

Post Distribution Monitoring Report

Winter Cash Assistance 2019/2020



Background


During the 2019-2020 winter season, UNHCR assisted close to 260,000 families, including refugees and vulnerable Lebanese. UNHCR aimed at supporting vulnerable families who are faced with increased stress due to extreme weather conditions, coupled with already limited resources. In the winter season of 2019/2020, families in Lebanon not only faced challenges of the winter season but also additional challenges due to the deteriorating national economy. In October 2019, nation-wide protests spread across the country, effecting refugees' ability to move safely, among other protection concerns. Additionally, strains on the economy and the banking sector made the use of ATMs in the country more restricted. Inflation and increased prices made it more difficult for families to meet their most basic needs.

UNHCR provided assistance to refugees through an unconditional, unrestricted cash transfer as part of the winter cash assistance program (WinCAP). Previously conducted research has shown that refugee families in Lebanon have increased expenditure during the winter months linked to additional needs. This is coupled with a decrease in the availability of income generating activities, which are usually more accessible in warmer months. The increased cost of living during winter has been estimated to be between US\$ 75 and US\$ 150/family/month.

Starting October 2019, and through the season, UNHCR provided a one-off cash payment to refugee families in an effort to help them meet the additional basic needs brought about by the winter season. The cash transfer was redeemable through an ATM card from ATMs across the country in the local currency.

Due to the other cash assistance programs in place, such as regular multipurpose cash and cash for food assistance, some refugee families were receiving different combinations of cash transfers and WinCAP uploads. These different groups are detailed in the figure below.

Figure 1: Various assistance packages to refugee families

1a: Syrian Refugees	WinCAP US\$ 225	WFP Food US\$ 27/person monthly	MCAP US\$ 175/family monthly
	WinCAP US\$ 375	WFP Food US\$ 27/person monthly	MCAP US\$ 175/family monthly
2: All Nationalities	WinCAP US\$ 375	WFP Food US\$ 27/person monthly	
3: All Nationalities	WinCAP US\$ 375		

Methodology

This report presents the findings of the post distribution and outcome monitoring exercise for UNHCR WinCAP to refugee families. The objectives were:

1. Assess the effects of WinCAP on benefiting families by measuring and examining key outcomes associated with the program.
2. Assess the degree to which families were able to access the assistance with safety and dignity.

The following four groups of refugee families were surveyed:

Food assisted Syrian (SYR) refugees

363 WinCAP assisted Syrian families who receive regular food assistance from the World Food Program¹.

WinCAP only- SYR

417 WinCAP assisted Syrian families who do not receive any kind of regular cash assistance throughout the year.

Non-assisted SYR

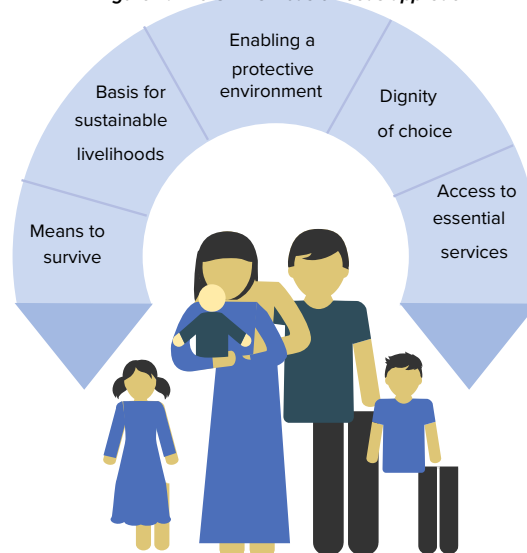
289 non-assisted Syrian families.

Assisted- refugees of other nationalities (RON)

192 WinCAP assisted Non-Syrian families who receive regular multi-purpose cash assistance from UNHCR and food assistance from WFP.

The **Non-assisted SYR** group serves as a control group for comparative purposes. The selection of this group took into consideration their comparability with the **WinCAP only-SYR** group to allow for confident comparisons. Data was collected during February 2020 through face-to face interviews at refugees homes by trained enumerators².

Figure 2: The UNHCR basic needs approach



1) WFP food assistance for this group of families is provided via a food e-card which can be used at WFP contracted shops for the purchase of food items.

2) UNHCR partners that participated in data collection: World Vision International in the Bekaa; Caritas in North Lebanon; Makhzoumi Foundation in Mount Lebanon; SHEILD in South Lebanon.

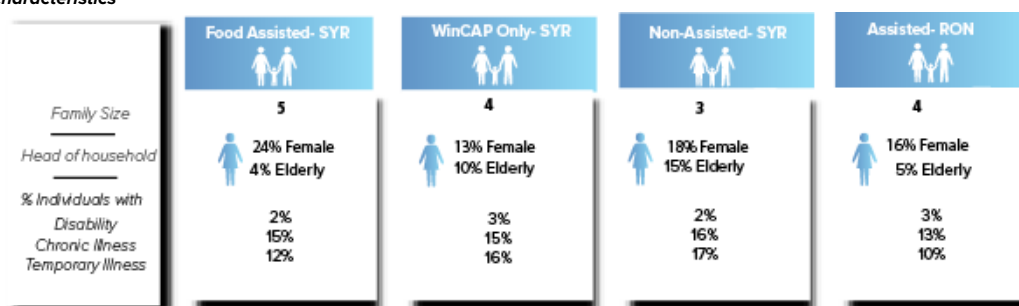
Results

Household Characteristics

Looking at the groups of Syrian refugees in the sample, the Food Assisted group has a slightly different profile as compared to those who only received WinCAP and those who were not assisted. This is expected since this group of families has heightened vulnerability and are thus selected to receive food assistance throughout the year. Firstly, the majority of families in this group reside in the Bekaa and the North while the other groups have a more geographical spread. Additionally, this group has a larger average household size. The Non-assisted group has very similar characteristics to WinCAP Only group making it an ideal control group for comparison.

The assisted refugees of other nationalities had an average household size of 4.3, larger than the typical family size of 3 usually seen among this nationality group. Household size is a known contributor to socio-economic vulnerability, where larger household size is seen to increase vulnerabilities. This explains the larger household size among this group and the Food Assisted Syrian refugee group.

Figure 3: Sample characteristics



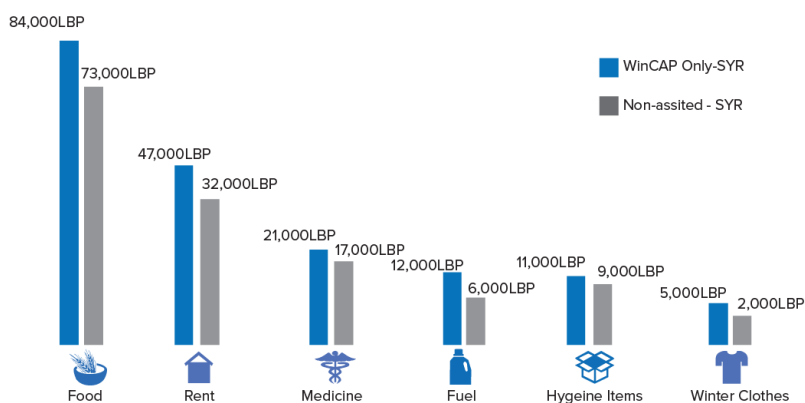
Expenditure

WinCAP-only assisted families had an average per capita monthly expenditure above the poverty line (US\$ 176/person for an average household size of 5) at LBP269,000. This is significantly higher than the non-assisted group (LBP183,500), indicating the effects of WinCAP on increased overall expenditure. This is specifically due to an increased per capita monthly expenditure on basic needs such as food, rent, health and medicine. **Per capita expenditure was also higher specifically on winter clothing and appliances.**

The food assisted group had a lower per capita expenditure at LBP110,000, likely due to the larger family size. **Average household monthly expenditure on fuel was higher for assisted families (LBP49,000 for food assisted Syrian families, LBP27,000 for WinCAP only Syrian families) compared to the non-assisted (LBP17,000).** Refugees of other nationalities spent much less on fuel for heating (LBP8,000 per month) likely due to the location of the families who mostly reside in Beirut as opposed to colder areas.

Refugees of other nationalities that were assisted with winter cash also had per capita monthly expenditures higher the poverty line, reaching LBP304,500.

Figure 4: Average per capita monthly expenditure on top six expenditures, by group



Cash Assistance spending

When it came to spending cash directly received from the WinCAP assistance, food and WinCAP assisted families spent a large portion on heaters (LBP188,000). This is significantly more than those that only received WinCAP and more than the refugees of other nationalities. This is likely due to the regional distribution of families where a larger proportion of food assisted families live in colder areas, as compared to other groups. For WinCAP only assisted families, majority of the cash assistance received was spent on food (LBP147,500), followed by rent (LBP91,000). This group spent LBP49,000 on heaters. Refugees of other nationalities spent the majority of their assistance on food (LBP223,000) and rent (LBP162,000). Compared to the others, much less was spent on the purchase of heaters (LBP14,000).

The amount of cash from WinCAP assistance spent on fuel for heating was low across all groups, ranging from LBP2,000 to LBP4,000. This could be due to the timing of the cash transfer which occurred, for most families at the start of the winter season. As such, **families seem to have used the assistance to prepare for the cold (by buying heaters)** rather than spending the assistance later on to purchase fuel for heating.

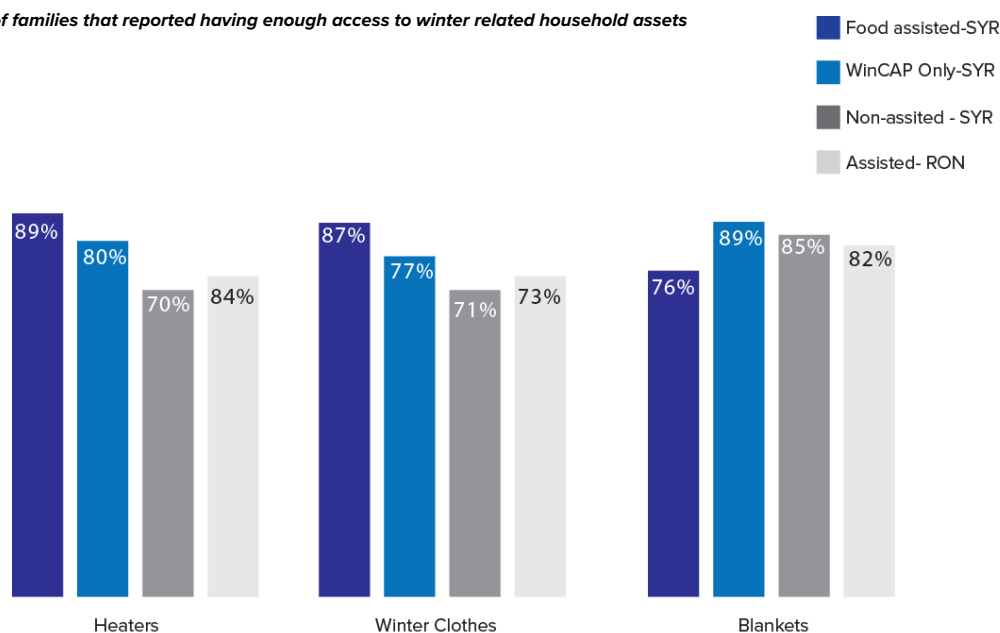
Heating and other winter needs

The ability of assisted families to secure heaters for the winter season is evident in their access to household assets. Respectively, 87%, 77% and 73% of food assisted, WinCAP only assisted and non-Syrian families reported that they had enough access to heaters during the winter season. This is compared to 71% of non-assisted families. Moreover, 30% of non-assisted families reported that they had no source of heating at all, compared to 7% among food assisted families, 19% of WinCAP only assisted families and 17% of families of other nationalities.

A larger proportion of assisted families also reported having enough access to winter clothes. This was the highest among the food assisted group at 87%, followed by the WinCAP only group at 78%. This is compared to 71% among the non-assisted group. Over three quarters of all families had access to enough mattresses and blankets, reaching the highest among the WinCAP only group of Syrian families (around 88%), 84% of non-assisted and 76% of WinCAP and food assisted. Access to beds however, was much lower reaching only 4% among WINCAP and food assisted families, compared to 15% of non-assisted.

Access to heating for refugees of other nationalities, however, was lower than their Syrian counterparts. As mentioned, this could be due to their area of residence. This population group is also burdened with high rent prices (as evident in their expenditure patterns) and thus could be prioritizing rent over other needs.

Figure 5: Share of families that reported having enough access to winter related household assets

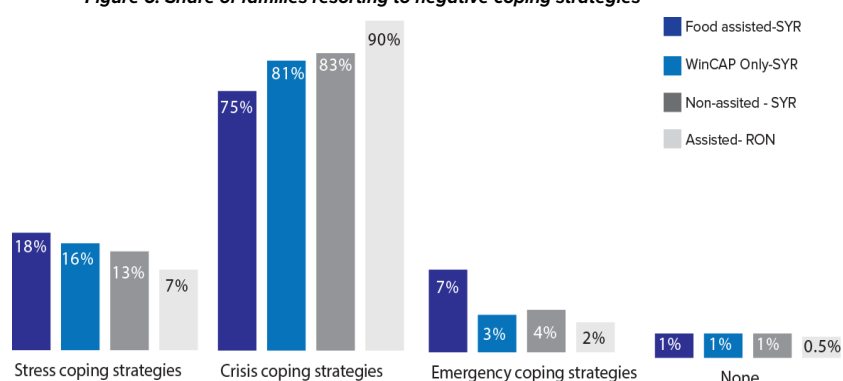


Coping Strategies

The winter season brings on additional strains to households and share of families reporting to negative coping mechanisms is usually higher than other times of the year. This is evident in that **almost all families, across the groups, reported resorting to some kind of negative coping mechanism.**

WinCAP appears to help families rely less on certain coping mechanism while others remained high even among assisted families.

Figure 6: Share of families resorting to negative coping strategies



Coping strategies are classified into three types: stress, crisis and emergency coping strategies. The less severe fall under stress coping strategies and include spending savings, selling household goods, buying on credit and incurring debt. Crisis coping strategies include selling productive assets, withdrawing children from school, reducing non-food expenses, marriage of children under 18 years old and moving shelters. Emergency coping strategies include engaging children in work, begging, accepting high risk jobs and selling a house or land.

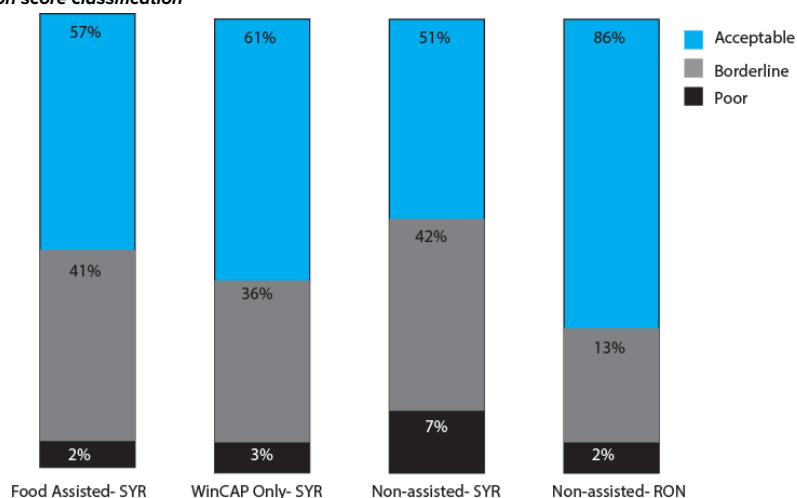
Syrian assisted families relied less on crisis coping strategies, mainly decreasing non-food expenditures and moving, as compared to the non-assisted, this is especially true for the food assisted families. Refugees of other nationalities still relied highly on these behaviors (90%). When it came to stress and emergency coping strategies, however, assisted families were resorting to these behaviors at a higher level than the non-assisted with the exception of selling household assets/good which was less common among the assisted.

Food Consumption

The food consumption score is a composite indicator based on the frequency of consumption of the seven major food groups over seven days. Through this, families are classified as having acceptable, borderline or poor food consumption. **Assisted families exhibit more positive food consumption as per the food consumption score, compared to non-assisted families.** The non-assisted group had the largest proportion of families with a poor food consumption score (7%) and the smallest with acceptable scores (51%).

Assisted refugees of other nationalities had the largest proportion of families with acceptable food consumption (86%) and a low proportion, similar to assisted SYR, in the poor category (2%).

Figure 7: Food consumption score classification



Similar to the trends noted above, when it came to food-related coping strategies, assisted families were relying to a lesser degree on decreasing portion size and reducing number of portions eaten per day. However, when it came to more severe behaviors such as restricting consumption for adults or restricting consumption of females specifically, assisted families did not exhibit better outcomes.

Distributions, Access to ATMs and Cash Withdrawal

Just under three quarters (71%) of Syrian assisted families and 21% of refugees of other nationalities in the sample had attended a card distribution in the five months preceding the interview, where one adult member of the household is required to attend and receive a card and/or PIN. On average, 30 minutes were needed to arrive to the distribution site and most (above 90%) had an associated cost (LBP7,000 for Syrians and LBP4,500 for others). Almost all families (above 95%) found the timing and the location of the site convenient. Prior to attending the distribution, only 39% of Syrian attendees reported that they knew how to use an ATM, afterwards, 71% reported that they felt comfortable being able to use an ATM alone.

Due to constraints in the banking sector in Lebanon during this time, access to ATMs was more restricted than usual. WinCAP and other cash beneficiaries were not able to use any ATM as before, and rather they were restricted to certain ATMs across the country. In an attempt to minimize anticipated overcrowding, UNHCR staggered cash transfers to refugees over several days. Syrian refugees reported an average time of 27 minutes from their home to the nearest ATM, for refugees of other nationalities this was lower at 17 minutes. The majority of Syrian refugees either take a bus (34%) or taxi (34%) to reach an ATM while 20% reported walking. For refugees of other nationalities, most walk (58%) and less take a bus (14%) or taxi (19%). Few families reported driving themselves or having a friend or relative drive them to an ATM. Average cost to reach an ATM was LBP6,000 and LBP4,000 for Syrians and other nationalities, respectively. This constitutes less than 3% of the transfer value and can be deemed an acceptable associated cost for beneficiaries.

Almost all refugees did not report that they faced a challenge or risk getting to or using an ATM. The main issues reported by 40% of benefiting families was long waiting time once arriving to the ATM location. This was mainly reported in the Bekaa and Akkar where the largest number of beneficiaries reside and where the number of ATMs is also lower, compared to other regions.

Conclusions

- WinCAP assisted families reported per capita monthly expenditures above the poverty line and higher than the non-assisted families. Families that were receiving WinCAP, in addition to food assistance throughout the year, were able to spend significantly more on fuel for heating, compared to others.
- Many families prioritized the purchase of heaters through cash received through WinCAP. Families that were WinCAP and food assisted spent a large portion of their assistance to buy heaters. Also, most assisted families reported that they had access to enough heaters. Moreover, a much larger proportion of non-assisted families reported that they had no heating source in their home at all.
- Almost all families were resorting to some form of negative coping strategy, indicating that families were struggling to meet their needs during this winter. WinCAP assisted families were relying less on some negative coping strategies such as selling assets, reducing non-food expenditures and moving shelters. For other negative coping strategies, however, this trend was not noted.
- WinCAP assisted families showed overall more positive outcomes with relation to food consumption. Assisted families had a larger proportion of families with acceptable food consumption patterns and less with poor patterns.
- Overall, families did not face challenges getting to distribution sites or ATMs. For Syrian refugees the share of families that reported knowing how to use an ATM considerably increased following the distribution. The main issue reported at ATMs was long waiting time, mainly in Bekaa and Akkar. These areas have a high concentration of refugees and lower availability of ATMs, compared to other regions.

UNHCR's Winter Assistance programme in Lebanon is funded thanks to generous donors

