

Commitment to reduce management costs in refugee contexts

One of “the reduce management costs” workstream commitments of the Grand Bargain is to decrease the costs of delivering assistance with the **use of technology and innovation (commitment 4.1)**. Reducing management costs will increase the portion of funding used for the direct benefit of affected people. There are various ways to do so, including with mobile technology for needs assessments/post distribution monitoring; digital platforms/mobile devices for financial transactions; communication with affected population via call centers/SMS; sustainable energy and biometrics.

This update summarizes the progress made by UNHCR and WFP on this particular commitment, as it relates to refugee contexts, and provides an example of **advancing the use of technology and innovation for aid efficiencies and effectiveness**. UNHCR has introduced the Global Distribution Tool (GDT) to support functions in registration and identity management and in particular has increased the **use of biometrics for both registration and authentication before distribution**. **The use of this tool is enabling UNHCR and partners like WFP** to ensure equitable access to food, cash, and core relief items at distribution sites across the world.

Use of biometrics for refugee registration

At the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, **UNHCR made a commitment to expand the use of biometrics for refugee registration** to a total of 75 country operations by 2020.

By using technologies such as biometrics to anchor individuals to existing registration data, UNHCR is strengthening the integrity of existing processes, protect identities, and significantly improve efficiencies in operations. Being able to quickly and accurately know who is being seeking protection and assistance is extremely important and a matter of human dignity.

The use of biometrics in refugee registration continued its expansion during 2019, reaching 69 operations, from 52 during 2017. More than 8.5 million UNHCR refugee registrations have been completed using biometrics. Thanks to these efforts, for all individuals over age five, **8 in 10 UNHCR registered refugees now has a globally unique biometric identity**.

Use of biometrics for food distribution

Beyond its use in registration, UNHCR and WFP have also expanded the **use of biometrics at food distributions for refugees**, to ensure the right people receive assistance, protecting identity, and improving efficiency.

UNHCR’s Global Distribution Tool (GDT) was introduced in 2015 delivering crucial distribution-focused functionality to operations holding biometrics. The GDT currently helps 14 operations use biometrics to verify attendance in food, cash and core relief item assistance distribution scenarios.

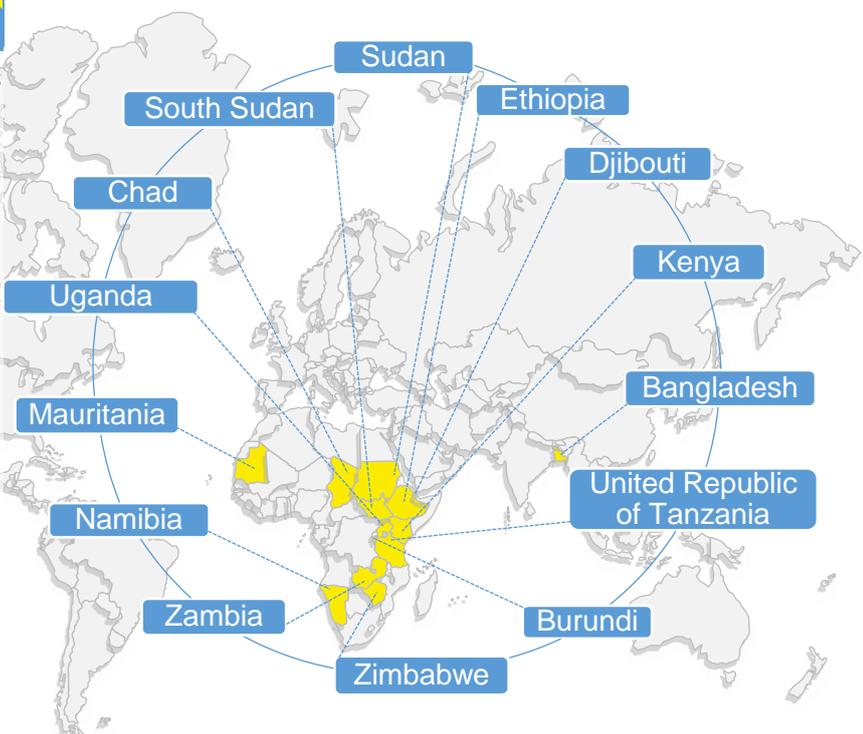
UNHCR and WFP jointly use the GDT for food distribution for refugees. WFP uses its own SCOPE system for biometric registration and authentication before distribution globally in other settings. This **joint work** is guided by the Data Sharing Addendum to the Global MoU (Sep 2018) to institutionalise data sharing between the agencies and promote security, scalability and efficiencies in joint ways of working.

Working together

UNHCR and WFP have established joint principles for targeting assistance for food and other basic needs and the agencies are committed to collaborating on targeting activities including jointly developing eligibility criteria. WFP and UNHCR are establishing a joint programme excellence and targeting Hub to strengthen joint programming and targeting practices to better meet basic needs and promote self-reliance of vulnerable populations.

Through a virtual set-up, the Hub will provide support to Country Offices to strengthen joint assessment, analysis, development of targeting strategies, improved accountability to affected population and monitoring with an aim to ensure assistance is targeted based on need in support of refugee self-reliance. Innovation and learning from country experiences will be shared and inform global guidance.

More than 100 food distribution sites now use biometrics with the GDT across 14 countries.



DJIBOUTI Following a country-wide verification exercise in 2017 which was jointly conducted by UNHCR and the Government of Djibouti, the GDT was introduced bringing operational efficiencies and process integrity benefits by using biometric data from UNHCR's biometric system to verify the identity of families collecting food at WFP food distribution points.

ETHIOPIA In August 2019, some 4,500 Sudanese refugees in Bambasi Camp, received for the first time their monthly food and cash entitlements using the GDT. Refugees coming to collect their monthly food and cash assistance present their identity cards or proof of registration documents which are then barcode-scanned using a mobile phone before assistance is given right away. Following the pilot exercise in Bambasi Camp, the new distribution system will be rolled out progressively across all 26 camps in Ethiopia.

KENYA The GDT is now in use together with [Biometric Identity Management System](#) (BIMS) in Dadaab, Kakuma and Kalobeyei refugee camps. With a beneficiary population of more than 250,000 persons across the sites GDT facilitates assistance delivery in three of the largest distribution centres in the world together with WFP. Verification of beneficiaries with GDT takes a few seconds for each household using irises or fingerprints. During and after each distribution, UNHCR automatically shares the biometrically verified beneficiary data with WFP which is then used to provide mobile-money assistance ("Bamba Chakula") to persons of concern.

MAURITANIA In mid-August 2018, the GDT was successfully deployed to Mberra camp, Mauritania. During the launch of the GDT in the country, more than 3,200 households received monthly food and cash assistance from the system, reducing refugee waiting times and the number of hours required for staff to manage the distribution.

NAMIBIA Since 2018, biometrics are now being used to verify the identity of refugees during monthly assistance distributions in Osire camp Namibia. This system ensures equitable access to assistance for all persons of concern.

SOUTH SUDAN In May 2019, the GDT was successfully deployed to South Sudan to facilitate assistance distribution using biometrics and completing UNHCR's move to the Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem ([PRIMES](#)) environment, which brings together all interoperable UNHCR registration, identity management and case management tools and applications. The GDT was used for the first time in the Gorom refugee settlement outside of Juba. More than 43,000 households (207,000 individuals) received food, cash and soap during the first-time GDT use in UNHCR's sub offices in Maban and Jamjang during their respective distribution activities.

SUDAN The GDT was piloted in the Sharq El Nil locality distribution in August 2019. Some 2,432 refugees were able to see real-time reports on exactly who had collected for their families and what had been received. This helped to mitigate uncertainty and duplication issues. The GDT is being rolled out for distributions across Sudan together with WFP.

UGANDA Since 2018, the BIMS and the GDT are being used in Uganda during the joint Government of Uganda, UNHCR and WFP food distributions to verify beneficiaries' identities and eligibility to receive assistance prior to distribution. More than 1 million refugees are biometrically enrolled in Uganda. A total of 72 WFP distributions points now provide assistance to beneficiaries through UNHCR's biometrics and the GDT.

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA Biometrics are being used since mid-November 2018 to verify the identity of beneficiaries at point of distribution in Nyarugusu settlement in Kasulu, Tanzania. A total of 22,642 individuals received soap during a three-day distribution exercise that took place as part of the piloting. Other field offices are to continue to integrate the GDT in their assistance delivery processes once the remaining population will be biometrically enrolled in BIMS.

ZAMBIA As part of UNHCR's continued efforts to increase accountability in recording and tracking assistance through the [PRIMES](#) programme, the GDT was deployed in Mayukwayukwa and Meheba with WFP and the Government of Zambia to enable biometric verification at the point of assistance collection. The GDT uses biometrics to quickly and accurately verify collectors during distributions and reduces avenues for fraud while providing greater integrity and better management information.

ZIMBABWE In June 2019, Zimbabwe rolled out the GDT in the Tongogara refugee camp. Together with WFP's [SCOPE](#) system which is a beneficiary information and transfer management platform, biometric verification at point of distribution is now used to facilitate cash-based assistance activities.