

A report for the Isle of Man Government

Protecting refugees during the Syria Crisis



© UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

Progress Report 2017



“Shelter is the foundation stone for refugees to survive and recover, and should be considered a non-negotiable human right. As we tackle worldwide displacement on a level not seen since World War II, no refugee should be left outside.”

– Filippo Grandi,
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Mohammed's eldest son Emad holding his little sister Sajeda. Mohammed and his wife Awash have six children: Emad (11), Ghosoon (8), Saqer (4) and 4-month-old triplets – Hasan, Sajed, and Sajeda, born in exile. Ghosoon and Saqer have cerebral palsy and cannot walk or talk. The couple was forced to leave their home in northeastern Syria, as the war dramatically increased the price of everything and basic supplies such as milk became impossible to find. Now safe in Jordan, the family receives cash assistance from UNHCR every month, which helps them survive and pay for part of their expenses. This winter, they were also given extra cash to help them survive the cold months, which allowed them to buy gas for heating, milk and diapers. © UNHCR/ Sebastian Rich

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ONE YEAR ON

The Syria crisis continues unabated. Since fighting broke out in 2011, over 5.56 million Syrians have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries, including 3.5 million people to Turkey, nearly one million to Lebanon and over 657,000 to Jordan.

A further 6.3 million people are displaced within Syria, and an estimated 13.5 million of Syrians are in need of humanitarian aid.

Each year of the conflict brings another winter that refugees must prepare to survive. Freezing temperatures, lack of warm clothing and insufficient protection against the extreme weather all pose serious risks to refugees, particularly for vulnerable people such as children, the elderly and those who are already ill.

The needs of those forced from their homes are high – but thanks to the generosity of donors such as the Isle of Man Government, UNHCR is helping to make a difference to the lives of displaced Syrians across the region. Here are some examples of how we have been helping in 2017, thanks to your support.

JORDAN

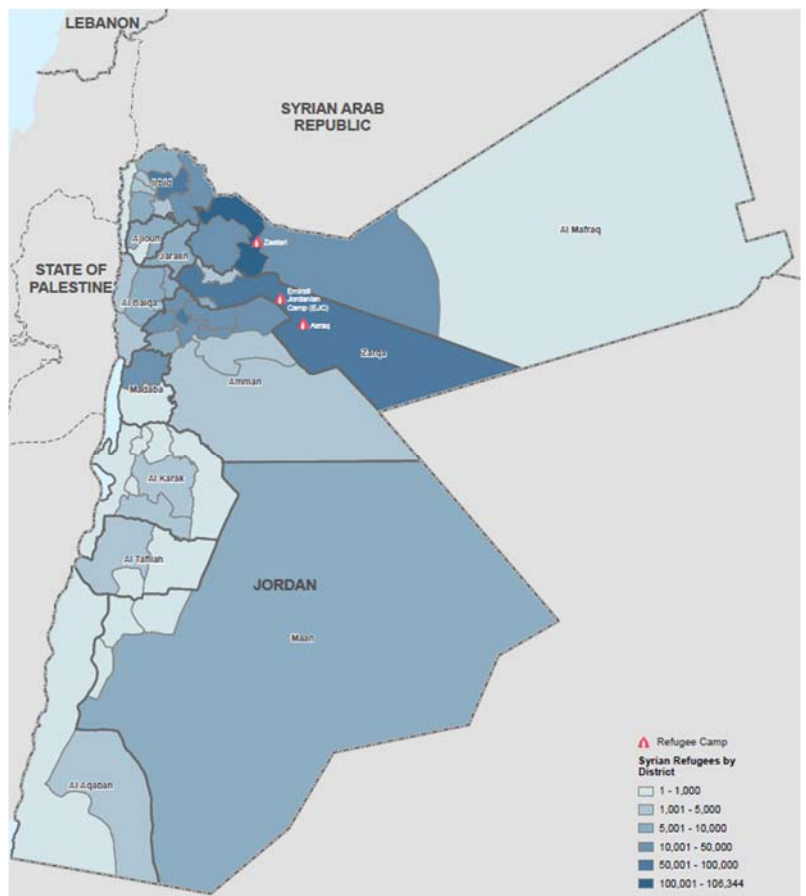
Background

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has seen 657,628 Syrians flee their homes to find refuge in Jordan – half of whom are children.

Jordan hosts the second-highest number of refugees in the world, when compared to the size of its population, and is the seventh highest refugee-hosting country in the world.

The majority of Syrian families live in cities, towns and settlements, not in camps. Most of them used to be urban dwellers: they were traders and business owners, who lived in comfortable houses, owned cars and enjoyed a generally good standard of living.

For many, the idea of calling a tent home once they arrived in Jordan was unthinkable. As a result, around 80% of Syrian refugees have taken the decision to live in apartments or houses, often shared and usually privately rented, no matter how low the quality. Living conditions are generally poor.



Syrian Refugees in Jordan (as of January 2018). Source: UNHCR

A quarter of households report having unreliable electricity supplies, 46% have no heating, and 20% have no working toilet. While the conflict shows no sign of receding, most refugees are finding it difficult to make ends meet financially.

Any savings that they fled with are long since depleted. Additionally, it has been difficult for Syrian refugees to access legal employment in Jordan, meaning it is hard for them to earn enough money to support their families. As a result, over 85% of Syrian refugees are living below the poverty line and struggling to meet basic needs of food, rent and medicine.

UNHCR in action – providing cash assistance to refugees in Jordan

In Jordan, UNHCR’s cash assistance programme provides a vital lifeline for around 32,000 vulnerable Syrian families each year. Cash grants enable them to stay in their homes and care for their families, as well as to pay their rent, which costs on average US\$183 per month. Thanks to cash grants families don’t have to choose between buying food, paying the rent or getting essential medicine. This financial support also prevents refugees from having to resort to dangerous or illegal work – such as selling sex to survive – or children from having to work in exploitative conditions to keep a roof over their heads. Our well-tested systems ensure that families in need of support referred to us or contacting us are carefully assessed to establish their needs and vulnerability. And our innovative use of iris-scanning technology¹ means that refugees are able to access cash support from a local cash machine, which offers them greater convenience and more dignity. Cash assistance also feeds into the local economy, as refugees support host communities when they spend their cash in local businesses.



Cash lifeline for Syrian family in Jordan
 Syrian siblings (left to right) Amar, Abdel Majid, Ahmad and Shukriyeh fled to Jordan with their parents and four other siblings in 2014. The family relies on the 155 dinars (\$220) they receive from UNHCR each month, as their father Hasan, 43, is partially blind and unable to work. He says that if their cash assistance ended they would need to walk the streets begging.
 © UNHCR/B.Almeras

HOW CASH ASSISTANCE WORKS



1. Refugees are registered and irises captured.
2. Donors provide funding.
3. Home visits are conducted to assess vulnerability.
4. Families are selected for cash assistance.
5. Text messages inform beneficiaries when the cash is available for withdrawal.
6. No card. No pin. Beneficiaries are identified by their iris and withdraw money from an ATM.
7. UNHCR conducts post-distribution surveys to measure the impact of cash assistance.

¹ Beneficiaries of UNHCR’s cash assistance are able to access their cash directly from more than 90 iris-enabled Cairo Amman Bank ATM’s. Authentication for withdrawal takes place through a secure and encrypted network connection (known as EyeCloud®) that enables refugees’ identities to be verified at ATM’s linked to UNHCR’s iris database. This not only reduces costs while increasing efficiency and security, but also helps to preserve refugees’ dignity. For more information: <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/unhcr-cash-assistance-improving-refugee-lives-and-supporting-local-economies>

The impact of cash assistance

In 2017, UNHCR supported 29,794 struggling Syrian families (a total of 144,815 people – 60% of whom are children) with monthly cash assistance, enabling them to afford rent in safe accommodation. Many of these households include a family member with a serious illness; for 31% of Syrian families, the money they receive from UNHCR is their only source of income. On average, we are welcoming around 200 new families per month to the scheme, replacing families who have managed to find new sources of income or have moved on elsewhere.

Cash assistance makes a real difference to refugees' lives. A recent, assessment looking at the impact of our programme found that cash assistance is meeting the majority of our beneficiaries' basic needs by helping them to afford rent and pay bills every month. Almost all those interviewed felt that cash assistance had improved their living conditions, with 43% reporting a significant improvement. They also described how they enjoy better financial security, with over a quarter taking on less debt (debt that can prove psychologically, as well as financially damaging). They described other changes to their lifestyles, including eating better quality and bigger portions of food, and accessing health services when needed. In addition, the assessment captured the very real and positive impact that cash assistance has on refugees' psychological well-being, with almost all beneficiaries stating that it helped them feel less stressed.

Meeting increasing needs and building financial self-reliance. Demand for cash assistance remains high and in excess of our available funding, with around 14,000 families still waiting for support. But as refugees can now obtain work permits in Jordan, UNHCR has started rotating assistance for families who show signs of being able to gain employment. Around 8,000 families are in the process of being rotated out – we give them a 3-month notice period while we work to link them with livelihood opportunities that would enable them to start earning money themselves and become self-reliant. This way, we ensure that other vulnerable families on the waiting list can also benefit from such vital support.

UNHCR in action – keeping Syrian refugees protected during winter

For 2017-2018 we developed a regional winterisation plan based on the assessed needs of 3.81 million Syrian and Iraqi internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The winterisation programme covers the period from September 2017 to March 2018. As of 31 December 2017, with the generous contributions we have received so far, 2.6 million Syrians have been reached with winterisation support.

Our winterisation strategy focused on three broad areas:

1. Winterisation of shelters, including weather-proofing and repairs, improvements to drainage systems and other infrastructure in camps and informal settlements.
2. Provision of seasonal cash assistance for vulnerable families to meet their additional needs during the winter months.
3. Provision of core relief items specific to winter such as high thermal blankets, plastic sheets, heaters and gas cylinders and winter clothes.



“If I stopped receiving cash assistance, I would prefer to go back to Syria to die.”

Syrian refugee Talal, 65, and his wife Asma live in Jordan. For the couple, who both have disabilities, **UNHCR’s monthly cash support means dignity, a meal a day and a better roof over your head.** © UNHCR/M.



Key achievements in helping Syrian refugees to survive the winter in Jordan

In urban areas, we have provided cash assistance to 219,040 individual Syrian refugees (48,149 families) through the multi-agency Common Cash Facility system² for the purchase of winter items. Distribution of in-kind and cash assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugees in Zaatari and Azraq camps began in October, with the final distribution of insulation



Jordan. Distribution of winterisation items at Azraq refugee camp. Syrian refugee women receive tubes of silicone sealant being distributed by UNHCR in order for refugees to prepare their shelters for the winter, at a distribution site jointly run by UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council, Azraq refugee camp, Zarqa Governorate, Jordan. © UNHCR/David Azia

materials to be concluded imminently. As of the end December 2017, UNHCR had provided winterisation assistance to over 24,000 families in both camps. Shelter repair interventions are continuing in both camps, prioritising the most vulnerable families and the most deteriorated shelters.

Fuel and essential items: In addition, all new arrivals in the camps, including families who moved to camps from urban areas, received high thermal blankets and a gas stove or heater. Additionally, from November 2017 to February/March 2018, all Syrian refugees in camps will be provided with a one-off cash grant to cover the cost of gas refills (gas is the primary source for heating during these months) and a one-off cash to cover the cost of shelter repairs, alongside shelter insulation materials and core winterisation supplies.

Winter Survival Kit

Each kit provides:

- 5 blankets or quilts
- 3 high thermal blankets
- 1 heating stove
- 1 gas bottle
- A supply of gas for 4 months



A 47-year-old Syrian woman sits in her caravan in Azraq camp in Jordan, which has benefitted from insulation for the winter. December 2017 © UNHCR/M.Hawari

² The Common Cash Facility (CCF) is a platform used by UN agencies and NGOs to deliver more than 90% of the cash assistance provided to the most vulnerable refugees in Jordan who live outside camps. Aimed at creating shared value for all organisations, the cash transfer arrangement was developed and procured by UNHCR and made available to all humanitarian partners on a direct and equal basis, with no management fees. For more information: <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/common-cash-facility-partnering-better-cash-assistance-refugees-jordan>



Syrian refugee Hannouda, 6, outside a shelter at an informal settlement near Terbol in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon
© UNHCR/ David Azia

LEBANON

Background

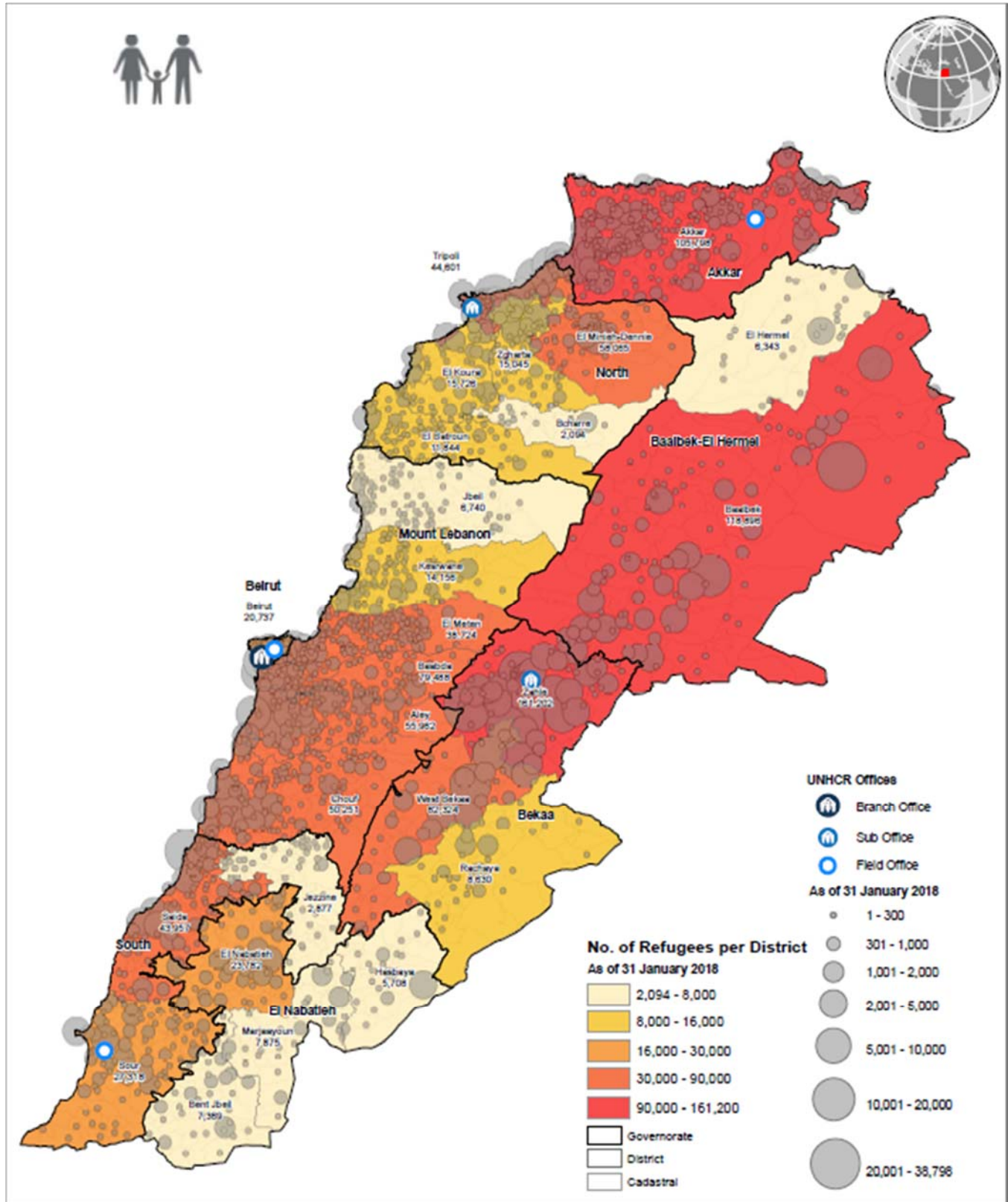
Among the countries affected by the Syria Crisis, Lebanon has the highest rate of refugees per capita in the world, hosting just under 1 million individuals. Some 80% of these refugees are women and children. The economic and social impact of the sheer number of refugees currently hosted by Lebanon has been felt across all social and economic sectors, with national health, education, other public services and infrastructure all overstretched. Both refugees and the host community are facing increasing challenges. The dramatic increase in the number of refugees arriving in a short period of time, and the limited number of places for people to stay, has put enormous pressure on the shelter market, and dwindling resources mean refugees are taking more and more risks to survive.

After almost seven years of conflict, this is now a protracted refugee crisis and, due to the huge strain on the country, the Government of Lebanon has now placed restrictions on new refugee entries as well as a reduction in international assistance. Our shelter programmes continue to be crucial to protect refugees who lack both

FACTS

- **Lebanon hosts 997,552 Syrian refugees** (as of 31 December 2017).
- **76%** of Syrian refugees in Lebanon currently live below the poverty line.
- Displaced Syrians who cannot afford their rent (which averages **\$183 / month**) sometimes only pay part of the cost. This can lead to accumulated debt with the landlord, which increases their risk of eviction and homelessness.
- One in eight refugee families changed their shelter location in the last six months due to non-affordable rent, eviction or threat of eviction, or unacceptable shelter conditions.

official refugee status and the possibility of leading a dignified life, however lots of work remains to be done to do to adequately respond to the basic assistance and protection needs of the most vulnerable refugee families.



Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (as of January 2018). Source: UNHCR

UNHCR in action – providing refugees in Lebanon with safe shelter

UNHCR's response to refugees in Lebanon consists of protection, shelter, health, education, basic infrastructure, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions, as well as institutional and community support. UNHCR is also supporting the national authorities to fulfil their commitment to introducing user-friendly regulatory frameworks governing refugees' residency and their access to livelihood opportunities. Together with our partners, we are working with both refugees and their host communities to empower them to address their protection challenges, while pursuing other permanent solutions such as resettlement in other countries.

Lebanon – repairs and temporary shelters

Our innovative shelter scheme in Lebanon involves upgrading, repairing and completing partially constructed buildings in return



for the landlord granting refugees the right to live there rent free, or for a reduced rate, for a whole year. Last year we continued to assist displaced families by rehabilitating shelters so they have a safe place to live.

Having somewhere safe to live is so much more than just having a roof over your head – it is a place where new futures can be built. For Syrian sisters Sara (above) and Taqla Kalloumeh, now living in their family's small apartment just north of the Lebanese capital Beirut, it means being able to continue their schooling and do their homework – albeit perched at the top of a stairwell outside their apartment, the only place they could find with enough space and seclusion for them to study. The importance of having a safe home is not lost on the sisters – elder sister Taqla, 15, already has her sights on a degree that will enable her to help with the reconstruction effort in Syria once they are able to return: **“I would like to be a civil engineer. I want to finish my education here and go back to Syria to work and build houses.”** © UNHCR



Syrian refugee Hawla, 65, and Khaled, 45, a Palestinian refugee displaced from Syria, stand at the entrance to their apartment in a rehabilitated building in Barelias, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. Windows and insulation, as well as plumbing, were installed by UNHCR and its partners to provide the family with a safe living environment. The family also receive winter cash assistance.

© UNHCR/David Azia

During 2017, **over 14,000 refugees** benefited from such rent agreements for **2,800 rehabilitated buildings**. The duration of these agreements covers one year, however we are working to extend them for a longer period of time. Additionally, last year we were also able to support around 27,000 Syrian refugee families (reaching over 103,000 people) with shelter kits.

These shelter kits are essential for protecting homes from weather conditions such as rain and wind; they include a tarpaulin plywood, lockable doors, insulation foam and tools such as saw, hammer and nails. Each kit costs \$347, which includes installation if needed, and normally lasts for a year or more, depending on weather conditions. Shelter kits make life more bearable for refugee families living in difficult weather conditions, keeping them protected and healthy while a more permanent living situation is found.

Key achievements in helping Syrian refugees to survive the winter in Lebanon

UNHCR’s winterisation programme started in Lebanon in early November. By the end of December, 783,625 highly and severely vulnerable Syrian refugees (156,725 families) had received seasonal cash assistance through ATM cards. Beneficiaries are informed by SMS about their eligibility based on their vulnerability; our call centre capacity has been increased in order to accommodate queries and complaints regarding seasonal assistance. In 2017, we have also supported over 30,000 Lebanese host community members with fuel vouchers and blankets in the Bekaa valley area. Furthermore, 14,100 weatherproofing shelter kits were distributed to 120,680 people (24,136 families) living in informal settlements.



Syrian refugee Halima, 37, a mother of nine from rural Aleppo, poses for a portrait inside her shelter at an informal settlement near Barelías, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. Halima received winterisation assistance in order to weatherproof her shelter from the harsh winter. © UNHCR/David Azia

EXPENDITURE UPDATE: 2017

Item	Unit cost £ GBP	No. of beneficiaries*	Total cost £ GBP
Cash assistance provided to 2,000 Syrian refugee families in Jordan enabling them to stay warm and protected	139 per household	10,000 (2,000 households)	278,000
Shelter kits distributed to 750 Syrian refugee families	215 per household	3,750 (750 households)	161,250
Winter clothes including undergarments provided to 1,100 families in Jordan and Lebanon	17 per household	5,500 (1,100 households)	18,700
High thermal blankets provided to 1,100 families in Jordan and Lebanon	35 per household	5,500 (1,100 households)	38,500
Heating stoves provided to 1,100 families in Jordan and Lebanon	52 per household	5,500 (1,100 households)	57,200
Operational support costs at 7%			42,000
TOTAL GBP		30,250 beneficiaries	£595,650**

* Note: number of beneficiaries is based on an average of 5 people per household

** Note: the remaining Isle of Man Government grant will be used in 2018

On behalf of Syrian refugees and the people displaced in Syria, thank you for your generosity – it has made a difference to their lives!



From right, Syrian refugees Hamsa, 3, Ali, 10, Islam, 5, and Shayla, 7, sit in the family's rented apartment in Madaba, Madaba Governorate, Jordan. © UNHCR/ David Azia