



# WFP and Digital Innovation

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

## Cash-based Transfers

WFP delivers millions of tons of food each year, but, increasingly, assistance to hungry people comes through cash-based transfers that allow them to buy food for themselves in local markets, and be in charge of key decisions that affect their lives. These transfers come in various forms from traditional banknotes, bank transfers or paper vouchers to more innovative electronic platforms such as special SIM cards, smart cards or mobile money. They are particularly effective in urban settings where key services such as mobile phone networks and financial services providers are well established. WFP is a leading humanitarian agency promoting the use of technology for the transfer of cash.

In Kenya, WFP is using **mobile phone technology** to deliver cash through a new programme named *Bamba Chakula* ("get your food" in Swahili-based Sheng language), which distributes mobile money to refugees for food purchases. The programme started in August 2015 in the camp of Kakuma and in January 2016 in Daadab, the two camps near the Somali border, which have become self-contained cities. Thanks to the cash-based transfers, refugees can shop for the food items they need in local markets. The programme has already injected a total of 289 million Kenyan shillings (US\$2.86 million) into the local economy.

In other urban refugee settings, WFP has put in place a **multipurpose electronic card** to allow people to

buy food, soap, hygiene products and warm clothes in winter. The card enables WFP to channel funds from other agencies to the same beneficiaries as part of the UN wider effort to deliver as one. In 2015, 12 partners in 3 countries namely Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan, reached almost 450,000 beneficiaries with US\$35 million of funding through the WFP Multipurpose card.

WFP works closely with other humanitarian partners, national governments, and non-governmental organizations, as well as new partners from the private sector to implement its cash-based transfer programmes. They include telecom companies and financial service providers, such as banks, microfinance institutions, and money-transfer companies, as well as local food retailers to maximize the food supply chain and ensure that consumers get the best possible price.

## Facts and Figures

- WFP uses 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, a threefold increase from 3 million people in 2010, for a transfer value of US\$680 million.
- WFP has global commercial financial relationships that provide over a million cash out points including mobile money, banks, card services, and transfer agents.
- WFP's largest cash transfer operation is its Syria regional emergency operation for refugees. In 2015, WFP transferred US\$355 million to refugees and plans to transfer US\$454 million in 2016.

## SCOPE: Know people better to serve them better

SCOPE, a cloud-based solution, is WFP's corporate beneficiary identity and entitlement management system which supports the programme intervention cycle from beginning to end. The purpose of SCOPE is to establish one corporate standard system to serve as a global repository of information on the people served, and consolidate all the data held separately at country level. It enables us to have a standard procedure across programmes, from registering beneficiaries, tracking the effectiveness of assistance through to post-delivery monitoring, and gives the added flexibility of being able to correct the course of action during intervention. SCOPE was originally created to be WFP's system for cash operations. Since then, it has evolved into a digital platform that now applies to both cash-based and in-kind interventions.

So far, SCOPE has been developed and rolled out to serve WFP's cash operations as well as in-kind operations in 47 countries. SCOPE is being progressively rolled out over the course of 2016 to the largest projects irrespective of transfer modality, and will be rolled out as the beneficiary management system to all cash transfer operations by the end of 2017. It is expected that by the end of 2016, a total of 18 million beneficiaries will be registered in SCOPE.



**Assisting even beyond borders:** SCOPE can collect demographic, geographic, biometric and/or anthropometric details, while keeping the information securely stored in a single repository and available whenever it is needed. For example, when refugees move back from Kenya to Somalia or Lebanon to Syria, WFP can easily enrol them into assistance programmes on the other side of the border without having to register them again.

## Biometrics

WFP's recent advances in biometric beneficiary 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 automatically communicates with UNHCR's registration database to confirm their identity, before checking available funds and making payment. This new iris scan technology makes food assistance more efficient, enhances accountability and makes shopping easier and more secure for the refugees.

Biometric verification also improves targeting beneficiaries and the management of resources. After the introduction of fingerprint verification in a Kenyan refugee camp, WFP realised monthly savings of \$1.5 million 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.

