# Post Distribution Monitoring

## Cash Assistance for Refugees with Vulnerabilities in Slovakia in 2024


## Summary

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, more than 2.8 million people from Ukraine have entered Slovakia[1] and more than 160,000 registered for Temporary Protection. As of mid-December 2024, the Ministry of Interior has granted 130,468 valid tolerated stays of foreigners in the territory of the Slovak Republic[2][3]. Out of this number, 31% were children 0-17y, 49% were women (18+y), 8% were elderly people (60+y) and 60% were people in productive age (18-60y, out of them almost 73% women).

UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency and UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, in agreement with the Government of Slovakia and, particularly, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) have supported Ukrainian families, stateless persons and third-country nationals affected by the war in Ukraine, and other refugees and asylum-seekers in Slovakia who face protection risks or who are extremely vulnerable. In 2023 and 2024, UNHCR and UNICEF implemented cash programmes which aimed to support extremely vulnerable households and those with children, with Cash for Protection, Cash for Development and Education as well as Cash for Winterization.

**Cash Assistance for refugees with vulnerabilities in Slovakia**[4] supports refugees, Temporary Protection holders ("odidenec"), asylum-seekers and stateless persons in Slovakia with the aim to complement ongoing government-led efforts and to cover current gaps in social protection systems. With a focus on individuals who were considered extremely vulnerable in 2024, cash assistance was started in May, to respond to specific protection situations based on partner vulnerability assessment aiming to reduce refugees' reliance on negative coping mechanisms and to achieve further protection outcomes. The transfer values were aligned with the Government's programme on material needs payments to Slovak citizens, following a simplified calculation scale. The established eligibility criteria[5] were the following, and only those who fulfilled the criteria were considered for cash assistance

1. **Eligible individuals and families who arrived in the Slovak Republic after 01 January 2024** and are economically disadvantaged (e.g., not having regular employment or a regular source of income or a source of income that is below the minimum subsistence allowance); OR
2. **Not being assisted by the Slovak Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Úrad práce)**; AND
3. Fulfilling one or more of the criteria below:
   Be a **single parent** or a caregiver with 2 or more children; OR
   Be a **family with 3 or more children**; OR
   Be a **single parent** or **family with at least one child below 3 years old**; OR
   The Focal Point or a child in the family was considered a **person with a disability**; OR
   The Focal Point was **60 years old and above** without a working adult family member; OR
   The Focal Point or another member in the family had a **serious medical condition**.

Priority was given to individuals and families with vulnerabilities supported by the Slovak Labour Office, as well as newly arrived individuals and families (those who got the Temporary Protection or international


[1] *Ukraine Refugee Situation (unhcr.org) – as of mid December 2024*
[2] *Dočasné útočisko, Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Polícia (minv.sk)*
[3] *The data reflected according to the moment the report was finalized.*
[4] *UNHCR-UNICEF cash assistance for refugees with vulnerabilities in Slovakia in 2024*
[5] *UNHCR-UNICEF 2023 Cash assistance criteria*

protection documents after 01 January 2024) under one or multiple stated criteria. The amount was calculated based on the number of family members and their ages and vulnerabilities the number of categories mentioned above one falls in.

As part of its commitment to monitor quality of support and ensure accountability to affected population, UNICEF and UNHCR conducted a Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Survey to assess cash effect on various livelihood domains. The survey findings are organized in 10 sections: (1) Methodology of the report, (2) Demographic composition of the sample, (3) Reception and expenditure of the cash assistance, (4) Risk in accessing cash assistance, (5) Problems during receiving/withdrawing or spending the cash assistance, (6) Markets and Prices, (7) Satisfaction, (8) Outcomes, (9) Coping mechanisms, (10) Accountability to Affected Population.

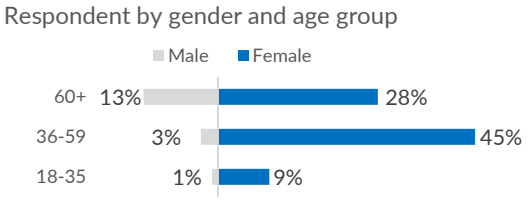
This PDM focused on evaluating the cash distribution for cash assistance provided to refugees with vulnerabilities in Slovakia in 2024, implemented between May and August 2024.

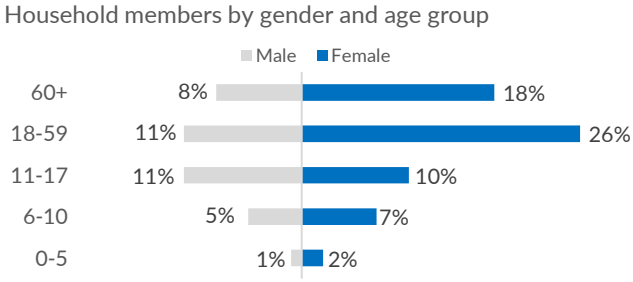
## 1. Methodology

Using a structured survey, UNHCR and UNICEF conducted phone interviews between 28 to 30 August 2024 covering a total of 374 household (HH) members. The households were randomly selected from UNHCR and UNICEF cash beneficiary database, including a 50%-50% split of beneficiary households from total territory of Slovakia, across the eight regions where beneficiaries reside. A buffer of 500 contacts was provided to account for potential non-respondents.

## 2. Demographics[6]

A total of 150 HHs, covering 374 HH members, were successfully reached. Out of the total number of respondents, females represented 82%. The age distribution of the female part of the sample among respondents was as per table below, **mainly composed of women 36-59 years (45%)**, followed by 28% of 60+ and 9% of 18-35 years old. The highest share of male HH members was 60+ years old (11% out of 16% male HH members).
In terms of geographical representation, the largest shares of respondents were in Bratislava and Prešov regions, with the largest average HH sizes in Nitra and Prešov regions (see below).



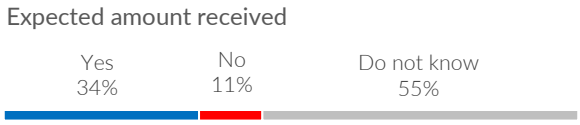




[6] *Source of data processed in this report: Slovakia_PDM_CBI_2024_Protection_UNHCR_UNICEF - Power BI*

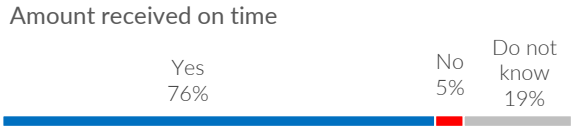
# 3. Reception and Expenditure of Cash Assistance

## Logistics

The third section aims to better understand the reception and expenditure of cash assistance. **Average amount received was 570 EUR per household**. The share of respondents saying that they did not know if they received the correct amount of cash reached 34%, similar to the previous PDM[7]. The share of respondents saying they did not get the expected amount was 11%.




In terms of timing, 76% of the respondents reported that the cash assistance arrived on the expected date, while 5% reported that the assistance did not arrive on the expected date and 19% did not know.



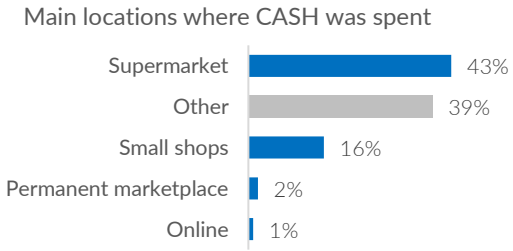

It is important to acknowledge that **91% of the respondents did not require any help to receive the cash support** (4% more than the previous PDM), while 7% required support (around 10 respondents). The main reasons reported were limited mobility, not knowing how to use the payment mechanism (IBAN, MTCN code etc.; adjust to context); not understanding instructions to access the money. The fact that the cash assistance was targeted mostly at refugees with disabilities and individuals 60 years old and above, can be an essential reason explaining the reported difficulties. Nevertheless, UNHCR has a strong Complaint Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in place, to also support these cases and through the Partners to link them with additional assistance and services in the country, as well as to refer them to national social protection systems.

Since 2022, UNHCR in Slovakia has taken all the necessary steps to design and determine the scope of CFM in the country, conduct the context analysis, select the adequate feedback channels, and allocate sufficient resources before the implementation started. The most important channel of CFM in Slovakia, the joint UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline, has been in place since 15 June 2022 and continues actively supporting vulnerable families and individuals who benefit from cash assistance. Furthermore, UNHCR has established five other channels as well, such as an official UNHCR Help site, Helpdesks in its Registration Centers/Blue dots, UNHCR Telegram and Facebook channels, dedicated official mailbox ( svkbrprot@unhcr.org and svkbrcash@unhcr.org ) operating in four languages, to provide feedback to improve the design, calculation and delivery of cash assistance to the affected populations in Slovakia. In addition, through mobile teams, UNHCR can reach people living in rural areas or facing immobility, while in need of cash assistance. Furthermore, UNHCR introduced community consultations, which are ongoing and enabling the community to share information and feedback on the provided assistance, as well as to support with any inquiries might arise.

[7] *Slovakia UNHCR – UNICEF joint Post Distribution Monitoring – November 2023*

### Expenditure

The main two places respondents chose to spend their cash were: supermarkets (43%); other shops (39%) that were within 15 minutes (34%); 15-30 (44%), 30-60 (13%) minutes of travel from their home[8]. The travel costs were within 0-0.99 euros for 55% of respondents, which corresponds to an average price of a basic public transport ticket in Slovakia. Travel costs up to 5 euros were reported by 85% of respondents. The individual collecting the cash was in 92% of cases also the holder of a bank account registered for cash assistance in the UNHCR-UNICEF database.




**It is important to highlight that less than one third of respondents (17%) reported not having any other source of income.**

Other sources of income reported by the respondents was mainly support from NGO/agencies (17%), informal income generating activities, such as seasonal labour (13%) and support from friends or family (7%). Around one third (31%) had formal source of income or salary. These numbers were much different from previous observations and were most likely caused by the demographic profile of the sample: mostly working age respondents as well as HH members.

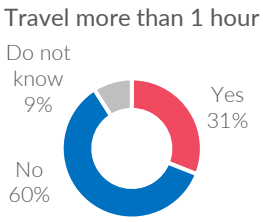
**Mostly the female head of the HH (46%) made the decision about spending the money**, or the whole HH together (31%), less often (5%) by a male head of a HH, which was expectable considering the typical HH composition (82% being women).

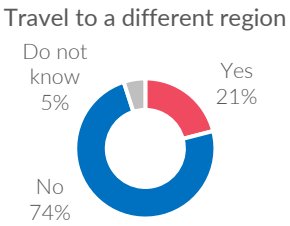
To the question about how the **cash support has impacted the relations in HH, there was a significant increase of the percentage by 10%** reaching the **95%** of respondents said it had a positive impact, 4% said it did not have any impact, while 1% preferred not to say. No case of substantial disagreement regarding the money usage was reported, with 96% reporting no disagreement at all. Almost 6% of persons registered to receive the cash needed help to spend the money. In such cases, a family member provided the help.

## 4. Risk & Challenges

### Registration

In this section, the risk perception and safety concerns of respondents during the registration process and access and use of the cash assistance, were evaluated. Almost a third of respondents (31%) reported over one hour travel time to register for the cash assistance, (out of them, 21% need to travel to another region), which was noted as part of the reported challenges. However, **mobile teams** were maintained, to facilitate the registration activities in remotely areas.




**For most people all questions regarding registration process were answered and they did not experience a negative behavior (95-99%).** In several cases questions were not addressed mainly because of information

[8] *This is expected, it is usual spending habit also for local population, as supermarkets are accessible and often cheaper compared to smaller local shops. Travel times 30-60 minutes for 13% of respondents do not seem that it is reduced by 7% in comparison to the previous PDM report.*

was not clear or not well explained; and the lack of interpretation seems to persist in every PDM exercise; and a couple cases reported that the staff did not answer the question.

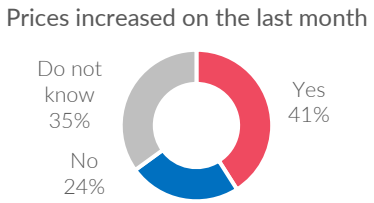
### Collecting and Spending Cash

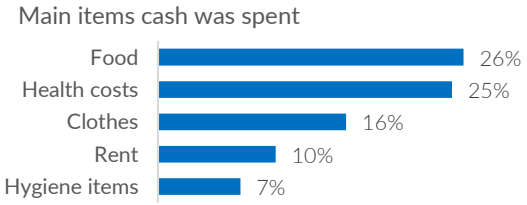
**Most of the surveyed HH, 99% of respondents, did not experience any kind of risk while collecting cash**, keeping it at home or spending it, except of one case who reported a language barrier in the shop. Only 3% experienced other type of complications, in addition 3% reported that salespersons refused to serve them. Main reported reasons were discrimination because of nationality; language barriers; rude staff in a supermarket. Important to note that there was a case mentioned refusal from a doctor to assist them. On the other hand, **99% of the respondents managed to resolve their problem**.

## 5. Market & Prices

This PDM survey aimed to receive information about the respondents' experiences purchasing goods in the market. **The majority of respondents, 96%, did manage to find products/services in markets/shops, while the 78% were able to find the right quality products[9].** Only 3% reported that they did not manage to find the right quality of products. Most complaints were about low quality of food and high prices of food, clothes and shoes, medicines; long wait for the doctor's appointment; and a low quality of clothes.

Overall, **41% of respondents reported to feel that products[10] got more expensive during the last 4 weeks**, 35% did not know. Interestingly, the majority of the products reported were mostly medicines and food products (bread, milk, butter, vegetables and fruits). When the PDM examined the items (goods/services) HHs spend more money in order of importance. Respondents confirmed that the top three items they spent the received cash assistance on were food (26%), health costs (25%), clothes/shoes (16%), and for the first time we see rent (10%). We observe a consistency on the main items the HHs spent the cash on, with the previous PDM[11], but this is the first time that accommodation is part of the reported expenses[12].



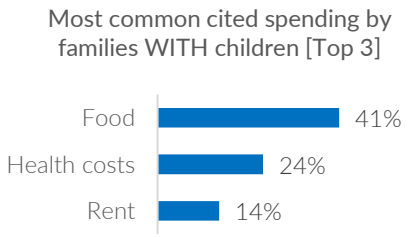



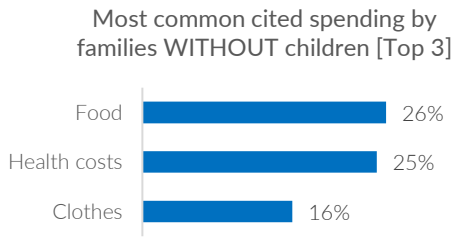

At the time of survey, 57% of respondents reported they already spent all the cash received (reduced by 30% since the previous survey), 25% of respondents had spent more than a half, 12% had spent a half and 8% did not know how much they had spent.

[9] *Mostly food products, medicines and hygiene products.*
[10] *Mostly food products, medicines and dental services and clothes and shoes.*
[11] *Slovakia: Joint CBI Post Distribution Monitoring - UNHCR and UNICEF - June 2024*
[12] *Since 1 July 2024 came to force the new regulation for the accommodation subsidies introduced by the Government, with only new arrivals being eligible to receive 120 days of accommodation support, as well as individuals facing high vulnerabilities. 59/2024 Z.z. - Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republi... - SLOV-LEX*

### Market & Prices – Children

Most common cited spending by **families with children** were food (41%), health costs (24%), and rent (14%). Among families with children, 43% respondents reported to increase spending on children (20% lower than the previous PDM).




**Families without children** reported spending mostly on food (25%), health costs (25%) and clothes and shoes (16%).

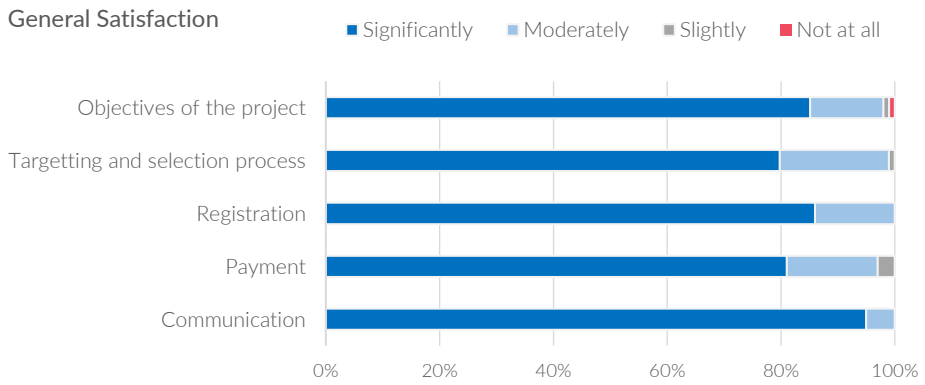
The needs were observed to have shifted to **health costs**, as the second option to both groups with or without children, and that **clothes and shoes** moved to the third position. **Food** remains the most important expense.

Respondents were also asked what they spent the cash assistance on. Most often reported items were: expenditures linked to sports for children, clothes, school supplies, dental expenses, pay rent, products for children with specific needs (33%); access better medical care (30%); managed to acquire more food (18%) ; managed to pay rent (14%).

Almost one quarter of the respondents, **22%, managed to save some money** (while in the previous PDM were only 7%), with **over 50% of those saved money as a cash at home**, but there was more that 30% increase of those who **saved their money on the bank account, with 42% in total**.

## 6. Satisfaction

The PDM also assessed the level of satisfaction under five main topics of cash assistance provision in Slovakia. **In general, the satisfaction level was very high, as shown by the percentages below**.



A few of the main reasons reported dissatisfaction regarding the payment, were mainly addressed different issues and did not focus to the specific cash assistance support that cash assistance for refugees with vulnerabilities in Slovakia in 2024 attempted to provide. Nevertheless, the dissatisfaction rates were in total under 4% of the total household surveyed.

The reported issues around dissatisfaction on **the payment** showed lack of understanding of the transfer values under the cash program and reflected once again the constant dissatisfaction regarding the small amount of the cash assistance provided. Only some 2% of respondent expressed dissatisfaction with the **targeting,** with the main reason being the long period of pending the decision. This reflects lack of understanding of the information and the criteria, since the review process of the cases and further the determination of the eligibility or non-eligibility to receive cash assistance was concluded within four weeks. In addition, the fact that not all families with children were covered was one of the reasons for dissatisfaction.

While dissatisfaction was reported by a significantly small amount of beneficiaries, it still shows that despite of joint efforts from UNHCR and UNICEF disseminating the information on the process and the targeting of the cash assistance, some refugees didn't receive the information. This shows the need of improved engagement of the communities in future cash assistance programmes and the need for continuous monitoring of the situation among the communities, with further involvement of UNHCR, UNICEF and partner staff

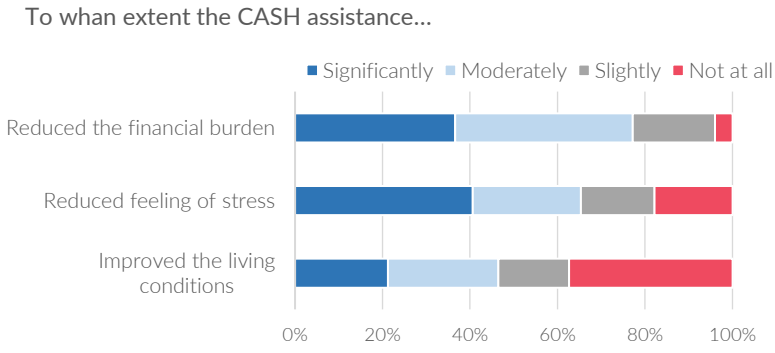
On the other hand, it is important to mention that **the communication** satisfaction rate was 100% with 95% reflecting significant satisfaction and the remaining 5% moderate satisfaction. Considering that this cash assistance programme is the most technical one implemented so far in Slovakia, it is a great success when it comes to CFM channels and communication enhancement to the community. Also, **the objectives of the project** and the registration share a rate of 86% on significant satisfaction with no further comments from the cash recipients, with comments being focused mainly on the payments and the amounts.

# 7. Outcomes

## Short/mid-term impact

The aim of the PDM was to investigate and receive feedback on the following key areas: improvement of living conditions, reduced feelings of stress and easement of the financial burden of their households. The categorization was done at four levels.

**Living conditions** were reported as significantly improved by 21% of respondents, 25% reported moderately, 16% slightly, while 37% not at all improved.




When asked about the impact of the cash assistance on their **feeling of stress**, 41% of respondents reported their level of stress be significantly reduced, 17% moderately, 25% slightly, and 18% not at all[13] reduced.

[13] *Most of respondents feel reduction of stress to some extent as also observed in previous assessments. The regularity of income makes people feel secure they will be able to cover their needs on the following months. Of course, this was a on-off cash assistance provided from UNHCR, while UNICEF processed 4 installments. In comparison to the previous PDM, the results are reflecting a quite more positive*

Finally, when asked how much the cash assistance **reduced the financial burden,** 37% respondents reported that the assistance reduced their level of financial burden significantly, 41% moderately, 37% slightly, and 4% not at all reduced.

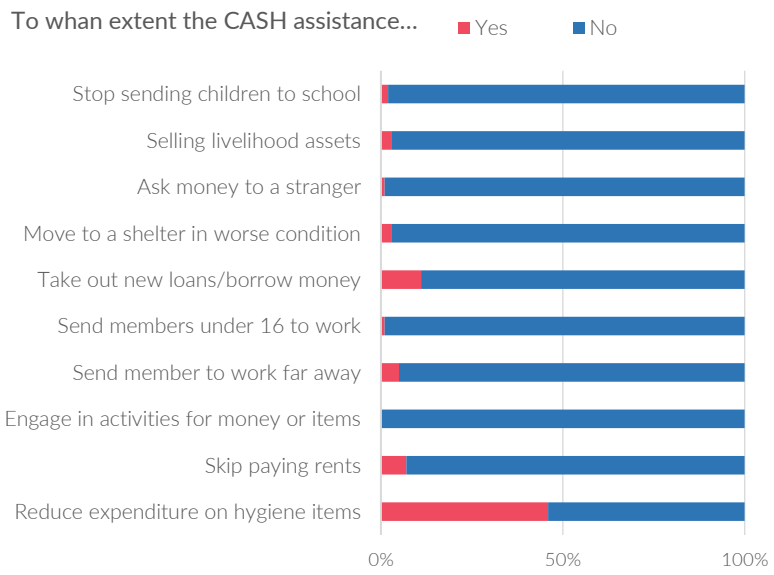
**T**he PDM also aimed to assess the recipients' ability to cover their basic needs. According to the respondents, only 7% were able to cover all basic needs, 22% was able to cover more than half of basic needs, 35% could cover half (increased by 12% from the previous PDM exercise), 23% less than half of basic needs, 12% of respondents did not know.

The survey showed that among **the basic needs** that the respondents did not manage to cover, the top needs were **rental (47%), food (26%), as well as clothes, shoes or health costs (25%).** Rentals were reported also during the previous PDM for the re-enforcing on the new status quo created by the government early in March and established in July 2024. Interestingly, education was also an uncovered need reported by 7% of respondents.

## 8. Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)

### Coping Mechanisms

This part of the survey focused on exploring whether the respondents in the four weeks prior to data collection have resorted to any copying mechanism to meet their basic needs. Overall, a concerning frequency of two negative coping mechanisms were detected. Around 46% of respondents reduced expenditure on hygiene items, water, baby items, health, or education[14]; and 11% of respondents reported taking new loans or borrowing money[15]. Among other coping mechanisms, no alarming levels were observed: 3% (5 respondents) reported moving to a shelter with worse conditions; 6% skipped paying rent/debts; 5% sent a HH member to work far away.




### Food substitute as a coping mechanism

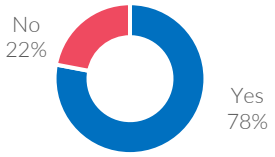
On the questions related to food substitution or saving on food, 80% of respondents had to rely on cheaper products every day of the week[16]; also 40% had to borrow food from relatives every day; and 40% reduced the number of meals daily. No further comments provided under this coping mechanism.

[14] *Increase of 7% since the previous PDM.*
[15] *Decrease of 2% since the previous PDM.*
[16] *Increase of 30% since the previous PDM.*

## Complaint Feedback Mechanism (CFM)

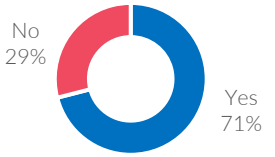
The PDM results presented that **71% knew how to use the joint UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline**, which remains one of the cornerstones of CFM in Slovakia, since the launch of CBIs in the country. As many as 65% understands how to file a complaint and from those needed to file a complaint 85% did proceed with the action. **Positive feedback that the 71% reported that the information obtained was clear**.

Know about UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline




**Preferred channel for CFM was the joint UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline (53%)** – showing an impressive change from the previous PDMs, where the short text message (SMS) was always on the top of the preferences, and reassuring about the strong capacity building that has been done with the Helpline operators and the trust that the refugee community gain over the Helpline. Second most preferred channel was the text (SMS) message for 22%, followed by complaints and suggestion box (12%), followed by UNHCR help site (7%) and UNHCR staff (7%).

Know how to file a complaint




Regarding the adequacy of information about cash assistance provided by UNICEF-UNHCR, 87% of respondents said they received adequate information, 29% said they did not receive a timely response or feedback to their complaints. 48% of respondents would like to further know, what assistance is coming next, 20% cash distribution date, time and location, 17% wanted to know eligibility criteria for cash assistance, 7% information on other UNHCR services.

**Cash assistance remains as the preferred modality of assistance by an overwhelming majority of respondents (89%), followed by 8% who prefer a combination of cash and in-kind assistance.** Reason for in-kind support was that the cash amount is not enough to buy the in-kind items. In case of continued cash support, **99% of respondents would prefer the current way of receiving money to be maintained.**

## For more information please contact:

Eirini Gkatsi | Cash-based intervention Associate
Danilo Smolovic | Social Policy Specialist
Carmen Garcia | Associate Information Management Officer
Laith Adnan Khalil Al Humimat | Beneficiary Data Specialist

UNHCR CBI Slovakia: svkbrcash@unhcr.org

Additional information on UNHCR-UNICEF CBI assistance: