



Learning Brief

Provisional Impact of Repeat Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance on Meeting Basic Needs and Supporting Food Security

In North-West Syria

Description of the Intervention

GOAL and its partner provided targeted food insecure households in Idleb and Aleppo governorates in North-West Syria with an average of six months of unconditional cash assistance to meet their identified monthly non-food basic needs.

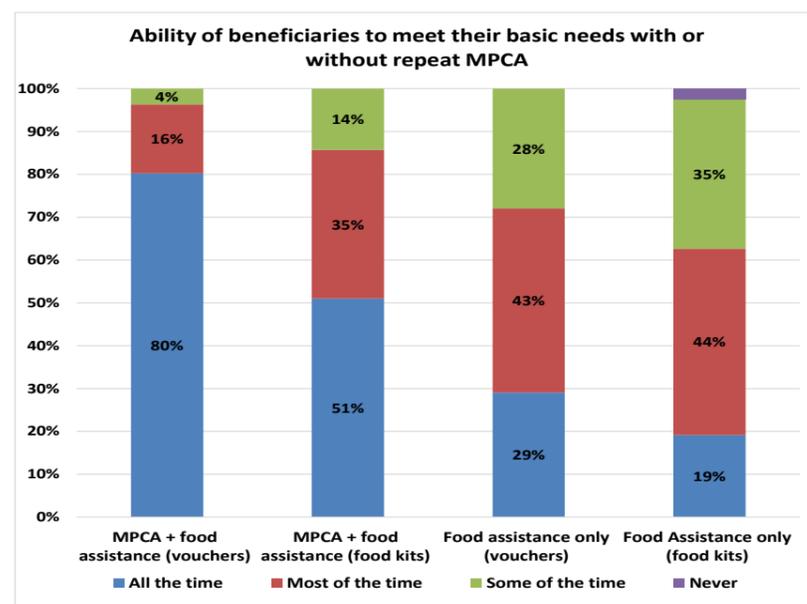
In 2020, with the Bureau of Humanitarian Aid (BHA) funding, GOAL targeted the same households that receive eight rounds of food assistance with six rounds of cash assistance because needs assessments in North-West Syria repeatedly showed households had high non-food needs along with food needs. In the North-West Syria response to date, cash assistance has been mostly provided on a once-off basis or else for a maximum of three months. Therefore, providing six months of Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) was relatively new to the response. To date under the GOAL Syria's BHA funded grant, GOAL has provided six months of cash to the value of \$25 per household per month alongside regular food assistance in the form of food kits or value vouchers. The value voucher was approximately \$52 per household, per month, calculated to meet 70% of the food needs as per the Food Security Cluster recommendations. The cash transfer value is in line with 100% of the NFI value of the SMEB (Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket) for North-West Syria. Between 1st October 2020-31st December 2020, GOAL reached 21,379 households that were receiving regular food assistance with additional MPCA to meet their basic needs. It is from a representative sample of these households that GOAL analyzed the post-distribution monitoring findings that form the basis of this learning brief.

Finding #1: Increased Number of Households Able to Meet Basic Needs

Repeat MPCA significantly increased number of vulnerable households able to meet their monthly basic needs.

80% of households who received cash in addition to regular food assistance with vouchers were able to meet their basic needs all the time, as opposed to 29% of those who only received food assistance via vouchers.

Similarly, 51% of the households who received MPCA in addition to regular food kits were able to meet their basic needs all the time, compared to 19% of those who only received food kits.



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Date:

11th March 2021

Title:

Repeat MPCA for NFI needs

Country/Region:

GOAL Syria

Sector:

Basic Needs

Intervention Dates:

July- December 2020

Grant:

BHA funded grant. 1st June 2020 - 31st May 2021

Repeat MPA value:

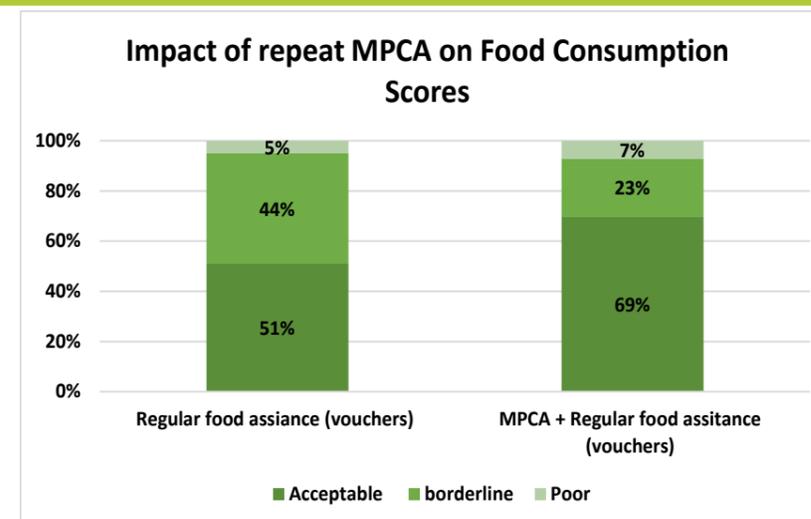
\$25 per household, per month. Each household receives six months of repeat MPCA alongside with a value voucher or food kit to meet their food needs.

MPCA Delivery Mechanism:

Smartcards that are integrated with Hawalas in areas where beneficiaries have smartcards under the voucher programme, and standard cash transfer method in areas without smartcards.

Finding #2: Improved Food Security Outcomes

Repeat MPCA significantly improved the food security status of the targeted vulnerable households as shown by their Food Consumption Scores.



Food Consumption Scores (FCS) were significantly positively affected by the addition of MPCA, as 69% of households receiving MPCA in addition to food assistance (vouchers) had an acceptable FCS, compared to 51% of those who only received food assistance (vouchers).

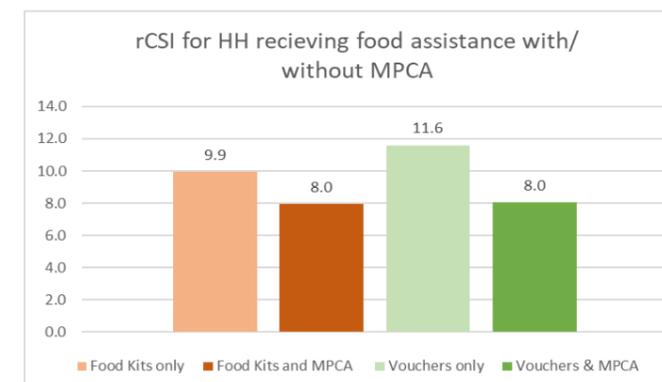
Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference in the Household Hunger Scale between households that received food assistance only compared to those who received MPCA in addition to food assistance in the form of vouchers or food kits.

Finding #3: Reduced Negative Coping Strategies

Repeat MPCA alongside vouchers or food kits reduced vulnerability as demonstrated by the reduction in the use of negative coping strategies.

When MPCA was combined with vouchers or food kits, there was a significant reduction in household negative coping strategies as the Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) reduced from 11.6 to 8.0.

Likewise, there were also positive impacts of the MPCA in terms of rCSI reduction when compared to households that only received food kits as the rCSI reduced from 9.9 to 8.0 when provided alongside vouchers/food kits.



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Finding #4: Cash Enables Households to Meet a Much More Diverse Range of Needs Than Value Vouchers

Despite value vouchers being the most flexible form of voucher assistance, cash is still the most beneficial CVA modality for meeting a diverse range of household needs

Value vouchers were spent primarily on bulk staple food items (vegetable oil, rice, bulger, sugar etc.) and household and personal hygiene items. Whereas MPCA, although a smaller transfer value than the value voucher, was spent on a much more diverse range of items. This included food, debt repayments, fuel for heating, rent, medical expenses, household and personal hygiene, rent, clothes, communication, savings, baby needs, water.

A proportion of it was spent on food, and the food tended to be more fresh, nutrient dense, than those bought with vouchers. This could be because it is cheaper to buy fresh produce in local informal market stalls (not contracted in the voucher program) than larger grocery stores. This also suggests that providing 70% of the food needs via a value voucher/food kit is not enough to meet the needs of the target population, and that cash may be the best option to meet the diverse needs of people when a strong market is present.

Debt repayments were the 2nd most common category of cash expenditure. In the North-West Syria context, this often includes debts to vendors for purchasing goods such as food items and NFI's on credit. Please see GOAL's "Currency in Crisis" study for more information on debts in North-West Syria.

Key Recommendations

Providing MPCA on a regular basis for at least six rounds (one month per round) in conjunction with eight rounds of regular food assistance has a significant positive impact on vulnerable household's ability to meet their basic needs, improve household food insecurity and reduce household usage of negative coping strategies.

- To meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable, monthly humanitarian assistance transfer values should cover food and NFI needs, as per the SMEB. The regular NFI needs of the most vulnerable are not being funded by most donors as the focus is on food security. However, food security outcomes are enhanced if households can meet their basic NFI needs at the same time.
- Likewise, debt repayments remain a critical part of the Syrian household economy. At times, this can be cost saving. For example, the 2019 MPCA for winterization showed that debt repayments were the 3rd most frequent category of cash expenditure. When GOAL investigated this, it found that households buy heating fuel on credit before the onset of the winter when prices are low and then re-pay the debt with their winterization cash support once they receive it, thereby stretching the value of their assistance. Providing at least a portion of assistance in cash allows households to utilize their assistance in flexible and cost-saving ways.
- While value vouchers provide a certain amount of flexibility and options to households, cash remains the optimum modality of assistance to reach a diverse range of households needs. When all cash is not feasible at scale, a combination of cash and value vouchers provided to the same beneficiaries still provides sufficient flexibility while being in-keeping with contextual operational constraints.

Other Publications by GOAL Syria that may be of interest:

["Currency in Crisis: Ways forward for GOAL Cash and Vouchers Assistance in North-West Syria."](#)

- 1st July 2020, found on the CaLP resource library- **Full study.**

["Currency in Crisis: Ways forward for GOAL Cash and Vouchers Assistance in North-West Syria."](#) - Executive Summary.

Found on the CaLP resource library.

Reference for Page 3:

[Winterisation After Action Review 24th of June 2019- Shelter/NFI Cluster](#)

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