



Federal Foreign Office



German
Red
Cross

Bridging science, policy and practice for humanitarian adaptation to climate change

Twice-yearly 'dialogue platforms' under the IFRC's umbrella began in Geneva in July 2015 – part of Germany's Federal Foreign Office action plan on climate being coordinated by the German Red Cross with actors from a range of disciplines.





MORE THAN 50 humanitarians, scientists and Dutch and German officials who gathered at the IFRC Geneva offices in July (*cover photo*) for the first forecast-based financing (FbF) 'dialogue platform' deployed into three working groups to hone the FbF concept and share lessons and expertise.

The German Federal Foreign Office and Red Cross (GRC) are aware that solutions on climate are unlikely to emerge without drawing together the ideas of experts from a range of disciplines. To help operationalize their action plan for humanitarian adaptation to climate change, they will convene a dialogue platform twice a year to create the space to do this.

The action plan centres on FbF pilots by the GRC and National Societies or the World Food Programme (WFP) in Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru and the Philippines. These pilots will disburse humanitarian funding before a potential disaster, rather than afterwards, once a forecast threshold for a hazard like rainfall is crossed.

How can we roll out the shift in humanitarian work?

The platforms' overall goal is to develop a methodology for forecast-based financing as a response to the challenges of a changing climate, together with partner agencies and pilot countries.

Experience from current pilots by the WFP and the Red Cross Red Crescent (National Societies and the Climate Centre) was blended at the Geneva platform in July with scientific expertise to fine-tune the work.

During the two-day session, targets were established for three working groups of stakeholders from various disciplines:

- Working Group I will organize a mechanism for peer review at key points in project implementation.
- Scientists on Working Group II will develop modalities for translating scientific information and forecasts into action, as well as feeding into a special FbF handbook.
- Working Group III includes donors, policy experts and international organizations which will develop common advocacy positions ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016.

Who do we need 'in the room' for FbF?

International organizations taking part in the platforms include the Nansen Initiative, Welthungerhilfe, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the World Bank.

They join scientists from the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (an IFRC science partner), Reading and Oxford universities in the UK, and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, among others.

The dialogue itself consisted of a series of highly interactive sessions, including an educational game that opened the floor to further exchanges on FbF.

The Climate Centre's technical adviser for Mozambique Flavio Monjane said: "It's important to make these initiatives accessible: some of the science is very difficult to translate into practice."



What were the outcomes of the dialogue?

- Prior to the platform, the Bangladesh pilots focused on rainfall forecasts that could trigger humanitarian action. After conversations by practitioners and experts, project implementers have agreed to include forecasts of storm surges as another trigger, responsible for some of the largest cyclone impacts. Implementers anticipate this will enhance the impact of FbF.
- When originally selecting hazards in Peru that would benefit from forecast-based financing, the north-west of the country – vulnerable to extreme rainfall associated with El Niño – was overlooked. But now after talks at the platform involving the Red Cross, scientists, and Peruvian disaster managers, FbF centred on El Niño is expected to be implemented around the end of the year.
- In Mozambique, attention was originally focused on the national meteorological service that forecasts rainfall. But after discussions with hydrologists and risk modellers at the platform, the Mozambique project team decided to engage the National Directorate for Water Affairs to provide specifically *flood-related* information.

- After hearing presentations on pilots for WFP's Food Security Climate Resilience (FoodSECuRE) Facility, participants said they appreciated rapid analysis that might be "good enough" to set forecast thresholds for action. Several FbF pilots are now aiming to have such good-enough thresholds in place by the end of 2015.
- Plenary discussions stressed the need to produce evidence on the impact of these pilots, needed for discussions on scaling up and new funding. As a result, the pilot projects in Peru and Mozambique are fully engaged with risk analysis and mapping by stakeholders.

"I think we all felt the motivational impact of the July session," said Thorsten Klose, Head of the Programme Support and Resilience Unit at the GRC and an expert on risk reduction and adaptation.

"The enthusiasm with which experts and practitioners took up specialist roles reflects huge interest in the FbF concept."

The GRC has said it regards FbF as "setting new standards" in the fight against the humanitarian consequences of climate change; a GRC mini-site¹ and a new IFRC web page will track progress with the FbF pilots.



¹ www.drk.de/weltweit/klimawandel/klimaanpassung-als-humanitaere-aufgabe.html