

# LOCALISED ANTICIPATORY HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO MINIMISE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND REDUCE THE RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY

## THE ISSUE

### FIGHTING AGAINST HUNGER: A HUMANITARIAN LENS



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We need to find new ways to oppose the already visible and growing impact of the changing climate, and contribute to avoiding loss and damage and support those particularly at risk of food insecurity. Yet, current efforts are not sufficient to stop the spiralling of humanitarian needs which are caused by an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and other escalating threats. This growing demand for humanitarian support causes humanitarian funding to be even more over-stretched than it already is ([IFRC 2019](#)).

To overcome this dilemma, humanitarian actors are continuously working on innovative approaches. One concept to combat rising humanitarian needs tries to utilise existing forecasts and early warning systems. Around 20 percent of all hazards can be accurately predicted, yet the use of the critical time between the warning and the occurring disaster remains largely unused ([GFFO 2022](#)). Anticipatory humanitarian action, however, can fill this gap by enabling humanitarian actors to take early action when a disaster is forecasted with a high degree of probability based on scientific data. This makes it possible to save lives and prevent damages.

Anticipatory approaches such as FbA are able to mitigate effects of climate change while preventing human suffering, including reducing food insecurity and preserving human dignity.

“Anticipation should be streamlined in the humanitarian system, accessible to all actors and communities.”



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Anticipatory humanitarian action unites manifold approaches which make use of technical progress made. Current forecasts have been enhanced over the past years now being able to predict extreme weather events more accurately and timely. This newly gained time and information advantage can be used to prepare for and implement lifesaving and damage-controlling measures before the actual occurrence of a disaster. Anticipatory approaches all have in common that action is being taken before the hazard materialises with the goal to prevent the negative impacts of forecasted hazard rather than relieving it in the aftermath. All actions taken under anticipatory humanitarian action are initiated on scientific indicators and risk analysis ([Anticipation Hub 2022](#)).

## FORECAST-BASED ACTION AS ONE WAY TO ACT IN ANTICIPATION OF CRISIS AT WELTHUNGERHILFE

For several years, Welthungerhilfe and its local partners are using the Forecast-based Action (FbA) approach to address drought induced-food insecurity using a long-term localised anticipatory approach even before droughts can unfold their full impact. FbA uses detailed hazard and risk analyses to identify extreme weather events in due time. This enables the people at risk to respond to impending crises through early actions. Based on comprehensive data analyses, Welthungerhilfe works with scientific partners to develop forecasting models that can predict disasters and their effects on the local population. For every disaster scenario, a community-based Early Action Protocol (EAP) is developed, which sets out in detail which trigger leads to which concrete early actions at which specific timeframe. This plan provides information on who does what, when and thus makes it possible to respond quickly to forecasted hazards. At the same time, funding for these actions is pre-agreed and guaranteed by the donor. This ensures rapid and efficient action before an imminent danger turns into a disaster with high losses and damages ([World Risk Report 2022](#)).

## ECONOMIC AND MORALE REASONING FOR ANTICIPATORY HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Using the time between an early warning and the hazard enables us to minimize risks, avoid losses and damages, and allow people to prepare and cope with crises more effectively: it can save lives. Anticipatory humanitarian action also ensures a more efficient and targeted use of limited resources and value for money. Some studies calculate how much every US Dollar spent on anticipatory assistance translates into US Dollars hypothetically needed in reactive humanitarian response to account for potential losses. This of course is a valuable side-effect of anticipatory humanitarian action in the fight against rising humanitarian needs and stretched humanitarian budgets. Welthungerhilfe nevertheless advocates to stress the inherent value of preserving human dignity and prevent human suffering as enough reason to apply the concept of anticipation besides its positive economic effects. Welthungerhilfe believes humanitarian actors are even obliged to act when forecasts predict highly potential hazards and their humanitarian impacts.

The notion of preventing human suffering and preserving human dignity can also be traced through Welthungerhilfe's first activation of the FbA approach. In January 2021, Welthungerhilfe's EAP for drought-induced food insecurity in Ambatondrazaka District in Alaotra-Mangoro in North Madagascar was implemented. The trigger of prospective food insecurity was met and, as a result, the Start Network released pre-positioned funds, provided by the GFFO, to implement early cash distributions. Similar anticipatory interventions were since implemented in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and other countries.

These early actions targeted the most vulnerable people, mainly day laborers, to reduce the risk of food insecurity, prevent negative coping strategies before the peak of the lean season and thus minimised the loss of household assets among drought-affected households. A post-distribution evaluation indicated how people used their cash distributions, showing that more than 85 percent of respondents used some of their money to buy basic food staples. This was confirmed by focus group discussions, in which participants explained that they spent most of their cash on white rice, generally to stock up to survive the coming months of drought. Households also used the money to prepare for the start of the school year (14.2 per cent), for necessities (12.4 per cent), agricultural inputs (8.5 per cent), medicines (6.7 per cent) and agricultural equipment (2.7 per cent). Some beneficiaries (30.9 per cent) spent part of their money on things besides daily household needs. These included house repairs, paying debts and reviving small businesses, like purchasing raw materials. Around 5 percent of respondents saved some of their money to serve as an emergency fund if further problems arose during the lean season. All of these enabled the participating households to effectively prepare and individually minimize the impact the drought had on their livelihood. Overall, the post-distribution monitoring showed that the early cash distributions were effective, that beneficiaries put their cash to its intended uses and this has enabled them to endure the incoming months of drought in a dignified manner ([Welthungerhilfe 2022b](#)).

## LOCALISATION IN ANTICIPATORY ACTION AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Besides obvious benefits for the vulnerable population, another main objective of anticipatory humanitarian action can be the fostering of localisation and locally led humanitarian action. FbA as an approach is designed in a localised manner with buy-in of all stakeholders at all levels. Welthungerhilfe is convinced that this will ensure the sustainability of the approach, increased ownership of stakeholders and communities and identification of the most effective and suitable pre-emptive measures adapted to the context and needs. Developing community-based EAPs bears completely new opportunities for an empowered design of humanitarian action and inclusive, community-led (anticipatory) humanitarian action.

However, there are still high barriers to accessing anticipatory funding for NGOs, especially local NGOs. Therefore, Welthungerhilfe rolled out its so-called EAP Custodian Approach which made anticipatory funding provided by GFFO and pre-positioned by Start Network accessible to in-country Start Network member organisations and their local NGO partners.

Still more accessible funding opportunities for civil society organisations is needed to make this a more commonly applied approach amongst (local) NGOs. EAP Custodian tandems took over the responsibility for EAP development in their allocated region. During the EAP development process, all custodian tandems engaged with actors at all levels: community members, community committees, and local and national governments and agencies. Research and consultations were conducted to select suitable early actions for each region. For example, communities provided their experience on the impacts of past droughts, their anticipated needs and potential risk factors. This was done through a range of participatory methods, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, community visits, consultations and stakeholder workshops. By ensuring a community-based EAP development process with high engagement from locally-rooted civil society organisations, EAPs were specifically adapted to local context and needs, accepted by communities and roles and responsibilities division were agreed to allow for a smooth roll-out and effective and efficient averting of drought impacts ([Welthungerhilfe 2022c](#)).

In short, it can be concluded that anticipatory approaches such as FbA are able to mitigate effects of climate change while preventing human suffering, including reducing food insecurity and preserving human dignity. These approaches become even more effective when being implemented in a localised manner involving stakeholders at all levels including local NGOs and communities. Therefore, Anticipation should be streamlined in the humanitarian system accessible to all actors and communities.

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[Forecast-Based Action: Recognizing disasters early - Welthungerhilfe](#)