## **AFGHANISTAN**

# Sustainable Winterization Solution

February 2023





## INTRODUCTION

Despite a reduction in active conflict following the change of authorities in August 2021, Afghanistan remains one of the most complex humanitarian crisis in the world. Following over 40 years of conflict across the country, recurrent natural disasters, and endemic economic structural challenges, much of the population faces a lack of key services and challenges to meet their basic needs. According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), 28.3 million people are projected to be in humanitarian need, up from 18.4 million people just before the change in authorities, at the start of 2021. The number of people in need of Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ES/NFI) has similarly increased since then, with 29% of the rural population considered to be facing extreme needs in 2023.<sup>1</sup> This is critical, particularly in the extreme Afghan winters, in which many households struggle to have sufficient heating.

In coordination with the ES/NFI cluster, REACH conducted a Sustainable Winterization Assessment in order to identify the different winterization responses currently conducted in Afghanistan and understand their varying levels of sustainability to inform potential shelter assistance solutions related to winterization. The five identified winterization assistance types – shelter repair and upgrade, winter clothing and blanket, heating fuel support, cash-for-rent, and solar veranda – were studied across six sustainability dimensions namely: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility, environmental impact, and social impact. The key assessment findings for each sustainability dimension are presented below with additional notes provided in Annex I.

The types of winterization response approaches include the following: (1) **shelter repair and upgrade** is to support the beneficiaries through allocating funds (in-kind or in-cash) for the shocks (earthquake, floods, and conflict) affected population to repair and upgrade their damaged house/shelter. (2) **Winter clothing and blanket support** is to support the population of interest (i.e., those who have vulnerabilities) in terms of providing warm clothing and blankets ahead of the winter season. Likewise, (3) **heating fuel support** is to assist the target population in terms of providing heating devices and materials such as wood/logs, or gas to the households with vulnerabilities ahead of the winter season. In addition, (4) **cash-for-rent** is to secure the shelter/accommodation of the affected families which are considered vulnerable in terms of providing a certain amount of cash for 3 months in the winter season. Finally, (5) **solar veranda** is to provide a winterization solution to the project beneficiaries through the construction of the veranda structure for the households; this structure both serves as an extra room and a warmer place in the winter season in cold and high altitude areas.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The assessment involved a detailed technical review of winterization aid programs through a secondary data review to inform the research design, key informant identification, data collection, data analysis, and a joint analysis workshop with experts in the field of winterization. The different phases of the assessment are briefly explained below:

**Secondary Data Review (SDR):** REACH conducted a detailed desk review of various publicly available data sources on winterization responses in Afghanistan. This included previous REACH reports, such as the ES/NFI Assessment (December 2019), Winterization Evaluation (2019-2020), and Local Architecture Review (November 2020), assessments conducted by other organizations, including UNHCR – Winterization Programme Lessons Learned (May 2019) and NRC – Afghanistan Shelter Evaluation Report (January 2019), as well as a review of Inter-Cluster Winterization Strategies (January 2021). Additionally, a review of the most recent technical reference documents and guidelines published by the Afghanistan ES/NFI cluster (available here) was conducted to compare with the assistance implemented by different agencies. The desk research provided contextual data to triangulate findings and identify key information gaps, informing primary data collection and tool development.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> OCHA (2023), Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023. Available here.

**Research Design:** Based on dimensions of sustainability identified by the ES/NFI cluster, six sustainability dimensions were defined to best assess and compare the sustainability of different winterization assistance types. REACH designed the assessment tool in line with these dimensions and was informed by the SDR and feedback provided by the ES/NFI Cluster. The tool consisted of a semi-structured questionnaire, in order to allow respondents to provide qualitative and open-ended inputs on the different arguments, details, considerations, and recommendations per winterization assistance. The six sustainability dimensions were determined at the research design stage to guide the final analysis and are presented below:

**Effectiveness**: This is the ability of the response to successfully achieve the desired results. In this regard, the key aspects to be analysed are the timeliness and duration of the response, as well as the impact of the response on the beneficiaries and their feedback on the use of the assistance received. **Efficiency**: This is the ability of the response to achieve the desired results by minimizing the waste of resources such as materials, energy sources, human capital, money, and time regarding maintaining quality. Ultimately, a response is efficient if it can be implemented by using the available resources in the best way possible, which means all processes are optimized to achieve the final results. In this regard, the analysis of the benefits of the response, compared to its cost, will be essential to understand if the response is worth the amount paid, both in terms of unit cost and total cost; **Equity**: This is the quality of the response to be fair and impartial. In this regard, key aspects to be analysed are the methods used to prioritise the targeted areas and population groups, as well as the criteria adopted to identify/select the beneficiaries within the most vulnerable/in need;

**Feasibility**: This is the possibility, capability, or likelihood of the response to be done or accomplished in the Afghan context. In this regard, the key aspects to be analyzed are the standard packages provided; the functioning of the supply chain for the procurement of the necessary items to be provided to the beneficiaries; the level of acceptance of the response by the beneficiaries, and the local communities;

**Environmental impact**: This is the environment alteration, directly or indirectly caused during the implementation of the response. In this regard, the key aspects to be analyzed are the unintended adverse effects on the environment at the local level, including increased pollution or deforestation, etc.

**Social impact**: This is the effect of the response on the community and the well-being of individuals and families. The key aspects to be analysed are the impact of the response on the local economy/markets, as well as on the social cohesion between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. It also includes considerations on the potential exposure of beneficiaries to risks related to their health and safety (do no harm) due to the assistance received.

**Key Informant Identification**: REACH and ES/NFI cluster used their respective networks to identify Key Informants (KIs) who have worked on ES/NFI programs in Afghanistan/the region, and/or who possess technical knowledge of winterization solutions. In total 48 KIs were identified, out of which REACH was able to interview 22 KIs across different types of assistance, sector, gender, and nationalities, the details are provided in Table 1 below. The KIs provided a wide range of perspectives and data on the modalities of ES/NFI assistance provided by different organizations, which informed an understanding of how the sustainability of these modalities of assistance was part of the winterization response in Afghanistan.

Type of Assistance	Sector		Gender		Nationality		Total
	Humanitarian	Academic	Male	Female	National	International	
Winter Clothing and Blanket Support	5	3	8	0	7	1	8
Shelter Repair and Upgrade Support	3	0	3	0	3	0	3

Table 1: KIs across different types of assistance, sector, gender, and nationality

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Heating Fuel Support	4	1	5	0	2	3	5
Cash-for-Rent	4	1	3	2	4	1	5
Solar Veranda	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Total	17	5	20	2	17	5	22

**Data collection:** Three assessment officers from REACH contacted the identified KIs through email and/or telephone, introduced them to the winterization assessment, and requested a feasible date and time for an interview. As the tool included some technical questions, it was shared with the KIs in advance with the MS Teams meeting link, to ensure that they could familiarize themselves with it and prepare answers ahead of time if needed. Interviews were conducted in English remotely on MS Teams using automatic transcription to speed up the data collection and analysis process. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and the KIs were interviewed between 19 December 2022 - 01 February 2023.

**Data analysis and workshop:** REACH reviewed the transcript generated by MS Teams for a quality check and extracted a summary of key discussion topics from each interview question in line with the analytical framework. The analytical framework was designed in Excel based on the six sustainability dimensions and their indicators with findings structured in accordance with the types of winterization assistance. The assessment covered five types of winterization assistance that were popular in Afghanistan: shelter repair and upgrade, winter clothing and blanket, heating fuel support, cash-for-rent, and solar veranda.

A virtual workshop was jointly organized by the ES/NFI cluster and REACH to rank the different types of winterization assistance based on the findings from the assessment. REACH presented key findings from the KIIs in the workshop, which was attended by the KIs from the assessment as well as partners of the ES/NFI cluster. In the workshop, the participants were divided into five groups each representing one sustainability dimension (with the exception of equity), and reviewed its indicators and key findings from the analytical framework. During the group exercise, each group ranked the type of winterization assistance from one to five, with one being the most sustainable and five being the least sustainable. The output of the workshop is presented in Table 2 below where the average value for five sustainability dimensions across the types of winterization assistance is available. It is important to note that the data used in the key findings came from the KIIs while the recommendations came from both the KIs and the participants in the workshop which also included the KIIs.

**Limitations:** One limitation of the assessment was the limited identification of new hypothetical types of winterization assistance due to difficulties in identifying and contacting relevant KIs with innovative solutions transferable to the Afghan context. Solar veranda was included as a new type of assistance in the assessment, however, after reaching out to multiple organizations only one organization was available to complete a KII to discuss Solar Verandas as a type of winterization assistance.

Additionally, the dimension of equity was not considered in the ranking as it consisted of questions related to prioritization and vulnerability criteria used by organizations, rather than the characteristics of the actual assistance used, which were not logical to rank like other dimensions. This had no impact on the overall understanding of each modality.

Furthermore, the joint analysis workshop had to be conducted online due to existing security constraints at that time. Considering the virtual participation, the overall duration of the workshop had to be reduced and active discussions among participants were less than expected during an in-person event. Inputs from the workshop reflect participants' beliefs and recommendations based on their extensive experiences, however, they should not be considered as scientific facts.

It is also important to note that the findings of this report are based on a small sample of KIs and should therefore be understood as limited in their generalizability. Although knowledgeable of their sector and



diverse in their experience, further studies using this report as a foundation should be conducted to confirm these findings.

## **OVERALL FINDINGS**

The ranking exercise conducted during the joint analysis workshop indicated that **winter clothing and blanket support was the most sustainable type of winter response** in the context of Afghanistan, as it was the top-ranked assistance across the dimensions of effectiveness, feasibility, and social impact. The **shelter repair and upgrade was indicated to be the second most sustainable type of winter response with the highest ranking on the dimension of efficiency**. This was in part because winter clothing and blanket support was highly effective in helping families cope with harsh winters and has relatively few limitations on timely distributions, while shelter repair and upgrade lasts longer but also costs more. Similarly, **cash-for-rent was indicated to be the third most sustainable type of winter response with the highest rank for environmental impact but the lowest rank for efficiency and feasibility** because of limited access to hard-to-reach areas and very low availability of houses for rent in rural parts of the country.

The ranking was done under nationwide considerations with insights from the workshop participants. However, KIs clearly detailed that the sustainability dimensions vary by area and that tailored assistance with a combination of different assistance types was considered the most sustainable design per intervention area taking the outlined findings and recommendations into account.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash-for- Rent	Solar Veranda
1	Effectiveness	3.33	1.87	2.01	2.77	3.73
2	Efficiency	1.25	2.50	2.25	4.75	2.75
3	Equity					
4	Feasibility	2.60	2.20	3.60	2.40	4.20
5	Environmental Impact	2.67	1.67	3.33	1.33	3.67
6	Social Impact	2.47	2.28	3.79	2.42	3.16
	Overall	2.46	2.10	3.00	2.73	3.50

Table 2: Ranking of assistance types by sustainability dimensions by workshop participants<sup>2</sup>

#### **Effectiveness:**

According to KIs, winterization assistance had varying time coverage ranging from a few months (cash-for-rent, winter clothing and blanket, heating fuel support) to multiple years/seasons (shelter repair and upgrade, solar veranda).



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The figures in the table represent the average value for each dimension across the types of assistance derived from the group work in the workshop. The dimension of Equity was not considered in the ranking because it consisted of questions related to prioritization and vulnerability criteria used, rather than the assistances themselves. Assistance was ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most sustainable and 5 being the least sustainable.

- The delivery mechanism seemed to impact the coverage duration of the assistance: a few KIs indicated that in-kind assistance lasts longer than cash assistance because beneficiaries use it for multiple seasons while cash tends to last for only one season due to its specific targeting and the monetary amounts provided.
- A combination of winter clothing and blanket, and heating fuel support was recommended to ensure maximum effectiveness, especially when provided via a mixed modality, i.e., in-cash for heating and winter clothing combined with in-kind blankets. It also allows vulnerable households to meet other competing family needs.
- The timeliness of assistance delivery was not affected by the type of assistance (i.e., all scenarios were found in all assistance types) but instead by the delivery mechanism or implementing partner.
- > Common reasons for delays mentioned by KIs in the delivery of assistance included:
- > Late planning, delays in the proposal/financing process
- > Coordination with the authorities/registration of the project
- Difficulty of access/transportation constraints
- > Delays in sourcing products from suppliers
- Almost all KIs suggested that assistance was usually used as intended. However, a few KIs mentioned in-kind goods being sold on the market and cash being spent on other products like food and health.
- Although all assistance types aimed to support beneficiaries' winter needs without resorting to coping strategies, a few KIs indicated that the assistance was not enough for large families (winter clothing and blanket support, and heating fuel support).

#### **Efficiency**:

- According to KIs, the cost per beneficiary varied largely between types of assistance (from 75 USD for winter clothing and blanket to 500 USD for shelter repair and upgrade) and for each assistance type depending on the package content (300 USD for partial damage vs 500 USD for severe damage). Shelter repair and upgrade tend to last longer than winter clothing and blanket, which should be taken into account when considering the cost.
- KIs suggested that the geographic area of assistance also impacted the cost per beneficiary because of transportation costs, Financial Service Provider (FSP) costs, harshness/length of winter, and market prices.
- > Program support costs varied between 20% and 30% depending on the assistance type.

#### **Equity:**

- According to KIs, prioritization of areas was mainly done by the ES/NFI cluster/donors and was based on the climatic condition during winter, the presence of IDPs and returnees, and previous assistance.
- ES/NFI cluster/donor vulnerability criteria were found to be widely followed by partners to prioritize vulnerable households; though it should be noted that solar veranda also included factors like the requirement of having a south-facing building.
- All types of assistance were focused on supporting households, while solar veranda also included community centers and schools.

#### **Feasibility:**

- Despite most KIs reporting having conducted market assessments before distributions, a few KIs indicated shortages of items and/or price fluctuations. This mainly occurred when two or more partners implemented similar responses at the same time in the same locations and was most notably mentioned in relation to shelter repair and upgrade assistance.
- KIs noted that it was challenging for hawalas (cash transfer agents) to distribute cash in remote areas due to security issues, which could also result in higher service fees. As such, the



feasibility of cash assistance modalities may be informed by geographic accessibility and security conditions.

- For in-kind interventions, some KIs indicated that it was challenging to procure items from the local market (in particular good quality items) and to transport the aid to the respective distribution point due to road conditions and security issues. These conditions can reduce the geographic area where this type of assistance was feasible to be implemented or may cause delays.
- KIs indicated that there was no rental market in some rural areas making it difficult to implement cash-for-rent in these locations.

**Environmental Impact:** 

- According to KIs, there was no significant environmental impact from shelter repair and upgrade, winter clothing and blanket, or cash-for-rent assistance.
- > For solar verandas, KIs advised to reuse or recycle the plastic before disposing of it.
- According to KIs, heating fuel support helped to limit the cutting of trees and bushes in the local areas. However, the burning of wood and coal was indicated to cause air pollution.

**Social Impact:** 

- The majority of KIs indicated that winterization assistance did not expose beneficiaries to health or safety risks. However, a few KIs indicated that air pollution from heating fuel support may contribute to health risks.
- According to some KIs, cash-based intervention can lead to an increase in commodity prices in the local market. They also emphasized that the cash modality has a positive impact on the market functionality, local economy, and job market.
- The cash-for-rent approach did not seem to influence rental prices as the rent was paid based on the contracted amount for the duration of the contract period.
- According to a few KIs, the impact on social cohesion due to assistance could be positive or negative, depending on the area (village level), the existing social cohesion, and – importantly – the transparency of the selection criteria.

## **ANNEX 1 : FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM KEY INFORMANTS**

The following pages summarize the key points provided by the KIIs across each assistance type per sustainability dimensions and can be reviewed to inform specific targeted interventions.

## **E**FFECTIVENESS

## **Shelter Repair and Upgrade:**

The findings and recommendations from the effectiveness dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash –for- Rent	Solar Veranda
1	Effectiveness	3.33	1.87	2.01	2.77	3.73

#### **Findings:**

In terms of effectiveness, shelter repair and upgrade was ranked fourth in the joint analysis workshop.





- All KIs (3/3) believed that the assistance covered at least the whole period of winter, whether it was provided in cash or kind. Assistance was usually provided once, according to three KIs, and according to one KI, assistance can last up to three years depending on the exposure to sudden onset shocks. The assistance also contributed to job creation for skilled and unskilled labor, generating income and providing a long-term positive impact on beneficiaries' winterization needs, according to all KIs.
- Regarding the timing of the response, the majority of the KIs (2/3) indicated that the assistance was usually provided in time to support beneficiaries for winter.
- The main challenges to the provision of timely assistance indicated by KIs included late planning by donor agencies for project award and contracting and coordination with de facto authorities for project registration and approval.
- All the KIs (3/3) indicated that they received feedback from the beneficiaries after being assisted and that the beneficiaries used the assistance as intended. They indicated that high market prices of the package items sometimes lead to insufficient cash for shelter repair.
- Regarding the overall impact, all the KIs indicated that shelter repair and upgrade in both cash and in-kind delivery mechanism keeps beneficiaries safe from the harsh winter and saves lives by preventing illnesses. One KI also indicated that this assistance gives beneficiaries dignity and provides a secure/safe space for the affected families.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The majority of the KIs (2/3) recommended that the ES/NFI cluster coordinate support with the de facto authorities at the national level, notably to clarify the specific documentation that was required from partners to implement programs (one KI noted that umbrella MoUs (Memorandums of Understanding) could be a way to simplify coordination with the authorities) and advocate for the relevance of the selected project area.
- On the response time and the challenges of delays, the majority of KIs (2/3) in the interviews recommended that the response projects should be awarded earlier to partners, noting that the cluster should consider the amount of time needed to coordinate with de facto authorities at the national and provincial levels.
- One KI noted that challenges to timeliness can also be solved by increasing the number of project staff and a separate KI also noted to pay a higher fee to the hawala so that money was transferred quicker.
- Regarding the impact of the response, the majority of the Kis (2/3) recommended increasing the amount of cash assistance so that the target families can purchase high-quality materials.
- One KI noted that the package for shelter repair and upgrade was sufficient. However, supplementary packages like winter clothing and blankets or cash support may be needed for shock-affected families to ensure that they can stay warm in their repaired shelter.

## Winter Clothing and Blanket

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of effectiveness, winter clothing and blanket support was ranked first in the joint analysis workshop.
- Overall, KIs had diverging opinions regarding the impact of the different assistance modalities. The majority of the KIs (6/8) indicated that winter clothing and blanket support was provided once per year before winter with both cash or in-kind as a delivery mechanism. Some KIs (3/8) indicated that while both cash and in-kind assistance were effective in helping beneficiaries cope with the harsh winter, in-kind has a greater impact as it lasts longer than cash assistance and only a few beneficiaries sell in-kind items for cash in markets. Few KIs (2/8) noted that with cash assistance, on the other hand, beneficiaries have decision-making and spending power to prioritize and tend to other household needs such as food or healthcare. One KI indicated an alternative of mixed assistance so that beneficiaries can use cash for other needs



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while also covering their winterization needs. A final decision may be made according to the context of the operational environment and targeting area.

- The majority of the KIs (5/8) indicated challenges of timely assistance, stating that late project planning/award, and coordination with the de facto authority at different levels cause significant delays. Half of the KIs (4/8) indicated that the low capacity (planning and management) of implementing partners (IPs) and a shortage of resources in the market further contributed to these delays. Additional reasons for the delays were transportation constraints, challenges in hard-to-reach areas, as well as prolonged procurement processes.
- Based on the challenges listed, delays can occur at various phases of the project including at the start due to the approval process, at beneficiary selection, and implementation due to procurement and distribution timelines.
- While IPs have received positive feedback from beneficiaries on the assistance type, some also indicated a preference for a reduced quantity but improved quality of blankets.

#### **Recommendation:**

- KIs from the workshop mentioned that explaining the area selection process to the de facto authorities was an important issue causing delays. They recommended for the ES/NFI cluster to lead the coordination with the authorities on this part on behalf of all IPs, as the geographic prioritization process was conducted by the cluster.
- Few of the KIs (2/8) indicated that the impact of cash assistance could be improved by making the response delivery on-time, by more accurately selecting beneficiaries, as well as by increasing the awareness of winterization items and their uses among beneficiaries. Adjusting the amount of cash depending on market prices was also recommended.
- For in-kind assistance, the lessons indicated by KIs also included improving the timeliness and improving the quality of items. Improving the information on weather conditions in the target area would better inform the planning and prioritization of affected populations.

## **Heating Fuel Support**

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of effectiveness, heating fuel support was ranked second in the joint analysis workshop.
- KIs held different opinions on the frequency of assistance and duration. While all the KIs (5/5) noted that this assistance should be distributed every year and the majority of the KIs (3/5) noted that the assistance usually lasts the whole winter, some also indicated that location, varying winter durations, and family size were often important factors, leading to some assistance lasting for only 2-4 months.
- All the KIs indicated that assistance was usually on time. However, delays may happen due to similar reasons indicated under other assistance types such as capacity issues of IPs (planning and management), transportation constraints, weather conditions, and access to remote areas. Late arrival of funds from donors can also cause delays, as well as challenges in getting project approval from the de facto authorities and barriers to female participation.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that heating fuel support assisted beneficiaries in having a safe and accommodated winter, preventing negative coping mechanisms, and avoiding long-term sicknesses.

#### **Recommendation:**

All the KIs stressed the importance of timeliness as a key driver of the overall impact of winterization assistance. It was recommended to plan all winterization response projects earlier (including donors approving funding, procurement, and beneficiary selection) so that they can be delivered before the start of the winter. One KI suggested that the ES/NFI cluster



could take the role of liaising with the de facto authorities at different levels for project approval.

To improve the impact on beneficiaries, one KI suggested an integrated approach. For instance, it was suggested to provide Food Security and Livelihood (FSL) assistance during the following spring so that households would be able to cover their upcoming winterization needs from their own income generation.

## **Cash-for-Rent**

#### **Findings:**

- > In terms of effectiveness, cash-for-rent was ranked third in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (5/5) indicated that the assistance lasted 3-4 months during the winter. Some of the KIs (2/5) noted that this assistance was a transitional response so that beneficiaries have the time to find a durable solution. However, in the case of an emergency response (e.g., an earthquake), households may need 5-6 months of rent support.
- On timeliness, some of the KIs (2/5) indicated that cash was usually provided on time and noted that this may depend on the implementing partner's capacity (planning and management). One KI noted that the ES/NFI cluster's support has helped IPs to improve the timeliness of assistance but financing from the ES/NFI cluster and project approval from the de facto authorities takes time. causing delays.
- Some of the KIs (2/5) indicated that restrictions on female staff remained a challenge. Other challenges included grant management issues where, for example, a donor provides 40% of an installment but expects an IP to deliver assistance to 100% of planned beneficiaries.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that there was a complaint and response mechanism in place and 2/3 KIs indicated that they were receiving feedback from beneficiaries. KIs (2/5) indicated that 100% of families used the assistance as intended. Cash-for-rent has a monitoring mechanism where a lease agreement between tenant and house owner has to be signed, therefore limiting cash uses to other household priority needs.
- Regarding cash assistance, the majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that the assistance was very useful for families facing different kinds of vulnerabilities. For example, it helps households avoid a large amount of debt due to the declining economic situation while ensuring that IDPs have rent for at least three months during winter. It also saved earthquake-affected households from a harsh winter when their shelter was under construction.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that the assistance seems to have a short-term impact on beneficiaries, but prevents them from taking large amounts of debt. KIs noted that the assistance was enough for one winter, but it needs to be redistributed every winter.

#### **Recommendation:**

- All the KIs (5/5) from the workshop highlighted that coordination with the authorities was a major source of delays in the implementation of winterization programs. This includes authorities raising questions on the project, unclear documentation requests, and questions on the specific areas targeted by programs. KIs recommended ES/NFI cluster's close coordination with the de facto authorities at different levels for project approval. KIs explained that once the project was approved at the national level, securing project approval at the provincial level was easier.
- One KI suggested that improvements could be made by contextualizing cash assistance, considering the duration of the winter in different parts of Afghanistan, as well as by having a flexible assistance package in terms of cost per beneficiary.

## **Solar Veranda**

#### **Findings:**



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- > In terms of effectiveness, the solar veranda was ranked fifth in the joint analysis workshop.
- The KI indicated that assistance was distributed once and it was expected to last for more than one season and up to eight years. The frame of the solar veranda was durable for more than 8 years; however, the plastic sheets may need to be replaced.
- The ideal time of delivery was between October and November. The major causes of delay were the transportation of items from one area to another and road blockages due to snow.
- With regards to impact, the solar veranda provides an additional space or room for the family members (including women). They use the space to relax and for breakfast and lunch during sunny days. The KI indicated that the beneficiaries were very happy with the assistance.
- The solar veranda supports beneficiary households in spending less on heating materials and promotes income-generating opportunities for skilled labor.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The KI highlighted the importance of training beneficiaries as a way to improve the overall impact and durability of the assistance.
- Similar to the other type of assistance, the KI also highlighted the challenges in receiving project approval from the de facto authorities and the importance of coordination for the ES/NFI cluster.

## **EFFICIENCY**

The findings and recommendations from the efficiency dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash-for- Rent	Solar Veranda
2	Efficiency	1.25	2.50	2.25	4.75	2.75

## **Shelter Repair and Upgrade:**

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of efficiency, shelter repair and upgrade was ranked first in the joint analysis workshop.
- The majority of the KIs (2/3) indicated that the cost of shelter repair and upgrade differed depending on the type of shelter damage: 300 USD - 330 USD for minor damage, 500 USD – 550 USD for major damage, and 1800 USD for full or severe damage.
- The support cost (administrative) for cash assistance of this type of response was indicated at 20-30% according to two KIs.
- One KI (1/3) indicated that the cost of the response differed from area to area as the prices of items in the local market and the cost of transportation changed while the cost per beneficiary depended on the severity of shelter damage.

#### **Recommendations:**

For improving the economic sustainability of the response, KIs indicated that increasing the amount of cash support would enable households to purchase higher quality items, reducing the probability that they will need similar support for the following years. For in-kind assistance, KIs recommended having the beneficiary households do the construction and repair work themselves, as this would build capacity and skills that could be used for the labor market leading to income generation.



- The majority of the KIs (4/5) indicated that considering the market cost of the shelter items, it was not possible to reduce the cost of the assistance package, additionally it is also not possible to reduce the support cost. However, some KIs suggested that the transport and logistics costs can be reduced by decentralizing the procurement process where possible, as well as by decentralizing staffing.
- For cash-based assistance, one KI mentioned that instead of having a shelter support transfer value set at the national level, setting a transfer value at the district or province level by considering the shelter items and labor cost would make the assistance more practical to the beneficiaries.
- One KI highlighted the importance of collaboration with other clusters such as WASH for a more sustainable approach whenever possible. This will allow beneficiaries to receive more support either in cash or in kind or technical support.

## **Winter Clothing and Blanket**

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of efficiency, winter clothing and blanket support was ranked third in the joint analysis workshop.
- For cash assistance, half of the KIs (4/8) indicated the cost for winter clothing and blanket support was between 74 - 105 USD, whereas, for in-kind assistance, between 65 - 75 USD.
- KIs indicated different support costs depending on the delivery mechanism (cash, in-kind, mixed). The support cost for cash was between 5-10%, for in-kind it was between 15-25%, and for mixed it was between 15-20%. Whereas, on average, the ratio of a program to support cost was 80% and 20% respectively.
- All KIs indicated that the cost of the response differed depending on the distance from the nearby market, hard-to-reach areas, transportation costs, and service costs.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The majority of the KIs (6/8) indicated that winter clothing and blanket support was already cost-effective and recommended not reducing the cost per beneficiary.
- For cost-effectiveness, one KI suggested providing the response ahead of winter to avoid paying higher prices for winter clothing and blanket items during the peak winter period. Whereas one KI also suggested using local money providers for cash transfers and locally made materials in the in-kind package to increase cost-effectiveness.
- For sustainability, some KIs (2/8) recommended collaborating winterization assistance (winter clothing and blanket support) along with livelihood activities to self-sustain the beneficiaries in the long run.

## **Heating Fuel Support**

#### **Findings:**

- Heating and fuel support were ranked second in terms of efficiency in the joint analysis workshop.
- The estimated total cost per beneficiary was indicated at 200 USD with an additional 7% of the service fee.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that the cost of the response can vary by 3-6% depending on the area of the response. The factors contributing to the change in cost include transportation, distance from the marketplace, and the price of the items.

#### **Recommendation:**

The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that in-cash support was more cost-effective in comparison to in-kind and mixed because it involved less support cost. For cash transfer, one



KI suggested that mobile money could be a good option considering the protection issue, but mobile coverage in some parts of Afghanistan was an issue.

The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that heating fuel support was already cost-effective and recommended not reducing the cost per beneficiary. Whereas remaining KIs (2/5) recommended increasing the amount of support to enable beneficiaries to purchase higher quality items.

## **Cash-for-Rent**

#### **Findings:**

- > In terms of efficiency, cash-for-rent was ranked least efficient in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (5/5) indicated cash-for-rent support was approximately 55 USD per month and the total cost depended on the number of months supported, the cost of rent in the specific location, and the duration of the winter. However, it was usually provided for three months.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that support costs were between 20-30% of the total budget, which includes a hawala (cash transfer agent) service charge of 6.5%.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The majority of the KIs (3/5) appreciated the ES/NFI cluster's revision of the transfer value for cash-for-rent from 75 USD to 165 USD in 2022 and mentioned that the revision had addressed the beneficiary need.
- One KI highlighted the importance of conducting the rental assessments on an annual basis to revise the transfer value for cash-for-rent and also to disaggregate the rental cost at the province level.

#### **Solar Veranda**

#### **Findings:**

- > In terms of efficiency, the solar veranda was ranked fourth in the joint analysis workshop.
- The KI (1/1) indicated that the cost of the solar veranda was around 25,000 AFN per beneficiary household to build a solar veranda of 4m by 6m, where about 30% of the total budget was used as support costs, including logistics, human resources, and administrative costs. The cost per beneficiary depends on the distance to the market.

#### **Recommendation:**

The KI indicated that the support cost for the solar veranda was already cost-effective and recommended not reducing the cost per beneficiary.

## **EQUITY**

The findings and recommendations from the equity dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

## Shelter Repair and Upgrade:

#### **Findings:**

All the KIs (3/3) indicated that ES/NFI cluster and donor agency criteria were used to prioritize population groups, looking at demographic parameters, including child and female-headed households, heads of households with disabilities, households with chronically ill members, and large numbers of dependents. Additional criteria according to one KI include exposure to natural disasters and harsh winters, as well as populations who were in dire need of assistance but who have not received it prior.



All the KIs were satisfied with the current prioritization criteria and mentioned that they align with Afghanistan's context and guide the IPs to effectively prioritize population groups.

#### **Recommendation:**

One KI mentioned that having common prioritization criteria between all donors including UNHCR (ES/NFI cluster) would make the prioritization process simple and easy for the IPs.

## **Winter Clothing and Blanket**

#### **Findings:**

- All the KIs (8/8) indicated that prioritization was done based on the ES/NFI cluster prioritization criteria for populations and areas. The criteria mainly include female-headed households, persons with disabilities, Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors, refugees, returnees, and households with limited income.
- Some of the KIs (2/8) indicated that in rare cases informal settlements, and students and teachers of community-based education centers were also targeted.

#### **Recommendation:**

One KI recommended focusing on vulnerable members of the community beyond IDPs and returnees, as all IDPs and returnees may not be equally vulnerable.

## **Heating Fuel Support**

#### Findings:

All the KIs (5/5) indicated that the vulnerability criteria from the ES/NFI cluster were used to prioritize areas and population groups which included the temperature of the area, remoteness, female-headed households, child-headed households, people with disabilities, and families with limited income.

#### **Recommendation:**

The majority of the KIs (4/5) were satisfied with the current ES/NFI cluster's prioritization criteria and mentioned that it was developed in consultation with the humanitarian community. One KI suggested that it could be revised based on Afghanistan's new context with the economic crisis.

#### **Cash-for-Rent**

#### **Findings:**

All the KIs (5/5) indicated that the ES/NFI cluster criteria were used to select beneficiaries and intervention areas. Similar to other types of assistance, the beneficiary selection criteria included IDPs, female and child-headed households, and households having members with disabilities. One KI reported that the areas for intervention were selected based on district prioritization through the RAM assessment conducted by REACH.

#### **Recommendation:**

- One KI suggested that the criteria could be improved by contextualizing it based on the intensity of winter. Another suggested that the criteria should be more flexible; in addition to a lease agreement, the households should have the option to relocate to a new location if needed.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that the current criteria were sufficient and do not need to change.



- One KI recommended adding more components to the criteria, especially in a changing context where 90% of the population needs assistance, the response should be based on severe needs.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) recommended consulting with target communities while revising the criteria.

## **Solar Veranda**

#### **Findings:**

The KI (1/1) noted that the winter temperature was used as criteria to prioritize the area, as a result very cold areas in the central highlands were prioritized which were also at high altitudes. The vulnerability criteria for targeting households included persons with disabilities, households with socioeconomic problems, minorities, persons with disability, GBV survivors, persons with medical needs, elderly-headed households, and households with no breadwinner. In addition, the households must have a front entrance facing south to construct a solar veranda.

#### **Recommendation :**

In addition to the current vulnerability criteria, the KI indicated prioritizing community centers for girls and boys which they join for the short-term winter course.

## **FEASIBILITY**

The findings and recommendations from the feasibility dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash-for- Rent	Solar Veranda
4	Feasibility	2.60	2.20	3.60	2.40	4.20

## Shelter Repair and Upgrade:

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of feasibility, shelter repair and upgrade were ranked third in the joint analysis workshop.
- According to all the KIs (3/3), the type of assistance was feasible in all parts of Afghanistan, and the material and labor for shelter repair and upgrade were available in the local market.
- If the local market is functional and beneficiaries can purchase the shelter items, the KIs indicated contracting hawala dealers for making the cash transfer. In the case of in-kind assistance, the items for shelter repair and upgrade support were purchased by IPs in the nearest local markets after conducting a market assessment and were delivered to the targeted beneficiaries in which traders, markets, and transportation companies were involved.
- The challenges for feasibility include a shortage of goods in the market especially when other IPs were implementing the same kind of response project, access difficulties or lack of transportation to some areas, and differences in the prices of the materials in different locations. KIs also indicated that a shortage of goods in the local market can cause local inflation.

#### **Recommendation:**



All the KIs recommended that the amount of the packages should be increased both for cash and in-kind approach so that beneficiaries can meet their shelter needs with good quality shelter items. The majority of the KIs (2/3) also highlighted the importance of a quality assurance mechanism in place to ensure good quality items were provided by IPs or purchased by beneficiaries, and timely delivery of assistance.

## Winter Clothing and Blanket

#### **Findings:**

- In terms of feasibility, winter clothing and blanket was ranked first in the joint analysis workshop.
- > All the KIs (8/8) indicated that the type of assistance was feasible in all parts of Afghanistan.
- The majority of the KIs (5/8) indicated that the winter clothing and blanket support was mostly delivered in combination with heating & fuel support for effectiveness. The combined package includes 200 USD for heating and fuel and 75 USD for clothes and blanket support, and in total the package cost was 275 USD per household.
- All the KIs indicated that the IPs provide the assistance package according to the ES/NFI cluster guidelines. For in-kind assistance, one KI indicated that a standard package includes 5 children's sweaters, 2 adult sweaters, 2 women's winter shawls, 1 male winter wrap, 2 patos, 2 adult winter shoes, 4 pairs of boots for children, 6 pairs of socks, 4 children's woolen winter gloves, and 4 children's woolen caps. The unit cost was 65 USD per household.
- In terms of feasibility, the challenges include an occasional shortage of package items in local markets, sometimes availability of only low-quality items, and transportation issues to rural parts of the country.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The majority of the KIs (5/6) indicated that winter clothing and blanket support had a significant positive impact on beneficiaries, especially children.
- Some KIs (2/6) recommended that the size and quality of the package should be increased both for cash and in-kind because the package items were not sufficient for the average family size (seven) in Afghanistan.
- They recommended that the items in the package should align with the target communities' needs and preferences, as in some areas people use different types of clothing and blankets for winter. To address the challenge, KIs recommended procuring items from the local market, monitoring the quality of items, and using local suppliers.

## **Heating Fuel Support**

#### **Findings:**

- Heating fuel support assistance ranked fourth in terms of feasibility in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (5/5) indicated that the heating fuel support assistance was provided as per the ES/NFI cluster's guidelines by all IPs. For cash assistance, the package value was 200 USD per beneficiary household. The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that they were satisfied with the current guideline that was able to meet beneficiary needs.
- One KI indicated that cash transfers to beneficiaries were done via the hawala system. But in rural parts of the country where there was security risk, hawala fees were higher.

#### **Recommendation:**

One KI stressed delivering assistance before winter because, in most cold parts of the country, the road access was usually blocked due to heavy snowfall in the past years.



## Cash -for-Rent

#### Findings:

- > Cash-for-rent assistance was ranked second in feasibility in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (5/5) indicated that cash-for-rent was feasible in urban areas, but not feasible in rural parts of the country where there were no houses available for rent.
- The majority of the KIs (3/5) indicated that the standard package was based on the ES/NFI cluster's guidelines, which includes 165 USD for three months of rent per beneficiary household.
- Challenges to the supply chain included limited money service providers in remote areas and unintended delays from the financial service providers.

#### **Recommendation:**

KIs from the workshop recommended contextualizing the rent price at the provincial level because rent in the capital of the country was usually higher and rent can vary between provinces due to the size of the market and population.

## **Solar Veranda**

#### Findings:

- Solar veranda assistance ranked fifth in feasibility in the joint analysis workshop.
- The KI (1/1) indicated that this assistance was feasible in areas of the country with low temperatures for most of the year and where there were harsh winters.
- The KI indicated that the supply chain involves the implementing partner buying the items from the local market at the village or district level and delivering them to the beneficiary household.
- Initially, a market assessment was conducted to estimate the cost of the solar veranda. After the cash was distributed to the beneficiary households, they normally have two choices: they can purchase the materials (plastic, wood, and iron nails) from the local market or they can build the solar veranda using their own raw materials, as this involves only buying the plastic and or iron nails.

#### **Recommendation:**

The KI suggested revising the amount of cash given to a beneficiary household from 25,000 to 35,000 AFN allowing them to purchase better quality materials and covering labor costs.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

The findings and recommendations from the environmental impact dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash -for- Rent	Solar Veranda
5	Environmental Impact	2.47	2.28	3.79	2.42	3.16

## Shelter Repair and Upgrade:

Findings:



- Shelter repair and upgrade assistance was ranked third for environmental impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (3/3) indicated that shelter repair and upgrade do not have a negative impact on air, water, and land.

#### **Recommendation:**

- One KI recommended training and advising the beneficiaries and IPs on the safe disposal of remains of construction activities like concrete and glass.
- While collecting wood from the forest for shelter repair or upgrade, one KI recommended only collecting dried wood to control deforestation.

## Winter Clothing and Blanket

#### Findings:

- Winter clothing and blanket assistance was ranked second for environmental impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- All the KIs (8/8) indicated that winter clothing and blanket support does not have a negative impact on air, water, and land.

#### **Recommendation:**

The majority of the KIs (5/8) recommended raising awareness among local populations and IPs for using local products and materials in a way that does not damage the ecology.

## **Heating Fuel Support**

#### **Findings:**

- Heating fuel support was ranked fourth for environmental impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- One KI highlighted the importance of monitoring the frequency of cutting down trees as it can create exploitation of forest resources.
- One KI suggested integrating the assistance programme into other programmes and sectors (like to jointly implement this with livelihood)

#### **Recommendation:**

One KI indicated that heating fuel support was not sustainable as a standalone program and it must be integrated with other assistance like winter clothing and blanket.

## Cash-for-Rent

#### Findings:

- Cash–for-rent assistance was ranked first in terms of environmental impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- > All the KIs (5/5) mentioned that Cash-for-rent has no impact on air, water, land, and forest.

## **Solar Veranda**

#### Findings:

- Solar veranda assistance was ranked fifth for environmental impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- The KI (1/1) noted that plastic can have adverse effects on the environment and was not always disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

#### **Recommendation:**



> The KI recommended raising awareness among the local population and IPs for the reuse and recycling of the plastic used for solar verandas.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT**

The findings and recommendations from the social impact dimension for the five types of assistance are presented below in detail.

Group	Dimension	Shelter Repair and Upgrade	Winter Clothing and Blanket	Heating Fuel Support	Cash -for- Rent	Solar Veranda
6	Social Impact	2.47	2.28	3.79	2.42	3.16

## **Shelter Repair and Upgrade:**

#### **Findings:**

- Shelter repair and upgrade assistance ranked third for social impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- The majority of the KIs (2/3) indicated shelter repair with cash assistance sometimes causes local inflation. One KI indicated that while there can be local inflation at the initial stage, ultimately the demand causes an increase in production/supply and balances inflation. One KI indicated that in-kind assistance has no impact on market prices.
- The majority of the KIs (2/3) indicated that cash assistance positively impacts the market, creating employment opportunities and cash flow.
- The majority of the KIs (2/3) indicated that the assistance does not impact the social cohesion between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and does not expose beneficiaries to health and safety risks.

#### **Recommendation:**

The majority of the Kis (2/3) recommended that the use of local materials in shelter construction should be encouraged which will positively impact the local market. Furthermore, Kls recommended aligning the prices of the items with the local markets rather than with the Kabul (capital city) market.

## Winter Clothing and Blanket

#### **Findings:**

- Winter clothing and blanket assistance ranked first for social impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- An almost equal number of KIs indicated that winter clothing and blanket in cash has a positive, negative, and neutral impact on the local market. One KI mentioned that cash assistance can have a limited impact on the increase in prices in the local market, but beneficiaries always have an option of going to nearby bigger markets where the price of items were comparatively cheaper.
- Some of the KIs (2/8) indicated that the assistance does not impact the social cohesion between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Some of the KIs (2/8) recommended aligning the prices of the items with the local markets rather than with the Kabul (capital city) market.
- Some of the KIs (3/8) recommended that cash distribution should be delivered in safe and easily accessible areas to reduce protection risks to beneficiaries.



## **Heating Fuel Support**

## Findings:

- > Heating fuel support assistance ranked fifth for social impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- The majority of the KIs (4/5) indicated that cash assistance can have a positive impact on the local market if heating materials were bought locally. One KI indicated a negative impact as it increases prices of heating materials in the local market due to an increase in demand.
- One KI indicated that the effect of assistance on social cohesion can vary from area to area. Another KI added that sometimes there were questions from those who do not receive assistance and this could lead to tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Another KI added that including a portion of the host community in the assistance could increase social cohesion and acceptance between the host and IDPs.
- One KI noted that heating materials may expose the beneficiaries to health risks, especially when the beneficiaries were using coal or wood for heating.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The majority of the KIs (3/5) highlighted the importance to alert the beneficiaries to the health risks of air pollution and maintaining aeration in the room when the heater is on, before distributing the heating materials.
- Some of the Kis (2/5) also noted that supporting coal as a fuel for heating material should be minimized as it can have a significant impact on air pollution.

## **Cash-for-Rent**

#### Findings:

- > Cash-for-rent assistance was ranked second for social impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- > All the KIs (5/5) indicated no negative impact on the local market.
- All the KIs indicated that Cash-for-rent does not expose beneficiaries to health and safety risks.

#### **Recommendation:**

- One KI recommended that cash distribution should be delivered in safe and easily accessible areas to reduce risks to beneficiaries. It was also added that contacting beneficiaries through several parties like the de facto authorities local government, and donors can expose them to certain risks.
- One KI indicated prioritizing cash as a modality across the different types of assistance because most beneficiaries prefer to receive assistance in cash. Cash assistance will have a positive impact on the overall market functionality.

## **Solar Veranda**

#### Findings:

- > Solar veranda was ranked fourth for social impact in the joint analysis workshop.
- The KI (1/1) indicated that solar veranda through cash and in-kind assistance has a positive impact on markets, adding that cash flow creates income for skilled labor, transport workers, and merchants.
- In the case of social cohesion, the KI indicated that in Bamiyan province, solar verandas were not a problem for women but in other regions, the transparency of the verandas could be a sensitive issue.
- The KI indicated that solar veranda has a positive impact on health as it reduces illness during the winter by creating a warm space inside rooms.s



#### **Recommendation:**

The KI indicated that there was a need to train beneficiaries on the application and use of the solar veranda, as the installation was in itself not enough, but that training was needed to ensure safe and effective use.



