

AFGHANISTAN

Winterization Evaluation

2019-2020

An Evaluation of Winterization
Needs and the 2019/2020 ES/NFI
Winterization Response

June 2020



Shelter Cluster Afghanistan
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



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SUMMARY

Context

After 40 years of continued crisis, Afghanistan remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian emergencies, driven by escalating conflict and devastating natural disasters. Shocks and disruptions have depleted the resilience of displaced, host, and disaster-affected households. Throughout the year it is difficult for households to meet their basic needs, but the harsh winter conditions in Afghanistan, where monthly temperatures can reach as low as -12.1 degrees centigrade,¹ have left many households in severe need.²

In response to the persistent need for winterization,³ the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Item (ES/NFI) Cluster in Afghanistan, in coordination with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) through the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), released a Joint Winterization Strategy in July 2019 aimed to assist 95,350 vulnerable families with support for the winter season from November 2019 to February 2020.⁴ The strategy prioritized a set of solutions, including adequate shelter, heating, NFIs, winter clothing, food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and medicine and health supplies. The strategy was supported by both bilateral donors and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) with a total of \$19.2 million USD, and by GoIRA with \$2.4 million USD, ultimately reaching 71,405 households during the 2019/2020 winter period.⁵

With the winter being a recurrent annual challenge, this assessment was aimed to assess the effectiveness, impact, and challenges of the 2019/2020 ES/NFI winterization response and identify areas for improvement for the 2020/2021 strategy. In particular, this assessment evaluated cash, voucher, and in-kind assistance distributed by multiple ES/NFI partner organizations.

Assessment

The assessment was comprised of three tools, including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, at different levels of analysis: 1) a statistically representative household survey conducted with 4,899 beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, representative by region, modality of assistance (restricted cash, unrestricted cash, voucher and in-kind) and displacement status, with a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error; 2) 44 structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with key representatives from implementing partners, providing indicative data on beneficiary selection and aid distribution, and 3) 34 semi-structured KIIs with coordinators at national and regional level from the ES/NFI Cluster, UNOCHA, Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT), and GoIRA's MoRR and Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA officers). Data collection and analysis took place from 19 May to 28 June 2020.

Key Findings

Overall Needs and Vulnerabilities

- A comparable proportion of non-beneficiary and beneficiary households qualified as 'vulnerable' (18% and 27% respectively), according to the concise vulnerability criteria in the Joint Winterization Response Strategy. **The proportion of vulnerable non-beneficiaries suggests that the criteria for assistance may not have captured all of the most vulnerable households.**⁶
- **Both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households reported similar priorities and winterization needs;** food (57%) and fuel (31%) were reported to be the main priorities during the winter. **Shelter concerns reflected shelter integrity for winter,** including a lack of insulation (55%) and damaged

¹ Afghanistan ES/NFI Cluster, Winterization 2019/2020 – Targets, Partners Commitment and Gaps per Province, 30 January 2020.

² UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response, Plan: Afghanistan 2018-2021, December 2019.

³ Winterization is the process of preparing for winter. The ES/NFI Cluster winterization strategy highlights the need to "holistically mitigate vulnerabilities associated with the harsh weather conditions and ensure that persons of concern are adequately protected from the cold and are able to cope with the harsh weather conditions." The Government of Afghanistan and Emergency Shelter/NFI Cluster, Joint Summary Winterization Response Strategy: September 2019 – February 2020, July 2019.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UNHCR, ToR for Evaluation of the ES/NFI Cluster Winterization Response 2019/2020 (*unpublished*).

⁶ A household was considered vulnerable if it had at least one of the following characteristics: having an elderly or disabled head of household, a female or child headed household with no adult males, no members of the household having a tazkera, or a dependency ratio of 8 or higher.



shelters (48%)⁷. Priorities related to WASH and housing, land, and property (HLP) were also highlighted, including a lack of adequate sanitation (38%) and inability to afford rent (37%).

Impact and Effectiveness of Winterization Assistance

- **Beneficiary households were found to be better able to meet their shelter and NFI winterization gaps than the non-beneficiary households, indicating that the assistance did help households to cope with the winter to some extent.** Beneficiary households were also more likely to report being able to heat their homes sufficiently in the 5 months prior to data collection (45%) when compared to non-beneficiary households (18%), while non-beneficiary households were seemingly less able to meet their most critical shelter needs over the winter.⁸
- **In-kind and voucher assistance were reported by beneficiaries to be more effective at addressing specific NFI winterization gaps** when compared to restricted or unrestricted cash; 84% and 75% reported that in-kind and voucher assistance “mostly”, “almost”, or “completely” met household NFI needs, respectively; compared to restricted and unrestricted cash (65% and 47% respectively). However, **cash was reported to be better at addressing shelter-related needs and non-ES/NFI winterization gaps.**
- In-kind assistance was found to be associated with lower levels of improvement in household well-being than other modalities (18%, compared to 43% of cash, and 41% of voucher recipients), suggesting that the in-kind aid helped meeting gaps, but only for NFIs that were received as part of the assistance.
- **Only 33% of female-headed households reported that the aid had improved their overall well-being had improved “significantly”, compared to 41% of male-headed households.**

Resilience and Recovery

- Most households’ reported coping mechanisms indicated an increased risk of a “debt trap” due to winter. Approximately 68% of beneficiary households and 57% of non-beneficiary households reported borrowing money or going into debt during the winter. A majority of the debt was reportedly used covering shelter (41%) and NFI (51%) winterization gaps. **Only 34% of beneficiaries and 25% of non-beneficiaries believed that they would be able to repay their debt.** Female-headed households were far less likely to report that they would be able to repay their debts (12%) compared to male-headed households (34%)⁹.
- **A majority of households reported relying on negative coping mechanisms in order to survive the winter.** Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries reported reducing money spent on food in order to survive the winter (61% and 75% respectively); beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, also reported reducing expenditures on other services, particularly healthcare (55% and 66% respectively). **More than half of the assistance expenditures were reported to have been made in order to address shelter and NFI winterization gaps.**
- **Refugee households from Pakistan in the south east, IDP returnee households in Badghis province, and beneficiary households in the West, consistently reported poorer outcomes, such as needs unmet and negative coping strategies, than other groups.** Implementing partners and coordinators noted that these groups were also some of the most comprehensively covered by assistance, suggesting that these populations have a relatively low resilience and are possibly more dependent upon aid for survival.

Accountability and Satisfaction

- Female-headed households (78%) were considerably more likely to report problems with cash assistance than male-headed households (57%), for example, by reporting that they did not receive enough assistance (65%). In addition, 37% of female headed beneficiary households reported that they would not report any questions or problems that they had with their assistance compared to male-headed households (19%).

⁷ A subset of those reporting shelter concerns.

⁸ There was a 16% difference between non-beneficiary (43%) and beneficiary (27%) households being unable to meet shelter needs. Furthermore, there was a 15% difference between non-beneficiary (21%) and beneficiary households (6%) reporting being unable to meet their most critical NFI winterization needs.

⁹ Based on a subset of households reporting to have borrowed money.

- **The restrictions of the cash assistance had no considerable impact on the way the money was spent.** On average, households receiving restricted and unrestricted cash spent approximately 44% of their cash assistance on ES/NFI and winterization needs. Food (20%-21%) was the largest non-winterization expense, highlighting the multi-sectoral nature of winterization needs.
- However, beneficiaries were less likely to report that they were satisfied by in-kind and voucher assistance; 52% of voucher and 53% of in-kind cash recipients reported being very satisfied with their assistance, compared to 65% of unrestricted and 76% of restricted cash recipients.
- **Households in the north east, the only region where in-kind aid was reportedly distributed on a wide scale, were more likely to report a fall in prices over the last winter of the goods they received,** including bukharis (57%)¹⁰, charcoal (55%), and gas (36%), than the national average (36%, 37%, and 20%, respectively).

Implementing partners

- **Assessed organizations recommended that the most useful improvement to the beneficiary selection process would be for them to have more flexibility in setting their own criteria (90%)** and to use a digital assessment tool (90%); 37% of assessed organizations reported completely following the ES/NFI Cluster guidelines on beneficiary selection and 53% reportedly followed them 'mostly'.
- **Over half of implementing partners modified the beneficiary selection criteria that was provided by the cluster to better reflect vulnerabilities in different geographic areas,** which suggests the cluster selection criteria could also be adapted. Additionally, despite having a cluster vulnerability criteria to prioritize/select beneficiaries, almost all organizations (95%) reported that they had selected at least some beneficiaries solely based on their displacement status.
- All of the assessed organizations reported having a functional complaints mechanism and, in total, were found to have recorded 1,237 complaints. **Twenty-nine percent of assessed organizations reported receiving at least one complaint about misdirection of aid or corruption.**
- **Difficulties due to snow coverage was reported by 65% of assessed organizations.** Challenges in the distributions included logistical issues (32%) and coordination issues working with government and humanitarian coordinators (24%).

Coordination

- **Coordination KIs reported that the beneficiary selection criteria had excluded many vulnerable households.** While the vulnerability scorecard helped in prioritizing households, KIs noted that many vulnerable households were left out because they did not meet the criteria, while in other regions partners had to make the criteria increasingly strict as too many households qualified.
- Provincial focal points were reportedly not always effective. Although some regional KIs reported a well-managed and organized provincial coordination bodies, many did not, and noted that not all of the provincial focal points have been properly trained, or were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, making provincial coordination inconsistent.
- **In some regions, coordination KIs reported that some local organizations worked outside of the cluster system.** This raised concerns about duplication and potential problems rising from different types of aid or modalities being provided to the same population.

Conclusions

The assessment carried a number of implications for winterization assistance in Afghanistan. First, the results show that there is a **lack of overall resilience for both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households throughout the winter.** Households struggled to meet needs and adopted negative coping strategies such as reducing food and service expenditure, they turned to borrowing money and can become trapped in a cycle of debt. **Addressing the threat of debt and lack of recovery calls for a more resilience-focused response.** Second, results suggest that **assistance does work, but did not address multi-sectoral needs.** Although beneficiaries reported a greater ability to meet their shelter and NFI needs than non-beneficiaries, they did not do better in more inter-sectoral needs

¹⁰ Bukharis are traditional Afghan heaters that have a cylindrical fire chamber where fuel, usually wood or charcoal, is burned with a narrow chimney cylinder on top.

indicators, including food security and healthcare. Restricted and unrestricted cash recipients reported spending cash aid on things other than the items which the money was intended for. As their total amount of assistance was similar, it can be concluded that **perceived restrictions of cash did not have a strong effect on how it was spent**. It was not possible to ascertain what effect assistance has had on local economies. However, it was reported by households that market prices, in the region where the most popular winterization items were distributed as in-kind goods, had reduced considerably for these items. This highlights the **need for market assessments to understand the effect winterization assistance has on the local economy**. Finally, the vulnerability criteria, as set by the cluster, and allocation of assistance were not generally found to capture all of those people that face income and poverty related vulnerabilities. Instead, criteria and targeting focused more on displacement status and shelter type, which may not adequately address the needs of the populations that are most vulnerable in Afghanistan.



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List of Acronyms

AFS	Afghan Afghani (local currency)
AHF	Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
AO	Assessment Officer
DoRR	Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation
ES/NFI	Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Item
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICCT	Inter Cluster Coordination Team
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
SFO	Senior Field Officer
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Geographical Classifications

Region	Highest level of administrative boundaries below the national level. In Afghanistan there are 8 regions as of 2019.
Province	Administrative boundaries below the regional level. In Afghanistan there are 34 provinces as of 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

After nearly 40 years of conflict, Afghanistan remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian emergencies, combining protracted displacement, ongoing conflict across the entire country, sudden-onset disasters, as well as structural economic and social challenges. These shocks and disruptions have depleted the resilience of displaced, host, and disaster-affected populations' ability to endure additional shocks.¹¹ This is particularly concerning during the winter, where monthly temperatures can reach as low as -12 degrees centigrade.¹² The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) noted in 2019 that 3.69 million people in Afghanistan were in need of emergency shelter/non-food item (ES/NFI) assistance in 2020, following the expanded definition of 'humanitarian action' in Afghanistan.¹³ Some 3.28 million people fall under the new case load of 'vulnerable people with humanitarian needs' and require assistance in covering their needs in order to survive the winter,¹⁴ this assistance is referred to as "winterization" assistance.

Given the expansion of humanitarian action, a deeper and more extensive evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the affected populations winterization needs is required to ensure an evidence-based prioritization and response strategy. This is particularly critical given expected funding gaps, which, according to the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), are likely to limit the population reached to approximately 1.1 million, making information to better target populations in need all the more critical.¹⁵ However, the overall impact and sustainability of the winterization response, and how it could be better tailored to meet the needs of people in need across Afghanistan, is currently unclear.

In response to the persistent need for winterization, the ES/NFI Cluster, in coordination with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA), through the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), released a Joint Winterization Strategy in July 2019 aimed at assisting 95,350 vulnerable families with support for the winter season from November 2019 to February 2020.¹⁶ The strategy prioritized a set of solutions, including adequate shelter, heating, NFIs, winter clothing, food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and medicine and health supplies. The strategy was supported by both bilateral donors and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) with a total of \$19.2 million USD, and by GoIRA with \$2.4 million USD, ultimately reaching 71,405 households during the 2019/2020 winter period.¹⁷ Over 20 implementing partners (both national and international non-governmental organizations), as well as government agencies, worked through the cluster system to deliver winterization aid as part of the response.

In order to address the knowledge gap in the overall impact and sustainability of the winterization response, REACH, in partnership with the ES/NFI Cluster and funded by United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), conducted an evaluation of the 2019/2020 winterization response. Building on the traditional post distribution monitoring (PDM) assessment, this evaluation aimed at identifying its overall impact, effectiveness and challenges at household, community, organization, and coordination levels in order to inform the 2020/2021 winterization response strategy.

This report outlines the main findings from the ES/NFI Winterization Evaluation across Afghanistan. First, the methodology for the report is detailed, followed by the key findings from the assessment. The findings are organized into six sections; demographics; overall needs and vulnerabilities; impact and effectiveness of winterization assistance; resilience and recovery; accountability and satisfaction; implementing partners and coordination. Concluding remarks are then drawn.

¹¹ REACH, Afghanistan: ESNFI Assessment, An In-Depth Analysis of Emergency Shelter, Non-food Items and Winterization Needs, December 2019.

¹² Afghanistan ES/NFI Cluster, Winterization 2019/2020 – Targets, Partners Commitment and Gaps per Province, 30 January 2020.

¹³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan 2020, November 2019.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response, Plan: Afghanistan 2018-2021, December 2019.

¹⁶ The Government of Afghanistan and Emergency Shelter/NFI Cluster, Joint Summary Winterization Response Strategy: September 2019 – February 2020, July 2019.

¹⁷ UNHCR, ToR for Evaluation of the ES/NFI Cluster Winterization Response 2019/2020 (*unpublished*).

METHODOLOGY

This assessment used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to collect data at three levels; household, implementing partners and coordination bodies. This mixed methodology was used in order to triangulate the results between the different levels and provide a holistic evaluation of the 2019/2020 Winterization Response.

The analysis was based on the following key research points; the key demographics and vulnerabilities of beneficiary and non-beneficiary households; how well the 2019/2020 ES/NFI Cluster-led Winterization response addressed the winterization needs faced by households across Afghanistan; and how effective and how coherent the ES/NFI Cluster and partner organizations performances were in delivering the Winterization response, from the perspective of partner organizations and coordinators.

The thematic areas of the response examined by this assessment are: overall needs and vulnerabilities, impact and effectiveness, resilience and recovery, accountability and satisfaction; and implementing partners and coordination. These themes were predominantly selected by the ESNFI Cluster with technical guidance from REACH.

The design of primary data collection tools was informed by a secondary data review of the post distribution monitoring (PDM) and winterization tools provided by UNHCR and the ES/NFI Cluster as well as REACH's own in-house tools. The ES/NFI Cluster was consulted during the tool development phase (6th-16th April 2020), providing design input and approval in order to increase the programmatic and technical relevance.

The following three data collection tools were developed:

- **Household Survey:** a statistically representative household survey conducted with 4,899 beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, representative by region, modality of assistance (restricted cash, unrestricted cash, voucher and in-kind), displacement status, with a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error. The sampling was taken from a unique list of beneficiary and non-beneficiary phone numbers provided by the ES/NFI Cluster partners and DoRR.
- **KIIs with implementing partners:** 44 structured KIIs with key representatives from 20 implementing partners¹⁸, providing indicative data on the implementing partners perspectives on beneficiary selection and aid distribution. Key informants (KIs) were purposively sampled based on the staff member's involvement in the winterization response and had in-depth knowledge about their organization's experience of the response. Each implementing partner was asked to provide a programs contact and a monitoring and evaluation contact. The majority of partners provided these but in some cases there were less or additional interviews conducted. The data was then aggregated to organizational level and analyzed as the % of responding partners.
- **KIIs with coordination bodies:** 34 semi-structured KIIs with coordinators at national and regional level from the ES/NFI Cluster, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT), and GoIRA's MoRR and Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA officers). These interviews were undertaken by REACH Assessment Officers (AO) and Senior Field Officers (SFO) via Skype and phone call with answers transcribed by hand.

Population of Interest

The following section provides a breakdown of the population of interest for each of the assessment tools:

¹⁸ Twenty organisations out of a possible twenty-one took part in the KIIs.

1) Household and Community Groups

The household assessment was sampled across four strata; impact, region, modality, and displacement status. Impact and modality were both sampled at regional level, while displacement was sampled at national level. Each strata is defined in detail below:

Regional

All eight regions of Afghanistan; Central, Central Highlands, East, North, North East, South, South East and West, in locations where the ES/NFI winterization response took place (Map 1)¹⁹

Impact

Beneficiary: Households that received winterization assistance as part of the ES/NFI Winterization Response from November 2019 to March 2020. Households were sampled from the beneficiary lists provided to REACH by 21 partners in the ES/NFI Cluster.

Non-beneficiary: Households that were either documented by Provincial DoRR offices as being in need of aid, or assessed by humanitarian organizations using the ES/NFI winterization vulnerability criteria, but were either ineligible for assistance or eligible but did not receive any. Non-beneficiaries were based in communities that either had or had not received winterization assistance.

Modality

Unrestricted cash: The direct and unconditional payment of cash to beneficiaries.

Restricted Cash: The direct and conditional payment of cash to beneficiaries. Usually, this is in multiple payments and beneficiaries must show proof of purchase of particular items in order to receive subsequent payments.

Voucher: A voucher, which is valid for exchange at a designated vendor for specific winterization items, is provided to beneficiaries.

In-kind: Specific winterization items are given directly to beneficiaries, for example bukhari stoves and fuel.²⁰

Displacement status²¹

Internally displaced persons (IDPs): are defined as “persons or groups of persons who have recently been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.”²²

Host communities: refers to all non-displaced households still living in their area of origin that host large populations of refugees, returnees or internally displaced persons, typically in camps or integrated into households directly.

IDP Returnees: persons who are Afghan Nationals that have been displaced from Badghis Province to other parts of Afghanistan and have since returned to Badghis Province.

Returnees: persons who are Afghan Nationals that have fled from Afghanistan and were refugees, but have since recently returned to Afghanistan.

Refugees: persons who are nationals of other countries outside of Afghanistan who have been displaced and fled their countries and are now residing in Afghanistan, predominantly in the South-East.

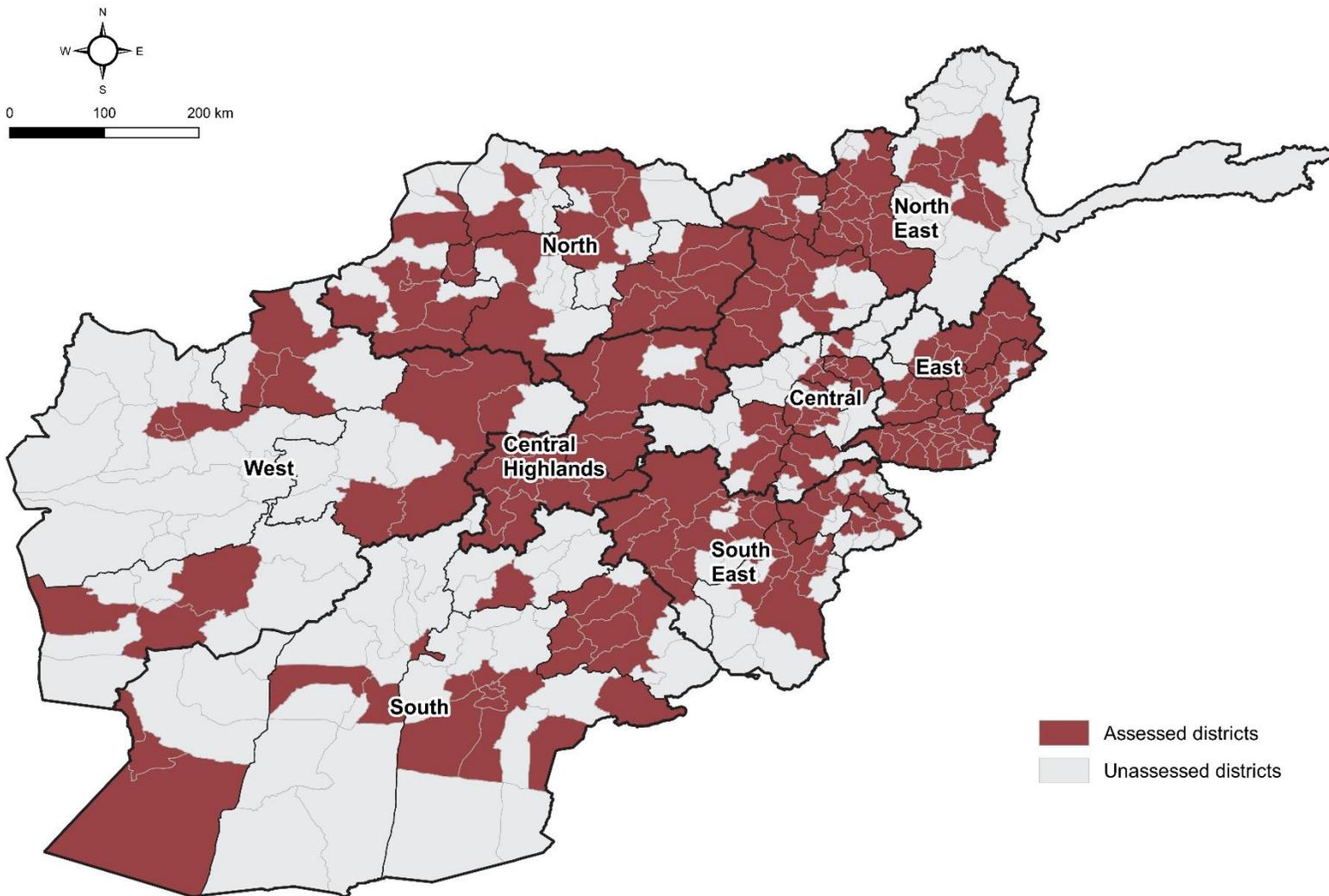
¹⁹ At a provincial level beneficiary data was gathered from all 34 provinces, and non-beneficiary data from all provinces except Nimroz and Panjsher.

²⁰ Mission East, AHF Project Training (presentation), December 2019.

²¹ Population groups are largely reflective of the HNO people in need groups (UNOCHA, 2019).

²² United Nations (1998), [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2

Map 1: Assessed Districts



2) Implementing Partners

For the partner tool, REACH interviewed 44 KIs from implementing partners (28 program KIs and 16 monitoring and evaluation KIs). This group is made up of programme management and monitoring and evaluation staff who were involved with the winterization response. The following partners were included: Mission East, ACTED, ACF, IRW, Afghani AID, NCRO, Cordaid / OHW / RRAA, ORCD, ORD, ADRA, PIN, Johanniter, NRC, DRC, IMC-UK, Concern Worldwide, Christian Aid, ZOA Refugee Care, IOM and IRC.

3) Coordinating Bodies

The responding group for the third tool are focal points from and the national and regional ES/NFI coordination teams. This included 34 KIs; all of the national coordination team, regional focal points from UNHCR (lead) and IOM (co-lead), regional focal points from the UNOCHA, national representatives from ANDMA and MoRR, as well as members from the Inter Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT).

Secondary Data Review

The sampling framework and call lists for the household survey primary data collection was informed by requesting anonymized beneficiary lists from implementing partners, twenty of which were provided. These lists contained: phone numbers, gender, region, province, district, beneficiary status, type of winterization assistance provided (breakdown), modality, displacement status and organization. These lists were then centralized into one database and were cleaned by removing phone numbers that were of incorrect length, removing duplicate phone numbers, ensuring entries were uniform in spelling, and communicating with implementing partners on what the main source of modality was when multiple were used. Implementing partners were less able to provide non-beneficiary data and the majority of non-beneficiary data came from DoRR. The sampling was performed using the REACH-developed sampling tool, the stratification groups were separated, and the final sample list created from random draws. For tool 2, KI names were also provided via the ES/NFI Cluster, who initially emailed out the request for implementing partners to provide contact details for a program and monitoring and evaluation staff member that worked on the Winterization Response. These contacts were followed-up by the REACH Assessment Officer (AO).

Key secondary data sources that influenced the assessment tool design included the GoIRA and ES/NFI Joint Winterization Strategy (2019)²³ as well as the UNHCR Winterization Post Distribution Monitoring Tool and ES/NFI Cluster Winterization Vulnerability Score Card²⁴, which were both used to inform the questions and responses of the household tools. In addition, the previous REACH, ES/NFI Assessment (2019)²⁵ also informed both program design and tool development. Other sources included the OCHA 2019 Afghanistan HNO²⁶ and the OCHA HRP (2018 – 2021)²⁷. The information from the secondary data review was used to triangulate the assessment's primary data findings.

Primary Data Collection

REACH used a mixed methods approach for primary data collection. All data collection took place remotely due to COVID-19-related measures, through phone calls, WhatsApp and Skype. Enumerators, the REACH AO, and SFOs all worked from their homes. Prior to data collection, enumerators and SFOs and AO were trained on the primary data collection tools and considerations.

²³ The Government of Afghanistan and Emergency Shelter/NFI Cluster, Joint Summary Winterization Response Strategy: September 2019 – February 2020, July 2019.

²⁴ Kindly provided by UNHCR and the ES/NFI Cluster.

²⁵ This assessment is currently undergoing validation, prior to publication - REACH, ES/NFI Assessment: An in-depth analysis of Emergency Shelter, Non-Food Item and Winterization Needs (2019)

²⁶ OCHA (2019), Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview .

²⁷ OCHA (2019) Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021



1) Statistically representative quantitative household survey

The statistically representative household survey was conducted with 4,899 beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, representative by region, modality of assistance, displacement status. The tool was in the style of PDM, adapted to cover the nuances of different organizations responses and used closed questions.²⁸ Households were divided up in to three separate stratifications for sampling; beneficiaries by region and modality, non-beneficiaries by region and displacement groups nationally. The displacement sampling was stratified in this way as groups were scattered across different regions and there were not enough respondents to make a representative sample at the regional level. This was also the same of non-beneficiaries, as lists with their contact details were limited, and the majority were IDPs, the latter of whom formed a national control group rather than a regional one.

The first sample size, is a subset of IDPs and host community displacement status and focuses on modality status (Table 1). IDPs and host community were selected as the displacement groups for beneficiary sampling as these groups were large enough to be covered naturally in sampling, unlike the other more localized displacement groups, who were more sparsely distributed. The modality stratification has a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error at the regional level, with the exception of restricted cash in the West, which instead has a 95% confidence level and 8% margin of error, which was likely due to a lower response rate.

Table 1: Household sample size, by modality at national level

Modality	Population	Sample size
Unrestricted cash	24,077	1,925
Restricted cash	18,038	1,480
In-kind	4,201	219
Voucher	889	190
Total	47,205	3,814

The second sample size, is for impact stratification and uses the population data for 3,814 beneficiaries supplied by all 21 of the implementing partners. The sample size for beneficiaries is based on the total number of beneficiaries that received winterization assistance in 2019/2020. As with modality stratification, impact stratification uses host community and IDP status only for beneficiary data due to the smaller numbers of other displacement statuses. Additionally, as there were insufficient numbers of different displacement statuses for non-beneficiaries, they were merged into a single non-beneficiary group of 1,085. A total of 4,899 surveys were undertaken for impact stratification with a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error at the regional level for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

For national-level analysis, beneficiary displacement groups that did not have a large enough population to draw a sufficient sample regionally were sampled separately at the national level (Table 2). This displacement status stratification has a 95% confidence level and 7% margin of error at the national level, with the exception of returnees, who have a confidence level of 90% and a 10% margin of error also at the national level, due to the relatively low number of returnee beneficiaries, relatively low phone uptake, and potential initial mislabeling of their displacement status. The samples are drawn from the same database and a household can fit into multiple sampling frameworks, for example, a restricted cash beneficiary that is also an IDP returnee, thus the total number of surveys is less than the total number of stratification samples.

²⁸ All tools are available on request to REACH Afghanistan – please refer to Annex 1.

Table 2: Displacement status: household level sample sizes, at the national level

Displacement status	Population	Sample size
Returnees	376	86
Refugee (South-East)	59	59
IDP Returnees	858	170
IDPs	41,338	2,763
Host communities	4,596	736
Non-beneficiaries	9,644	1,085
Total	56,871	4,899

2) KIIs with implementing partners

Structured interviews took place with 44 KIIs that were representative of 21 of the 22 implementing partners to provide indicative data on beneficiary selection and aid distribution. Interviews took place with 28 program KIIs and 15 monitoring and evaluation KIIs. The KIIs were responsible for coordinating, managing or evaluating each partners' relative part of the response. The second tool, was a semi-structured tool which included both closed and open questions in order to have a deeper understanding of the response.²⁹ The ES/NFI Cluster provided focal points for each partner who were then individually contacted by REACH and asked to share the details of relevant KIIs. Each KII was contacted to introduce the assessment and request interviews. The interviews themselves were undertaken by SFOs and AOs, all of whom were trained remotely by the focal AO. The semi-structured kobo tool used for the KIIs was developed in coordination with the Shelter Cluster. Interviews were undertaken by phone, WhatsApp or Skype, depending on the KIIs preference. The data was entered on either a kobo enabled smart phone or a kobo laptop application depending on the interviewer's preference. Data was then aggregated to the organizational level according to the data analysis plan.

It is important to note that not all partners had a monitoring and evaluation focal points, some partners undertook more interviews than others due to their programming scope. Moreover, the breakdown was further affected by the COVID-19 contingency measures, which occasionally impacted the ability to undertake interviews.

3) KIIs with coordinating bodies

Semi structured interviews took place with 34 KIIs that were coordinators of the winterization response at national, regional level from the ES/NFI Cluster, UNOCHA, Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT), and GoIRA's MoRR and Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA officers). This open ended "pen and paper" tool,²⁹ was developed with the ES/NFI Cluster in order to address the overall coordination of the response. These interviews were undertaken by REACH AOs, Research Managers and the Country Coordinator. Where needed, a REACH SFO undertook some interviews in Pashto and Dari, the rest were conducted in English. UNHCR provided the contact information for the KIIs, who were approached and introduced to the assessment by the AO via email. Interviews took place remotely via phone call, WhatsApp or Skype, depending on the preference of the KII. Coordination focal points were interviewed at the national level and at all regions and included the following organizations; UNHCR, IOM, OCHA, ANDMA, MoRR and ICCT.

Data Processing & Analysis

Throughout the household survey data collection, data checking and cleaning took place daily to maintain the high data standards of the assessment. For to the household survey, a cleaning log of all changes and reasons for changes was updated daily by the AO, and enumerators via SFOs confirmed data entry errors. On completion of data collection, the data was checked for integers, outliers, and text entries, and the cleaning log updated where necessary. The cleaning log was sent along with the final data to the REACH Afghanistan data team who wrote a script, and changes were made automatically to keep the data accurate and accountable. The REACH data team also developed an analysis syntax to be conducted in R software. Analysis was weighted by population group and region.

The data from KIIs with implementing partners was cleaned by the AO, and was based around “other” text options that were already pre-existing multiple choice options and notated in a cleaning log. A data analysis plan, outlying aggregation priority, was used to aggregate multiple interviews for one partner into a singular response for the organisation. The data was then analyzed in excel using pivot tables.

Notes taken during the KIIs with coordinating actors were transcribed by the interviewees and compiled by the AO and Research Manager A synthesis of each group was created and from this a grid was used to document and ensure data saturation was achieved.

Limitations

The prevalence of the COVID-19 virus and related preventative measures induced logistical limitations. For instance, all household surveys were undertaken remotely, likely resulting in an underrepresentation of those households that were not reachable by phone, for instance due to poor connection and coverage, or households that did not have, or could not afford a phone. Furthermore, less than two-thirds of the sampled households picked up their phones, potentially due to poor network coverage, phones being turned off or not answered (63%),

In terms of representation, as household heads are predominantly male in Afghanistan, the conditions and needs of women may be underrepresented. In-kind and voucher assistance was only provided by one partner in each of the regions in which this partner was present, making it difficult to separate the performance of the modality from the individual partner’s performance.

Non-beneficiary households were not equally sampled across all regions of Afghanistan, due to the absence of comprehensive populations lists, resulting in an underrepresentation in Central, Central Highlands, South, and West. Furthermore, due to differences in how partners defined ‘restricted cash’, REACH, for the purpose of this assessment, provided respondents with a standardised definition²⁹ and allowed households to determine if the assistance received was indeed ‘restricted’. This mitigation measure enabled the assessment to compare spending behaviour, based on respondents’ perception of restrictions.

In addition, 3% of assessed households that were recorded as beneficiaries reported that they were not, and 16% of households were reportedly ascribed the wrong displacement status, which meant that additional households needed to be sampled in order to make the necessary sample sizes. After drawing on additional sample lists, this was managed by slightly increasing the margin of error for returnee households and restricted cash beneficiaries in the West.

Respondents may have also underreported the frequency or quantity of aid received, or over reported household needs, in an effort to influence assistance in their area. In an effort to mitigate this potential bias, REACH explained to every respondent before the survey that they are not an aid provider and responses would not directly result in aid provision.

²⁹ The direct and restricted payment of cash to beneficiaries. Usually, this is in multiple payments with limitations where beneficiaries must show proof of purchase of particular winterization items which are related to the programme goals and the objectives of the ES/NFI Cluster in order to receive subsequent payments.’

FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the main findings of the assessment, beginning with a brief synopsis of the assessed population's demographic data, the findings follow these themes; overall needs and vulnerabilities, which addresses the vulnerability criteria, shelter typologies and households' specific winterization shelter and NFI needs; impact and effectiveness of winterization assistance, which examines how heating, shelter and NFI gaps were met and the effectiveness of the winterization assistance; resilience and recovery which focuses on debt traps and coping strategies; and accountability and satisfaction which analyses assistance challenges, cash restrictions, modality satisfaction and preferences. After these themes, the final section discusses the perspectives of the implementing partners and the coordination of the winterization response, reviewing the beneficiary and modality selection process, as well as challenges, coordination and complaints.

Demographics

Overall, the assessed population was made up of a larger proportion of beneficiary households than non-beneficiary (83% and 17% respectively). Cash beneficiaries were the largest assistance modality (79%, Figure 1) and IDPs the largest displacement group (69%, Figure 2).

Figure 1: Proportion of beneficiary households, by reported aid modality

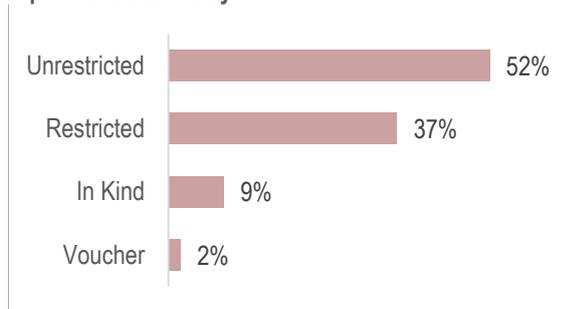
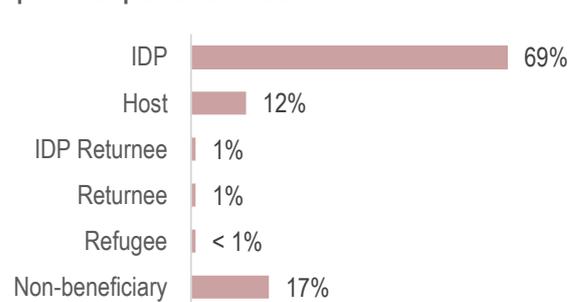


Figure 2: Proportion of beneficiary households, by reported displacement status



Households' main reported form of income was unskilled labour (75%), with non-beneficiary households more likely to report having members in skilled employment than beneficiary households (29% and 9% respectively). Most households reported work as a source of income in the last 30 days (95%), followed by loans (29%). This suggests that as beneficiaries are more likely to have insecure income sources than non-beneficiaries, which may make it harder for them to have funds available to pay for winterization expenses. If the funds are not available, then they may be at risk of falling into a debt trap as they borrow money to meet winterization needs, and borrow again when unable to pay the debt.

Women are particularly vulnerable in Afghanistan³⁰, in this assessment, female-headed households were twice as likely to be categorized as vulnerable than male-headed households according to the Joint Winterization Strategy vulnerability criteria, (57% to 23%, respectively). This assessment found no major difference reported in female and male headed households' types of work, with both female headed households and male headed households reporting relying on unskilled labor as their main source of income in the last thirty days (80% and 74%, respectively). However, female-headed households reported earning less comparison to males, making 3,733 AFS³¹ (\$49 USD) compared to 5,590 AFS (\$73 USD) in the 30 days prior to the assessment. Additionally, refugees reported making around half of most other displacement groups incomes (2,880 AFS). This relatively lower income likely leaves them less able to purchase winterization goods and therefore less able to cope with winter.

³⁰ CARE (2020) Rapid Gender Analysis, COVID-19, Afghanistan July 2020.

³¹ AFS is the national currency - Afghan Afghani.

Overall Needs and Vulnerabilities

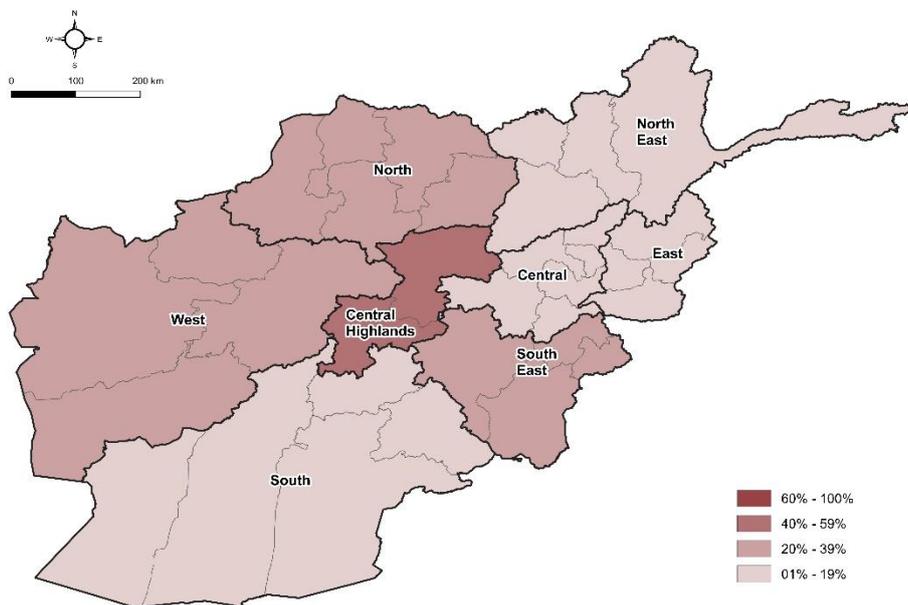
This section shows the findings for vulnerability by beneficiary status. Shelter typologies, with a focus on transitional shelters, are examined disaggregated by displacement status. The main winterization priorities, shelter concerns and needs as well as NFI needs are also discussed.

Vulnerability Criteria

The high proportion of vulnerable³² non-beneficiaries indicates the beneficiary selection process assistance may not have captured the most vulnerable individuals. Although more beneficiaries qualified as vulnerable than non-beneficiaries (18% and 27%), according to the concise vulnerability criteria in the Joint Winterization Response Strategy, this level of vulnerability for non-beneficiaries was high. As a result, 73% of beneficiary households classified as non-vulnerable received assistance whilst the 18% of vulnerable non-beneficiary households did not. This triangulates with the REACH 2019 ES/NFI Assessment, which reported that households who do not meet the vulnerability criteria³³ that many humanitarian organizations use, may be equally vulnerable, and often have similar needs.

In some instances, the ES/NFI Cluster’s vulnerability criteria were not used or did not adequately include all vulnerable households. Almost all assessed partners reported that they had selected some beneficiaries solely based on their displacement status (95%), which does not always accurately indicate the complex and regionally nuanced vulnerability profiles of Afghani households. Furthermore, coordination KIs reported that the beneficiary selection criteria were not inclusive of many vulnerable households. While the vulnerability scorecard helped in prioritizing households, coordination KIs noted that many vulnerable households were left out because they did not meet the criteria, while in other regions partners had to make the criteria increasingly strict as too many vulnerable households would otherwise have qualified.

Map 2: Proportion of non-beneficiary households classified as vulnerable



³² According to the Joint Summary Winterization Response Strategy: (July 2019), vulnerability criteria can be briefly summarized to include female, elderly, disabled and child headed households, households with over 8 members, households with monthly incomes below 5,000 AFS and have no or partial capacity for heating, households that cannot afford shelter materials or repairs due to low income or support, households living in damaged or makeshift tents and those facing the threat of eviction.

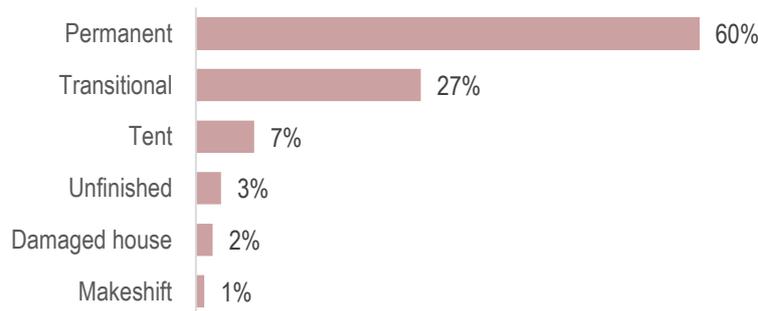
³³ In this instance the vulnerability criteria refer to: A household that had at least one of the following characteristics: containing at least one member over the age of 65, contains at least one member with a disability or chronic illness, has a female or child household head, or no adults were reported to own a tazkira.

Map 2 shows the spread of vulnerable non-beneficiary households throughout Afghanistan, highlighting the Central Highlands as particularly vulnerable. The Central Highlands are poor³⁴ and experience harsh winter temperatures that are on average, below -5 degrees centigrade.³⁵ However, the Joint Winterization Response Strategy also showed that there was a smaller number of allocations given in this region, which suggests households in this region had to be more vulnerable in order to receive any assistance than households in other regions.

Shelter typologies

New / replacement shelters are needed for displaced and host populations. Over one third of the assessed households reported living in unsuitable shelter types (37%), most notably transitional shelters (27%) and tents (7%). According to the REACH 2019 ES/NFI Assessment, transitional shelters were coming to the end of their lifespan. This could indicate that new, more long-term shelters are needed.

Figure 3: Proportion of households by reported shelter type



IDPs and host communities reported similar levels of living in transitional shelters. Over a quarter of both IDP and host community beneficiary households (29% and 26% respectively) reported living in transitional shelters which increases their exposure to harsh winter conditions and could increase their vulnerability (Table 3). Almost all refugees reported living in transitional shelters (97%) and the majority also reported food as their first priority need for the 2019/2020 winter (78%), indicating that refugees have competing priorities to shelter issues.

Table 3: Proportion of households living in transitional shelters, by displacement status

Displacement Status	% living in transitional shelters
Host community	26%
IDP	29%
Refugee	97%
Returnee	8%
IDP Returnees	20%
Non-beneficiaries	18%

Winterization Priorities and Needs

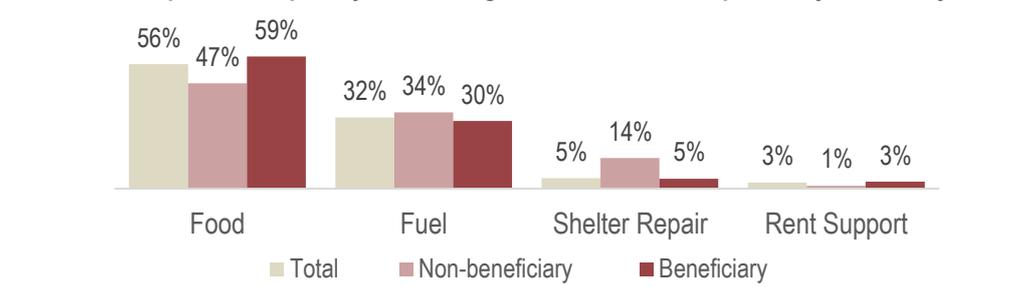
Both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households reported similar priorities and winterization needs; such as food (57%) and fuel (31%) were commonly reported to be households' first priority need for the winter period (Figure 4 **Error! Reference source not found.**). Food is a primary and basic needs for households to survive the winter in Afghanistan. In order to be resilient, a household needs the capacity to “anticipate, prevent, recover from

³⁴ The Asia Foundation (2019), Afghanistan in 2019: A Survey of the Afghan People. Available at: https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019_Afghan_Survey_Full-Report.pdf

³⁵ Afghanistan ES/NFI Cluster, Winterization 2019/2020 – Targets, Partners Commitment and Gaps per Province, 30 January 2020.

and transform in the aftermath of shocks, stresses and change.”³⁶ This indicates an overall low level of resilience of households, who seem to commonly lack the basic resources needed to survive the winter.

Figure 4: Households reported first priority need during the 2019/2020 winter period, by beneficiary status³⁷

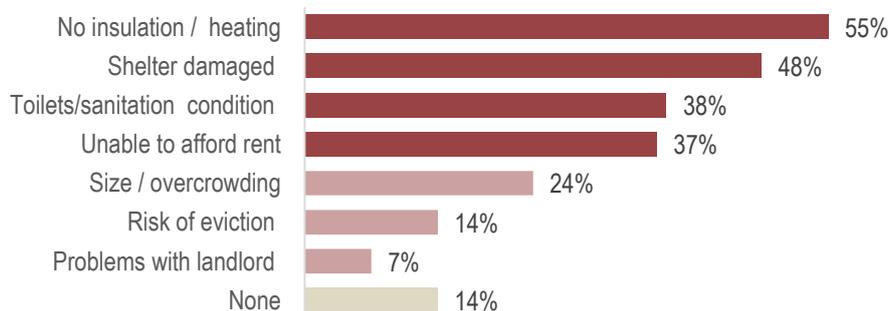


The West, Central and South regions were found to have a high need of shelter assistance. Tents were most commonly reported in the West and the Central (22% and 13% respectively) compared to other regions. In the South, transitional shelter was the highest reported shelter typology (70%). And they had the highest reported first prioritization of shelter repairs (70%, compared to the national average of 6%).

Shelter concerns seemingly reflected shelter integrity for winterization. The top concerns reported by households about their current shelter for the past winter were; a lack of insulation (55%) and damaged shelters (48%) (Figure 5). The lack of insulation and damage seems to be reflective of households’ inability to prepare adequately for winter, which might be a sign of their overall low resilience to predictable events. Additionally, a poorly insulated shelter could lead to households needing to increase the amount spent on heating materials, which would further reduce the allocation of funds for insulation and shelter repairs. The third most reported shelter concern was sanitation conditions (38%) which shows that the assessed households were also experiencing winterization needs that fall outside the usual spectrum of the ES/NFI Cluster, which is traditionally associated with responding to winterization needs. The reported concerns surrounding insulation and heating were particularly high in the West (85%), which is likely due to the high proportion of beneficiaries living in tents, which do generally not retain heat and are more difficult to insulate.

All assessed households reported that they lacked NFIs for winter. The top three most commonly reported NFI priorities for the winter were: firewood / charcoal / other fuel (86%), blankets and quilts (56%) and winter clothing (45%). These are in line with the findings for shelter concerns and priority repairs / upgrades, focusing on heating which is basic survival for the winter. In addition, personal insulation is a primary winter need and is problematic if households are unable to clothe themselves adequately to cope with Afghanistan’s harsh winters.

Figure 5 Top three reported shelter concerns, by proportion of households



In summary, the overall needs for winterization were similar between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries: high levels of vulnerability and problematic shelter typologies. The large proportion of vulnerable non-beneficiary

³⁶ UNDP (2016) Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings: Building a resilient foundation for peace and development, New York, UNDP, pp143

³⁷ Respondents were allowed to select on response to “What was your household’s first priority need during the November 2019- March 2020 winter period?”

households suggests the vulnerability criteria and beneficiary selection process, as well as the allocation of resources throughout provinces could be improved upon to more accurately include all vulnerable populations. The high reporting of inappropriate shelter typologies, insulation and shelter damage needs suggest that households' current – often transitional shelters' lifespans may be coming to an end and may indicate that overall household resilience is low. The high response for those who prioritized sanitation as their primary winter needs, which is not traditionally addressed by ES/NFI Winterization responses, could point towards the need for a multi-sectoral response.

Impact and Effectiveness of Winterization Assistance

This section explores the impact and effectiveness of winterization aid, specifically exploring key shelter, NFI and heating needs. The impact from different modalities of assistance, specifically cash, vouchers and in-kind aid, will also be analyzed by beneficiary and displacement status.

Heating

Beneficiary households were more likely to report being able to heat their homes sufficiently in the last 5 months (45%) when compared to non-beneficiary households (18%). Findings on heating do not negate the shelter typology findings which focused on heating – over half of reported beneficiary households being unable to heat their homes sufficiently (55%). Furthermore, as the reported priorities were focused on heating, insulation and sealing the shelter, it may mean that households regularly overspend on heating as heat escapes from poor insulation and closings, and potentially this money could have been spent on shelter repairs, which highlights the emergency focus of the winterization response as opposed to long-term resilience.

Table 4 shows that, with the exception of the Central and the West, non-beneficiaries were considerably less likely to report being able to heat their shelters sufficiently in the last five months, which suggests the winterization assistance may have supported beneficiaries in heating their shelters. Both the Central and the West reported the highest levels of households living in tents (13% and 22% respectively), which were similar between beneficiary and non-beneficiary, which could account for households lack of ability to heat the shelter sufficiently.

Table 4: Households reporting being able to heat their homes sufficiently in the last 5 months, by beneficiary status

Region	Beneficiary	Non-beneficiary
National level	45%	18%
Central	46%	54%
Central Highlands	56%	27%
East	38%	12%
North	60%	34%
Northeast	67%	15%
South	35%	20%
Southeast	58%	18%
West	22%	22%

Furthermore, findings suggest that beneficiaries who received in-kind assistance were almost twice as likely to report being able to heat their shelter sufficiently (79%) as compared to those who received restricted or unrestricted cash for the same purpose (43% and 40% respectively, Figure 6). This was likely due to the fact that the majority of in-kind assistance reportedly received were heating items, such as bukhari/gas cylinders (89%) and other fuel types (84%).

Figure 6: Proportion of beneficiary households reporting that they were able to heat their shelter sufficiently in the 5 months prior to data collection, by modality

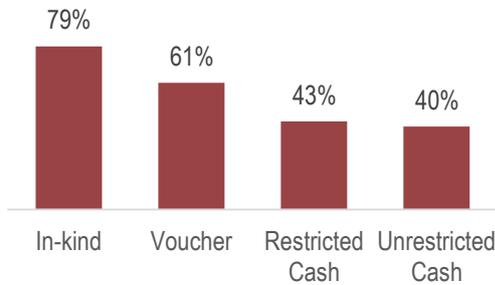
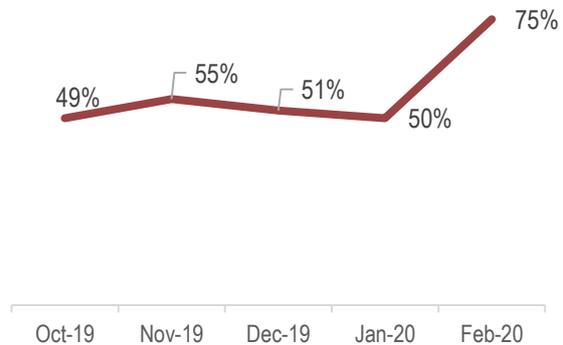


Figure 7: Proportion of beneficiary households reporting being unable to heat shelter sufficiently, by month winterization aid was first received



The analysis suggests that there were no considerable differences in terms of ability to heat shelters between beneficiaries who had received their assistance in October and those who had received assistance in January (49% to 55%, Figure 7). However, beneficiaries who had received assistance in February more commonly reported not being able to heat their home sufficiently (75%). This increase in beneficiaries reporting inability to heat shelters later into the winter may be because temperatures are generally higher in October and November. Another explanation might be that households are able to manage, either through borrowing or through other coping mechanisms earlier in the winter, whereas, these coping mechanisms may be exhausted later in the season

Shelter and NFI

Findings suggest that beneficiaries were better able to meet their winterization shelter and NFI needs than non-beneficiaries, however, many beneficiaries reported being unable to meet their winterization needs. There was a notable difference between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households reporting being unable to meet shelter needs (27% and 43% respectively, Figure 8). However, this finding does indicate that the assistance provided did not sufficiently meet the shelter winterization gaps³⁸ for the majority of beneficiaries either (64% of beneficiaries reported not having met or only partially having met their shelter needs). Additionally, the high proportion of beneficiaries reporting unmet shelter needs could suggest that the repairs are too expensive or that the shelters' poor state makes the repairs or upgrades unviable.

Figure 8: Proportion of households by reported level of meeting their shelter winterization needs, by beneficiary status

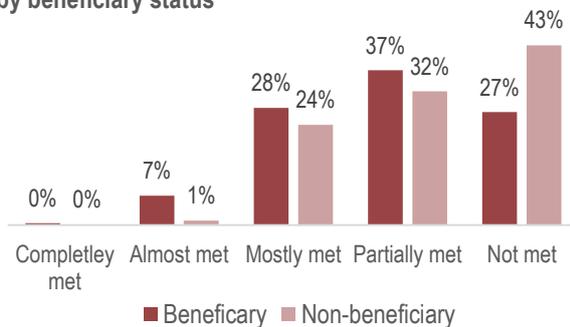
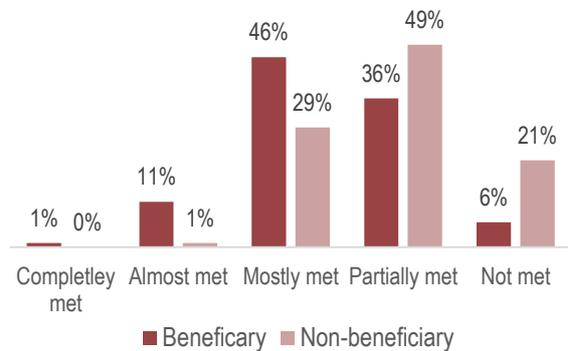


Figure 9: Proportion of households by reported level of meeting their shelter winterization needs, by beneficiary status



Female-headed households were more likely to report not having been able to meet their shelter needs, which was found for beneficiaries (36% compared to 26% of male-headed households) and non-beneficiaries (68%

³⁸ A "gap" refers to a winterization need that has not been met.

compared to 41% of male headed households). The large income disparity reported between female-headed households (3733 AFS / \$49 USD) and male-headed households 5590 AFS (\$73 USD)³⁹ could partly explain female-headed households being less likely to meet shelter gaps.

Non-beneficiaries were more likely to report not meeting their most critical NFI needs than beneficiaries (21% and 6% respectively), indicating that the winterization assistance helped beneficiaries to meet some of their NFI needs. However, non-beneficiaries were also more likely to report meeting their NFI needs than their shelter needs (43% shelter needs not met compared to 21% of NFI not met), which could suggest that NFI gaps are easier for households to close in general. Across the eight regions, assessed households reported being better able to meet their NFI needs than their shelter needs.

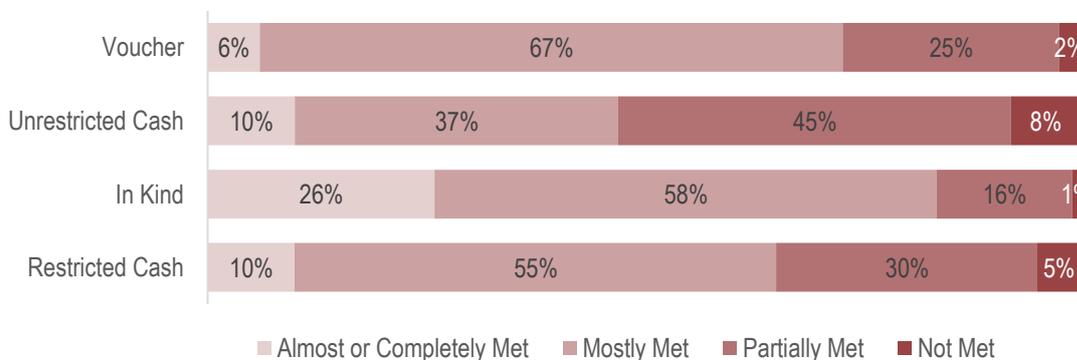
Reports of shelter needs not being met were most prominent in the Central region (48% of households), which may be related to higher costs for shelter materials in Central /urban areas. Furthermore, refugee and host community households reported some of the highest instances of unmet individual shelter and NFI winterization needs (Table 5), evidencing their low levels of resilience, despite many of them were receiving assistance.

Table 5: Proportion of households reporting level of NFI and Shelter needs as "not met" or "met partially", by displacement status

Displacement Status	% shelter needs not met or partially met	% NFI needs not met or partially met
Host community	77%	56%
IDP	62%	40%
Refugee	97%	56%
Returnee	61%	55%
IDP Returnees	59%	50%
Non-beneficiaries	75%	70%

In-kind and voucher assistance were reported by beneficiaries to be more effective at addressing NFI winterization needs when compared to restricted or unrestricted cash (84% and 75% reported that the in-kind and voucher assistance “mostly, almost, or completely” met household NFI needs, respectively), which is shown in Figure 10. This is likely because the most commonly reported received in-kind items were bukharis / gas cylinder (89%) other fuel⁴⁰ (84%) and blankets (31%), and matched almost directly with the most commonly reported NFI needs - firewood / charcoal / other fuel (86%) and blankets and quilts (56%).

Figure 10: Proportion of households by reported level of meeting their three most critical NFI needs for the past winter, by aid modality*

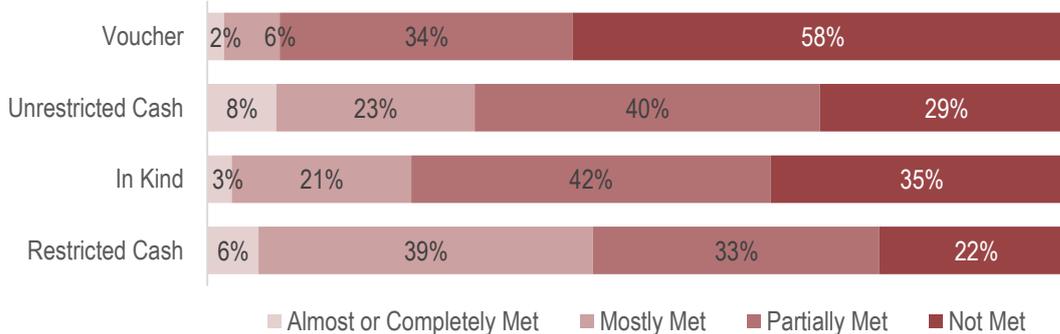


³⁹ Based on reported earnings in the 30 days prior to being assessed.

⁴⁰ Charcoal / fire wood / liquid gas

Cash was found to be better at addressing shelter needs and non-ES/NFI winterization gaps (Figure 11). In-kind and voucher were seemed less successful at meeting shelter needs because the specific shelter items needed – doors and windows (50%), roofing materials (36%) and plastic tarpaulin (32%) – were not reportedly given as in-kind or voucher items. Cash likely enabled the freedom to purchase repair and upgrade materials. Restricted cash was also more commonly reported by households to meet their shelter needs compared to households who received unrestricted cash (45% of restricted cash beneficiaries reported either “completely” “almost” or “mostly” meeting their most critical shelter needs compar to 31% of unrestricted cash). Despite the seeming success of cash, the majority of cash beneficiaries still reported either not meeting or only partially meeting their shelter needs (69% of unrestricted and 55% of restricted).

Figure 11: Proportion of households by reported level of meeting their three most critical shelter needs for the past winter, by aid modality*

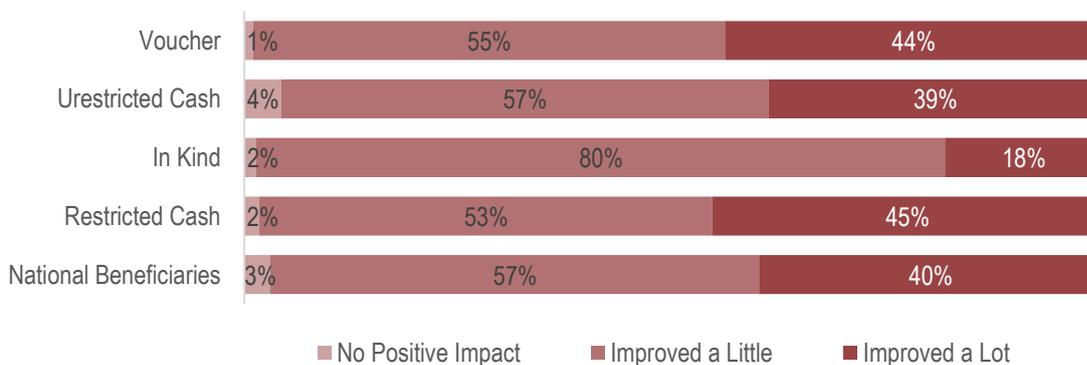


Shelter and NFI Effectiveness

In-kind assistance was reported by beneficiaries as having lower levels of improvement in overall household well-being compared to other modalities (18%, compared to 43% of cash, and 41% of voucher recipients), again suggesting that the in-kind assistance only helped meeting specific NFI gaps (Figure 12). Furthermore, considering the lifespan of goods provided through in-kind assistance, meeting a specific need with in-kind assistance might only be a short term solution, and beneficiaries may again need similar support for future winters.

Examining this finding by the gender of the head of household, **female-headed households were less likely to report assistance improving their overall wellbeing than male-headed households** (33% and 41% respectively). This correlates with challenges that cash beneficiaries reportedly experienced with female-headed households being more likely to report that the assistance amount was not enough to meet their needs than male-headed households (65% and 41% respectively). This could indicate that female-headed households might require additional focus in the 2020/2021 winterization response.

Figure 12: Proportion of beneficiary households reporting impact of aid on overall well-being, by aid modality*



In conclusion, the assessment indicates that winterization assistance may have helped households meet their winterization gaps, as beneficiaries were found to generally be better off in this respect than non-beneficiaries, particularly when it comes to the ability to heat shelters. However, there remain considerable gaps in the ability of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike to meet both shelter and NFI needs. This indicates the low level of resilience that all assessed households appear to be experiencing, and although assistance seems to be alleviating some of the stress on households, it is not enough to alleviate the majority of winterization needs throughout the country. Furthermore, although in-kind assistance was seemingly better at closing NFI gaps, the satisfaction reported by recipient households was the lowest of all the modalities. Finally, the current winterization response is based around emergency needs – heating and emergency shelter, with the focus being on the short term which may not improve long term development or household resilience.

Resilience and Recovery

Having highlighted the high levels of vulnerability among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as well as the prioritization of certain needs and gaps indicating low-resilience, this section will address how many assessed households are currently in, or at risk of a debt trap. Coping strategies used to manage livelihood, shelter, NFI and heating gaps are also examined.

Debt Traps

Most of the households' reported coping mechanisms indicated an increased risk of a "debt trap" due to winter. Beneficiary and non-beneficiary households alike reported borrowing money or going into debt over winter (68% and 57% respectively). The debt was spread evenly throughout the regions, but appeared to be more common in the West; the majority of the debt was reportedly taken for covering shelter (41%) and NFI (51%) winterization gaps. Borrowing money was also the second most commonly reported coping strategy for heating gaps (23%). Non-beneficiary households were seemingly slightly less likely to take on debt when unable to meet shelter or NFI needs, but more likely to have taken on debt to cover non-ES/NFI winterization needs. The average reported household debt was 21,510 AFS (\$276 USD).

Of those households reporting taking on debt, only relatively low proportions of beneficiaries (34%) and non-beneficiaries (25%) reported believing that they would be able to repay their debt within the next year. Female-headed households were far less likely to report believing that they would be able to repay their debts (12%) compared to male-headed households (34%), which could put them at higher risk of a cyclic debt trap. The debt becomes a trap when households must then borrow more money in order to pay back the previous loan, or to meet winterization gaps. In this case, a third of households (36%) reported resorting to borrowing money to pay back previous loans. Moreover, many households who reported not being able to pay back the winter debt, reported taking out another loan to cope (39%), which reduces the likelihood of ever repaying debt as interest mounts, and could lead to them adopting more negative coping mechanisms.

Coping Strategies

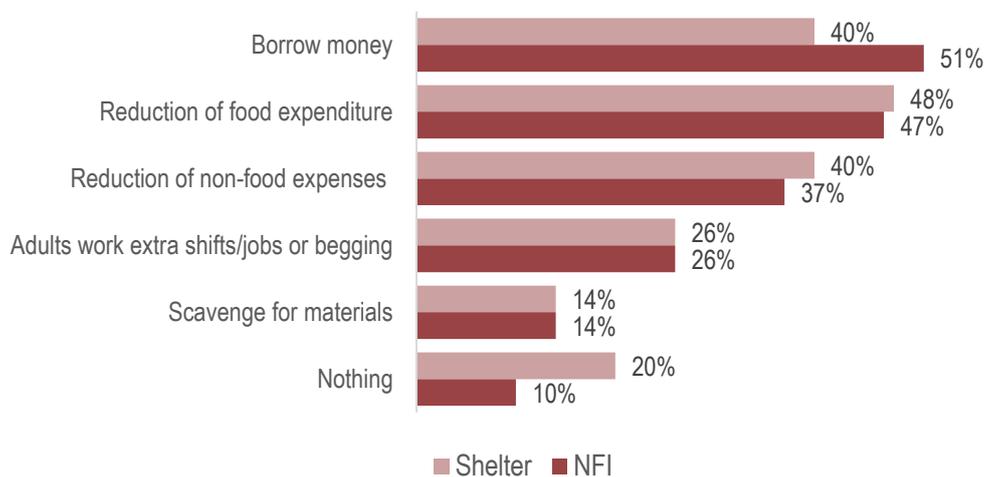
A majority of households reported negative coping mechanisms in order to survive the winter. A high proportion of beneficiaries (61%) and non-beneficiaries (75%) reported reducing money spent for food in order to survive the winter. When households resort to reducing their food expenditure, this could indicate that they are consuming either less meals, or less nutritious meals, indicating a low level of household resilience.

Table 6: Most commonly reported livelihoods coping strategies used during last winter, by % of beneficiary and non-beneficiary households

Livelihoods coping mechanisms	Non Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries
Reduce money spent on food for household	75%	60%
Reduce money spent on services (education, health, etc.)	66%	55%
Borrow money / take on debt	57%	69%
Take low paying or inappropriate jobs	69%	66%

Furthermore, a significant proportion of beneficiaries (55%) and non-beneficiaries (66%), reported reducing expenditures for other services, particularly healthcare. More than half of these expenditures were reported to have been made in order to address shelter and NFI winterization gaps. Many households reported that they did “nothing” to cope with shelter gaps (20%), which suggests their coping mechanisms have been depleted, or that there are other competing priorities.

Figure 13: Proportion of households reporting using coping mechanisms when they were unable to meet their shelter or NFI winterization needs



Reducing food and healthcare may further erode a household’s resilience by compromising the health of its members. If household members are not able to consume enough nutritious calories and they are less able to afford healthcare, simple illnesses can be exacerbated and new ones created. As the majority of households (75%), rely on unskilled labor as their main income source, households’ livelihoods could become further endangered if breadwinners are unable to work at full capacity or even at all.

Furthermore, **IDP Returnees, returnees and refugees, and host and IDP beneficiaries in the West, consistently reported high rates of coping strategies** in terms of reducing food and service expenditure, undertaking extra work, scavenging (except returnees), and refugees commonly reported children begging as a coping strategy. Host and IDP beneficiaries in the West also most commonly reported borrowing to cope with livelihood gaps. Assessed partners and coordination KIs also noted that these groups were also some of the most comprehensively covered by assistance, suggesting that these populations have low resilience and were dependent upon aid for survival.

The analysis of the resilience and recovery indicators suggests that households’ resilience levels are low. This is based on the following evaluation; assessed households reported high levels of borrowing money regardless of whether they received aid or not; most debt was associated with NFI and shelter gaps and to a lesser extent heating gaps, indicating that households are struggling to survive the winter. Few households reported being able to repay debt and many reported further borrowing to either pay back the original debt or just cope in general. This suggests

households are falling into a debt trap, which is likely to further compound their ability to cope with the challenges of future winters.

The low resilience of households in relation to meeting shelter and NFI needs suggests that the current winterization response is mostly emergency-based, with less long-term impacts. Coping strategies were negative, focusing on food and service (particularly health service) reduction, which could further endanger livelihoods by poor health and physically demanding jobs, exacerbating their ability to build up resilience in time for next year's winter.

Accountability and Satisfaction

This section addresses the challenges faced in assistance disaggregated by modality and gender and includes the distance to markets, size of cash payments, and restrictions on cash. The impact of cash restrictions and expenditure of cash are also discussed, followed by an analysis of assistance Satisfaction and modality preferences.

Assistance Challenges

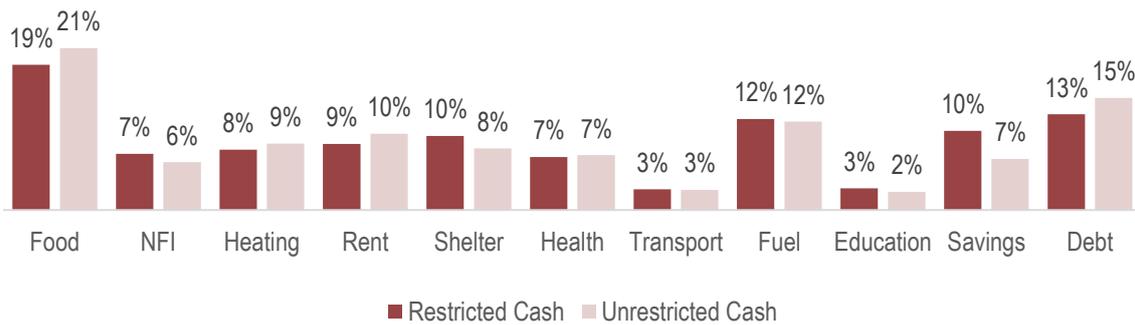
The most commonly reported challenges in receiving assistance were the distance to markets and the size of cash payments. Households reported challenges with all aid modalities - voucher (8%) in-kind (14%) and cash (59%). The largest issue for households receiving vouchers as aid was not an actual voucher issue, rather, it was the distance travelled to reach markets, reported by most beneficiary households in the Central Highlands region (where vouchers were used) (87%). Travel times of over an hour to reach markets (24%) usually by walking (80%) was reported by both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households in the Central Highlands. This may suggest the in-kind delivery would be more relevant in this context, given also that cash payments would still involve long trips to the market to purchase goods. The most commonly reported issue with in-kind aid was having to wait for over two hours to receive assistance (95%). Furthermore, in-kind and voucher assistance beneficiaries were more likely to report facing delayed assistance (49% and 46% respectively).

Households receiving cash more commonly reported challenges than households receiving other aid modalities (59%). The most commonly reported issues by cash recipients were that the amount received was insufficient (44%) and the distance to markets (19%). Female-headed households were significantly more likely to report problems using cash assistance than male-headed households (78% and 57% respectively), reporting mainly that they did not receive enough assistance (65%). In addition, over a third of female-headed beneficiary households (37%) reported that they would not report any questions or problems that they had with their assistance regardless of modality; this proportion was lower for male-headed households (19%). Additionally, almost a third of assessed partners reported receiving at least one complaint about misdirection of aid or corruption (29%). Finally, at distributions, the majority of households, regardless of the aid modalities they received, reported having waiting times of over two hours (restricted cash 89%, unrestricted cash 81%, in-kind 95% and voucher 67%). Implementing partner KIs mentioned beneficiaries often arrive far earlier than requested, which may suggest that pre-distribution communication could be enhanced.

Cash Restrictions

Restrictions on cash assistance seemed to have had no notable impact on the way the money was spent. On average, households receiving restricted and unrestricted cash reportedly spent almost half of their cash assistance on ES/NFI and winterization needs (44%). This included items such as heating, rent, shelter and fuel (Figure 14). Outside of winterization items, food was the most commonly reported non-winterization expense (20% and 21% of beneficiaries of restricted and unrestricted cash, respectively). When this is coupled with the prioritization of sanitation as a first priority need for winter (38%), it highlights the inter-sectoral nature of winterization needs. Moreover, these findings suggests that households might be doing what is necessary for survival, regardless of what restrictions are applied.

Figure 14: Proportion of beneficiary households reporting aid expenditure, by cash modality



Assistance Satisfaction and Preferences

Beneficiaries of in-kind and voucher assistance were less likely to report being satisfied with the assistance received than beneficiaries of other aid modalities; 52% of voucher and 53% of in-kind recipients reported being very satisfied with their assistance, compared to 65% of unrestricted and 76% of restricted cash recipients. This difference might also be reflected in beneficiary households' aid modality preferences; almost all beneficiary households reported a preference for unrestricted cash for winterization assistance (96%). Unrestricted cash was reported to be preferred because it offers a choice on how to spend it, which includes being able to spend assistance on multi-sectoral needs.

Households in the north east, the only region where in-kind aid was reportedly distributed on a wide scale, were more likely to report a fall in prices of the goods they received, including bukharis (57% of households), charcoal (55%) and gas (72%) than the national average (36%, 37%, and 72%, respectively). Market assessment data was not statistically representative for this assessment, yet these indicative findings suggest a potential negative impact on local economies; future market assessments might be valuable in terms of understanding the impact of assistance on local economies.

Examining the accountability and satisfaction of the winterization response has indicated that households receiving aid were more satisfied with cash than with in-kind or voucher modalities. Although more challenges were associated with cash, these issues were predominately due to the amount distributed (which disproportionately affected female-headed households, rather than the logistical issues reportedly faced by in-kind aid recipients, which included walking over an hour to collect their assistance. Given the distance faced by the majority of Central Highlands beneficiaries, the delivery of in-kind goods, or the provision of transport for the use of cash, may be preferable over the usual cash assistance. However, overall unrestricted cash was reported by almost all beneficiaries as the most preferred way to receive assistance. Almost half of cash assistance was reportedly spent on winterization items, but food was the next highest expense, which is indicative of the multi-sectoral nature of winterization needs. Finally, future market assessments might be helpful to gauge the impact of assistance, in particular kind and voucher assistance, on local economies.

Implementing Partners and Coordination

Assessed partners and coordination KIs discussed beneficiary and modality selection from which the following findings are analyzed. This part of the evaluation also addressed challenges, coordination and complaints reporting.

Beneficiary and Modality Selection

Guidelines for beneficiary selection appeared to be appropriate at an organizational level. Almost all assessed partners reported receiving guidance on beneficiary selection from the ES/NFI Cluster (95%), of these, over a third reported completely following the ES/NFI Cluster guidelines on beneficiary selection (37%) and over half reported mostly followed them (53%), which suggests the appropriateness of these guidelines. However, there were some challenges reported in terms of beneficiary selection, mostly related to the vulnerability criteria and allocation.

As previously mentioned, coordination KIs reported that the beneficiary selection criteria had likely excluded many vulnerable households, which is reflected by household survey findings indicating that there was a high level of vulnerable non-beneficiaries. Interviews with coordination KIs revealed that **the vulnerability scorecard helped in prioritizing households, many vulnerable households were left out because they did not meet the criteria, while in other regions, partners had to make the criteria increasingly strict as too many households initially qualified.** This is also reflected in the implementing partner data, where the majority of assessed partners recommended that the most useful improvement to the beneficiary selection process would be for assessed partners to have more flexibility in setting their own targeting criteria (90%).

Over half of interviewed partner KIs reported modifying their beneficiary selection criteria for different locations (55%), and a further quarter reported wanting to modify their assessment criteria for different locations but being unable to do so (30%). Needing donor approval was mentioned by two partner' KIs as the reasons they could not modify. This again suggests the need for greater flexibility. Additionally, despite having a set of ES/NFI Cluster vulnerability criteria to prioritize/select beneficiaries, almost all assessed partners (95%) reported that they had selected at least some beneficiaries solely on their displacement status, which could redirect focus away from more holistic indicators of poverty. Further compounding the beneficiary selection procedure, in some regions, coordination KIs reported that some local organizations worked outside of the cluster system. This raised concerns about duplication and potential problems rising from different types of aid or modalities being provided to the same population.

It was noted in national level of coordination interviews that there are standards for winterization packages created at the national cluster level (amount of assistance and needs), however, partners had autonomy to choose their own modalities, and often use ones that they are familiar with. KIs reported that these modalities are not always appropriate, for example, the use of unrestricted cash was reportedly found in post-distribution monitoring assessments to be less useful in meeting winterization needs, but was still used, potentially due to partner's familiarity with the modality and its relative ease of use.

Challenges, Coordination and Complaints

Two-thirds of the assessed partners reported difficulties due to snow coverage (65%), which reportedly affected accessing beneficiaries (55%) and delayed distributions (60%) and related assessments (30%). Future post-distribution monitoring assessments and lessons learned exercises might be valuable in surfacing possibilities for improvements for next winter season.

In terms of coordination, provincial focal points were reportedly not always effective. Although some regional KIs reported a well-managed and organized provincial coordination bodies, many did not, and noted that not all of the provincial focal points have been properly trained, or were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, making provincial coordination inconsistent, suggesting enhanced training may be beneficial.

All of the assessed partners reported having a functional complaints mechanism and reported complaints compounded to a total of 1,237. However, it should be noted that 4% of beneficiaries reported making complaints, and not all assessed partners were able to provide complaint data, suggesting that the total number of complaints is likely to be higher. Furthermore, the majority of beneficiaries making complaints reported that their complaints were not resolved satisfactorily (62%), which could indicate more support is needed in this area.

Overall, the examination of the winterization response from the perspective of assessed partners and coordination KIs suggests that partners generally want to have more flexibility in terms of beneficiary selection in order to account for localized variations in vulnerability and regional differences. Considering the contextual differences between regions, additional research on which modalities are the most appropriate and effective may be useful to support the response in regions where some modalities are better placed than others, however, almost all beneficiaries reported preferring unrestricted cash. Assessed partners reportedly faced challenges due to snow coverage, as well as coordination issues working with government and humanitarian coordinators. According to the regional KIs, there are some locations where provincial focal points may not have been trained adequately, which may compromise coordination efforts.

CONCLUSION

This assessment aimed to assess the effectiveness, impact, and challenges of the 2019/2020 ES/NFI winterization response and identify areas for improvement for the 2020/2021 strategy. In particular, this assessment evaluated cash, voucher, and in-kind assistance distributed by multiple implementing partners. The conclusions are informed by findings drawn from a statically representative household survey, structured interviews with assessed partners, and semi-structured interviews with KIs from coordinating bodies. These conclusions will provide an evidence-base to support future winterization responses in Afghanistan.

The analysis has highlighted an overall lack of resilience of the assessed population throughout the winter regardless of whether they received assistance. This is shown through their common use of negative coping strategies and the prevalence of debt traps. Despite receiving assistance, many beneficiaries' winterization needs had reportedly not been met. Furthermore, the findings signal the need for a more flexible and enhanced beneficiary selection process to include more vulnerable persons. **These findings suggest that despite being able to meet some short term needs, there were persistent longer-term needs left unaddressed, highlighting the need for more resilience-focused winterization programming.** Other conclusions drawn from the data highlight certain populations as particularly vulnerable, such as female-headed households, refugees, IDP returnees, and IDP and host populations in the West. Finally, findings suggest that further assessments are needed to better understand the impact of winterization assistance on local economies.

Shelter and NFI needs were reported similarly by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and suggested the need for replacement transitional shelters and tents. Food was reported as the most important winterization need for all assessed households, which suggests this basic need is competing priority to long term shelter needs. Households commonly reported living in transitional shelters; these findings are reflected in the REACH 2019 ES/NFI Assessment, which also found that the transitional shelters were reaching the end of their lifespan, highlighting the need for new shelters. This could indicate that households may benefit from more permanent, long-term shelters, or new, durable transitional shelters.

Shelters may be less efficient in retaining heat, which could lead to households spending more on heating. Shelter concerns and needs focused on shelter integrity and sealing the shelter to retain heat. Although many households reported that they were able to heat their homes sufficiently over the last five months, the most critically needed shelter repairs/upgrades related to sealing the shelter. Providing resilience-focused assistance could lead to reduced costs in future emergency assistance as the aid provided could last longer. Commonly reported NFI needs also reflected heating and included fuel and personal insulation NFIs. Inefficient heating could mean that households spend more on heating than is necessary. This could further hamper households' abilities to afford winterization repairs that would bring the cost of heating down, or enable the redirection of saved funds towards other multisector winterization needs.

Findings suggest that winterization assistance is having limited impact on the household resilience. Unstable work and low incomes of households might undermine the capacity of households to cope with increased needs brought about by the winter season. Both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households reported negative coping strategies in order to survive the winter. When households were unable to meet their winterization needs, expenses in other critical areas, such as food and healthcare, were reduced to afford shelter needs. This was especially prevalent among IDP returnee, returnees, and refugee households, and regionally beneficiary households in the West. These negative coping strategies could further erode a household's resilience by compromising the health of its members and breadwinners. This feeds into a negative coping strategy cycle, as after households survive the winter, their reduced capacity will make it harder for them to prepare for the next year's winter, which in turn is likely to lead them to adopt increasingly erosive strategies.

Most households' reported coping mechanisms indicated an increased risk of a "debt trap" due to an inability to meet needs during winter. Households reported taking on more debt as a coping mechanism to meet livelihood gaps, which suggests a lack of resilience to cope with basic household expenditures. High levels of borrowing money to meet shelter and NFI winterization needs were reported by both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households alike. Even with these loans, households were still not commonly able to meet their

winterization needs properly. **The majority of assessed households reported being unable to repay the loan within a year, and engaged in further negative coping strategies to survive;** those that could repay also reportedly did so through resorting to negative coping strategies. Regardless of whether loans could be repaid not, many households took out new debt to meet basic and winterization needs, falling into a debt trap, which is likely to further compound their ability to cope with next years' winter.

The assessment findings signal the need for a more flexible and enhanced beneficiary selection process that reflects the nuanced regional needs of households across the country. There was a high rate of non-beneficiaries that qualified as vulnerable according to the ES/NFI Cluster's Joint Winterization strategy. Many implementing partners are adapting to regional needs themselves which may result in overlaps or gaps, thus a common regional beneficiary criteria for all response actors to use could ensure that nuanced regional needs are being met regardless of location of response.

Beneficiaries were found to be better able to meet their winterization shelter and NFI needs than non-beneficiaries, however, many beneficiaries reported being unable to meet their winterization needs. NFI needs were better met by in-kind distributions and vouchers, but cash better met shelter needs. Although winterization assistance seems to have helped beneficiaries survive the winter, for the majority of beneficiaries their needs were not met, or only partially met. Given the negative coping strategies and debt trap found to be prevalent among beneficiaries, increasing the assistance may not significantly improve beneficiaries' situations in the long-term. Multipurpose cash, or in the case of this assessment, unrestricted cash, is generally associated with higher levels of dignity and can respond to more multisector needs than other forms of assistance. Similarly, beneficiaries reported higher levels of satisfaction and overall impact on household wellbeing than other modalities. Unrestricted cash was reported as their preferred modality, which could reduce logistical pressure and be more cost-effective whilst achieving similar results. Furthermore, indicative findings suggested that in-kind distributions coincided with declines in the market price for similar winterization goods, suggesting the **need for additional market assessments to gauge the impact of assistance, in particular kind and voucher assistance, on local economies.**

In-kind and voucher assistance were reported by beneficiaries to be more effective at addressing specific NFI winterization gaps when compared to restricted or unrestricted cash. However, beneficiaries of in-kind and voucher assistance were also less likely to report being satisfied with the assistance received than beneficiaries of other aid modalities, particularly unrestricted and restricted cash recipients. Almost all beneficiary households reported a preference for unrestricted cash for winterization assistance mostly because it offered a choice on how to spend it, including being able to spend assistance on multi-sectoral needs. **However, there was little difference in how restricted and unrestricted cash recipients reported spending cash assistance, suggesting that restrictions on cash had very little impact on how the money was ultimately spent.**

Overall, this suggests that the standard heater/fuel support (USD 200 package) typically provided is only one component of a larger winterization response, emphasizing the need for additional interventions such as such blankets, winter clothing, in-kind /voucher support, simultaneously incorporating affected people's priorities and efficiently addressing ES/NFI objectives and intended outcomes.

Finally, **this winterization assessment has indicated that the overall low resilience of the assessed households makes any long-term impact of winterization assistance challenging.** The winterization needs of the assessed population have suggested the need for sustainable shelter support, however, needs extended beyond the traditional ES/NFI winterization needs, as beneficiaries were commonly spending cash assistance (both restricted and unrestricted) to meet multi-sectoral needs, such as food and, to a lesser extent, healthcare. Moreover, sanitation was a commonly reported winter priority need. This indicates the opportunity for expansion beyond the traditional ES/NFI scope of programming in order to build resilience for future winter seasons.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Tools

The following tools are available on request to [REACH Afghanistan](#):

Tool 1: Households Survey: in the style of a PDM, adapted to cover the nuances of different organizations responses and used closed questions, it undertaken using Kobo enabled smartphones.

Tool 2: Implementing Partners Survey: a semi-structured tool which included both closed and open questions in order to have a deeper understanding of the response, undertaken using Kobo enabled smart phones and laptops. This tool focused on beneficiary selection process, working with others, coordination, distribution, successes and challenges.

Tool 3: Coordination Survey: an open ended qualitative “pen and paper” tool, with questions tailored depending upon the responding group. This included how the response itself was organized and worked, the beneficiary selection procedure, guidance, working with others, successes and challenges.