

UNHCR Yemen post cash distribution monitoring

How UNHCR cash assistance supports displaced Yemenis at risk of famine

Background

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 2021 UNHCR has assisted over 110,000 IDP families (close to 700,000 individuals) with multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) in 19 governorates, distributing more than USD 43,500,000. This assistance has been made possible through the generous support of the United States of America, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates via the Famine Relief Fund, and the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani Humanitarian Fund. Most of the beneficiary families have received up to four cash instalments as part of UNHCR multi-month MPCA programme aiming at providing longer term support with the goal of averting famine and fostering self-reliance. The programme targets particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing across 49 districts classified as being on the verge of famine (IPC4+). UNHCR's extensive database based on needs assessments specifically aimed at addressing IDPs' needs makes it possible to target families who



An IDP family in an informal site in Hajjah Governorate. Thank you to the support of generous donors, UNHCR has provided cash support to close to 700,000 displaced Yemenis since January 2021. © UNHCR/Alejandro Staller

because of their displacement are four times more at risk of hunger than the rest of the Yemeni population. Eligible families are selected according to their socio-economic vulnerability, demographic and protection risk profiles. The selected households in northern and southern Yemen received a disbursement of YER 122,000 and YER 141,000 respectively (corresponding to USD 204 and USD 161, as per the exchange rate in the north and in the south), 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 cash distributions to the selected families, UNHCR has conducted monthly post distribution monitoring (PDM) exercises to understand their expenditure patterns and evaluate the impact of the cash assistance provided on families. This document offers an overview of the progress registered in a series of key indicators measuring food consumption parameters and beneficiaries' satisfaction and wellbeing over a four month period, including a comparative analysis between the findings of April's PDM as baseline and July as end line in relation to the key monitoring parameters.

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 Thornton, undertook a fourth PDM from 17 July to 9 August. The exercise was aimed at assessing the:

- Impact of cash assistance on households' food security status and expenditures on food and on other needs.
- Impact of the cash assistance on the household's food consumption.
- Impact on the use of harmful coping mechanisms by the families receiving cash assistance.
- Households' safety and security in terms of access to distribution sites and markets as well as goods and services.
- Overall quality in the delivery of cash assistance by the financial service providers, as well as households' preferred distribution modality.

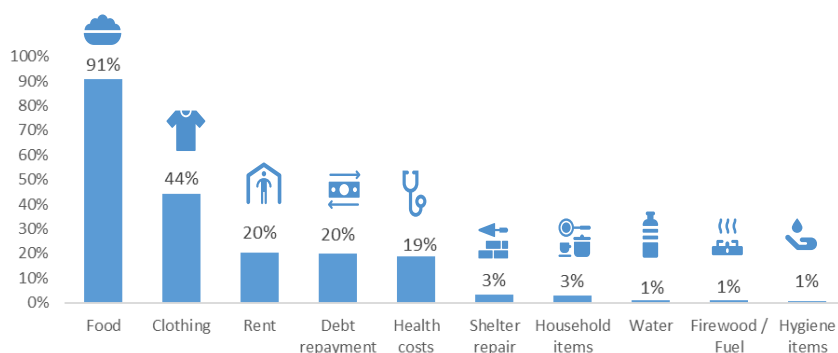
Methodology

- A sample of 2,809 households in IPC4+ locations benefitting from the assistance (1,856 in the North and 953 in the South) were selected and interviewed for the PDM. The sample represents about 7% of the total number of households that received assistance in July.

Key findings

The findings of this PDM reveal a continuous and significant positive improvement across most food consumption indicators and satisfaction and wellbeing parameters of cash beneficiaries over a four-month period. Overall, the results reaffirm previous signs that regular and steady monthly cash assistance significantly supports families to address their immediate food needs and reduce their risk of falling into hunger, while minimizing their exposure to harmful coping mechanisms. A notable improvement was recorded in the food consumption scores of displaced families; in only four months, the percentage of families with poor food consumption scores dropped from 56% to 43%, while those reporting borderline and acceptable levels increased from 44% to 57%. Likewise, the number of beneficiaries reporting being able to meet half or more than half of their needs through the cash assistance increased from 11% in April to 23% in July. During the same period, an increase of 3% in the expenditure of households on the use of the assistance on food was recorded (which in July reached up to 91%); further confirming that food remains the main priority of families assisted and endorses the efficiency of the targeting criteria. Worth noting as well is that the July results revealed a significant decrease in the use of harmful coping mechanisms by displaced beneficiary families, proving the impact of cash assistance in improving their protection space. A reduction was recorded in most indicators in comparison to April, such as on families forced to reduce their expenditure on hygiene items and healthcare, those having to send their children to work, and those sending women and children to beg.

Use of cash assistance

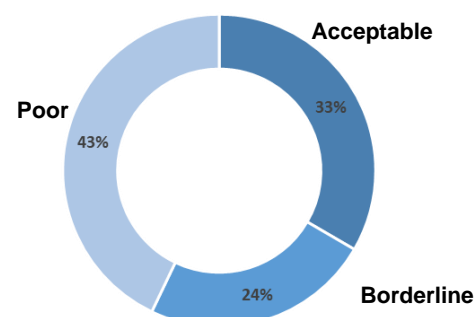


In response to the question on how the cash assistance received was spent, after four months of receiving assistance, 91% of the respondents indicated using all or part of it to cover food-related expenses, 44% buying clothes, 20% to pay rent and 20% to cover rent payments. In comparison to April (88%) as baseline, there has been a 3% increase in the expenditure on food by respondent households, confirming that indeed food remains the most important and pressing need for beneficiary households.

Food consumption score

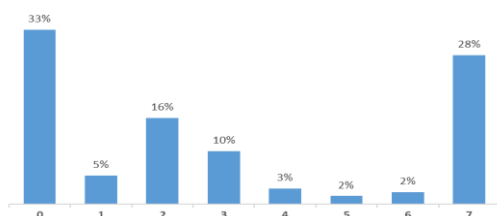
Generally, there has been a significant improvement in the food consumption scores of the respondents comparing April and July. A 9% improvement was recorded in respondents with acceptable food consumption score, 8% for borderline and 12% for those within the category of poor food consumption score. These results again emphasize the fact that with regular cash assistance, beneficiaries will be able to meet their preferred and nutritious food needs. It is worth noting that these gains were achieved during the period of inflationary pricing and exchange rate fluctuations without a corresponding increase in the cash amounts provided to beneficiaries.

- 33% of HHs with **acceptable** food consumption
- 24% of HH with **borderline** (mid-point) food consumption
- 43% of HH with **poor** (unacceptable) food consumption



Information on food security and lack of resources to buy food

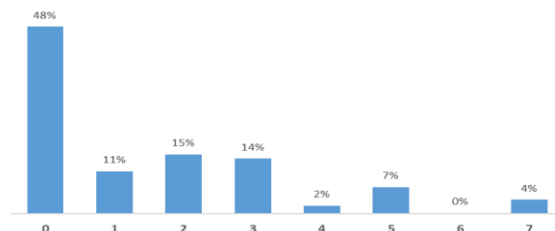
How often did your household have to rely on less preferred and less expensive food options?



Times per week

In July, a 24% improvement was realized in terms of households who did not have to resort to less preferred or expensive food at all (April: 25%, July: 34%). However, due to the exchange rate fluctuation and its accompanying inflationary pricing, respondents who had to buy less expensive food and consume less preferred food seven times in the week increased by 64% (April: 10%, July: 28%). This clearly confirms the importance of transfer value revision to align with prevailing market prices to make relevant gains through cash programming in the lives of beneficiaries.

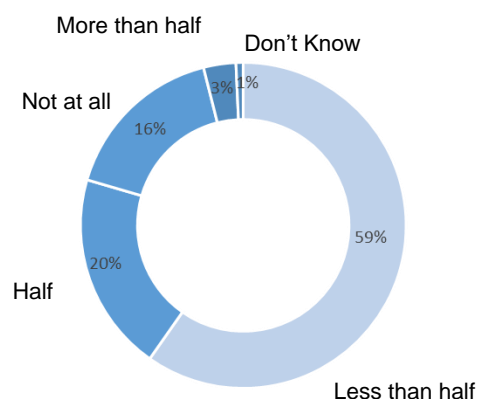
How often did your household have to reduce the number of meals per day?



A significant improvement was recorded in beneficiary families reporting not having to reduce their number of meals per day, from 38% in April to up to 48% in July (almost half of those interviewed). This represents a great improvement in a four-month period, reflecting the impact of the assistance on the beneficiaries. Still, 52% of families reported having to reduce their meals per day at least once a week, with those reporting facing problems everyday still reaching 4%.

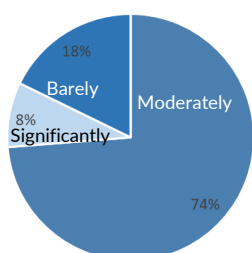
Impact of the assistance on meeting basic needs

Multiple cycles of cash assistance to households have largely proved to impact and help them meet their basic needs. From April to July, there has been improvements in all indicators measuring household's ability to meet their basic needs through the regular cash assistance they received. For those who were able to meet more than half their basic needs, an increase of 67% was realized, seemingly 70% for those who could meet half of their household needs with corresponding decreases of 3% and 48% for those households who could meet less than half and could not meet at all their household basic needs with the cash assistance received.

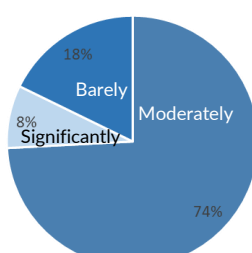


Did UNHCR cash assistance ...

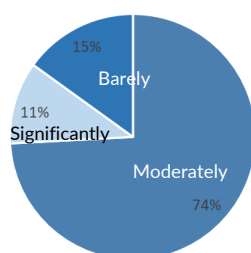
Improve your living conditions?



Reduce feelings of stress?



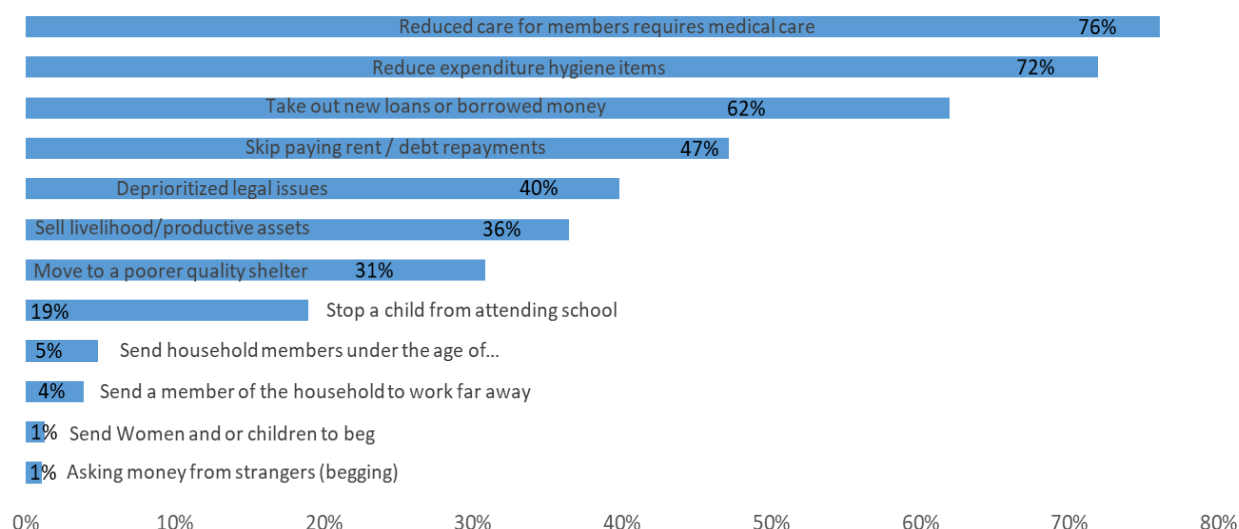
Reduce the financial burden of your household?



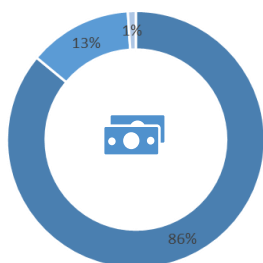
Although most respondents still struggle to fully meet their needs, **more than two-thirds of beneficiaries noted that the cash assistance received was making a difference in their life** and in their capacity to cope with the stress of being displaced and unable to fend for themselves. There has been a significant improvement between April and July on the number of households who initially indicated that cash assistance improved their living conditions, from 73% in April to 82% in July. Likewise, positive improvements were also recorded in parameters measuring stress levels and reduction of financial burden on beneficiary families, with reductions of close to 10% on respondents indicating that the assistance barely helped them.

Coping mechanisms

Decreases have been recorded across most indicators measuring the use of harmful coping mechanisms by vulnerable displaced families, proving the efficiency of steady cash support to help improve the protection space of those most affected by ongoing conflict. Largely, there has been a 16%, 29%, 20%, and 50% decrease in households who had to reduce their expenditure on hygiene items (April: 88%, July: 72%), send under-aged household members to work (April: 14%, July: 5%), send household members far to work (April: 9%, July: 4%) and sending women and children to beg (April: 3%, July: 1%) respectively. There were also some decreases across other coping mechanisms such as households taking loans (April: 64%, July: 62%), skipping rent (April: 52%, July: 47%), and stopping children from going to school (April: 31%, July: 19%) to have enough money in hand to meet the essential household needs.



Receiving and managing the cash assistance

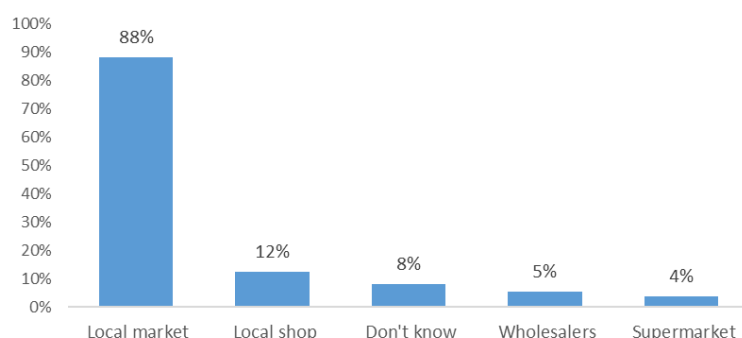


86% of families were very satisfied with the amount they received, in comparison to 84% in April. Some 13% were satisfied and only 1% reported not being satisfied.

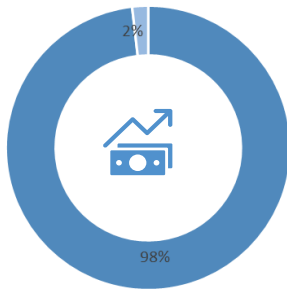


In July 100% of the respondents mentioned that they felt safe while receiving the cash assistance. These results are consistent with the average results recorded during the past months which stood at 99%, with only 1% reporting feeling unsafe, mainly due to COVID-19. The positive 100% result reflects also on the extra measures taken in distributions sites to implement COVID-19 preventive measures.

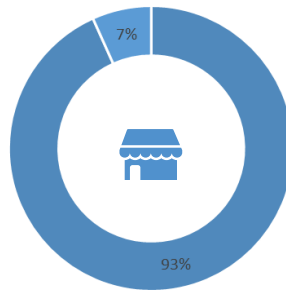
Where was the cash assistance spent?



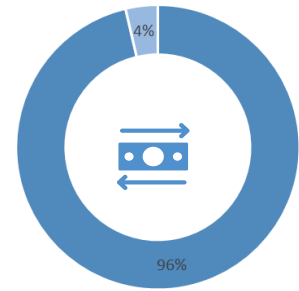
In July, 88% of the respondents reported spending the assistance on local markets, 12% in local shops and 5% at wholesalers. Comparatively, there is a 4% increase in the number of beneficiary respondents who purchased their goods from local shops between April and July. This is potentially linked to the regularity of the cash assistance which has allowed local shop owners to stock enough goods for households to purchase without them having to travel or go to buy from far-away supermarkets. This reaffirms the direct positive impact of cash assistance on strengthening local businesses and sustaining local markets.



98% (4% raise compared to April) of the respondents indicated that prices increased in the last four weeks. The increase in prices has affected other indicators as explained in previous PDMs. Particularly the number of families who had to resort to less preferred food commodities for instance, which has probably been impacted by the price increases of commodities caused by exchange rate dynamics with no corresponding cash transfer value increase.

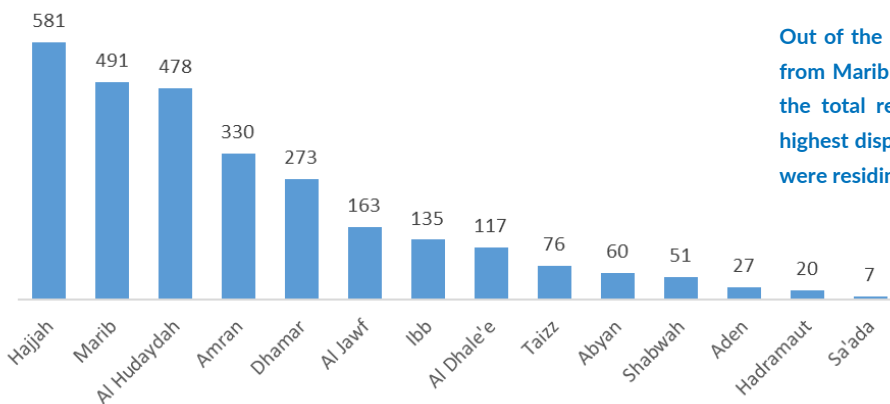


93% of the respondents found everything they needed in the local market, while 7% reported not being able to find all what they had wanted to purchase. This 93% represents an 11% increase between April and July which demonstrates that since the regular monthly distributions of cash assistance, local markets have adjusted and provide sufficient options for displaced families to respond to their most pressing needs, especially food needs.



96% of the respondents did not face any security, access, or safety problems spending the assistance in markets and local shops. An improvement was recorded in comparison to April, where 94% of respondents reported not facing any security, access, or safety concerns. This is likely linked to the additional measures taken by FSP to situate distribution locations closer to beneficiaries.

Breakdown of the respondents



Out of the 2,809 respondents, 581 were from Al-Hajjah, 469 from Marib and 478 from Al-Hudaydah (representing 55% of the total respondents) which are the governorate with the highest displacement figures. In total, 66% of the respondents were residing in northern Yemen and 34% in southern Yemen.

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