Innovative Digital Solutions

WFP has made considerable investments in attracting experts to identify and deploy cutting-edge technologies in Bangladesh. All WFP cash-based transfers in the country are digitalized and, since April 2021, every refugee in Cox's Bazar has received food through e-vouchers. WFP continues to enhance its capacity to design, test and scale digital solutions that can be used to increase efficiency, cost-effectiveness and impact, while supporting Government and other partners address emerging challenges.

DIGITAL ADVISORY SERVICES

Globally, WFP is exploring various ways in which it can provide technical guidance to governments in enhancing their social protection systems with digital solutions. To support Bangladesh's long-term development aims, WFP has assisted the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) to improve its management information system and successfully roll out its online self-registration process for the Vulnerable Women Benefit Programme across Bangladesh. In coordination with MoWCA, WFP developed a self-registration application for potential beneficiaries, an offline application to test, and a video manual to facilitate data entry. Discussions are now underway about the possibility of integrating the management information systems used by other social protection ministries with the MoWCA system which WFP supports. using emerging technologies like blockchain. This will provide an opportunity for data independence among ministries, while creating a platform for coordination and visibility to reduce duplication in government safety net programmes.

JOINT UN COORDINATION

Following the Rohingya refugee influx in August 2017, WFP Bangladesh has taken the lead in the development and use of digital solutions to improve implementation of the response. Since 2018, WFP has supported other humanitarian agencies use its corporate and digital platforms – including SCOPE, Building Blocks and its Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MoDA) platform – to digitize their assistance. WFP's digital tools are currently being deployed by IOM, UNICEF and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) in Cox's Bazar and UNFPA, UNWOMEN and FAO in Dhaka. WFP is also assisting joint UN bodies – including the Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP) and the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) – with digital technologies and data analytics tools.

SCOPE

The SCOPE platform is used for WFP beneficiary and transfer management (online and offline) around the country. In Cox's Bazar, SCOPECARDS are used by WFP, IOM, and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) to deliver food; liquefied petroleum gas; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) items; and shelter kits. WFP nutrition interventions, food-assistance-for-assets and asset creation activities for the refugee and Bangladeshi community in Cox's Bazar are also facilitated by SCOPE, representing over one million beneficiaries.

In the rest of the country, 24,000 WFP beneficiaries have also been assisted via SCOPE. Of the total, 20,000 are being supported as part of the 2022 flood response in northeast Bangladesh (CERF-funded joint response by WFP, UNFPA, FAO and UNWOMEN), while 4,000 are vulnerable women from WFP's urban food security programme in Dhaka.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Building Blocks (BB) is a humanitarian blockchain-based platform for inter-agency coordination and online entitlement delivery. Since 2021, all WFP e-voucher outlets serving the unregistered refugee population (860,000 people) have been serviced by BB. Cox's Bazar is the first WFP operation to build e-voucher outlets, which provide a dignified approach to food assistance whereby refugees can choose from a range of food items each month.

The platform is also supporting behaviour change communication and transaction tracking under WFP's urban social safety net programme in two Dhaka slums, as well as food distribution tracking for refugees on Bhasan Char. In Bangladesh, BB has successfully processed more than 8.3 million cash-based transfers for WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA valued at over US$ 260 million, with WFP food assistance representing US$ 199 million of the total.

SCOPE-BUILDING BLOCKS INTEGRATION

SCOPE and BB work together to facilitate secure assistance delivery. SCOPE manages beneficiary information and entitlement transfers, then automatically transfers payment files to BB for online transactions and reconciliation.

MARKET LINKAGE TOOLS

Farm2Go creates a digital negotiation space, where actors from the smallholder farmer value chain can interact remotely and simultaneously in real-time, reducing their reliance on mobile communication and increasing efficiency through digital commodity tracking. Under the platform, smallholder farmers (including WFP beneficiaries) and their respective cooperatives can share commodity prices and locations, and get linked with WFP-contracted retailers and aggregators. Retailers in the camps can see which fresh produce is available at their preferred location and purchase digitally to lower their transportation costs, while farmers gain access to markets and WFP retailers .

Camp retailers are also assisted by WFP's Market Linkage tool (powered by Kobo Toolbox), which digitally tracks the amount and source of fresh food purchased from smallholder farmers and aggregators. The data provides WFP with a comprehensive picture of beneficiary shopping preferences and habits, as well as the accessibility of local products, which enable WFP to create strategies to help farmers grow seasonal in-demand items.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Twelve of WFP's 20 digital tools in Bangladesh are for its programmes. The remaining eight enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations (e.g. admin, HR and finance). WFP's internal Cash Dashboard tool, for instance, provides cash-based transfer (CBT) distribution reports in simplified and pictorial format, which aid in CBT-related decision making.

- The SCOPE Card Light pilot in Cox's Bazar has enhanced the efficiency of cash-in-hand distributions for beneficiaries engaged in cash-for-training and cash-for-work. The pilot integrates SCOPE and BB with bKash (a popular mobile money transfer service used across Bangladesh) through the bKash customer payment disbursement portal. Once the project is fully scaled, WFP will end the manual upload of beneficiary payment lists into bKash, which will save time and avoid errors.

- Using MoDA, WFP has moved from paper-based to digital attendance tracking for its cash-for-work programme. This shift has improved beneficiary attendance record keeping in both the refugee camps and surrounding Bangladeshi communities.

Photo 1: *Elderly Rohingya man using the e-voucher modality to receive monthly food entitlement* (WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud).

Photo 2: *A woman waits for her local shopkeeper to process the fresh food she purchased for her family through WFP's urban food security programme* (WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud).

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