UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

FACTSHEET

COSTA RICA: Cash based interventions (CBI)

As of August 2024

Context

To address the significant gaps faced by the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in meeting their basic needs, since 2019 **UNHCR** manages a **Multi-purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) Basic Needs Program**, which is under direct implementation. The most vulnerable cases are identified through a socioeconomic evaluation. The amount of assistance is defined by the size of the family group.

The assistance is delivered for **three months** through a prepaid card.

With the prepaid card families can make ATM withdrawals or make purchases in stores, granting them **flexibility to prioritize their expenses**.

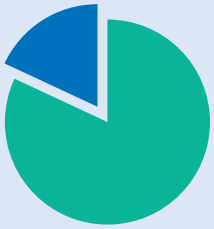
From January to July 2024 **1,079 people country-wide** have benefited of this program, which has meant that over **USD 467,435** has been delivered in cash assistance aimed at covering basic needs.

Our beneficiaries: results from our socio economic evaluation

In 2024, UNHCR developed **5,795 socioeconomic assessments** that identify households' **basic needs, protection needs and coping strategies**.

85% **were Nicaraguans**

84% **lived in the Metro Area**



57% **of interviewes** were women

86% **were persons in working age/ capacity**

62% **are adults from 18-59 years old**

Households' main expenses were **food (21%)**, **rent (15%)** and **utilities 16% (%)**, and **hygiene items (15%)**.

To face the **lack of food or money to buy it**, households often resort to coping mechanisms such as **reducing food portions (19%)**, **reducing non-essential expenses (17%)**, **borrowing for money (16%)** or **selling productive assets (7%)**.

Some of these mechanisms put refugees' safety or well-being at risk, like **begging (9%)** or **finding food scrap (7%) on streets**, **sending children to work (7%)** or resorting to **survival sex (2%)**.

Income sources

46% **informal**
21% **formal**
17% **friends/ family**

Food sources

60% **cash (purchase)**
22% **donations family/ friends**

Housing type

49% **rented apt/ house**
16% **hosted (family/ friends**
16% **rented room**

Sanitation

65% **private toilet**
28% **shared toilet**

Basic needs programme

- From Januray to July 2024, **421 family groups, representing 1,079 individuals, were reached** through assistance.
- Most beneficiaries in this period were **female (53%)** and **71% are from Nicaragua**, while **47%** of the individuals are **children**.
- The average household size was **2.56 members**, while the average age of beneficiaries was **23.9 years old**.
- **75%** of CBI assistance was delivered **in person**.

Key figures / January – July 2024

USD 467,435 **distributed through cash transfers** since January 2024

1,382 transfers for an average amount of **USD 332.53**

1,079 **total beneficiaries** of MPCA program for basic needs

53% **women and girl** beneficiaries

CONTACT: Gabriela Vargas, CBI Programme Assistant Officer, vargasg@unhcr.org
LINKS: UNHCR Costa Rica Webpage | @ACNUR_CostaRica | Costa Rica | Global Focus | Central America & Mexico | Operational Data Portal

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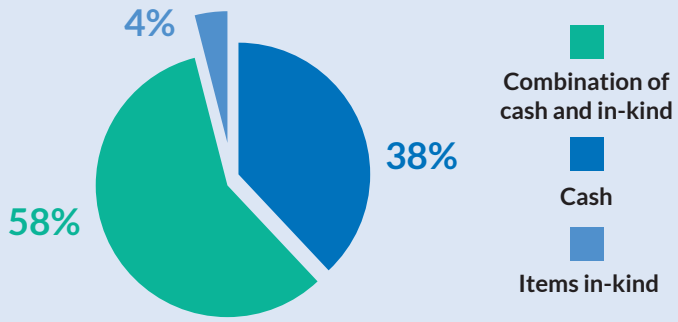
Impacts of MPCA: results of post-distribution monitoring

UNHCR developed its 2023 Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) in October and November with **137 families** that received cash assistance. From these households, **95% indicated they felt safe going to spend the amount of assistance**, and 98% by keeping your money at home.

The most common expense items were **food (96%), rent (64%) and personal hygiene items (52%).** More than half of the families (**62%**) perceive that **the program improved their living conditions significantly**; also, most households also reported a relevant reduction in their **stress levels (63%)** and in the household's **economic burden (62%)**.

Households preferred assistance modality



UNHCR plans to begin data collection for its **2024 Post-Distribution Monitoring** in **September**.

2024 CBI strategy

- In 2024, the operation decided to establish a **single amount of assistance for the country** (previously it was divided into two regions with different amounts). This implies a **decrease in the amounts delivered in the Metropolitan area** and will allow UNHCR to reach more family groups.
- From the **post-delivery monitoring (PDM) focus groups**, the beneficiaries expressed the need for **basic financial education** to better manage assistance and their income. As a result, for 2024, in coordination with the Livelihoods Unit, the partner agency Omar Dengo Foundation offers **training in financial education to all CBI beneficiaries**.
- This year, **socio-economic evaluations of families** applying for the Basic Needs Programme are also **carried out by UNHCR partners**. Consequently, UNHCR has noticed an **increase in families** assessed and, ultimately, **eligible for assistance**.

Changes in implementation: remaining gaps

Due to budgetary restrictions, from January 2024 to July 2024, **2,111 households did not receive assistance**, even though they met the socioeconomic assessment criteria. This is **83%** of the households who met such criteria.

Not reaching households with increasing basic needs negatively impacts their access to food, housing/shelter and hygiene, and **increases their chance to resort to negative coping strategies** to cover such needs, exposing them to **protection risks** and increasing their vulnerability.

UNHCR appreciates the contributions of donor countries that contribute to Costa Rica and global programs with unearmarked funds:
As of 31 July 2024

UNHCR Costa Rica also appreciates the contributions of our private donors globally:
Republic of Korea and Japan

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