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Monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory actions for drought

Guidance and tools for Forecast-based Financing
programmes



World Food
Programme

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Measuring the effectiveness of anticipatory actions for drought

I. Introduction: FbF, M&E and drought

A. Forecast-based Financing for drought

Forecast-based Financing (FbF) is a programmatic approach to anticipate disasters and mitigate their impact. FbF relies on in-depth risk analysis to design and implement anticipatory actions (AA) before a severe weather event occurs. Pre-planned and financed activities are undertaken once a forecast trigger reaches a critical threshold, indicating a high likelihood of an extreme weather event becoming a humanitarian disaster. By acting *early*, FbF programmes aim to avoid or reduce human suffering and losses instead of waiting for negative impacts to materialize and focusing exclusively on emergency *response* operations.¹

WFP has implemented FbF since 2015 in a growing number of countries that are prone to recurrent climate-related shocks. FbF programme activities are closely aligned with national priorities, leverage local field expertise and build on existing coordination mechanisms. FbF strengthens host governments' and partners' capacities to reduce, anticipate and rapidly respond to the effects of climate shocks on food systems before a hazard causes large-scale negative humanitarian impacts.

In the African region, WFP's FbF approach is primarily focused on droughts for now. Water or moisture shortages can severely affect human lives and livelihoods by disrupting crop production, animal forage, drinking water supplies – which can lead to famine and epidemics among other humanitarian emergencies. WFP implements FbF projects in a number of vulnerable drought-prone countries, integrated within a continuum of early warning, anticipatory action, recovery and resilience programming. Anticipatory actions are usually geared towards protecting agriculture, livelihoods and food security in the short and medium term. To strengthen local capacities, WFP collaborates with national and local government partners to strengthen forecasting systems and access to information to enable quick, efficient and effective decision-making that is based on credible forecasts and pre-agreed danger thresholds or triggers.

The overarching goal of WFP's drought FbF work is to provide communities and households with the resources needed to strengthen their capacity to absorb the effects of drought. WFP's drought-related anticipatory actions aim to maintain and ideally improve the food security status of households and to protect their lives and livelihoods. A range of forecast-based actions for drought is conceivable, ranging from information dissemination (e.g. early warnings), distribution of inputs (e.g. seeds; fertilizer), cash or in-kind transfers (e.g. food; animal feed) to infrastructure rehabilitation (e.g. water sources; food storage facilities) and asset creation programmes.

B. Importance of M&E for drought FbF

The humanitarian sector has extensive experience *responding* to the impacts of droughts, particularly where droughts give rise to severe food insecurity, epidemics or conflict. There is also a large body of

¹ For an introduction to the FbF approach and its application in different contexts see WFP (2019), [Forecast-based financing \(FbF\) - Anticipatory actions for food security](#).

monitoring and evaluation (M&E) results and research on the effects of emergency *response* on the lives and livelihoods of those affected by the crises.²

Much less evidence exists on the effects of *anticipatory* humanitarian action. Several studies assess the benefits of AA in anticipation of extreme floods or cold waves³, but only very few examine drought-related anticipatory actions.⁴ With FbF being considered an innovative approach and a relatively recent addition to the humanitarian sector, it is necessary to generate robust evidence on the effectiveness of AA, also compared to conventional humanitarian response, and to learn what works and how to do better, including for drought.

C. Purpose of this guide

This document seeks to offer practical guidance and examples for monitoring and evaluating anticipatory actions for drought, helping to answer the overarching question of “Does drought FbF make a difference” to reduce or mitigate the impacts on affected populations. The primary audience are WFP M&E and Programme staff in country offices (COs), although the methods and tools compiled in this guide should be useful to anyone working on M&E of anticipatory action for drought.

The forecast-based nature of an FbF programme and the complexity of the drought context imply several particularities for M&E that are considered in this guide. Instead of aiming to be an exhaustive programme or project M&E manual – which would require repeating existing guidance available elsewhere – this document focuses on the particular M&E challenges posed by the FbF and drought contexts.⁵ It does not prescribe a particular approach or method, but flags key issues, provides perspectives for consideration and points to useful resources and further reading to allow FbF teams to make informed decisions about how to set up their M&E.

The examples and tools in this guide are built in a modular fashion so that country teams can adapt and use them in their programme settings. All content is based on practical experience from FbF programmes and built on existing organizational policy, guidance and M&E practice.

² For recent examples, see: OCHA (2019), [Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Drought Response in Ethiopia 2015-2018](#). Doocy, S., Tappis, H. (2016), [Cash-Based Approaches In Humanitarian Emergencies: A Systematic Review](#) provides a synthesis of 108 studies on the effects of cash transfers in humanitarian settings.

³ In July 2020, a [CERF-funded trigger of anticipatory actions to prevent extreme flood impacts in Bangladesh](#) generated a number of evidence products on FbF interventions; the results were not yet published at the time of writing this document. For peer-reviewed studies see, for example, Gros et al. (2019), [Household-level effects of providing forecast-based cash in anticipation of extreme weather events: Quasi-experimental evidence from humanitarian interventions in the 2017 floods in Bangladesh](#); Gros et al. (2020), [The effectiveness of forecast-based humanitarian assistance in anticipation of extreme winters: Evidence from an intervention for vulnerable herders in Mongolia](#).

⁴ FAO has published several booklets about the effects of Early Warning Early Action work ahead of severe drought, see: FAO, Impact of Early Warning Early Action: [Horn of Africa \(2018\)](#); [Madagascar \(2019\)](#); [Sudan \(2019\)](#); [Philippines \(2020\)](#).

⁵ This guide does not provide general introductions to FbF or programme M&E. It is assumed that the target audience – being FbF and M&E practitioners at country level – already have the requisite foundational knowledge.

Feature 1: NORAD and DANIDA support to FbF in WFP: the project context and focus of this guide

The development of this document was supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NORAD) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Their grants have enabled WFP to introduce FbF projects for drought in several COs in Africa, including Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The examples and tools provided in this guide are informed by these FbF projects but remain relevant for all WFP COs as well as external partner agencies and practitioners implementing anticipatory actions for drought. The focus on safeguarding and strengthening the food security and livelihoods of drought-affected populations also shapes this material's thematic orientation. The logical frameworks and the anticipatory actions chosen by the countries are relatively diverse. Therefore, this guidance should also be applicable to other country and drought environments.

It is important to note that the NORAD and DANIDA FbF projects also invest in complementary work to strengthen systems, capacity, and to connect WFP's FbF programme with early warning systems, social protection schemes, vulnerability analysis and other mechanisms such as cash-based transfers and asset creation activities. While these enabling programme components are very important for the success of an FbF initiative, a wealth of resources exists covering M&E of capacity and systems strengthening interventions.[†] **This document focuses on measuring household-level effects, assessing to what extent providing anticipatory assistance makes a difference to the affected**

D. Building on existing policy, guidance and practice

WFP M&E: This document draws on and assumes that WFP staff are familiar with the organization's core guidance on monitoring and evaluation, particularly as it relates to programmes and indicators focused on food security, livelihoods and resilience:⁶

WFP normative framework for monitoring by COs:

- [Minimum Monitoring Requirements \(MMRs\)](#)⁷
- [CRF Indicator Compendium](#)
- [Monitoring Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\)](#)
- [Corporate Results Framework 2017-2021 \(CRF\)](#)
- [CRF Logframe Business Rules](#)⁸

⁶ Web links related to WFP policies and guidance may be internal to the organization and accessible to WFP staff only. Users not connected to the WFP intranet may see an error message when opening such internal links.

⁷ For WFP staff, the MMRs are supplemented by the [Corporate Monitoring Strategy](#) and a suite of [Corporate Monitoring Guidance](#). The [Monitoring Foundations e-learning course](#) is another useful resource for WFP staff and partners.

[†] For example, World Bank (2009), [The Capacity Development Results Framework](#): A strategic and results-oriented approach to learning for capacity development. INTRAC (2010), [Monitoring and Evaluating Capacity Building: Is it really that difficult?](#)

⁸ The CRF Logframe Business Rules are formulated to inform the design of the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) logframe, and also make reference to "conventional" humanitarian response. Some rules will not be applicable to forecast-based interventions that are implemented at relatively short notice in an area that is not precisely known in advance. For example, rule (xii) stipulates that baselines should be established for all outcome indicators "no later than 3 months before and after an activity start as part of the CSP development process". Rule (xvii) states: "For sudden humanitarian responses implemented for less than six months, performance measurement should focus at output and process level. If the emergency activity is extended beyond 6 months, measurement of the outcome level becomes mandatory. Pre-assistance

Evaluation and assessing effectiveness:

- [WFP Evaluation Policy \(2016-2021\)](#)
- [Evaluation Charter \(OED 2016/007\)](#)
- [Decentralized evaluation mini-guide for WFP management at country level](#)

Drought FbF and M&E: WFP's CRF was updated in late 2020 to include selected indicators related to anticipatory action. Several of these are highly relevant for the purpose of this guide, especially: "Number of people covered and assisted through Forecast-based Anticipatory Actions against climate shocks" (CRF ref. G.9); "Number of people provided with direct access to information on climate and weather risks" (CRF ref. G.8); and "Percentage of planned tools developed or reviewed to strengthen national systems for Forecast-based Anticipatory Action" (CRF ref. G.7). As described above, the purpose of this guide is to go beyond counting outputs to understand whether AA *makes a difference* to drought-affected people. It is also worth noting that the other new CRF indicators on FbF – such as the one on strengthening national systems for AA – are not discussed further in this guidance note because its focus is to measure household-level effects, not systems changes or the performance of the forecast trigger system.

The Red Cross Red Crescent's [FbF and Early Action for Drought Guidance Notes](#)¹² share insights into analyzing drought hazards, designing forecast thresholds and triggering systems, choosing anticipatory actions and guiding thoughts on how to approach FbF M&E in drought contexts.⁹ While some general guidance on M&E of anticipatory actions is available outside of WFP¹⁰, this has not been tailored to FbF for drought.

The remainder of the document is structured as follows: Section II puts forward guiding considerations on the 'what' and 'how' to monitor AA for drought and to assess their effectiveness. Section III provides step-by-step suggestions for M&E planning, activity and output monitoring, outcome assessment and learning. The Annexes contain the examples and tools used throughout the guidance document.

baseline should be established regardless of the duration of the emergency response." Section II discusses the practical feasibility of baseline data collection for FbF interventions, while section C reviews options for measuring outcome-level results.

⁹ The author of this document has also co-authored the M&E section of the [FbF Drought Guidance Notes](#). This guide builds on the initial thinking shared in the Drought Guidance Notes and expands these concepts by concrete methodological guidance and tools. The Red Cross Red Crescent [FbF Practitioners Manual \(chapter 6\)](#) provides general methodological suggestions for M&E as well as examples and templates for FbF implementing teams. The manual is supplemented by a range of case studies on how the suggested M&E approaches have been applied in FbF interventions (see footnotes 3 and 4).

¹⁰ [Red Cross Red Crescent \(2020\), FbF Practitioners Manual](#).

II. Basic considerations for drought FbF M&E

As indicated above, this document does not prescribe a specific M&E approach or method. Instead, it wants to enable FbF programme teams to make informed decisions about how to set up M&E for their interventions, and to put useful tools into their hands. Therefore, this section discusses foundational issues that are important to consider when planning and establishing an M&E process for drought FbF.

A. Anticipatory Action in the context of drought

Droughts are highly complex phenomena. While 'drought' generally refers to acute water shortage and a decrease from the expected average of water resource availability over a certain period of time,¹¹ today it is not understood as a one-off natural disaster anymore but a natural *cycle* that can be worsened depending on a range of hydro-meteorological and socio-economic factors.^{11,12}

Figure 1 illustrates the differences in timelines between droughts and fast-onset hazards such as floods and cyclones. Forecasts of the latter typically give anticipatory humanitarian actors a relatively narrow window of opportunity of a few days to several hours. The time constraint limits the choice of anticipatory actions that can be undertaken. The period within which physical impacts occur – devastation from a cyclone making landfall or a land area being flooded – is usually short, from a few hours to days, sometimes weeks in case of severe and prolonged or repeated flooding. Since the anticipatory actions are usually designed to avoid or mitigate the impacts occurring in this short time period, the timing of data collection is typically linked closely to the timing of the extreme weather event.

Given the complexity of drought as a meteorological event with hydrological and agricultural implications, it is challenging to determine **when the ideal time is to deploy anticipatory actions to mitigate drought impacts** and to assess **the intended and unintended effects that anticipatory actions have on the affected population**. By extension, it is important to determine **when and how measuring results is most sensible** in light of the specific drought context and selection of anticipatory actions.

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