

# 2018-2019 Winterization Programme

## Lessons Learned

UNHCR CO Afghanistan, May 2019



### Key achievements:

- 31,345 households assessed;
- 26,109 households assisted;
- All funds disbursed before 10 January 2019;
- New measures put in place to increase accountability.

## I. Overview

### Achievements:

UNHCR, together with partners of the Emergency shelter/ NFI cluster, has been providing winterization support to address seasonal vulnerability since 2015. Targeted populations include new conflict-induced and prolonged internally displaced persons (IDPs), recent returnees, refugees, vulnerable host community families and people with specific needs (PSN).

In the winter season of 2018 to 2019, UNHCR provided winterization support to 26,109 households, in coordination with the local authorities and Cluster partners. The assistance was based on the Cluster assessment of winterization needs (USD 200 per household) and the winter severity analysis. The Cluster members applied the same eligibility criteria and coordinated the geographical division to avoid duplication. UNHCR was able to complete the winterization assessment by 31 December 2018, and the disbursement was completed in the first week of January 2019, ensuring vulnerable families received the assistance in a timely manner. This was an important improvement compared to previous winterization programmes.

## # of households received winterization assistance from UNHCR:

Regions	Host Community	Refugees	IDPs	Returnees	Grand Total
Central	20	49	1,907	2,379	4,355
Central Highland	149	1	136	121	407
Eastern	91	-	507	318	916
Northern	331	17	3,389	587	4,324
Southeast	709	11,912	506	41	13,168
Southern	-	2	-	-	2
Western	433	10	2,367	127	2,937
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,733</b>	<b>11,991</b>	<b>8,812</b>	<b>3,573</b>	<b>26,109</b>

## Targeting and selection criteria:

Depending on the operational context, the assistance was provided in the following forms:

- One-off unconditional cash assistance of USD 200 per household
- One-off unconditional cash assistance of AFN 15,000 per household
- In-kind assistance (heating materials and firewood) in Paktika Province<sup>1</sup>
- One-off unconditional cash assistance of USD 33 per individual for urban refugees (due to the smaller household size<sup>2</sup>)
- The winterization support was provided on the basis of status for Pakistani and urban refugees, whereas, the winterization assistance other people of concern were based on vulnerability.

Aligned with the vulnerability criteria of the ES/NFI Cluster, households with below vulnerabilities were included in the programme:

- Female Headed Household
- Elderly Person Headed Household (Over 60 years old) and with members below 18yrs
- Elderly Person Headed Household (Over 60 years old) and with members above 18yrs
- Disabled Head household with members above 18 years
- Disabled Head household with members below 18 years
- Child headed (under 18) household
- Families with chronically ill members
- Very large family (8 members or more)

<sup>1</sup> Due to security constraints, cash distribution was considered unsuitable for Paktika Province

<sup>2</sup> Due to the smaller HH size of urban refugees, winterization assistance was individual based instead of HH based.

Due to the limited resources, target setting was based on the Cluster assessment and prioritization. UNHCR targeted 15% of Priority-1 provinces, and 12% of priority-2 provinces. Priority-3 provinces were not included. During the implementation, considering the fast-evolving operational context in Afghanistan, field offices were allowed to adjust the allocation in their region according to the field reality. The final allocation is annexed.

### **Accountability:**

The 2018 OIOS Audit mission to UNHCR Afghanistan made below recommendations on cash-based interventions:

**The UNHCR Representation in Afghanistan should strengthen control measures over its cash assistance programme, including its management supervision and oversight, to ensure that: (a) the targeting and selection of beneficiaries include vulnerable persons of concern; (b) anti-fraud measures and remote monitoring tools are implemented; (c) regular reconciliations between cash disbursements and beneficiary distribution lists are performed; and (d) the impact of the programme is comprehensively assessed to inform the design of the 2019 programme.**

A number of improvements were made on the oversight of the 2018/2019 winterization programme, which included: a) 100% mandatory use of KOBO for household assessments; b) additional layer of reconciliation performed by Kabul Programme Unit in addition to field reconciliation; c) third party monitors were deployed where UNHCR staff cannot be present at the distribution point due to security constraints; d) anti-fraud leaflet in local languages (Dari, Pashtu and Uzbeki) was developed and distributed; e) an anti-fraud hotline was established and managed by Kabul Protection Unit.

A post-distribution monitoring survey on the winterization is expected to be completed in July 2019. Measures were taken to protect personal data of people of concern. UNHCR policy on data sharing was included in the contract with the money service provider (MSP).

## II. Challenges, improvements and lessons learnt

Challenges	Lessons learnt
<b>Project design and overall management</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Despite the fact that the winterization SOP was circulated and shared with the field several times before being finalised, there was still some misunderstanding by some field offices in the targeting and selection criteria of the SOP during the implementation.</li> <li>2) Although UNHCR Afghanistan managed to complete all assessment before 31 December, the implementation period was tight, which didn't provide sufficient time for data quality control. The winterization started in September after the budget allocation was approved by HQ following the mid-year review.</li> <li>3) The size of the programme usually requires a specific PPA or a PPA amendment to include additional staffing, which takes additional time.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In addition to emails, meetings to be organized with the field to discuss the design of the programme and the SOP before finalizing it.</li> <li>2) Design and conduct a training for both UNHCR MFT and partners, clarifying roles and responsibilities for each unit/team member during verification process.</li> <li>3) Pilot the assessment in selected locations before the full roll-out.</li> <li>4) Winterization assistance is not planned for 2019 and afterwards. However, as a lesson learnt, several preparatory work could have started before the budget allocation is received, such as discussing the programme design and develop the SOP. This will allow more time for the actual implementation.</li> </ol>
<b>Beneficiary identification and assessment</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In 2019, UNHCR Afghanistan requested all assessment to be conducted in KOBO in the field. However, there are cases when partners did not have internet connection in the field, or when carrying an electrical device could pose a security threat, assessments were still conducted in paper, and transferred to KOBO after partner staff returned to the office. While this is acceptable, the SOP requested field offices to document such changes, which was not fully followed by the field. Using paper-based assessment forms increased the chance of human error, and reduced the data quality control by Kabul IM Unit.</li> <li>2) Due to the lack of a unique identifier (ideally Taskira), verification of data entry is based on names and other household</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) More training on KOBO is needed for partner enumerators.</li> <li>2) In KOBO assessment, names of the beneficiaries should be in local language, in order to avoid inconsistent translation.</li> </ol>

<p>information. The translation of names in local language to English could be different. This resulted in the different spelling of the name of the same person, and increased the difficulties in verification and reconciliation process.</p>	
<p><b>Distribution</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Security remains the main challenge in the distribution. In Paktika province, two supplier trucks with firewood were kidnapped by AGE. The trucks were released after the intervention by the community leaders. In the same location, a complex attack took place near the distribution point. Partner staff and beneficiaries were traumatised and had to stop the distribution.</li> <li>2) In some cases, the distribution centre had to be changed due to security constraints, which resulted in additional logistical work for UNHCR and partners, as well as difficulties in timely communication with beneficiaries.</li> <li>3) Verification of beneficiaries was conducted manually, by comparing the list with the ID (or any other documents registered during the assessment phase).</li> <li>4) The IDP population was highly mobile. Some families moved locations between assessment and distribution.</li> <li>5) Long waiting hours during distribution, that is for two hours or more.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Paktika was the only province UNHCR provided winterization assistance in-kind, taking into account the volatile situation and the high attraction of cash. It seems future assistance will still need to continue in-kind in this province.</li> <li>2) Photo ID was suggested as a means to verify the beneficiaries. However, due to culture sensitivities, this may not be viable for female beneficiaries. UNHCR is conducting a CBI tender, and might move towards mobile money service provider, who can provide finger print verification. The modality still needs to be tested.</li> <li>3) Population mobility will continue to present a challenge to all assistance programmes. Shortening the interval between the assessment and assistance could reduce the impact of population mobility on assistance delivery.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Reconciliation</b></p>	
<p>The following challenges were experienced due to the short implementation timeframe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In the absence of a unique identifier (national ID card) and biometric system, risk of overlap, human error and fraud was high.</li> <li>2) The entire distribution process was paper based. CO Kabul Programme Unit conducted manual reconciliation of 21,653 paper-based winterization coupons against distribution lists to complete the reconciliation process, which was both tedious</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Field reconciliation needs to be strengthened. The field should be the first layer of reconciliation, instead of only transmitting documents to CO Kabul.</li> <li>2) A stronger finance service provider may help to ease the reconciliation process if the process is automated.</li> </ol>

<p>(taking 1.5 months) to identify and rectify human errors. The reconciliation process helped to identify 8 duplicate payments, as well as ensured timely documentation on practices not fully in line with the SOP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) The territory to cover is vast with severe access and movement challenges (security, cancellation of flights during winter season;</li> <li>4) Sufficient lead-time is needed to plan and explain the exercise to authorities and to get their buy-in for the distribution.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Accountability</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The lack of national ID (Tazkira) for many people resulted in the absence of unique identifier in the distribution. Different documents were accepted (UNHCR VRF forms, WFP SCOPE cards and documents issued by other agencies), which increased the challenges in screening for duplication. This challenge is magnified by the paper-based manual verification at the distribution site, which verifies beneficiaries based on the token distributed and collect fingerprints. With the current system, the risk of human error and fraud is high.</li> <li>2) There was lack of harmonized Complaints and response mechanism (CRM) for the operation, and each office had their own mechanism of responding to POC's complaints</li> <li>3) Corruption was also reported in some locations. Some beneficiaries reported that they were asked to pay local officials, NGO staff or community leaders to get into the assessment list or receive the assistance earlier at the distribution site.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In the absence of national ID and bio-metrical registration, UNHCR token could include the photo of the beneficiary.</li> <li>2) A centralized and harmonized CRM was introduced, and anti-fraud leaflets were distributed to all beneficiaries during the assessment and distribution, complemented by a centralised anti-fraud hotline managed by the Protection Unit in the Country Office. It is suggested that an Anti-fraud report should be produced by Protection (without individual details) after each distribution.</li> </ol>

Annex A – Final Winterization Allocation and Assistance

Region	Province	Allocation and Assistance
Central	Kabul	2,507
Central	Kapisa	348
Central	Logar	694
Central	Panjsher	44
Central	Parwan	173
Central	Wardak	323
Central	Ghazni	348
<b>Central Total</b>		<b>4,437</b>
Central Highlands	Bamyan	216
Central Highlands	Daykundi	134
<b>Central Highlands Total</b>		<b>350</b>
Eastern	Kunar	331
Eastern	Laghman	56
Eastern	Nangarhar	484
Eastern	Nuristan	45
<b>Eastern Total</b>		<b>916</b>
Northern	Badakhshan	331
Northern	Baghlan	452
Northern	Kunduz	557
Northern	Takhar	154
Northern	Balkh	273
Northern	Faryab	301
Northern	Jawzjan	180
Northern	Samangan	56
Northern	Sar_e_Pul	163
<b>Northern Total</b>		<b>2,467</b>
Southeast	Paktya	163
Southeast	Khost	8,549
Southeast	Paktika	4,456
<b>Southeast Total</b>		<b>13,168</b>
Southern	Kandahar	2
<b>Southern Total</b>		<b>2</b>
Western	Badghis	1,832
Western	Ghor	700
Western	Herat	2,237
<b>Western Total</b>		<b>4,769</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>26,109</b>