

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief
Coordinator, Mark Lowcock remarks at the UN General Assembly Side Event:
Partnering to Address Severe Food Insecurity.**

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As delivered

Question: You have highlighted the importance of pre-arranged financing to make communities more resilient. How does the Famine Action Mechanism feed into these efforts?

We need to build resilience and we need faster development.

We also need to rid the world of the scourge of famine.

When you boil it down There are three things that we need to do, all of which our panelists have touched on.

First, you need good data to tell us when a problem is coming. Graziano [Jos Graziano da Silva, DG of FAO] touched on all the improvements in data. Through the IPC system, the Fewsnet system and lots of the other vehicles that we have. Right now, your teams are out there doing the famine risk assessment in Yemen, which is the next situation we're concerned about.

What we have the opportunity to do with the Famine Action Mechanism is not just to use data on what we can see has already happened, but by partnering with Google and Microsoft we can use the power of the modern techniques that panelists have talked about - predictive data and analytics, to predict on the basis of what we know has happened to crystalize a problem. What we need is a data system that allows us to trigger an automatic response.

The second thing, when we pull the trigger is that you need much faster financing. The basic system we have to finance response at the moment essentially involves watching

the problem develop and people like me picking up the telephone to donors and telling them we have a problem and asking for money and launching appeals and holding conferences. It takes far too long. So, what we need is a pre-agreed, pre-negotiated, pre-arranged system automatically for releasing resources when the problem crystallizes.

Now, happily there are things in the international community's toolkit to enable us to do that. The fund managed by the Secretary-General, the Central Emergency Response Fund, is a pot of money which can be pre-designed and pre-agreed for release based on a forecast of the problem that's about to crystallize. The World Bank toolkits include the deferred draw-down options, the contingency financing arrangement through IDA, and some other things that could be put in place. The fact is now that we could combine out toolkits to enable us to deal with financing problems much faster and better.

The third thing you need is a delivery system. Ideally, we'd all be working behind the governments in the countries in which this problem is happening. As a practical matter, the countries most vulnerable to famine now are the ones where governments on by their own can't deal with the problem. That is where the United Nations family the World Bank Group, and the NGOs and the Red Cross need to collaborate more. And that is the third feature I think that is exciting about FAM - that it is a collective effort and it can build on the things for example the World Bank did last year when gave a grant to ICRC to deal with the famine in Somalia and the things you are doing with Henrietta UNICEF in Yemen on the cash transfers.

The mechanism enables us to join our response much better and the point about the FAM is that it does those three things as part of a single system. So [combining] the data piece base, the automatic release of finance and the delivery system working together are how you get an effective response.

Famines have been part of the whole human history throughout human history. In fact, probably the worse famine the world has ever seen took place during my lifetime. But it's also the case that famine has become much rarer. There have only been only two declared famines during the last 20 years –the Somalia famine in 2011 and the declaration we had to do for South Sudan last year. Most countries are beyond this scourge. The FAM can help us get all countries beyond the scourge.