Cash for Food Assistance in Container Cities Post-Distribution Monitoring Report

Turkiye - Q4 2025

Introduction

Following the February 2023 earthquakes, many refugees who lost their homes were relocated to newly established container cities in southeastern and eastern Turkey. As of August 2024, WFP, with funding from the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), began providing cash for food to vulnerable refugees in Hilalkent Container City, Hatay province. The cash for food programme, in partnership with the Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (ASAM), offers TRY 500 per person per month. A similar cash for food programme was launched in Bebek Container City in Adiyaman province in May 2025. WFP is self-implementing the assistance by distributing TRY 425 per person monthly. This cash support empowers beneficiaries to meet mainly food needs by allowing them to choose how to allocate the funds. The assistance aims to improve food security and living conditions, particularly for households with children, the elderly, and vulnerable individuals, by increasing purchasing power and helping them regain stability.

To prevent duplication of assistance, refugees already receiving SSN support are excluded from the cash for food programme. All beneficiaries redeem their cash assistance from PTT branches and ATMs with their ID. WFP and ASAM raised awareness of the cash for food programme through SMS announcements and information sessions. SMSs are sent to all residents, both eligible and non-eligible, about the programme details, feedback mechanisms, cash collection dates and any changes in the programme.

As part of the policy decision to close refugee camps and container cities, the Bebek and Hilalkent Container Cities began the process of depopulation in September 2025 and were fully vacated by October 2025. Following the relocation of residents, the World Food Programme (WFP) will continue to provide support, recognizing the ongoing vulnerabilities of former container city residents, particularly with respect to their livelihoods and food security.

Key Findings

Presence of Members with special needs: 34 percent of surveyed households have members with special needs, including individuals with disabilities and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Economic Instability and Debt: 87 percent of households rely on unskilled /irregular labour, more than half are in debt, and cannot meet the minimum expenditure basket cost, highlighting continuing financial pressures.

Increasing Food Insecurity: Percentage of food insecure households increased from 20 to 36 percent compared to Q2 2025, with higher prevalence among households headed by women (49%) versus men (32%). Acceptable food consumption has declined to 92 percent and food expenditure share has increased, reflecting poor food security results amid relocation from container cities.

Increasing use of coping strategies: The use of livelihood coping strategies increased, with only 14 percent of households able to avoid them, while reliance on crisis strategies—such as withdrawing children from school, cutting health and education expenses, and selling assets—rose considerably.

Gender-Based Vulnerabilities Persist: Households headed by women remain more vulnerable, with higher food insecurity rates (49%), fewer income opportunities and more than half spending over 75 percent of their income on food.

Gaps in Communication and Programme Awareness: While no serious protection issues or misconduct were reported, 65 percent of respondents feel fully informed about the programme with 31 percent unaware of channels to report misconduct.

Satisfaction with Complaint Mechanisms: All beneficiaries who reached out to official channels (mainly WFP) were satisfied with the responses, indicating effective feedback mechanisms.

High Satisfaction Levels: 82 percent of beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the amount of assistance, and 99 percent with the modality of delivery, demonstrating strong programme acceptance.

Complementarity between programmes: The majority of resident of Hilalkent container city prefer to use their assistance in the Hilalkent marketplace, reflecting complementarity between recovery efforts in the earthquake-affected region and the cash for food programme.

Objectives and Methodology

The primary objective of the Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey was to collect comprehensive data on the demographic profiles, household characteristics, food security status, livelihood coping strategies, and cross-cutting issues of beneficiaries residing in Hilalkent and Bebek Container cities. The data collected in the PDM survey provides a comparison to the previous baseline study conducted in September 2024 and a follow up to PDM conducted in Q2 2025. The data demonstrates the impact of assistance on food security and living conditions of the beneficiaries.

The survey employed a representative sample size, calculated using a 95 percent confidence level and a 7 percent margin of error, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the conditions of all beneficiaries living in Hilalkent and Bebek Container City. The gathered data covers various aspects of the beneficiaries' situations, including food security, livelihoods, and other cross-cutting issues. PDM data is collected remotely from September to October 2025, during the relocation of residents.

Household Demographics

In total, 187 households participated in the PDM survey. The survey results indicate that the majority of surveyed households (76%) are headed by men, with 34 percent having at least one member with special needs, such as individuals with disabilities (9%) or pregnant and breastfeeding women (26%). Additionally, most households (54%) are medium sized, having 5-9 members, and 84 percent of them have children. These vulnerabilities potentially increase the households' dependence on external support and expose them to greater economic and food insecurity risks, particularly given their specific needs for healthcare and nutrition and childcare.

The educational profile of household heads is low, with 20 percent having completed high school or higher and 9 percent having no formal education. This limited educational background may restrict access to stable employment opportunities and may contribute to the persistent cycle of poverty. The language barrier is another critical issue, as 72 percent of household heads do not speak Turkish at all or have very limited knowledge, further complicating their integration into the local labour market and access to social services. Moreover, 30 percent of surveyed families have lived in other refugee camps before relocating to Hilalkent, reflecting a pattern of displacement.

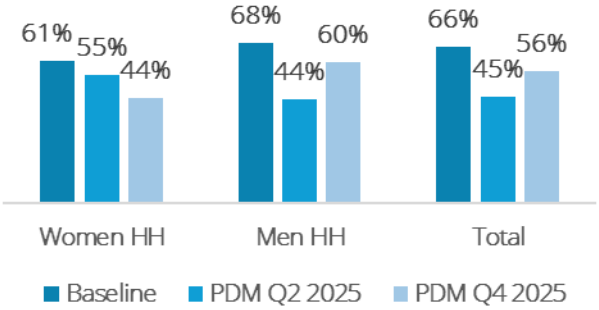
Livelihoods and Economic Conditions

The reliance on unskilled, casual labour has grew compared to baseline and Q2 PDM results, from 62 percent to 87 percent, reflecting that beneficiaries are vulnerable to job market fluctuations and seasonality. Only 4 percent hold skilled/regular jobs, indicating limited opportunities for economic advancement. In one case, a household reported resorting to high-risk activities such as begging or scavenging, further illustrating the precarious nature of livelihoods. For most households, WFP assistance serves as a secondary or tertiary source of income, highlighting that despite the support if the assistance regular livelihood opportunities are necessary for households to meet their essential needs.

Contrary to the baseline and Q2 PDM findings, households headed by women in Q4 exhibited income source patterns similar to those headed by men. Previously, households headed by women demonstrated a higher reliance on aid or gifts; however, in Q4, 80 percent reported unskilled labour as their primary income source, while dependence on aid or gifts declined sharply from 23 percent to 4 percent. Despite this shift, women's participation in wage labour remained limited at 10 percent, likely constrained by cultural norms, childcare responsibilities, and restricted employment opportunities.

More than half of the surveyed households (56%) have recently borrowed money and are currently in debt, further exacerbating their financial vulnerability. While the proportion of households able to meet their essential needs increased compared to Q2 PDM findings, it remained below baseline levels. Notably, this improvement was observed only among households headed by men, whereas the proportion of households headed by women able to meet essential needs declined, from 55 per cent to 44 percent. This divergence highlights widening gender-based disparities in economic resilience and suggests that households headed by women are facing increasing barriers to meeting basic needs.

Figure 1: Economic capacity to meet basic needs by gender of the head of household

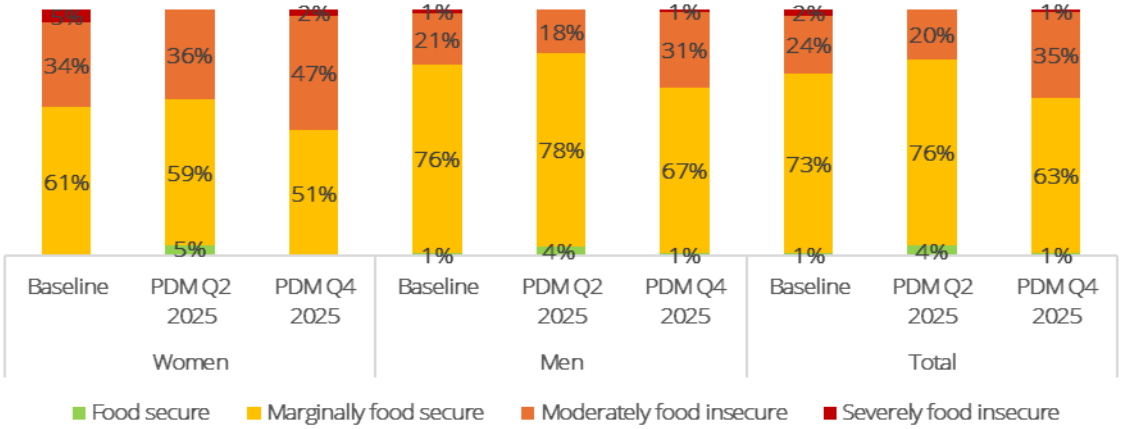


Food Security

Overall, 36 percent of surveyed households are food insecure, with prevalence notably higher among households headed by women (49%) compared to those headed by men (32%). Food security conditions have deteriorated since Q2, as severe food insecurity was newly observed among two households. Furthermore, only 1 percent of households are classified as food secure, while the remaining 63 percent are considered vulnerable to food insecurity.

No significant differences in food security outcomes were observed across container cities, household size, number of children, or the presence of members with special needs. However, a positive correlation was identified between the number of income sources and food security, with households relying on multiple income sources more likely to be food secure.

Figure 2: Food security by gender of the head of household



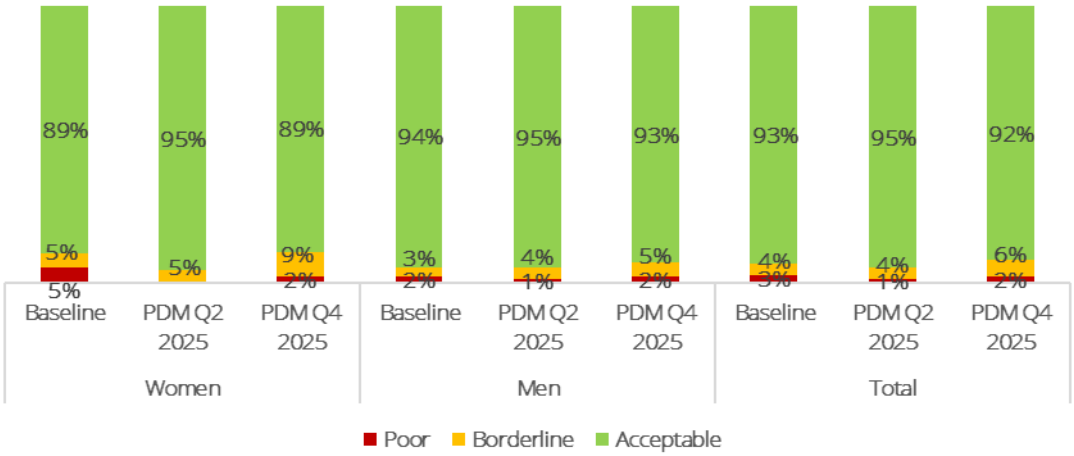
The overall deterioration in food security may be attributed to increasing reliance on debt, limited income diversification, rising costs of essential goods and emerging costs of relocating from container cities to urban areas.

Food Consumption and Expenditure

Acceptable food consumption has decreased from 95 percent in Q2 to 92 percent in Q4 2025, reflecting that both increasing prices and relocation efforts put strain on food consumption of households. Moreover, households headed by women experienced greater stress, with acceptable food consumption decreasing from 95 to 89 percent. The trend is consistent with broader patterns of reduced economic capacity to meet basic needs and lower food security levels among households headed by women.

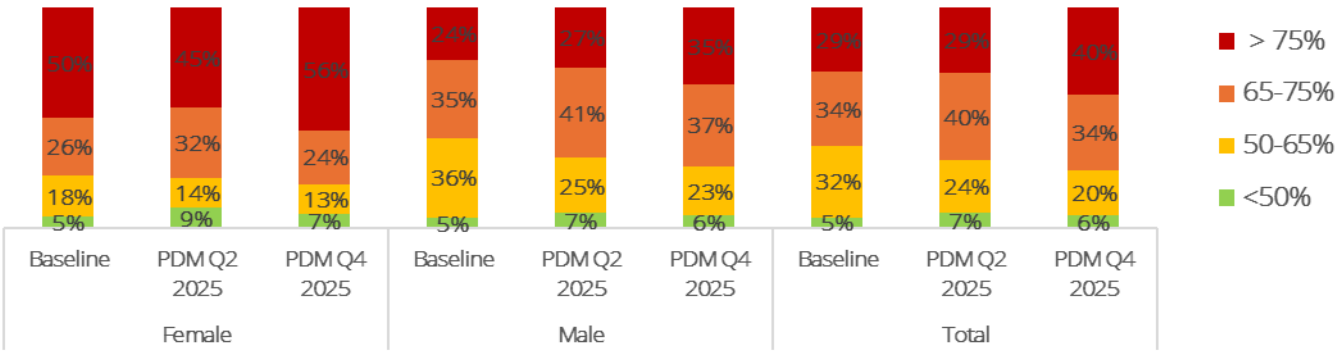
Households residing in Hilalkent Container City had worse food consumption levels compared to the residents of Bebek Container City, as acceptable food level consumption is 90 percent in Hilalkent compared to 96 percent in Bebek.

Figure 3: Food consumption by gender of the head of household



The food expenditure rate has increased; the percentage of households spending more than 75 percent of their income on food has increased from 29 percent to 40 percent. This negative trend might be the reflection of increasing prices and the stress on budget created by the relocation efforts.

Figure 4: Food expenditure share by gender of the head of household



This financial strain is particularly pronounced among households headed by women, where the percentage of households spending more than 75 percent of their income is 56 percent, compared to 35 percent in households headed by men. This trend underscores the economic vulnerability of households headed by women, who face greater challenges in securing income and maintaining a balanced budget.

Coping Strategies

Consumption Coping Strategies:

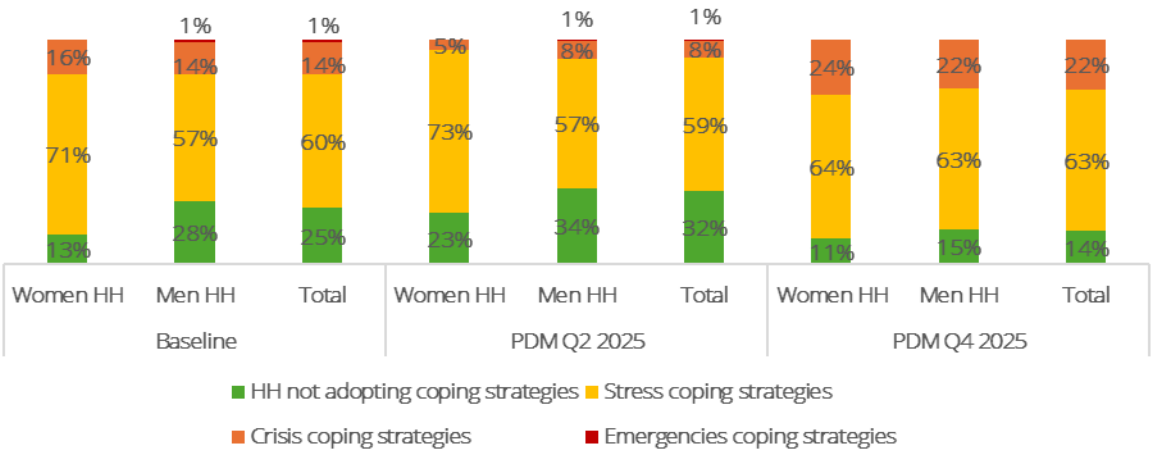
The majority of households continue to use at least one type of consumption coping behavior; however, the percentage has slightly decreased, from 80 percent in the Q2 PDM to 78 percent in the Q4 2025 PDM survey. Coping strategies are more common among households headed by women (91%) compared to those headed by men (73%). Notably, the frequency of consumption coping among households headed by women remained unchanged across both surveys. These findings suggest that, despite some improvements, reliance on coping mechanisms persists.

The most commonly used strategy was relying on less preferred cheaper food, used by 75 percent of beneficiaries, followed by reducing portion size of the meals (31%). Households headed by women used more severe coping strategies compared to households headed by men, reflecting their increased vulnerability.

Livelihood Coping Strategies:

The percentage of households that are not resorting to any livelihood coping strategies has decreased to 14 percent, even lower than the baseline values. Even if the use of emergency coping strategies were eliminated, crisis coping strategies such as withdrawing children from school, reducing expenses on health or education and selling productive assets has increased considerably, indicating that households are struggling with economic difficulties that threaten their long-term resilience and well-being.

Figure 5: Use of livelihood coping strategies by gender of the head of household



No considerable differences are observed in the use of livelihood coping strategies between container cities and households with varying compositions, such as household size, presence of members with special needs, or having children. Similarly, the sex of the household head does not appear to influence the use of livelihood coping strategies. These results suggest that strain on household livelihoods is both widespread and systemic, underscoring a general erosion of resilience across all groups.

Accountability to Affected Populations

Programme Perception and Feedback

The programme did not cause any protection concerns and was generally viewed positively by respondents. All participants reported receiving respectful treatment from WFP and partner staff, and none experienced security issues. However, two respondents reported difficulties in accessing their assistance: one had not yet received their card, while the other faced access challenges due to a disability.

The percentage of beneficiaries who reported that they were fully informed about the programme has increased from 45 percent to 65 percent. The main issue was that 31 percent of beneficiaries do not know how to report misconduct, despite being informed through SMSs regarding WFP hotline channel.

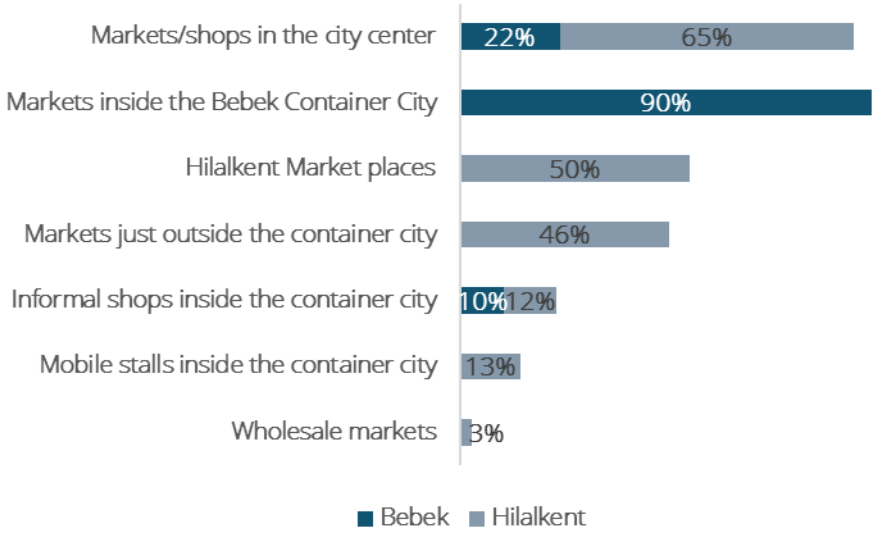
The majority of respondents (63%) who contacted programme channels for an issue they experienced or to receive information reported that they contacted WFP. All beneficiaries who reached out to official channels expressed satisfaction with the response they received. No cases of favouritism, fraud theft, or diversion of assistance were reported, which suggests that the programme is being implemented with integrity.

Most of the beneficiaries reported that they are satisfied with the amount of the assistance (82%) and the modality of the assistance (99%). Only 1 beneficiary reported that they would prefer their assistance to be delivered through a bank card. These results indicate a high level of satisfaction with both the amount and delivery method.

Use of Assistance

Respondents were asked where they prefer to use their assistance and the reason for their preference. Half of beneficiaries who resided in Hilalkent reported they shopped at Hilalkent marketplace, which was constructed by WFP and ASAM, reflecting that the recovery efforts in the earthquake affected region and the cash for food programme complement each other. Similarly, Bebek Container city residents preferred markets inside the container city area, as well. Main factors affecting the decision on shop preferences were reported as affordable prices (59%) and being easier to reach (50%) by respondents.

Figure 6: Shopping preferences of respondents



Conclusion

The findings of the PDM survey reveal persistent and systemic vulnerabilities. Economic fragility remains widespread, with most households relying on unskilled labour and facing high levels of debt. Gender disparities are evident, as households headed by women experience greater challenges in meeting basic needs, higher food insecurity, and heavier reliance on coping strategies. These trends underscore the need for targeted interventions to address structural barriers, such as limited employment opportunities, language constraints, and caregiving responsibilities.

Food security and consumption indicators show a concerning deterioration compared to previous monitoring periods, driven by rising costs, relocation pressures, and limited income diversification. Although satisfaction with the assistance modality and amount remains high, the survey indicates that cash support alone cannot fully mitigate the economic and nutritional challenges faced by these households. Taking into consideration that the PDM data was collected during the relocation, it can be expected that vulnerabilities demonstrated in the report will be exacerbated once the residents are relocated and have to cover rent or other costs that will emerge after relocation.

Recommendations

Continue Assistance Post-Relocation with Increased Amounts: Given the deterioration in food security and economic resilience during the relocation, WFP should maintain cash-based assistance for former container city residents. The amount of assistance should be revised upward to reflect rising living costs in urban areas and the additional expenses associated with relocation. This adjustment will help households meet essential needs and reduce reliance on negative coping strategies.

Enhance Programme Communication: Enhance awareness of reporting mechanisms through targeted communication campaigns, as 31 percent of beneficiaries are unaware of how to report misconduct.

Gender-Sensitive Programming: Households headed by women face disproportionate challenges in food security and economic resilience. WFP should explore partnerships in complementary targeted interventions, such as childcare support, flexible training schedules, and dedicated livelihood opportunities for women, to address structural barriers and promote gender equity.

Strengthen Livelihood Support and Skills Development: High dependence on unskilled labour and limited Turkish language proficiency highlight the need for livelihood programs, including vocational training, language courses, and job placement support. Partnerships with local NGOs and municipalities can facilitate integration into the labour market and reduce long-term dependency on humanitarian aid.

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