



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Guatemala

CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS 2021 POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING REPORT



CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS

2021 POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING

REPORT

Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) is performed by UNHCR and its partner agencies for cash assistance using corporate-defined methodology and tools adapted to the Covid-19 context. This exercise covers various aspects of the programme, including process, implementation, outcomes of cash usage, negative coping mechanisms, protection concerns, and communication/feedback mechanisms. This report covers households that had received a CBI payment in the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2021.

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[COVER PHOTOGRAPH:]

UNHCR accompanying beneficiaries to collect their first cash assistance in San Cristobal Verapaz, Alta Verapaz. Hiram Villarreal / October 2021

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Guatemala, UNHCR provides unrestricted and unconditional multi-purpose cash assistance under its basic needs programme for a duration of between three and ten months. Populations eligible for basic needs assistance include asylum-seekers and refugees (AS/REF), Guatemalans who are part of the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) programme, Deportees with protection needs as well as other Guatemalans at the risk (GAR)¹. The cash assistance covers rent, food, utilities, and hygiene expenses, and ensures that families can prioritize their own needs in a dignified manner, without resorting to high-risk behaviours or negative coping mechanisms.

The Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) exercise was carried out in November 2021 and included 251 households representing asylum-seekers and refugees, Guatemalans in the PTA programme, and other Guatemalans at risk. Nearly all respondents were cardholders (94%), defined as the person registered with UNHCR to receive the assistance. The majority of respondents were women (63%). More than 90% of the households reported significant or moderate improvement in living conditions and 81% in stress reduction. 95% of beneficiaries could cover all or at least half of their basic needs with cash assistance. On the other side, 48% of households relied on one or more negative coping strategies to cover their expenses.

The cash assistance is used for the intended purposes (94% of households spending on food, 42% on utilities, and 24% on rent). However, cash is also used to a significant extent for other basic needs (38% for health costs, 34% for hygiene items, and 22% for water). Most importantly, there is a significant discrepancy in how different beneficiary groups use their cash, most noticeably concerning rent payments between asylum-seekers and refugees (non-nationals) and nationals with protection needs in Guatemala.

Markets were functional, with 92% of respondents being able to find key items and services when needed and 94% with the desired quality. 84% of households reported an increase in (mainly food) prices in the last four weeks. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (93%) prefer cash, with 59% preferring cash as the sole modality, and 34% preferring a combination of cash and other types of assistance. Only 2% prefer in-kind. Less than half (46%) of the respondents were aware of the available feedback mechanisms managed by the World Food Programme and UNHCR.

¹ Guatemalans at risk (GAR) is a broader term that in this report includes Guatemalans living in socially vulnerable communities.

2. INTRODUCTION: CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN GUATEMALA

Guatemala is a country in Central America, sharing borders with Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize. Due to its geographic location, it is a country of reception for asylum-seekers and refugees, and a place of transit for mixed movements, among which are people in need of international protection. Guatemala is also a country of origin for displacement, while at the same time receiving a large number of returnee and deportee population. In this context, UNHCR in Guatemala focuses on supporting the government to strengthen its asylum system within a framework of respect for due process and protection principles, strengthening of protection networks, and the identification of people with international protection needs.

In 2021 as well as in 2022, UNHCR is working along three main axes: protection and prevention, access to basic needs, livelihoods and solutions, which together form the wider protection and solutions strategy. UNHCR's cash assistance programme in Guatemala was launched in May 2020 as an emergency humanitarian response to cover basic needs, namely, food, hygiene items, utilities, and may include rental support as well. Beneficiaries of the programme receive monthly multi-purpose cash grants, for a set number of months (3, 6 or 10). The transfer value depends on the size of the household and averages US\$350 per month.

Initially, the CBI programme targeted asylum-seekers and refugees and, from September 2020 onwards, it was expanded to include Guatemalans in need of international protection who are being resettled through the Protection Transfer Arrangement. Households undergo a scorecard specific needs assessment, to identify and prioritize those most in need of critical financial support, and to determine the duration of assistance. As of October 2021, UNHCR started to assist Deportees with protection needs and other Guatemalans at the risk under basic needs and livelihoods sectors.

Assistance was distributed indirectly through an UN-to-UN agreement with World Food Programme (WFP), using their Financial Service Provider Banrural. Banrural is the bank with the widest geographical coverage in the country and is the provider of choice for several humanitarian organizations and programmes and will be the Financial Service Provider of UNHCR as of 2022 during the direct implementation of CBIs. Families that enter the cash assistance programme receive a WFP Scope Card (UNHCR ProGres Card as of 2022) which acts as a token or beneficiary ID that allows them to collect cash over the counter at Banrural branches.

Previous PDM assessments surveyed asylum-seeker and refugee beneficiaries only. However, starting from January 2021 the surveys included Guatemalans who are part of the PTA programme and other Guatemalans at risk receiving cash assistance to cover their basic needs. In 2021, 10,121 individuals received cash assistance representing 88% of the individuals registered with UNHCR. A total of 8,300 payments were made with a budget of approximately US\$ 3,400,000.

3. PDM METHODOLOGY

Primary household data was collected between 22 November and 30 November 2021. Due to Covid-19 related restrictions and risks, household surveys were conducted by phone. No in-person interviews, home visits or focus groups discussions were conducted during this period.

The enumerators were trained on interview techniques and referral mechanisms, as well as on the use of the digital tool to record survey responses. During data collection, a debrief session was held with all enumerators to promptly address any technical issues as well as to capture qualitative or anecdotal information to further qualify and contextualize quantitative findings.

Within each type of beneficiary population group who were treated as strata, disproportional stratified random sampling was used applying an Age-Gender-Diversity approach. The sample size was calculated with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 7 for each stratum (population group). An additional 10% was included in the resulting sample size to account for non-respondents. The pool included all households that had received a CBI payment between September and November 2021. Contact for each household was attempted three times. Enumerators attempted calls on varying days and times, using all provided telephone numbers. The non-response rate was 39%.

Figure 1: Beneficiary figures and sample size

Population Group (Type of beneficiary) / Stratum	Beneficiary HHs (Sampling frame)	Target sample size	Respondents	Percentage (weight) of respondents within the total
AS/REF	161	89	69	27.5%
PTA	126	77	69	27.5%
GAR	950	163	113	45%
All beneficiaries	1,237	329	251	100%

4. KEY FINDINGS

Characteristics of Respondents

- Of the 251 survey respondents, 63% were female, 37% were male; 96% were aged 18-59 and 4% were over 60. 94% of the respondents reported being the person registered with UNHCR to receive the assistance (i.e., the cardholder or recipient) and 6% another family member of the cardholder.
- In total, the interviewed households were comprised of 1,081 individuals (53% women, 47% men), with an average household size of 4.31. The current sex breakdown of all 2021 beneficiaries is 63% women, 36% men, 1% other.
- When broken down by nationality, 73% of the interviewed beneficiaries were from Guatemala, 12% from El Salvador, 8% from Honduras, 4% from Nicaragua, and 3% from other nations, which is representative of UNHCR's beneficiaries in 2021.

Other Income Sources

- Only around one-third of the respondents (37%) solely relied on UNHCR income, while the other two-thirds reported some level of formal or informal income. Guatemalan beneficiaries reported almost having no support from friends/family or the Guatemalan government, while asylum-seekers and refugees seem to be able to better diversify their source of income.
- A small number of the asylum seeker population reported additional support from NGOs or remittances but also reported higher levels of debt.

Figure 2: Sources of income or support households received or used in the past 4 weeks (%)

Income Source	AS/REF	PTA	GAR	TOTAL
Informal income generating activities e.g. casual /seasonal labour	38%	35%	49%	42%
None - only income was the cash from UNHCR	23%	46%	41%	37%
Formal income generating activities e.g. any business or activities generating money, or salary	43%	33%	9%	25%
Other	3%	3%	5%	4%
NGOs/agencies – giving material support	10%	0%	0%	3%
Loans (debt or credit)	7%	0%	1%	2%
Remittances	4%	3%	0%	2%
NGOs/agencies – giving cash support	4%	0%	1%	2%
NGOs/agencies – giving other support	6%	0%	0%	2%
Savings	1%	0%	0%	0%
Support from friends / family (locally)	0%	0%	1%	0%
Help from Guatemalan government	1%	0%	0%	0%

Expenditures

- Beneficiaries were asked to list their top expenditure items in the past four weeks. The top 5 expenditures include: food, utilities and bills, health costs and medicines, hygiene items and rent.
- Disaggregated by types of beneficiary households, the greatest difference in expenditure is due to rent, with 86% of asylum-seekers and refugees using the assistance for rent, while only 22% of Guatemalans in the PTA programme and 3% of the other Guatemalans at risk have rent expenses.

Figure 3: Household expenditures in %

Expenditure Items	AS/REF	PTA	GAR	TOTAL
Food	86%	97%	97%	94%
Utilities and bills (e.g. electricity, water bills, phone calling credit)	45%	72%	22%	42%
Health costs (including medicines)	42%	43%	32%	38%
Hygiene items	26%	29%	42%	34%
Rent	62%	22%	3%	24%
Water	33%	23%	14%	22%
Transport	29%	29%	12%	22%
Firewood / Fuel for cooking or heating	14%	23%	21%	20%
Clothes / shoes	12%	28%	19%	20%
Assets for a livelihood activity	32%	6%	15%	17%
Saved some money	3%	4%	27%	14%
Debt repayment	20%	6%	6%	10%
Education (e.g. school fees, uniform, books)	6%	17%	6%	9%
Other	19%	12%	2%	9%
Household items (e.g. mattress, blankets, jerry can)	14%	3%	8%	8%
Shelter repair (e.g. rehabilitation, materials)	1%	3%	13%	7%
Gave some to other family members / relatives / friends	3%	3%	3%	3%
Legal assistance / documents	1%	7%	1%	3%
Entertainment (including alcohol, cigarettes)	1%	0%	0%	0%

Results of Cash Assistance

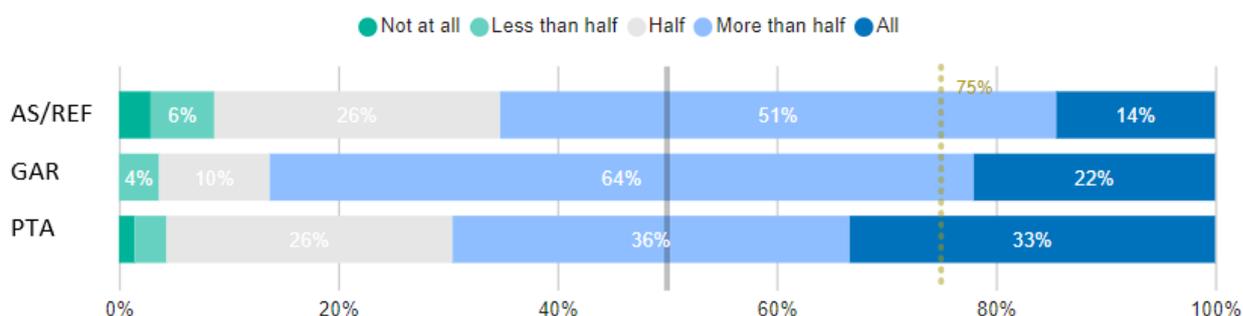
Overall well-being indicators show:

- 91% of respondents reported moderate or significant improvement in living conditions.
- 81% of respondents reported a moderate or significant reduction in feelings of stress.
- 38% of respondents reported moderate or significant improvement in access to shelter.
- 35% of respondents reported moderate or significant improvement in access to livelihoods.

Meeting Basic Needs

Overall, in the PDM conducted in November 2021, 23% of the surveyed households were able to meet all, 53% more than half, and 19% met half of their basic needs, meaning that 95% of the beneficiaries met at least half of their basic needs and 76% of the beneficiaries met at least more than half of their basic needs. Only 4% of the households reported meeting less than half of their basic needs.

Figure 4: Meeting basic needs of the household disaggregated by population group

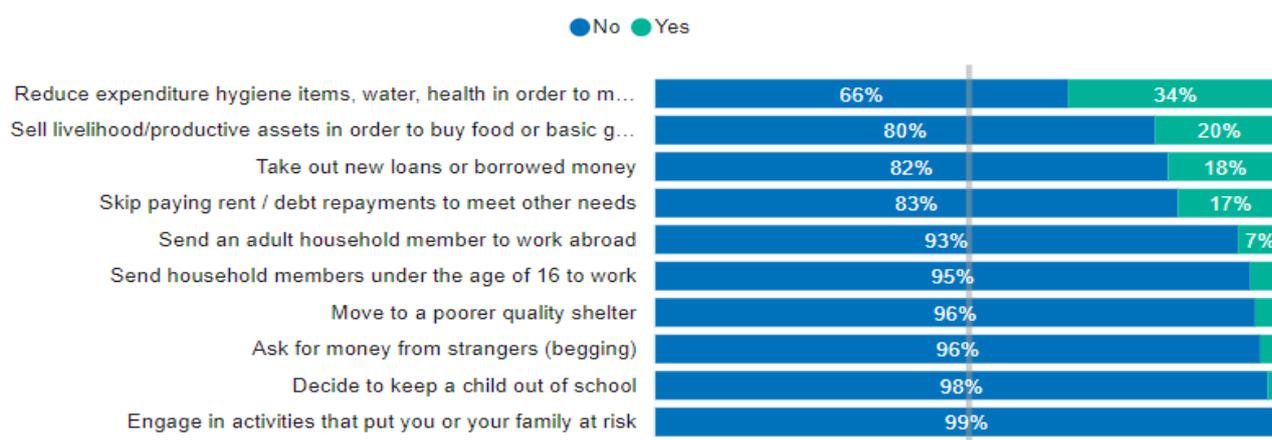


When disaggregated by population group, Guatemalan recipients had the highest rate of meeting all their basic needs. Overall, 23% of respondents reported being able to meet all their households' basic needs. The top unmet needs cited by households in the PDM vary for each type of beneficiary population, but health costs (including medicines), and clothes/shoes appear at the top of each population group.

Negative Coping Mechanisms

48% of the households reported using at least one or more negative coping mechanism in the past 4 weeks to fulfil their basic needs. The strategies employed vary in risk, with the largest number reducing expenditure on hygiene products, water, or health items to meet their other basic needs. Nearly 20% either borrowed money or sold productive assets to buy food or basic goods.

Figure 5: Negative coping mechanisms in the past 4 weeks



Persons living in poverty often make changes in eating and food purchases to make ends meet. The respondents were asked about the food-related coping mechanism in the past 7 days. On average, the respondents said that they resorted to less preferred or less expensive foods, reduced portion sizes at meals, and skipped meals.

Accountability to Affected Persons

- Persons of concern to UNHCR can access three formal feedback mechanisms for the cash assistance programme: UNHCR's all-purpose hotline, UNHCR helpdesk and WFP's hotline. When asked whether the participants in the PDM were aware of how to make complaints or provide feedback regarding UNHCR's cash assistance programme, 46% of the beneficiaries affirmed. In a follow-up question, 95% of these respondents correctly identified at least one official mechanism.
- An overwhelming majority of the respondents (93%) prefer cash, with 59% preferring cash as the sole modality, and 34% preferring a combination of cash and items. Only 2% prefer in-kind and 5% other modalities.
- To prevent misinformation, UNHCR ensures that information shared by other actors is accurate and is distributed through officially printed or electronic material that can be disseminated widely among the population.
- 63% of beneficiaries heard about the availability of UNHCR's cash assistance programme through partner agencies or UNHCR, and 20% learned about it from relatives or community leaders.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite the geographic and infrastructural shortcomings, as well as lack of access to public transportation in Guatemala, the cost and average travel time (between 15 and 30 minutes) to access cash assistance was considered reasonable by the majority of beneficiaries, with few exceptions for Guatemalans living in rural areas.
- Covid-19 continues to be a challenge for beneficiaries, creating difficulties for withdrawing their money. UNHCR will continue to provide training to bank staff to improve the quality of services to Persons of Concern to UNHCR.
- Only around one-third of the beneficiaries report UNHCR assistance as their sole source of income. Further investigation into this group is needed to understand how to transition these beneficiaries of cash assistance, as cash interventions are for a limited period.
- Given the level of spending for health services and pharmaceutical supplies among beneficiaries, UNHCR may wish to consider including a specific Cash for Health programme.
- UNHCR will continue to monitor cash transfer values based on market prices, availability, and according to the UNHCR survey and national data.
- Less than half of the beneficiaries are aware of the feedback mechanisms available to them. UNHCR will take steps to increase awareness of complaints and response mechanism channels among the population through the hotline to be established by the Financial Service Provider, as well as outreach activities.
- Overall, the programme is meeting its strategic objectives to promote access to basic needs, improving living conditions and reducing risky behaviours and negative coping strategies. However, as 48% continue to use moderate to high negative coping mechanisms to make ends meet, UNHCR will continue to closely follow the situation.



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