UNHCR Yemen post cash distribution monitoring

How UNHCR cash assistance supports displaced Yemenis at risk of famine

Background

UNHCR staff talking with Saleh, a 65-year IDP in Sa'ada who recently received an SMS notifying him of his eligibility for cash assistance © UNHCR

As part of UNHCR's interventions to ensure that extremely vulnerable displaced Yemeni families at risk of famine have the necessary means to buy food and other essential items, in April 2021 alone, UNHCR assisted 47,458 IDP families (some 300,400 individuals) with multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) in 18 governorates. This assistance has been made possible through the generous support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates via the Famine Relief Fund, as well as the United States of America and the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani Humanitarian Fund. The programme targets in particular displaced families (IDPs) residing in districts classified as highly food insecure (IPC4+). Of note, UNHCR's extensive programme specifically aimed at addressing IDPs' needs makes it possible to target families who because of their displacement are four times more at risk of hunger than the rest of the Yemeni population. In this respect, within the IDPs, eligible families are selected according to their socio-economic vulnerability, demographic profile and protection risk profiles. The selected households countrywide receive a disbursement of YER 122,000 to 141,000 (around USD 200), based on the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) monthly transfer value set by the Yemen Cash and Market Working Group (CMWG). The latter considers the average household basic survival needs and in-country inflation. Following the distributions to the selected families, UNHCR has conducted an extensive post distribution monitoring (PDM) exercise to understand their expenditure patterns and evaluate the impact of the assistance provided on their capacity to be freed from hunger.

Objective of PDM

To evaluate the impact of the cash assistance on selected families and how the cash assistance contributed to reducing their food insecurity, UNHCR through its Third-Party Monitoring Partner, Grand Thorton, undertook a PDM from 4 May to 2 June. The exercise aimed at assessing the:

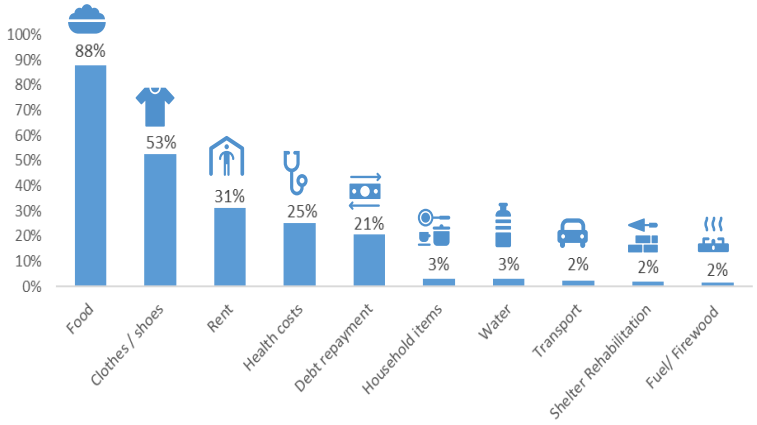
- Impact of cash assistance on the household's food security status and household's' expenditure on food and on other household's needs.
- Impact of the cash assistance on the household's food consumption.
- Coping mechanisms adopted by the families before receiving cash assistance.
- Household's safety and security in terms of access to distribution sites and markets as well as goods and services.
- Service quality in the delivery of cash assistance by the financial service providers as well as household's preferred distribution modality.

Methodology

- A sample of 2,264 households in IPC4+ locations benefitting from the assistance (1,329 in the North and 935 in the South) were selected and interviewed for the PDM. The sample represents about 5% of the total number of households that received assistance in April.

Key findings

Use of cash assistance



When asked how they spent the cash they received through UNHCR (families can choose all that applies), **88% of the respondent families mentioned food**, 53% buying clothing and 31% paying rent. Health and medicine were the answer for 25% of the families interviewed and debt payment was the answer for 21%.

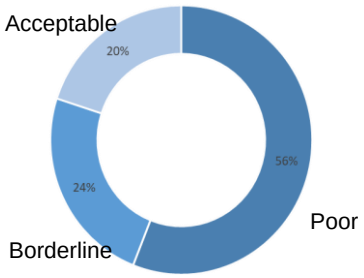
- The slight reduction in the expenditure on food compared to the latest PDM conducted by UNHCR in late 2020 seems to be explained by the increase in expenditure on clothing due to the Eid, where there is an increase of demand of these items for children.
- Similarly, the increase of expenditure on rent is explained by a noticeable increase of risk of eviction due to the reduction of available support in cash for rent from most humanitarian actors during this period due to the earmarking of funding received to address food insecurity.

Food consumption score

Food consumption patterns and habits of IDP families receiving cash

- **24%** of HHs with **acceptable** food consumption
- **20%** of HHs with **borderline** (mid-point) food consumption
- **56%** of HHs with **poor** (unacceptable) food consumption

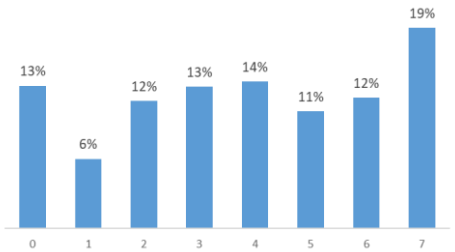
Two third of the respondents with poor food consumption score



The findings clearly reveal that two thirds of the respondent households remain in critical need of assistance to be able to buy food in sufficient quantity and quality and that steady cash assistance remains crucial to achieve the long-term impact of averting famine and improve long-term resilience of internally displaced families.

Information on food security and lack of resources to buy food

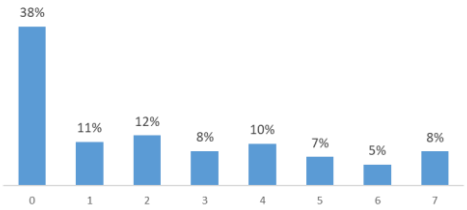
How often did your household have to rely on less preferred and less expensive food options?



More than half of the respondents (56%) indicated having to rely on less preferred food options for more than half of the time. Only 13% indicated having the means to buy they food they preferred.

Times per week

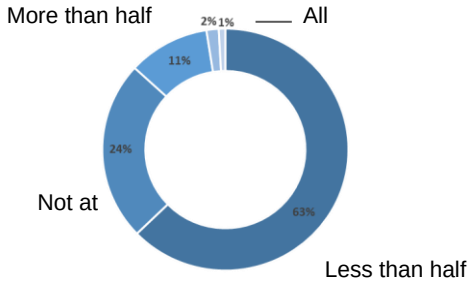
How often did your household have to reduce the number of meals per day?



Some 38% of the respondents reported not having to skip any meals during the week, whereas 62% reported having to reduce their number of meals at least once during the week. **Two-third of respondents were thus still forced to reduce their food consumption.**

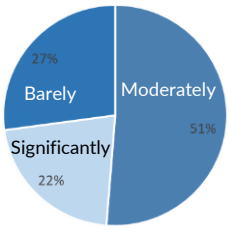
Impact of the assistance on meeting basic needs

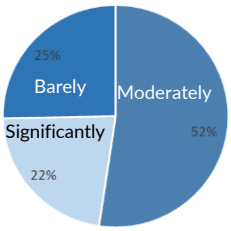
Only 11% of the households claimed the assistance helped them meet more than half of their basic needs, while **63% of the respondents indicated being able to meet less than half of their basic needs, and a significant 24% stating they were unable to meet their needs at all**. This confirms the severe impact of conflict-induced displacement on the ability of families to make ends meet.



Did UNHCR cash assistance ...

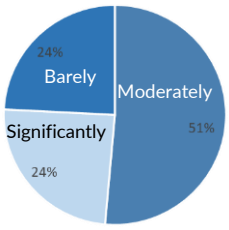
Improve your living conditions?





Reduce the financial burden of your household?

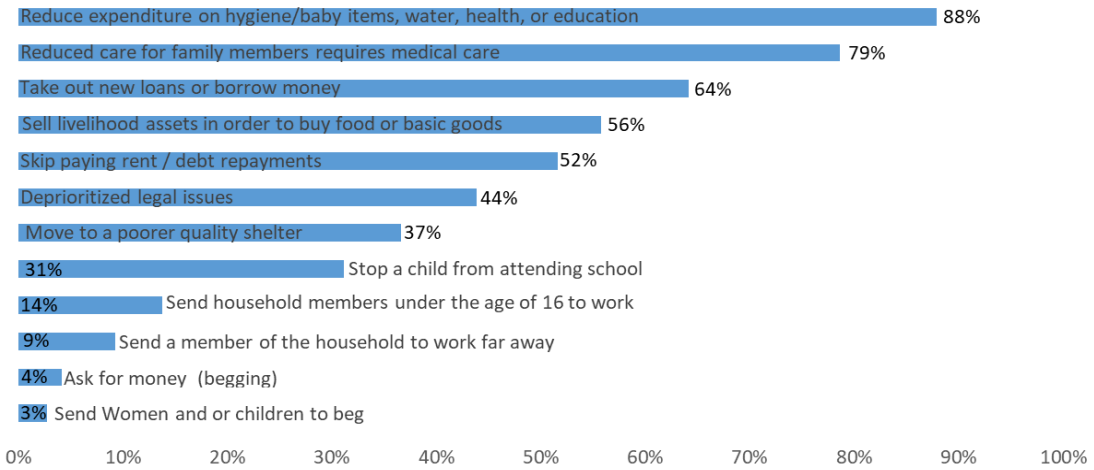
Reduce feelings of stress?



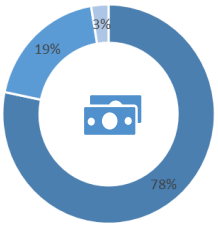
Although most respondents still struggle to make ends meet, **two-third of respondents noted that cash assistance was making a difference in their life** and in their capacity to cope with the stress of being displaced and unable to fend for themselves.

Coping mechansims

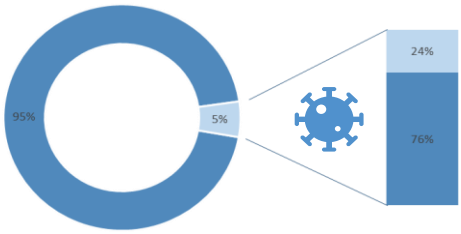
When asked on harmful measures taken by members of the household in the past four weeks prior to receiving cash from UNHCR to overcome food shortage, **88% reported having to reduce general expenditure on water, hygiene, health, or education**, **79% had to reduce expenditure on medical care** and **64% had to borrow money**. In addition, up to 31% of families had to refrain from sending children to school, 14% had to engage in child labour and 4% had to beg – all coping mechanisms impacting on the protection space.



Receiving and managing the cash assistance



78% of families were very satisfied with the amount they received, 19% were satisfied and only 3% reported not being satisfied.

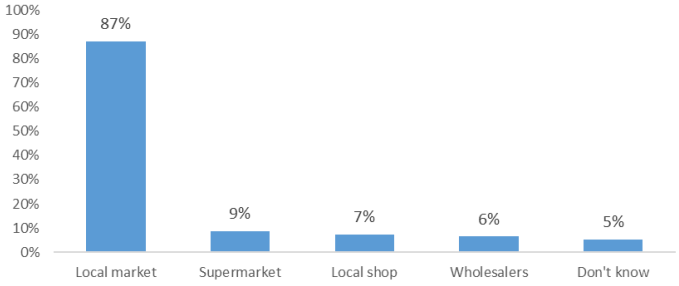


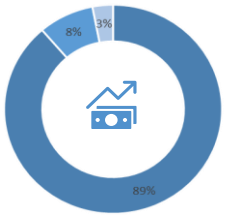
95% of the respondents mentioned that they felt safe while receiving the cash assistance.

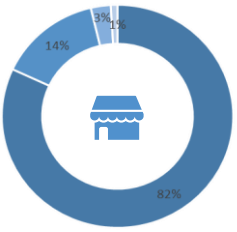
Only 5% mentioned they felt unsafe while doing so. Out of those 5% who felt unsafe, 24% highlighted that they feared being exposed to COVID-19.

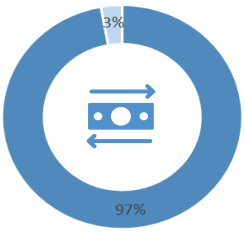
Where was the cash assistance spent?

87% of the respondents spent the assistance on local markets, 9% in supermarkets and 7% in local shops.







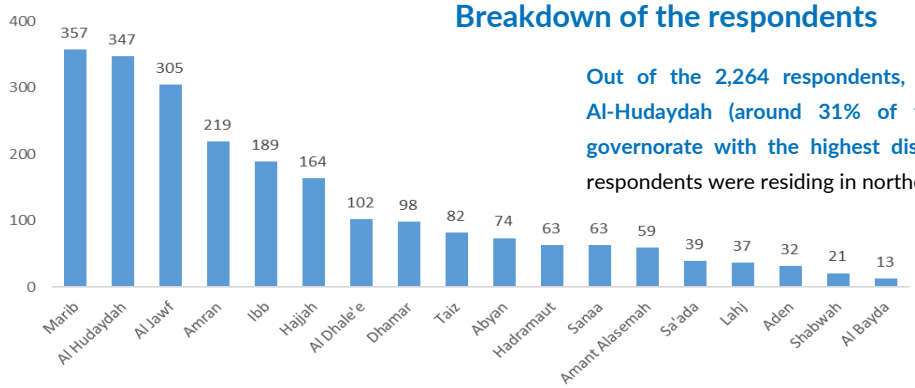


89% of the respondents indicated that prices increased in the last four weeks. This may explain why some 87% of the respondents reported not being able to meet half or all of their basic needs during the reporting period.

82% of the respondents found everything they needed in the local market, while 14% found most of it. Only 1% reported not being able to find what they were looking for. This demonstrates that the local markets provide sufficient options for displaced families to respond to their most pressing needs, including food. Food is available but not affordable by many in Yemen, in particular IDPs.

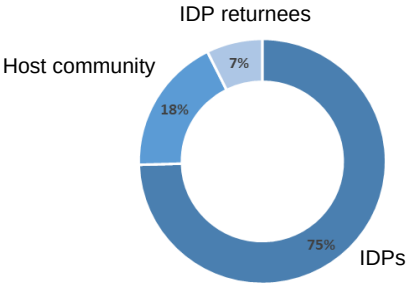
97% of the respondents did not face any security, access, or safety problems spending the assistance in markets and local shops.

Breakdown of the respondents

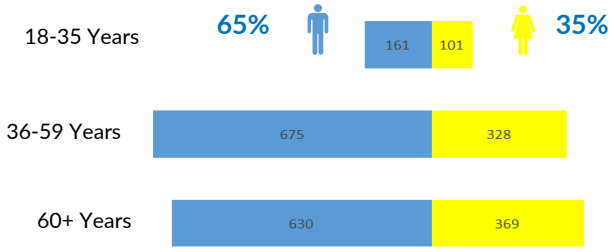


Out of the 2,264 respondents, 357 where from Marib and 347 from Al-Hudaydah (around 31% of the total respondents) which are the governorate with the highest displacement figures. In total, 59% of the respondents were residing in northern Yemen and 41% in southern Yemen.

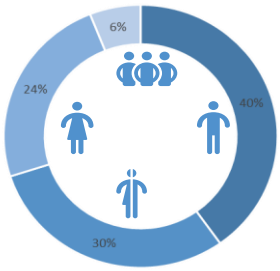
Respondents by type



Age and gender breakdown



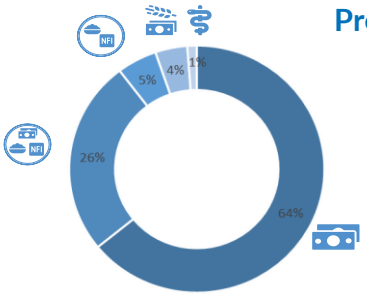
Decision making in the household



40% of respondents indicated the male head of household decided how to spend the cash, **30%** said it was a joint decision and **24%** that it was the female head of household. A remaining **6%** comprised other options (father, mother in law, caregiver, etc.). In total, **more than half of the decisions (54%) regarding the use of cash was taken with the involvement of a woman.**

99% of the respondents mentioned that they did not have any disagreement within the family on how to spend the cash received from UNHCR.

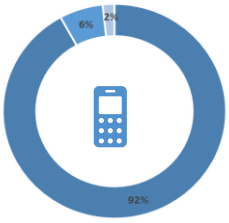
Preferance of future assistance



64% of the respondents mentioned that they prefer to receive assistance in the form of cash in the future. Only **26%** prefer a combination of cash and in-kind and **5%** said they would prefer in-kind assistance (food or non-food items). **4%** indicated preference for being assisted in securing livelihoods opportunities and **1%** for healthcare.

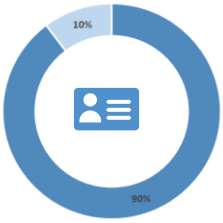
Satisfaction and adequate delivery of the assistance by service providers

Communication of eligibility - SMS



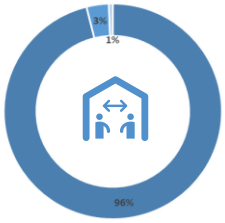
92% of HH received a Hawala SMS to inform them about their eligibility for cash assistance on time. 2% received the SMS late, and 6% reported not receiving it and had to rely on the community centers to check and confirm their eligibility.

Identification by the financial service provider

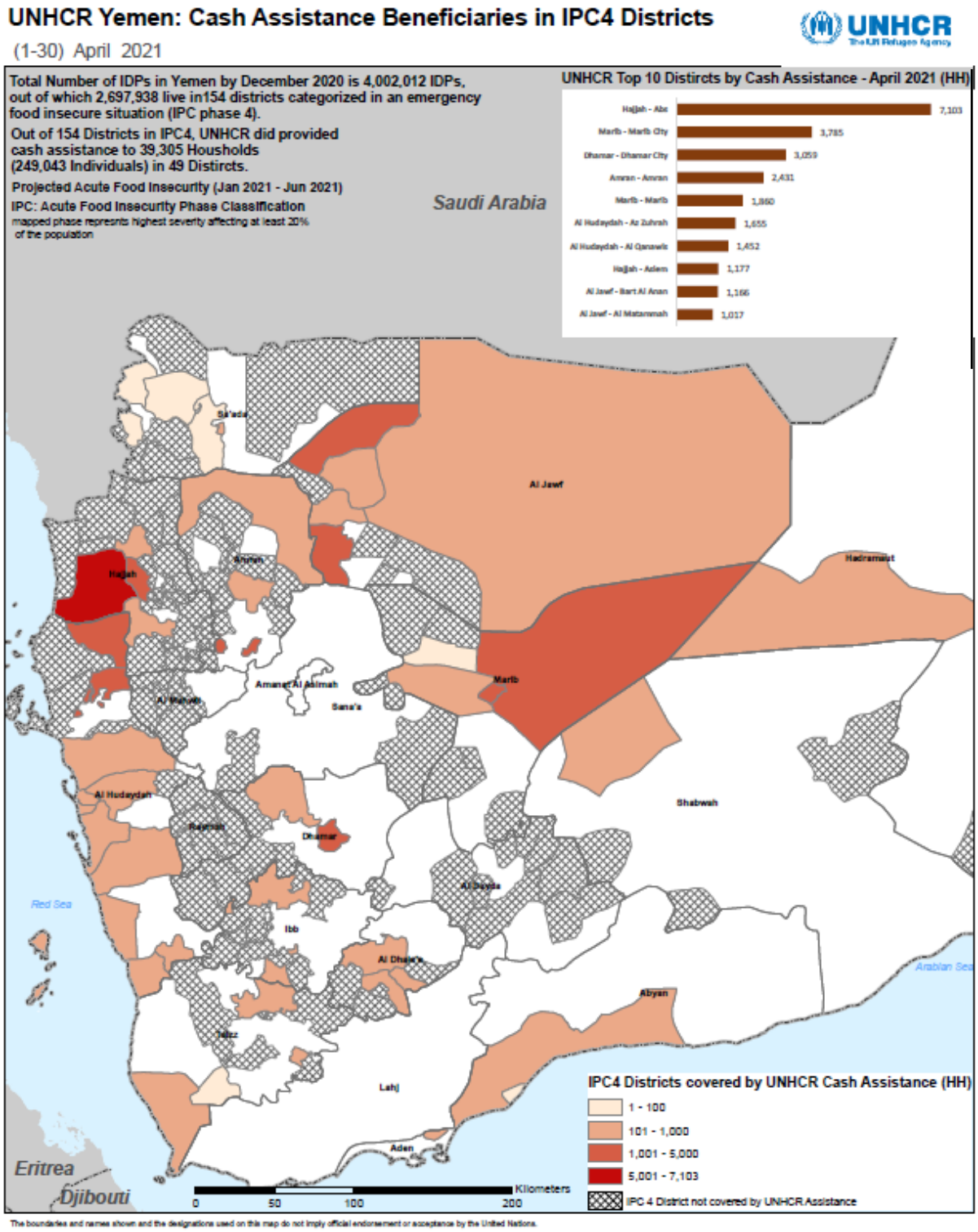


90% of respondents did not face any issue with their identification at the cash point. **10%** reporting issues with their IDs at the bank (mainly not matching the list provided to the bank by UNHCR or containing wrong information).

Quality of services by the financial service provider



96% of the respondents mentioned that they were satisfied of the service they received at the bank.



Special thanks to donors

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by major donors to cash interventions in Yemen in 2021: **The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates through the Famine Relief Fund | United States of America | Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani Humanitarian Fund**