

Post Distribution Monitoring Report

Winter 2017-18

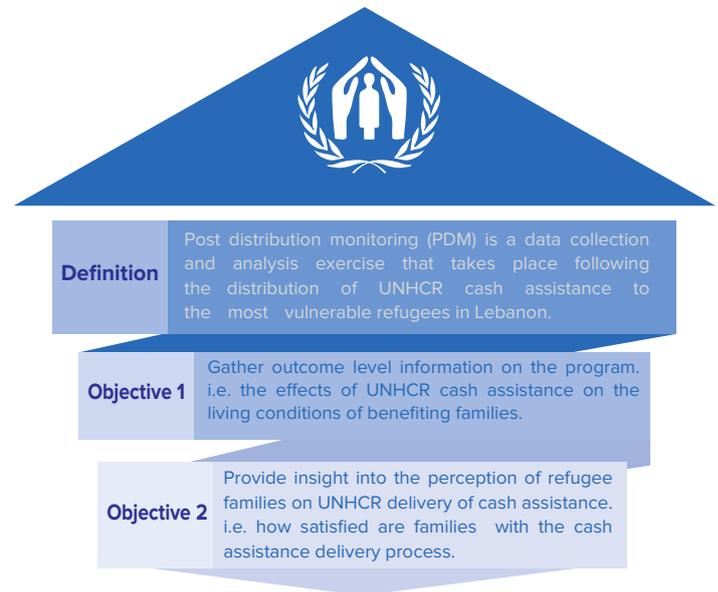


Background

During the winter of 2017/18, UNHCR provided socio-economically vulnerable refugee families with winter cash assistance (WinCAP) to overcome the economic shock and seasonal strains due to adverse weather conditions. The needs of refugee families normally increase during winter (e.g. improved shelter, heating), while their resources are weakened due to seasonal decrease in job opportunities. This causes overwhelming pressure for families to meet their essential survival needs using already limited resources. Socio-economic vulnerability is defined as families' abilities to stay above the poverty line (defined as the Minimum and Survival Expenditure Baskets (S/MEB threshold). All socio-economically vulnerable refugee families (those with predicted expenditures scores under the MEB, as per UNHCR ranking) are eligible for WinCAP, while UNHCR further prioritizes those not receiving other forms of cash assistance, across the four regions of Lebanon.

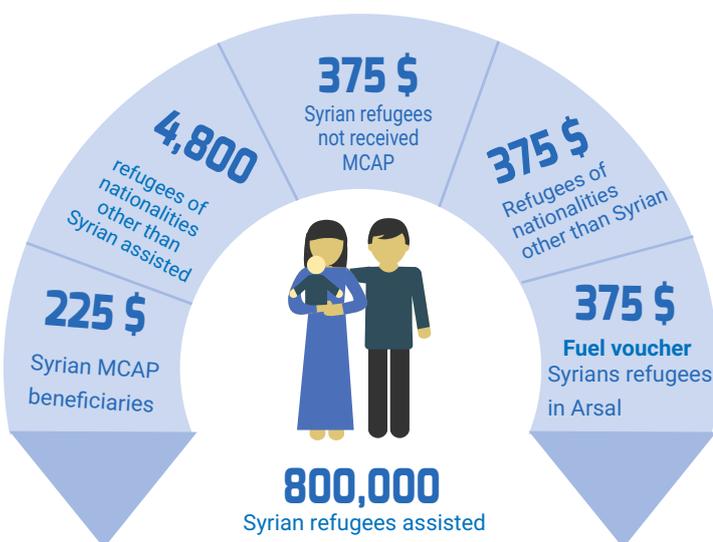
UNHCR distributed a lump sum cash transfer corresponding to assistance from November 2017 to March 2018, whose value was determined based on previous analyses of refugee expenditures during winter⁽¹⁾ and available funding. With the aim to prioritize limited resources, and in coordination with the Basic Assistance Working Group, UNHCR provided refugee families with USD 75 per month to cover winter needs. Syrian refugee families with predicted expenditures below the Survival Minimum

UNHCR Post Distribution Monitoring



Expenditure Basket, who were already receiving Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MCAP, USD 175 per family/month) received a USD 225 top up (USD 75 for three months) to cover their winter needs. Syrian refugee families with predicted monthly expenditures below the Minimum or the Survival Expenditure Basket, who were not receiving MCAP, received a higher cash transfer, amounting to 375 USD to cover their needs for five months (USD 75 for five months). Refugees of nationalities other than Syrian⁽²⁾ received a winter assistance package of USD 375, in addition to the regular monthly MCAP (USD 175 per month).

Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) is a data collection and analysis exercise that takes place following distribution of UNHCR cash assistance to the most vulnerable beneficiaries in Lebanon. The exercise aims to gather both outcome information on the programme (effects of UNHCR cash assistance on the living conditions of the beneficiaries) as well as to provide insight into the perception of refugees families on UNHCR delivery of cash assistance (how satisfied are beneficiaries with the cash assistance delivery process).



UNHCR Winter Cash Assistance Packages

- (1) UNHCR analysis of household visit data in 2016 showed that a refugee family's monthly expenditure increases at an average of USD 70-150 during the winter season (November – March).
- (2) The population of refugees of nationalities other than Syrian targeted by UNHCR does not include Palestinian refugees and is composed mainly of Iraqi families, in addition to refugees from Sudan and smaller numbers of families from Ethiopia, Egypt, Turkey, Eritrea and Somalia.

Objective and Methodology

Objective

UNHCR WinCAP PDM aims to assess the direct, or short term, outcomes of UNHCR winter cash assistance on refugee families in Lebanon using both quantitative (household visits) and qualitative methods (focus group discussions, FGDs). Syrian refugee families benefiting from WinCAP were compared with those not enrolled in the programme, designed as a control group. The selected control group provides a baseline to understand the effects of UNHCR assistance on recipient families. Due to a combination of limited resources and differences in programme design, refugees of nationalities other than Syrian who did not receive WinCAP were not surveyed as part of this exercise. All sampled refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian had expected expenditures below the MEB, and all received MCAP. Instead of the control group, their findings were compared to overall population statistics from the annual Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees of Other Nationalities (VARON).

Design and Sampling

While there was only one group of respondents among the refugees of other nationalities than Syrian (for a total of 400 families), three different groups of families were analyzed for the Syrian refugee population, for a total of approximately 1,300 families, clustered as indicated below:

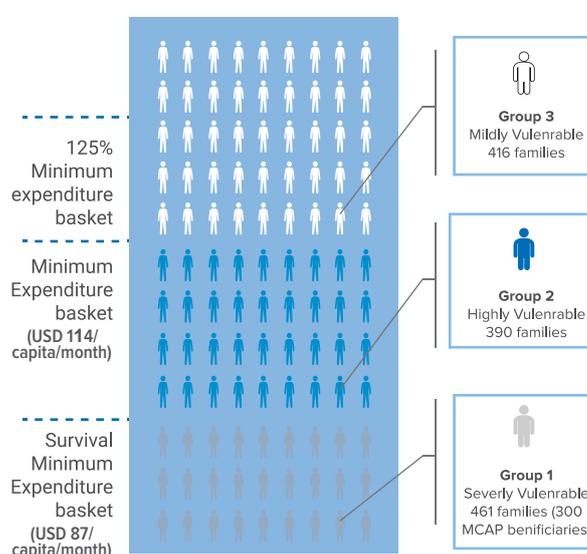
Group 1. Severely vulnerable families. All families received WinCAP. Some of them also received MCAP; all received food assistance.

Group 2. Highly vulnerable families. All families received WinCAP. None received food assistance nor MCAP.

Group 3. Mildly vulnerable families – control group of non-assisted families. Families in this group are not eligible for WinCAP, MCAP nor food assistance.

A total of six FGDs were held with Syrian recipients of WinCAP across the country. Participants were grouped based on gender and vulnerability levels.

Overview of the three sampled population groups



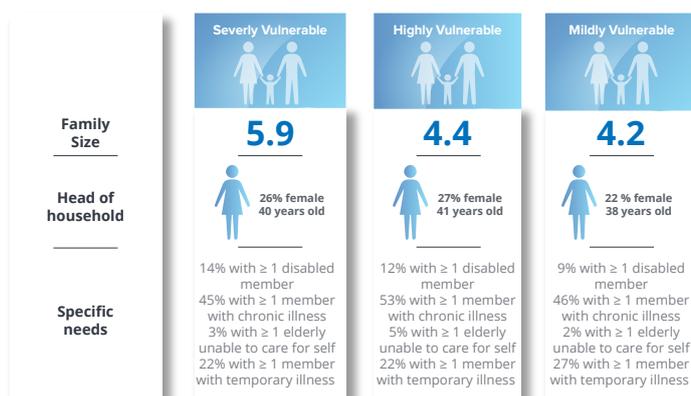
Sample Characteristics

Family Size

The family size of interviewed Syrian refugee families within the group of those severely vulnerable (approx. 6 members) was almost 20% larger than the average size of the other two groups, with families in the control group presenting the smallest size (4.2 members). This fact also contributed to a higher family size among those interviewed, as compared to the average size of 4.9 reported in the annual Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR). This was expected, given that WinCAP and MCAP recipients are selected among most vulnerable families, who are typically larger than average. Similarly, the average size of sampled families of nationality other than Syrian was 4.3 members, larger than the average family size reported in VARON (3.4 members).

Specific Needs

Refugees receiving WinCAP presented slightly higher levels of specific needs (including chronic disease and disabilities), across all nationalities. Among Syrian refugee families, a higher proportion of severely vulnerable households (14%) reported at least one member with a disability, compared to 9% within the control group. Overall, families in the control group category reported lower proportions of both elderly at risk and chronic illness.



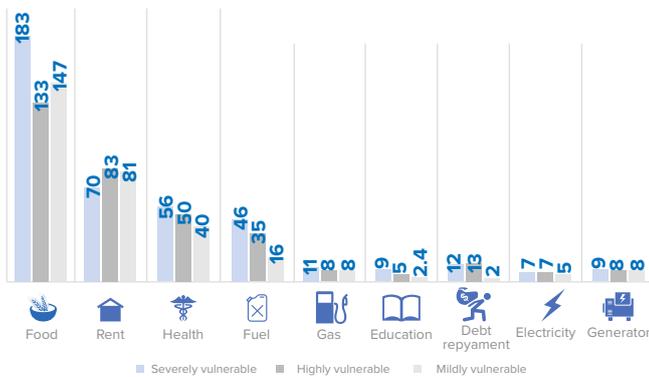
OUTCOMES OF WinCAP ASSISTANCE

Shelter

While families across all vulnerability groups seemed equally affected by adverse weather events, WinCAP recipients may have been better able to prepare for such events. Only about 10% of Syrian refugee families stated that they bought items and/or materials to prepare their shelter for the winter season, most of which (52%) were severely vulnerable families who received WinCAP. In the FGDs, families indicated shelter prices as a source of great stress to families, as they feel pressure from landlords and are in constant fear of eviction, also considering the limited work opportunities during winter. A common concern was having to move to cheaper homes where facilities are of lower standards.

Expenditure and household assets

Syrian refugee families who received WinCAP reported having more access to key winter-related assets as compared to families who did not receive WinCAP. Access to heaters was highest among severely vulnerable families who received WinCAP, MCAP and food assistance (83% of those interviewed had access to heaters). Similarly, highly vulnerable families who received only winter assistance had more access to heaters as compared to families who did not receive winter assistance (72% compared to 66%). This was also the case for mattresses, blankets, and clothing, indicating that the WinCAP assistance enabled families to better prepare for winter. As for refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian, overall spending (including winter items) is not increased compared to VARON. This may be due to the fact that the main increase is seen in rent expenditure, which commonly include utilities.



Average reported monthly family expenditure among Syrian refugees, USD

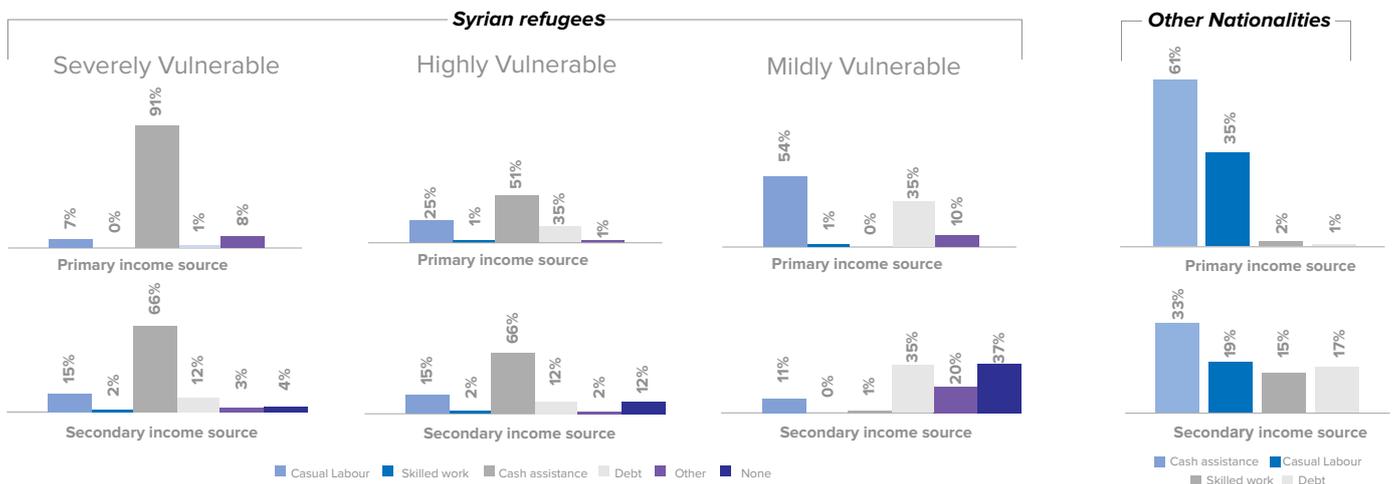


Average expenditure among Syrian refugees over the winter season, USD

Income and livelihoods

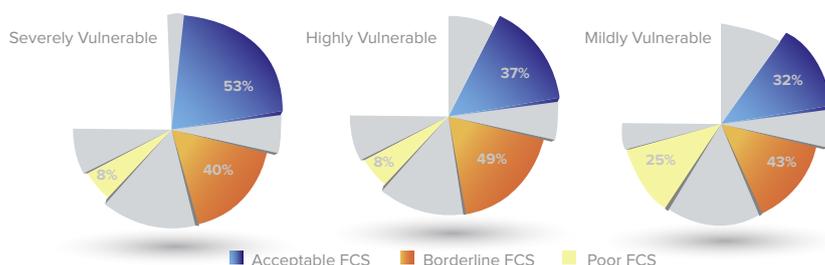
In the group discussions, families unanimously cited that job opportunities are scarce in the winter, more so than any other time of the year. Results of quantitative analysis suggest that WinCAP, as well as other forms of cash assistance, is effectively used as an additional income source by most families within the severely vulnerable category, aside from debt, cash assistance was reported as the primary income source for 91% of surveyed severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families and for 61% of assisted refugees of nationalities other than Syrian. Overall, refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian receiving WinCAP tend to rely more on casual labour (65%) as a primary source of income, while casual labour is the primary source of income for 54% of Syrian refugee highly vulnerable families and 7% of severely vulnerable families. This difference might also be due to more flexible labour regulations for the refugee population of nationalities other than Syrian – although they face a higher cost in terms of the residency permit fees, which are not waived.

Overview of main income sources



Food consumption

UNHCR WinCAP can be associated with better quantity and quality of food consumed by assisted families. Families were asked about their frequency of consumption of major food groups within the seven days preceding the interview. Winter assisted families reported, on average, a higher frequency of consumption of a number of food groups including main staples (e.g. cereals, rice, bread, etc.), vegetables, meats, and dairy.



This translates into better Food Consumption Scores (FCS) : 53% of severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families and 37% of highly vulnerable families assisted by WinCAP recorded an acceptable FCS, as opposed to 32% of non-assisted families. Refugees of other nationalities than syrian seem to fare worse compared with the overall population in VARON (52% compared to 81% recorded an adequate food consumption). Among other factors, this may also be related to families of nationalities other than Syrian not receiving food assistance.

Coping strategies

Most refugees, regardless of their vulnerability category and nationality, reported facing challenges to secure enough food for their family – either not having enough food and/or enough money to purchase food within the past month. For Syrian refugees receiving multiple forms of assistance, however, the number was slightly lower: 81% among the most severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families (receiving WinCAP, MCAP and food assistance), and 90% across the other two groups (receiving either WinCAP or no assistance at all). This may indicate that food remains a key basic need that refugee families across all categories are struggling to meet.

Decreasing expenditures (both on food and non-food expenses) was the most common coping strategy used by families. Reducing expenditure on health care was quite common with participants of the FGDs. They reported not visiting doctors and resorting to home remedies instead of medication in an effort to save money.

REFUGEES' PERCEPTION OF UNHCR Winter ASSISTANCE

Distribution of ATM cards

About 70% of sampled Syrian refugee families who received WinCAP reported that they had attended a distribution in the past five months to collect their ATM card and PIN. Almost everyone (99%) found the timing of the distribution to be convenient and 90% found the location to be convenient. For those who were somewhat satisfied with the location of the distribution site, their concern was mainly due to the site being a long distance from their place of residence. Nonetheless only one respondent mentioned facing challenges arriving at the distribution site in relation to the taxi driver (most likely that transportation costs to the site were increased). Refugee perception of the treatment from staff, security and other attendees at the distribution site was also very positive with almost everyone stating they were treated fairly at the site.



Cash withdrawal perception and safety

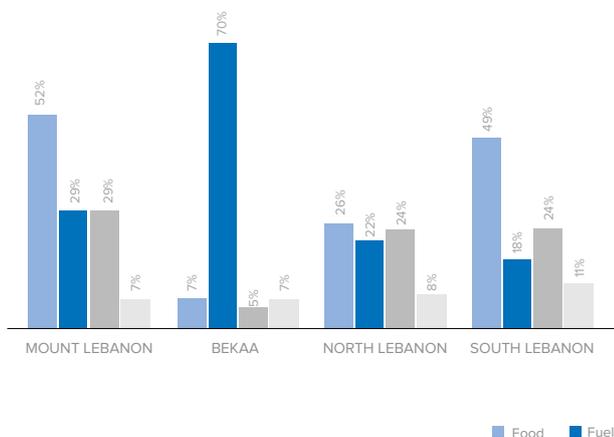
When using the ATMs to withdraw the cash assistance, over 90% of respondents across all nationalities stated that they did not face any challenge. For those who did, the main issue reported was long waiting times at the bank - mostly in the Bekaa region, where most of assisted Syrian refugee families are located.

Cash spending and decision making

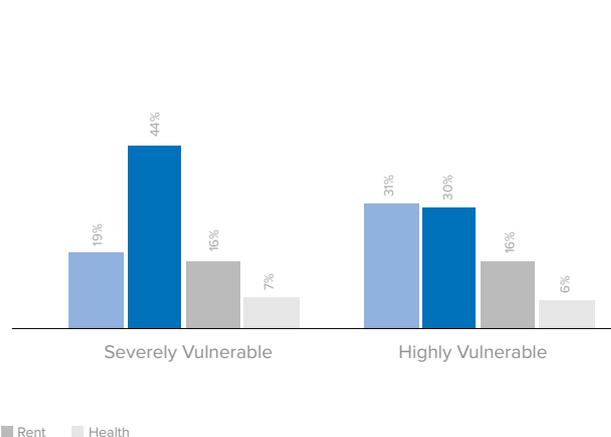
In Syrian refugee families, male heads of household were reported as the designated family member to keep possession of the ATM card and make decisions around how the cash should be spent. As for refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian, in 54% of the families, a male member (head of household, father, husband or son) was reported to be the main decision maker with regards to how to spend cash assistance. None reported that decisions around cash assistance spending caused disagreements in the family.

WinCAP was used by families to cover their most basic needs with food, fuel for heating, rent and healthcare costs among the top reported priorities among all refugees' families for WinCAP spending. The level of priority of these four expenses however, differs across the vulnerability groups and across regions. In the Bekaa, 70% of families stated that fuel for heating was their main priority, compared to 22% in the North, 18% in the South and only 3% in Mount Lebanon. For refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian, food was the main priority for winter cash assistance spending among 58% of the sample, followed by rent (25%). This is not surprising as families of nationalities other than Syrian are not recipients of food assistance in the way that some Syrian families are and are additionally burdened with high rent prices.

Primary priorities for winter cash assistance spending by region, Syrian refugees



Primary priorities for winter cash assistance spending by economic vulnerability, Syrian refugees



Complaints and feedback

The majority of respondents are aware of UNHCR complaints and feedback mechanisms related to card management and distribution. About 78% of the Syrian refugees families and 96% of refugees of nationalities other than Syrian stated that their preferred way to file a complaint or provide feedback related to the management of the cash assistance card is by calling the UNHCR/WFP call center or the UNHCR field hotline. This includes issues such as card replacement, report of stolen card or PIN requests. Most of the others (14% of Syrian refugees) indicated that they prefer to approach UNHCR desk office in person. Preferences also depend on the type of complaint/feedback to be filed, with more protection oriented issues likely being addressed directly to UNHCR desks.

Approximately 8% of Syrian and 5% of refugee families of nationalities other than Syrian assisted through WinCAP stated that they had registered a complaint related to assistance. The complaints registered were mainly in relation to lost cards or PINs and inquiries about other types of cash assistance. Most of those (60%) who reported a lost card or PINs had the problem resolved at the time of the interview.



Conclusions and Recommendations

- WinCAP provided cash assistance to families as necessary additional income during the winter months. Families reported a decrease in job opportunities across the board during this season and WinCAP allowed them to decrease their dependency on debt, while increasing purchases of winter related items.
- Among Syrian refugee families receiving both MCAP and food assistance, WinCAP provided an effective complement to the other forms of assistance. Families receiving multiple forms of cash assistance reported more positive outcomes on key issues including shelter preparation, food coping strategies and expenditure on winter related expenses.
- Covering rent prices is indicated as one of the main seasonal challenges, creating stress within the families, for refugees of all surveyed nationalities, regions, and vulnerability levels. This proved to be particularly challenging for refugees of nationalities other than Syrian facing high rent prices in Mount Lebanon. High rent prices pose a risk to families who consider coping by living in less than standard conditions.
- The refugee community is well aware of different assistance packages over the years and build their expectations based on that. Further exploring the expectations and related needs of the populations of concern to UNHCR would provide additional programmatic insight and allow for the strengthening of the existing system.