



OUT IN THE COLD

SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED



Save the Children

“WE HAVE ONE BLANKET. WE DON’T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE – EVEN CLOTHES. WE RECEIVED ONE BLANKET AND THERE ARE THREE OF US. HOW IS IT GOING TO FIT US? HOW IS IT GOING TO WARM US? IT IS NOT ENOUGH. WE ARE GETTING SICK – I’M GETTING SICK.”

ALI, 11 YEARS OLD

On a cold November night, twins Mizra and Yousef, 6, warm themselves by a fire outside the former sheep shed in which they now live.

All photos: Sam Tarling/Save the Children unless otherwise stated.

SAVE THE CHILDREN WORKS IN MORE THAN 120 COUNTRIES.
WE SAVE CHILDREN’S LIVES. WE FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS.
WE HELP THEM FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL.

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“My brothers are getting cold, too. My two youngest brothers can’t say many words yet, but now when they get cold, they say that word: “cold”. They know that word. They know cold.”

RAMI*, 11 YEARS OLD

“As a father, if I didn’t hold my family tight and try to lead them as best I can, support them and raise my children the very best I can ... if I didn’t do this, we would die from the cold.”

BILAL, RAMI’S FATHER

These two quotes are from a father and his son, both refugees from Syria now living in a tent in the middle of a wind-swept desert in Jordan. Winter is coming, and Rami is only one of over 200,000 children across the region left out in the cold as temperatures plummet.

As Syria’s brutal civil war enters its 20th month, thousands of families continue to pour across the borders, seeking safety in neighbouring countries. Children have been forced to take refuge in abandoned schools, animal sheds, and unfinished buildings. Some are staying in apartments they can no longer afford, while others are confined to refugee camps, living in leaky tents.

Save the Children is working in these countries, providing direct relief and assistance to more than 80,000 people now living in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. We have spoken to these families and heard first-hand how children are suffering and parents are taking increasingly desperate measures to keep them alive as the needs continue to grow, temperatures drop – and aid falters.

As their situation becomes increasingly dire, these families have told us their stories. We are publishing this report to allow the voices of these children and their desperate parents to be heard, and listened to before it’s too late. We must all act now to ensure that families get the support they so urgently require so that as winter sets in, these children are not left out in the cold.

Mike Penrose, Humanitarian Director, Save the Children

*Names have been changed to protect families’ identities.

INTRODUCTION

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

Abdullah, 5, lives in a makeshift tented community in Lebanon. His hands and feet are already chapped from the cold.

As Syria's civil war continues unabated, thousands of children have fled across the border, terrified and desperate for safe refuge from the spiralling violence. These children have not found the protection and assistance they need – because winter is coming and thousands remain without appropriate shelter, out in the cold.

Winter has started its glacial spread across the region, but while the icy winds and driving rains pick up and temperatures begin to plummet, funding required to meet the needs of those most at risk is just not there.

Startlingly low levels of aid mean children and their families are facing the winter without enough support. The appeal for humanitarian relief inside Syria is 50 percent funded, while the refugee response is only 51 percent funded.

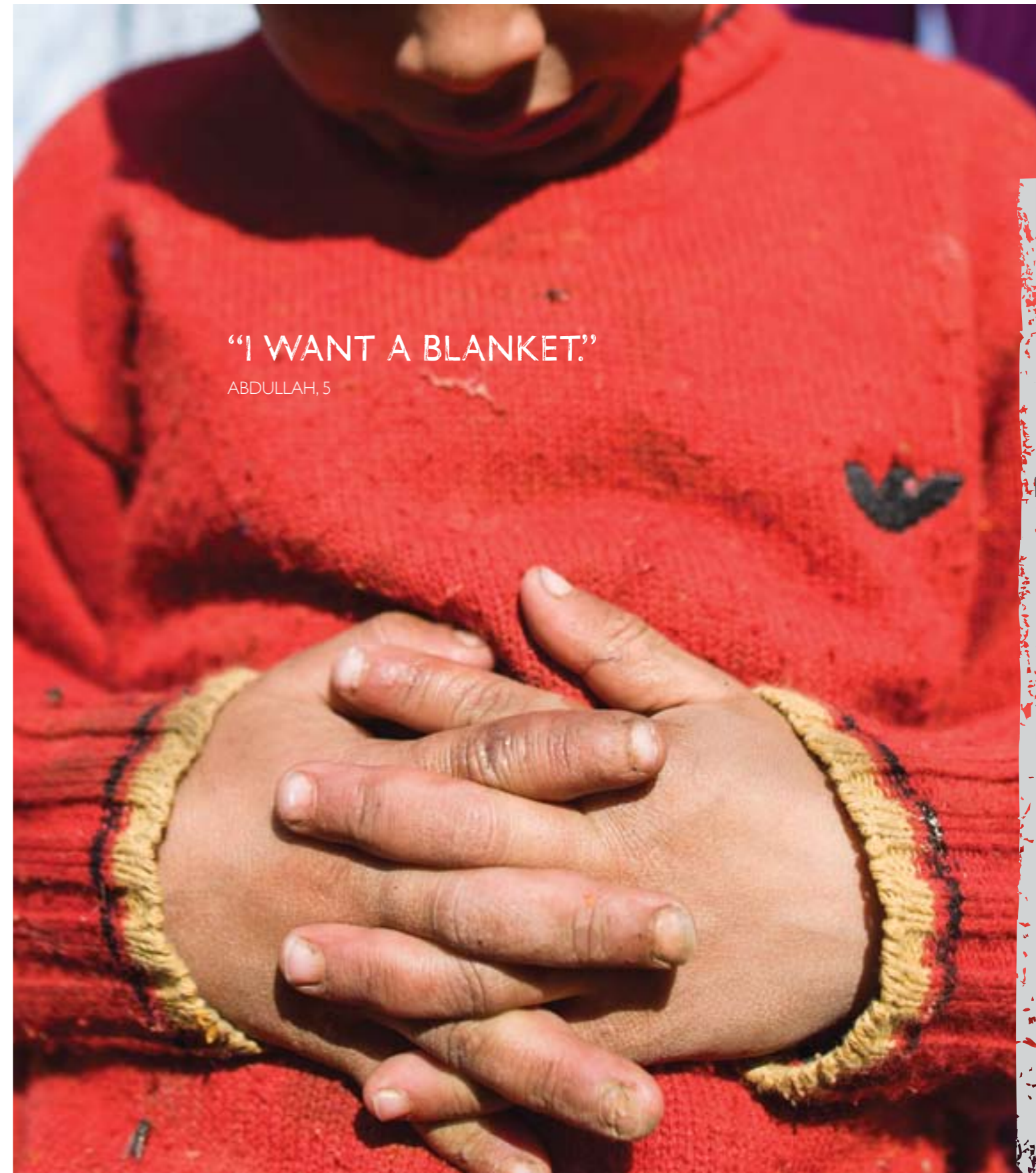
As winter sets in, the most vulnerable must not be abandoned and left to fend off the freezing temperatures on their own. Save the Children is working to scale up relief efforts for Syrian refugees across the region, providing shelter from the cold and distributing winter clothes, blankets and other materials to keep children warm as temperatures drop. With a current aid shortfall of \$200 million to provide relief for refugees, however, these efforts are now seriously endangered.

Thousands of children have already suffered through months of terrifying conflict and displacement, and are now at serious risk of succumbing to the cold. Children are particularly vulnerable to disease associated with the cold, and are in urgent need of protection as the bitter winter sets in.

Across Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon – where Save the Children is working – cold temperatures combined with freezing rains and strong winds are posing huge challenges for refugees who are already living in extremely difficult conditions.

This compilation of testimonies and photos lay out some of these challenges families face as they prepare to endure a cruel winter, out in the cold.

The stories come from face-to-face interviews conducted by Save the Children staff with children and adults we're working with on the borders of Syria.



“I WANT A BLANKET.”

ABDULLAH, 5

“WE GET SICK AND MY FATHER DOES NOT GET US MEDICINE BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY MONEY.”

SALAH, 6 YEARS OLD



LEBANON

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

Over 133,000 Syrian refugees are registered or currently waiting to be registered in Lebanon, with estimates that actual numbers are close to 200,000.

The situation is now critical. There are no official camps in Lebanon and the influx of refugees shows no sign of slowing.

Many of these families are living in rented accommodation, struggling to pay rent that's set at prices they cannot afford for rooms that are all too often in poor condition. Others are staying with host families, where limited space means refugees and their hosts are forced to live in cramped, crowded rooms.

Some families are staying in unfinished buildings or abandoned schools, where classrooms have been converted into one-room shelters now housing entire families, and some are now living in former barns – sheep sheds and chicken coops – in their desperate bid to find protection from the elements. In some parts of the Beka'a Valley, groups of refugee families have come together to create informal tented communities, with shelters crafted from billboards and tarpaulin.

Nearly all families are living in the cold, with inadequate protection from temperatures that have already started to drop.

Save the Children is on the ground, providing warm clothes, shoes, and blankets for children and their families at risk from the cold. We're scaling up to reach 58,000 people, providing toolboxes to families to fix up their shelters and provide better protection from the elements, and organising voucher systems and cash transfers so families can buy stoves, heating fuel and other essentials to keep them warm.



Refugees in Lebanon are taking increasingly desperate measures to protect their children from the bitter weather. Some have begun using scraps of billboards to create makeshift shelters in an effort to stave off the wind, rain and icy temperatures.

Previous page: On a cold November night, Hammoudi, 2, and his siblings warm themselves by a fire inside the old farm building in which they now live.

IRAQ

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

Over 60,000 Syrian refugees are currently living in Iraq, the vast majority in refugee camps in the Kurdistan region and the desert area of Al Qaem in Anbar.

Temperatures are starting to drop dangerously close to freezing in Iraq.

The lack of drainage in the refugee camps means that as it rains, water floods the tents, invading the only living space children and their families have, and soaking through their belongings. In one refugee camp in Al Qaem, families are forced to sleep on sodden, cold mattresses every time it rains. Children are becoming sick.

Children we have spoken to in Iraq tell us of their desperation and their fear at the approaching freezing winter. As temperatures continue to drop in Iraq, aid agencies like Save the Children are becoming increasingly stretched, without the funds to meet even basic needs of children in camps like Al Qaem. Most families fled Syria without warm clothes, and many children are still in short-sleeved t-shirts and flip flops, unprotected from the freezing rains or winds now hitting the desert lands where the camps are located.

Showers in the camps only have cold water, and as the weather gets colder, families have begun avoiding them, with some children saying they haven't showered for weeks, increasing their risk of disease. Those who continue to shower with increasingly freezing water also risk falling seriously ill.

Save the Children is one of very few aid agencies currently working in Al Qaem's camps. Our team is working around the clock to meet families' basic needs – distributing warm clothes for children and providing winter aid packages specially-made for infants. We're aiming to reach 15,000 children and family members this winter, and are raising funds to refurbish showers with hot water capacity, and set up cash-for-work programmes that would provide an income to parents while also helping to improve drainage in the camps, decreasing floods in tents.



Al Qaem refugee camp in Iraq is facing driving rains and icy winds, as families are confined to leaking tents that become flooded with cold water with every downpour.

JORDAN

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

Over 200,000 Syrians have now fled to Jordan – more than half of them children. Most families are relying on the kindness of the local community to support and house them. Some 30,000 are living in refugee camps.

The majority of families in refugee camps are living in canvas tents, many of which leak through with each downpour. Nearby, in host communities, families are crowded into one and two bedroom homes, often with no hot water or heating, and with little bedding or warm clothes to keep them warm. In many cases, the small amount of money parents managed to bring with them has run out – some exceptions have only a handful of bills left.

It is illegal for refugees to work, so these families cannot work to support themselves. Some are now going into deep debt to keep their children alive over winter. The high cost of rent, fuel, food and warm clothing is compounding their misery.

Children are falling ill from the cold and wet weather, and families do not always have access to medicines.

Save the Children is working in the refugee camps and the host communities. We've already reached over 50,000 children and family members – working to distribute life-saving food, provide access to healthcare and education, and also help children recover from their distressing experiences inside Syria. We are working to provide blankets and warm clothes to children – especially the youngest, who are most at risk of succumbing to the cold – but there isn't enough funding to reach all of those who need our help.

“WE CAME INTO JORDAN ONLY WITH THE CLOTHES WE HAD ON. IT WAS THE FEAR THAT MADE US DO THIS – WE HAD TO RUN WITH WHATEVER WE HAD, THERE WAS NO TIME. THE THING WE NEED THE MOST RIGHT NOW IS WINTER CLOTHES, FOR ALL MY CHILDREN, AND ESPECIALLY BOOTS AND HATS.”

DANA*, 33 YEARS OLD

Dana*, 33, comforts her children as they huddle close to her for warmth in the apartment the family now rents in Jordan.
Photo: Agnes Montanari/Save the Children

¹As of November 27, 2012

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.

Following page: Esma, 7, sits in a shelter crafted from billboards. Since fleeing her home in Syria six months ago, Esma has been living in an informal tented community with another 150 refugee families.





“IT’S REALLY COLD HERE.
WE DON’T HAVE ANY CARPETS.”

ESMA, 7 YEARS OLD

“WHEN WE COVER OURSELVES WITH THE BLANKET, IT’S NOT ENOUGH FOR US. WE ARE GETTING SICK.”



ALI

11 YEARS OLD

“I NEED CLOTHES TO WEAR ... MY PARENTS DON’T HAVE MONEY, THEY DON’T HAVE ANYTHING. WHO SHOULD I ASK FOR CLOTHES FROM?”

Ali, 11, has been living in an abandoned school in northern Lebanon for close to two years. Now winter is coming, and Ali and his family may be forced to leave their new home.

“I’m not happy at all. We would love to go back to Syria.

“Every day here, we need to pay 1,000 pounds [Syrian pounds, or 14 USD] for the fuel. We have to pay to use the well, because here we don’t have water at all.

“We are in need of food. And clothes. Everything, everything.

“We need fuel. How are we going to warm ourselves? We don’t have anything to make us warm. We need fuel and blankets and even clothes.

“Even clothes, we don’t have. Money for clothes, we don’t have.

“We have one blanket. We don’t have anything else. We received one blanket and we are three. How is it going to fit us? How is it going to warm us?

“When we cover ourselves with the blanket, it’s not enough for us. We are getting sick.

“I get stomach aches and diarrhoea because of the cold – I’m getting sick.

“I need clothes to wear. We don’t have anything. Look what I’m wearing. We don’t have anything.

“My parents don’t have money, they don’t have anything. Who should I ask for clothes from? I ask for things from my grandmother, but she doesn’t have any money EITHER. We don’t have money to buy biscuits.

“We need help because they are going to kick us out of here. We need someone to help us.

“They will kick us out on the streets. We don’t have anywhere to go.”

Ali, 11, sits in an abandoned school in northern Lebanon, now used as a shelter by Syrian refugees who have fled the growing conflict in their country.

MIRA

13 YEARS OLD

“MY LITTLE BROTHER HAS THE MOST TROUBLE. WHEN HE GETS COLD AT NIGHT, HE COMES UP TO SLEEP BESIDE ME, SO HE CAN GET WARM. I HUG HIM AND HELP HIM GET BACK TO SLEEP. I ALSO SHARE MY BLANKET WITH HIM.”

Mira*, 13, was forced to flee her home in Syria when conflict erupted too close to home. Now living as a refugee with her family, Mira shares a bare, run-down apartment with 25 other people – all Syrian refugees, all from her extended family – in Ramtha, Jordan.

“I think I’ve been here for a month. It’s really cold. We don’t really have much. For warm clothing, I only have these pyjamas, and one more pair. We don’t have many blankets.

“I’m really scared of the cold. They say that the winter here is very harsh. Here, we’re on the fifth floor, and it gets freezing. If we want to heat our home, we aren’t able to breathe,” she says. Her mother explains that the only way to secure a bit of warmth for the unheated apartment is by making a fire in the middle of what’s now become a shared living room for the different families that share the place. Although it does help to provide some warmth, the fire quickly causes the makeshift living room to fill up with thick grey smoke, choking her children and forcing them outside on to the balcony, once again exposing them to the cold winds brought by the approaching winter.

Mira also fears the approaching winter, in particular the icy downpours that have already started to hit their new neighbourhood. “I’m scared to go to school with the rains that are coming, because I don’t even have a jacket and my shoes will get soaked through, too.

“I’m scared to get cold and for my brothers and sisters to get cold. When I get sick, I get really sick – last time I got a cold, I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn’t breathe. My nose was all stuffed up, so it woke me up, because I couldn’t breathe anymore.

“My brothers and sisters have been getting cold too, and they only have one blanket each – how is that going to be enough?

“My little brother has the most trouble. When he gets cold at night, he comes up to sleep beside me, so he can get warm. I hug him and help him get back to sleep. I also share my blanket with him.”



Mira*, 13, hugs her brother Shadi, 5, trying to help her brother regain some warmth in the bare, cold apartment now home to 26 refugees in Ramtha, Jordan.

Photo: Agnes Montanari/Save the Children

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.

RIMA

MIRA'S MOTHER
32 YEARS OLD

Rima*, 32, has four girls and two boys. The family has been living in Jordan for three months in a small, bare apartment shared with Rima's extended family. A total of 26 people are now living in the apartment, all having fled the growing conflict in Syria.

"We're heating the house by burning wood. It's making the children cough. They go looking for wood outside, near the apartment.

"We don't have enough blankets – we only have one each. In Syria, during the winter we had three blankets each and that was almost enough to keep us warm.

"Ever since my son learned how to use the toilet, he stopped wetting his bed. That was until we came here. Now, he wets his mattress every night. He wakes up at night, he keeps telling me he's cold and keeps asking me to cover him up.

"I'm really worried about my children. I used to worry about them in Syria, and now I worry about them here. I worry about them for everything.

"The most important thing we need right now is heating for this place, so my children can be warm again, and have warm clothes. My children need warm clothes.

"The other day ... we went outside in that rain, and filled all the pots and containers we had with rainwater. That's what we use to wash our children. In Syria, each of my kids used to wash once a day and everyone had a change of clothes, including underwear. Now, we can only wash once every few days, and we have only one set of clothes to change into.

"In Syria my children needed two or three layers of clothing under their jackets, and had mitts and hats to stay warm. Right now, we have none of these things. We need heating, warm clothing and hot water.

"What I'm feeling right now is fear, because here I can't even give a fraction of what I gave my children in Syria."

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.

“WHAT I’M FEELING RIGHT NOW IS FEAR, BECAUSE HERE I CAN’T EVEN GIVE A FRACTION OF WHAT I GAVE MY CHILDREN IN SYRIA.”

Rima*, 32, tucks her son Shadi into bed in the apartment they rent in Ramtha, Jordan. She says her family doesn't have enough blankets or money to run a heater. Her son wakes during the night saying he is cold, and has begun to wet his bed again.





AHMED

FATHER OF FIVE
46 YEARS OLD

“THIS SITUATION – BELIEVE ME, NO HUMAN CAN BEAR IT. IT’S IMPOSSIBLE.”

Ahmed, 46, is a father of five from Syria, forced to flee his native country for neighbouring Lebanon when conflict broke out in the city he and his family lived in. Now a refugee in northern Lebanon, Ahmed and his family have spent the past year living in an old sheep shed, which despite days of cleaning, still smells of sheep and manure.

“We left when the fighting came to our neighbourhood. I became very afraid for my children. When we left, we had to go through the forests, trying to stay hidden, at night time. My children weren’t able to sleep. They were seeing things, imagining things that weren’t there.

“We are living in terrible circumstances. It’s hard. It’s cold. The situation is bad. Now it’s starting to rain, and the water comes inside. I don’t feel good about it – we’re not used to living like this.

“If I remember how I used to live and compare it to how I’m living now... This situation – believe me, no human can bear it. It’s impossible.

“I cry in my heart. I feel depressed. It’s unjust. Is there a worse way to live than this?

“Our situation is terrible to the maximum. We didn’t expect there were humans who could live the way we are living.

“I’m a graduate from law school. This is not how we lived.

“I’d love to see my children like normal children, like everyone wants to see their children. Is there anyone who wants to see his son on the street? We don’t throw our children on the streets. We were forced to live like this. My children are in need of everything. They need clothes. They need heating. They need health care.”

“I’M A GRADUATE FROM LAW SCHOOL. THIS IS NOT HOW WE LIVED.”

Ahmed, 46, stands behind his youngest son, two year-old Hammoudi, inside the former sheep shed in which his family now live.

NADIA

MOTHER OF FOUR
30 YEARS OLD

“I CAN’T BUY THEM BLANKETS WITH MY OWN MONEY.”

Nadia, 30, has four young children. Zahra, her youngest, is only five months old. Her other two daughters, Hela and Shahad, have begun coughing. They are living in a bare building in northern Lebanon, where they have taken refuge after fleeing growing violence in Syria. With winter approaching, the mother-of-four increasingly fears for her children’s health and wellbeing.

“We left – they were bombing our village. We didn’t dare to sleep in our houses from the bombing. Our neighbour’s house was destroyed, to the ground. We ran away and came here. We ran here, me and my little children. I was pregnant. Now it has been eight months. We are living in the cold. It’s very cold here. We haven’t any blankets, or even food for the baby.

Life is hard here. It’s cold. We are scared of hunger. We are scared because we don’t have blankets. We are scared of the winter ... all of my children are sick.”

Looking down at baby Zahra in her arms, Nadia says, “This is my daughter. She’s sick. She’s five months old and shouldn’t be in such a room. It’s very cold. There’s nothing to warm us. We don’t have a heating system. We don’t have fire or gas. If we want to heat something up, we make a fire outside. If I want to wash the baby, we have to make a fire, heat the water outside and then wash her.

“We weren’t like this in our country. It wasn’t our choice to leave. We are forced to live here. It’s not our decision. We want to go back to our country as soon as possible, because our circumstances were better there. We were happy and comfortable in our country. But we were forced to come here. We were too scared. That is why we came here. We ran away from bombing.”

But finding respite from the conflict has not ensured a safe existence for Nadia or her children. With no income and next to no money, Nadia isn’t able to buy her children food, milk, winter clothes or blankets to keep them warm and healthy. “I can’t buy them blankets with my own money. I feel I am weak because I can’t offer anything for my daughter. She’s five months old – she doesn’t know anything. I’m the one who is supposed to offer her what she needs. She’s only five months old, she’s still so young.”

Nadia, 30, with her five-month-old baby Zahra, sits on the floor of the bare room in which they live, in an unfinished building in Wadi Khaled, North Lebanon.

“WE WEREN’T
LIKE THIS IN
OUR COUNTRY.
IT WASN’T OUR
CHOICE TO
LEAVE. WE ARE
FORCED TO
LIVE HERE.”





Syrian refugee children play in a corridor inside the unfinished building in which they live, in northern Lebanon.

AHMED

5 YEARS OLD

“I DO NOT WANT ANYTHING FOR MYSELF, BUT I WANT YOU TO GIVE BLANKETS TO MY LITTLE SISTER. SHE IS THREE YEARS OLD AND VERY SICK. SHE IS CRYING AND IN PAIN, AND I LOVE HER, SO I CANNOT SEE HER CRY.”

ISMAIL

AHMED'S FATHER

“MY YOUNGEST DAUGHTER CANNOT SLEEP AT NIGHT BECAUSE OF THE COLD. IT MAKES HER HURT, SO SHE CRIES ALL NIGHT. THE HEALTH CENTRE IN THE CAMP CANNOT HELP HER. IT MAKES MY HEART HURT, BUT I CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO HELP MY DAUGHTER.”

Ahmed*, 5, and his father Ismail are living in a refugee camp in Al Qaem, Iraq. Ahmed's baby sister has fallen ill from the cold and the family does not have the blankets, clothes or medicine to nurture her back to health.

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.

RAMI

11 YEARS OLD

Rami*, 11 years old, has been living in a refugee camp in Jordan for two months, ever since fleeing his native Syria. Rami is now living in the two small tents his father has clustered together in an effort to keep his family warm and provide them some comfort as they try to rebuild their lives. His mother has started cutting up the blankets they've received at the camp, and sewing them back together as clothes for her children, to keep them warm during the day and at night.

"It's getting to be winter, and it is cold not just at night, but during the day. Last week when it rained, water was coming through into our tent. When it rains here, we wake up in the morning and there's water all across the front of our tent.

"When it rains you really feel the cold. It's really bad for you. It's easy to get sick when you're freezing all the time. When a kid gets sick, his parents get very worried. They have to pay for medicine and sometimes even injections for their kids to get better.

"When it gets cold, we wear the clothes our mother has sewn for us, made from old blankets and threaded together. One of the blankets we had already with us from Syria, and the rest we got since we've been here. My mother used to make us gloves back in Syria. She is going to make them here too, and she's also going to make us socks and hats. She makes everything out of the blankets we got.

"The thing we run out of the most are the blankets, mainly because my mom uses them to make pyjamas for us so we can stay warm.

"When it gets cold, we put our pyjamas on and go outside. We run around and do lots of exercise to keep ourselves warm. But we get tired when we exercise. When we really get too tired ... then we come back inside.

The first thing I feel when it gets colder out, is that my hands start to get cold. My friends and brothers get cold too. "My two youngest brothers can't say many words yet, but when they get cold, they say the word: 'cold'. They know that word. They know 'mom', 'dad', only a few words – but they know 'cold'."

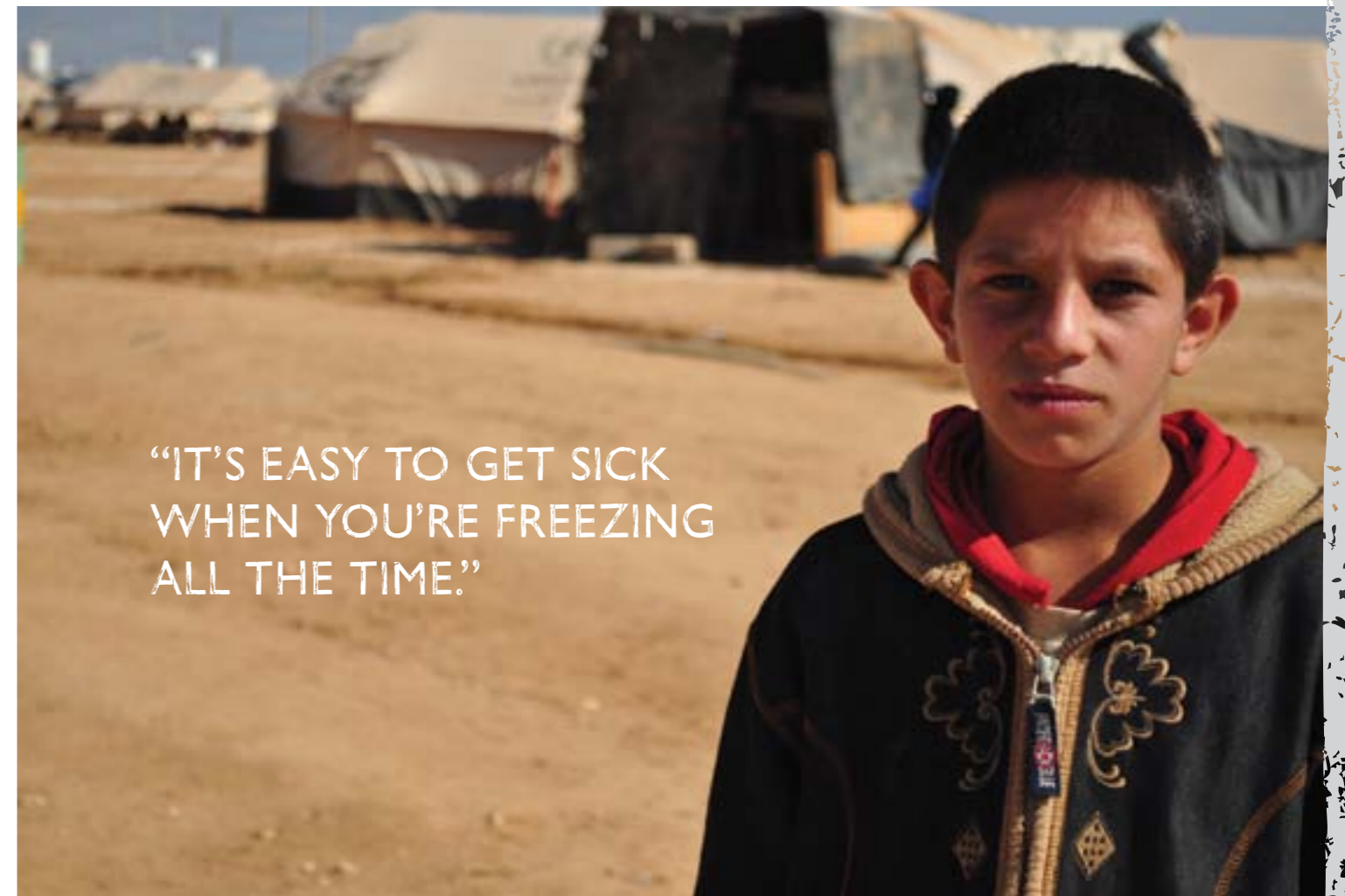
*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.

Rami, 11, stands outside his family's tent in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. His family arrived two months ago, without warm clothes for winter. Photo: Annie Bodmar-Roy/Save the Children

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

"I MAKE SWEATERS AND PYJAMAS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY – FOR US TO SLEEP IN AND SO WE CAN STAY WARM. WHEN I SEW MY CHILDREN'S CLOTHES, I TRY MY BEST TO DO WHAT I CAN BY HAND. I GUESS THEIR SIZES AND HOPE IT FITS."

RAMI'S MOTHER, AMAL*

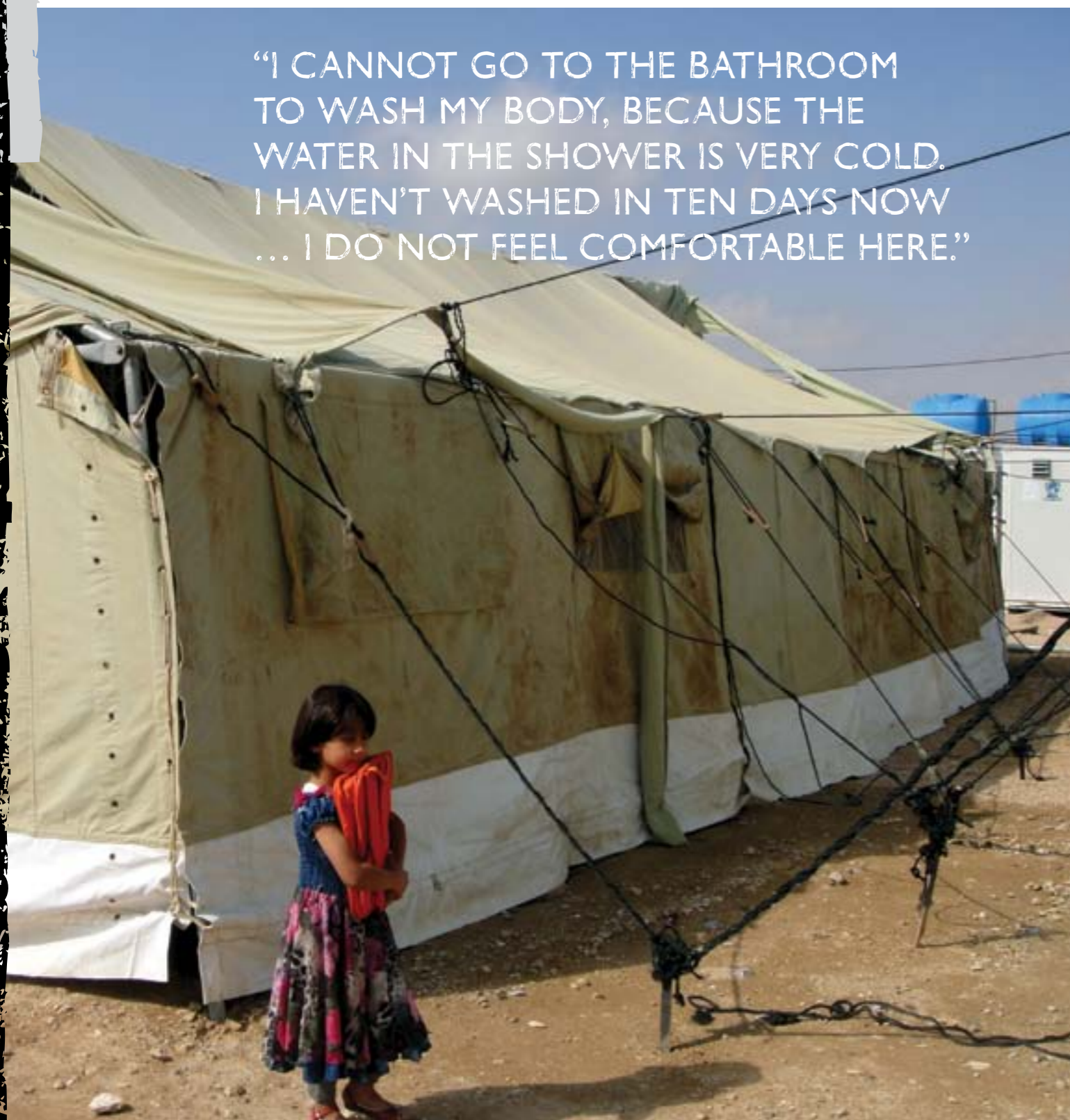


"IT'S EASY TO GET SICK WHEN YOU'RE FREEZING ALL THE TIME."

NOURA*

6 YEARS OLD

“I CANNOT GO TO THE BATHROOM TO WASH MY BODY, BECAUSE THE WATER IN THE SHOWER IS VERY COLD. I HAVEN’T WASHED IN TEN DAYS NOW ... I DO NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE HERE.”



SHAIMAA

MOTHER OF SIX
27 YEARS OLD

Shaimaa*, 27, has six children and is seven months pregnant. While her husband stayed behind in Syria to try to make money, Shaimaa fled to Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan, where she now lives in a small tent with her children, whom she’s been taking care of on her own since the family first left Syria three months ago.

“Now it’s starting to get cold – in the past few days, it’s been getting even colder.”

“We ran from Syria in such a rush. We were only able to bring a few things – but it’s not enough,” Shaimaa says regretfully.

“Here we’ve been given some blankets but they are so thin. Because of this, I was forced to go out and search the camp for any blankets I could find. I collected blankets even in trash cans; they had been left behind by people who had left the camp. I washed them as clean as I could, and used them for my kids, to keep them warm.”

Shaimaa explains that nightfall is the hardest time of day, when the sun has set and taken any warmth from the day with it. “At around 5pm every day, we have to go back into the inner part of the tent, and shut everything up so the wind doesn’t get in. We cover ourselves in blankets to stay warm. Sometimes at night I go with my children to my parents’ tent, they have an electric heater so I take the children to group around the heater until they get warm, and then I bring them back here and put them to bed before they get too cold again.”

“My biggest worry right now is keeping this tent warm,” she says, and remembers back to one recent night with the tent wasn’t enough to keep the heavy rains out. “We were sleeping and it started raining really hard, pouring down. We couldn’t leave the tent. Water was leaking into the sides, coming down inside the tent. We started to collect sand on the sides of the tent, from the outside, so that the water wouldn’t flood in.”

“I’VE BEEN ABLE TO BUY SOCKS, A HAT AND A JACKET FOR EACH ONE OF MY KIDS – BUT I STILL HAVEN’T BEEN ABLE TO PAY FOR THEM.”

*Names have been changed to protect families’ identities.

A young girl stands amidst the tents in a refugee camp set up in Al Qaem, Iraq. Wearing only sandals and a short-sleeve dress, she is one of thousands of children from Syria now taking refuge in neighbouring countries, ill-equipped and unprotected for the cold winter months. Photo: Save the Children

Despite all her efforts to keep her children away from the cold, Shaimaa acknowledges she's fighting a losing battle. "My kids complain from the cold, they have diarrhoea, fever and sometimes they throw up. Even now, some are getting a cold, and they keep coughing.

"My youngest daughter, Nissrine*, has been sick already for one month. She gets a fever sometimes. She is cold, and she coughs all the time.

"The blankets aren't enough – my children are getting sick.

"My daughter got the t-shirt she's wearing from a distribution of summer clothes, but the rest of us have been wearing only the clothes we had with us when we left – the ones on our backs and one other set each. That's it.

"My youngest daughter especially needs more clothes – sometimes her two shirts are dirty at the same time, and she doesn't have even one shirt to wear.

"I've been able to buy socks, a hat and a jacket for each one of my kids – but I still haven't been able to pay for them.

"I'm borrowing money from my parents and other relatives in the camp, but I have to pay them back. I've been able to buy socks, a hat and a jacket for each one of my kids – but I still haven't been able to pay for them.

"It's hard for me to keep borrowing money, even if it's from my relatives. I'm trying to get by with what we have until I find work, but it's hard – my husband doesn't want me to work in my condition, seven months pregnant. It's a big problem.

"The worst thing that can happen – if we run out of money – is we might just have to go back to Syria. At least there the house is warmer, and we can find wood for fire. But I don't know if my house has been destroyed or not – the month we came here we were staying underground – my children couldn't stand the chaos and the fear."

Now seven months pregnant with her seventh child, Shaimaa is increasingly worried about bringing her baby into the world, knowing she may not be able to protect her newborn.

"I need to have a caesarean, they say it's because uterus dropped from having my children close together. It's a whole operation and there needs to be heating – not just for me, but especially for my new baby.

"I have no clothes for this baby, and so I will have to borrow more money, again. I hate to be a burden on anyone, but I don't know what else to do – I need clothes for my baby."

Shaimaa, 37, lives in Za'atari refugee camp with her six children. The family arrived from Syria with very little and Shaimaa is now struggling to afford winter clothing for her children.
Photo: Annie Bodmer-Roy/Save the Children

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.



"I HAVE NO CLOTHES FOR THIS BABY, AND SO I WILL HAVE TO BORROW MORE MONEY, AGAIN. I HATE TO BE A BURDEN ON ANYONE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO – I NEED CLOTHES FOR MY BABY."

INES

8 YEARS OLD

Ines, 8, lives in a makeshift tented community with her mother Salwa, in Lebanon's Beka'a valley, less than 50kms from the border with Syria.

"I feel cold. I've been shivering and even now, I feel cold.

"When we first arrived here, the weather was good. Now it's raining and we're getting cold. My brothers also get cold. We sit next to the heater every day. We all go and sit next to the heater and warm ourselves with blankets."

When it rains, Ines says, the water "reaches inside – sometimes we get pockets of water in the tent. We want to push them from the tent, but then it floods outside on the ground.

"We get floods around the tent, so we cannot go out anymore. We can't go to the market to bring bread. We cannot go walk around. If we want to go to my uncle's house, we cannot walk. The mud covers us. We need boots so we can walk."

"This ceiling is caving in. We need metal for the roof, because the one we have here is ripped and the water leaks through. And the pillows get wet and damp."

With the weather getting colder and the heavy rains starting to pour down, Ines's family tries to keep warm with a wood-burning heater in the front area of their tent. Despite the bit of warmth the heater brings, the smoke that accompanies it – combined with regular downpours and icy winds – is already affecting Ines and her brother.

"My throat hurts, and I feel like I have the flu. We need medicine. My brother Suleiman is sick from smoke. It went inside his eyes. Now we have to take him to the doctor. We need winter clothes ... we need heaters ... even right now, I feel cold."

SALWA, INES'S MOTHER:

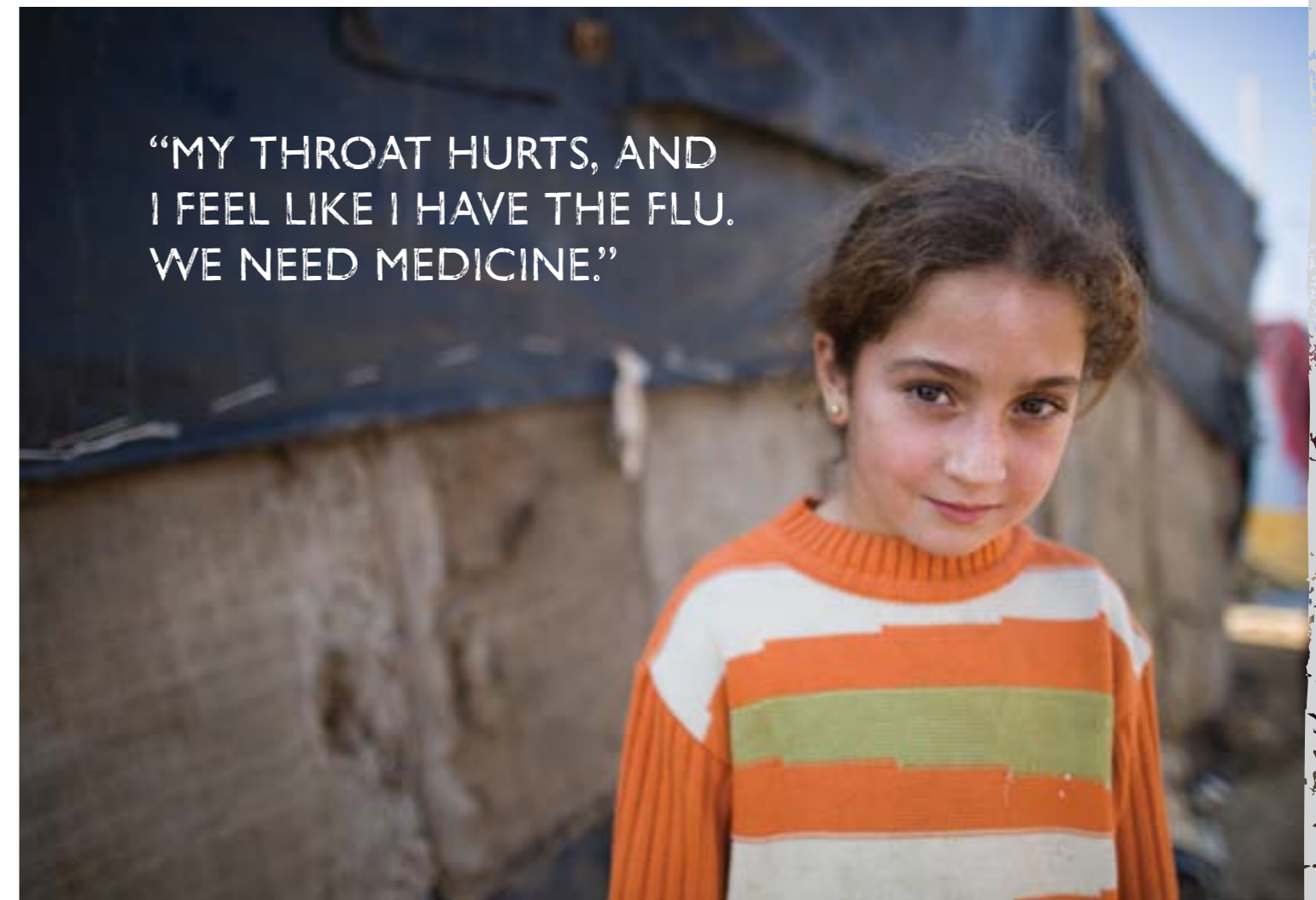
"I can't get her everything she needs. She needs boots. I can't get them for her. She needs a jacket. An umbrella, hats, stuff like this. I keep delaying – we cannot get it for her. This is very difficult for us. We had the ability to do all this before and now we can't. It's very hard on all of us. I find it really difficult. There's no money. The money situation is very bad.

"We can handle the cold, but our children cannot. And the children, they are going to school from seven am. We are carrying them because it is all mud and they can't walk on the mud. They are going to school all muddy and with their feet dirty. They need boots and warm clothes."

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

"I FEEL COLD. WHEN I'M COLD,
I START SHIVERING. EVEN NOW
I FEEL COLD."

Ines, 8, outside her home in a makeshift tented community in Lebanon's Beka'a valley that has become home to some 150 families who have fled the conflict in neighbouring Syria.



OSMAN

14 YEARS OLD

Osman, 14, has been living in an abandoned school in northern Lebanon for almost two years, ever since his parents decided to bring their children across the border from escalating violence in Syria. Now winter is coming, and Osman's family may be forced to leave their new home. With nowhere else to go, Osman fears they may have to live on the streets, completely exposed and without shelter from the bitter cold.

"We moved here, to this school. Our parents were scared for us and they brought us here.

"Living here is very devastating. We live in a small room, and we have to pay \$200 for it.

"No one in my family is working, not my parents or my brothers. We're not getting even one dollar to be able to pay for this rent – it's \$200. At the beginning of the month we will have to leave and we will be living on the streets.

"I am feeling the cold more than before, because I don't have a jacket. I don't have anything to keep me warm."

"When I feel cold I go inside. We have a heater installed inside. But we don't have fuel for it. So it's a decoration. We sit next to it, but it doesn't warm us. How are we going to get warm? We are not able to buy fuel. If we had money, we would have bought some and warmed ourselves, but we don't.

"We need fuel for the heater and clothes that keeps us warm. Only these two things. We need fuel to use in the heater so we can stay warm, because in the winter it's very cold. And we need to stay warm. And clothes – we need a lot of clothes.

"When I get cold, there's nothing I can do. I sit and feel the cold. It gives me a headache and I can't do anything."

Osman explains that as bad as things are now, they may still get worse. The family has been told they will not be able to stay in the school much longer, and may have to leave at the beginning of December.


"We have until the end of the month, and they will kick us out. We're children. And the winter is here. Is it fair that we sit in the streets?"

OUT IN THE COLD – SYRIA'S CHILDREN LEFT UNPROTECTED

"WHEN I GET COLD, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. I SIT AND FEEL THE COLD. IT GIVES ME A HEADACHE AND I CAN'T DO ANYTHING."

Osman, 14, lives with his family in a single room in an abandoned school in northern Lebanon.



A woman wearing a headscarf and a brown sweater sits behind a young child. The child is wearing a dark grey hoodie with a crest on the chest. They are sitting on a concrete floor. In the background, there is a black plastic crate filled with various items, a yellow bucket, and a white bowl. The room appears to be unfinished and sparsely furnished.

“I HAVE LITTLE CHILDREN. WE NEED
BLANKETS. WE NEED MATTRESSES.
WE NEED WINTER CLOTHES FOR
THE CHILDREN.”

MALAK, 40 YEARS OLD

Malak, 40, sits with her son Mohammad, 5, on the concrete floor of an unfinished building in northern Lebanon, near to the Syrian border.

CONCLUSION

Save the Children is already on the ground with in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, providing families with winter clothes and blankets, and setting up cash transfers and vouchers to help them buy heating fuel, stoves and other items to keep them warm. We're helping families to access basic health services and education, and distributing kits to help families repair their shelters and ready them for winter.

But much more needs to be done. With temperatures falling there is an urgent need for donor governments around the world, to contribute to the international aid response to help children and their families survive the winter. Whilst international attention and effort has rightly focused on diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, children remain pitifully under-provided for as winter begins to bite. The international community must urgently address the multi-million pound fund short-fall if children and their families are to get through the winter.



RECOMMENDATIONS

In particular Save the Children is calling on the international community to:

- Fully fund the international response for Syria's refugees.
- Prioritise measures to alleviate the immediate effects of winter, including clothing, blankets, fuel, heaters and access to hot water.
- Ensure the funds available go to operational agencies, including NGOs like Save the Children, by the quickest means possible. Funds should also be provided to help heat schools and safe play areas, so that children can be protected from the cold.
- Some governments have contributed generously, while others have not. Those who have paid should lobby others also to pay their fair share.
- Ensure that aid is allocated on the basis of vulnerability and humanitarian need, addressing the needs of Syrians who may avoid refugee registration for security reasons and other groups such as Palestinian and Iraqi refugees and vulnerable returnees.

Alaa, 22 months old, has chapped skin on her cheeks, caused by exposure to the cold. The toddler is now living in an informal tented community in Lebanon's Beka'a Valley.

“I DO NOT WANT ANYTHING FOR MYSELF, BUT I WANT YOU TO GIVE BLANKETS TO MY LITTLE SISTER. SHE IS THREE YEARS OLD AND VERY SICK. SHE IS CRYING AND IN PAIN, AND I LOVE HER, SO I CANNOT SEE HER CRY”.

AHMED, 5 YEARS OLD, AL QAEM REFUGEE CAMP, IRAQ

*Names have been changed to protect families' identities.



Save the Children