



Bamba Chakula -Vouchers for food assistance in Kenya's refugee camps

Update May 2015

A few words about ration cuts and vouchers...

WFP has been asked a lot of questions in the past few weeks about the relationship between ration cuts and the new voucher programme.

Last week, WFP announced cutting rations in the camps by 30%, starting in June, because WFP has not received sufficient contributions to keep the pipeline healthy this year. WFP has, however, received earmarked contributions for the new voucher programme that is currently fully funded until April 2016. **So why not use the vouchers immediately to fill the in-kind food pipeline gap?** There are **two** reasons why we can't do this.

Firstly, **we are not ready yet.** We've selected the traders, but they still need to be trained about how to redeem the vouchers. WFP has shortlisted 320 traders in Kakuma. If we do not train them well, there will be confusion and delays at the shops, and people will become frustrated and angry. In the volatile security contexts of the camps, this type of situation can quickly escalate. Also, the communication campaign is not yet in full swing, and if we have not fully communicated with

refugees about how the programme works and how they can receive and redeem their vouchers, we risk having some (usually the most vulnerable) people miss out. Lastly, the integration between the 3 systems (UNHCR's, WFP's, and Safaricom's) is not fully tested yet. We need these systems to work smoothly together to ensure the strong controls provided by the biometrics system are in place also for the vouchers. We had planned to have the first voucher cycle in June, but we expect now that it will be in August.

Secondly, even when we do start, **we have to start with a conservative voucher value.** Our market assessments indicate that the retailers in the camps have the capacity to supply the equivalent of about 10% of the general food distribution (GFD) cereal ration. This translates to 100 Kenyan Shillings per refugee per month, so this is where we plan to start. If there are no supply shortages, and food prices stay stable in the camps, we will gradually increase the voucher value. But if we inject too much new demand too quickly, we risk food shortages causing price spikes that could lead to conflict.

In last month's update:

- ⇒ Snapshot of *Bamba Chakula*
- ⇒ A newly discovered operational challenge: Low mobile phone ownership in Kakuma 4!
- ⇒ Retailer selection in Kakuma begins
- ⇒ 30 seconds on retailer selection with Jairus Mutisya

In this month's update:

- ⇒ A few words about ration cuts and vouchers
- ⇒ Solving the problem of low mobile phone ownership among new arrivals
- ⇒ Retailer selection continues in Kakuma
- ⇒ 30 seconds on the voucher system with Jennifer Nyanjui

Quick Facts about the new voucher programme

- ⇒WFP Kenya has dubbed the new voucher programme **BAMBA CHAKULA**, literally translating from Swahili to "Get your food".
- ⇒The voucher value will start at 100 KES per person per month. This amount is a **responsible introduction of demand** into the refugee camps.
- ⇒This means that approximately **\$345,000** and **\$180,000** will be pumped into the Dadaab and Kakuma camps respectively, every month.
- ⇒At least **250 traders in Dadaab** and **150 in Kakuma** are expected to participate in the new voucher programme.
- ⇒The vouchers will be electronic, delivered through mobile phones.
- ⇒Refugees that are registered by UNHCR but do not hold documentation will receive mobile food vouchers, with a SIM card that enables them to access WFP's food voucher only.



Solving the problem of low mobile phone ownership among new arrivals

Last time we featured the latest challenge we had with phone ownership. We are now pleased to say that we have a solution. Or rather, the refugees have come up with their own solution!

The challenge: In April, WFP conducted a phone ownership census in the Kakuma camps and the ownership levels did not turn out to be as high as a previous survey in 2013 had shown. Most of the new arrivals from South Sudan last year did not bring phones with them. We do not want the most vulnerable people in the camps left out of the voucher programme because they do not have a phone.

The solution: Most of the new arrivals are living in Kakuma 4 camp. Only about 40% of them own phones. We needed to find out from them what they thought about the vouchers, and

how they would cope with so few phones. So we held a series of focus group discussions with new arrivals. Most told us that they borrow phones from friends and neighbours when they need to use them. Some of the women also suggested that they could pool their resources through a 'merry-go-round' to buy a phone that a number of families could share. This is apparently a common practice within both the Somali and South Sudanese refugee communities. WFP is also requiring the traders it contracts for vouchers, to have spare mobile phones on site for customers to use if they do not have their own phone.

Trader selection continues

For the last month, a committee including WFP, UNHCR, Norwegian Refugee Council, the Department of Refugee Affairs, the Public Health Office, and the County Commissioner's Office has been busy vetting the applications from Kakuma traders wanting to participate in the voucher programme. The committee

ensures transparency and buy-in for the process, important for managing dynamics in the volatile camp settings. The committee's work includes: vetting and approving the selection criteria for traders, overseeing the process for selecting them, and shortlisting the traders to be contracted.

To be eligible to participate in the programme, traders must already be selling food in the camps, they must be paying county council business licensing fees, they need to pass health and food safety inspections, and they must agree to abide by the terms of WFP's contract, including: to provide good service to beneficiaries, to sell quality food within market prices, and to allow regular inspections and monitoring.

As 660 applications rolled in to WFP Kakuma's field office, the committee was faced with the daunting task of filtering applications, and

verifying the information provided by the traders by visiting each and every shop. The goal is to include as many traders as possible from a range of backgrounds that would be able to supply as many different food types as possible, to encourage dietary diversity, stronger markets, and more livelihood opportunities.

The committee whittled the list down to 320 traders that met the selection criteria...on paper. Armed with checklists, the committee broke off in small groups to visit the shops, and soon discovered that some applicants did not exist! Some had put misleading or contradictory information in their applications. A few had changed their minds about participating in the programme. The selection committee is still meeting to sift through the results of the site visits. We'll have the final results of the process in our next update.

Key Milestones REVISED!

WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR...

February 2015

- ⇒ WFP selected mobile phones as the voucher delivery mechanism.
- ⇒ WFP established a technical working group for the new programme.

March 2015

- ⇒ WFP held operational planning meetings with all stakeholders.
- ⇒ FilmAid carried out communications research in Kakuma and Dadaab.

April 2015

- ⇒ WFP finalized the Operational and M&E plans.
- ⇒ FilmAid finalized the communication strategy.
- ⇒ WFP launched the trader selection process in Kakuma, and received 660 applications.

May 2015

- ⇒ WFP, UNHCR, and Safaricom began integrating their systems to link the vouchers to biometrics.
- ⇒ Trader selection continued, with shortlisting and verification visits to the shops.
- ⇒ Kimetrica started work to design a study for measuring the impact of the vouchers.
- ⇒ WFP held M&E training to prepare for the baseline in Kakuma.

WHAT WE HAVE AHEAD OF US...

June 2015

- ⇒ Contract and train traders in Kakuma.
- ⇒ Launch the communication campaign.
- ⇒ Finalize systems, and install equipment.

July 2015

- ⇒ Distribute 40,000 SIM cards to households in Kakuma.
- ⇒ Launch the WFP Helpline.
- ⇒ Start the trader selection process in Dadaab.
- ⇒ Carry out the baseline in Kakuma.

August 2015

- ⇒ First voucher distribution in Kakuma.

September 2015

- ⇒ Test, learn, and iterate systems and procedures in Kakuma.

October 2015

- ⇒ First voucher distribution in Dadaab.

November 2015

- ⇒ After action review for both locations.
- ⇒ Adjust systems and procedures accordingly.

December 2015

- ⇒ Issue baseline report.

KEY DOCUMENTS

- ⇒ Evaluation of the Fresh Food Voucher Pilot in Dadaab (Peter Haag, June 2014)
- ⇒ Strategy for Diversifying Food Assistance Transfer Modalities in the Kakuma and Dadaab Refugee Camps (WFP, July 2014)
- ⇒ Analysis for the selection of a delivery mechanism for electronic vouchers in WFP Kenya's Refugee Operation (WFP, February 2015)

NEW!

- ⇒ Operational Plan for *Bamba Chakula* – The New Voucher Programme in Kakuma and Dadaab (WFP May 2015)

COMING SOON...

- ⇒ *Bamba Chakula* Retailers – A guide for selecting, contracting, and managing traders in the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps

30 seconds with...

Jennifer Nyanjui WFP Innovations Operations Manager, Nairobi

WFP and UNHCR signed a data sharing agreement in 2012 for the biometrics project. Will you be sharing data for the new voucher programme as well?

Yes, we will be sharing data for the new voucher programme. The data sharing agreement with UNHCR is about finding new ways that we can work together. We serve the same beneficiaries, so the discussions we have with UNHCR are about thinking as one, thinking about the beneficiary as a whole person whose needs are served by a number of partners. The data sharing agreement and the work we are doing to integrate our systems are furthering our goal of multi-agency assistance through a single delivery mechanism.

More information on the biometric fingerprint checks that WFP and UNHCR do during food distribution is available on request.

When you say “integrating our systems”, what do you mean?

I mean that the 3 systems—UNHCR's, WFP's and Safaricom's—all have to talk to each other to make the voucher



transfer. When a beneficiary passes through biometrics, information will pass from UNHCR's system (proGres) to WFP's cash transfer system. WFP's system takes this information and turns it into instructions that can be passed to Safaricom's SurePay system. From there, the voucher is transferred to the beneficiary's SIM card.

What are the challenges?

Technology is great, but it needs to work for us on the ground. This involves everyone working together: techies, finance, programme, protection, field staff, and Safaricom, to design the system and procedures. Then the techies dim the lights, put on their headsets, crack open the Coca Cola, and do the coding. After that we test, test, and test some more. That's the stage we're at right now. The challenge is to minimize the number of system problems we confront when we go live.

A big thank you goes to our donors who make this work on vouchers possible:



In next month's update:

- ⇒ What's in a retailer contract?
- ⇒ The communication campaign
- ⇒ 40,000 SIM cards for Kakuma
- ⇒ Procedures, procedures, procedures...please!

For more information or feedback on these updates write to

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