



CASH-BASED TRANSFERS & ANTICIPATORY ACTION

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# How to supercharge social protection through Anticipatory Action

## An overview of how partners in Fiji did it

In November 2023, just ahead of the cyclone season in the South Pacific, the United Nations and Fijian Government (GoF) launched the [Fiji Anticipatory Action \(AA\) Framework](#). This innovative programme enables the GoF, WFP, and other UN partners to provide vulnerable communities with assistance before a cyclone makes landfall, reducing storm-related impacts while protecting hard-won development gains.

While the framework broadly resembles other global AA initiatives—with people we assist receiving money ahead of a shock based on pre-agreed forecast triggers—it **sets new standards for the integration of AA and social protection**, promoting local ownership of proactive crisis management. In case of a forecasted cyclone, the framework enables WFP to channel anticipatory cash through the government's social protection infrastructure, including registries and payment mechanisms.

April 2024

The system has been built on a game changing, **first-of-its-kind reimbursement scheme developed by WFP and the GoF**: the government uses its own contingency funds to process anticipatory cash transfers to then be reimbursed by WFP. By minimising transfer-related administrative burdens, the reimbursement scheme makes it possible to complete transfers within 24 hours of a trigger, ensuring recipients have the maximum amount of time to get ready for the cyclone.

For countries with similar characteristics, **the Fijian system provides an exciting blueprint for supercharging a government's social protection system to enable the rapid disbursements of anticipatory cash**. To inform countries interested in replicating part or all of this programme, we have put together a full technical case study. This paper provides a summary of the AA design.

## Context

In Fiji, the following contextual factors enabled success of this initiative:

- **Functional early warning systems:** The Fiji Meteorological Service has extensive experience operating early warning systems for monitoring and forecasting storms, which allowed them to lead on the development of agreed triggers for anticipatory action.
- **Government capacity and leadership on disaster management:** The National Disaster Management Act of 1998 provides a comprehensive legal framework for disaster management – emphasising, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- **Well-established social protection systems:** The government of Fiji has implemented social protection programmes with monthly transfers to nearly 10 percent of the population for more than 12 years. More than 90 percent of funds are digitally transferred into recipients' bank accounts.

- **Available funds that can be reallocated swiftly:** The setup of a payment scheme where the government pre-finances the distribution of cash to then be reimbursed by WFP was only possible due to the availability of contingency funds.

## OPERATIONAL DESIGN

As the larger framework developed, WFP worked closely with government and other partners to ensure that anticipatory cash transfers could be sent through the country's existing social protection system. A key challenge was aligning cash transfer protocols with the timelines of the collectively agreed forecast trigger system to ensure that funds reach at-risk communities before a cyclone makes landfall. Working together on a technical solution, **WFP and the Fijian Government designed the anticipatory cash transfers to take place 3 to 5 days prior to the impact of the forecasted cyclone—**aligned with the lead times for the readiness and action triggers respectively. The key programme elements are described in more detail below:

**A. Targeting.** Historically, tropical cyclones in Fiji have hit different locations, so the government and UN partners agreed on a dynamic approach to geographical targeting that aligns with the two-stage trigger system. This means the process of identifying specific districts would only start at the 5-day (120-hour) readiness trigger for a cyclone. This reduces the risk of providing AA to people outside of the area of impact. Household targeting relied on the existing digital social protection beneficiary registry (meaning no registration was required). The final list of the households targeted for AA cash would be pulled from the registry based on likely impacted geographical locations.

**B. Payment mechanisms and transfer value.** Selected people would receive cash through the existing digital payment instruments of the social protection system (bank transfers, mobile money, and the post office)—all of which are capable of processing transfers at short notice. The transfer value was set to align with regular social protection cash transfers and the national

basic needs poverty line—or FJD 200 (US\$88) per household. This was determined through consultations between the Department of Social Protection, WFP, and the Fiji Cash Working Group.

### **C. Funding arrangements and money flow.**

Especially in sudden-onset scenarios (where assistance usually needs to reach at-risk communities within a matter of days), pre-committed finance is required for the successful implementation of anticipatory action. In Fiji, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) pre-committed up to US\$2.4 million for the implementation of the multi-partner AA framework. In case of activation, WFP will receive a pre-agreed share of these funds to be disbursed to the Fijian Government to cover the costs of anticipatory cash transfers through the social protection system.

## **OPERATIONAL READINESS**

With the right enabling environment and design in place, WFP and its GoF counterparts worked to ensure that a potential implementation of anticipatory cash transfers is in line with both parties' legal and operational requirements. This involved putting in place all necessary arrangements to ensure operational readiness for cash transfers. The following preparedness elements were put in place:

### **a. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

developed by WFP, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Finance which provides a legal framework for the reimbursement scheme. It covers the necessary clauses to ensure GoF pre-financing and WFP's reimbursing in compliance with agreed standard operating procedures, corporate, and reconciliation standards.

**b. Detailed internal and external Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** were developed that defined functions and roles before any trigger is reached, between triggers, and after triggers.

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For the Fiji case, the transfers into people's accounts was already deemed to be working well, as evidenced by regular social cash transfers, with cash deposits within 24 hours of transfer instructions.

**c. The Cash Assurance** defined a set of standards and measures in place to guarantee that cash operations are implemented in an effective and accountable manner, minimising risks, and identifying opportunities and areas of improvement. To ensure accountable information management, partners collaborated on conducting data quality checks, agreed on identity management approaches (including ways to identify and remove potentially duplicate records from registries), data protection measures, data security, and informed consent. This exercise requires transparency from both parties, presented an opportunity to understand potential risks, put in place mitigation measures, and identify entry points for systems strengthening for the future.

**d. Cash Delivery Readiness** involved taking actions that ensured that the social protection cash delivery system is adaptable and reliable to deliver cash before the impact of the tropical cyclone. This initiative aimed to familiarise financial service providers (FSPs) with AA concepts and implications, sparking discussions on their preparedness regarding time-sensitivity, and necessary adjustments such as business continuity processes, liquidity management, and approval procedures.

**e. An activation simulation** was planned and designed to test functions from trigger communication, early warning messaging, geographical targeting, household targeting and prioritisation, playlist development, and instructions to the FSPs—with involvement of all relevant stakeholders to validate the functionality of the SOPs and timeliness of the cash transfers.

Building a similar system in your context will depend on the unique factors of your country operation and government partners. This brief overview, coupled with the full Fiji AA Framework Technical Case Study, provide a reference point for interested countries to assess general feasibility. If you think your (partner) government could benefit from developing similar structures, get in contact with us at [wfp.anticipatory.action@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.anticipatory.action@wfp.org) and [global.cbtsupport@wfp.org](mailto:global.cbtsupport@wfp.org).