

REGIONAL ANALYSIS SYRIA

3 October 2014

The Onset of Winter in Syria, Iraq, and the Region

This report gives an overview of the expected impact of the winter season in Syria, neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees, and Iraq. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report. For additional information, comments or questions please email SNAP@ACAPS.org

Key Issues

- Winter will adversely impact millions of people from November 2014 through March 2015, particularly in areas where vulnerable communities will face severe winter conditions: northern Iraq, southern Turkey and mountainous areas of Lebanon.
- Indications are that agencies are delayed in their winter planning at the country-level and it is unlikely that needs will be met in time.
- Primary concerns are lack of available funding, along with limited common understanding of needs and vulnerabilities, and difficulties accessing to conflict-affected areas.

Winter in the region

Overview: Within both the SHARP 2014 and RRP6, the humanitarian community has been advocating for the early planning of winter activities for the 2014-15 season, and warned that the realisation of these activities is highly contingent on donor support. Given the protracted crisis, and emerging crises both globally and within the region, funding has not been forthcoming. Winter is one the most predictable aspects of the crises affecting Syria, Iraq, and the region; many will be affected by rain, snow, and cold temperatures from November 2014 through March 2015. However, stakeholders throughout the region indicate that most agencies are delayed in their winter planning at the country level. Delays in establishing common strategies and the time and capacities required to roll out operations make it unlikely that needs will be met in time. (SHARP 2014, RRP6 2014, UNHCR 03/10/14)

This situation has arisen due to difficulties establishing a common regional understanding of needs and vulnerabilities, the lack of advocacy and efforts

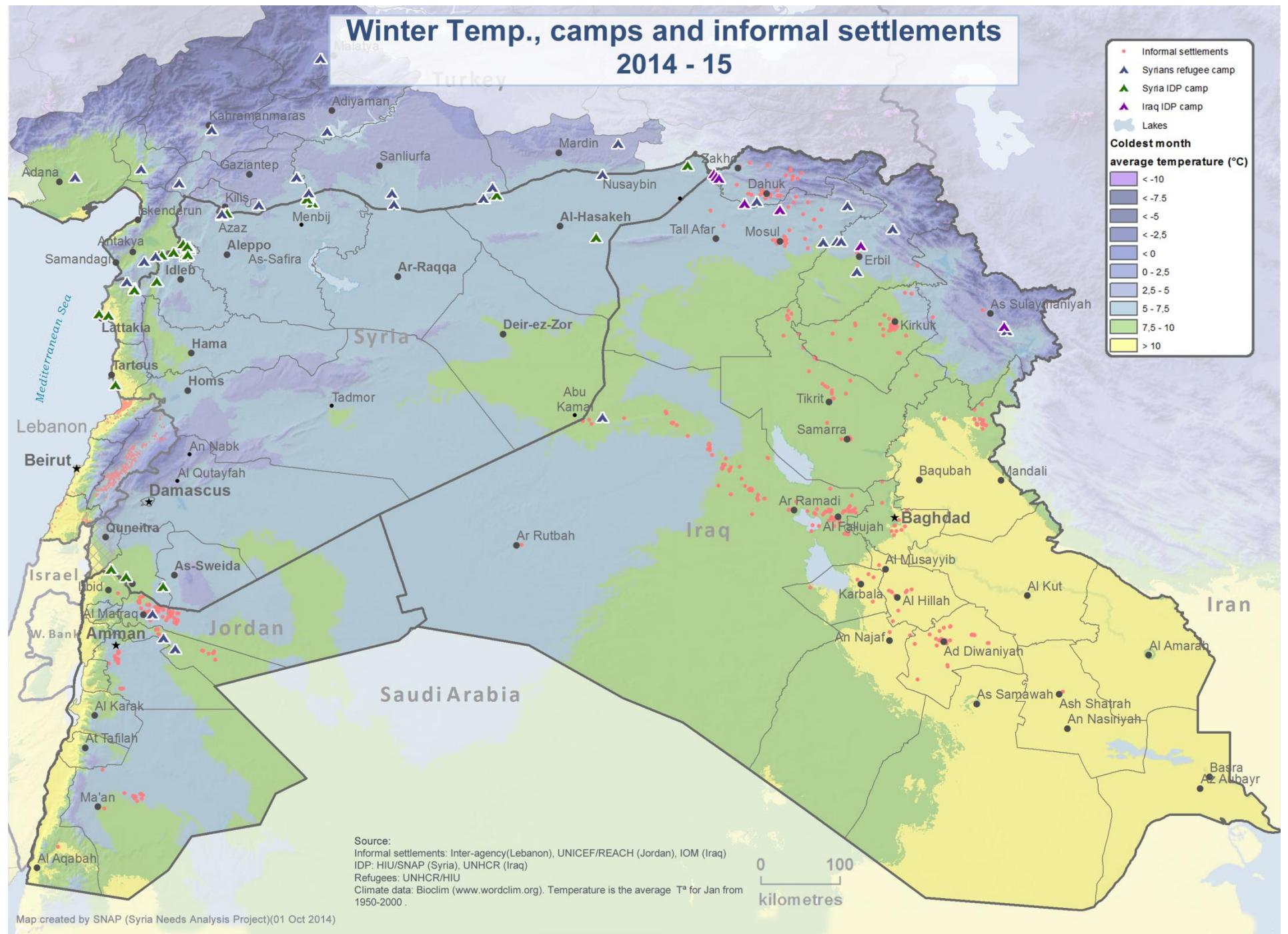
to prioritise winter needs early enough, low levels of funding, and difficulties accessing conflict-affected areas, particularly in Syria and Iraq, as well as in some parts of Lebanon.

People in need: According to recent estimates, over 19 million people need assistance across the region. In Syria, 10.8 million people are in need (including 6.4 million IDPs), while in Iraq 5.2 million are in need (including 1.8 million IDPs and over 200,000 Syrian refugees). In the region, there are an estimated 3.2 million Syrian refugees (registered or awaiting registration), of which almost one million have crossed into neighbouring countries since January 2014. A significant proportion of these people are of concern for the winter, due to displacement and protracted violence adversely impacting livelihoods. (OCHA 06/14, OCHA 26/09/14, UNHCR 03/10/14)

In countries hosting Syrian refugees, the RRP6 announced that over 2.4 million people will be targeted for winter assistance if full funding is achieved. It also indicated that underfunding would put over 800,000 refugees at risk of disease and possibly death. As of late 2013, it was estimated that nearly 540,000 Syrians refugees live in tented accommodation and require shelter support in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. More recent figures are not available. (RRP6 2014)

General winter needs: Low temperatures and harsh weather will increase the need for heating fuel, warm clothes, weatherproofed shelters and infrastructure, and items such as stoves and blankets. Displaced populations living in camps, informal settlements, and sub-standard accommodation are most at risk. Lebanon and Syria have the highest number of people living in informal settlements, where adequate drainage and other WASH interventions will be needed in order to prevent flooding. Displaced people are also expected to face increased risk of eviction, due to the general depletion of livelihoods and hence cash to pay for rent, as well as the reopening of schools currently serving as collective shelters, mostly in Iraq and Syria. The main impact of an inadequate response will be the increase of avoidable morbidity due to respiratory infections.

Generally, high vulnerability levels, low assistance coverage, and increased prices of necessary items such as fuel are expected to cause an increase in negative coping mechanisms including exploitation, debt, and depletion of assets to compensate for the lack of livelihoods and unmet needs.



Country-specific Winter Issues

Syria: Four years into the conflict, over 10.8 million people are considered in need of assistance in Syria, 6.4 million of whom are internally displaced. (OCHA 06/14) There are also 540,000 Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, half of whom have reportedly been displaced inside Syria. (UNRWA 04/14) The SHARP mid-year review indicated that 10 million people are in need of shelter/NFI assistance, and set a 6.12 million target for shelter/NFI response, without specifying a target for winter response. In Syria, the winter season mainly creates a risk in terms of health (notably acute respiratory infections), higher fuel prices resulting in reduced purchasing power, indoor pollution, and restricted access to treatment and care as a result of security concerns, low income and a decrease in the number of functioning health centres. Children and the elderly are considered the most at risk, especially those residing in collective shelters and in crowded and shared accommodation. IDPs living in open spaces are exposed to harsh weather conditions, and shelter support is a particular priority in emerging camps. (SHARP 2014)

The SHARP lists only three projects that include a winterisation component. As of late September, only one of these had received funding, at the level of 10%. This project, proposed by UNHCR, was planning to target 3.5 million people with winter activities, and had requested USD 205 million. (FTS 30/09/14) Last year's response was mainly focused on shelter upgrade and NFI distribution through SARC. No consolidated information is available on winter activities conducted by agencies operating cross-border. Due to ongoing violence, access is expected to severely hamper the delivery of assistance in many parts of the country. (UN 24/09/14)

Iraq: Due to the recent escalation of violence across the country, humanitarian partners have recently estimated that over 5.2 million people need assistance. Among them, 1.8 million are internally displaced, mostly concentrated in north of the country, which experiences lower temperatures. (OCHA 26/09/14) The overall caseload also includes a stable number of 214,000 Syrian refugees, for whom the winter response appears to be on track with full coverage of the refugee camps by humanitarian partners. (UNHCR 03/10/14, UNHCR 25/12/13) Urban refugees, who have less access to aid, are not yet sufficiently benefiting from the winterisation response and remain a priority for intervention. The IDP population, in contrast, appears unprepared for winter. A recent assessment showed that over 30% of IDPs countrywide reside in camps, collective shelters and unfinished buildings, and 45% of IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) reside in vulnerable

shelter arrangements. 90% of IDPs in camps and 46% of IDPs in collective shelters reported not having access to heating systems for the upcoming season. The average number of winter NFIs is also below minimum standards, and reported priorities include winter clothing and winterised shelter. (Shelter Cluster, CCCM, REACH 10/09/14, IOM 18/09/14, UNHCR 25/12/13)

According to the latest Strategic Response Plan, 50% of shelter/NFI projects are currently prioritising winterisation. However, access is severely constrained in central Iraq, and the response is most likely to cover the KR-I, with limited impact in areas under opposition control. (OCHA 03/10/14) Funding shortfalls hamper the response, a problem which will be significantly compounded if fuel is not subsidised, as it has been in previous years.

Lebanon: With 1.2 million Syrian refugees (registered or awaiting registration), Lebanon hosts the biggest share of Syrian displaced in the region, and the caseload is expected to increase to 1.5 million by December. (UNHCR 03/10/14) There are also an estimated 450,000 Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA (UNRWA 04/14), an unknown number of Lebanese returnees, and an increasing number of host communities affected by the refugee influx and subsequent pressure on livelihoods and services. Over 60% of Syrian refugees live in the north or the Bekaa Valley, where winter conditions are more severe. Also, over 40% of refugees live in sub-standard accommodation such as informal settlements, unfinished buildings, garages, worksites and warehouses, which are especially vulnerable to cold temperatures. (IA 30/09/14, UNHCR 07/14) An increasing proportion of refugees reside in informal settlements (15%), and many live in areas lacking adequate drainage and/or prone to flooding. (IA 01/09/14) Challenges for the winter response mainly centre on the fact that refugees are scattered across 1,700 locations, which complicates identification of people in need and the provision of assistance. (UNHCR 07/14, IA 30/09/14)

The winter response is expected to begin in mid-October in the form of NFI distribution, fuel vouchers and cash for fuel, with a targeting system based on a combination of socio-economic vulnerability and exposure to cold. Assistance related to fuel for heating is expected to roll out in tranches, depending on funding, initially targeting the 10% most economically vulnerable households (i.e. 28,000). (IA 30/09/14)

There are concerns, however, over the strategy (which is entirely focused on Syrian refugees) and targeting plan, and disagreements on the modality of the response. Key stakeholders have indicated that so far, there is no real common and agreed strategy for winter activities in Lebanon, and no

response plan laying out options and funding needed. This is believed to be both an effect and a cause of the lack of funding for winterisation.

Jordan: Jordan currently hosts 620,000 registered Syrian refugees. (UNHCR 03/10/14) Assessments have been conducted and lessons learned from last winter's response were collated over the summer to inform winterisation activities, and planning started in September. While winterisation planning appears to be on track, funding has been very limited and few winterisation activities are underway compared to last year, with most of the focus on Azraq camp. In Za'atari, aid actors have agreed that assistance would only be provided if resources allowed for the provision of winterisation items for all camp residents, in order to avoid conflicts among refugees. However, funds are not currently adequate to cover all camp residents. Most refugees residing outside camps will not be assisted. The shelter sector reported that shelter kits for winterisation are only funded and planned for 800 households as of mid-September. People living in informal settlements and sub-standard shelters are considered particularly vulnerable due to poor shelter and WASH infrastructure, as well Government of Jordan (GoJ) restrictions on aid agencies assisting informal settlement residents. In addition, refugees who have not been able to access either GoJ or UNHCR documentation to reside in host communities are highly vulnerable due to their lack of access to public services or any UN assistance. (Inter-Agency WG 21/07/2014)

Turkey: Turkey currently hosts 870,000 registered refugees, 75% of whom live outside camps. (UNHCR 02/10/14) Local Turkish sources have set the number at about 1.35 million, with up to 900,000 refugees living outside camps. With the onset of winter, people residing outside camps are considered most vulnerable, as assistance has so far been more limited in non-camp settings. A 2013 survey by the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority of Turkey (AFAD) indicated that non-camp refugees claim to have inadequate sleeping materials (73%), heating (81%), and clothing (77%) In addition, refugees living in abandoned homes, unfinished construction sites, and farm buildings are particularly vulnerable to cold winter temperatures.

Since mid-September about 160,000 Syrian Kurds crossed into the Sanliurfa province of Turkey following major attacks by IS forces in the Ain al Arab (Kobane) subdistrict. This overwhelmed the response capacity in Turkey with urgent needs for temporary shelter and NFIs such as clothes and mattresses and food. The number of refugees is expected to increase significantly with unofficial sources talking about another 50,000–150,000 people attempting to

cross the borders. Most of the new arrivals joined relatives or host families living in the region, without taking the time to pre-register with the authorities. (ACAPS 23/09/14, UNCHR 01/07/14) Agencies responding to the influx in Turkey noted that there is a lack of common situational awareness about the location and needs of the refugees and how to reach those who are most in need. In addition, most organisations based in Turkey are responding to the needs of the affected population in Syria, and are not mandated to respond to needs in Turkey, which will impact rapid response.

Shelter conditions have also been highlighted as one of the key needs for refugees both in and out of camps. The AFAD survey reported that over 25% of Syrian refugees live in ruins or make-shift arrangements.

In September, UNHCR consulted humanitarian partners regarding the start of the procurement procedure for winter clothes for Syrian refugees outside camps. UNHCR indicated at the time that, depending on requirements and resources, a one-time support in cash may be considered. As of late September, most agencies doing or planning winter activities are focusing on NFIs, and very few are working on shelter-related issues. It is also reported that a very limited number of actors are planning to use cash modalities in the shelter/NFI sector.

People in Need and Syrian refugees Winter 2014 - 15

