Post Distribution and Outcome Monitoring Report
Winter of 2018-2019

Winter cash assistance prevents families from having to resort to the most severe forms of negative coping strategies including child labor, begging and high risk jobs. All families reported resorting to some form of negative coping mechanism in order to meet their needs.

Drawing on a series of perception based questions, UNHCR's wellbeing index classifies families based on their life experiences and perceptions. Families who were receiving cash assistance have more positive outcomes of wellbeing.

The effects of cash assistance on food consumption has been evident across several monitoring activities. Assisted families consistently exhibit better outcomes in terms of their dietary habits and food consumption.

Assisted families were able to allocate a portion of the money towards winter needs such as fuel and clothing. Families that received more than one form of cash assistance were able to do so to a larger degree.

Most families (87%) reported spending the cash assistance during the month it was received (November 2018). Previous research had shown that a significant number of families would prefer to receive the winter cash assistance as a lump sum payment.

Spending prioritization differed across the regions. In the Bekaa, most families used the cash assistance to buy fuel for heating. In the South and Mount Lebanon, rent and food were priorities. In the North, debt repayment came up as a significant priority.

Total Syrian refugee households interviewed: 926, all of whom received cash assistance through UNHCR WinCAP

Background

Program overview

From November 2018 to March 2019, UNHCR provided almost 900,000 Syrian refugees with cash assistance in an effort to support families meet the additional needs brought about by the winter season. Families are faced with overwhelming stress during the winter season due to both extreme weather conditions and limited resources. Many families already live in substandard shelter conditions which deteriorate further with heavy rain, wind and snow. As a consequence, many families face additional health risks exacerbated by the inability to stay warm, flooding and already limited access to health care. Analysis of household level data in the past has shown that Syrian refugee families in Lebanon increase their monthly expenditure by 75 to 150 US$ during the winter season. These additional expenses include buying fuel for heating, shelter rehabilitation, health costs, among regular expenses like food and rent.

UNHCR distributed 375 US$ to poor Syrian refugee families in November 2018 as part of the winter cash assistance programme (WinCAP). The transfer was calculated based on the increased 75 US$ expenditure/family over five months. Some families were already receiving cash assistance through UNHCR's multipurpose cash programme (MCAP) and/or food assistance from WFP.

Target population

165,971 families (892,594 persons) were assisted through WinCAP. Recipients of UNHCR winter cash assistance can be broken down into three groups:

Group 1: Families that also receive cash through MCAP and WFP food assistance programme.
Group 2: Families that also receive cash through WFP food assistance programme but not MCAP.
Group 3: Families that were not receiving regular cash assistance through either MCAP or WFP food assistance.

Figure 1: Different assistance packages distributed to families during winter 2018/19.
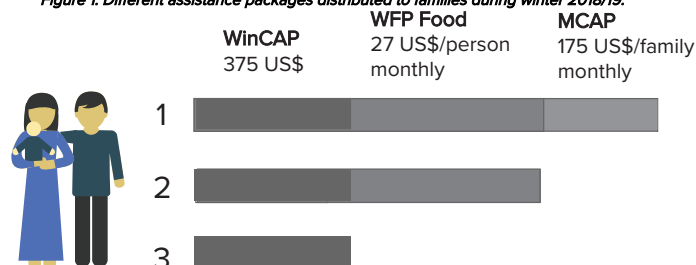
Methodology

Data collection for this post distribution and outcome monitoring (PDOM) exercise took place between February and March of 2019 with four main objectives:

1. Examine the effects of WinCAP on benefiting families.
2. Assess the complementarity of the different assistance packages to refugee families.
3. Assess whether families were able to safely access assistance.
4. Better understand the needs of refugee families in the winter season.

Data was collected by trained enumerators employed by UNHCR partner agencies in each operational location[1] through face-to-face visits at refugee homes.

The data collection tool used was a hybrid of UNHCR's outcome monitoring and post distribution monitoring tools. Outcomes that were assessed included expenditures, wellbeing, shelter conditions, food consumption, coping strategies, amoung others. The post-distribution component covered indicators related to the distribution process, accessing and using ATMs, and knowledge of the complaints mechanism.

In order to examine the effects of the varying assistance packages, the sampling methodology aimed at selecting households from all three groups of assisted families.
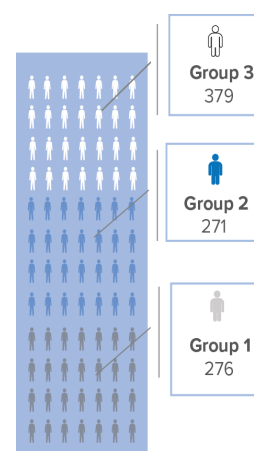

Figure 2: Number of families visited from each group as per the sampling methodology.

Results

Household characteristics

The three groups exhibit some key differences in their characteristics. As a result of the targeting and sampling strategy, this is not unexpected. Families in Group 1 who received all three types of assistance are, to some degree, 'more vulnerable'. The same is true when comparing Group 2 to Group 3. It is these nuances in vulnerability that cause slight differences in household characteristics. For example, families in Group 1 have a larger average household size compared to the other two groups and the proportion of female headed households in Group 1 is larger as compared to the others.

	Group 1 WinCAP +MCAP +Food	Group 2 WinCAP + Food	Group 3 WinCAP Only
Family Size	7.6	5.8	5.2
Gender of the head of household	26% female	22% female	20% female
Individuals below 18 years old	71%	61%	55%
Individuals with a disability	2%	3%	2%
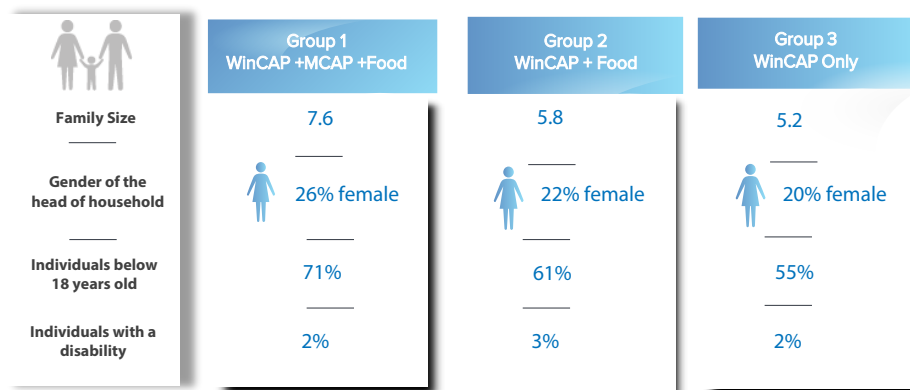
Figure 3: Key household characteristics

Shelter and weather conditions

Over one quarter of the families surveyed reported that their shelter was adversely effected by a weather event, namely heavy rain, and to a lesser extent wind and more severe flooding. Overall, refugee families have a low satisfaction with their shelter as a significant number live in substandard conditions. Less than 2% of families reported that they were completely satisfied with their living space. From enumerator observation, half of the surveyed families were living in shelters with leaking roofs and over a quarter with unsealed windows and/or doors.

Of the very few families (4%) that purchased materials to upgrade their shelter in the winter, the amount spent was on average 125 US$. This money was mainly used to purchase plastics sheets, wood, cement or other materials. Less than 3% reported that they prioritized the winter cash assistance for this purpose. With families already struggling to meet needs related to food, rent and health costs- spending on shelter rehabilitation was often not feasible.

Figure 4: Observed shelter conditions and reported weather events which adversely effected shelters.

50% with a leaking roof

28% with unsealed window and/or doors

9% with overflowing sewage

21% effected by rain

5% effected by floods

6% effected by heavy winds
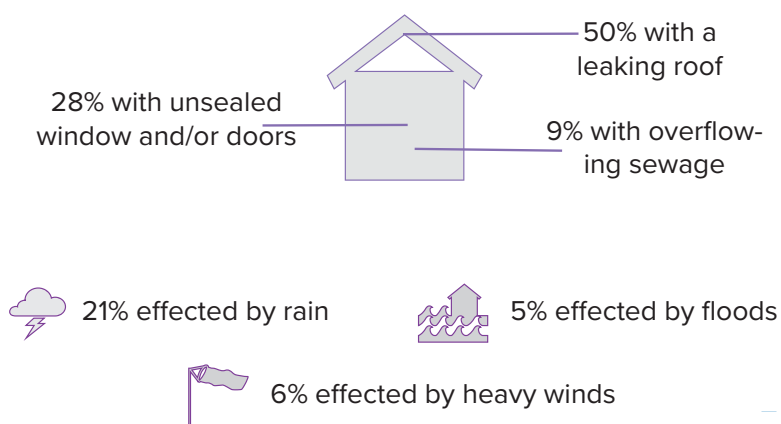
Expenditures

Surveyed families were asked to estimate their 'winter-specific' expenditures over the past month as well as throughout the winter season. This included spending on fuel for heating, winter clothes, appliances (eg. heaters), and blankets.

The most common ' winter-specifc' expenditure was fuel for heating which was also the highest in terms of average money spent. This was followed by winter clothes. A minority of families reported spending money on heaters and less so on blankets. For families in Group 1 who were benefiting from WinCAP, MCAP and WFP food, average spending in the past month was higher on all winter related expenses. Families who only received cash through WinCAP spent significantly less. The complementarity of assistance is quite evident in these findings. Families that were only receiving cash through WinCAP were still able to spend a significant amount on fuel (22 US$ monthly or 76 US$ throughout the season). This would have been compromised if they were not recipients of cash assistance.
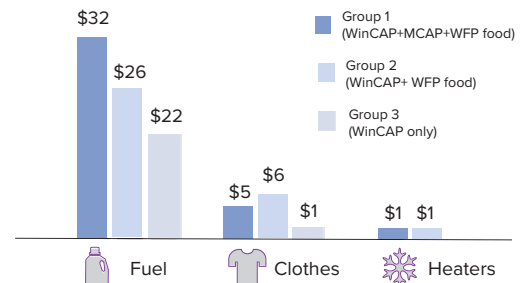
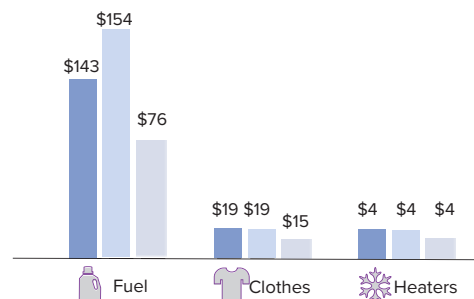*Figure 5: Reported household expenditures during February 2019 among sampled families*

Figure 6: Reported household expenditures throughout the winter season (Nov 2018- Feb 2019

Cash spending and prioritization

Families that received cash through UNHCR WinCAP received 375 US$ to cover the needs of the winter season. This amount was calculated based on the expected increase in expenditures of 75 US$ per month. Previous research on UNHCR WinCAP showed that if the monthly cash transfer is at the lower end of the 75-150 US$ spectrum, families prefer to receive it as a lump sum rather than in monthly payments. For this winter cycle, families received the cash transfer at the start of winter in one payment on their ATM card.

Most families (87%) reported spending the cash received from WinCAP during the month it was received (for most this was November 2018). The remaining families stretched or rationed the cash assistance over the course of the season.

In terms of spending priorities, as expected, and noted in previous years, needs and priorities varied from region to region. The differences in spending patterns was due to the known weather conditions and expenses characteristic to each area.
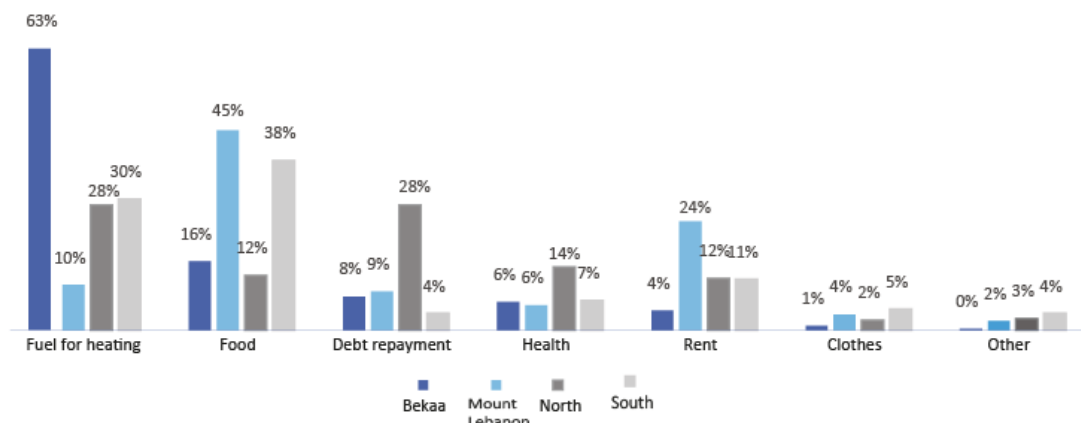

Figure 7: Reported primary priority for winter cash assistance spending amoung sampled families

Wellbeing

The wellbeing index, developed by UNHCR Lebanon, aims to assess refugee wellbeing using a perception based, quantitative score and subsequent classification. Four dimensions feed in to the overall wellbeing: hopefulness, finance, health and environment.

As noted in previous rounds of monitoring for UNHCR MCAP, families that receive cash assistance have a more positive wellbeing than those that do not. This was also found to be true here, where families that received multiple forms of cash assistance scored higher on the wellbeing scale. There was a lower proportion of families with 'low' and 'mild' wellbeing among those that received all three types of cash assistance. In parallel, there was a larger proportion of families in this group who score either high or moderate. Very few families scored 'high' regardless of their assistance status, implicating the dire state of the refugee population in winter.
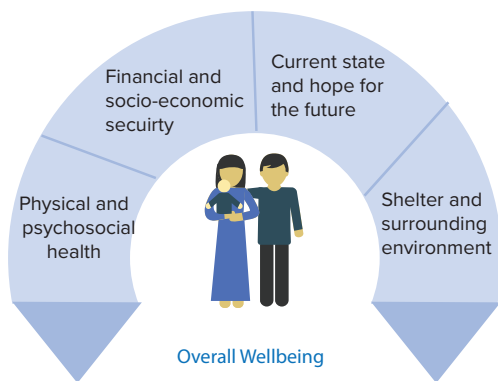

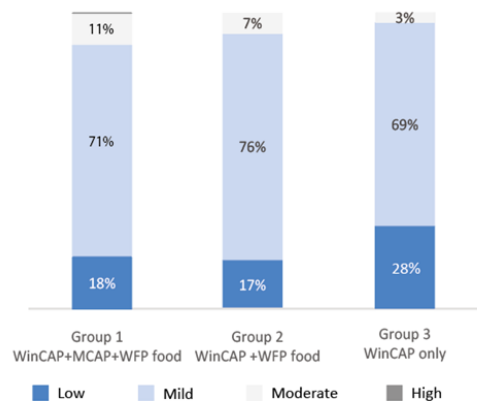Figure 8: UNHCR wellbeing index components and analytical framework

Figure 9: Wellbeing index classification amoung sampled households

Coping strategies

Cash through WinCAP prevented some families from resorting to the most severe forms of negative coping strategies. The 2018 vulnerability assessment (VASyR) showed that 12% of families resort to severe coping strategies, which include child labor, begging and accepting high risk jobs. Among this sample of assisted families, it was significantly less at 5%.
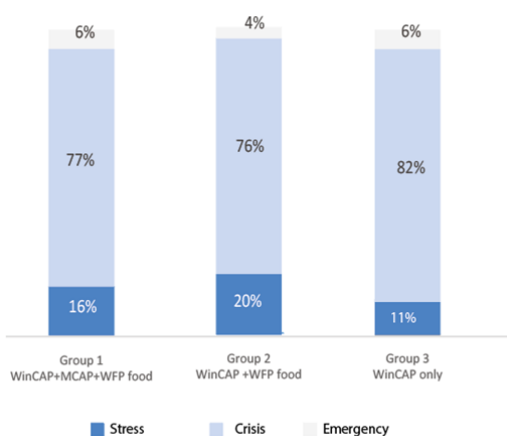

Figure 10: Prevalence of different degrees of negative coping strategies among sampled families

Almost all families in all groups were resorting to some kind of negative coping mechanism in order to meet their needs. This is different than findings noted through MCAP monitoring activities where those that receive assistance rely less on these types of mechanisms. This clearly demonstrates the hardships that families face, especially in the winter season. Families are having to compromise on certain expenses and priorities in order to meet their most pressing needs.

Stress	Crisis	Emergency
- Spending savings - Selling household goods - Buying on credit - Incurring debt	- Selling productive assets - Withdrawing children from school - Reducing non-food expenses - Marriage of children under 18	- Working children - Begging - Accepting high-risk jobs - Selling house or land in Syria

Figure 11: Classification of negative coping strategies

Food Consumption

A larger proportion of families that were receiving different streams of cash assistance had acceptable food consumption scores, as compared to others. The food consumption score is a composite index calculated based on the frequency of consumption of the major food groups- main staples, pulses and nuts, vegetables, fruits, meat and fish, milk, sugar, oil and condiments. Using this score, families are classified as having a poor, borderline or acceptable food consumption.

The positive effects of cash assistance on food consumption score has been evident in past monitoring activities related to MCAP. Consistently, families that receive cash assistance have had better outcomes in terms of food consumption. Here, the effects of the complimentary of assistance is also obvious.

	Acceptable	Borderline	Poor
Group 1 WinCAP+MCAP+WFP food	54%	43%	3%
Group 2 WinCAP+WFP food	44%	52%	4%
Group 3 WinCAP Only	49%	37%	14%

Figure 12: Food consumption score classification of sampled families.

Distribution and access to ATMs

A large number (88%) of the sampled families had attended a card or PIN number distribution in the recent months. Very few (less than 2%) did not find the location or the timing of the distribution to be convenient. The remaining were satisfied. On average, families reported spending 1.2 hours in the distribution site and almost 90% stated that they were treated fairly by staff, other attendees and security persons at the site.

No issues were noted with access to ATMs among families that benefited from WinCAP. The majority of beneficiaries (42%) walk to a nearby ATM and need, on average, 14 minutes. For those that take a taxi (30%), average time to reach an ATM is 20 minutes and costs 3.6 US$. Taking a bus costs an average of 1.8 US$ and is the preferred method for 19% of the sampled families. A smaller number of families (7%) reported that they drive themselves (either car or motorcycle) to an ATM and 3% have a friend or relative drive. There were no striking findings with regards to safety while traveling to an ATM or while withdrawing the cash assistance. Only 10% stated that they do not feel that can use the ATM alone or without assistance.

Families showed adequate knowledge of the complaints mechanism in place with the vast majority (81%) stating the hotline or call center as the means to file a complaint related to the ATM card. A smaller number (14%) cited the complaints box at UNHCR offices.

Conclusions

-        The importance of the complementarity of the different assistance packages is evident through assessing wellbeing, coping strategies, food consumption and expenditures.

-        In the winter, refugee families are faced with overwhelming stress to meet their most basic needs. All families resort to some kind of negative coping mechanism in the winter and very few families achieve the highest classification of wellbeing.

-        Recipients of cash assistance rely less on very severe negative coping mechanisms (child labour, begging, high risk work) and more on the less severe strategies (debt, selling goods, reducing food and non-food expenses, among others), as compared to the overall population.

-        A larger proportion of families that receive cash assistance through different streams have higher scores for both wellbeing and food consumption as compared to those that receive less support.

-        Families that receive more than one type of cash assistance are able to spend more on winter specific expenses (fuel, clothes, heaters) as compared to those that only receive winter cash assistance. Families that only receive WinCAP were able to allocate a significant portion of their monthly expenditure on these needs.

-        Spending priorities differ by region. In the Bekaa, a larger proportion prioritized the winter cash on fuel for heating while in Mount Lebanon and the South the main priorities were food and rent. Debt repayment was more of a priority in the North than in other areas.