

Post Distribution Monitoring - Cash for Protection

Summary

Since the beginning of the full scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022, **more than 5.2 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed the border into Romania**, both directly from Ukraine and via the Republic of Moldova. Of them, some **150,00 have been issued Temporary Protection** permits in Romania, and **83,765 refugees remained in the country**, as of 31 December 2023.

The Ukraine situation is one of the world's most acute and complex humanitarian emergencies. A high proportion of refugees from Ukraine can be exposed to protection-related risks, including gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, the separation of children and human trafficking. These risks and harmful coping mechanisms are exacerbated by the depletion of savings that refugees may have brought with them.

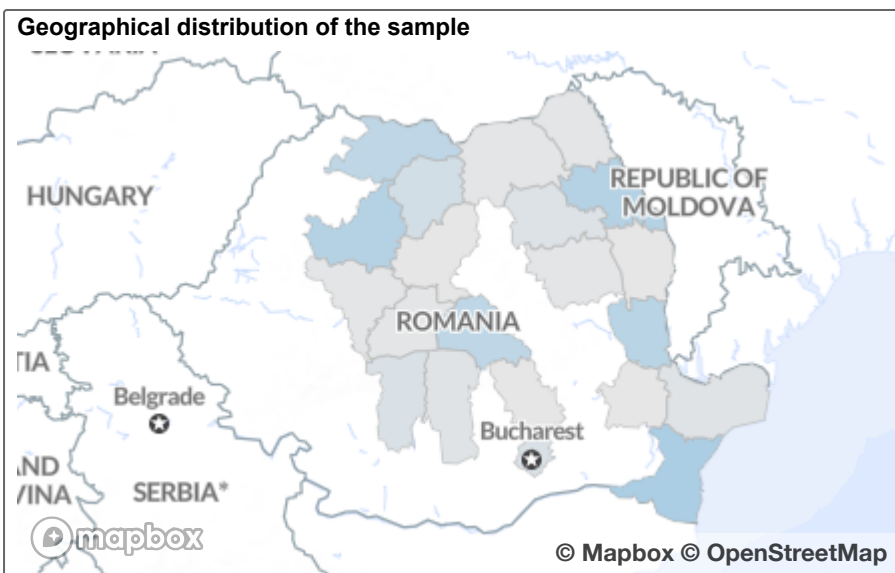
On the 12 April 2023, the Government of Romania approved a new Emergency Ordinance modifying the previous assistance program for food and accommodation into a more restrictive and targeted version. Subsequently, on 3 July 2023, UNHCR Romania launched the Cash For Protection programme, complementary to the governmental assistance. The programme provided four installments, each in value of RON 630 per individual, to the most vulnerable households residing at that moment in Romania, aiming to prevent many vulnerable Ukrainian refugees from exposing to protection risks and livelihood coping strategies.

In order to identify the most vulnerable households, UNHCR, together with a group of experts from partner organizations, developed and piloted a vulnerability assessment which determined the eligibility of each interviewed family by calculating their vulnerability score from a combination of indicators relating to basic needs, demographics, and integration factors. The last interviews were conducted on the 3 November 2023 and 9,086 refugees were found eligible and received this assistance.

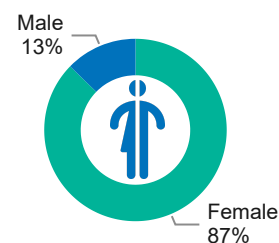
UNHCR conducted a Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey to evaluate the Cash for Protection programme in Romania as part of its commitment to monitor cash assistance delivery and impact of cash assistance to ensure accountability to the affected population. This document presents the survey findings organized into nine sections: (1) Demographic characteristics of the sample, (2) Methodology, (3) Receiving and spending the cash assistance, (4) Risks in accessing the assistance, (5) Problems in accessing and spending the assistance, (6) Markets and Prices, (7) Outcomes, (8) Coping mechanisms, and (9) Accountability to the Affected Population.

1. Demographic composition

The average household size in the surveyed sample of 181 refugee households (510 individuals) consists of 2.8 individuals. This household size is consistent with the findings of the 2024 Romania Multi-Sector Needs Assessment. Regarding gender disaggregation, out of 181 respondents, 87% were women, and 13% were men. Within the 510 individuals, the two largest age groups were 18-59 years old (with 162 females and 50 males) and 5-17 years old (with 83 females and 76 males). In terms of geographic representation, the top counties were Bucharest (48), Constanța (19), Iași (16), Cluj (16), Galați (15), Brașov (13) and Maramureș (13). In the other counties, the sample sizes ranged from 1 to 7 individuals.



Respondents' gender breakdown



181

Households

2.82

Average Household Size

510

Total individuals

Population pyramid



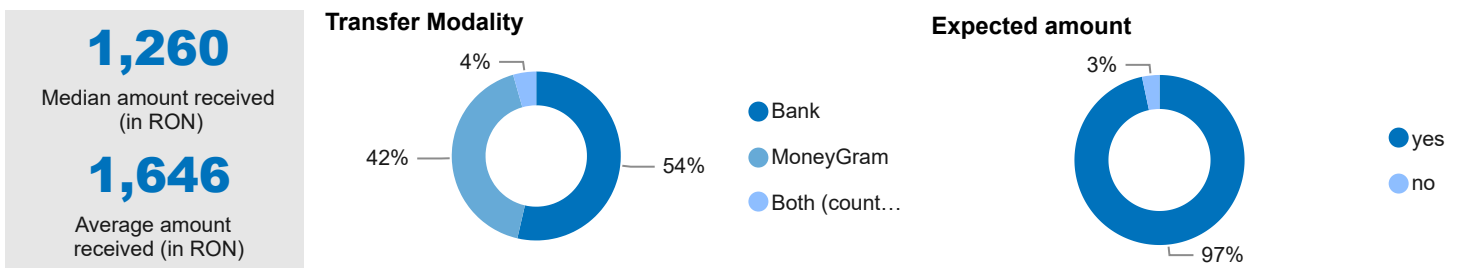
2. Methodology

Using a structured survey, UNHCR conducted phone interviews with a total of 181 refugee households between 22 November and 15 December 2023. These households were randomly selected from the UNHCR list of refugee recipients of cash assistance with a confidence level of 95% and a 7% margin of error. Additionally, a 100% buffer was included in the sample to account for potential non-responses due to the potential fluidity of the number of refugees.

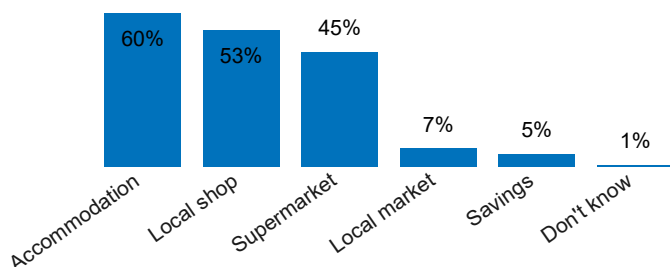
3.Reception and expenditure of Cash Assistance

The third section of the monitoring questionnaire aimed to better understand the reception and expenditure of the assistance. Considering that all beneficiaries were disbursed the same amount of 630 RON per person, the survey asked refugees to report on the amounts received and their perception of this. Reportedly, the average amount received by the refugees was around 1,260 RON and the median amount of 1,646 RON per household, with the preferred transfer modality being through Bank (54%). In terms of months in which they benefited of cash assistance, 43% of the respondents reported that they received 3 months of assistance; 30% reported 2 months of assistance; 20% reported more than 3 months and 8% reported receiving only a month of assistance. Regarding the perception on the amount received, 97% of the respondents reported that they received the expected amount of cash, while 3% stated that they did not receive the expected amount.

In terms of timing, 94% of the respondents reported that the cash assistance arrived on the expected date, while 6% reported that it did not arrive on the expected date. The top reported decision-makers, in terms of how the cash assistance was spent, were: female head of the household (49%), the entire household (30%); both husband and wife (17%) and the male head of the household (4%). In 99% of the cases, the decision maker was also the person on the UNHCR distribution list; with only 1% of the cases being another member of the household.



Where was the cash spent*

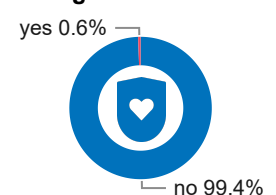


The top 3 places where respondents chose to spend the cash were: **on accommodation (60%)**; **local shop (53%)**; and **supermarket (45%)**. Furthermore, 98% of the respondents reported that they were able to find quality items/services in the market, while only 2% of respondents reported that they were able to find most of the items/services in the market.

4.Risks in accessing the cash assistance

Regarding the perception of risks and safety concerns when accessing or using the assistance, there was only one instance where this was reported. The respondent stated that they felt unsafe or at risk during the enrollment process, when going to enroll and get the money.

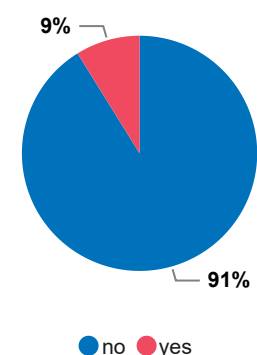
Feeling unsafe or at risk



5.Problems in receiving/withdrawing or spending the cash assistance

During the survey, participants were also asked whether they encountered any problems or issues in the process of receiving, withdrawing, or spending the cash assistance. While 91% of the respondents reported that they hadn't encountered or were not aware of any problems, 9% reported facing at least one of the following issues: refusal of services by shop/market owners (n=14); and poor services from the financial service provider (i.e., the financial service provider did not have any Romanian currency, or did not have any more cash in the location where refugees went to pick up the assistance) (n=3).

Encountering problems

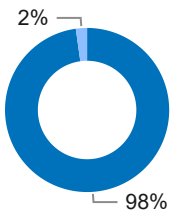


*The results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice

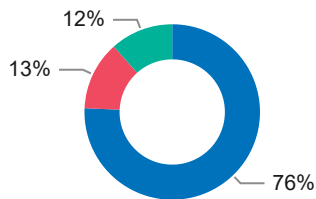
6. Markets and prices

Refugees were also asked about their experiences in the market. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents (98%), were able to find the items they needed, while 2% found most. When enquired about the price of items and services, the respondents had differing opinions. According to the survey, 76% of the respondents claimed a general increase in the price of items or services, while 13% reported that they did not notice any increase in prices. The remaining 12% of the respondents admitted that they did not know how to determine if prices had changed.

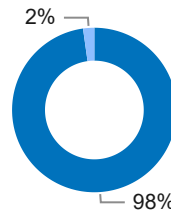
Finding the needed items/services in the market



Observing an increase in the price of items or services in the last four weeks



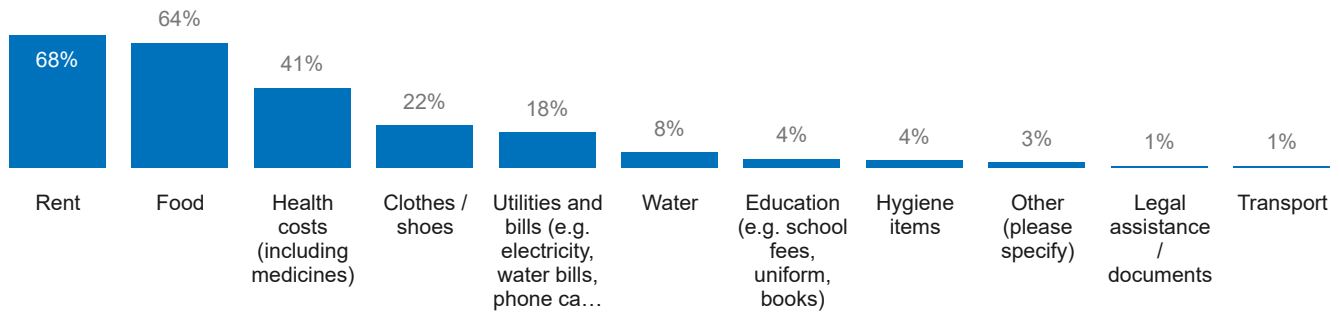
Finding quality for items/services in the market



● yes ● mostly ● Don't know ● no

When asked about the quality of items or services they encountered, a majority of the respondents, specifically 98%, answered affirmatively, indicating that they found the right quality. Only a small minority of 2% of the respondents reported that they did not find the right quality of items or services in the marketplace. Specifically, the respondents mentioned items such as medicines; food and clothing as the ones that were not readily available or did not meet their quality expectations.

On what was the assistance spent*



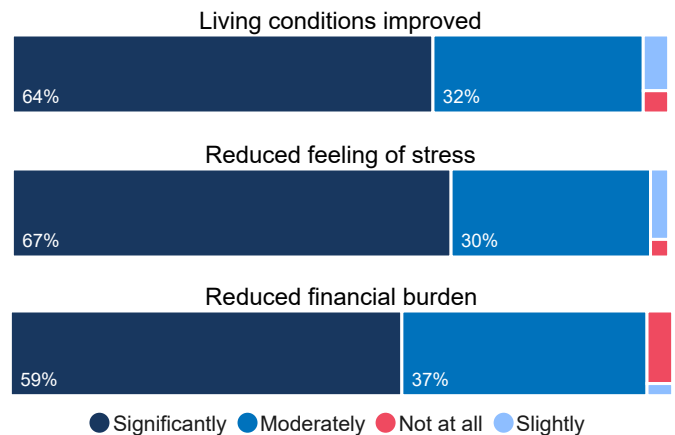
7. Outcomes

The survey also sought to understand the impact of cash assistance on the respondents, specifically in three key areas: improvement of living conditions, reduced feelings of stress, and the alleviation of the financial burden on their households. The respondents' assessments were categorized into four levels of impact: "slightly," "moderately," "significantly," and "not at all."

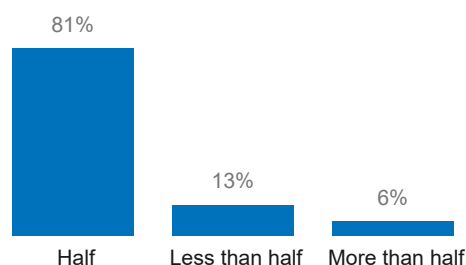
In terms of **living conditions**, 64% reported a 'significant' positive impact, 32% 'moderate,' 3% 'slight,' and 1% 'not at all.'

For **reduced stress**, 67% experienced a 'significant' reduction, 30% 'moderate,' 2% 'slight,' and 0.5% 'not at all.'

Regarding a **reduced financial burden**, 59% felt a 'significant' effect, 37% 'moderate,' 0.5% 'slight,' and 3% 'not at all.'



Meeting the households basic needs



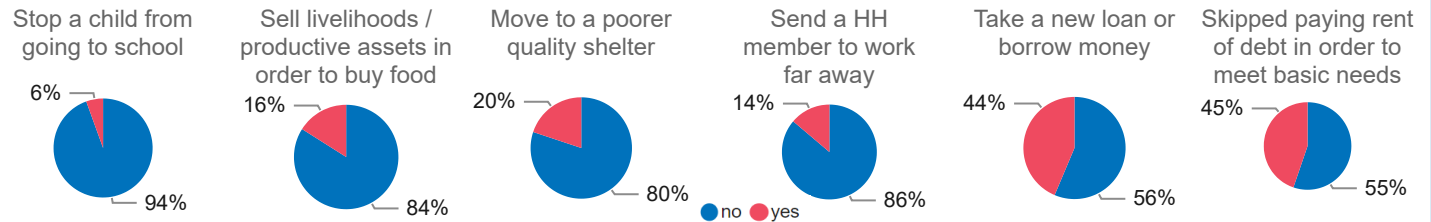
The assessment also focused on understanding how well the respondents could fulfill their households' basic needs on their own. The answers were categorized into five levels, each representing different levels at which they were able to meet these needs: "Not at all", "Less than half", "Half", "More than half (but not all)", and "All".

According to the answers, 81% reported that they were able to meet half of the basic needs of their households and another 6% reported that they were able to meet more than half. On the other hand, 13% of the respondents indicated that they were able to meet less than half of the basic needs of their household.

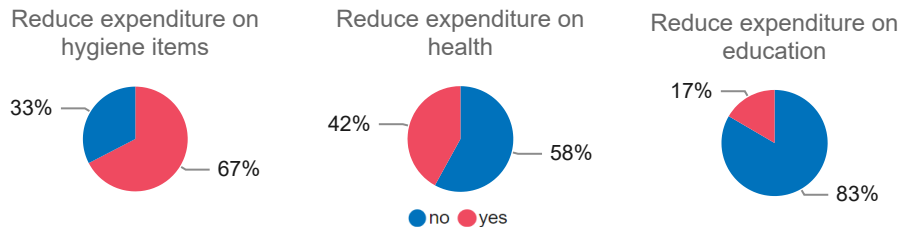
*The results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice

8. Coping mechanisms

In this section of the survey, refugees were asked whether in the four weeks prior to the data collection they have resorted to any coping mechanism in order to meet their basic needs. 6% reported they had to stop a child from going to school; 16% had to sell livelihoods or productive assets; 20% moved to a poorer quality shelter; 14% sent a household member to work far away; 44% took a new loan or borrowed money and 45% had to skip paying rent or a debt.



Similarly, some households had to resort to coping mechanisms such as reducing expenditures on hygiene items (67%) reducing expenditure on health items (42%) and reducing expenditure on education items and costs (17%), in order to buy food.



Extreme Coping mechanisms

Among the surveyed refugees only 1% have also reported resorting to extreme coping mechanisms, such as begging or asking strangers for money (n=2); or sending household member under the age of 16 to work (n=1).

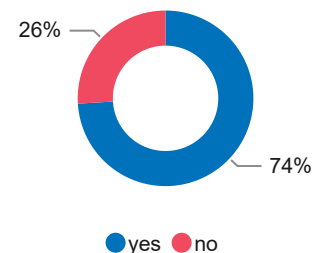


9. Accountability to Affected Population

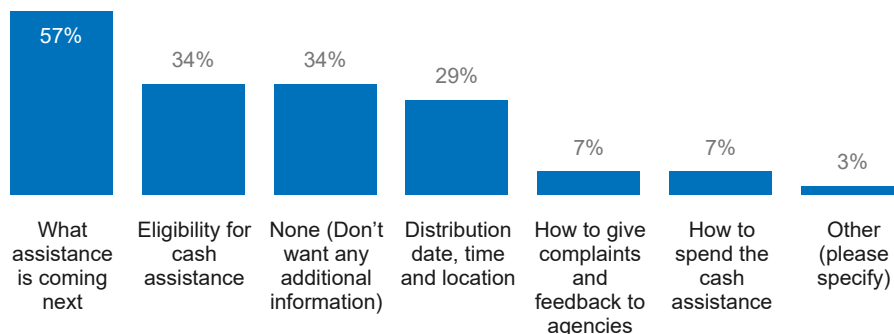
In terms of informational needs, 57% of respondents prioritized information about what assistance is coming next. Additionally, 34% of respondents expressed a desire for information regarding the eligibility criteria for cash assistance. Furthermore, 29% of respondents expressed a need for information on the distribution details, such as date, time and location.

Regarding preferences for assistance, if the program were to resume, 75% of respondents indicated a preference for cash assistance (as oppose to in-kind of a combination of both). When asked about their awareness of reporting complaints and providing feedback on cash assistance from UNHCR, 74% of respondents answered affirmatively. Among these respondents, 83% indicated that they would use the hotline as the preferred channel for reporting concerns or providing feedback. Additionally, 9% mentioned community mobilizers as their preferred means of communication, while another 9% indicated an unspecified channel of preference.

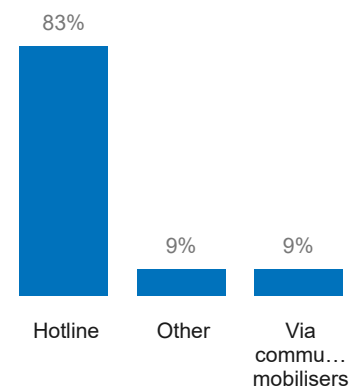
Knowing how you can report complaints and feedback on the cash assistance from UNHCR?



Information provision*



Channel



*the results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice