

Update: Winter Support Plan 2015-2016

Lebanon, 31 March 2016

1. Background

- Recent surveys found that 70% of refugee households are now below the poverty line of USD 3.84/person/day (VASyR, 2015) as compared to 50% in 2014.
- Given the large-scale needs, the level of vulnerability, and exposure to winter conditions, UNHCR aims to assist 180,000 refugee families (900,000 individuals) and 53,000 vulnerable Lebanese families (193,000 individuals) between November 2015 and March 2016.
- Cash support is preferred by refugees; this will be supplemented by distribution of fuel cards, blankets and stoves, as well as shelter weatherproofing activities.



Syrian refugee children peeking from the door of their tent during a winter storm in an informal settlement in the Bekaa © UNHCR/H. Darwish

2. Who and what: assistance modalities and beneficiaries



Basic Assistance

Cash and Voucher Assistance	Targets (# beneficiary households)	Progress to date
Cash for winter for families living above 500 metres (USD 147/month)	75,000	98%
Cash for winter for families living below 500 metres (USD 100/month)	76,000	97%
Fuel cards for families living in Arsal (USD 100/month)	10,000	88%

Core Relief Items	Targets (# items)	Progress to date
High thermal blankets distributed and pre-positioned for emergency	125,000	187%
Stoves distributed	2,500	171%



Shelter

Activity	Targets (# beneficiary households)	Progress to date
Weatherproofing/minor repairs in substandard buildings	6,000	60%
Weatherproofing kits for informal settlements	29,000	93%
Site improvements in informal settlements (average 25 tents per IS)	2,550	93%

3. Updates

- The number of people reached with cash assistance this winter has doubled compared to last, thanks to the generous contributions of donors, which allowed UNHCR and its partners to help alleviate the widespread and worsening vulnerabilities of refugee families.
- On 23 March, the last round of winter assistance was provided to 72,974 Syrians and 383 refugees from countries other than Syria living above 500 metres, and to 75,532 Syrian and 885 refugees from countries other than Syria living below 500 meters.
- Despite the ongoing security challenges, UNHCR and its partners have reached more than 8,700 families in Aarsal with fuel cards.
- A recent workshop to gather lessons learned on UNHCR's programme of winter assistance brought together UNHCR personnel from Beirut and field offices, and drew on studies and focus group discussions conducted with partners and beneficiaries. According to participants, winter assistance was timely and flexible, allowing UNHCR and partners to respond to extreme weather conditions, such as the snow storms that recently experienced in the North and the Bekaa. Challenges included coordinating winter assistance with other agencies given that agencies received funding at different times throughout the winter season.
- This winter, UNHCR has worked alongside the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), under the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), to support Lebanese host communities. 45,000 Lebanese families received high thermal blankets. The identification of additional vulnerable Lebanese households by the NPTP allowed UNHCR to exceed the planning figures for the distribution of blankets and stoves. In addition, a total of over 27,000 vulnerable Lebanese have received USD 30 per person per month for six months via WFP e-vouchers intended for food purchases.
- Close to 27,000 households have received shelter kits and almost 2,400 households benefited from site improvements in informal settlements to reduce flooding due to winter rain and snow. Shelter support is provided all year round to ensure that refugees can live in as dignified living conditions as possible. UNHCR and partners will thus continue to work towards the targets set even after the end of the winter season.



Abdul Fatah Ali and his family fled Hama in Syria five years ago. When they arrived in Lebanon they were homeless, until the owner of an unfinished building in the South offered them some space rent-free. Abdul Fatah suffers from epilepsy and cannot work full-time to afford renting a room. He relies on aid and the help of his 15-year-old son who now works to help to support his family.

"I can't pay for my medication and for a rent, I don't have the means. And my son can't afford it. No one gives you an apartment for free; even if I suffer here it's better than having to pay rent", notes Abdul Fatah.

"It's been two years that the water drips on us. Sometimes the kids wake up and there is water under their mats", laments Hanaa, Abdel Fatah's wife.

UNHCR provided the Ali family with a shelter kit. Abdel Fatah used the plywood to reinforce the roof and the walls.

Hanaa is grateful for the support they have received: *"This winter it is a bit better because of the plastic sheets UNHCR gave us. It keeps the water from coming in".*

More than half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in vulnerable shelters such as unfinished buildings, garages and shops. They brave the winter in precarious conditions. UNHCR provides these refugees with shelter kits consisting of plywood and plastic sheets to help them weatherproof their houses, but living conditions remain very difficult.