

Scaled up Anticipatory Action

The Case for Stepping up FbF in Zambia

Why FbF?

Forecast-based Financing (FbF), alternatively known as Forecast-based Action (FbA) has been gaining in traction since initial pilots in 2013. It is a tool which uses the advances in hydro-meteorological and climatological modelling to act based on forecasts – essentially positing that there is enough certainty in some forecasts to be able to act in advance of an impending hazard. FbF works by choosing a predetermined trigger threshold for action – a forecast of a certain magnitude of hazard, for example – and matching this with a plan for coordinated early action as well as financing to make the intervention possible. It is designed to save lives and assets, increase dignity and agency for people and mitigate disasters. On the disaster risk management continuum it falls in the window between preparedness and relief/response; it does not replace either.

Why Now?

FbF is now at a critical juncture: it has grown exponentially in the last five years and is being pursued in more than 60 countries around the world. Proof of concept has been established, and donors are increasingly demonstrating their interest through the creation of dedicated streams of financing for FbF and anticipatory action. As

The Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS), financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, began undertaking FbF in 2017, together with partners within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement as well as with more than 20 local actors. Featured prominently are the Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), and the Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA). Stakeholders have spoken of the benefits that FbF offers in Zambia, including increased technological sophistication in Early Warning Systems (EWS), increased forecasting skill, increased coordination and data sharing, higher levels of community trust in government and disaster authorities, and breaking down of traditional working silos (see [overview here](#)).

recently as the G7 Summit in June 2021, a [policy paper](#) was published which highlighted scaling up anticipatory action and the funding to match.

Interest has expanded beyond the humanitarian sector into development, disaster risk reduction, the private sector, civil society and governments.

Anticipatory action is [being recognized](#) as [key to meeting Sendai](#) and Paris Agreement targets, building comprehensive risk management, and bridging the humanitarian, climate, and development spheres.

The blueprints for rapid-onset hazards have been etched, with marked successes in hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods and cyclones, as well as heatwaves, cold waves, and volcanic ashfall. Increasing attention is being paid to slow-onset hazards such as drought and food insecurity. More and more [calls are emerging](#) for exploratory research to investigate the potential

for connecting mechanisms such as FbF to [other hazards](#) such as epidemics, displacement, and conflict. Now that the groundwork for linking forecast-based actions to forecast-based financing has been laid, it seems that the demand for applying it to diverse hazards will only continue to grow.

Further evidence that the time is now is found in the [growing injections of funding](#) for anticipatory action. As more donors enter the scene, and as risk financing pools grow, one of the next big focuses for FbF will be [scalability](#) – a promising potential entry point for Zambia.

Why Zambia?

As one of the first countries to undertake FbF, Zambia is uniquely well positioned to be a leader in the space. Should Zambia so choose, it can leverage its existing innovation, use lessons from FbF development and activation, and showcase its institutionalization successes as pathways for FbF – and at scale.

Zambia has a comparative advantage relative to other countries entering the space. With multiple years of experience in developing anticipatory action for floods, Zambia can now more easily translate these experiences to other hazards – and is already well into the process of doing so, with the ZRCS and partners having just completed a feasibility study and now embarking on the process of early action protocol development for droughts. With only one country having submitted a drought EAP (Niger) and only recently (in late April 2021), Zambia could be among the leading countries in adapting anticipatory action for slow onset risks.

Furthermore, Zambia is also ahead of the curve when it comes to embracing a growing movement towards multi-hazard risk management, and the ZRCS recently completed a multi-hazard contingency plan which addresses the compounding risks related to floods, cholera, COVID-19, drought, crop diseases and election related violence. As Covid-19

demonstrates the importance of building capacity to address multiple hazards simultaneously, the headway that ZRCS has made could help galvanize national action in that direction, and perhaps to adjust FbF to fit multi-hazard contexts.

Zambia also has the potential to scale up FbF in a significant way as a result of high levels of government engagement and promising institutionalization efforts. By couching FbF into the pre-existing infrastructure of the early warning committee, the team has been able to build off of pre-existing efforts and progress. Mobilizing these stakeholders and continuing to deepen a commitment to anticipatory action will be critical to scaling up FbF action, and is possible through integration into national contingency plans as well as through insertion into the DMMU's bill – which, coincidentally, is currently in the process of being revised.

Finally, Zambia is well-positioned to lead in this space because of the extensive network of stakeholders which have been engaged. As more and more actors enter the space – and as they bring with them new injections of funds – FbF could quite readily be scaled up. For example, the UN has created an anticipatory finance stream in the Central Emergency Relief Fund, which other actors can help to implement through collaborating with UN agencies.

Underpinning all of these pull factors is the main push factor driving all of the work in this space: the growing intensity and frequency of climate-related risks and hazards. Zambia is no exception to this, and indeed, faces quite a significant threat from growing climate risks: [ND-GAIN](#) ranks the country as 41st most vulnerable globally. As Zambians face extreme temperatures, seasonal and flash flooding, increased droughts and dry spells, and the cascading impacts (increased poverty, food and water insecurity, livelihoods, etc), it is crucial to act with the tools available to mitigate the future impacts of these looming disasters.

FbF offers the opportunity to do this, and more. Institutionalizing anticipatory approaches will bolster institutional capacity for adaptation. It also has the potential to draw on detailed data analysis and impact-based forecasts to target interventions to the most vulnerable. Put simply, stakeholders in-country could seize the moment to scale up investment and action to support FbF. This decision would benefit those most vulnerable to a changing climate, affirm Zambia's commitment to multilateral agreements, and help position Zambia at the vanguard of climate innovation.

Calls to Action

1. Mainstream Anticipatory Action into the Zambian National DRM System.

This recommendation is suggested in the IFRC's [World Disasters Report 2020](#), which calls for anticipatory action to be "anchored in national disaster risk management frameworks and strategies", as well as the Anticipatory Action Task Force's May 2021 Policy Brief, which advocates for anticipatory action to be mainstreamed into national DRM systems to increase sustainability and scalability.

2. Expand predictable, flexible, and localized funding for Anticipatory Action.

As FbF and anticipatory action evolved, it has moved from project-specific pilot funding to structured financing streams, often available internally through dedicated forecast-based funds (i.e. [FbA by the DREF](#) within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement). As anticipatory action scales up, it is becoming increasingly important that funding come from multiple and complementary sources (i.e. government contingency funds, National Disaster Trust Funds), and that the funding be adaptive to local need and evolving context.

3. Support Anticipatory Action for Multiple Hazards.

Covid-19 has affirmed the need for DRM that addresses multiple hazards. This pivot to [multi-hazard risk management within FbF](#) in Zambia can draw from the results of the ZRCS's recent multi-hazard plan.

4. Expand Anticipatory Action Beyond Weather-Related Hazards.

Stakeholders in Zambia are well poised to use the pre-existing foundation in anticipatory action for floods (and soon to include droughts) to explore the potential for application for non-hydrometeorological hazards such as epidemics, displacement and conflict. This is an [emergent field](#), both complex and important, that is sure to grow in years to come.