UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Yemen

Post Distribution Monitoring

Refugee – Winterization Cash Assistance
Winter 2023

In Sana'a, refugees wait to receive winterization cash assistance at UNHCR national partner's centre. © UNHCR/SR

Overview

This report presents the results of the post distribution monitoring of the 2023 winterization assistance for refugees in the north of Yemen.

Cash-based interventions (CBI) are UNHCR's primary methods to rapidly provide protection, assistance, and services to the most vulnerable forcibly displaced families and persons. During the winter season in Yemen, UNHCR provides a specialized CBI programme called winterization assistance to help displaced households residing in locations facing harsh winters.

In the final quarter of 2023, UNHCR assisted 5,407 refugee families with winterization assistance.

Displaced families residing in locations affected by harsh winters are eligible, according to socio-economic vulnerability assessments and protection risk profiles. UNHCR collects data on critical socio-economic and shelter conditions as well as protection markers including family size, level of income, age/gender breakdown of the dependents. Specific attention and priority is given to vulnerable protection profiles, such as female-headed households (FHH), households with an elderly member, or persons with disabilities. Winterization assistance not only channels cash directly to these internally displaced people (IDPs) but enables them to choose how best to meet and prioritize their own winter needs.

Winterization assistance is distributed in the north of Yemen. The transfer value is calculated in accordance with the Shelter Cluster's guidance and recommendations to cover the winter blanket and winter clothing needs of a refugee household. During the 2023-2024 winter season, the recommended transfer value was set at USD 100 (53,000 YER).

The post-distribution monitoring (PDM) collects recipients' feedback on the quality, suitability, use and effectiveness of the assistance received. UNHCR conducts PDM through its third-party monitoring partner, Blumen. PDM is part of UNHCR's efforts and engagement in the accountability to displaced populations, with a focus on continuous improvement of the quality and relevance of the support provided. The focus of the winterization assistance PDM is on the following aspects:

1. Use of cash assistance to fulfil the basic needs of the recipients;
2. Expenditure patterns of the assistance received;
3. Impact of cash assistance on recipients' protection and well-being;
4. Impact on the risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms;
5. Households' safety and security in the access to distribution sites, markets, goods, and services;
6. Overall quality of the delivery of cash assistance by the financial service providers and households' preferred distribution modality.

Methodology

A sample of 189 households (90 refugee HH, 99 asylum seeker HH) from 12 districts in two governorates in the north of Yemen and who received winterization assistance was selected.[1] The data was collected through home visits using a dedicated questionnaire drafted by UNHCR.

The majority of respondents ranged from ages 36 to 59 years old (54 per cent). The majority (67 per cent) were female.

To better understand the impact of the winterization assistance, the reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) was incorporated in the PDM.

Key findings

- 100 per cent of respondents received cash assistance.
- The top five uses of the assistance were: rent and food (equal split), debt repayment, healthcare, and clothes.
- 76 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the transfer value and it was in line with their expectations.
- 95 per cent of the respondents indicated that they received assistance on the day they expected.
- 100 per cent of respondents reported spending cash assistance in local markets.
- Respondents received updates and information about cash assistance via relatives, neighbours and friends (76 per cent); visiting a help desk (11 per cent); during a community meeting (5 per cent); UNHCR/NGO staff (5 per cent); community protection networks (3 per cent); by SMS (1 per cent); and via local leaders (1 per cent).
- 100 per cent of respondents were able to find the items or services they needed in the local market, and at the right quality.
- Most of the respondents (94 per cent) preferred cash modality, 5 per cent would have preferred livelihood opportunities, 1 per cent would have preferred a combination of cash and in-kind modality.
- 60 per cent of respondents were aware of the complaint and feedback mechanism.

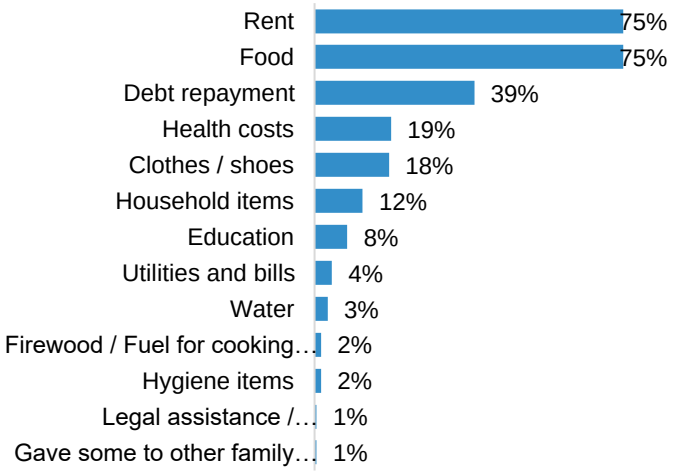
[1] *The sample size was calculated using a 95% Confidence Level a 7% Margin of Error, extracted against each batch of cash assistance considered for this report.*

Use of cash assistance

All respondents were asked how they spent their winterization assistance.

There was an equal split between rent and food (75 per cent each), followed by debt repayment (39 per cent) as their top expenditures.

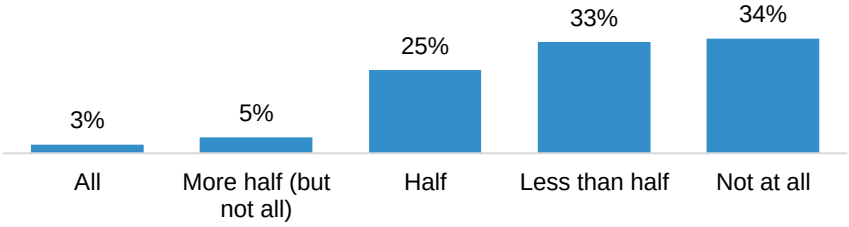
The respondents were also asked to list their top expenditures in the past four weeks. The top five expenditures were: rent (69 per cent), food (60 per cent), debt repayment (32 per cent), healthcare (15 per cent), and clothes (13 per cent).



The use of the winterization assistance follows the urgent needs of refugee families to ensure a roof over their heads and food on the table. Refugee families are spending every penny of the assistance, as 98 per cent confirmed that they could not save any amount of the assistance.

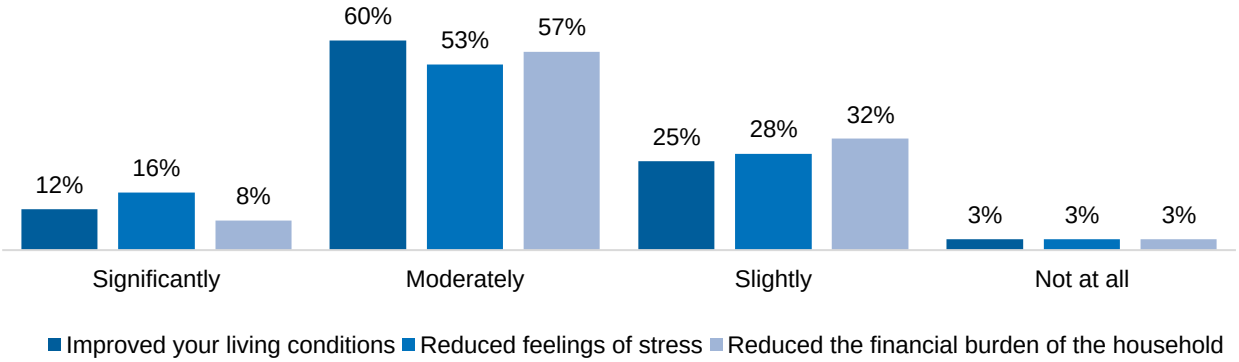
Impact of assistance on meeting basic needs

Even though most of the population reported the transfer value meeting their expectations; the extreme vulnerabilities faced by refugees did not enable them to regularly meet the basic needs, despite the assistance received. Among the respondents, thirty-four per cent could not meet their basic needs. Fifty-eight per cent reported that they were able to meet less than half or half of their household's basic needs. Additional information is reported in the following table.



Impact of cash assistance on living conditions

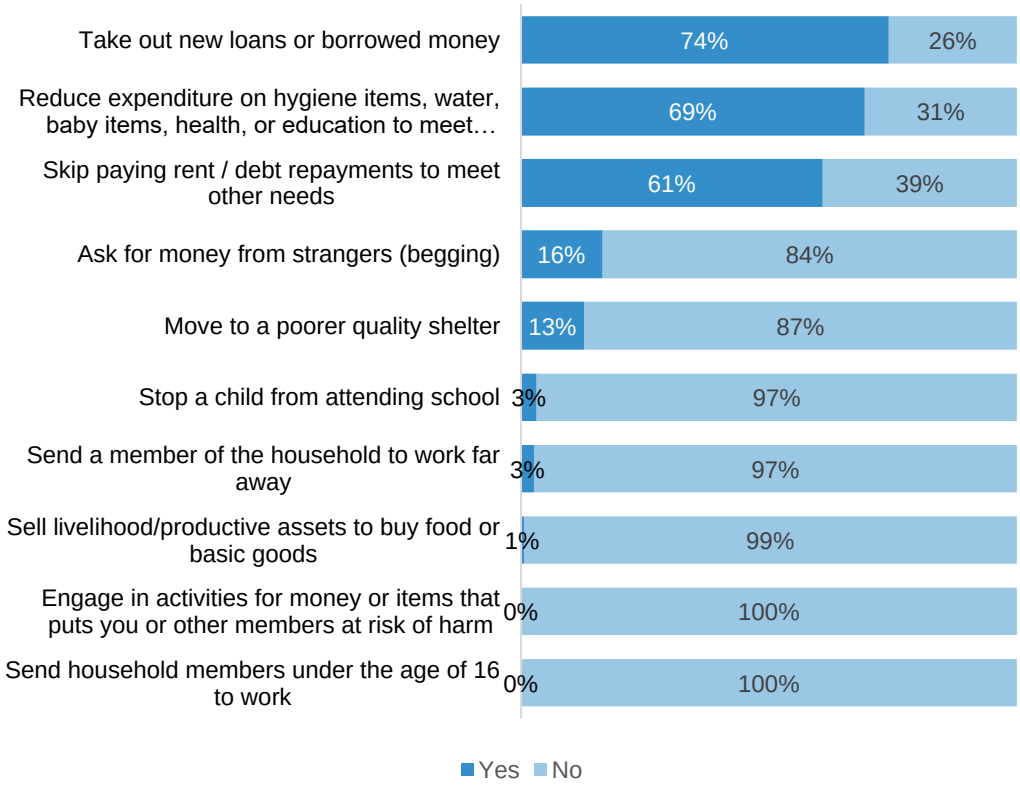
Though the cash assistance did not allow the respondents to regularly meet their basic needs, almost all respondents (97 per cent) reported slightly, moderately, or significantly improved living conditions, reduced the feeling of stress, and reduced financial burden.



Coping mechanisms

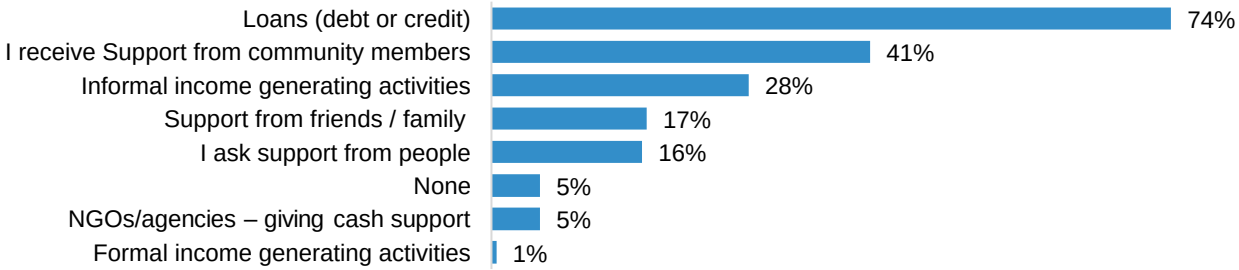
Approximately all respondents reported using one or more harmful coping strategies in the four weeks before taking part of the post-distribution monitoring. Most of the respondents (74 per cent) took out new loans or borrowed money, while 69 per cent reduced spending on hygiene items, water, baby items, health, and/or education. Additionally, 61 per cent skipped paying rent or debt repayments to meet other needs, 16 per cent resorted to begging, 13 per cent moved to a poorer quality shelter, 3 per cent had to stop a child from attending school.

According to the incorporated reduced coping strategy index (rCSI), after receiving the winterization assistance 77 per cent had high coping strategy, with 20 per cent having medium and 3 per cent having no to low coping strategies.



Other sources of cash

Within the last four weeks of receiving cash assistance, 74 per cent of respondents took out a loan as an additional source of cash. Followed by support from the community (41 per cent), informal income (28 per cent), support from friends/family (17 per cent), support from people (16 per cent).



Respondents' expectations

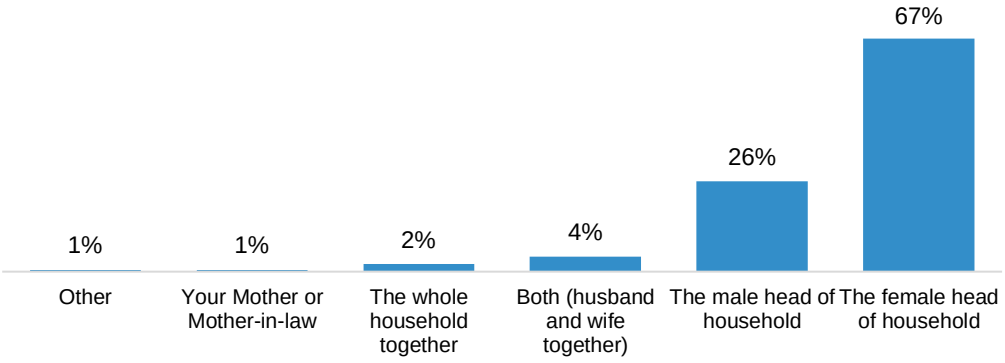
The winterization assistance received mostly met the respondent's initial expectation (75 per cent). However, 24 per cent indicated a desire to receive a higher amount compared to their previous assistance.

Markets and prices

All respondents were able to find the items and services, at the right quality, required in the local markets and shops. Only 12 per cent of respondents noticed an increase in prices during the four weeks before the PDM was conducted.

Decision maker on spending the assistance

More than half (73 per cent) of respondents included a female voice in the decision making on the spending of the winterization assistance. Sixty-seven percent of respondents had only the female head of household deciding how the cash assistance was spent. Four percent had joint decision-making from both spouses. While 26 per cent of the respondents reported that the decision was taken by only the male head of household.



Accountability to Affected Persons

The most common channel of information sharing about winterization assistance were: via relatives, neighbours or friends; visiting a help desk (11 per cent), community meeting (5 per cent); UNHCR/NGOs staff (5 per cent); community protection network (3 per cent); and via local leaders (1 per cent).

Complaint and Feedback Mechanism

Among the respondents, 60 per cent indicated that they were aware of the complaint mechanism regarding how to submit/report a complaint and feedback on the assistance received. Of those who are aware, 92 per cent referred to the hotline as the mechanism to report.

Preference for future assistance

The majority (94 per cent) reported their preference to receive assistance in cash, whereas the remaining respondents stated that they would prefer livelihood opportunities (5 per cent) and a combination of cash and in-kind assistance (1 per cent).

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