

UN General Assembly Event Partnering to Address Severe Food Insecurity

Event Name: Partnering to Address Severe Food Insecurity

External Organizer: The World Bank Group

UN Co-Organizer: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Proposed Date: Sunday, September 23, 2018 | 3.00PM EST (90-minute session)

Venue: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 1

Background: The risk of famine continues to threaten millions of people. In 2017, more than 20 million people across North-East Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen faced severe famine or famine-like conditions. The magnitude of need has grown significantly over the last few years, testing the limits of an already overburdened and underfunded international humanitarian system. In 2017, 124 million people across 51 countries faced crisis-levels of acute food insecurity or worse, requiring urgent humanitarian action—an 11% increase compared to 2016. It also is estimated that 155 million children are chronically malnourished with a majority living in fragile and conflict affected states.

During the World Bank’s Spring Meetings in April 2017, co-hosted by World Bank Group President Kim and UNSG Guterres, participants endorsed a ‘zero tolerance’ for famine and urged the Bank and its partners to “do more, and do better” to anticipate and respond to these crises. This commitment is a natural evolution of the World Bank’s twin goals to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity as the poorest are those most at risk of famine. This also contributes to the first two Sustainable Development Goals, i.e. No Poverty and Zero Hunger, as well as to the World Bank’s ongoing efforts to promote preventative and preparedness approaches to address risks before they evolve into crises.

Existing famine early warning systems, financial instruments, and implementation arrangements have evolved organically over many years; however, the links between them remain relatively weak and informal. Early warnings do not reliably translate into the timely release of adequate funding and predictable actions. Despite strong evidence that earlier interventions save lives and are significantly more cost-effective, financing often follows as opposed to precedes crises. Similarly, investments in resilience have been shown to deliver high returns, but such investments often remain under-resourced, especially in areas most at risk of famine.

The World Bank has partnered with key UN agencies, bilaterals, the ICRC, NGOs, academics, humanitarians and private sector partners to address these difficult challenges by developing the Famine Action Mechanism (FAM)—a Global Public Good which seeks to formalize, strengthen and incentivize the links between famine early warnings, finance and implementation arrangements. The FAM focuses on three core areas.

First, it aims to strengthen the evidence base to support decision-making in countries at high risk of severe food insecurity and famine. This includes using advanced analytics to assess in real time the risks of worsening conditions, leveraging the World Bank’s analytics and partnering with FAO, FEWSNET, IPC, the WFP, and global technology firms, among others. FAM is exploring the use of innovative technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to help guide earlier interventions to where they are needed most. FAM also seeks to improve data on financing available for key stakeholders at the country- and global-levels.

Second, the FAM seeks to mobilize existing and additional financing from donors, development partners, philanthropists and the capital markets, among other sources, to support investments in famine prevention

and preparedness, i.e. investments that tackle root causes. Additionally, the FAM, for the first time, will attempt to link famine early warnings with pre-arranged financing to support more consistent early action.

Third, FAM will connect early financing to robust preparedness plans, ensuring that resources are mobilized before a crisis occurs. This work includes identifying and scaling-up effective and well-coordinated interventions such as social protection systems.

Delivering this ambitious agenda requires working in close partnership with a wide range of actors spanning the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and the FAM provides a way for concretizing and sustaining these partnerships moving forward.

Focus / Objective: The FAM is the international community’s collective proposal for delivering on its commitment to promote a ‘zero tolerance’ for famine. This work builds on the extensive experience and current systems in place and has been pursued in close collaboration with key bilateral partners, UN agencies and related organizations such as the UNSG, FAO, ICRC, IFAD, IFPRI, IPC, OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, among others. Private sector engagement also has been central to this work, and partnerships with global technology firms, for instance, are enabling new avenues for tackling these complex crises. This event will provide a forum for showcasing the partnerships and progress made in the last year to develop the FAM at the global- and country-levels.

Participants and Run-of-Show		
The moderator, Zeinab Badawi, will provide a short introduction to the event. Opening remarks then will be provided by SG António Guterres and President Kim, and a short video will follow to highlight visually the key aspects and ambitions of the FAM. A panel comprised of UN Heads of Agencies as well as senior management from global technology firms will then be invited to participate as part of a moderated discussion. Public sector representatives will have an opportunity to reconfirm commitments which are critical to sustaining this work and ensuring its success moving forward. Additionally, private sector representatives will be invited to speak to the role and potential applications of innovative technologies, i.e. artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc., to equip public actors with the most advanced tools for getting ahead of risks before they evolve into crises.		
Time (90 minutes)	Running Order	Participant(s)
2 minutes	Welcome and Introduction	Zeinab Badawi [Moderator], International Broadcaster and Chair, Royal African Society
5 minutes	Remarks	António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations
5 minutes	Remarks	Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank Group
3 minutes	Multimedia	Animated video on the Famine Action Mechanism (FAM)
45 minutes	Moderated Panel Discussion	José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, FAO Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General, OCHA Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF David Beasley, Executive Director, WFP Peter Maurer, President, ICRC Senior Representative (tbc), Amazon Web Services Senior Representative (tbc), Google Senior Representative (tbc), Microsoft
30 minutes	Interventions from Delegates	Bilateral partners, NGOs, etc. attending the event and who are recipients of invitations from the UN and World Bank to speak.