



Post-distribution Monitoring of MPCA to Sudanese New Arrivals - Egypt 2023

A Two-times UNICEF-funded Cash Assistance Programme Implemented by UNHCR

Cover photo: UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes
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Summary

UNHCR provided a multipurpose cash assistance funded by UNICEF to the most vulnerable new arrivals from Sudan, who were on UNHCR waiting list, to support them in covering their immediate needs, and mitigate potential protection risks, and also to reduce their resorting to negative coping strategies. The cash assistance was meant to cover four months and was funded by UNICEF. It was distributed through Egypt Post Office branches that cover all Egypt's governorates. To assess the impact of the assistance, and beneficiaries' views on the cash distribution process, UNHCR conducted a post-distribution monitoring survey (PDM) for MPCA provided in 2023/2024.

Data collection for this quantitative assessment was carried out by a third-party, Sagaci Research, between 11 and 24 February 2024. Telephone interviews were conducted with a representative sample of beneficiary households from Sudanese new arrivals who were randomly selected from Financial Service Provider (FSP) cash collection reports in September and December 2023. The sample size was calculated using confidence level of 95 per cent and confidence interval of 5 per cent. To account for non-response and errors in data collection 15 per cent were added to the calculated sample size.

A total of 371 beneficiary households were interviewed about their use of cash, impact of cash assistance, and potential non-compliance issues they faced during the process of cash collection.

Key Findings

- Slightly less than one third of respondents (29 per cent) reported that the assistance enabled them to cover **all or most of their priority needs**, while (48 per cent) reported that it covered half of their needs.
- Most of the interviewed beneficiaries (99 per cent) reported that the cash assistance **reduced the financial burden** on their households, **reduced their feelings of stress** and **improved their living conditions** (99 per cent).
- The five most cited spending categories were **food** (cited by 82 per cent of respondents), **rent** (62 per cent), **utilities and bills** (25 per cent), **health-related items/ services** (25 per cent), and **infant items and needs including milk formula, diapers, etc.** (5 per cent).
- MPCA enabled most of the beneficiaries (99 per cent) to afford items and or services which they could not afford before receiving it; namely the ability to **pay rent/avoid eviction** (48 per cent), the **ability to purchase**

more food (45 per cent), **eating more diverse and nutritious food** (35 per cent) and **pay utility bills** (16 per cent).

- The majority of beneficiaries (90 per cent) were able to **find the needed items in the markets and with the required quality** (98 per cent). However, most of them (97 per cent) reported recent **increases in the prices** of items/services, mainly food, rent and hygiene items.
- Most beneficiaries (80 per cent) needed to **resort to one or more negative coping strategies** in the four weeks preceding the survey to cover their most pressing needs. The most frequently adopted coping strategy was reducing expenditures on various basic household needs to meet household food needs (62 per cent).
- The majority of beneficiaries (80 per cent) were **very satisfied/satisfied with the cash collection process**. Also, most beneficiaries (95 per cent) did not require any help to withdraw or spend the cash assistance.
- Most beneficiaries (94 per cent) **felt physically safe at all times** during withdrawing, keeping and spending cash assistance. While 79 per cent did not face any problems while withdrawing or spending the assistance.
- Among the interviewed beneficiaries, 79 per cent could identify at least one local channel for **reporting complaints or feedback** on UNHCR cash assistance.

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List of Acronyms

CBI	Cash-based Interventions
MPCA	Emergency Cash Assistance
EGP	Egyptian Pound
EPO	Egypt Post Office
EVAR	Egypt Vulnerability Assessment Report
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FSP	Financial Service Provider
MPCA	Multi-purpose Cash Assistance
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
rCSI	Reduced Coping Strategy Index
SMS	Short Message Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar

Introduction

The conflict that erupted in Sudan on 15th of April 2023 has forcibly displaced more than seven million people as of 26 December 2023, including 1.38 million who fled to the bordering countries such as Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic¹. As a result of the conflict 370,000 Sudanese and 8,504 individuals of other nationalities, totaling some 378,504 people, have crossed into Egypt since the start of the Sudan crisis, according to the Government of Egypt, and UNHCR had registered 132,000 new arrivals from Sudan, 91 per cent of whom were Sudanese.

As a response to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and through its UN2UN agreement with UNICEF, UNHCR distributed a UNICEF -funded four-month multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to 4,600 of the most vulnerable Sudanese families who arrived after 15 April who registered with UNHCR and who were on the waiting list for UNHCR regular MPCA. The main objective of this cash assistance was to support those new arrivals in covering their most pressing needs, thus mitigating potential protection risks, and discouraging negative coping strategies. The MPCA is unrestricted and hence provides the beneficiaries with the ability to prioritize and choose the items they need. The households receiving MPCA were selected following a vulnerability assessment by UNHCR partner, Caritas, which allowed for extensive analysis of refugees' living conditions to determine their eligibility according to the level of poverty. The cash assistance aimed to cover the families' priority needs for four months; from September to December 2023, and the monthly cash transfer value ranged from EGP 850 (USD 27.5)² to EGP 2,600 (USD 84.1) depending on the household size. The assistance was distributed on two tranches; each of which covered two months, and the disbursement was through Egypt Post, and its 4,000 branches across Egypt. Beneficiaries residing near any of the 54 iris-enabled post offices received their cash assistance through iris biometric authentication, while those not residing near any of the iris-enabled post offices were assigned to receive their cash assistance using UNHCR cards from any post office.

As part of its commitment to the Accountability to the Affected People, and to inform its cash programming, UNHCR conducted this post distribution monitoring (PDM) survey for MPCA through a third party, Sagaci Research. The survey aimed to monitor the compliance to cash distribution processes and to assess the impact and effectiveness of the MPCA on its recipients. The survey was conducted through telephone interviews in November 2023 on a representative sample of beneficiaries who received the two tranches covering the four months, and this report outlines the findings of this survey.

¹ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sudan-situation-update-41>

² According to UN exchange rate as of 1st of December 2023 (30.9)

Methodology

This PDM survey was conducted by Sagaci Research using the standard corporate PDM questionnaire developed by UNHCR HQ, which has been adapted to the context of Sudan situation, and to the operation's information needs while retaining the PDM core indicators identified by UNHCR HQ, UNICEF and by Cash Working Group in Egypt. The questionnaire was uploaded on KoBo platform to allow for mobile data collection.

Research Objectives

The research objective of this PDM survey was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the emergency cash assistance distributed by UNHCR to vulnerable new arrivals from Sudan. To achieve this, the PDM survey aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the cash assistance help the beneficiaries in meeting their most priority needs?
2. How did beneficiaries use the cash assistance they received?
3. To what extent were beneficiaries able to find what they needed in the market at the quality level needed and with stable prices?
4. Which harmful coping strategies were adopted by households to meet their most priority needs when resources were insufficient?
5. To what extent were MPCA beneficiaries satisfied with the cash distribution process and with the information they receive on the cash assistance?
6. What were the difficulties and process-related issues that beneficiaries encountered during the cash distribution cycle?
7. Were beneficiaries aware of the local channels for lodging complaints and feedback related to UNHCR cash assistance?

Sampling

The survey was conducted on a representative random sample of 397 registered beneficiary households from Sudan who arrived in Egypt on or after 15 April 2023 and who received the second tranches of the MPCA funded by UNICEF between 27 December 2023 and mid-January 2024 as per the FSP collection report, and who also received the first tranche of the assistance. The sample size was calculated using confidence level of 95 per cent and confidence interval five (5). To account for non-response and for errors in data collection 15 per cent were added to the calculated sample size.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted by Sagaci Research, where a team of nine enumerators conducted phone-based interviews with the sampled households starting from the 11 February 2024 and ending the 24 February 2024. The "PDM Questionnaire" was uploaded on KoBo server after being modified according to Egypt's context and information and data was collected through smart phones and entered directly on the web-based KoBo form.

Interviews were conducted with the person registered by UNHCR to receive the cash assistance; mostly the principal applicant or the head of household. If the registered person was not available, the enumerator conducted the interview with any member of the household over the age of 18 who is able to give the necessary information. If neither the person registered to receive cash nor a household member above the age of 18 were available, the enumerator would end the interview.

An informed consent briefing the respondents on the survey and its voluntary nature, and ensuring the confidentiality of participants' data, was obtained from all participants before starting the interview.

Out of the provided sample of 397 beneficiaries, successful interviews were conducted with 371 respondents with a response rate of 93 per cent. The main reasons for non-response after three calling trials separated by at least two hours were turned off telephones (three per cent of the provided sample), no answer (two per cent), out of service (one per cent) and less than one percent reported to be a wrong number.

Analysis

The global CBI data analysis framework which outlines the relevant indicators and the corresponding survey questions, as well as the methodology of core indicators calculation, was used after introducing some context-related modifications.

Data collected through KoBo web-based form was uploaded to a UNHCR-owned KoBo server after initial review by the field supervisor. The collected raw data was shared by UNHCR on daily basis and the data quality checks were regularly applied both during and after data collection. Sagaci Research data processing team then conducted statistical analysis on the cleaned data set using relevant software such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Analysis followed any stated aggregation or disaggregation of findings and data, where applicable.

Challenges and limitations

- Respondents' recall bias might have influenced the responses to some questions, especially with different types of cash assistance provided by multiple humanitarian organizations.
- Information gathered from PDM survey are self-reported, and there might have been a response bias due to unfounded fear of exclusion from future cash assistance.

Results

Respondent Profile

A total of 371 beneficiary households were interviewed. As shown in Figure (1), most respondents resided in Greater Cairo (92 per cent), and the remaining resided mainly in Alexandria (five per cent), Aswan (two per cent) and other governorates (one per cent). In Cairo, they resided in the districts of Al Haram (32 per cent), 6th of October (11 per cent), North Giza (nine per cent), East Nasr City (seven per cent), West Nasr City (seven per cent) and 35 per cent in other districts of Cairo. For those in Alexandria, 40 per cent reside in Al Montazah district, 15 per cent in Borg El Arab and in Mansheya with the remaining 30 per cent residing in other districts of Alexandria.

Also, 76 per cent of respondents were females while 24 per cent were males. As for age group distribution, 37 per cent of respondents were 18-35 years, 53 per cent lied in the age group of 36-59 years and 10 per cent were above 60 years. The total number of individuals in the surveyed households was 2,239, most of them were females (61 per cent) and slightly less than half of them (48 per cent) were children. Around 19 per cent of those children were under five. The average household size of the surveyed sample was 6.

Additionally, nine per cent of the respondents (35 households) reported to have a disabled member in their household with six per cent aged 0-4 years, 41 per cent 5-17 years, 38 per cent 18-59 years and 15 per cent aged 60 years and above.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by governorate

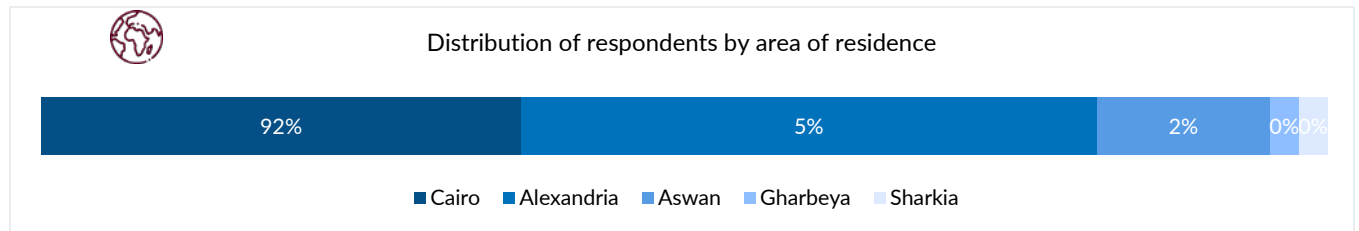
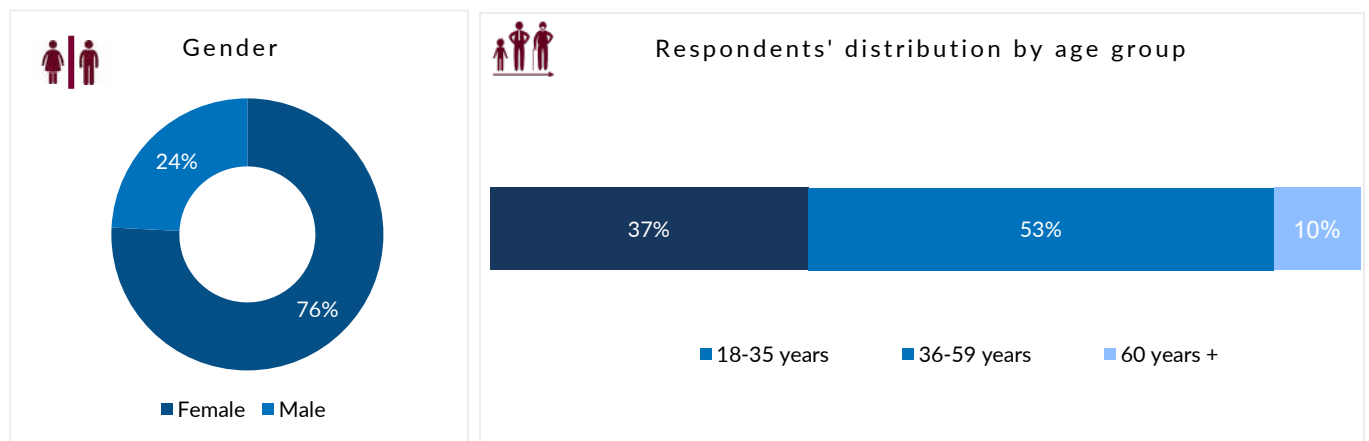


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by gender and age group

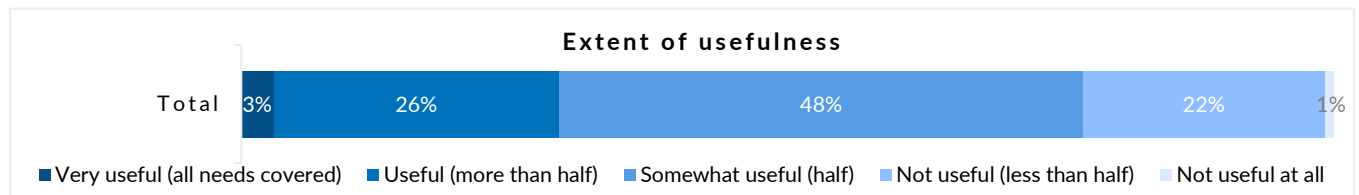


Impact of Cash Assistance

Perception about usefulness of cash assistance and impact on beneficiaries' wellbeing

At the time of the survey interview, the vast majority of responding beneficiaries reported that the cash assistance enabled them to cover some or all of their households' priority needs (99 per cent). As shown in Figure (3), **29 per cent reported that the cash assistance was useful as it helped them cover all or most of their priority needs**, while 48 per cent reported that it helped them to cover half of their priority needs. Some 22 per cent reported less usefulness of the assistance as they could only meet less than half of their priority needs. Only one per cent of respondents found the cash assistance not useful as it did not cover any of their priority needs.

Figure 3: Extent of cash assistance usefulness in covering household priority needs



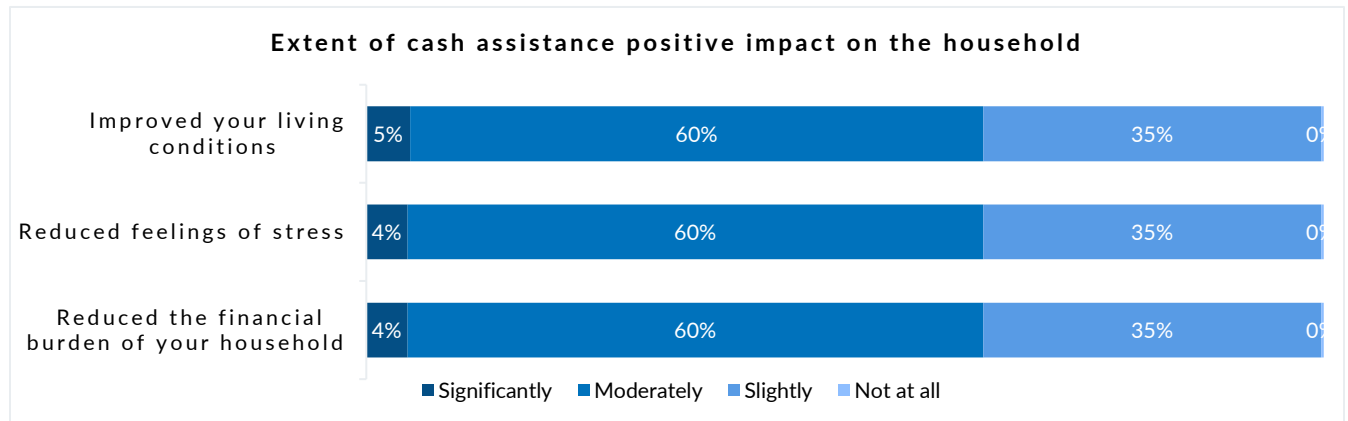
I arrived from Sudan with my child in July 2023. The cash assistance enabled us to afford buying food . I don't know how we would have done so without it.

- Female PDM survey respondent, Cairo

When respondents who perceived the assistance not to be useful (i.e., the 23 per cent able to cover less than half or none of their priority needs) were further asked about the reason for this perception, **the main reason reported was that the assistance amount is insufficient (100 per cent)**. Other reasons reported were that a different form of assistance was needed (15 per cent), the assistance duration is too short (seven per cent) and the cash assistance is only a short-term relief (six per cent).

When asked how the received cash assistance has impacted their lives, most respondents reported that the cash assistance had at least slightly improved their living conditions (99 per cent), reduced their feelings of stress (99 per cent) and reduced the financial burden on their household (99 per cent). The extent of this positive impact is detailed in Figure (4).

Figure 4: Extent of cash assistance positive impact on the household wellbeing, overall

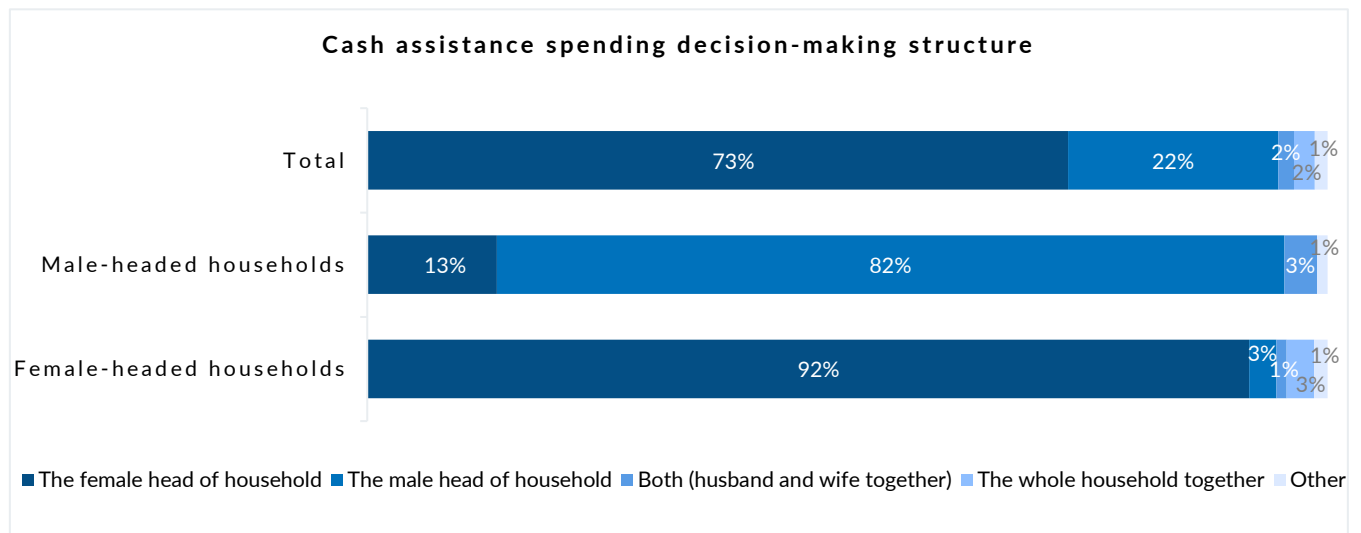


“I fled Sudan with my three children after the crisis. My seven-years old son could not attend school as I couldn’t afford the school fees. Thanks to the cash assistance my son is now in school” — Female PDM survey respondent, Cairo

As for the effect of the cash assistance on the household decision-making dynamics, disagreements about spending the cash assistance appeared to be rare as most respondents (95 per cent at overall level) reported no disagreements, while four per cent reported having some discussions before reaching an agreement, two per cent (corresponding to 13 households) reported many disagreements, and less than one per cent (one household) refused to provide an answer.

Also, findings from the PDM survey show that in two thirds of interviewed households (73 per cent) it was the female head of the household who decided on how the cash assistance will be spent, 22 per cent by the male head of the household, two per cent by the husband and wife jointly, two per cent by the entire household and one per cent relied on other decision-making structures. It is worth mentioning that females took the spending decisions in 13 per cent of male-headed households.

Figure 5: Household decision making structure on how to spend the cash

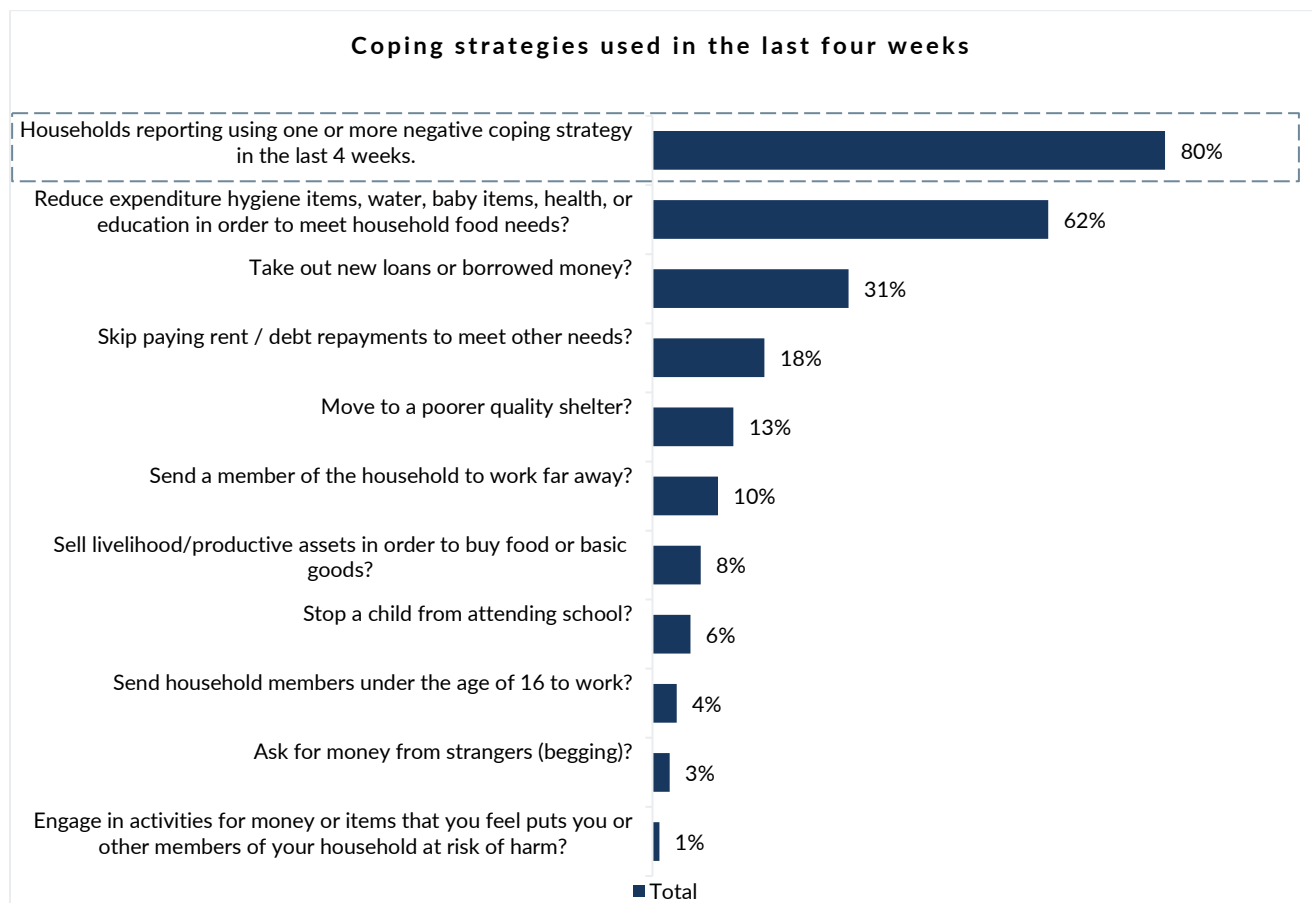


Use of Negative Coping Strategies

Coping mechanisms are behaviors adopted by households when resources are insufficient, revealing the trade-offs the households are forced to make to meet its most pressing needs. Such strategies harmfully impact both the livelihood and the dignity of the household’s members.

The challenges faced by refugees in meeting their most pressing needs lead to adopting a variety of negative coping strategies. On an aggregate level, **80 per cent of survey respondents reported resorting to at least one harmful coping strategy in the four weeks preceding the survey**. The most common coping strategies were as follows: (1) reducing expenditures on various basic household needs (hygiene, health, baby items etc.) to prioritize food needs (used by 62 per cent of respondents), (2) taking out new loans or borrowed money (used by 31 per cent of respondents) and (3) skipping on rent payments or debt repayment to meet food needs (used by 18 per cent of respondents). These patterns are shown in Figure (6).

Figure 6: Prevalence of negative coping strategies in the past four weeks

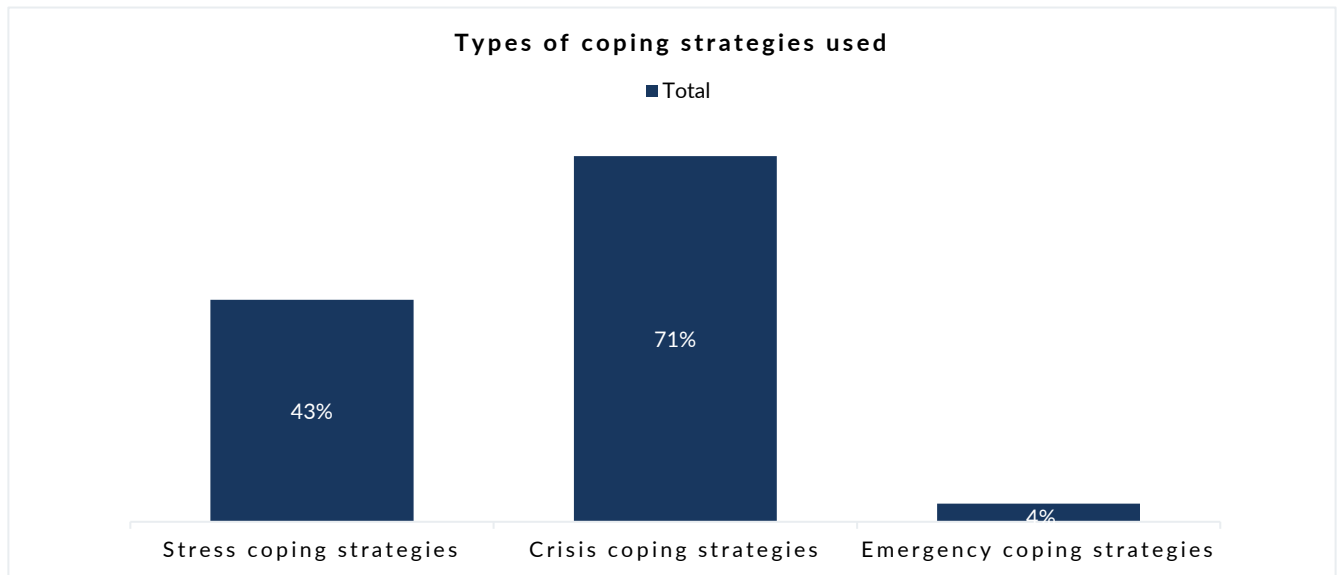


According to the severity of their implications harmful coping strategies are further classified into stress, crisis, and emergency coping strategies. Stress strategies reduce the household’s ability to deal with future shocks. Skipping rent payment and debt repayment, as well as taking out new loans are examples of stress coping strategies. Crisis strategies directly reduce future productivity (including human capital). Stopping a child from attending school and selling livelihood and productive assets are considered crisis coping strategies. Emergency

strategies also affect future productivity but are also difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature. Examples of such strategies are asking for money from strangers (begging) and engaging in activities for money that puts members of households at risk of harm.

When negative coping strategies were analyzed by severity of impact, 43 per cent of respondents resorted to stress coping strategies, 71 per cent resorted to crisis coping strategies, while four per cent of respondents resorted to emergency coping strategies. See Figure (7).

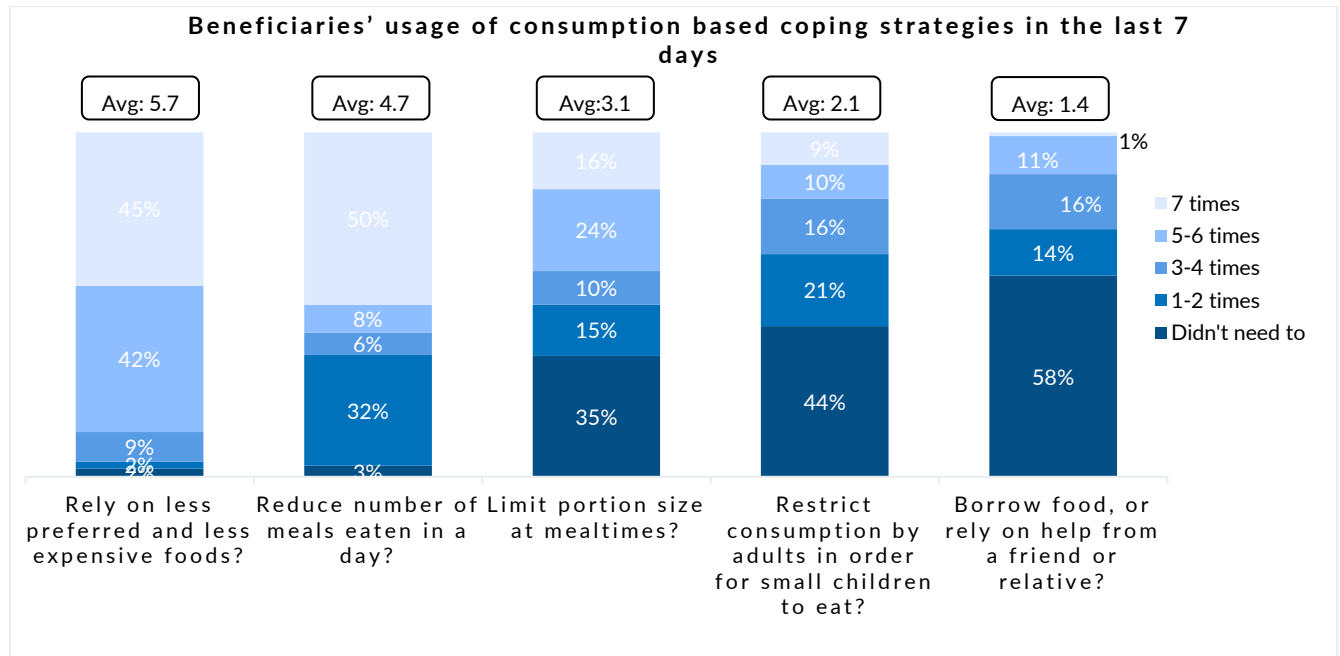
Figure 7: Prevalence of negative coping strategies by severity



To cope with their inability to meet food needs, households may resort to one or more food consumption coping strategies which vary in severity, where the most severe are restricting consumption by adults in order for children to eat, followed by borrowing food from friends or relatives.

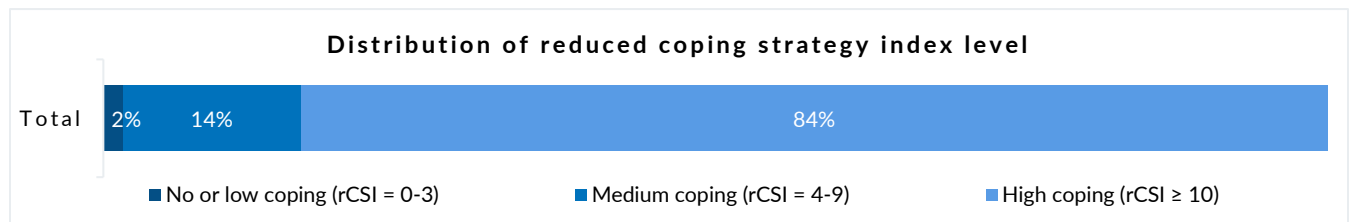
In the week preceding the survey food consumption coping strategies were highly prevalent where 99 per cent of respondents resorted to at least one strategy. Resorting to less preferred and less expensive food in the seven days preceding the survey was the most frequently used consumption coping strategy and was reported by 98 per cent of respondents with an average of 5.7 times in the week preceding the survey. This was followed by reducing number of meals eaten in a day, which was used by 97 per cent of respondents, with an average of 4.7 times. Limiting portion sizes was ranked as the third most used strategy and was cited by 65 per cent of respondents with an average of 3.1 times in the last seven days. Borrowing food or relying on help from friends and relatives was the least frequent consumption-based coping strategy that respondents resorted to and was reported by 42 per cent of respondents. See Figure (8).

Figure 8: Prevalence and frequency of food consumption coping strategies in the past 7 days



Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) is a proxy for food security that has been developed by the World Food Programme (WFP) and is calculated using the frequency and severity of the food consumption coping strategies in the seven days preceding the survey interview. The higher the rCSI, the higher food insecurity of the household. Survey results show that the average rCSI for the surveyed households is **22.6** out of a maximum score of 56 indicating a high level of food insecurity. Data has also shown that two per cent of surveyed cases had no or low coping, i.e., food secure (rCSI = 0-3), 15 per cent had medium coping (rCSI = 4-9) while the remaining 84 per cent were high coping (rCSI ≥ 10).

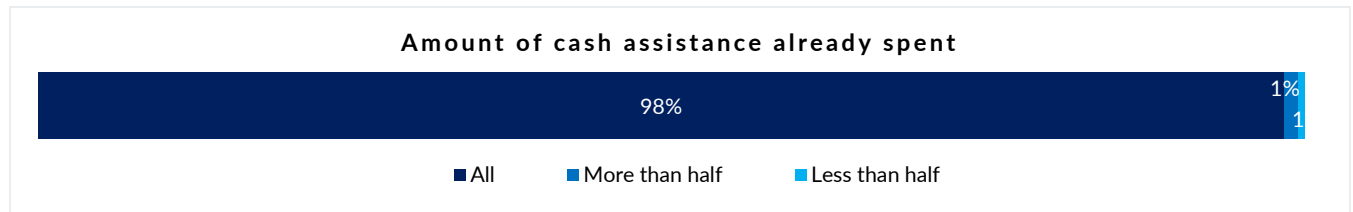
Figure 9: Levels of reduced coping strategy index applied by beneficiaries



Use of Cash Assistance

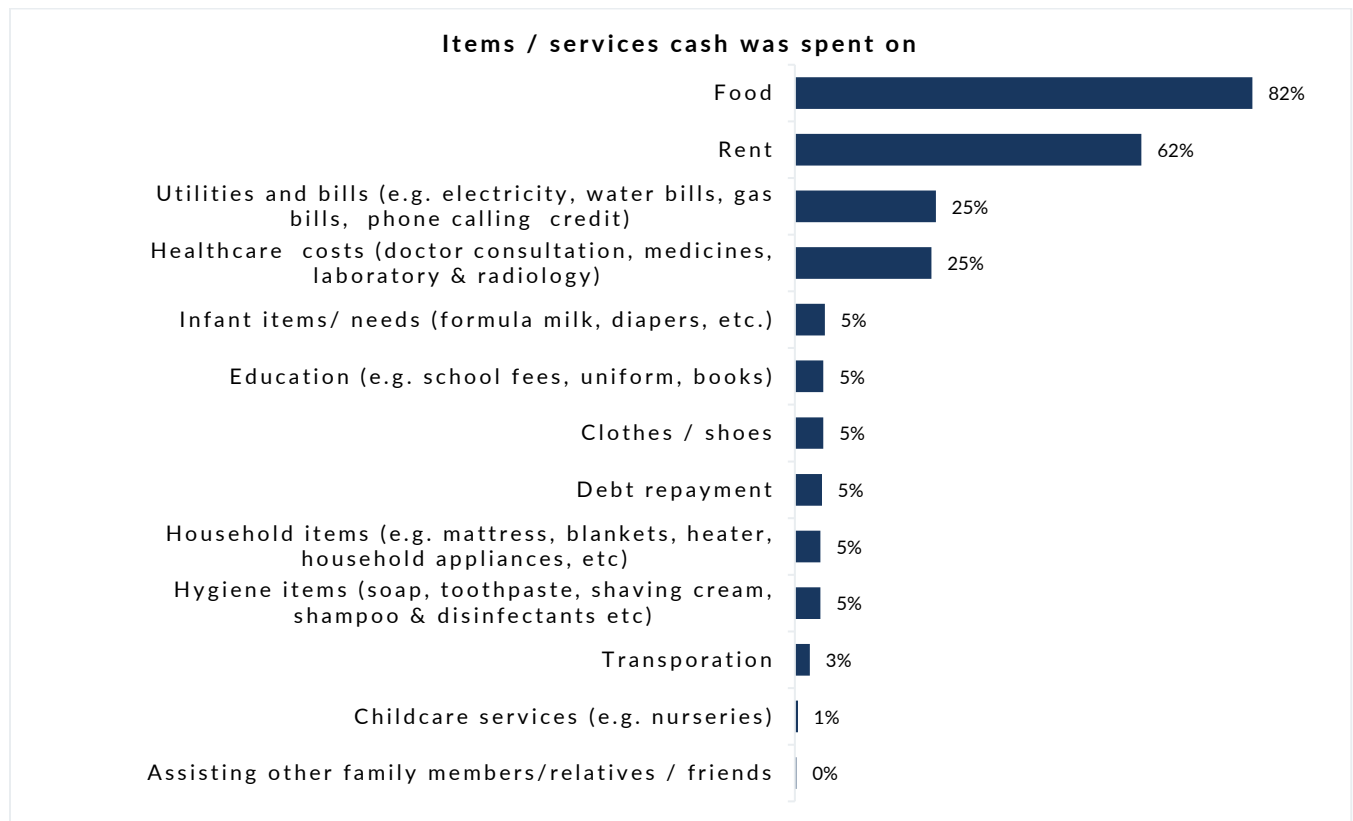
Between the period of collecting the cash and conducting the phone interviews, 98 per cent of respondents reported spending the entirety of the cash they received, one per cent reported spending half or more, while one per cent reported spending less than half of the cash assistance.

Figure 10: Proportion of cash assistance already spent at the time of the survey



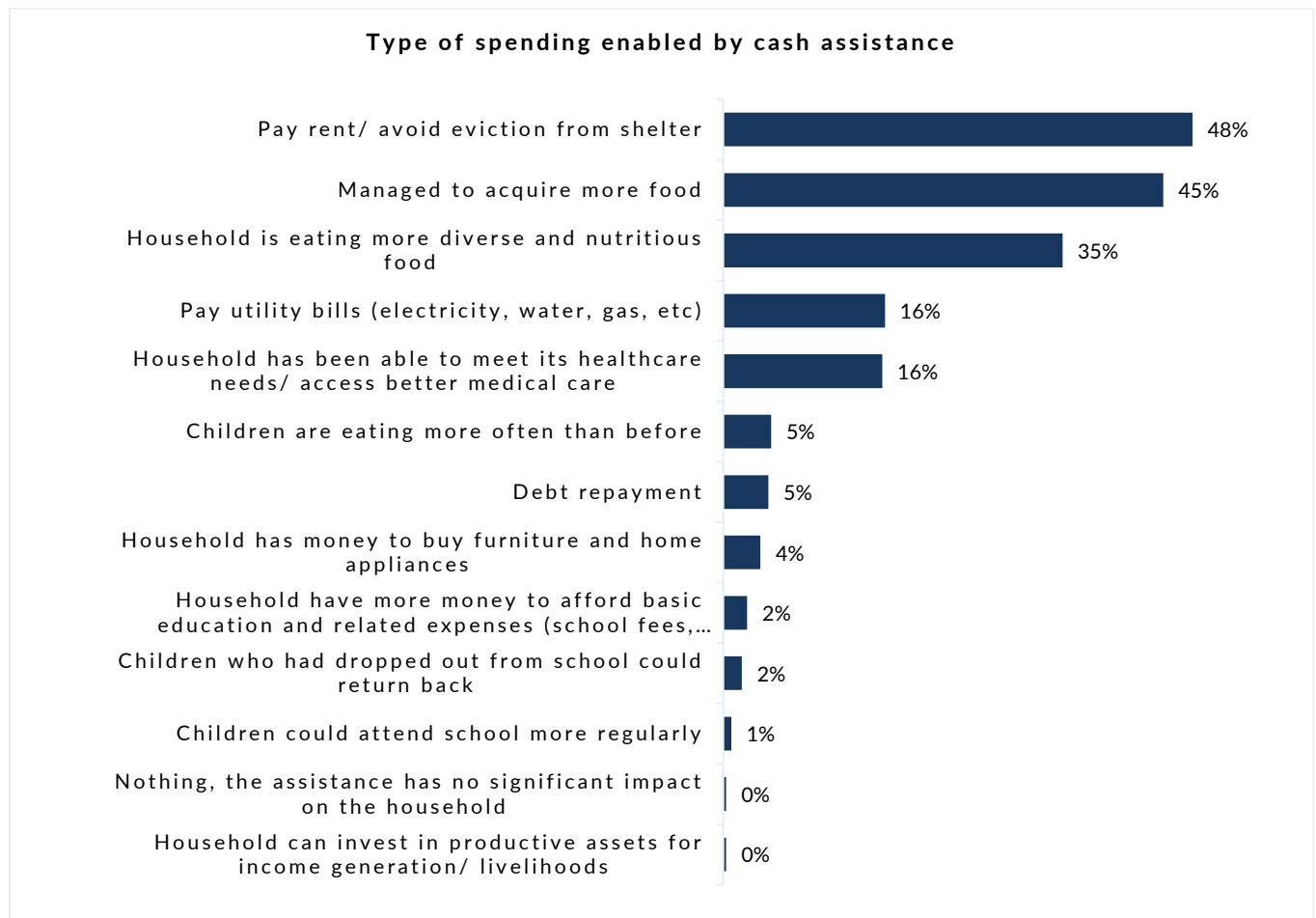
Regarding the items on which respondents spent the cash, results of the PDM show that **82 per cent of respondents spent the cash assistance on food, followed by 62 per cent who reported spending on rent**, 25 per cent spent it on utilities and bills and 25 per cent spent the assistance on healthcare costs. This spending pattern is consistent with findings across other PDMs, where food and rent have been cited as the most important areas of spending. This pattern is also in line with the objective of the cash assistance.

Figure 11: Spending categories of cash assistance



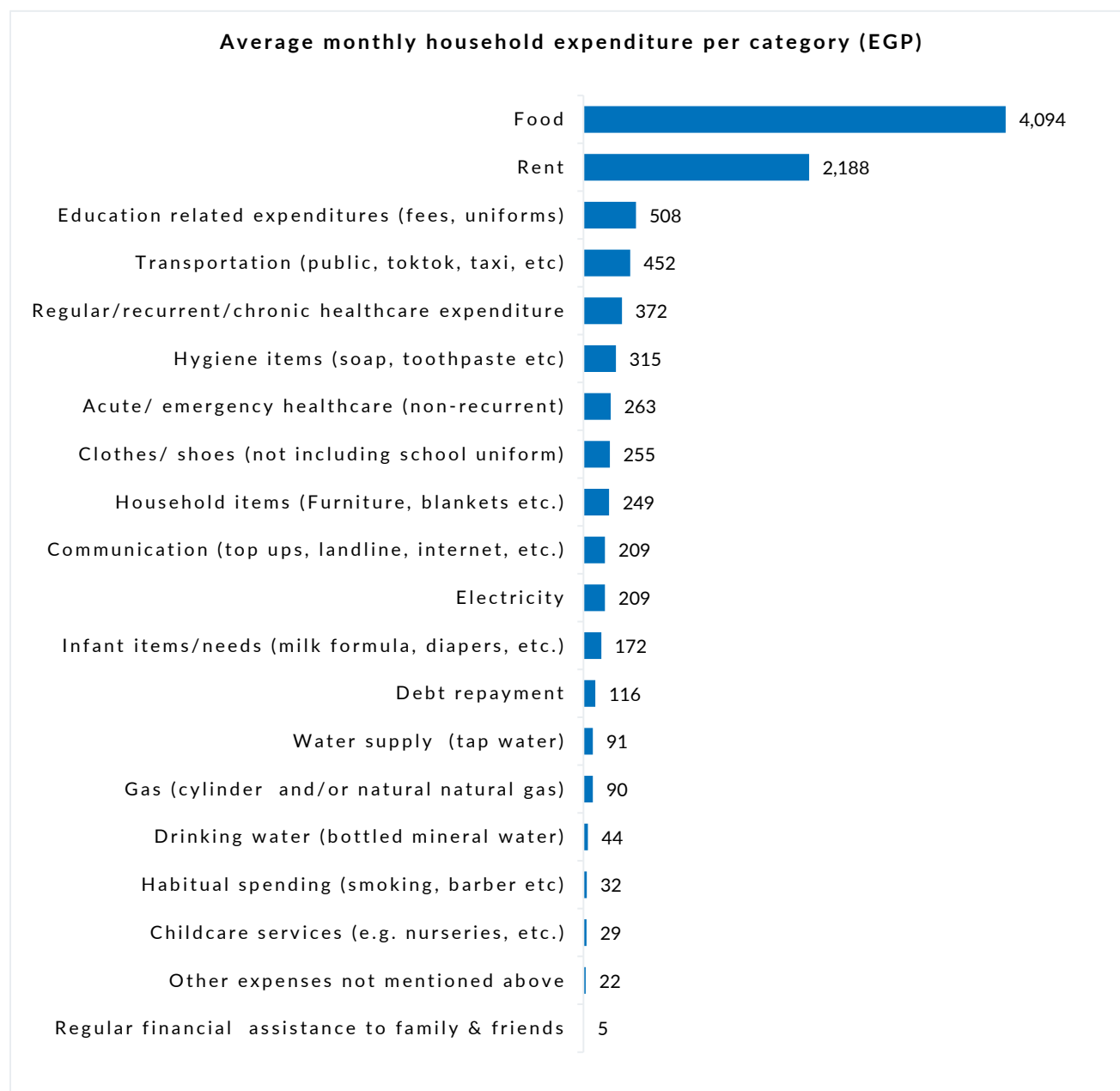
When beneficiaries were asked about things they were able to do or afford after receiving the cash assistance, and which they were not able to do before receiving the cash, **99 per cent stated that the cash assistance enabled them to do things they were not able to do before receiving the cash.** The main response was the ability to pay rent/avoid eviction from shelter as reported by 48 per cent of respondents followed by the ability to acquire more food, reported by 45 per cent of respondents. The cash assistance also enabled 35 per cent of the respondents to eat more nutritious food, 16 per cent of respondents to pay their utility bills, which they could not do before receiving the cash and meet healthcare costs (reported by 16 per cent of respondents) among others. These variations are detailed in Figure (12).

Figure 12: Type of spending enabled by the cash assistance



“We wouldn’t eat or drink without the help. Without the help, we would not have paid the rent and it helped us a lot with food” - PDM survey respondent, Cairo

In the last 30 days, respondents reported spending an average of 9,795 EGP with the highest amount spent on food (4,094 EGP) followed by rent (2,188 EGP). Expenditure breakdown by category is provided in Figure (13).

Figure 13: Expenditure in Last 30 Days by spending category

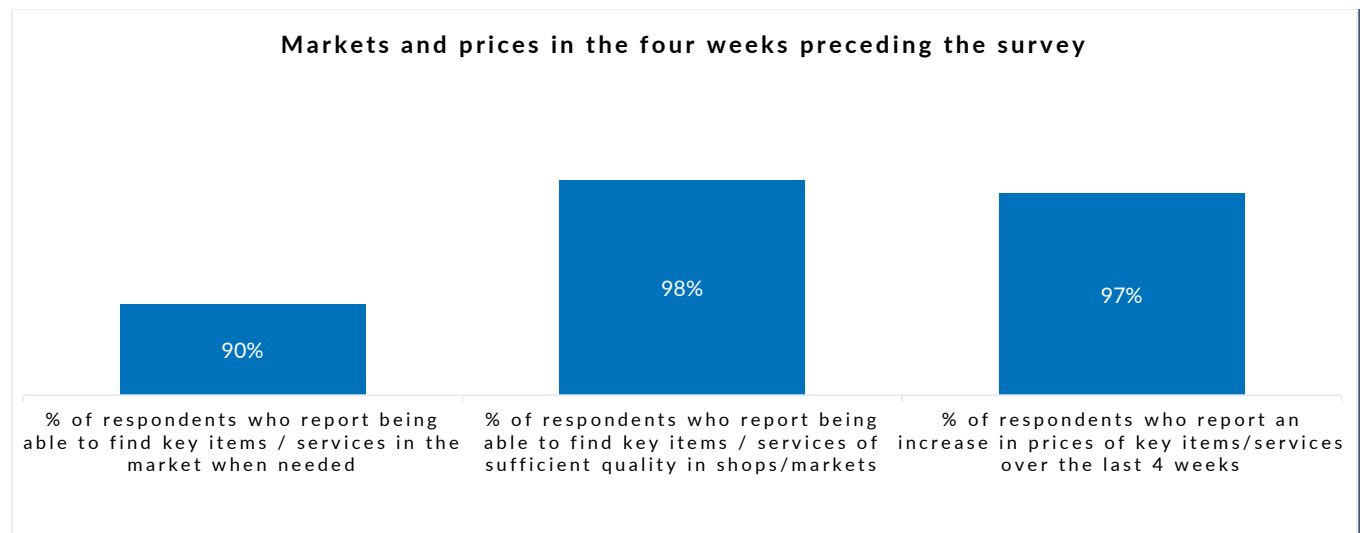
Availability of items in the nearby markets

The PDM survey results show that **90 per cent of respondents were able to find items/services they needed in the market, indicating functioning and viable markets.** The remaining 10 per cent (comprising 38 respondents) cited the unavailability of food items (37 respondents), health care related items (two respondent) and clothes (one respondent). The food item not available include; sugar (37 respondents), oil/ghee (six respondents), rice/pasta (four respondents), dairy products (three respondents), vegetables, fish and eggs (two respondents each), bread and poultry meat (reported by one respondent each).

Similarly, **98 per cent of respondents found the items they needed with acceptable quality**. Items with unacceptable quality cited by the remaining two per cent (nine respondents) were food items (cited by eight respondents) and household items like furniture, mattress, and blankets (one respondent).

Despite the ability to find the required items/services and with an acceptable level of quality, **97 per cent of respondents reported an increase in prices in the last four weeks**. Some 98 per cent of those reported that **food items** were subject to price increases. Respondents also reported increase in the prices of **rent** (10 per cent), **hygiene items** (10 per cent), **healthcare items** (eight per cent), clothes (eight per cent), utilities (six per cent), transport (two per cent), household items (one per cent), education (one per cent) and tools for business (less than one per cent). This reported increase in prices is in line with the official data published by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) as of December 2023³ which indicated that annual food inflation recorded 64.5 per cent. The same source indicated that, while the prices of fruits, vegetables and poultry had slightly declined in November, yet the prices of rice, sugar, dairy products and red meat had increases. It might also explain the high prevalence of negative coping strategies, especially food consumption strategies, and the high rCSI among survey respondents.

Figure 14: Ability of beneficiaries to find key items/services with acceptable quality and at stable prices



³ https://www.cbe.org.eg/-/media/project/cbe/listing/publication/2023/december/in_december_2023_en.pdf

Cash Distribution Process-Related Issues

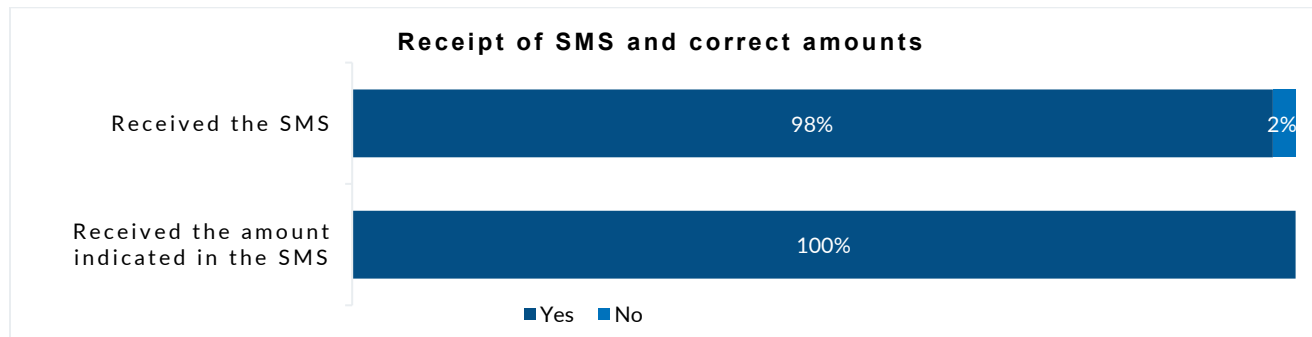
Notification about cash distribution and amounts of cash received

At the beginning of each of the two cash distribution cycles beneficiaries received a notification SMS from UNHCR on their registered phone. The SMS included information on the amount of cash entitlement, whether cash assistance will be received through biometric authentication or UNHCR card or the beneficiary’s passport, the nearest iris-enabled post office in case of receiving cash through biometric authentication, and the deadline of the cash distribution cycle. The SMS also included UNHCR partner’s helpline number that beneficiaries could call in case of any cash-related inquiries or complaints.

Most survey respondents (98 per cent) reported that they received a notification SMS from UNHCR upon the start of the cash distribution cycle indicating the amount of assistance they should receive and where to collect it from. Only two per cent of respondents (nine households) reported that they did not receive the SMS. To know that the cash distribution cycle had commenced, they relied on going directly to the post office and asking there (five households), UNHCR Staff (InfoLine and Community based protection) and relative/friends (two household each).

There were no instances of non-compliance as all respondents reported receiving the same amount of cash as was indicated to them in the SMS received.

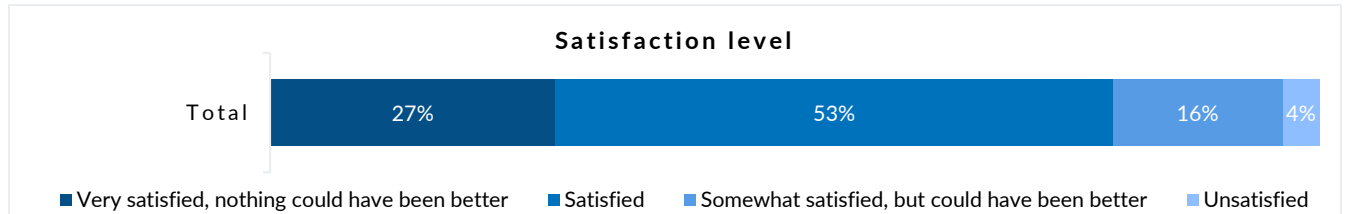
Figure 15: Receiving notification SMS and the correct amount of cash entitlement



General satisfaction with the cash collection process

Cash distribution process was generally satisfactory to beneficiaries. Survey results indicate that **80 per cent of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the process**, while 16 per cent were somewhat satisfied although they still think that there is room for improvement. The extent of satisfaction and the disaggregation by registration are illustrated in Figure (16).

Figure 16: Satisfaction with cash distribution process



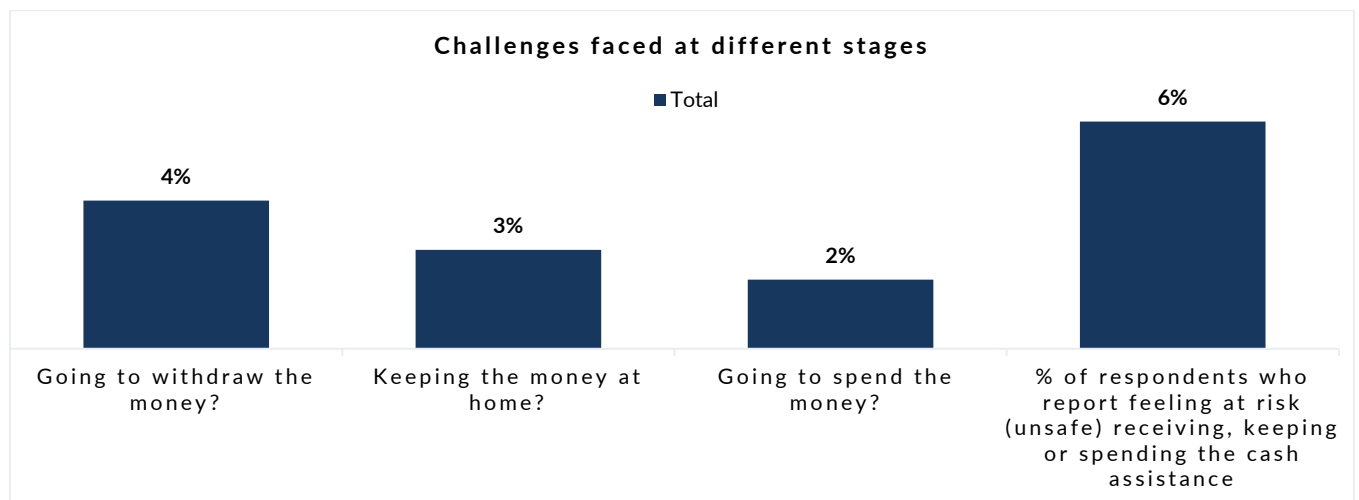
Among the 20 per cent who were not satisfied (73 households), the reasons for dissatisfaction cited included overcrowding at the post office (75 per cent), iris scan issues (27 per cent), mistreatment/ discrimination by the post office staff (15 per cent), requiring several visits to the post office before successfully withdrawing the assistance (eight per cent) and other reasons such as delay in the timing of cash disbursement by UNHCR, post office is far away, not receiving notification SMS, unclear SMS and refusal to represent aged people (reported by one per cent each).

Difficulties in collecting assistance

Most respondents (95 per cent) did not require any help to withdraw or spend cash, indicating that cash distribution process remains relatively smooth. The main reasons for requiring help among the remaining five per cent were limited mobility due to medical conditions (76 per cent), the post office being far/ hard to reach (12 per cent), the recipient was locked up and having young children (reported by six per cent each). Those who needed help with withdrawing or spending the cash sought it mainly from family members (14 respondents) and acquaintances/friends (three respondents).

The majority of respondents (94 per cent) reported feeling physically safe while receiving, keeping, and spending the cash assistance.

Figure 17: Percentage of respondents reporting feeling physically unsafe while withdrawing, keeping or spending their cash assistance

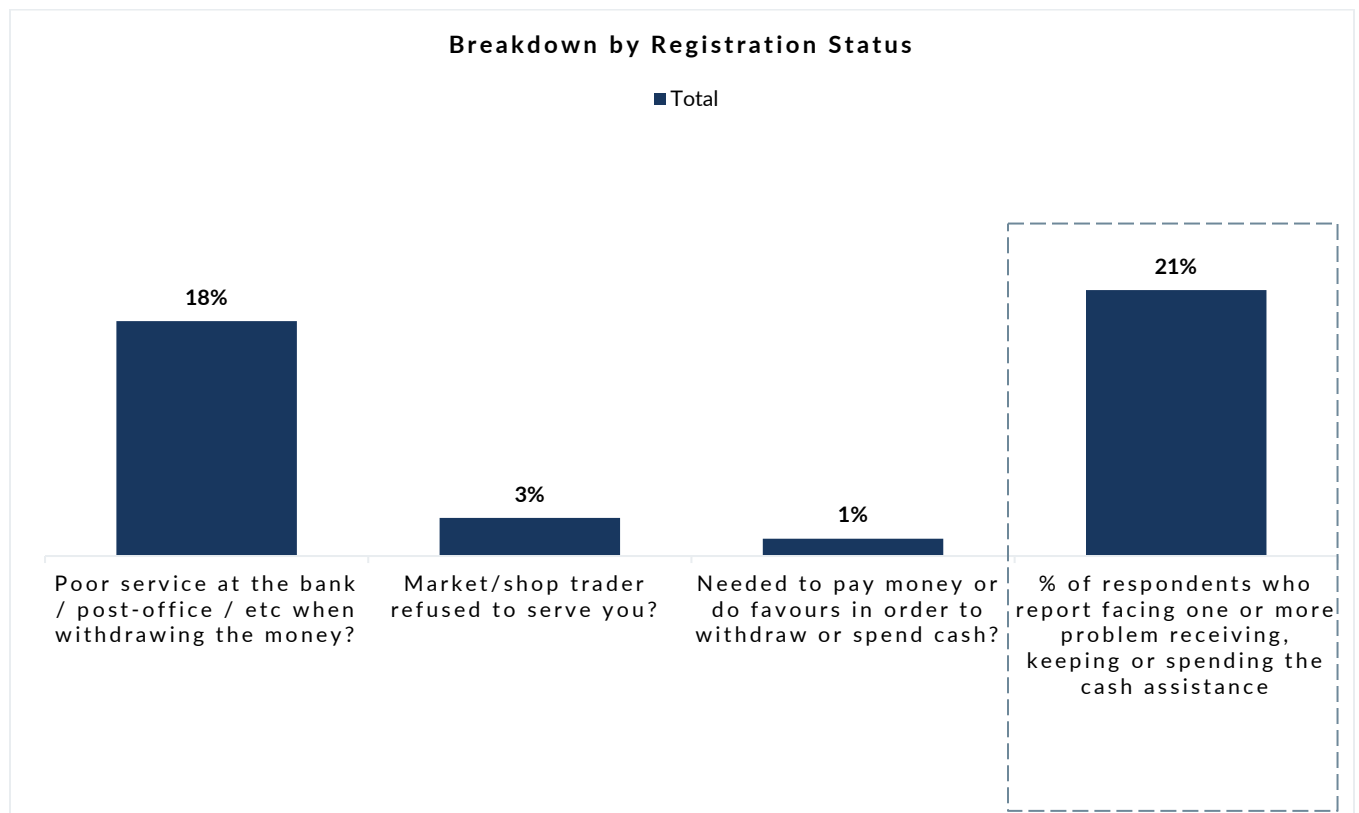


Further analysis of responses indicates that 96 per cent of respondents felt physically safe **while going to withdraw the money**. Those who felt unsafe cited reasons such as fear of theft (three per cent), fear of harassment/ bullying (two per cent), fear of physical assault and unsafe roads (one per cent each).

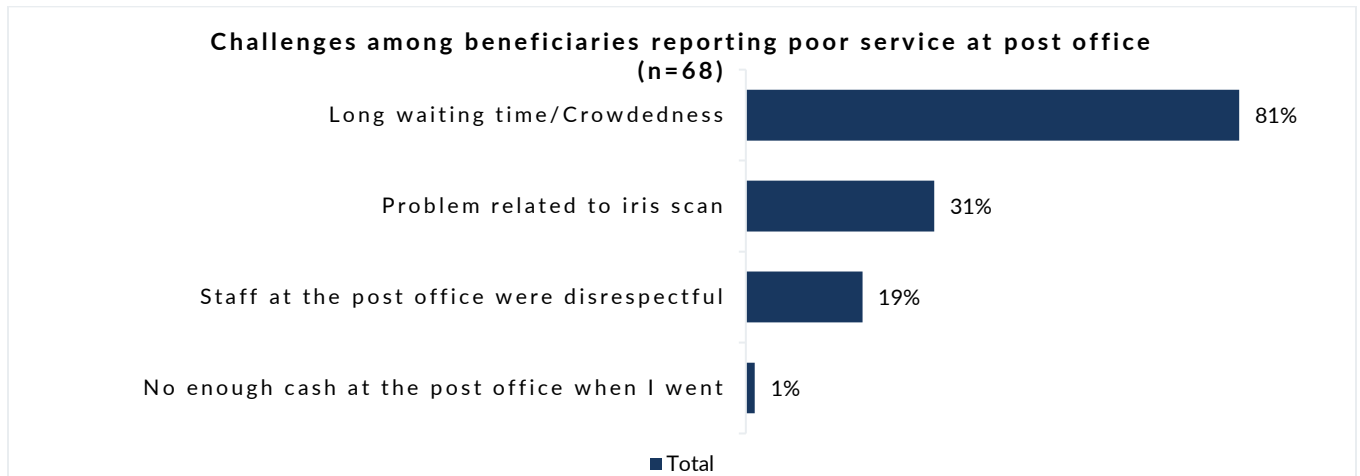
Furthermore, the majority felt physically safe while keeping the money at home and while spending the cash assistance (97 and 98 per cent respectively). Reasons for feeling unsafe while spending the money were the same reasons cited for feeling unsafe while withdrawing the money.

One fifth of respondents (21 per cent) reported facing one or more problems while receiving, keeping, or spending the cash assistance. The most commonly cited problem was poor service at the post office while withdrawing the cash and was faced by 18 per cent of all survey respondents. See Figure (18).

Figure 18: Problems faced during withdrawing, keeping or spending cash assistance



The main issues faced at the post office were long waiting time/ over crowdedness (cited by 81 per cent of the 68 respondents reporting facing issues at the post office), iris scan issues (31 per cent), poor treatment by staff at the post office (19 per cent) and lack of enough fund in the post office (one per cent). See Figure (19). The increased crowdedness and the long waiting times may be attributed to the Sudan emergency and the associated increase in the number of cash lists distributed at the same time by UNHCR at EPO.

Figure 19: Challenges faced among respondents reporting poor service at post office

Non-compliance issues

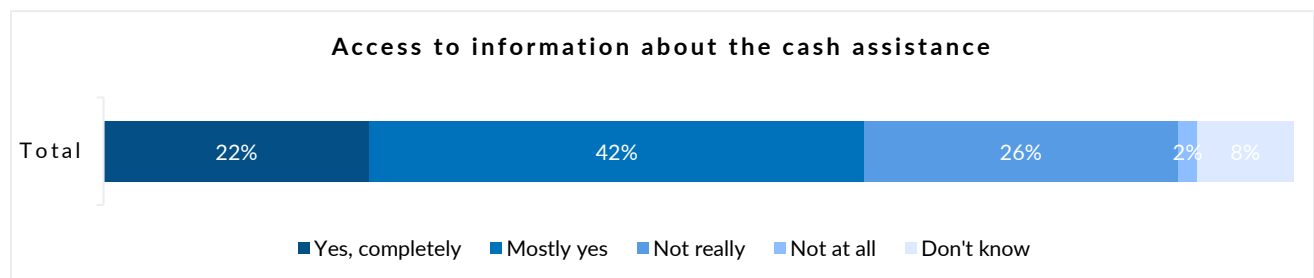
Of all beneficiaries interviewed, one per cent (representing five respondents) reported being asked to pay someone in order to cash out the cash assistance. All the five respondents declared paying a post office employee to withdraw the money. All non-compliance cases were recorded and followed through.

Accountability to Affected People

Information about assistance, complaints, and feedback channels

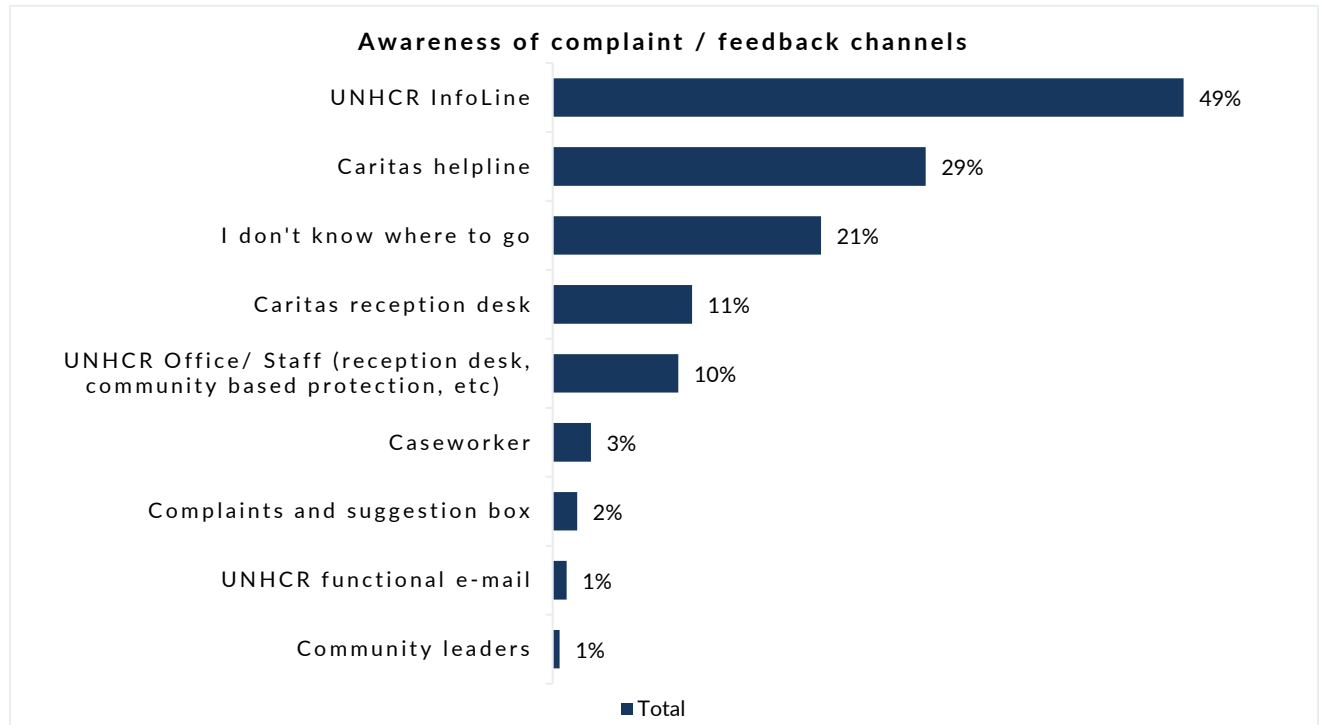
As part of its protection mandate and its commitment to Accountability to Affected People, UNHCR takes measures to ensure that sufficient and timely information on cash assistance is available to refugees through various channels such as SMS, UNHCR InfoLine, UNHCR partner’s (Caritas) helpline, and reception desks. Other sources of information include UNHCR help website, social media, community meetings, WhatsApp groups with community leaders, and information booklets and flyers. UNHCR also ensures that safe and accessible complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) are in place for collection, documentation, analysis and response to feedback and complaints concerning cash assistance. When asked if they feel well-informed about the cash assistance provided, **64 per cent of respondents cited feeling well-informed about the assistance, 28 per cent did not feel well-informed, while eight per cent did not provide an answer.** For those 104 respondents who did not feel well-informed, they mentioned that UNHCR could better inform beneficiaries by providing more information on the eligibility criteria (60 per cent), duration of the cash assistance (46 per cent), documents required (19 per cent), timing of the assistance (18 per cent), clearer notification SMS (13 per cent), increasing communication channels (eight per cent), clear information on how to collect the cash (three per cent) and where to go in case of facing problems (one per cent). See Figure (20).

Figure 20: Respondents feeling of being well-informed about the assistance



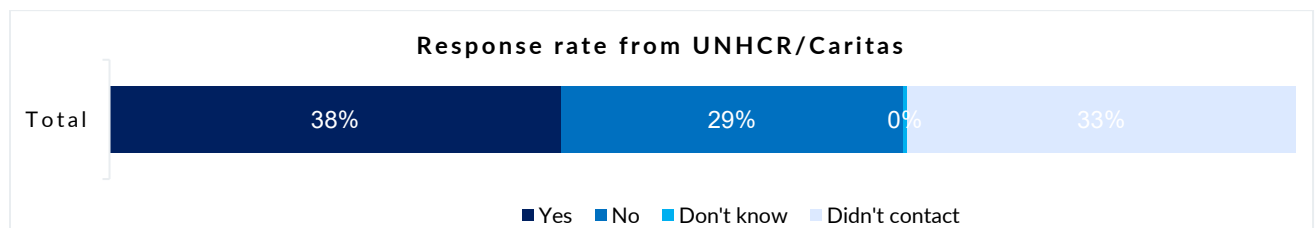
When all respondents were asked about how complaints and feedback can be reported, 79 per cent of beneficiaries were able to identify at least one locally available channel for lodging complaints or feedback. Figure 21 shows that UNHCR InfoLine was the most recognized complaints and feedback channel and was mentioned by 49 per cent of the respondents. This was followed by Caritas helpline/ reception desks, which was mentioned by 29 per cent of respondents. Other complaint and feedback channels recognized by respondents were Caritas reception desk (11 per cent), UNHCR staff (10 per cent) among others.

Figure 21: Complaints and feedback channels known to respondents



Of the beneficiaries who previously reached out to UNHCR/Caritas to raise a complaint or for inquiries re, **38 per cent reported having received a response from UNHCR/Caritas**. See Figure (22) below.

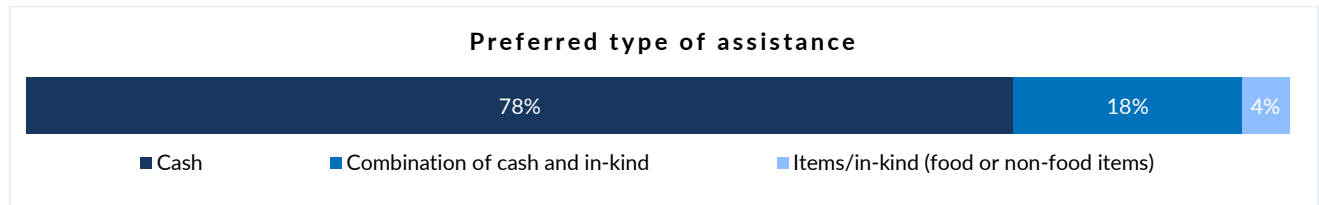
Figure 22: Response rate from UNHCR/Caritas



Preferred type of assistance

In consistence with global PDM results, the vast majority of respondents (96 per cent) mentioned cash as a preferred kind of assistance, where 78 per cent preferred to receive the assistance as cash only and 18 per cent preferred a combination of both cash and in-kind assistance. Only a small proportion of respondents (four per cent) preferred to receive the assistance in kind only. See Figure (23).

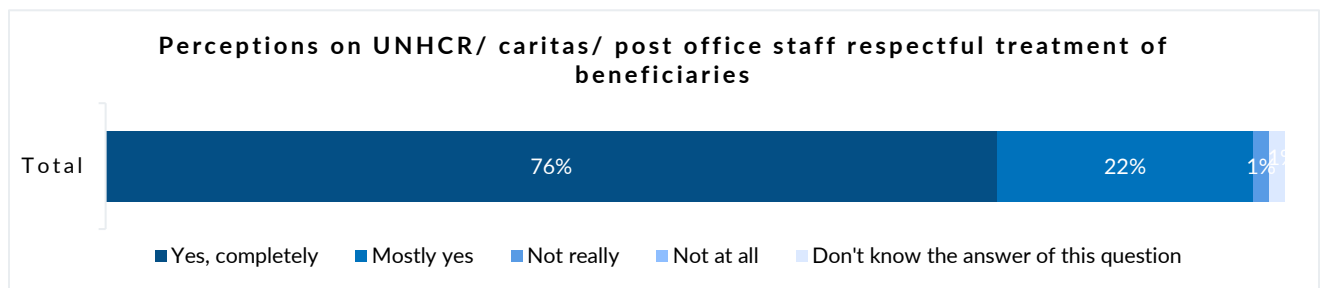
Figure 23: Preferred type of assistance



Other general views on cash assistance

When respondents were asked how they felt about the treatment they received from UNHCR/ Caritas/ Post Office staff throughout the process of receiving cash assistance, **98 per cent felt that they were treated with respect throughout the whole process.** For the five respondents who felt disrespected (one per cent of respondents), two reported it to be from a UNHCR staff member, two from Caritas staff and two from the post office staff. See the breakdown by nationality in Figure (24) below.

Figure 244: UNHCR/Caritas/Post Office treatment of beneficiaries



Conclusion

This PDM survey was conducted to provide an overview on how the new arrivals from Sudan used the four months multipurpose cash assistance, the difficulties they met during cash collection and the overall effect of the cash assistance on recipient households.

Overall, results from this monitoring exercise indicate that the one-off emergency **cash assistance had positive impact on its beneficiaries**, where more than two thirds of beneficiaries could meet half or more of their priority needs (77 per cent) and almost all beneficiaries reported at least a slightly positive effect on their well-being such as improving their living conditions, reducing their level of stress, and reducing their financial burden.

Findings also show that **most new arrivals put their cash assistance towards running essential household needs**; namely on buying food (82 per cent), paying rent (62 per cent), utilities (25 per cent) and covering healthcare related costs (25 per cent). Almost all respondents (99 per cent) stated that **MPCA enabled them to afford items/services which they could not afford before receiving it**; namely the ability to pay rent/avoid eviction (48 per cent of respondents), buy more food (45 per cent) and afford diverse and nutritious foods (35 per cent), among others. Also, most beneficiaries could find the needed goods and services in the markets, and with acceptable quality, indicating functional and viable markets in Egypt through which cash assistance can be effectively spent.

However, survey results showed that **the majority of beneficiaries (97 per cent) reported an increase in prices in the four weeks preceding the survey, mainly in food items**, thus contributing to their inability to cover their priority needs. The continued influx from Sudan coincides with Egypt's worst economic crisis in decades where significant price increases for food and utilities are worsening living conditions for the most vulnerable population. Data from Central Bank of Egypt confirm this finding where annual headline urban inflation recorded 33.7 per cent in December 2023 while annual food inflation continued to be high where it recorded 60.4 per cent, during the same period. Regular price monitoring conducted by UNHCR also confirms the same. As a result of increased cost of living and challenges in covering their priority needs, the proportion of beneficiaries resorting to one or more negative coping strategies was high (80 per cent). The increased reliance on negative coping strategies highlights the insufficiency of the cash transfer value, which meets only 22% of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket. This result also indicates the need for including beneficiaries of the four-months MPCA in the regular multipurpose cash assistance programme. Resorting to one or more food consumption coping strategy among MPCA beneficiaries was high as well (99 per cent of beneficiaries), and the reduced coping strategy index was 22.6 indicating food insecurity among beneficiaries.

The feedback of beneficiaries on the cash delivery process was generally positive where the majority of beneficiaries (80 per cent) were very satisfied or satisfied with the process, and the majority did not require any help during withdrawing or spending the cash. However, nearly one fifth of beneficiaries (21 per cent) reported some challenges in withdrawing or spending the assistance. Long waiting times and crowdedness at the post office, along with iris-related issues (reported by 15 per cent and six per cent of beneficiaries, respectively) were the most frequently encountered issues, and the distribution of other types of cash assistance at the same time may have contributed to the problem. To reduce crowdedness, UNHCR is planning to expand the network of iris-enabled post offices, and to increase the number of iris cameras in the highly trafficked post offices. In addition, UNHCR is working on timely troubleshooting of iris-related problems and on investigating the technical root causes of such problems to minimize their future occurrence.

Beneficiaries' knowledge of where to lodge cash-related complaints and inquiries at 79 per cent is fairly good, given that beneficiaries have newly arrived in Egypt. UNHCR Infoline was the most frequently identified communication channel, reported by 49 per cent of beneficiaries, followed by Caritas helpline which was identified by 29 per cent of beneficiaries. Of those who approached UNHCR or Caritas, 38 per cent reported receiving a response to their inquiries or complaints. UNHCR has been working on increasing the capacity of the helpline to receive more calls and on implementing an automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to provide instant responses to refugees' cash related inquiries. UNHCR is also expanding its use of SMSs to inform beneficiaries about the actions taken towards their complaints. In addition, the notification SMSs sent to beneficiaries included Caritas helpline number and instructions to contact this helpline for further inquiries or complaints.