

Northwest Syria Cash Working Group Post-Distribution Monitoring Assessment.

January, 2024
Northwest Syria

KEY MESSAGES

- Post-earthquake MPCA was used by households for a wide variety of purposes, such as purchasing essential food items, clothes and blankets, and hygiene items. It was also commonly used by surveyed households to service debt repayments and access critical medical services. However, **a majority of households also reported they still had urgent unmet needs after receiving the assistance.**
- As seen in the previous post distribution monitoring assessment, **almost all surveyed households reported that they did not face challenges accessing the goods and services they needed in local markets.** This highlights the overall resilience of markets in NWS in the aftermath of the earthquake.
- The overwhelming majority of surveyed households expressed a preference for receiving the cash assistance in US dollars opposed to Turkish lira, despite the latter being the defacto currency in NWS. **This reflects concerns around the ongoing depreciation of the TRY against the USD among households in NWS.**
- Surveyed households reported **almost no instances of problems related to the distribution of cash assistance in terms of protection risks, do no harm, corruption, or community tensions,** which indicates a strong commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) among cash partners.

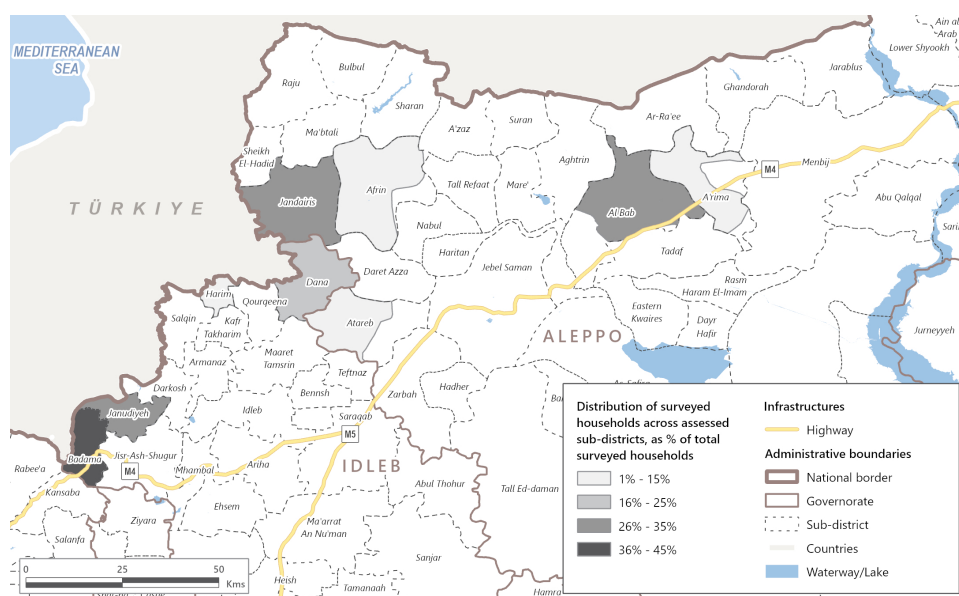
CONTEXT & RATIONALE

In recent years there has been a scale-up of cash assistance as a humanitarian response modality in Northwest Syria (NWS).¹ This shift to cash assistance has been a contingency measure in the context of unreliable delivery of in-kind cross border aid², and is considered to offer more independence to households to prioritise spending according to their needs. In addition, given the presence of functional markets in NWS, cash assistance can be a benefit multiplier when items are available for purchase in local markets. In order to routinely check some of these assumptions, and take into consideration the views of those who receive the assistance, implementing organisations individually conduct post-distribution monitoring (PDM). Working under the coordination of the NWS Cash Working Group (CWG), REACH and implementing partners identified an opportunity to bring these datasets together to assess collective impact, highlight common issues, and mitigate risks.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

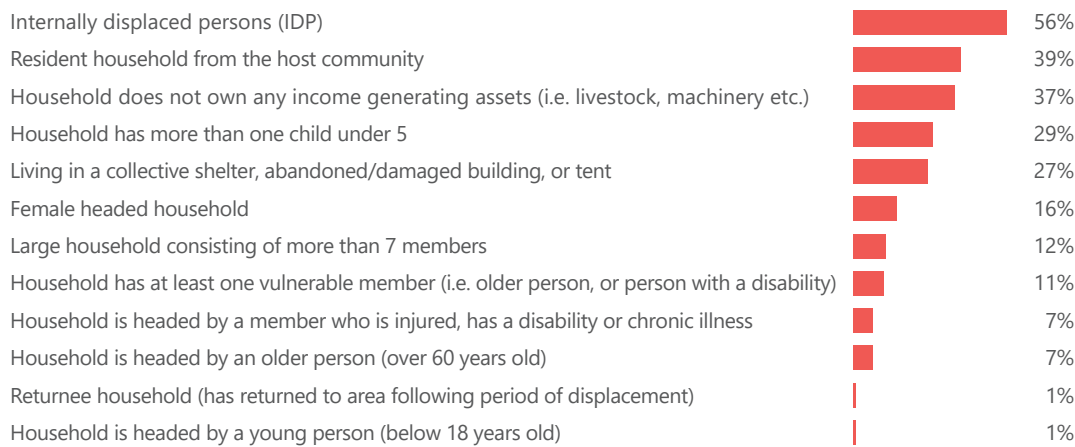
This assessment aims to provide joint PDM data analysis collected through implementing partners that incorporated harmonised indicators. This analysis and subsequent rounds, aims to enable the CWG to draw conclusions about their collective effectiveness, develop recommendations, and plan accordingly. PDM surveys analysed in this factsheet were conducted in July by 3 partners following implementation of post-earthquake emergency multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA).³ See the methodology note on [page 7](#).

Coverage map



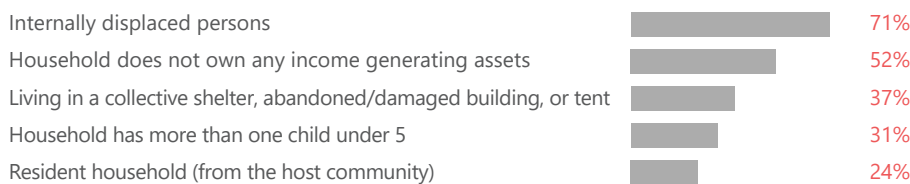
Characteristics of surveyed households

Reported characteristics that apply to the surveyed households, as % of total number of surveyed households (n=907)*

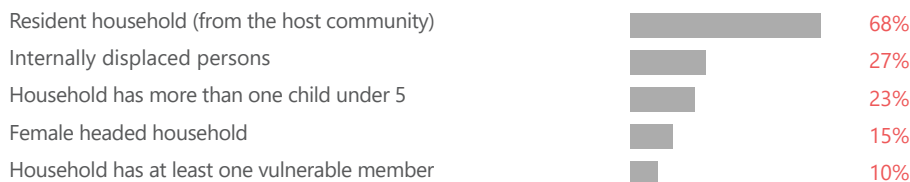


Top 5 household characteristics reported per region, as % of surveyed household within each region*

Assessed sub-districts in Northern Aleppo (n=592)



Assessed sub-districts in Greater Idlib (n=315)

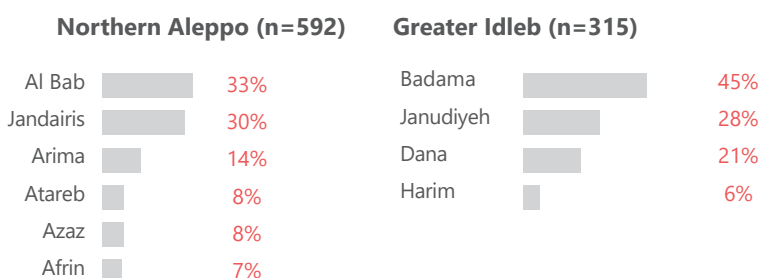


The characteristics of surveyed households varied between the assessed sub-districts. For example, significantly more households reported being IDPs and living in collective shelters, abandoned/damaged houses, or tents in Northern Aleppo compared to Greater Idlib.

This is potentially reflective of different targeting strategies implemented across the areas, as well as different socio-economic and demographic factors impacting beneficiary households in each region.

Location of surveyed households

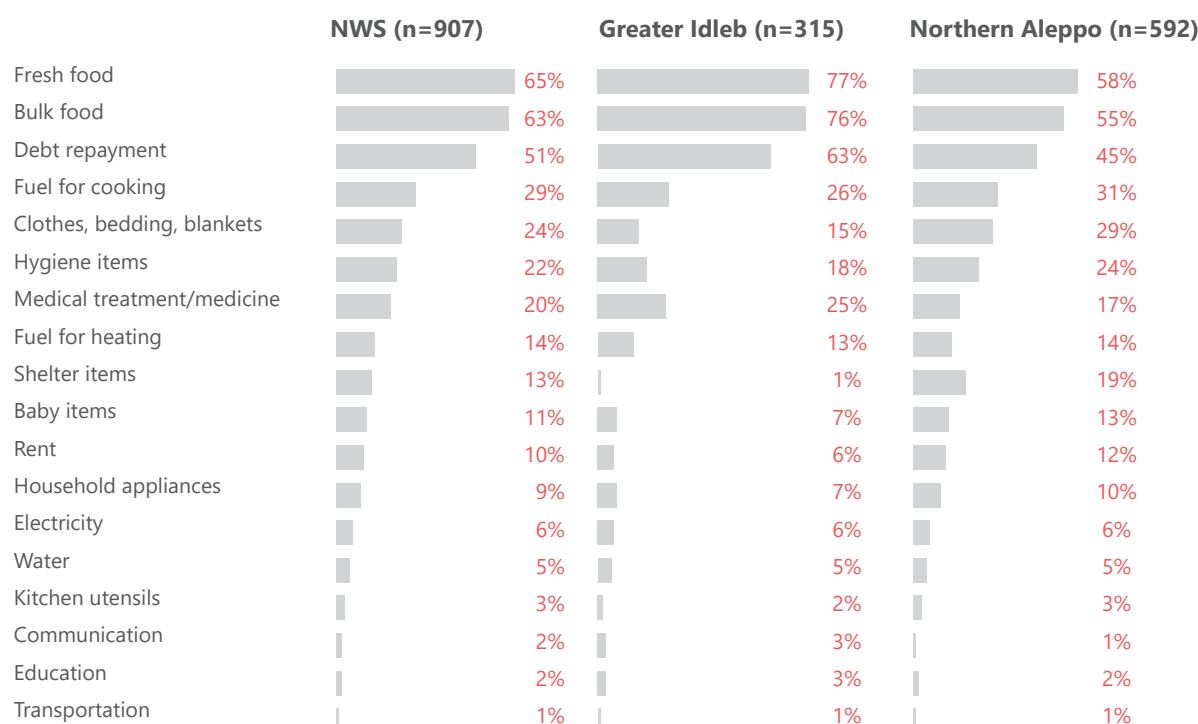
Geographic distribution of surveyed households, as % of households surveyed in each governorate



* Select multiple question and therefore percentages do not equal 100.

Utilisation of assistance

% of households reporting that they spent any of the assistance on expenditure category*



Expenditure patterns reported by surveyed households highlight that although the assistance was used to meet a diversity of household needs, **the primary expenditure categories related to basic food needs and debt repayments**. This aligns with the findings of REACH's recently published income and expenditure assessment⁴, which showed that food was by far the highest reported expenditure category in assessed districts in NWS and that taking on debt remains a widespread coping mechanism used by households to meet their essential needs.

Differences in expenditure patterns based on factors such as household characteristics and geographic location were also evidenced in the findings. For example, in Jandarisi subdistrict, which was one of the most earthquake-affected areas in NWS, over 60% of surveyed households reported spending at least some of the assistance on shelter items compared to only 13% of households in all assessed subdistricts.

Most commonly reported top 3 expenditures, as % of surveyed households (n=504)

Category	NWS	Northern Aleppo (n = 329)	Greater Idleb (n = 175)
Fresh food	66%	74%	53%
Bulk food	63%	61%	65%
Debt repayment	41%	36%	53%
Cooking fuel	31%	34%	28%
Hygiene items	11%	11%	12%
Heating fuel	10%	11%	9%
Medical treatment, medicines	10%	7%	15%

Extent to which the assistance supported recipient households, as % of surveyed households (n=907)

	Significantly	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
Improved living conditions	60%	31%	9%	0%
Reduced feelings of stress	54%	37%	8%	0%
Covered immediate needs	49%	36%	16%	0%

* Expenditure categories were not reported where the percentage was less than 1. This was a multiple choice question and therefore percentages do not equal 100.

Unmet needs

Most surveyed HH's reported that they still had unmet urgent needs after receiving the assistance, including over 95% of surveyed households in Atareb, Dana, Harim, and Jandaris subdistricts. Beyond the impact of the February 2023 earthquakes, this more broadly reflects the multiple, long-term challenges households in NWS face, including the ongoing conflict, rising inflation, reduced purchasing power, and vulnerability to regional and global economic shocks. Large households with more than 7 members, those with more than one child under 5, and households headed by an older (60 +) or vulnerable person (e.g. person with disability or chronic illness) were the most likely to have reported having unmet needs as households with these characteristics face a range of additional challenges, as highlighted in REACH's Humanitarian Situation Overview of Syria (HSOS) data.⁵

The findings also show that the most commonly reported unmet needs overlap with the top reported expenditure categories on page 3. In general, the relatively high prevalence of categories such as medical treatment/medicines, hygiene items, and baby needs as urgent unmet needs by surveyed households indicate the difficult tradeoffs they are forced to make on a month-to-month basis when making decisions

% of surveyed households that reported they had needs that remained unmet after receiving the assistance, as % of total surveyed households (n=907)



Top 3 needs that remained unmet after the receiving assistance, reported as % of surveyed households*

	NWS (n=596)	Greater Idleb (n=226)	Northern Aleppo (n=370)
Bulk food items (cereals, canned food, oil, sugar, tea etc.)	48%	54%	44%
Fresh food (meat, fruit, vegetables, dairy, bread etc.)	39%	54%	31%
Debt repayment	37%	40%	35%
Medical treatment / medicine	26%	29%	24%
Clothes, blankets, and bedding	25%	25%	25%
Hygiene items	24%	21%	26%
Household appliances	24%	26%	23%
Fuel for cooking	19%	19%	19%
Fuel for heating	19%	28%	13%
Baby needs (diapers, wipes, ointment)	16%	13%	18%
Electricity and lighting (bills, solar panels, batteries etc.)	16%	21%	12%
Kitchen utensils	11%	14%	9%
Water	11%	9%	12%
Shelter (tents, plastic sheeting, repair items)	7%	3%	9%
Rent	6%	7%	6%
Education expenses	3%	2%	4%
Transportation	1%	2%	<1%
Communication	1%	2%	1%

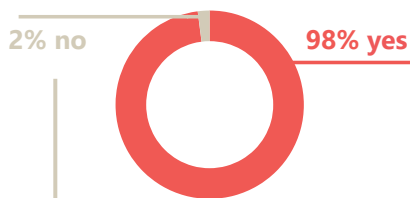
* Expenditure categories were not reported where the percentage was less than 1. This was a multiple choice question and therefore percentages do not equal 100.

Market conditions

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, markets in NWS have consistently demonstrated high levels of resilience despite the impact of regular shocks and overlapping, protracted crises. As highlighted by REACH's post-earthquake Joint Rapid Assessment of Markets (JRAM) in February and April 2023, the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes was a continuation of this trend.⁶

Markets in the region remained largely functional, enabling traders to continue their operations and meet essential community needs. Based on evidence of market functionality from REACH's JRAM, the widespread distribution of MPCA to beneficiaries in earthquake-affected areas in NWS also provided a vital source of income to traders while they recovered from earthquake-related losses and disruptions.

% of surveyed households that reported being able to access the items/services they needed in local markets after receiving the assistance (n=907)



this was primarily linked to **affordability issues** where the high price of items/services prevented households from accessing what they needed (11/14 households)

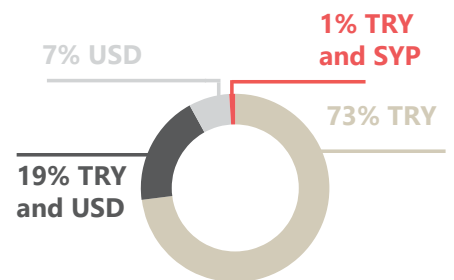
98%

of surveyed households reported that they did not face any challenges spending or exchanging the cash assistance



Of those households who reported facing challenges (n=10), 7 households identified the lack of accessible markets as the main challenge they faced. A smaller number (n=3) reported facing challenges due to the market not being accessible for elderly persons.

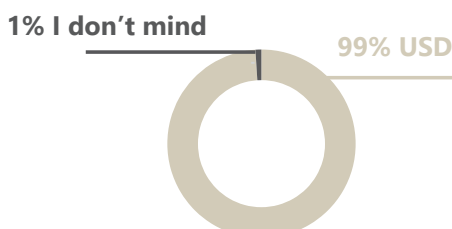
Currencies households reported spending the cash assistance in, as % of surveyed households (n=)



Accountability to affected populations

The vast majority of surveyed households reported that they preferred to receive assistance in US Dollars. With the Turkish Lira (TRY) having lost over 60 percent of its value against the USD since 2021, surveyed households understandably view the USD as a safer currency to receive assistance in given the ongoing volatility of the TYR in the context of inflation and decreasing purchasing power in NWS.

Currencies households reported preferring to receive cash assistance in, as % of surveyed households (n=894)



98%

of surveyed households reported that they would prefer to receive cash if they were to receive similar assistance again

0%

of surveyed households reported being asked to provide a favour in exchange for the assistance

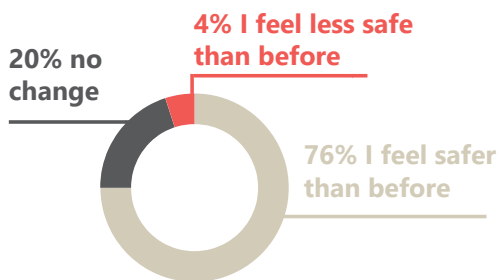
0%

of surveyed households reported being asked to pay tax or a fee in exchange for the assistance

Ensuring that the delivery of cash assistance is accountable to affected populations, does not cause unintended harm, raise community tensions, or heighten other protection risks to vulnerable groups is a key focus of the CWG. **In general, the findings of this PDM round indicate that reported issues related to protection risks, AAP, and do no harm concerns were extremely low among surveyed households.**

While two-thirds of households reported that the assistance increased their sense of safety, four percent (n 36) reported that they felt less safe than before. A decreased sense of safety was most commonly reported in Dana subdistrict. Four out of five surveyed households that reported community tensions as a result of the assistance were also from Dana. All reported the tensions were due to disagreements in the family about how to spend the assistance.

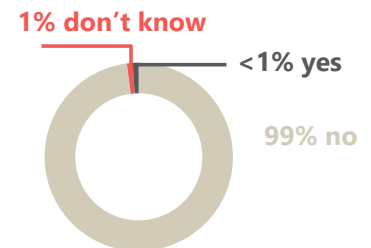
% of surveyed households that reported the cash assistance had impacted their sense of safety in their daily lives (n=907)



0%

of surveyed households reported being asked to share the assistance they received

% of surveyed households that reported the cash assistance caused tensions in their family or community



METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The assessment combined PDM data following distribution of MPCA, which is a cash transfer corresponding to the amount of money required to partially cover a household's multiple needs to survive. It is unconditional, meaning that households do not have to participate in an activity to receive the cash, and the cash can be spent by households according to their own priorities. There are two main types of MPCA distributed in NWS: 'emergency', which is distributed once or up to 3 times, and 'regular' which is distributed over more than 4 rounds. Findings presented in this factsheet refer to one round of emergency MPCA (value of \$150) that was distributed in June 2023.

Through a series of workshops held in 2022 and 2023 CWG partners agreed on a minimum set of harmonised indicators and questions for integration in PDM surveys to allow for joint analyses. The sampled households were beneficiaries of MPCA who met specific eligibility requirements. These requirements vary by organization and include criteria such as household size, vulnerabilities (i.e. persons with disabilities or female headed household), and income level. PDM surveys were conducted with beneficiary households from in early July.

Partners were advised to conduct PDM interviews within 2 weeks of distribution and randomly select beneficiary households from their whole list of recipients with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. However, due to differences in the capacity of partner's Monitoring and Evaluation units, data collection may have occurred outside of the preferred 2-week window and REACH did not have

oversight for the random selection of beneficiaries and monitoring of sample sizes. In addition, datasets were cleaned by partners not REACH staff, and due to the time between data collection and the submission of the datasets, REACH had limited ability to control data quality or conduct follow ups. As such, the findings presented in this factsheet should be considered indicative of households that received emergency MPCA following the earthquakes by the 3 CWG partners.

ENDNOTES

PAGE 1

- 1 Cash Working Group, Northwest Syria, [Response Updates](#), 2020-2023
- 2 REACH, [Cross-border aid mechanism to Northwest Syria in limbo, threatening to worsen already dire humanitarian conditions](#), July 2023
- 3 MPCA is an unconditional cash transfer corresponding to the amount of money required to partially cover a household's multiple needs to survive.

PAGE 3

- 4 REACH, [Northwest Syria Household Income and Expenditure Assessment](#), 2023

PAGE 4

- 5 REACH, [Humanitarian Situation Overview of Syria, Northwest Syria](#), November 2023

PAGE 5

- 6 CWG-REACH, Joint Rapid Assessment of Markets, [February](#) round and [April](#) round, 2023

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).