



Digital Innovation



Innovation is enabling the shift from food aid to food assistance. Throughout the world, WFP is using innovative means and technological solutions to provide essential food assistance and promote long-term development.

Cash-based Transfers

Increasingly, WFP provide assistance to people in need through cash-based transfers that empower them to buy food for themselves and take charge of key decisions that affect their lives. These transfers come in various forms from traditional banknotes, bank transfers or paper vouchers to innovative electronic platforms such as special SIM cards, smart cards or mobile money. WFP conducts in-depth analysis to determine the most effective way of achieving specific programme objectives, whether it be through cash, food, vouchers or a combination.

In refugee camps in Kenya, WFP uses **mobile phone technology** to complement in-kind food assistance by delivering small amounts of unrestricted cash through a new programme named *Bamba Chakula* ("get your food" in the local Sheng language). This enables refugees to choose the food they buy in local markets. The programme, which started in August 2015 in Kakuma camp and in January 2016 in Daadab, has already injected a total of 289 million Kenyan shillings (US\$2.86 million) into local markets near the camps.

In other contexts, WFP has put in place a **multipurpose electronic card** to allow people to buy not only food but also soap, hygiene products and warm clothes in winter. The e-card allows funds from other agencies to be channeled to the same affected people as part of the wider UN effort to deliver as one.

Facts and Figures

- WFP is currently using cash-based transfers to provide food assistance in 84 operations across 54 countries, compared to just 26 operations in 19 countries in 2010.
- In 2015, WFP reached 9.6 million people representing a threefold increase from 2010 levels.
- WFP has global commercial financial agreements that provide over a million cash-out points. We transfer cash via mobile money, banks, card services, and transfer agents.
- WFP's largest cash transfer operation is its Syria regional emergency response for refugees. In 2015, WFP transferred US\$355 million to refugees and plans to transfer US\$454 million in 2016.
- WFP has trained 2,300 staff in over 60 countries on cash-based transfers.

SCOPE: Know people better to serve them better

WFP also developed SCOPE, an innovative, cloud-based platform used in the field to register people in need and manage their entitlement, to plan WFP interventions and distributions, manage transfers and track WFP operations. It is conceived as a flexible and powerful data source with online and offline capabilities. SCOPE enables WFP to better understand the people it serves and give them more personalized assistance, with the flexibility to change the course of action during an intervention. It can also be used as a single platform to transfer benefits from various agencies. In 2016, it is anticipated that a total of 8.4 million people will be registered for cash distribution and 18.6 million for in-kind aid through the SCOPE programme. SCOPE was originally created to be the WFP system for cash operations. It has evolved into a digital platform that now applies to both cash-based and food operations.



Assisting even beyond borders:

SCOPE can be used to collect demographic, geographic and biometric details. While keeping the information securely stored in a single repository, these details are available whenever they are needed. For example, when refugees move back from Kenya to Somalia or Lebanon to Syria, WFP can easily enrol them in assistance programmes on the other side of the border without having to register them again.

Biometrics

WFP's recent advances in biometric registration and verification now allow Syrian refugees living in Jordan to purchase food using a scan of their eye instead of cash, vouchers or credit cards. Once the shopper has their iris scanned, the system communicates with UNHCR's registration database to confirm their identity, before checking available funds and making payment. WFP's use of new iris-scan technology makes food assistance more efficient and accountable, and makes shopping easier and more secure for the refugees.

Biometric verification also improves WFP's capacity to target people in need and manage resources. After the introduction of fingerprint verification in a Kenyan refugee camp, WFP saved US\$1.5 million each month and the number of refugees fell by 20 percent within 6 months.

Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM): delivering real-time food security data through mobile technology

The World Food Programme's mVAM project collects food security data through short mobile phone surveys, using SMS, live telephone interviews and an Interactive Voice Response system to understand the food security situation of people living in places too dangerous or remote for traditional face-to-face data collection. Mobile phone surveys are a fast and efficient way to collect critical information from disaster-affected communities. The mVAM approach is faster and can achieve savings of up to 50 percent in the costs of collecting data compared to traditional methods.

Since mVAM was piloted in 2014 in DR Congo and Somalia it has been deployed to over 20 countries, including emergencies in Iraq, South Sudan, Syria, West Africa and Yemen. mVAM uses free and open source software, and data is made available on an open access basis.

