



CASH-BASED TRANSFERS DIVISION

Olienne is a single mother who receives money through the Haitian social protection system. She is proud of being able to take care of her family.

“ I WORK THE LAND, I PAY THE SCHOOL FEES, I GET THE BOOKS, AND I SEND THE KIDS TO SCHOOL.”

OLIENNE

SINGLE MOTHER WHO RECEIVES ASSISTANCE THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME



Sending Money to Women in Haiti

How can digital social safety nets support families through crises while contributing to reducing gender inequality?

Chloé Gueguen & Thomas Debrouwer, 2023 September

When crises hit, delivering government assistance through digital payments can help lay the foundations for greater financial resilience and women's economic empowerment. Take Olienne for example, a single mother from Haiti whose home was destroyed by the 2021 earthquake. Olienne was registered to receive cash transfers through Klere Chimen, Haiti's largest safety net programme (also called 'Adaptive Social Protection for Increased Resilience', ASPIRE, in English). She conveniently receives these transfers directly in her e-wallet account, without having to wait in lines to receive her cash assistance or travel long distances around insecure streets. Now that she has a national ID and an account in her own name, she will be able to access other critical government services, such as voting or health services, as well as formal financial services such as remittances, savings, insurance or credit.

Haiti has one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world. Nearly 5 million Haitians—almost half of the population—do not have enough to eat, and 1.8 million are facing emergency levels of food insecurity.

Hunger tightens its grip on vulnerable Haitians as natural hazards, insecurity, violence and deepening economic woes are driving a complex emergency in Haiti. On the 2021 Climate Risk Index, Haiti was third among countries most affected by extreme weather events from 2000 to 2019.

One of the World Food Programme (WFP)'s top priorities in Haiti is to support the Government to develop policies that promote food security and nutrition objectives. In recent years, WFP and partners such as the World Bank have been supporting the government to enable Adaptive Social Protection, strengthen Government-to-Person (G2P) payment systems and get money to the most vulnerable populations in an efficient, sustainable and gender-transformative way. Under Klere Chimen, more than 22,400 vulnerable households in Grand'Anse (one of Haiti's most vulnerable departments) now receive monthly unconditional cash transfers—the majority via e-wallets—allowing people like Olienne to meet their family's essential needs while building back better in times of crises.

What have we learnt so far? Our take, in six lessons.

LESSON 1

DESIGN CASH TRANSFERS PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Designing cash transfers not only for women but with them and their communities was crucial to ensure money sent by the government can have transformative results for women while strengthening their family's resilience. We started by consulting women and men about their needs and experiences receiving cash transfers but also about the barriers they faced when accessing and using other financial services. Many mentioned an overall lack of trust in formal banks or microfinance institutions, low self-confidence, and insufficient network coverage. Women in particular faced issues dealing with mostly male e-money agents and an overall mismatch between what Haitian financial service providers offer and what they need in their daily lives. People also tended to 'auto-exclude' themselves from accessing formal financial institutions, as they felt they did not have the required income. Building on these insights, we brainstormed with financial service providers such as Digicel's MonCash or HaitiPay, local NGOs, and policymakers on solutions to solve women's pain points throughout their user journey receiving cash transfers. We came up with ideas such as developing targeted communication campaigns, increasing network coverage, adapting pricing or bundling cash transfers with other financial services.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Klere Chimen is a US\$75 million safety net programme funded by the World Bank. Besides cash transfers, the programme also provides additional voluntary trainings related to health, nutrition and financial inclusion, and supports the creation and strengthening of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA). Launched in June 2021, Klere Chimen is currently implemented by the World Food Programme and will be handed over to the Haitian government by mid-2024.

COVERAGE

Department of Grand'Anse, in the Southern part of Haiti.

TARGET POPULATION

22,400 vulnerable households with children under 5 years old, pregnant women or disabled people.

TRANSFER VALUE & FREQUENCY

From US\$29 to US\$58 per month per household, depending on the household's composition.

KEY FIGURES

- As of March 2023, about 60 percent of the people receive their cash transfers digitally (instead of via cash-in-envelopes) versus 3 percent in May 2022
- 66 percent of the recipients are women
- 10,000 people will receive biometric ID cards by the end of 2023
- 12,000 people received free SIM cards

LESSON 2

DIRECT PAYMENTS TO WOMEN-OWNED ACCOUNTS AND STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S DIGITAL FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES

Under Klere Chimen, we purposely prioritised women as main recipients of assistance for their families. As a result, a majority (66 percent) of cash transfers recipients are now women. To do so, we tested various approaches. Firstly, we conducted initial sensitisation campaigns towards future households, to encourage families to register an adult woman as the recipient, rather than the head of the household (typically male) as is still traditionally done in most social cash transfers programmes. Yet, such an approach did not prove sufficient to change the proportion of women receiving money on behalf of their families (versus men). Together with partners, we went a step ahead and analysed social registry data to identify households with an adult woman. For these households, we then automatically registered the adult women as the cash transfer recipients by default, while still giving families the possibility to change that if they wanted to. In parallel, we relayed key community messages emphasising reasons for the prioritisation of women, also strengthening community cohesion. As a result, the share of women registered as recipients jumped from an initial 37 percent in the first communes to 95 percent in the last communes where the programme was rolled out.

We supported women to develop the skills and confidence they needed to fully benefit from their e-wallet account. This included two training materials: a 20-minute 'refresher' on e-money for the initial 12,000 people receiving their entitlement via e-wallets, and six in-depth training modules on financial inclusion, resilience, and gender. These in-depth trainings aimed at making e-money more relevant to people's life, so that they don't only use their accounts to cash-out their assistance but also for remittances, merchant or bill payments, savings, and climate-risk insurance payments, which WFP is currently piloting.

LESSON 3

DIGITISING PAYMENTS IS NOT ENOUGH TO DRIVE FINANCIAL INCLUSION. PARTNER WITH VARIOUS ECOSYSTEM PLAYERS TO DRIVE USAGE BEYOND SIMPLE CASH-OUTS.

Haiti's recent political instability and accrued insecurity accelerated digitisation efforts to safely deliver cash assistance. Within less than a year, the proportion of people receiving cash transfers digitally (instead of cash-in-envelopes) climbed from 3 percent (in May 2022) to 60 percent (in March 2023). Free SIM cards were distributed to 12,000 people (of which 66 percent women) in cooperation with Digicel. Yet, such an achievement did not come without challenges: the lack of people's knowledge and trust in e-money, but also challenges with Digicel's limited presence of e-money agents in remote areas, liquidity issues or the lack of connectivity, to mention just a few. All those barriers are now gradually being tackled by the programme, making e-money the safest and most efficient option for reaching the people the Government of Haiti wants to assist.

To tackle the lack of e-money agents in remote areas, we worked with Digicel to regularly deploy agents to hard-to-reach locations, facilitate e-wallet registrations and improve cash-out capacities. This was the first step to quickly deliver social assistance digitally in times of emergency. But in the long term, we are also collaborating with Digicel to increase e-money acceptance among merchants and improve cash-in-cash-out (CICO) agent presence in rural areas. As of March 2023, WFP and its partners trained 250 informal fruit and vegetable shop owners across local markets (90 percent of which were women) so that people receiving cash transfers can directly use their e-wallet to pay for their essential needs directly in local markets, therefore reducing the need for cash-outs.

In response to extreme floods in June 2023, we were able to use the same G2P payment system to channel additional money so that people could better respond to climate hazards, suffer less and recover faster. Across three Grand Anse communes, people registered under Klere Chimen received a cash transfer which was twice the usual amount. As part of a micro-insurance pilot, 1,500 households in two Grand Anse communes will now be able to receive insurance payments directly through their e-wallet, protecting them against climate risks, like extreme winds or floods. Sending digital transfers before, during and after disaster strikes helps people bounce back quicker, strengthens their climate resilience, and ultimately reduces the cost and duration of humanitarian or government assistance.

LESSON 4

PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO IDENTIFICATION SO THAT BOTH WOMEN AND MEN CAN BENEFIT FROM ESSENTIAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Identification was one of the main obstacles to our digitisation plan as 40 percent of the people assisted under Klere Chimen did not have a national ID and therefore could not open an e-wallet account. To address this issue, WFP and its partners advocated with the Haitian National Identification Office to increase access to biometric ID cards. As a result, the Haitian government is currently providing ID cards to approximately 10,000 people. This will not only allow people to open an e-wallet via which they can receive their cash transfers but also access other public services, like voting, formally registering a business, enrolling children in school or obtaining quality health services. In response to stricter Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements introduced by the new [Circulaire 121](#), WFP coordinated Cash Working Group actors to address a joint advocacy letter to the Central Bank, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, advocating for lighter KYC requirements and a greater coordination with the National Office of Identification to provide national IDs for the people participating in social assistance programmes. Ultimately, we hope such joint advocacy efforts will help more people to receive national IDs and open full e-wallets, subsequently receiving faster assistance while also contributing to strengthened national systems.



LESSON 5

LET HER CHOOSE AND REWARD BETTER USER EXPERIENCE

The new Circulaire 121 also opened up the e-money market to new financial technology (Fintech) actors, allowing for greater competition. WFP welcomed this trend and is currently contracting a FinTech partner to provide the people we assist with alternative, cheaper options and greater bargaining power when choosing their preferred financial service provider. WFP and its partners hope that the people we assist, women in particular, can select what works best for them based on their needs and preference, while encouraging Fintech actors to address rural infrastructure challenges such as connectivity and agent coverage.

LESSON 6

BOLSTER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM WITH SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA

When building a strong data system, integrating sex-disaggregated indicators is key. In recent years, WFP has supported the development of the information system of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to expand vulnerability data on the Haitian population. The new system currently under construction will not only enable the Ministry to direct Klere Chimen cash transfers (or other social benefits) to Haitian citizens but also help decision-makers understand the gender impacts of social protection interventions. The system also aims to link the national social registry to various financial service providers to ensure Haitian households responding to vulnerability criteria defined through the National Social Protection and Promotion Policy can effectively receive assistance.

THE WAY FORWARD:

LAYING DOWN DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE ADAPTATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN HAITI

Moving forward, WFP and its partners will continue their effort towards building inclusive G2P systems in Haiti, while also strengthening the institutional capacity of the Government, which will take over the management of the Klere Chimen programme by mid-2024. Our work has centered building digital public infrastructure for more inclusive and adaptative social protection in Haiti—one that enables women and men to verify their identities, to have data about them exchanged seamlessly and transparently, and to receive social protection payments securely and in a timely fashion so that they can better prepare and respond to climate shocks, conflicts or economic crises.

Beyond Haiti, digital financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment have now become global strategic priorities for WFP, reflected in our 2022–2025 Corporate Strategic Plan, 2022 Gender Policy and new Cash Policy. WFP is the largest provider of humanitarian cash transfers: in 2022, we sent US \$3.3 billion to 56 million people in 72 countries. But humanitarian assistance alone can only go so far to achieve impact at scale and change people's lives. Government social protection systems can reach hundreds of millions more people and play a vital role in helping people meet their essential needs, reducing the impact of shocks and enhancing their resilience. For this reason, like in Haiti, last year we assisted 65 governments to improve their cash transfer programmes, supporting them in the design and implementation of programmes that are people-centred and financially inclusive, leverage shared digital public infrastructures, provide choice and support women's economic empowerment in the long run.

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