

## Overview of assistance delivered through **Cash-Based Interventions (CBI)** in MENA region in 2024

(January - December 2024)



Hawa, a mother of eight, fled escalating violence in Sudan, particularly the rising attacks on young girls, and sought safety in Egypt. Her journey was challenging, beginning with a stint in Port Sudan where she worked in a restaurant to save for the next leg of their trip. Upon arriving in Egypt, Hawa focused on securing refugee status and, while waiting for her UNHCR appointment, sold Sudanese spices on the streets to make ends meet. She found a small, poorly furnished apartment in Faisal, a crowded area with many refugees.

After registering with UNHCR, Hawa was determined to be eligible for assistance to support attainment of her and families basic needs. This support allowed her to move to a better apartment and provided relief from the financial strain. "The assistance allowed me to breathe," she says. Additionally, an additional grant during winter helped her buy essentials like mattresses, blankets, warm clothes, and even a washing machine, which is crucial for a family of nine. Hawa continues to receive the assistance, which supports her in covering rent and provides stability for her children.

Since the conflict began in Sudan, UNHCR has assessed over 176,000 Sudanese refugees in Egypt, with many receiving assistance to meet their urgent needs, though many also remain on the waiting list. Hawa's story highlights the vital role of assistance delivery through CBI in helping refugees regain stability and meet basic needs during challenging times. ©UNHCR/Nadine Amine

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS



**\$255 million**

distributed to forcibly displaced vulnerable families, helping communities meet their essential needs while supporting local markets

→ out of which: →

**\$213 million**

Supported beneficiaries to cover their survival needs



**2.237 million**

individuals reached from **January - December 2024**

→ out of which: →

**1.8 million**

individuals reached for survival needs

1,183,046  
Females



1,053,954  
Males

out of which

99,189  
elderly



1,149,495  
children

In 2024, **1.52 million** of identified eligible individuals (45%) could not be assisted due to resource constraints unding.

## REGIONAL INTERVENTIONS

In 2024, UNHCR supported vulnerable households across 16 operations<sup>1</sup> in the MENA region through cash-based interventions (CBIs). These interventions were life-saving, helping families secure food, emergency shelter, and urgent medical care—protecting them from immediate harm.

Beyond meeting basic needs, CBIs also supported targeted sectoral programs:

► **Education Grants:** Provided in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia to help primary and secondary students cover school-related expenses.

► **Health Grants:** In Egypt and Iraq, these covered hospital reimbursements, medical equipment (e.g., wheelchairs), and access to specialized care in semi-private or private facilities.

► **Livelihood Grants:** Delivered in Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, and Syria to help refugees start small businesses and acquire essential livelihood assets.

► **Shelter Grants:** Distributed in Algeria, Lebanon, and Mauritania to help individuals pay rent and avoid eviction.

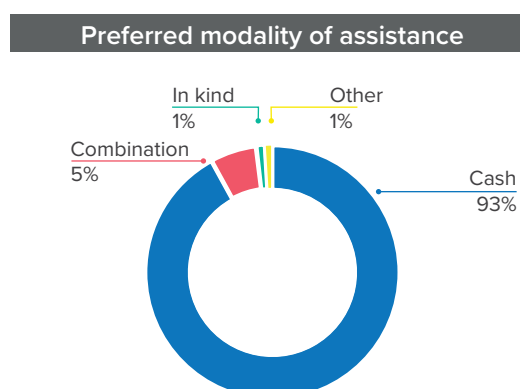
*Amina, a mother of five, fled her home in Tel Rifaat, Northern Syria, to escape the escalating conflict. After losing her husband to a stroke and facing significant challenges, including a son who became paralyzed in a car accident, Amina and her children found refuge in Azaz, Aleppo Governorate. Living in a one-room shelter without basic appliances, Amina struggled to meet her family's needs. UNHCR's assistance of \$100 per month provided crucial support, enabling her to purchase food, clothing, and even invest in her tailoring business, which helped increase her income. Amina remains optimistic about Syria's recovery and is determined to ensure a brighter future for her children through education. "I want my children to be well-educated. One of my older sons didn't finish beyond sixth grade, and the other didn't make it past ninth grade. I want the rest of my children to complete their education. That's the only way they will have a better future." © Shafak Organization/Khaled Dalaty*



## IMPROVING LIVES AND REDUCING HARM

UNHCR uses **Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM)** to assess how assistance delivered in cash is used and whether it meets the needs of forcibly displaced families. Normally conducted 3–4 weeks after distribution, PDM involves surveys and interviews to identify challenges, risks, and areas for improvement. The findings guide future programming and ensure accountability to both recipients and donors.

Key findings from 2024 PDM across 11 MENA operations include:



<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Northwest Syria, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen

## Positive Impact:

- ▶ 73% of households reported improved living conditions (up from 61% in 2023).
- ▶ 96% felt less stressed after receiving assistance (compared to 94% in 2023).
- ▶ Many noted a positive effect on their mental well-being

## Preference for Cash:

- ▶ 93% of recipients preferred cash over in-kind support. While cash assistance helped many, it couldn't cover all needs:
- ▶ 64% of households could meet half or more of their basic needs.
- ▶ 35% could meet less than half or all of their needs.

## Flexibility allowed families to prioritize their most urgent needs with dignity and choice:

- ▶ 71% used the cash for food
- ▶ 49% for rent and shelter
- ▶ 30% for medical care

## Market Access:

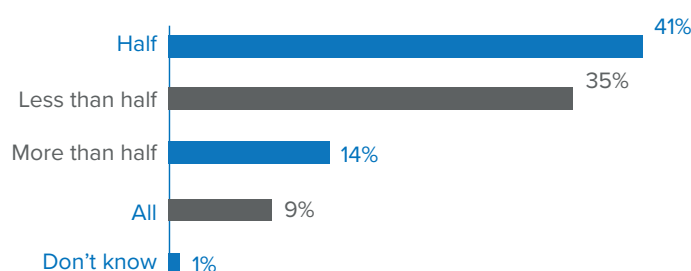
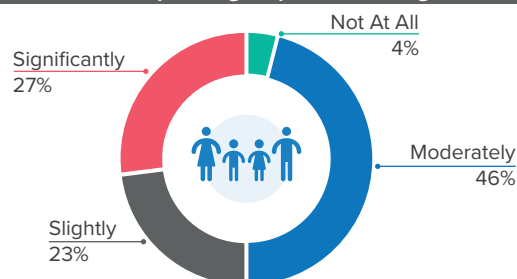
- ▶ 98% of households were able to purchase what they needed locally, showing strong integration with local markets.

## FROM RELIEF TO RESILIENCE

UNHCR MENA's assistance delivery in cash is not only about emergency relief, but also a bridge to long-term resilience. By aligning with national systems and development goals, these interventions are helping build sustainable solutions. UNHCR's interventions tailored through cash as assistance delivery modality, based on strong targeting and vulnerability criteria, are also increasingly focused on sustainability - by aligning humanitarian aid with national systems and long-term development objectives. What distinguishes MENA is not just the scale of operations, but also its capacity to engage financial infrastructure, private sector partnerships, and robust data systems such as RAIS and PRIMES, ensuring effective coordination and accountability.

This allows operations in MENA to:

### % of households reporting improved living conditions



## To cope, families adopted various strategies:

- ▶ 54% reduced household spending to afford food
- ▶ 35% borrowed money or took out loans
- ▶ 34% couldn't pay rent, leading to debt
- ▶ Riskier coping strategies included child labor (5%) and asking strangers for money (4%)

These findings highlight the ongoing need for timely, flexible support to reduce financial stress and prevent harmful coping mechanisms.

- ▶ Leverage financial infrastructure and private sector partnerships
- ▶ Use robust data systems like RAIS and PRIMES for coordination and accountability

In Iraq, for example, UNHCR's basic needs assistance is helping integrate refugees into national social protection systems. By working closely with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and aligning with the 2014 Social Protection Law, UNHCR is advocating for equitable access for refugee households strengthening the link between humanitarian aid and government support. This approach strengthens linkages and facilitates a smooth transition between humanitarian aid and government systems, improving the efficiency, equity, and sustainability of refugee responses in Iraq.

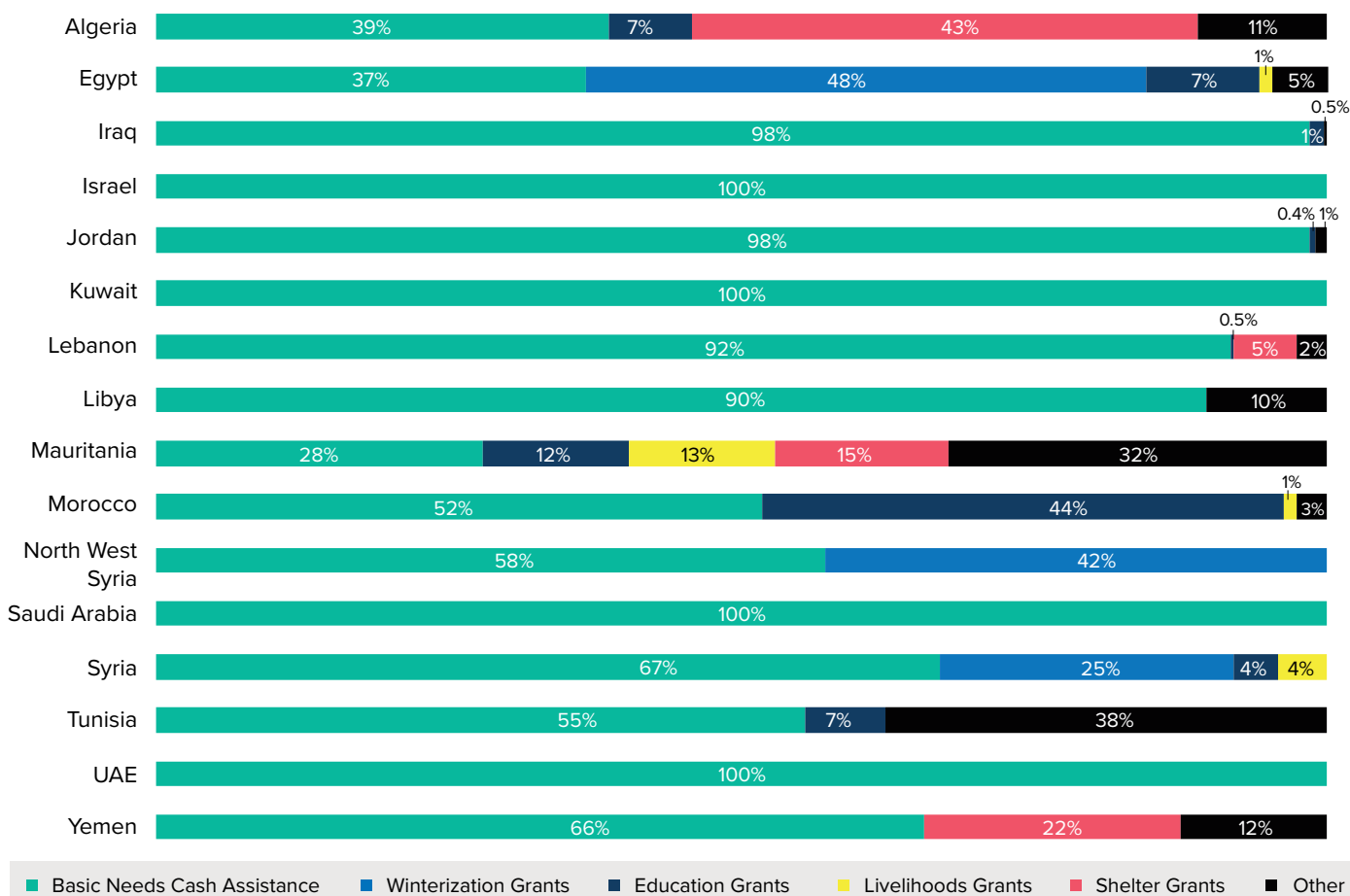




In the heart of Zakho, a small town in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Silva's Garden bursts with life. To a passerby, it might be just an ordinary garden, but to Silva, a Syrian refugee, it's a lifeline that supports her family. Silva fled escalating conflict in Hasakeh, Syria, in 2013, just six credits away from earning her degree in Agricultural Engineering. Determined to complete her education, she petitioned local government offices and universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and eventually earned her degree from Salah Al-Din University in Erbil. After marrying in 2022, Silva moved to Zakho with her husband. They shared a passion for gardening and started a small initiative in their home garden. With limited resources, they nurtured a single plant into 18, which became the seed of their business. With support from UNHCR's, Silva took her business to the next level, naming it Gardenia House. Silva is one of 56,000 refugees and asylum-seekers who received assistance in cash from UNHCR in Iraq in 2024.

©UNHCR/Hamzeh Almomani

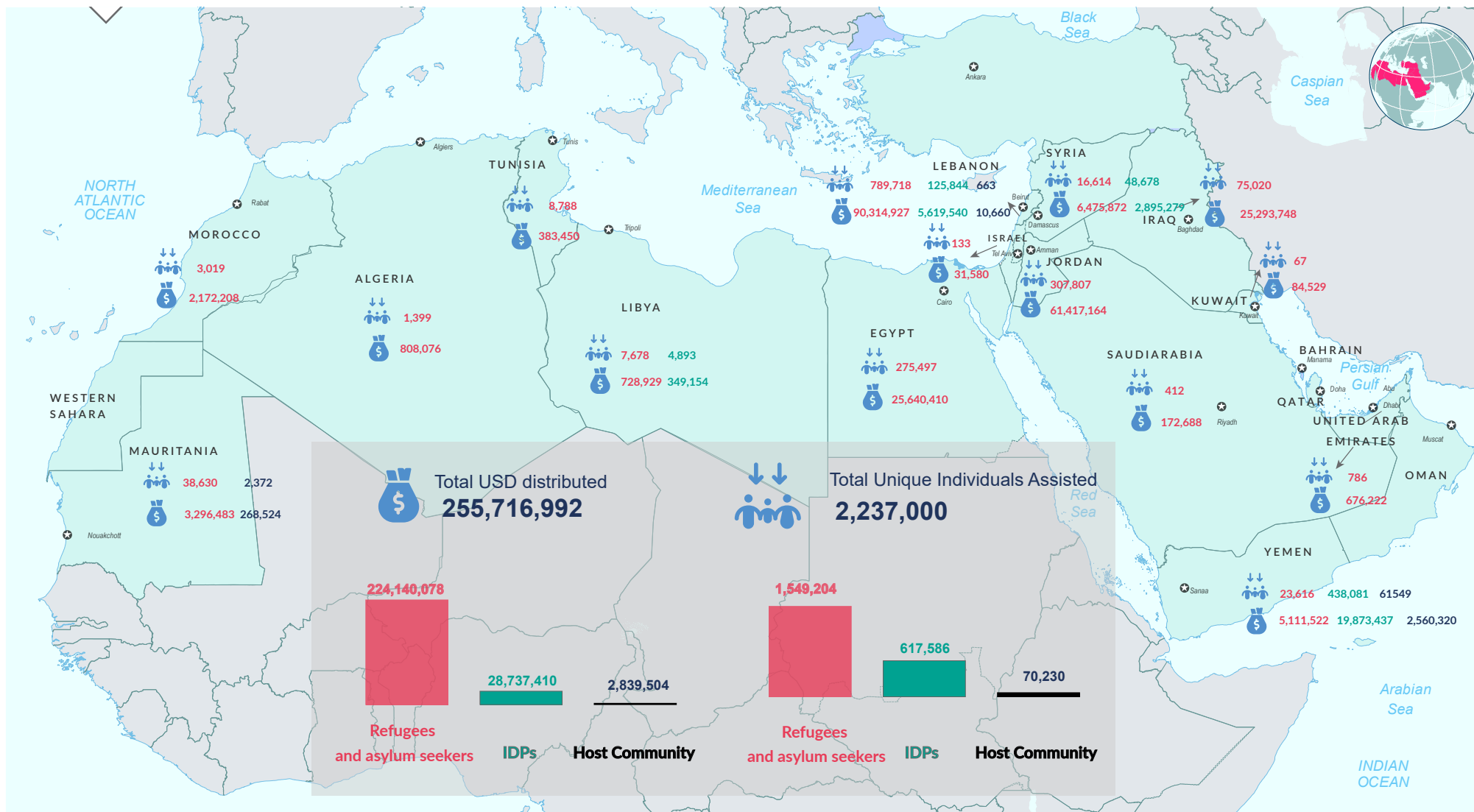
## Types sectoral interventions delivered though CBI in 2024



**Six<sup>2</sup> of UNHCR's 10 largest operations providing basic needs assistance through cash based interventions globally are located the MENA region**

<sup>2</sup> Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Syria

UNHCR cash assistance operations in MENA in 2024 – # of persons supported by country





Mohamed Ibrahim, a Malian herder and father of four, fled the violence in Mali and found refuge at the Mbera refugee camp in Mauritania. "It was the war, the sound of gunfire, the killings that forced me to flee," he says. Arriving in January 2024 with only the essentials, Mohamed and his family received assistance from UNHCR, which allowed him to buy a hygiene kit for his wife and materials to build a shelter. This financial support helped meet their immediate needs. "The assistance from UNHCR has given us a roof over our heads. My two children are in school, and every month we receive support to meet our basic needs," Mohamed shares.

In addition, UNHCR's protection efforts have been vital, granting Mohamed and his family official refugee status and access to essential services like psychosocial support and education for his children. Refugees arriving from Mali face significant challenges, as the Hodh Chargui region struggles with high poverty rates, scarce resources, and limited access to vital services such as water, food, and education. Despite these difficulties, Mohamed remains hopeful and determined to rebuild his life in the camp. "We still miss some aspects of our previous life. My wife used to work, and I had livestock, but at least now we are safe. I don't know how we would have survived otherwise," he reflects, expressing gratitude for the support that has helped his family survive and regain hope. @UNHCR/Houleyemata Diawara

## Donors

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its operations in the MENA region with unearmarked and earmarked funds, including private donors:



For MENA regional and country reports, please visit:

- [UNHCR.org/Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](https://www.unhcr.org/Middle-East-and-North-Africa-(MENA))
- [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](https://www.unhcr.org/Syria-Regional-Refugee-Response)
- [The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(3RP\) website](https://www.unhcr.org/3RP)