

## Context



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To address the significant gaps faced by the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in meeting their basic needs, since 2019 UNHCR manages a **Multi-purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) Basic Needs Program**, which is under direct implementation. The most vulnerable cases are identified through a socioeconomic evaluation. The amount of assistance is defined by the size of the family group.

The assistance is delivered for **three or six months** through a prepaid card. With the prepaid card families can make ATM withdrawals or make purchases in stores, granting them **flexibility to prioritize their expenses**.

From January to October 2024 **2,535 people** country-wide have benefited of this program, which has meant that over **USD 748,639** has been delivered in cash assistance aimed at covering basic needs.



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## Our beneficiaries: results from our socio economic evaluation

In 2024, UNHCR developed **10,416 socioeconomic assessments** that identify refugee and asylum-seeker households' **basic needs, protection needs and coping strategies**.



Households' main expenses were **food (21%), rent (15%) and utilities (16%), and hygiene items (15%)**.

To face the **lack of food or money to buy it**, households often resort to coping mechanisms such as **reducing food portions (18%), reducing non-essential expenses (17%), borrowing for money (16%) or selling productive assets (8%)**.

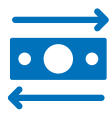
Some of these mechanisms put refugees' safety or well-being at risk, like **begging (9%) or finding food scrap (7%) on streets, sending children to work (7%) or resorting to survival sex (2%)**.



## Basic needs programme

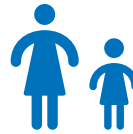
- From January to October 2024, **1,040 family groups, representing 2,535 individuals**, were reached through assistance.
- The average household size was **2.42 members**, while the average age of beneficiaries was **24.2 years old**.
- Most beneficiaries in this period were **female (53%)** and **77% are from Nicaragua**, while **45%** of the individuals are children.
- **74%** of CBI assistance was delivered in person.

## Key figures / January – October 2024



**USD 748,639** distributed through cash transfers

**2,450** transfers for an average amount of **USD 283.7**



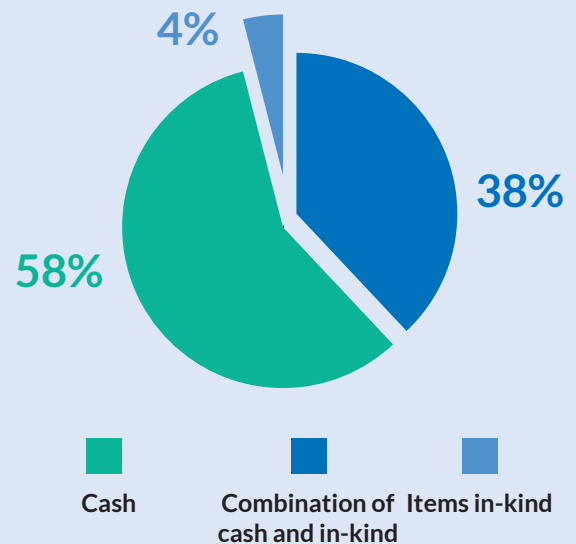
**2,535**

**53%**

total beneficiaries of MPCA program for basic needs

women and girl beneficiaries

## Impacts of MPCA: results of post-distribution monitoring



UNHCR developed its 2023 Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) in October and November with **137 families** that received cash assistance. From these households, **95%** indicated they felt safe going to spend the amount of assistance, and **98%** by keeping your money at home.

The most common expense items were **food (96%)**, **rent (64%)** and **personal hygiene items (52%)**. More than half of the families (**62%**) perceive that the program improved their living conditions significantly; also, most households also reported a relevant reduction in their stress levels (**63%**) and in the household's economic burden (**62%**).



## 2024 CBI strategy

- In 2024, the operation decided to establish a **single amount of assistance for the country** (previously it was divided into two regions with different amounts). This implies a **decrease in the amounts delivered in the Metropolitan area** and will allow UNHCR to reach more family groups.
- From the **post-delivery monitoring (PDM) focus groups**, the beneficiaries expressed the need for **basic financial education** to better manage assistance and their income. As a result, for 2024, in coordination with the Livelihoods Unit, the partner agency Omar Dengo Foundation offers **training in financial education** to all CBI beneficiaries.
- Funded by **IPA's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative** and in collaboration with UNHCR, from September 2024 to August 2025, researchers are conducting a **randomized evaluation of the Basic Needs program** to measure whether unconditional cash transfers and information about State's social and public services improve refugees' and asylum seekers' long-term economic and social integration. In light of this evaluation, different combinations of frequency vs. amount of cash transfers are being tested in the CBI program for 2024 and 2025.



## Changes in implementation: remaining gaps

Due to budgetary restrictions, from January 2024 to July 2024, **2,278 households did not receive assistance**, even though they met the socioeconomic assessment criteria. This is **73%** of the households who met such criteria.

Not reaching households with **increasing basic needs** negatively impacts their access to food, housing/shelter and hygiene, and **increases their chance to resort to negative coping strategies** to cover such needs, exposing them to **protection risks** and increasing their vulnerability.



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As of 15 November 2024



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