

Cash support in 2020 for refugees and asylum-seekers in Ukraine

Post Distribution Monitoring Report

15 December 2020

Overview

In line with the people-centered approach, UNHCR conducts post-distribution monitoring (PDM) on a regular basis for assistance activities in order to deepen its understanding of the impact these activities have on the persons the organization assists and provides protection to.

The primary responsibility to provide for the reception of asylum-seekers and the local integration of recognized refugees remains with the State. Given the State's inadequate reception conditions, UNHCR is therefore filling protection gaps to meet specific needs, with a focus on the most vulnerable. The assistance provided through UNHCR is complementary to the responsibility of the State and should not be understood as replacing it. Asylum-seekers and refugees are therefore expected to apply for the available State support first and only when such support cannot be provided, UNHCR is complementing.

In Ukraine, UNHCR provides individual protection assistance only in those geographic regions covered by Partners in the frame of Project Partnership Agreements (PPA). Currently, this includes the following regions: Kyiv, Odesa, Zakarpattya (also covers Lviv) and Kharkiv regions. Geographical limitations do not apply to the self-reliance grants programme.

The UNHCR Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) support only vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers. The type of assistance vary depending on the needs and vulnerability of persons of concern. This report covers all regular cash-based assistance of UNHCR Ukraine in 2020 to support asylum-seekers and refugees, namely Monthly Subsistence Allowance (MSA); Vouchers for food and non-food items (Metro¹ cards); Emergency cash; 2018-2019 self-reliance grants.

This report does not cover one-time emergency cash assistance provided in May 2020 as part of the COVID response to assist asylum-seekers and refugees affected by the strict quarantine measures that deprived most of the asylum-seekers and refugees of their livelihoods, as vast majority are engaged in the informal sector².

Types of CBI covered

This report analyzes the following types of CBI assistance that were provided to refugees and asylum-seekers by UNHCR and its Partners in Ukraine in 2020:

1. Supplementary assistance and newcomers assistance

Modality: voucher (Metro cards)

Available only in Kyiv and Odesa

Distribution of vouchers (Metro cards) for food and non-food items to refugees and asylum-seekers who meet established vulnerability criteria (newcomers, PoCs in need of supplementary food or hygiene due to medical condition). In 2020, 121 families residing in Kyiv and Odesa received voucher assistance at least once.

2. MSA (Monthly Subsistence Allowance)

Modality: cash. OTC (over the counter)

Available in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv

MSA (monthly subsistence allowance) aims to support the most vulnerable persons of concern. It is given based on the strict vulnerability criteria and cases are reviewed every four months at the MSA committee meetings, composed of partner social counselors, SMS and UNHCR. In 2020, 105 vulnerable families were covered by this type of support.

¹ Metro is a supermarket chain, which is contracted by UNHCR to provide cash vouchers.

² See Emergency cash PDM report (COVID response) from June 2020.

3. Education support to school-age children

Modality: cash. OTC (over the counter)

Available in Kyiv, Odesa, Zakarpattya, Kharkiv, Lviv

School cash assistance is a once per year cash assistance to POCs designed to cover the needs related to the start of school year for the families with children of school age. For 2020 school cash assistance, 80 families meeting the pre-defined criteria were identified as eligible and benefitted from the assistance. Due to COVID-19 and introduction of the distance modality of education, school assistance aimed to cover families' needs with digital devices.

4. Self-reliance grants for business start-ups and for vocational training

Modality: cash. OTC (over the counter)

Available: all territory of Ukraine

The self-reliance grants programme provides cash grants to refugees and asylum-seekers for business start-ups or to undergo vocational trainings for further employment. The program was launched in 2018. It was implemented directly by UNHCR; then for 8 months in 2018 it was implemented by Caritas under a PPA; starting from 2019 it moved back under direct implementation. From the start of the programme, 109 people benefitted from the grants programme.

CBI payment modalities

Vouchers

In 2020 UNHCR used Metro Cash&Carry (big supermarket chain) cards in the value of 500 UAH. However, due to COVID-19 quarantine restrictions imposed by the government of Ukraine, UNHCR Ukraine has gradually shifted to provision of these types of assistance through other modalities. This PDM focused only on the cases processed through vouchers.

Cash (OTC)

In Ukraine, asylum-seekers cannot open bank accounts. The asylum-seeker certificate issued by the State Migration Service does not have the status of an ID document which prevents them from doing financial transactions through the bank system.

In 2018, UNHCR contracted a new Financial Service Provider (FSP), Ukrposhta, the Ukrainian national post service. Since then, UNHCR has gradually transferred MSA, school cash assistance, some of self-reliance grants installments and other types of assistance to the new payment modality. Assisted beneficiaries received the payments at the post offices in cash. The cash assistance is transferred to a specific post department, close to the recipient's place of residence. Beneficiaries are informed on cash assistance by the Partners, including the date of money transfer and the necessity to retrieve the money during 30 days following the payment. Ukrposhta also sends text messages to beneficiaries informing them about the money transfer(s). In order to collect the money, the recipients should provide an identity document, which could be one of the four options: Recognized Refugee Certificate (RR document), Certificate of Complementary Protection (CP), Asylum-seeker Certificate (Dovidka) or a UNHCR Protection Letter. While the first two types of documents are similar to national passports, the latter two are not recognized by Ukrainian law as documents confirming the person's identity. UNHCR managed to negotiate with Ukrposhta the distribution of cash with these two documents as well. However, not all Ukrposhta employees are aware of this agreement and therefore often individual follow-up is required by UNHCR or Partners for the asylum-seekers to pick up the cash.

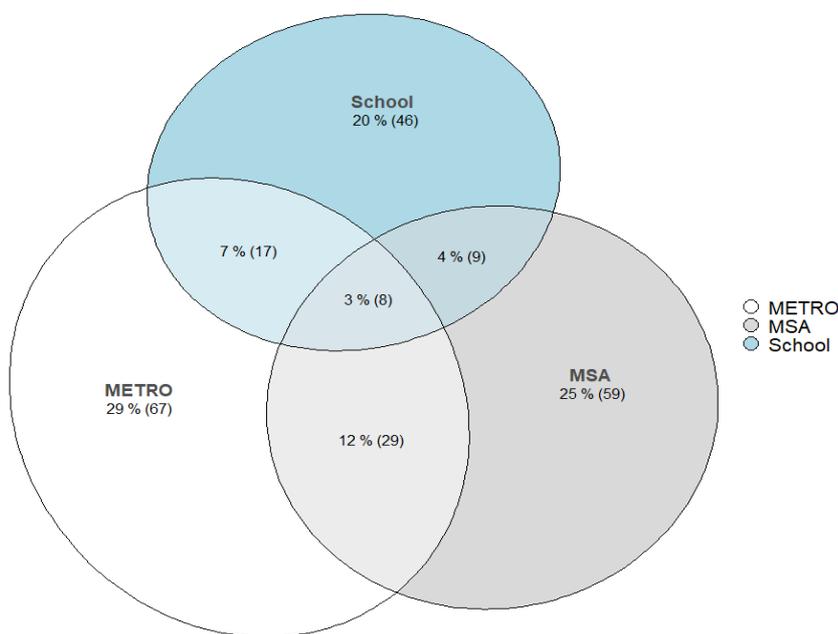
Scope of assistance provided and beneficiaries

Type of assistance	Location	Top COO	Population size (assisted families)	Responded to PDM survey ³
MSA	Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv	35 AFG; 9 RUS; 7 TJK; 14 SOM	105 (222 persons: 99F and 123M)	78

³ 18 responders claimed to have not received any assistance.

Metro cards	Kyiv, Odesa	53 AFG; 34 TJK; 18 RUS; 13 SOM; 10 UZB	121 (353 persons: 167F and 186M)	50
School cash assistance	Kyiv, Od., Lviv Zakarp.,Kharkiv	27 AFG; 11 RUS; 16 TJK; 3 SYR	80 (366 persons: 180F and 186M)	43
Self-reliance grants/ business start-up	All Ukraine	19 RUS; 17 SYR; 8 AFG; 6 UZB; 5 TJK	76 (13F and 63M)	47
Self-reliance grants/ vocational training	Kyiv, Od., Lviv Zakarp.,Kharkiv	10 AFG; 8 SOM; 4 RUS	32 (12 F and 20 M)	15 (FGD)
TOTAL			457	233

Overlap by type of assistance | n=235



The amount of MSA is calculated based on the family size. It is in line with the recommendations of the Cash Working Group on assistance provision at 60% of subsistence level (3 774.62 UAH as of February 2020), which corresponds to MSA amount. Assistance per single person provided by UNHCR amounted to 2 400 UAH per month, proportionally increased depending on the number of household members.

Metro cards are distributed by tranches of 500 UAH and the amount is calculated based on vulnerability of the person and family size.

The amount of school assistance is calculated based on the number of children in the family, taking MSA amount per single person as a basis for calculation.

Self-reliance grants have a maximum value of 5 000 USD and depend on the project proposal. Each proposal is evaluated by the Committee, verifying the business grant calculations as per market value of minimum viable equipment/goods to start or develop a similar project.

Post Distribution Monitoring Objectives and Methodology

OBJECTIVES OF PDM

1. Evaluate the extent of programme effectiveness to cover the needs of the targeted population (*Given the purpose of material assistance, to which extent this assistance satisfies the needs of the targeted population*);

2. Assess efficiency of the programme implementation (*Is the modality of the project implementation satisfactory; Is there a preference on the part of PoCs between Ukrposhta and vouchers distribution*);
3. Assess quality of Partners' counselling on the purpose of assistance and eligibility for this assistance and the degree of awareness of persons of concern on the available feedback mechanisms.

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS SAMPLING

UNHCR carried out telephone household survey based on a unified questionnaire. The PDM survey was conducted during October-November 2020 (delays are related to COVID implications) by a team of students and teachers⁴ trained by UNHCR Protection staff.

Based on the experience with the low response rate during the phone surveys in 2018 and 2019, and in order to ensure representativity, all households were included in the sampling size.

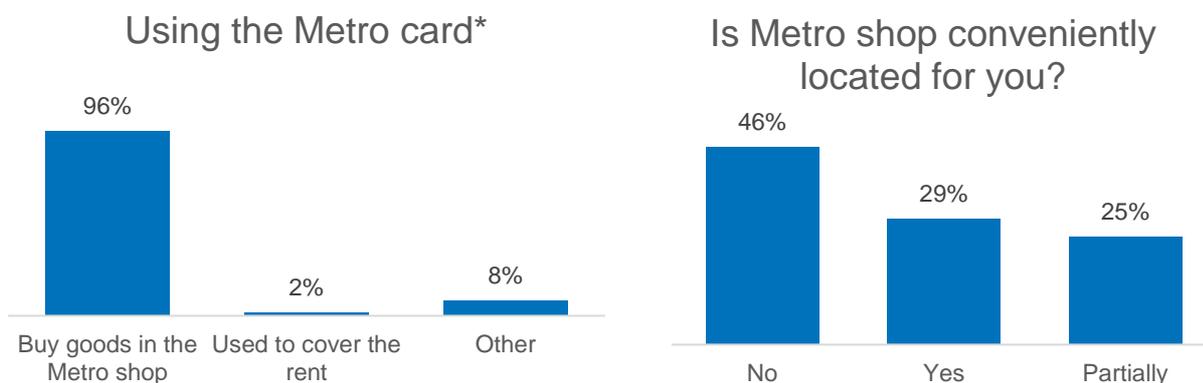
All self-reliance grants beneficiaries who received grants for business start-ups were contacted by telephone with the unified survey. Self-reliance grants beneficiaries who received grants for vocational training were invited for FGDs, to provide in-depth feedback and recommendations through qualitative data collection. As UNHCR is looking into modifying its livelihoods program and vocational training component in particular, the groups discussions were organized to generate debate and allow for collection of the detailed feedback.

Questionnaires for phone survey and for FGDs are attached as Annexes A, B and C to this report.

Type of assistance	All HHs	Respondent HHs	Margin of error, with a 95% confidence level
MSA	105	78	6%
Metro cards	121	49	11%
School cash assistance	80	42	10%
Self-reliance grants for business start-up	76	47	9%
Self-reliance grants for vocational training	32	15	19%

Key findings per type of assistance

Metro cards



*Respondent could select few options

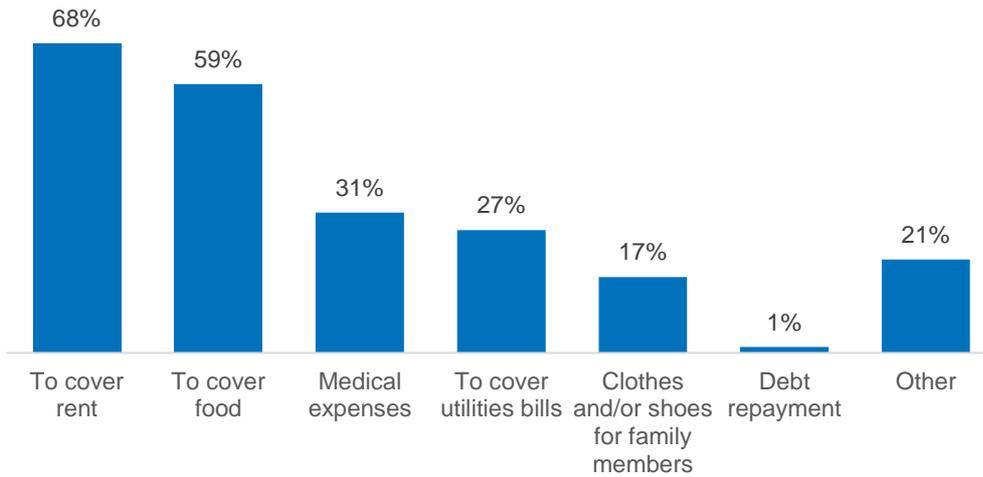
- Comparing to the 2019 PDM, when 2% of respondents exchanged Metro cards for cash or goods, in 2020 none of the respondents informed about the usage of the cards in this way. 2% of the respondents, however, mentioned using the cards for rent, which could be interpreted as exchange for good.
- Only 29% of the Metro cards recipients find the location of the metro shop convenient.

⁴ Farsi, Arabic, French, English speaking students and teachers from the Kyiv National Linguistic University.

- 14% of the respondents had difficulties using Metro card, the main reason being the value of the card and no possibility to receive change in cash, in case one wants to buy good of lower value.
- 6% (3 persons) indicated that they received unclear or no explanations from the Partners on how to use the Metro card and on the purpose of this assistance.

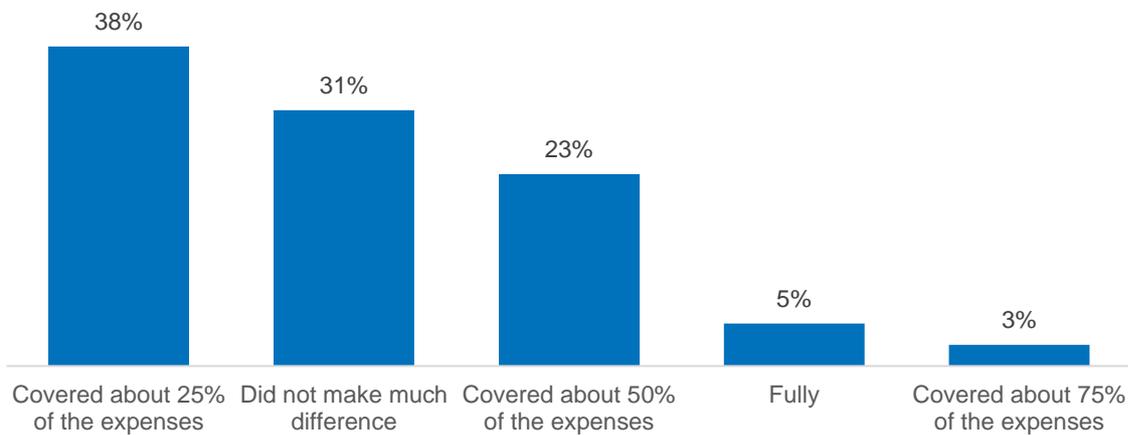
Monthly Subsistence Allowance (MSA)

Spending the UNHCR MSA cash on*

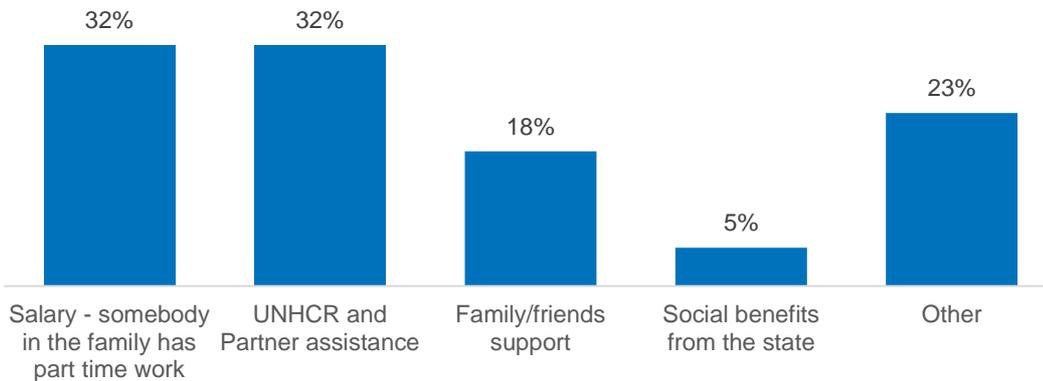


*Respondent could select few options

Extent to which MSA covers monthly expenses of HHs



Additional sources of income of MSA beneficiaries*

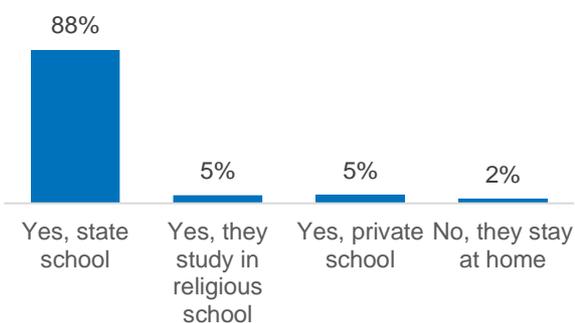


*Respondent could select few options

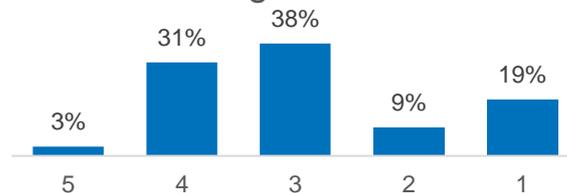
- Seven respondents (10%) mentioned to have used MSA to cover some COVID-related expenses, like hygiene items and medication.
- Over 40% of respondents spend MSA on rent and utilities.
- 69% of the respondents reported that MSA covered 25% of their expenses or less.
- 30% reported one family member to have occasional work, some mentioned that it was impacted by the quarantine.
- 11% said that they take loans and receive some support from community members. None of the respondents mentioned savings, pensions; 5% mentioned some sort of state support.
- 22% reported that they were not clearly explained the criteria for assistance or they felt that they would like to receive more information about available assistance, which they do not have. Only three persons mentioned that they experience poor communication with the Partner.
- 12% of recipients were not clear about the criteria used for their selection for this type of assistance (MSA).

School assistance

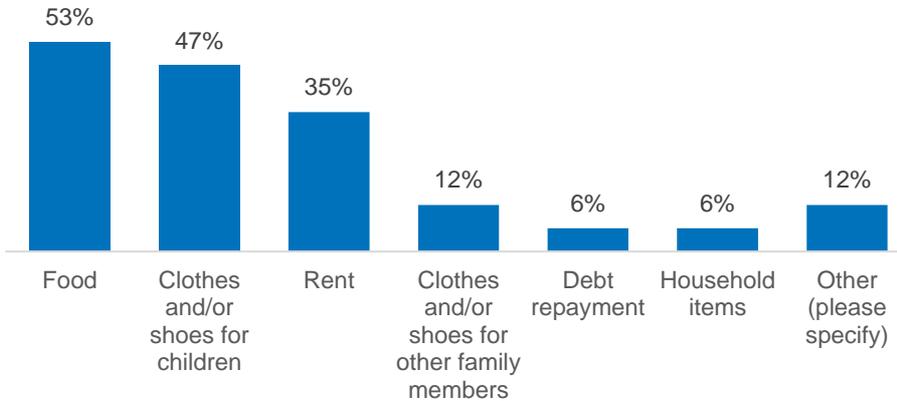
School attendance by school age children



On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 – not at all; 5 – fully), was this amount enough to purchase necessary things for your child to go to school?



People who used school assistance to fully or partially cover other needs, used it for*

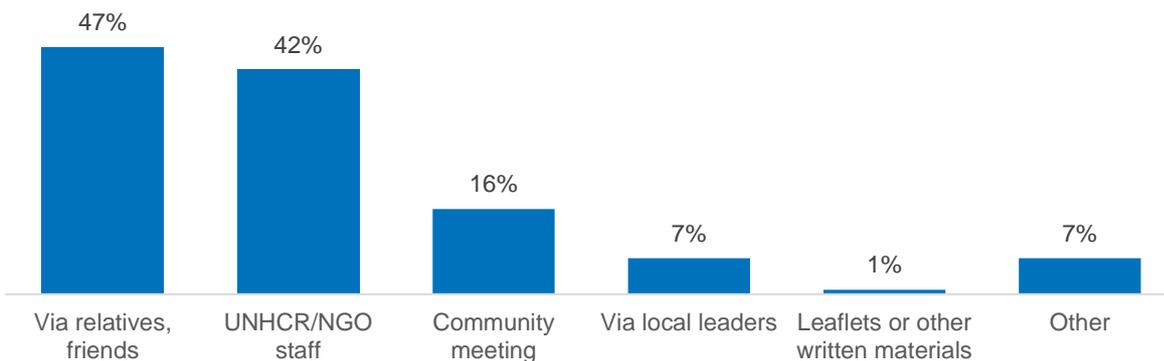


*Respondent could select few options

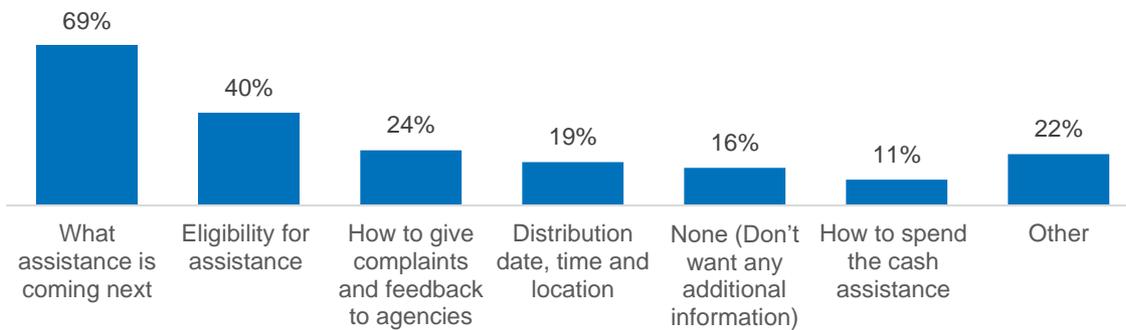
- One person reported that one school-age child is out of school.
- Four children do not attend public school and are enrolled either in private or religious schools instead. The parents attribute this to lack of means to purchase school supplies (2 persons), language barrier (2 persons).
- 58% of the assisted families spent the full received amount on school-related expenses; 23% - partially and 20% of the people spent the assistance on other needs.
- Only 6% of those respondent (2 families) who used the cash for school-related expenses, used the amount to purchase digital means for children to study on-line; others purchased non-digital school items.
- 40% of respondents reported that children did not have difficulties with on-line studies. 24% stated that their children did not have experience with on-line studies. The remaining 36% of respondents listed the following problems with on-line studies: lack of equipment (majority of respondents), poor or expensive Internet connection (3 families).

Assistance provision. Feedback and accountability

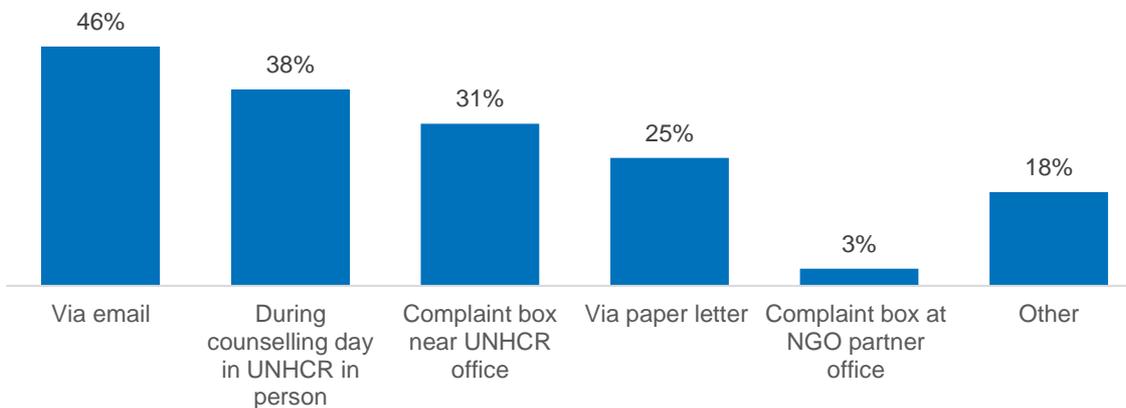
Sources of information about UNHCR assistance*



Additional information that people would like to know about UNHCR assistance*



52% of respondents knew the following ways to report complaints or feedback*

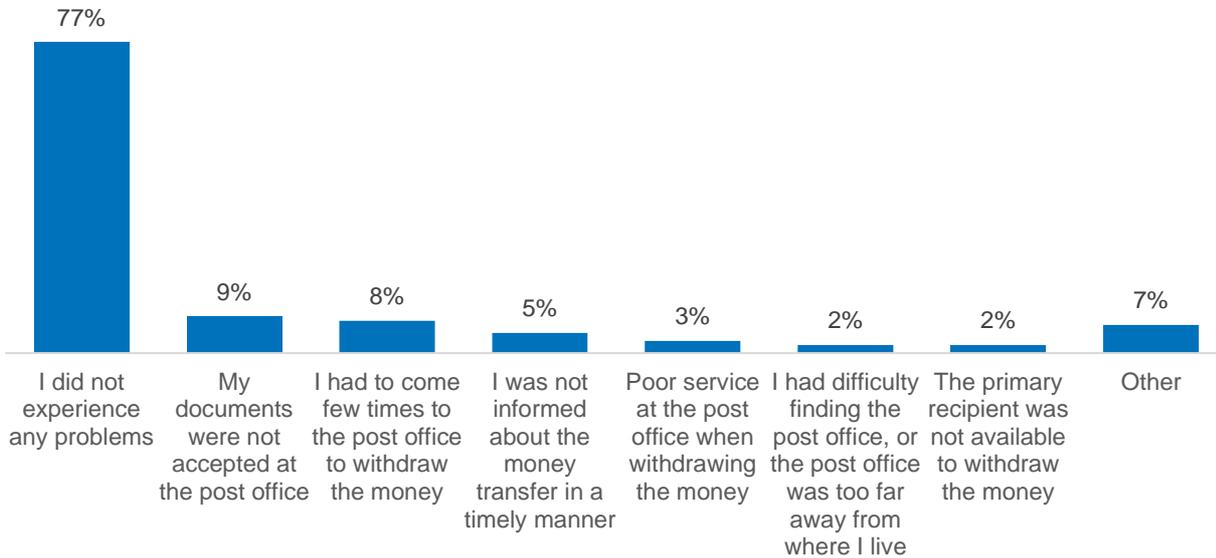


*Respondent could select few options

- Out of 236 respondents, 92% felt that some kind of information necessary for them was missing: either the types of possible assistance, eligibility, timing of assistance or how to file the complaints or feedback. The data comparable with 2019 PDM.
- 48% reported that they do not know how to report complaints and feedback on cash assistance from UNHCR.

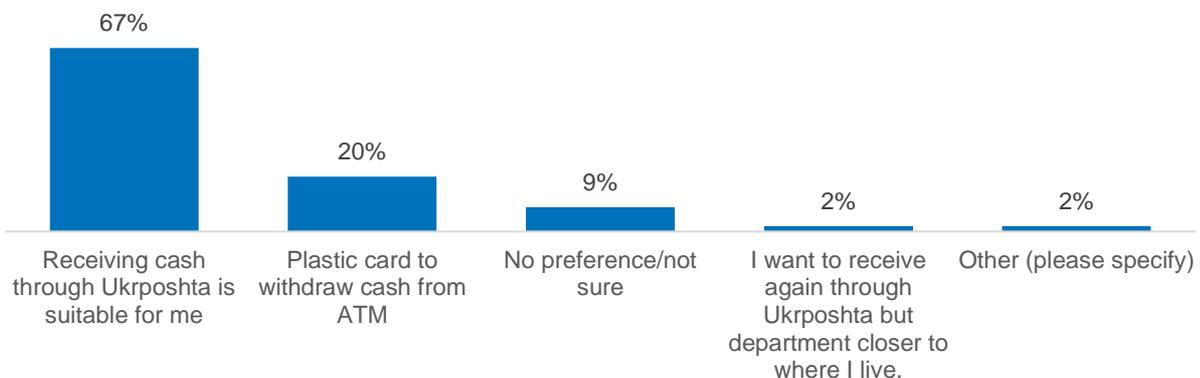
Delivery mechanisms

Collecting the cash at the Ukrposhta resulted in the following experiences*



*Respondent could select few options

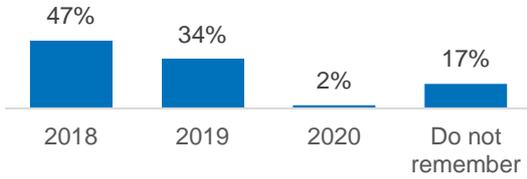
How would you prefer to receive cash assistance in the future?



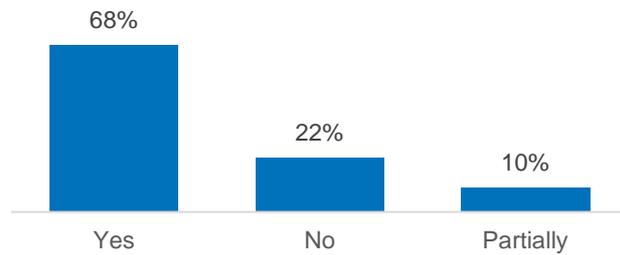
- Only 8% of respondents preferred Metro cards as modality for assistance delivery. 92% opted for Ukrposhta transfers.
- Ukrposhta is a convenient FSP for 69% of the respondents. Out of 33% of respondents who reported difficulties with delivery mechanisms, a third were in relation to the document of the person.

Self-reliance grants (for business start-ups)

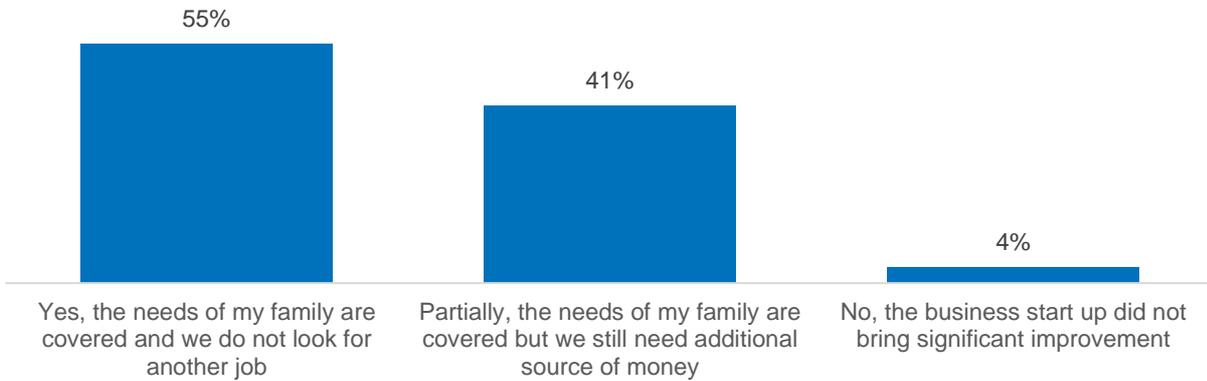
Break-down of the respondents-business grants beneficiaries per year of assistance



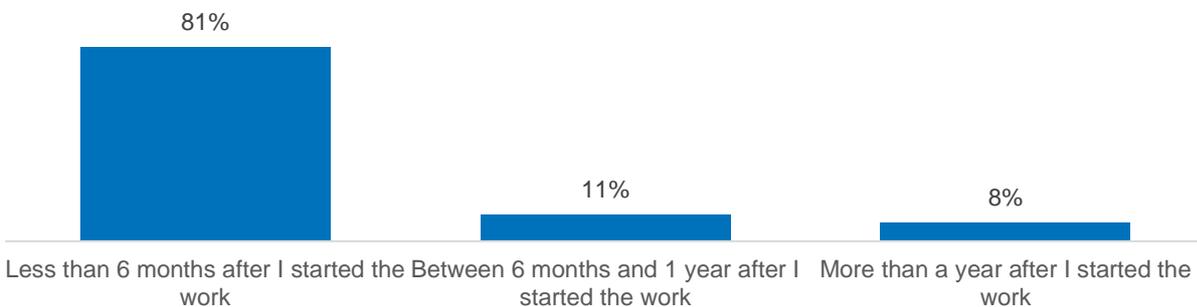
Is your business still operational?



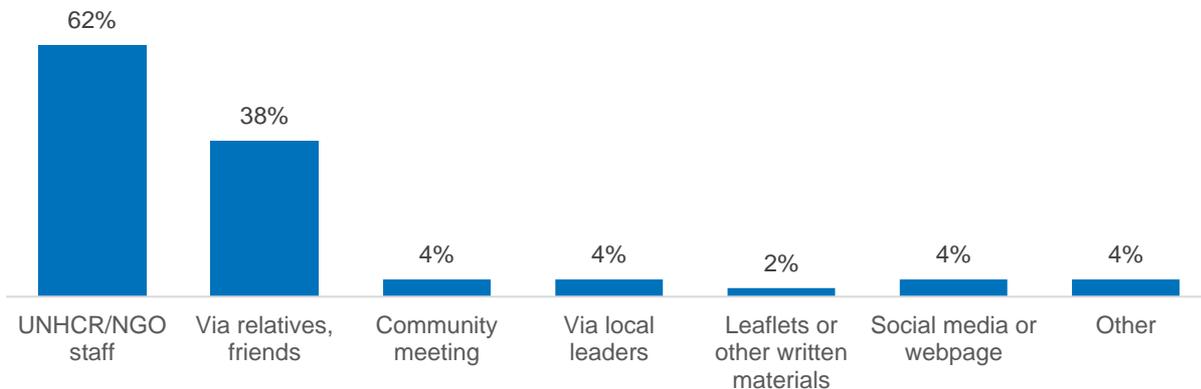
Did the grant help your family to live better than before the grant?



When did you start receiving some income from your grant?

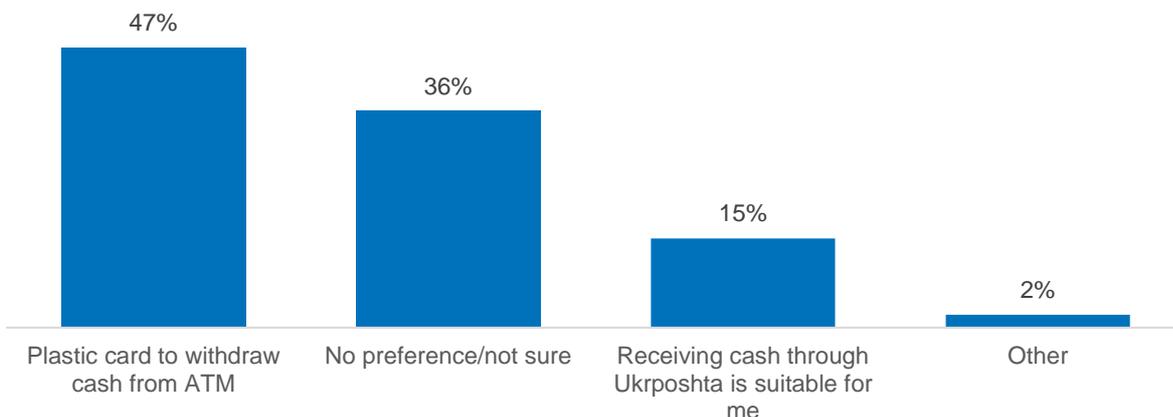


Sources of information on UNHCR grants*



*Respondent could select few options

Preferred cash transfer modalities:



- 89% of respondents manage to open business fully or partially within 3 months after money receipt.
- **68% still have their business fully operational, and 10% more have it partially operational.**
- 70% of respondents stated that they have received all the necessary support with implementation upon the receipt of the grant. 22% stated that they were not aware that they could ask for further support.
- **56% of grantees whose business is still operational claim that the business which they started with the grant provides for all of the family needs and they are not looking for additional sources of income, 41% claimed that business partially satisfies the needs of the family. Only 4% reported that the business is not providing for the family needs.**
- 66% received the cash transfer to their own bank accounts and 28% received the Ukrposhta transfer. Out of the Ukrposhta transfers recipients, 63% of people faced no problems. 37%, however, experiences difficulties with the document, money availability or service at the post office.
- **81% of respondents started generating income from their business activity within less than 6 months upon grant receipt.**
- 10% of respondents reported constraints with opening the business as per their initially planned idea. Out of them, 2 respondents indicated that the grant amount turned out insufficient, and 3 respondents indicated implementation constrains.
- 20% of people reported that the business has fully or partially closed down. Of them, 2 people found better jobs and 8 people had to close down due to COVID and quarantine restrictions, as they could not cover operational costs or did not have enough orders.
- Partially closed and closed businesses are from different fields and there is no correlation revealed during the monitoring between the field of business and the rate of closure of the business.
- One respondent feels that his business failed due to the lack of legal support.

The respondents shared the following recommendations to improve the grants program:

- Provide additional guidance during the whole period of grant implementation.
- Consider increasing the ceiling for grant proposal.
- Provide legal accompaniment for the business.
- Provide guidance on business expansion.
- Not to delay the payment of grants in the future, because long waiting period for the decision discourages motivation and applicants lose interest in the business idea, as well as identified opportunities.
- Allow people to receive grants multiple times, as people might change their interests.
- Allow opportunity for top up on the grant, if business expenditures are higher than expected.
- Support those existing grantees who create work placement for other refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Provide additional financial support during quarantine would be needed, particularly to cover operational expenses.
- Provide more clarity on the proposal evaluation timeline and payment schedule.
- For those grantees that develop their own products – provide support with certification process
- Provide support to the grantees who would like to expand their businesses.

General feedback from grantees:

- Participants expressed gratitude for the grants.
- People engaged in unofficial livelihoods activities shared that lack of documentation poses a number of obstacles – it limits their possibility for advertisement, exposure, engagement with state institutions as clients; as well as exposes them to potential fines.
- Rent became too difficult to cover during the COVID.
- Delays with decision and payments were discouraging for grant recipients.
- Some respondents felt that assistance was granted to people who weren't deserving to be the grantees of this program.
- For UNHCR to consider the possibility to support studies grants.
- 55% of grantees did not know how they can report feedback or complaints to UNHCR.
- Several grantees requested information on other assistance programs, like medical assistance, school enrollment, cultural induction programmes, kindergarten support.

Self-reliance grants (for vocational training)

To obtain qualitative information and feedback on the vocational training programme, 2 FGDs were conducted with the 2018-2020 grants recipients. 25 people were invited for the FGDs and 15 participated. Of the participants, 13 people graduated from the course; 1 dropped out; 1 did not enroll.

The participant who did not enroll into the course used the money to start on-line sales of bags, and this business is currently successful. The participant who dropped-out at half-way informed that the content of the studies was not satisfactory, but he is still using the equipment procured with funds from UNHCR cash grant to work, and the work generates some income for him.

Most of the participants informed that they have selected the field of study by themselves. Some of them either had previous experience in the same area or had pursued their childhood dream related to the selected field of study.

General observation is that the participants who have had previous experience in the selected field had a higher success rate with subsequent employment than those who enrolled into a new field of study. For example, for the IT courses, they were crafted to the linguistic needs of the applicants but the success rate of the graduates remains low. None of the participants has found a job yet and all of them feel that they still lack knowledge to even start looking for a job, irrespective of their place of residence. On the contrary, people who have had previous experience, seemed more successful with finding a job and retaining it.

Among the key reasons for not finding/retaining the job after the vocational training the respondents indicated:

- Insufficient knowledge (IT sector)
- Lack of appropriate documentation and the fact that the asylum-seeker certificate is not considered as an ID document (food sector)
- COVID-19 implications (food sector, accountancy services)

Other challenges reported:

- Issues with banks when receiving payments for services

- Lack of guidance on the job market
- Lack of language skills

The most successful cases from among the respondents were in the following fields:

- Graphic design
- Beauty industry

UNHCR noted that among respondents from successful fields of work, there were recognized refugees but also asylum-seekers, meaning that, for them, their documentation was not an obstacle.

All the participants informed that the grant application procedure was clearly explained to them and that they have received support from UNHCR and Partners in the process.

Some participants suggested that assistance with job-search after the courses could be helpful, as well as legal accompaniment when needed.

Participants from the IT sphere requested longer duration of studies.

Some participants stated that now they would have purchased an upgraded technical equipment instead of using part of the grant for the course of studies, if they had a better understanding of the content of the selected courses.

Conclusions

Objective 1: Evaluate the extent of programme effectiveness to cover the needs of the targeted population (Given the purpose of material assistance, to which extent this assistance satisfies the needs of the targeted population?).

MSA: Most of the respondents stated that the amount of MSA support is very low and this is particularly relevant in the times of COVID-19 when their livelihoods are negatively impacted. The increase of the MSA amount that is planned for 2021 will partially respond to the reported needs.

Metro cards: The vast majority of respondents would opt for cash instead of Metro cards, as this modality poses a number of challenges which no longer surpass the benefits of the vouchers. The transition to cash instead of vouchers that is planned in 2021 will respond to this reported preference.

School support: Respondents reported high school attendance rate among refugee and asylum-seeking children. The support is mainly used for school needs of the children, however it does not cover the technical constraints faced by the families during the on-line schooling. A possibility to cover technical needs of school-age children will be considered in 2021.

Grants for business start-ups: high success rate reported by the respondents. Several practical recommendations should be considered for the 2021 programme, namely continued legal support with the grant implementation.

Grants for vocational training: low success rate reported by the respondents due to objective (e.g. documentation) and other reasons (e.g. not sufficient duration of studies). This should be taken into account for 2021 vocational training programme planning, particularly while considering state-run courses that offer colleague or vocational school studies vs private intensive courses which target students with a certain level of education in the selected field.

Objective 2: Assess the efficiency of the programme implementation (Is the modality of the project implementation satisfactory?; Is there a preference on the part of persons of concern between Ukrposhta and vouchers distribution?).

Ukrposhta as FSP was highly evaluated by the respondents of MSA and school uniform support. The majority of respondents are satisfied with its services, despite occasional problems in some new Ukrposhta departments.

The majority of the grants beneficiaries received cash transfers to their bank accounts. Even those who received transfers through Ukrposhta did not report problems. The majority of grantees suggested to shorten the selection and payment processes.

About 90% of respondents would prefer Ukrposhta transfer of cash to Metro vouchers.

Objective 3: Assess the quality of Partners' counselling on the purpose of assistance and eligibility for this assistance and the degree of beneficiaries' awareness on the available feedback mechanisms.

Overall, the participants informed that the information regarding this type of assistance was provided to them in a clear manner, both by partners and by UNHCR.

Over half of the respondents wanted to have more clarity on the eligibility criteria and on the timing of the assistance to be provided to them in advance.

Over half of the participants informed that they did not know how to file a complaint or provide feedback, other than to call the UNHCR hotline.

Success stories from vocational training grants beneficiaries

Fatima⁵ is a woman from Afghanistan and living in Kharkiv: She received a grant for hairdresser courses in 2018. She studied during 4 months. Upon completion of the course, her teacher referred her to the beauty parlor for internship and in less than a month after completion of the course, she was offered a job. She has been working for almost 2 years since then.

Abdulla is a man from Afghanistan living in Odesa: He received a grant for computer equipment and to participate in a short graphic design course to upgrade his skills in 2018. *“I am very happy with the grant, it helped me to realize my dream and earn my living with a dream job. Two years ago I worked at the market, loading stuff. Now I work from home, I have a number of returning clients, I am very happy”.*

Farukh is a man from Afghanistan living in Odesa: He received a grant for furniture design courses and equipment in 2018. *“Having relevant skills allowed me to demonstrate my work better. One thing is when I explain to the potential customer what I can do with the furniture; it is a totally different thing when I can draw on the computer and show the customer how the order is going to look like. This really helped me to increase my customers pool by 10 times or more. Also, it helped me to promote my work through social media. I approached it smartly, and took care of increasing the price gradually. First, I found enough customers, then they recommended my work to others, now I have more orders than I can fulfill, so I am thinking of expanding”.*

Jack is a man from Cote d'Ivoire living in Odesa. He received grant for bakery school in 2018. Upon graduation, he worked in a small bakery for several months and later secured employment in a 5-stars hotel in Odesa. The employment was unfortunately terminated due to the COVID-19 situation.

Lessons Learned

- The amount of Monthly Subsistence Allowance was considered insufficient by the vast majority of the respondents. This should be addressed during 2021 by increasing the amount.
- Metro cards is unwelcome as a modality by a vast majority of assistance recipients, as the shops sell in bulk, are situated far from the areas where people reside, and the prices in the Metro supermarket chain are high as comparing to the market.
- Out of the available financial service providers, the Ukrainian state post (“Ukrposhta”) seems to be a satisfactory service provider, although asylum-seekers face some difficulties with cash receipt there.
- Comparing to the June PDM, there were hardly any complaints regarding text messages from Ukrposhta about the delivery of cash transfer, which can be attributed to numerous UNHCR interventions on the issue.
- FGDs is a convenient and efficient modality for PDM, as it allows to effectively collect the feedback from the communities.
- UNHCR and Partners should provide more regular information sessions for persons of concern, as this was a request from all FGDs.
- While the business grants programme demonstrated a high success rate among the respondents, the vocational training programme will be re-designed, possibly considering a long-term approach to studies.

Contacts

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Links

UNHCR Ukraine: www.unhcr.org/ua - Twitter: [www.twitter.com/UNHCRUkraine](https://twitter.com/UNHCRUkraine) Facebook: www.facebook.com/UNHCRKyiv -

Reports: <https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/resources>

⁵ All names have been changed.