



OUTCOME AREA 8

UNHCR winter financial assistance helps Olena, a single mother in Dnipro, Ukraine, keep her home warm during the colder months amid ongoing disruptions to essential services caused by the war. © UNHCR/Viktoriia Tiutiunyk

Well-being and basic needs

Core output indicators

4.8 million people received cash assistance in 101 countries, a decline of 10% compared to 2024, with 95% of the cash unrestricted, meaning people could choose how best to meet their own needs.

6.8 million people received non-food items in 59 countries, 14% more than in 2024. The increase reflected greater in-kind assistance in emergency and high-intensity displacement contexts, particularly for IDPs and returnees.

UNHCR and partners supported **1.2 million** people with improved cooking options in 19 countries, a 16% increase compared to 2024. Most were refugees and asylum-seekers living in camps and settlements, with nearly half in Bangladesh.



UNHCR sustained life-saving assistance despite a sharp contraction in available resources. Expenditure declined by 31% from 2024, reflecting the broader funding crisis rather than reduced needs. In this constrained environment, operations prioritized the most vulnerable households and protection-critical contexts in cash-based and non-food item assistance and support for clean cooking solutions.

The choice between cash and in-kind assistance was based on context, including the nature of the emergency, operational constraints, market functionality and the setting, such as camps or urban areas. Cash remained the preferred form of assistance where feasible, and in-kind support remained essential where cash could not be delivered effectively or safely.

Reductions in funding resulted in lower coverage, shorter assistance duration and reduced cash transfer values in many operations.

Key results

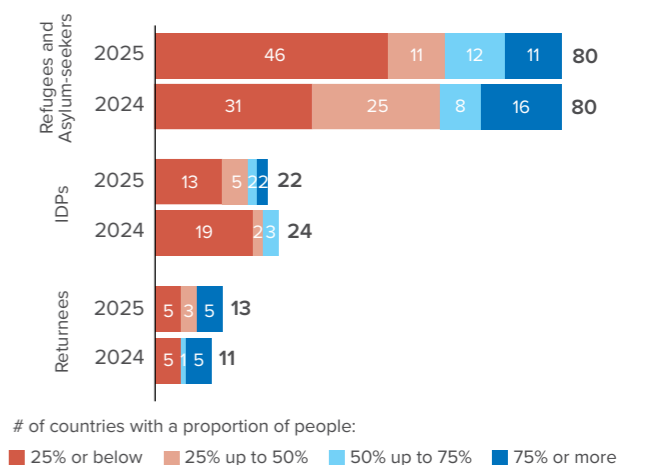
- The number of refugee returnees receiving cash assistance tripled, highlighting the importance of cash for return and reintegration. A majority of UNHCR cash assistance was delivered through digital means. In Afghanistan, UNHCR digitized 88% of cash assistance and introduced a blockchain-based aid delivery system, reaching 500,000 people.
- All declared emergency countries used cash as a part of their emergency response, including Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria).
- In Ukraine, UNHCR provided cash assistance for more than 330,000 war-affected people, helping them cover basic needs, including heating and energy costs during winter.
- Cash assistance was a very cost-efficient modality with only 1.4% in average bank charges.
- Where cash assistance was not feasible, and supplies were already available, UNHCR provided non-food items (NFIs) to help people meet urgent needs during emergencies, displacement and return. In Sudan, NFI assistance reduced exposure to protection and health risks during large-scale conflict-driven displacement and flooding.
- In Syria, large-scale distribution of core relief items and winterization support stabilized living conditions for IDPs and returnees.
- Direct distributions and market-based initiatives to improve access to liquid petroleum gas reached more than 949,000 refugees, helping combat deforestation and facilitate the transition to clean energy alternatives, including in Algeria, Bangladesh and Rwanda.
- In Rwanda and Uganda, the [Refugee Environmental Protection Fund](#) pilots commenced, aiming to deliver clean cooking solutions to approximately 90,000 refugee and host community households and restore a minimum of 7,000 hectares of degraded landscapes.
- UNHCR strengthened targeting, verification and delivery systems. In Ethiopia, UNHCR applied proGres, biometric identification and vulnerability assessment tools to support targeting and verification for cash and non-food assistance.

Challenges

Severe and unpredictable funding shortfalls undermined the scale, predictability and adequacy of cash and in-kind assistance. In major displacement contexts, needs outpaced resources, leaving many people without enough support to meet basic needs. Among people receiving financial aid, 71% could meet only half or less of their basic needs, and two-thirds used one or more negative coping mechanisms. Operational, market and delivery constraints disrupted timely and consistent access to assistance, while strained and under-resourced national social protection systems made it harder to link humanitarian support with shock-responsive state schemes. Persistent energy poverty and climate-related shocks led to continued reliance on unsafe cooking practices, increasing protection, health and environmental risks.

Core outcome indicators

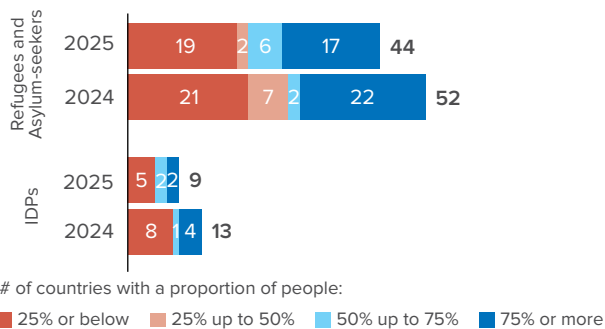
Proportion of forcibly displaced people that received cash transfers and/or non-food items



In 2025, 11 of 80 reporting countries indicated that more than 75% of refugees and asylum-seekers received cash transfers and/or non-food items from UNHCR and funded partners, a decrease from 16 of 80 countries in 2024. For IDPs, only 2 of 22 reporting countries reached this level of coverage, reflecting the scale of displacement, insecurity and delivery constraints in major IDP-hosting contexts. For returnees, 5 of 13 reporting countries reported coverage above 75%.

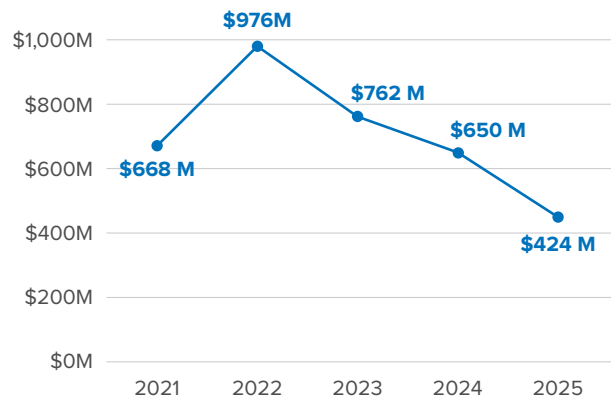


Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology



In 2025, 17 of 44 reporting countries (39%) reported that more than 75% of refugees and asylum seekers relied on clean cooking fuels and technologies, reflecting a slight decrease from 22 of 52 countries (42%) in 2024. This decline indicates a deprioritization of these activities since the previous year.

Cash assistance | 2021-2025



Financial overview

Global expenditure and budget for Well-being and basic needs

- With the funds available, UNHCR could spend **\$689 million** towards budgeted needs of **\$2.287 billion**.
- **31% decrease** in expenditure compared with 2024
- **\$1.598 billion** of unmet needs or **70%** of the budget.
- **22%** of total expenditure under this outcome area, or **\$153 million**, was funded by flexible funding, including **\$96 million** of unearmarked funding.

Well-being and basic needs: operations with the largest expenditure

These operations accounted for **\$470 million** or **68%** of global expenditure for this area in 2025

