

2019 Summer Assistance in Iraq Shelter & NFI Cluster Position Paper

This paper presents the position of the Shelter & NFI Cluster in regards to the provision of summer assistance - fans, cool boxes, air water coolers (AWC), etc. - for vulnerable people affected by the recent conflict in Iraq.

SUMMARY

Summer season in Iraq ranges from late May till beginning of September and is characterized by hot, dry weather with temperatures reaching and exceeding 50 °C (121 °F), and occasional thunder and dust storms. For People in Need¹ (PIN) occupying sub-standard shelter, including emergency tents in camp settings, shading and cooling are essential to protect against heat exhaustion and exposure which negatively impact broader protection outcomes related to thermal discomfort, worsening health conditions, and thus their overall safety and dignity.

As such, past SNFI Cluster Guidance has recommended the emergency provision of a basic summer package to PIN, consisting of a core package of an additional jerry can for water storage and a cool box, with potential supplementary items including rechargeable fans, communal area shading, tent shading, and summer clothing. All these items have proven effective during the emergency phase, yet the thermal discomfort linked to the very hot temperatures inside critical shelter can only be mitigated by mechanical cooling systems (e.g. AWC).

Humanitarian partners and the Government of Iraq (GoI) have therefore responded to needs since 2014, covering both in-camp and vulnerable out of camp populations. As camp populations on the whole have decreased by more than 17,000 HHs since last year², and with all people living in camps covered via blanket distributions over the last two summer seasons, the SNFI Cluster is therefore recommending that any in-camp summer assistance target only new arrivals since September 2018, who are unlikely to have received a summer kit in previous years, as part of their broad non-food item assistance.

Out of camp assistance is recommended to be used only in cases of highly-vulnerable families as assessed by the Cash Working Group's Socio-Economic Vulnerability Assessment Tool (SEVAT) found in critical shelter, and is recommended to be provided as a cash package in most instances, allowing households to prioritize the summer assistance they select.

In an environment of limited humanitarian funding and a slowly re-established overall security situation, targeting improvements to the overall quality of shelter - including tent replacement where necessary, upgrading critical shelter out of camps, and rehabilitation of war-damaged structures for households desiring to return home will have a greater impact on exposure to heat than continual replacement of summer items that are of limited utility without the provision of water, ice³, and electricity.

¹ People in Need as defined in the 2019 HRP, which includes internally displaced persons (IDPs) both in and out of camps, returnees, and host community

² May 2018 DTM Data, April 2019 DTM Data

³ For food cooling/refrigerating purposes (not for drinking)

The GoI, in particular the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), has been providing air water coolers, and other summer items in camps and to other vulnerable populations, and are encouraged to continuing doing so, as observations by the SNFI Cluster indicate that people prefer and value these items, when provided with sufficient water and electricity to use them, and thus keep them and maintain them from year to year. Ultimately, the government is responsible for meeting needs in Iraq, and when they are willing and able to do so, the humanitarian response is best focused on complementing the government response by meeting other more urgent needs.

2018 SUMMER REQUIREMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In 2018, the SNFI Cluster identified approximately 68,000 IDP households (HHs) in need of summer assistance in and out of camp settings out of approximately 127,000 HHs in need of humanitarian assistance⁴. Of the 68,000 HHs in need of summer assistance, approximately 64,000 HHs were in camp settings, including nearly 39,000 HHs not served in 2017, and more than 25,000 HHs in need of replenishment. As of May 2018, humanitarian partners had reported planned coverage of approximately 45,000 summer items, and the government planned to provide AWC to 68% of camp populations, leaving 23,000 HHs in need not covered.

However, in response to identified gaps, humanitarian partners provided blanket coverage in many locations, including the highly-critical camps of Qayarra Airstrip, Jeddah 1-6, and Salamiyah 1 & 2.

As for the electricity, the average supply is 11 hours/day. 84% of the camps could access at least 8 hours/day, which is the minimum recommended during summer for AWC operating hours. 15% of the camps depend solely on the national grid, which is subject to many power shortages especially during the hottest months. These camps should be prioritized for electricity supply.

As for the water supply, the minimum quantity required to operate AWC for at least 8 hours/day is around 100 litres/unit/day. That means each family should be provided with 300 litres of water daily, to cover their drinking, cooking and hygienic needs as well as the usage of AWC.

ANTICIPATED 2019 NEEDS

Further, when asked about summer needs as part of the camp profiling exercise conducted in early 2019, few IDPs in camps reported anticipating summer needs, with the highest needs being for increased water storage (eg. additional jerry cans) reported by 17% of IDPs in Diyala and 16% of IDPs in Dohuk. On average, just 8% of IDPs anticipated needing additional jerry cans. With regards to cool boxes, while 12% of IDPs in Dohuk viewed them as a need, the average answer was that just 2.2% of IDPs perceived cool boxes as necessary, while in Anbar, Baghdad, Kerbala, and Sulaymaniyah, 0% of IDPs reported a need for cool boxes. Need for fans was similarly low - with an average of 1.3% of IDPs reporting a need for fans.

⁴ April 2018 DTM Data, SNFI Cluster and partners data

IDPs have reported strong preferences for AWC provided by MoMD over other types of summer items. Thus, humanitarian agencies are strongly cautioned from engaging in resource-intensive in-kind distributions of low-value items that are generally not needed by IDPs.

Based on the most updated information available and collected by humanitarian partners⁵, around 10,000 IDP families living in camps are in need of AWC⁶.

GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION

In previous years MoMD has provided AWC and ice as part of their mandate to assist vulnerable Iraqis among the displaced and returned population. Nonetheless, available ministerial budget and distribution plans have not been disclosed with the humanitarian community. While such engagement should remain high in MoMD agenda, the Shelter Cluster would like to be shared with some information, so as to disseminate them to other relevant stakeholders (beneficiaries, CCCM and Protection Clusters). Considering that during the past winter timely and sufficient kerosene distribution has proven difficult, the humanitarian community counts on a timely governmental intervention to support people in need during summer.

SHELTER & NFI CLUSTER POSITION

As the humanitarian situation in Iraq stabilizes, the Gol is encouraged to expand upon its activities in terms of supporting vulnerable populations in Iraq with regular seasonal assistance, as summer in and of itself does not constitute a humanitarian emergency. The Cluster supports the Gol in providing assistance to vulnerable IDPs, returnees, and host communities in Iraq as part of their social protection mandate. The responsibility of supply remains with the Gol, allowing the humanitarian community to support complementary interventions for highly vulnerable families in and out of camp. To achieve this the following strategy, led by the Cluster, and agreed by the humanitarian community, is proposed:

1. The Cluster will work with all branches and levels of the Gol to support equitable distributions through the analysis of data, forecasting of need and the identification of barriers and gaps. The objective remains for the Gol to share with humanitarian partners a distribution plan meeting the needs of all groups before the start of summer in June.
2. Together with donors, the UN and NGOs, the Cluster will advocate that the Gol meets its commitments of equitable distributions of AWC and other summer items to all families in need, and especially for new comers and those in need of replenishment. Additionally, the Cluster supports the Protection Cluster and local authorities to ensure families who miss documentation such as PDS card are able to access distributions.

⁵ Camp profiling, CCCM Cluster and REACH, Feb. 2019

⁶ This includes Nimrud and Basateen camps, not served with AWC last year as the electricity system was not yet installed

3. In exceptional circumstances such as life-saving ones⁷, humanitarian partners can support following a SEVAT analysis of highly-vulnerable households, or to serve new arrivals. In cases where humanitarian partners are providing summer assistance, a cash package of \$150 is the preferred modality to allow households to meet their own summer needs, as per the Shelter Cluster [Climatisation Guidance Iraq v7.1](#).
4. Humanitarian actors are advised to avoid providing items such as cool boxes without a firm plan to consistently provide ice as well, as otherwise cool boxes are not particularly useful. If humanitarian agencies plan to provide rechargeable fans, they are advised to be sure that beneficiaries have regular access to electricity. Humanitarian partners are strongly discouraged from providing such above standard items as refrigerators, AWC, and air conditioning units except for cases of extreme needs such as refrigerated medication or other health concerns, and in such cases, they must also ensure the HH has regular access to electricity.

ADVOCACY WITH THE GOVERNMENT

1. Humanitarian partners have been supporting most vulnerable people affected by the recent conflict through the distribution of emergency summer non-food items (cool box, extra water jerry can and fans), which have proven useful during the very acute emergency phase of its response.
2. Mechanical cooling remains the best way to mitigate thermal discomfort during hottest months of the year.
3. Around 10,000 IDP families living in camps are in need of AWC. At a cost of around 150 USD/AWC, the budget to purchase those units would amount at 1,5 million USD. The SNFI Cluster therefore advocates that the GoI covers these needs out of their regular budget allocations for seasonal support.
4. As increased water supply and electricity are key to the function of mechanical cooling devices such as AWC, the SNFI Cluster supports CCCM actors and the GoI to ensure that adequate water is supplied for both drinking and AWC operation during summer months, and that electricity is available at least 8 hours per day.

⁷ As per the Health Cluster guidance, children under 5 years and elderly (above 60 years) are particularly at risk, as well as those with specific health conditions such as diabetes, organic mental disorders, dementia, Alzheimer disease, substance misuse disorder, schizophrenia, neurological and cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the renal and respiratory system, chronic lower respiratory disease