



ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA 21–23 June 2017

Innovation – Financing, technology, knowledge and action

Germany, United Kingdom, World Food Programme, UNICEF, German Red Cross

Thursday, 22 June, 18:00-19:15h

Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.*

Background and objectives

Germany's Federal Foreign Office (FFO) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) take a leading role in developing innovative mechanisms and tools for a more efficient and effective use of scarce resources in the humanitarian system.

The objective of the side event is to present and discuss innovations within the humanitarian system, especially in the context of early warning early action, food security, risk reduction and humanitarian response. The side event will showcase examples on how humanitarian donors and organizations can support innovations to operationalize the different reform processes of the humanitarian system.

The panel will present a broad range of innovations, technologies and new approaches to humanitarian assistance, highlighting successful solutions already implemented and others on the horizon. These include:

- **Forecast-based-Financing (FbF):** Since 2014 the German FFO is supporting the development of the FbF approach in cooperation with the German Red Cross (GRC) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). The FbF mechanism uses extreme weather forecasts to enable the timely disbursement of funding for preparedness actions before potential disaster happens. FbF enables early actions through an analysis of danger levels and forecast triggers. The Red Cross / Crescent Movement and WFP are piloting this approach in high risk countries, such as Bangladesh and the Philippines with support from Germany's Federal Foreign Office. This is in line with DFID's initiatives in the context of anticipating crises, preparedness and climate risk insurances.
- **Technological innovation to advance cash-based transfers:** Today, WFP distributes e-cards so that the people we serve can buy what they need, when and where they need it, and pay for it as if using a debit card; and Syrian refugees in Jordan can use a scan of their eye as a method of payment. As of May 2017, WFP is deploying cutting-edge blockchain technology to make cash-based transfers faster, cheaper and more secure.

- **Pre-financing humanitarian action in high risk contexts:** Interagency research supported by DFID suggests that every \$1 spent on preparedness in high risk situations saves a median of \$1.50 and an average of \$2.60 toward the next emergency. This suggests we can make humanitarian response more cost effective and efficient if early investments are matched to the risk on the ground. UNICEF is exploring innovative pre-financing mechanisms that provide a win/win solution for donors and beneficiaries, in line with Grand Bargain commitments.
- **Mobile and data innovation:** From digital tools for smallholder farmers to monitoring the impact of programmatic interventions, WFP sees mobile and data innovation as key to achieving its goals. One well known example is WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit which leverages mobile technology to collect food security data from communities in near real-time.

Finally, the panel will look at strategies and approaches to accelerate innovations for the humanitarian system. One example is **WFP's Innovation Accelerator** supported by Germany. The goal of the Innovation Accelerator is to identify and nurture innovative ideas and to turn them into high impact, scalable opportunities. Based in Munich, the WFP Innovation Accelerator has supported over 150 internal and external innovative ideas to accelerate the development of cutting-edge solutions through financial support, access to a network of experts and a global field reach.

Discussion points

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions and discussion points:

- How can innovative financing and risk reduction mechanisms support the creation of an anticipatory humanitarian system?
- How do these innovative humanitarian initiatives translate into concrete risk reduction and preparedness on community level?
- What efforts are needed to mainstream and strengthen emergency preparedness even more prominent into the humanitarian system?
- How does the Innovation Accelerator select innovative ideas and turn them into scalable solutions?
- What are examples of new tools and methods to support effective humanitarian action to address hunger and food insecurity?
- What kind of policy processes need to be influenced to speed up the implementation of humanitarian innovations?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of initiatives like the Innovation Accelerator and Forecast-based-Financing and what needs to be done to mainstream such innovative approaches into the humanitarian system?
- What partnerships are needed to foster innovation within the humanitarian system? How to engage the private sector in such innovations?

Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations

The side event will explore innovations – tools, methods and approaches – for humanitarian assistance ranging from innovative financing for risk reduction and preparedness approaches to the use of cutting edge technologies.

It will inform about innovative initiatives within the humanitarian system to create an anticipatory approach to disasters and crises, by automatic funding of early actions using extreme weather forecasts and new financing mechanisms. Furthermore the side event will showcase how innovative ideas supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator contribute to the improvement of food security programs.

The side event will discuss how innovations are used to reduce risks and vulnerability factors of communities at risk in the context of climate change and to make food security programs more effective, efficient and accountable.

The side event will conclude by highlighting how humanitarian organizations in cooperation with donors and the private sector can accelerate innovations within the humanitarian system to reduce current and future needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system and create an anticipatory humanitarian system.

Format

(Co-)Chair(s):

- Germany
- United Kingdom

Moderator:

- Thorsten Klose-Zuber, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
- Dylan Winder, UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, United Kingdom

Panel composition:

- Mr. Robert Opp, Director of Innovation and Change Management at the UN World Food Programme
- Mr. Manuel Fontaine, Emergency Director, UNICEF (tbc)
- Ms. Alexandra RÜth, Head of Climate Change Task Team, German Red Cross

Background Material

- Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre: <http://www.climatecentre.org/>
- WFP website: <http://www1.wfp.org/>
- WFP innovation Accelerator: <http://innovation.wfp.org/>
- German Red Cross: https://www.drk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/FBF/FbF-An_innovative_approach.pdf

- German Red Cross: https://www.drk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/FBF/FbF-A_policy_overview.pdf
- IFRC Website: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/preparing-for-disaster/risk-reduction/forecast-based-financing/>
- WFP forecast base financing: <http://www.wfp.org/climate-change/initiatives/foodsecure>

Contact

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