional funding arrived a further set of beneficiaries were also assisted with the same package. This resulted in a higher than originally planned total number of beneficiaries

- UNHCR and IOM successfully launched the winter task force for out-of-camp assistance, and co-facilitated the development of eligibility profiles, a standard assistance package based on market prices, and assistance duplication measures focused on use of the UNHCR's Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) database. The process followed and tools developed will prove useful for implementation of future assistance programmes.
- In order to support all targeted individuals despite limited funding received late in 2022, UNHCR reviewed and revised its winter assistance amounts, with a reduced but unified winter package provided to families. UNHCR was able to reach 434,723 Syrian individuals (101,604 families) and 19,632 mainly Iraqi refugees (8,529 families). Those receiving regular cash assistance for basic needs in both urban and camp settings received JOD 70 (\$100) per family, compared to JOD 185 (\$260) from last year in urban areas, and JOD 300 (\$423) in camps. Those who are not receiving regular assistance received JOD 95 (\$134) per family compared to JOD 230 (\$325) last year.
- UNHCR chose to increase the number of individuals receiving the reduced assistance, and upon reception of additional funding a further set of beneficiaries were also assisted with the same package. This resulted in a higher than originally planned total number of beneficiaries. Partners on the winter task force similarly varied their assistance, in some cases providing a top-up to UNHCR assistance. Additionally, some 12,861 Syrian families and 449 families of other nationalities received CRIs.
- Winter assistance had a generally positive impact on refugees, with 36% of those surveyed reporting a moderate or significant improvement in living conditions, with a further 53% reporting a slight improvement. The needs however remained high, since even with the limited additional assistance provided by UNHCR for winter needs, only 25% reported being able to meet half or more of their basic needs. Further analysis of the survey results will help refine ongoing and future winter targeting.






Fajer (48) is a Syrian refugee and widow. She and her family fled to Jordan in 2012. Her husband passed away in 2017 leaving her alone with her son Nour (9). They live in a small flat in east Amman. Her son suffers from heart issues, and they both depend on UNHCR's monthly cash assistance to pay their daily expenses and rent. Winter is hard for them, and they count on the winter assistance to be able to pay to refill gas cylinders, for heating and cooking at the same time. They cover themselves with blankets when the cold hits. Photo: © UNHCR/Jordi Matas

IRAQ

Targeted individuals planned vs. reached

Type of assistance

Iraqis		255,950 individuals targeted 0 individual reached (0%)*	Cash
Syrians		232,374 individuals targeted 67,739 individuals reached (29%)	Cash
Refugees of other nationalities		25,774 individuals targeted 10,554 individuals reached (41%)	Cash

* Budget limitation did not allow UNHCR to assist Iraqi IDPs with cash assistance for the 2022-2023 winter.

- Due to limited funding, UNHCR Iraq began distributing cash for winter in late December 2022. The distribution was spread over three months and was concluded at the end of March 2023. During the 2022 - 2023 winter season, a total of 78,293 individuals (22,966 families) were assisted with winter cash assistance, of which 67,739 were Syrian refugees (20,474 families) and 10,554 were refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities (2,492 families).
- The assistance consisted of a one-time payment of \$165 (against \$330 planned) to support refugees and asylum-seekers during the cold winter months. 94% of families received their cash assistance using iris biometric authentication, while the remaining who faced issues with iris biometrics received their assistance through mobile money.
- Limited funding remained a notable challenge in Iraq. UNHCR had an initial comprehensive winter assistance plan for in and out of camp refugees, IDPs and returnees. Due to funding constraints, only the most vulnerable out-of-camp refugees were prioritized for assistance for the 2022-23 winter cash programme. Additionally, in November the government registration of UNHCR's partner who provides communication support for all recipients of cash assistance in Iraq was not renewed, resulting in delays with communicating with beneficiaries.
- The winterization distribution was concluded in late March 2023, with sampling and data collection for the PDM exercise starting in April. The key findings and final report highlighting impact of winterization cash will be shared by end of June 2023.

Donors:

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the Syria and Iraq situation responses, including with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds



and other private donors