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

Turkiye - Q2 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 program 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. Beneficiaries residing in Hilalkent Container City redeem their cash assistance from Halkbank ATMs and those residing in Bebek Container City redeem their cash assistance from PTT branches and ATMs. 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.

Key Findings

Presence of Members with special needs: 36 percent of surveyed households have members with special needs, including individuals with disabilities and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Economic Instability and Debt: 62 percent of households rely on unskilled labour, more than half are in debt, and nearly half cannot meet the minimum expenditure basket cost, highlighting continuing financial pressures.

Improved Food Security: Severe food insecurity was eliminated among surveyed households; 95 percent reported acceptable food consumption, with notable improvement among households headed by women. Despite these improvements, the percentage of food secure households is only 4 percent and the food expenditure rate has not improved compared to the baseline survey.

Decreasing use of coping strategies: The percentage of households not using any livelihood coping strategies rose from 25 percent to 32 percent and use of consumption coping has decreased from 86 percent to 80 percent, indicating strengthened resilience and reduced reliance on negative coping mechanisms.

Gender-Based Vulnerabilities Persist: Households headed by women remain more vulnerable, with higher food insecurity rates (36%), fewer income opportunities, more reliance on assistance and 45 percent spending over 75 percent of their income on food.

Gaps in Communication and Programme Awareness: While no serious protection issues or misconduct were reported, only 45 percent of respondents feel fully informed about the program, with many unaware of reporting misconduct or beneficiary selection processes.

Satisfaction with Complaint Mechanisms: Majority of respondents (85%) know whom to contact for queries regarding the programme, and 98 percent of those who reached out to official channels (mainly ASAM) were satisfied with the responses, indicating effective feedback mechanisms.

High Satisfaction Levels: 97 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 respondents 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 Container City. Beneficiaries residing in the Bebek Container City were not included in the sample, as the assistance began in May 2025 and since the PDM data is collected from May to June 2025, any measurable change in food security could not be observed.

The data collected in the PDM survey provides a comparison to the previous baseline study conducted in September 2024 and 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 Container City. The gathered data covers various aspects of the beneficiaries' situations, including food security, livelihoods, and other cross-cutting issues.

Household Demographics

In total, 170 households participated in the PDM survey. The survey results indicate that the majority of surveyed households (87%) are headed by men, with 36 percent having at least one member with special needs, such as individuals with disabilities (11%) or pregnant and breastfeeding women (26%). Additionally, most households (54%) are medium sized, having 5-9 members, and 85 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 23 percent having completed high school or higher and 12 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 83 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, 9 percent of surveyed families have lived in other refugee camps before relocating to Hilalkent Container city, reflecting a pattern of displacement.

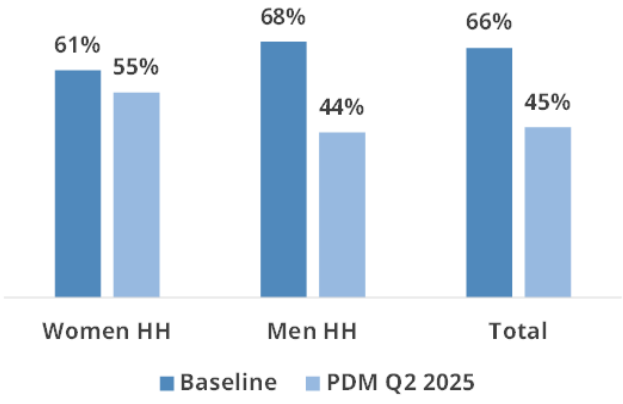
Livelihoods and Economic Conditions

There has not been a great change in income sources compared to baseline surveys. The majority of households (62%) continue to rely mainly on unskilled, casual labour, making them vulnerable to job market fluctuations, as opposed to 64 percent in the Baseline survey. Only 15 percent hold skilled jobs, indicating limited opportunities for economic advancement. WFP assistance is usually a secondary or third income source for most households.

A notable concern is the absence of women in income-generating activities and reliance on aids/gifts of households headed by women. 90 percent of households reported that women do not participate in earning income (94% in baseline), possibly due to cultural norms, childcare responsibilities, or a lack of job opportunities. Moreover, 23 percent of households headed by women rely on aid or gifts as their main income, further highlighting that women might be struggling to secure a steady income in the absence of abled-bodied men in the households.

More than half of the households (62%) surveyed have recently borrowed and have debt, further straining their financial situation, which has increased compared to 51 percent in the baseline survey. Moreover, the percentage of households that are able to meet their essential needs decreased from 66 percent to 45 percent in the PDM survey. The decrease has been more dramatic for households headed by men than by women, decreasing from 68 percent to 55 percent. This negative trend might have been caused by deteriorating economic conditions and increasing food prices.

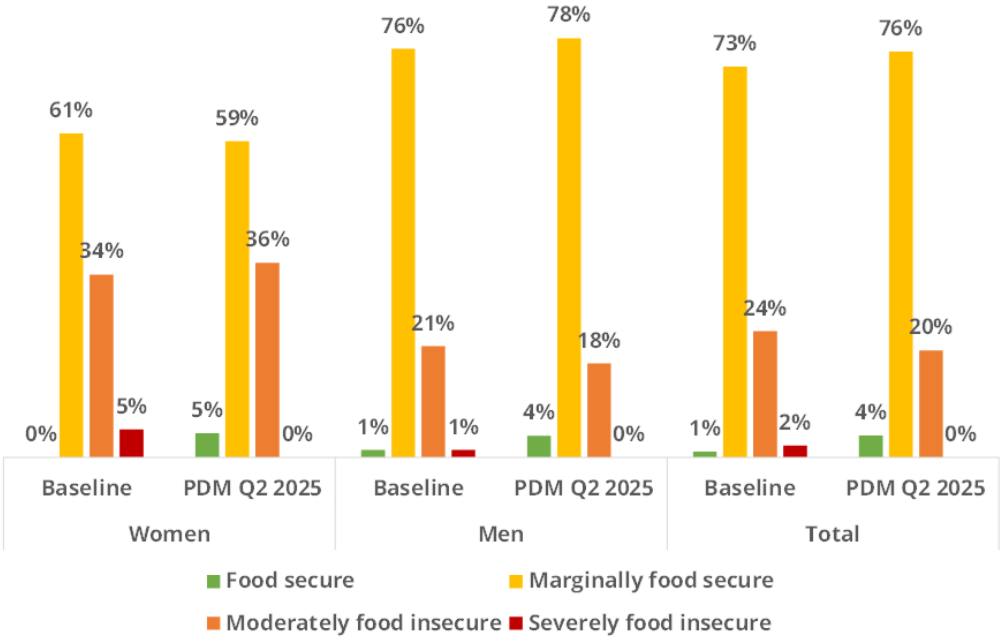
Figure 1: Economic capacity to meet basic needs by gender of the head of household



Food Security

Overall, 20 percent of surveyed households are food insecure, with the prevalence higher among households headed by women (36%) compared to households headed by men (18%). Moreover, only 4 percent of households are food secure, and the remaining 76 percent are categorized as vulnerable to food insecurity. Despite these figures, there has been some improvement in food security compared to the baseline surveys. The PDM survey results indicate that severe food insecurity is eliminated, and the food secure population has increased slightly, demonstrating the positive contribution of the assistance provided. No considerable difference in food security is observed based on household size, number of children, or number of members with special needs.

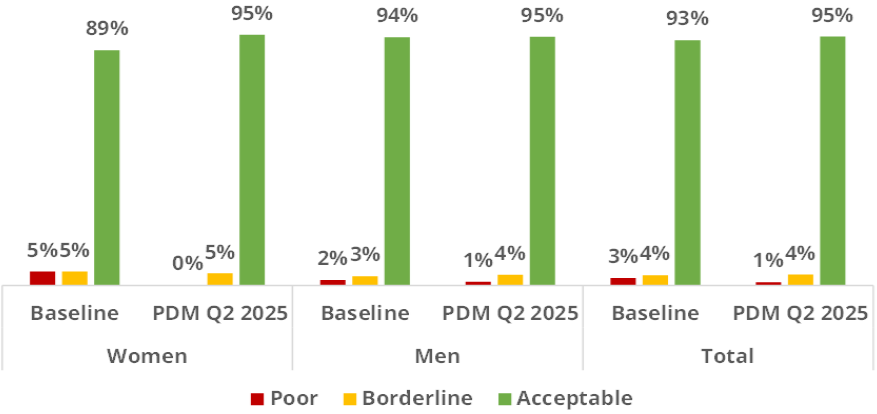
Figure 2: Food security by gender of the head of household



Food Consumption and Expenditure

Overall, 95 percent of surveyed households report an acceptable level of food consumption, which has increased from 93 percent in the baseline survey. Households headed by women experienced greater improvement, with acceptable food consumption increasing from 89 to 95 percent. This finding is also consistent with reported income sources by households headed by women, demonstrating that they are less likely to secure employment, rely more on assistance and their food security and consumption levels can be improved with assistance. Additionally, no considerable difference in food consumption has been observed among households with different characteristics such as household size, number of children or number of members with special needs.

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



There has not been a significant change compared to baseline surveys in the food expenditure rate. A considerable portion of the surveyed households (29%) allocate more than 75 percent of their household budget to food purchases. This financial strain is particularly pronounced among households headed by women, where the percentage is 45 percent, compared to 27 percent in households headed by men. This trend underscores the economic vulnerability of households headed by women, who face greater challenges in maintaining a balanced budget.

Coping Strategies

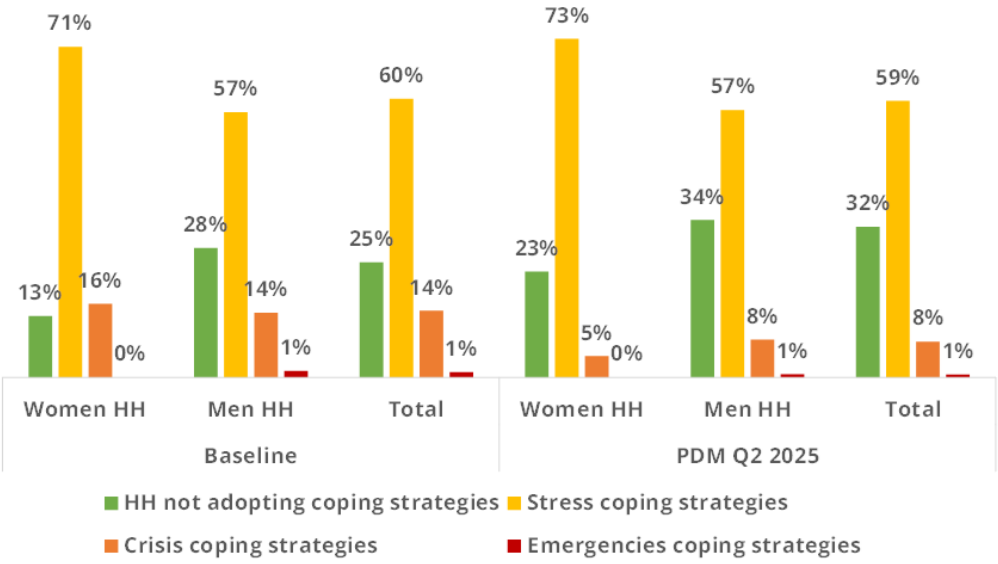
Consumption Coping Strategies:

The majority of households use at least one type of consumption coping behaviour; however, the percentage has decreased from 86 percent in the baseline to 80 percent in the PDM survey. The use of coping strategies is more common among households headed by women (91%) compared to those headed by men (78%). In fact, the frequency of using consumption coping has increased from 90 percent to 91 percent for households headed by women from baseline to PDM surveys. The findings suggest that even though there were improvements in food security and consumption, especially among households headed by women, reliance on coping mechanisms persists.

Livelihood Coping Strategies:

The percentage of households that are not resorting to any livelihood coping strategies has increased from 25 percent to 32 percent. Similar improvement was observed for both households headed by men and women. The use of more severe forms of coping strategies, such as crisis or emergency, has decreased from 16 percent to 5 percent for households headed by women, whereas the decrease was from 15 percent to 9 percent for households headed by men. In contrast, 1 percent of households headed by men continued to use emergency coping strategies, which allowed children under the age of 15 to contribute to household income, reported by 1 household. Additionally, no considerable difference is observed in the use of livelihood coping strategies between households with different compositions, such as size, members with special needs and, having children. These findings suggest a positive trend in household resilience, particularly among women-headed households, while emphasizing that a small portion of households remain highly vulnerable despite the assistance provided.

Figure 4: Use of livelihood coping strategies by gender of the head of household



The most commonly used livelihood coping strategy was borrowing money to access essential needs, reported by 56 percent of households, followed by spending savings (30%) and selling household assets and goods (28%). Additionally, no case of child marriage, begging or other unsafe work and informal migration is reported by households.

Accountability to Affected Populations

Programme Perception and Feedback

The programme did not cause protection issues and was viewed positively by respondents. All respondents received respectful treatment from WFP and partner staff and did not experience any security issues. 2 respondents stated that the programme sites could have been improved and reported lack of toilet facilities, long travel times and cost of transport being too expensive as main issues. Additionally, 2 respondents reported they experienced ID issues, which disrupted their access to assistance. On the other hand, only 45 percent of the respondents were fully informed about the program. Despite all respondents confirming that they received information on the programme in an accessible way, 25 percent are not aware of the selection criteria and 37 percent are not informed about how to report misconduct.

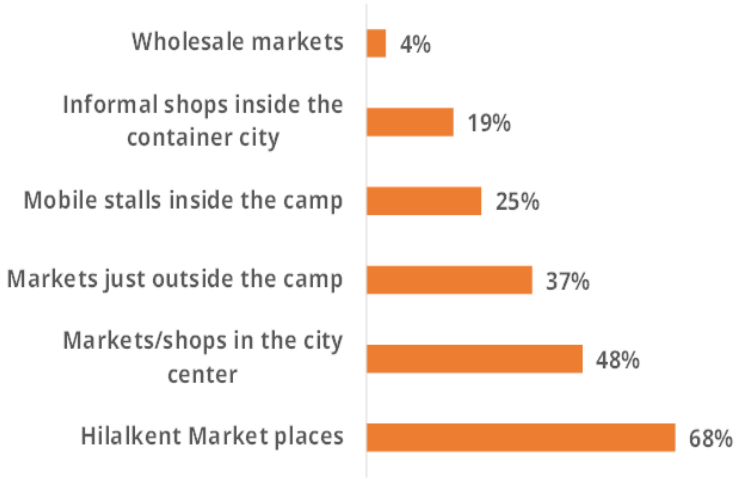
The majority of respondents (85%) who contacted for an issue they experienced regarding the programme or to receive information reported that they contacted ASAM. 98 percent of those who reached out to official channels expressed satisfaction with the response they received. No cases of favouritism, theft, or diversion of assistance were reported, which suggests that the program is being implemented with integrity.

Most of the beneficiaries reported that they are satisfied with the amount of the assistance (97%) and the modality of the assistance (99%). The remaining 2 beneficiaries reported that they prefer a bank card or IBAN transfer of cash to their existing account. 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. The majority listed Hilalkent marketplace, which was constructed by WFP and ASAM, as one of the places they prefer to use their assistance, reflecting that the connection between recovery efforts in the earthquake affected region and the cash for food programme complements each other. Main factors affecting the decision on shop preferences were reported as being easier to reach (80%) and affordable prices (55%) by respondents, proving that Hilalkent marketplace can serve residents with affordable prices.

Figure 5: Shopping preferences of respondents



Conclusion

The findings of the PDM survey conducted in Hilalkent Container City indicate that the cash for food programme has contributed positively to improving food security, food consumption, and overall household resilience among vulnerable refugee populations. Notably, the proportion of food-insecure households has decreased compared to the baseline, with severe food insecurity eliminated entirely. Acceptable food consumption levels have increased, particularly among households headed by women—underscoring the critical role of cash assistance in addressing gender-based vulnerabilities. Additionally, the decline in the use of severe livelihood coping strategies and the increase in households not resorting to any coping strategies reflect growing resilience and improved economic stability for many beneficiaries.

While the programme is largely perceived as effective and dignified—with high satisfaction reported regarding both the amount and modality of assistance—some challenges persist. A significant portion of households continue to rely on consumption coping mechanisms, and the majority allocate more than half of their budget to food, especially women-headed households. Language barriers, limited education, and low participation of women in income-generating activities further limit economic independence. Additionally, gaps in awareness about programme details and feedback mechanisms suggest a need to strengthen communication efforts. Overall, the cash for food assistance has made measurable progress in supporting vulnerable households, but continued efforts are needed to address persistent vulnerabilities and improve the long-term impact of the programme.

Recommendations

Enhance Programme Communication: Enhance awareness of selection criteria and reporting mechanisms through targeted communication campaigns, as 37 percent of beneficiaries are unaware of how to report misconduct, and 25 percent lack clarity on the selection process for beneficiaries.

Promote Women's Economic Participation: Given the low involvement of women in income-generating activities and the higher economic vulnerability of households headed by women, WFP and partners should explore complementary programming aimed at empowering women economically. This could include partnerships with other actors to facilitate women's access to dignified employment through targeted vocational training or childcare support to ease participation in the workforce.

Monitor and Address Persistent Vulnerabilities Through Tailored Support: Although overall resilience has improved, a portion of households—especially those headed by women—continue to rely on negative coping strategies and spend a disproportionate share of their income on food. Integrating additional layers of support, such as top-up cash assistance, should be considered for highly vulnerable households or linking them to broader social protection services and nutritional support, based on regularly updated vulnerability assessments.

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