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Monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory actions for fast and slow-onset hazards

Guidance and tools for Forecast-based Financing



World Food
Programme

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Guidance at a glance: executive summary

WHAT TO MEASURE?

The guidance provides recommendations for answering the following questions:

- How many people were reached with anticipatory actions (AA)?
- How timely were the AA? Did assistance arrive earlier than it would normally have?
- To what extent did AA achieve the intended results? Can changes in household-level outcomes, if any, be attributed to the AA intervention?

HOW TO ASSESS?

This guidance recommends assessing the effects of AA using a quasi-experimental approach, that is, by measuring differences in outcomes, if any, between beneficiary households and a comparison group of similarly vulnerable and disaster-affected households who only received traditional disaster response (non-AA beneficiaries). This is aligned with WFP's Corporate Monitoring Strategy which encourages the use of comparison groups for impact assessment.

WHEN TO COLLECT DATA?

This approach requires collecting sample survey data from FbF beneficiaries and comparison households *at least once* at endline, and ideally also at baseline if feasible. In drought contexts, a midline survey, for example, in the form of an outcome PDM, is recommended for one-off or recurring interventions that are designed to cover a longer period of time, else the drought conditions might erode benefits that may have been observable previously.

WHAT ARE THE CAPACITY REQUIREMENTS?

The suggested approach is fully aligned with existing WFP M&E processes and tools, including the organization's increasing attention to comparison groups for impact assessment. Depending on the types of AA chosen by the CO, some outcome indicators (e.g. related to livestock productivity) may be non-standard to WFP and will require some customization. Moreover, testing for statistical significance is an important part of intervention-comparison group analysis. In case in-house time or capacity are limited, CO teams may consider hiring temporary support using the available FbF project funds to support the design or implementation of their AA activation M&E.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Developing an M&E Framework is an integral part of the systems-building component of FbF interventions. As such, funds for both the design and implementation of M&E frameworks and tools should be budgeted under the (multi-year) capacity strengthening funding of FbF. In case of a forecast trigger activation and where M&E resources may not be sufficient, COs can include additional M&E budget (i.e. tools development, data collection costs, data analysis and reporting) in their internal funding request to HQ (Pro-C Unit) for anticipatory action funds allocation. Alternatively, COs can also benefit from the expertise of the Office of Evaluation, which is currently collaborating with PRO-C/PRO-R on the Climate and Resilience Evaluation Window, where consistent approaches are being developed and support to COs who are embarking on similar approaches as the ones proposed in this guidance note.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE

A. Planning and setting up the M&E system

1. Review the AA SOPs and logframe (Annex 1) to ensure results and indicators are aligned with the ToC (Figure 4). A minimum set of indicators to be monitored is proposed in the Annex.
2. Develop an M&E plan (Annex 2) based on the SOPs and logframe. → Align choice of indicators (recall periods!) with timing of data collection and when outcomes (results) are expected to materialize.
3. Ensure implementation monitoring forms and processes are defined and ready.
4. Plan for outcome data collection and analysis. → See C. below and prepare questionnaires, data collection and analysis according to research design. See also timing of data collection decision matrix (Annex 4).



B. Activity implementation, process and output monitoring

1. Monitor timeliness: keep timeline of events. → Anticipatory action log (Annex 3)
2. Monitor outputs and reach. → Standard output monitoring; basic monitoring form for timeliness and reach (see example in online resource folder).
3. Process monitoring.
4. Consider periodic check-ins, where relevant.
5. Consider alternative data sources and opportunities to generate insights.

C. Assessing household-level effects

1. Choose a research design. → A quasi-experimental approach is recommended; research design outline (Annex 6).
2. Define a sampling approach. → Sample size should be sufficient to detect significant differences based on expected effect size.
3. Tailor data collection tools to actions, results and context. → Questionnaire design (example in online resource folder).
4. Collect data. → Surveys should cover beneficiaries and comparison households, at endline and ideally baseline.
5. Analyse data. → Test for statistically significant differences in outcomes between beneficiaries and comparison group.
6. Conduct Focus Group Discussions to triangulate findings from outcome monitoring surveys (FGD Guide in Annex 5).

D. Learning

1. Review and interpret data and draw conclusions about the FbF programme. → Lessons learned workshop guidance (Annex 7).
2. Prepare, share and discuss findings with key audiences, including affected people.

I. Introduction: FbF, M&E, slow and fast-onset hazards

A. Forecast-based Financing

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 before a hazard causes large-scale negative humanitarian impacts.

WFP's FbF approach is integrated within a continuum of early warning, anticipatory action, recovery and resilience programming. Anticipatory actions are usually geared towards protecting lives and livelihoods, agriculture 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 FbF work is to provide communities and households with the resources needed to strengthen their capacity to absorb the effects of hydrometeorological hazards. WFP's 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 are conceivable, depending on the nature of the hazard: for fast-onset hazards such as floods and cyclones, actions must be very quick, for example, early warning dissemination and rapid cash-transfers. For drought, actions range from information dissemination (e.g. seasonal bulletins and 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.



Terminology: Anticipatory Action (AA) and Forecast-based Financing (FbF)

For WFP, **AA** are predefined actions taken (1) based on defined thresholds from forecasts and risk analyses, (2) in anticipation of predictable hazards, so as to (3) prevent or mitigate the risk or impact.

AA can be delivered through **FbF** mechanisms. FbF releases funding and enables implementation of community-level actions in the critical window between a forecast and an extreme weather event. It consists of (1) forecast triggers, (2) **AA**, (3) pre-arranged financing, and (4) an M&E framework.

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](#), and WFP (2019), [Climate Risk Financing: Early Response and Anticipatory Actions for Climate Hazards](#) which illustrates the differences between AA, early response and traditional post-shock response.

In this document, 'AA' and 'FbF intervention' or 'FbF assistance' are used interchangeably.

B. Importance of M&E for FbF

The humanitarian sector has extensive experience *responding* to the impacts of hazards and large-scale humanitarian emergencies, whether caused by floods and cyclones or because droughts give rise to severe food insecurity, epidemics or conflict. There is also a large body of 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, and 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.

C. Purpose of this guide

This document seeks to offer practical guidance and examples for monitoring and evaluating anticipatory actions for slow and fast-onset hazards, helping to answer the overarching question of “*Does 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.

The forecast-based nature of an FbF programme, the short lead times of fast-onset hazards and the complexity of drought contexts 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 anticipatory action for slow and fast-onset hazards.⁵ It does not prescribe a particular approach or

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, most importantly: Pople et al. (2021), [Anticipatory cash transfers in climate disaster response](#). 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.



FbF M&E Guide

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.

Feature 1: Focussing on household-level effects of anticipatory action

In addition to implementing anticipatory actions, WFP's FbF projects typically 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 vulnerable populations.**

The examples and tools provided in this guide are informed by WFP's existing FbF projects but remain relevant for all WFP COs as well as external partner agencies and practitioners implementing anticipatory actions for slow and fast-onset-hazards. WFP's focus on safeguarding and strengthening the well-being, food security and livelihoods of disaster-affected populations shapes this material's thematic orientation. However, the general methodological approach will be applicable to a broader range of outcomes beyond food security and livelihoods.

The climate **hazards** discussed in this document are guided by what WFP country offices work on: mainly **floods and cyclones** in the fast-onset category, and **drought** as the only slow-onset hazard (WFP currently does not implement anticipatory actions for cold waves). Therefore, 'drought' and 'slow-onset hazard' are sometimes used interchangeably in this guide.

D. Building on existing policy, guidance and practice

WFP M&E: This document draws on and presumes 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

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