IFRC

Climate Centre

German Red Cross



The Anticipatory Action Manual

A Red Cross Red Crescent Practitioners' Guide

10/2026

CONTENT

MANUAL

Summary	12
Anticipatory humanitarian action in the RCRC movement	12
Why anticipatory action?	12
What is anticipatory action?	12
What are the common characteristics of anticipatory action?	13
When is anticipatory action implemented?	13
Where is anticipatory action implemented?	14
How can anticipatory action be delivered and financed?	14
How this Manual works	15

APPROACHES FOR NATIONAL SOCIETIES TO IMPLEMENT ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Summary	18
Introduction	18
Early Action Protocols	18
Imminent DREF	19
Anticipatory action as part of community-based disaster risk reduction	19
Auxiliary role and support to the government	20
Complementary and evolving pathways	20
Moving from awareness to exploration	21

01. SCOPE POSSIBILITIES FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Summary	23
Step 1: Start exploring anticipatory action	23
Step 2: Identify a focal point for anticipatory action	24
Step 3: Initial discussions on how to integrate anticipatory action in existing plans and mechanisms	24
Step 4: Reflect on suitable anticipatory action approaches in your context	25
Step 5: Understand and define the value of a scoping study for your context	25
Step 6: Define the support that you need for the study	26
Step 7: Design the Study	27
Step 8: Select the person or team to conduct the study	27
Step 9: Conduct desk review	28
Step 10: Collect primary data in-country	29
Step 11: Write report	30
Step 12: Validate results with stakeholders (National Societies and partners)	30
Step 13: Report the results	30
Step 14: Decide the next steps	31
Toolbox	31

02. ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Summary	34
Step 1: Understand why engaging stakeholders is important	34
Step 2: Understand whom to engage in your context	34
Step 3: Build your message(s)	35
Step 4: Engage	38
Step 5: Monitor and track your engagement	41
What can go wrong in stakeholder engagement?	42
Toolbox	43

03. PREPARE YOUR NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Summary	46
Step 1: Double-check ownership at leadership level for anticipatory action	46
Step 2: Develop a plan to prepare your National Society to engage in anticipatory action	46
Step 3: Put together and onboard a team for anticipatory action	47
Step 4: Agree on information management system	48
Step 5: Sensitize other key staff of the National Society, government focal points and other stakeholders involved	49
Step 6: Assess existing capacities, strategies and plans	50
Toolbox	51

04. GET TO KNOW THE EAP CRITERIA AND THE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Summary	54
Step 1: Reach out to IFRC delegation	54
Step 2: Familiarize yourself with s/EAP templates and eligibility criteria	54
Step 3: Submit and validate the s/EAP	56
Step 4: Get IFRC approval and sign legal agreements	57
Step 5: Managing the s/EAP	58
Step 6: Activate the s/EAP	58
Step 7: Monitor, evaluate and learn from the activation	58
Step 8: Revalidate your s/EAP	58
Toolbox	58

05. COLLECT RISK, EARLY ACTION AND IMPACT INFORMATION

Summary	61
Step 1: Understand key terms and related questions	61
Step 2: Understand how you will use the data	62
Step 3: Gather your data	63
Toolbox	68

06. DETERMINE ACTIVATION TRIGGER

Summary	71
Step 1: Select hazard	71
Step 2: Understand what needs to go in a trigger	71
Intervention map: When do you need it?	71
Step 3: Establish coordination mechanism	72
Step 4: Define hazard variables to monitor based on impacts and early actions	73
Step 5: Compile a menu of forecasts	73
Step 6: Set impact threshold	74
Step 7: Link impact and hazard magnitude	76
Step 8: Define and justify trigger threshold and forecast variable	77
Step 9: Define stop mechanism (if applicable)	78
Step 10: Develop a trigger statement	78
Step 11: Develop a mechanism that defines the intervention area	80
Toolbox	82

07. SELECT EARLY ACTIONS

Summary	85
Step 1: Define your team	85
Step 2: Develop a data collection plan to do the following	85
Step 3: Identify impacts	86
Step 4: Prioritize impacts	86
Step 5: Review and scope existing early actions	87
Step 6: Identify and brainstorm potential early actions	87
Step 7: Narrow and prioritize list of early action	88
Step 8: Develop theories of change	95
Step 9: Test or workshop - Theory of change	98
Fatal Assumptions Decision-tree	98
Step 10: Finalize early actions	99
Step 11: Develop an activation plan for selected actions and test it	99
Step 12: Make rationale explicit your anticipatory action plan	99
Final lessons and recommendations	99
Toolbox	100

07.1. LINK EARLY ACTIONS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

Summary	103
What is Social Protection?	103
Why should we link anticipatory action and social protection?	103
Why is it relevant to the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and the humanitarian sector?	104
What does the integration of anticipatory action and social protection look like in practice?	105
Which social protection instruments can be leveraged for anticipatory action?	105
How can National Societies engage in integration of anticipatory action and social protection?	106
What should be kept in mind when integrating anticipatory action and social protection?	109
Toolbox	110

08. DEVELOP ACTIVATION PROCESSES FOR YOUR ANTICIPATORY ACTION PLAN

Summary 113
Step 1: Set-up a forecast monitoring and activation processes 113
Step 2: Develop a communication protocol 117
Step 3: Develop early action implementation process 117
Step 4: Develop process for targeting people at risk 119
Step 5: Review security guidelines 119
Step 6: Document and institutionalize data storage and activation procedures 120
Toolbox 120

09. PREPARE ACTIVATION MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING

Summary 122
Introduction 122
Step 1: Set up your MEAL team 123
Step 2: Understand MEAL requirements in the s/EAP template and assessment criteria 123
Step 3: Plan your PDM & CEA 124
Step 4 (optional): Plan to go beyond the minimum MEAL requirements 125
Step 5.1: Evaluation of the activation process 126
Step 5.2: Outcome & Impact Evaluation 126
Step 5.3: Trigger review 132
Step 6: Setting yourself up for success - lessons from experience 132
Step 7: Incorporate findings 133
Step 8: Share your evidence 133
Toolbox 133

10. DESIGN THE S/EAP BUDGET

Summary 138
Introduction 138
Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the eligible types of activities in an s/EAP 138
Step 2: Download the latest version of the template 139
Step 3: Plan the budget and fill the budget template 139
Step 4: Double-check what goes where 141
Step 5: Double-check that your budget meets all the guidelines 141
Toolbox 142

11. PREPARE FOR ACTIVATION: BUILD CAPACITY AND TEST YOUR PLAN

Summary	144
Step 1: Map capacities, resources and procedures needed for the implementation of the plan	144
Step 2: Review existing assessments on capacities and procedures to identify gaps	144
Step 3: Finalize the organizational structure for the implementation	145
Step 4: Conduct trainings and develop guidance material	146
Step 5: Disseminate the anticipatory action plan	147
Step 6: Test your plan through a simulation	147
Step 6.1: Understand why and when to use a simulation	147
Step 6.2: Decide what kind of simulation you would like to conduct and plan, design and organize the simulation	149
Step 6.3 Conduct the simulation	150
Step 6.4: Evaluate and share lessons learned	150
Step 7: Integrate lessons learned in guidance and trainings	151
Toolbox	151

12. SUBMIT YOUR S/EAP TO IFRC FOR FUNDING

Summary	154
Step 1: Submit your s/EAP	154
Step 2: Wait for feedback	154
Step 3: Respond to and integrate the feedback	155
Step 4: Submit the revised s/EAP	155
Step 5: Sign the project funding agreement	155
Step 6: Access readiness and prepositioning funds	156
Step 7: Annual reporting	156
Toolbox	156

13. ACTIVATE, REVISE, AND RESUBMIT YOUR S/EAP

Summary	159
Step 1: Activate your s/EAP	159
Step 2: Post activation reporting	159
Step 3: Revise and resubmit	160
Toolbox	161

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON THE IMMINENT DREF FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Summary 163
Introduction 163
What is an Imminent DREF and when should you request it? 163
How can you request an imminent DREF and what does it cover? 164
Experience from Jamaica in advance of Hurricane Melissa 165
Toolbox 166

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Summary 168
Introduction 168
Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R) 168
Step 2: Conduct an Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) 169
Step 3: Develop the community resilience plan of action, including AA aspects 170
Step 4.1: Develop a community early warning system (CEWS) action plan 170
Step 4.2: Integrate the CEWS and AA into new or updated Community Contingency Plans 172
Toolbox 174

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NON-WEATHER HAZARDS

Summary 176
Anticipatory action and health 176
Anticipatory action and displacement 179
Other hazards 181
Toolbox 182

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Summary 185
Acting in vain 185
Action lifetime 185
Anticipatory action 185
Cash & voucher assistance 185
Climatology 185
Contingency planning 185
Deterministic weather forecast 185
Dialogue Platform 186

Drill 186
Early Action 186
Early Action Protocol (EAP) 186
Early Warning Early Action 186
Early Warning System 186
Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS) 186
Epidemic 186
Exposure 187
Extended-range Weather Forecasting 187
Extreme Weather Event 187
Impact-based Forecasting 187
Feasibility Study (FS) 187
False Alarm Ratio (FAR) 187
Forecast 187
Forecast-based Financing (FbF) 187
Forecast Skill 187
Hazard 188
Hazard-impact curve 188
Hazard magnitude 188
Historical impact 188
Historical forecast data / hindcasts 188
Inclusion 188
Intervention map 188
Impact Level 188
Implementation Time 188
Lead Time 188
Menu of Forecasts 189
Meteorological Agency 189
National Scale / Flexible Approach 189
Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) 189
Predictive Analytics (in the humanitarian sector) 189
Probabilistic forecast 189
Probability Threshold 189
Readiness 189
Residual Risk 190
Return Period 190
Shelf life 190
Short-range Weather Forecasting 190
Simulation 190
Social Protection 190
Trigger 190
Theory of Change 191
Verification 191

DOWNLOADS

Summary 193
Files by tag 193

Manual

Manual

Summary

This introduction gives you

- A definition of what anticipatory action is
- Some guidance on how this Manual works and who should read it

Please feel free to reach out to us any time for support! You can find our contact details under contact and contribute.

Anticipatory humanitarian action in the RCRC movement

Anticipatory action is increasingly recognized as a key solution to reducing the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events; anticipatory action helps people and organizations such as National Societies to build resilience to future shocks by better understanding risk and transforming this risk information into action before a disaster strikes.

Building on decades of experience in disaster preparedness, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and many National Societies have pioneered the development of anticipatory action approaches since 2014. In 2018, IFRC launched the Anticipatory Pillar of the Disaster Response Emergency Fund, a fund to provide reliable and predictable financing for National Societies to implement anticipatory action.

Even more, anticipatory action within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is now sustainably anchored and committed to: In October 2024, the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted Resolution 5, *Protecting people from the humanitarian impacts of extreme climate and weather events: Working together to strengthen anticipatory action* (34IC/24/R5). Adopted by States party to the Geneva Conventions together with the components of the Movement, this resolution is the central political and normative reference point for anticipatory action today: it sets out an agreed definition, recognizes the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to public authorities, and calls on States to integrate anticipatory action into their domestic disaster risk management, climate, social protection and health frameworks and financing systems.

The resolution directly on earlier commitments within the movement, such as 2022, the Council of delegates resolution with the title *Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward*, adopted in 2022, and the *IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025* that aimed at operationalizing the scale-up ambition of the Council of delegates resolution into strategic priorities, measurable indicators and the means to achieve the targets.

Please find related documents in the toolbox.

Why anticipatory action?

Extreme weather and climate events are becoming more frequent, intense and complex – driven by climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, and compounded by armed conflict, food insecurity, displacement and epidemics. Yet a large share of these crises is foreseeable, and forecasts and early warning systems continue to improve, providing increasingly reliable information about where, when and with what magnitude a hazard will strike.

This combination of rising needs and growing predictability is the core rationale for anticipatory action. Anticipatory action links forecasts and early warning information to concrete actions and financing mechanisms, so that protective measures can be taken before a disaster fully unfolds. While anticipatory action originates from addressing extreme weather events, such as storms, floods or droughts, the approach is increasingly being extended to other contexts: non-weather hazards such as disease outbreaks or locust plagues, the humanitarian impacts of population movement, or wildfires.

A growing body of evidence shows that acting early in this way is more dignified and can be more cost-effective than tradition, reactive humanitarian response alone, and that it can reduce losses and suffering before they occur rather than only alleviating them afterwards. The value of an early warning system, moreover, often depends less on the accuracy of the forecast than on the capacity to act on it – and anticipatory action can help to close that gap.

Importantly, anticipatory action is not a substitute for longer-term investment in risk reduction. It strengthens the capacity to manage risks effectively and helps reduce the residual risk that is not addressed through broader disaster risk reduction and longer-term preparedness efforts.

What is anticipatory action?

Anticipatory action is defined as acting ahead of predicted hazards (both weather and non-weather) to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. Anticipatory action serves as an umbrella for different terms such as Forecast based-Financing, Forecast-based Action or Early Warning Early Action.

Resolution 34IC/24/R5: A formal definition for anticipatory action

Within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and for the States that make up the International Conference, Resolution 34IC/24/R5 provides a formal definition of anticipatory action that serves as an agreed reference point.

The resolution defines anticipatory action as "*actions taken to reduce the humanitarian impacts of a forecast hazard before it occurs or before its most acute impacts are felt; the decision to take action is based on a forecast or collective risk analysis of when, where and how an event will unfold.*"

The resolution further clarifies that anticipatory action can be most effective when triggers, actions, decision-making and funding are pre-agreed in a participatory manner. This definition is also used as a basis throughout this Manual.

A closely aligned definition can also be found in the outcome document of the Grand Bargain Caucus on Scaling Up Anticipatory Action, a time-bound initiative that brought together key humanitarian stakeholders to advance the scale-up of anticipatory action across the wider humanitarian system and that concluded its work in late 2024.

What are the common characteristics of anticipatory action?

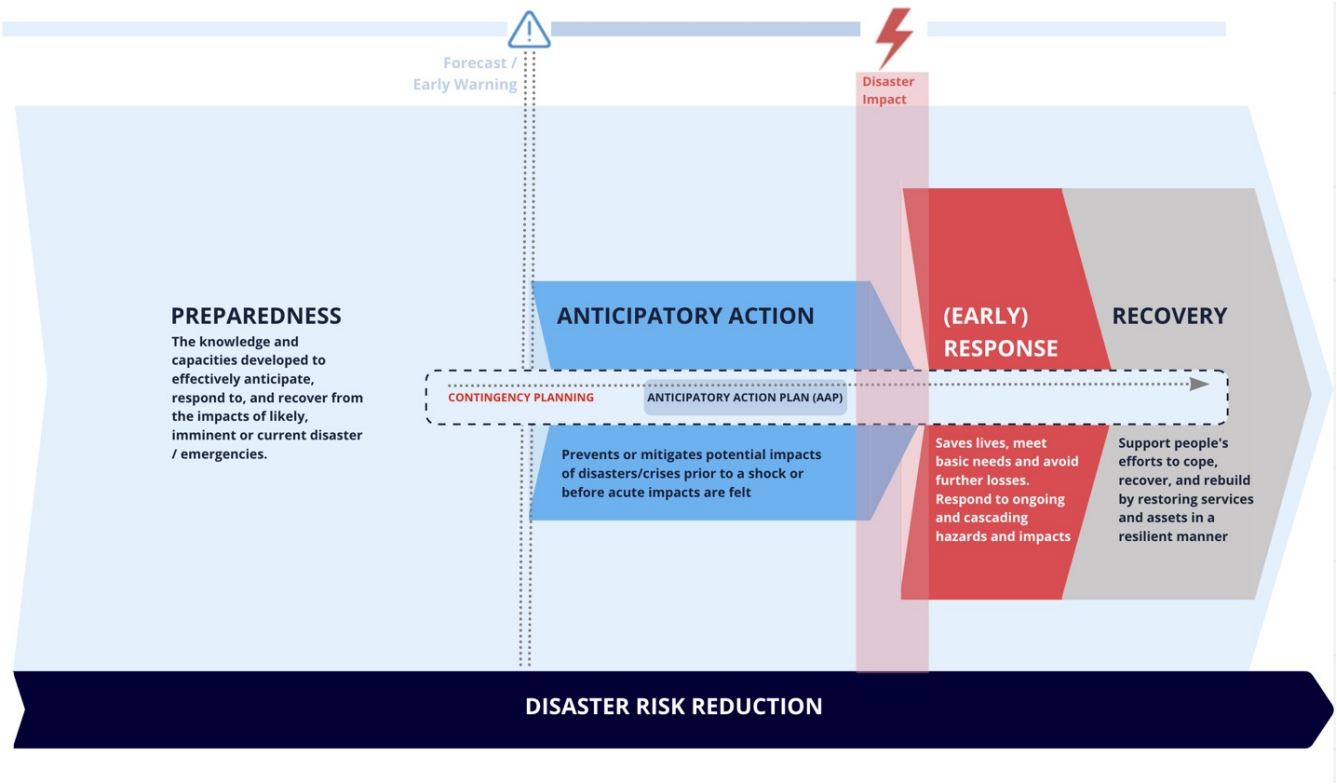
Even though anticipatory action can be implemented differently across organizations and with different approaches, methodologies, and scales, three key parameters are generally agreed upon and reflected in the formal definition:

- **What?** Action is taken to reduce or prevent the impact of a predictable extreme event.
- **When?** Action is taken before the hazard strikes or its impacts fully unfold.
- **How?** The decision to act is based on forecasts or predictive analyses.

See toolbox below for further readings, especially *A short overview of anticipatory action*

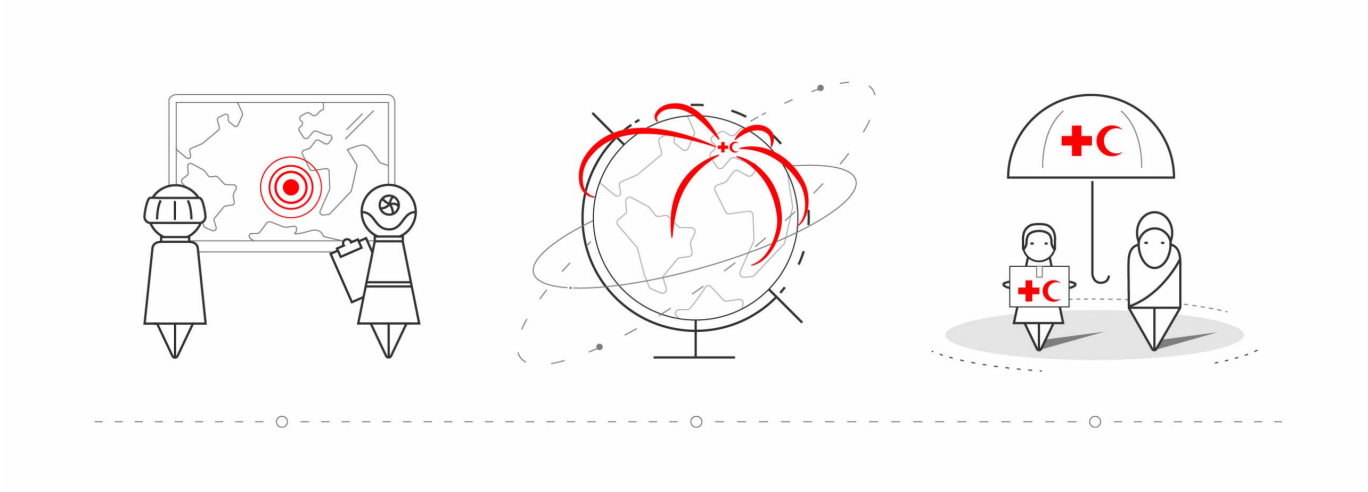
When is anticipatory action implemented?

Anticipatory action is a part of the disaster risk management continuum. It bridges the gap in the disaster risk management cycle between long-term risk reduction on the one hand and humanitarian response and recovery on the other.



Where is anticipatory action implemented?

To get an overview of anticipatory action initiatives around the world, please visit the Anticipation Hub. The Anticipation Hub is a platform to facilitate knowledge exchange, learning, guidance, and advocacy around anticipatory action both virtually and in-person.



How can anticipatory action be delivered and financed?

Anticipatory action can take different forms depending on the institutional and operational context. Within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, four main pathways can be distinguished :

- **Early Action Protocols** are formalized anticipatory action frameworks that define risk analysis, pre-agreed triggers, early actions and financing in advance. Through a full or simplified EAP, National Societies can access pre-arranged funding via the anticipatory pillar of the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund.
- **The Imminent DREF** is a flexible and lower-threshold mechanism that allows National Societies to request a fixed amount of DREF funding based on forecasts or predictions of an imminent hazard, even in the absence of a formalized EAP. This pathway can also serve as an entry point or testing ground for anticipatory action.

- Anticipatory action can be **embedded within community-based disaster risk reduction** processes, building, for example, on enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (eVCA), enabling communities to define and trigger tailored early actions based on local or national warning systems.
- In their auxiliary role, National Societies may **support national or subnational authorities** in mainstreaming the concepts and mechanisms of anticipatory action within existing disaster management systems, for example by developing and implementing anticipatory action frameworks at national or subnational levels.

The next chapter provides a detailed overview of these approaches and helps National Societies reflect on suitable entry points.

How this Manual works

The Anticipatory Action Manual is a step-by-step guide for National Societies and partners to implement anticipatory action. It was developed for National Societies, government authorities who are engaged in disaster risk management, hydro-meteorological agencies, humanitarians, academics and the communities themselves to prepare for enhanced Early Warning Early Action (EWEA).

There are different ways for National Societies to approach anticipatory action. Within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, these include the development of Early Action Protocols, the use of imminent DREFs, embedding anticipatory action within community-based disaster risk reduction, and leveraging the National Society's auxiliary role to support governments at national and local levels.

Currently, the most prominent is the development of full and simplified Early Action Protocols (EAPs) which allow guaranteed access to funds from the Anticipatory Pillar of the DREF. However, as outlined in the next chapter, there are other ways of doing anticipatory action and the aim of this Manual is to guide National Societies and their partners through the process. Please have the following in mind when using this Manual:

- The focus of this Manual is on the development of EAPs. However, many steps are also relevant when you choose another approach to anticipatory action. Hence, the first chapter gives you an overview of the different entry points, the main body of this manual consists of the 13 chapters that guide you step-by-step through the development of an s/EAP while flagging considerations for other approaches. The final chapters contain guidance and considerations for some of these specific approaches as well as reflections on non-weather-related hazards.
- This Manual is not linear. Though it is organized in chapters and steps, activities will run in parallel, and you may need to revisit certain chapters at different points in the process.
- There is no standard on how long each individual step takes. This will depend on the context, the National Society and the partners.
- The Manual addresses you as a reader, but "you" may be a delegate, a project coordinator, a disaster risk management officer or an anticipatory action project team.
- The Manual is based on experience with weather-related hazards (e.g. floods, tropical storms and heatwaves). However, the methodology is also applicable to non-weather-related hazards, such as epidemics and locust plagues as well as the impacts of population movement (see the final chapter).

Toolbox

- Resolution 34IC/24/R5
- Resolution 34IC/24/R5 Background Document
- Council of Delegates Resolution: Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward – Resolution
- Council of Delegates Resolution: Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward – Background document
- Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025 (IFRC, 2022)
- Grand Bargain Caucus on Scaling up Anticipatory Action - Outcome Document
- A short overview of anticipatory action (Anticipation Hub)
- Practical info on FbF and the DREF (IFRC, 2022)

- Anticipatory pillar of the DREF (IFRC)
- World Disaster Report (IFRC, 2020)
- G7 Statement (German Federal Foreign Office, 2022)
- ASEAN Framework (ASEAN, 2022)

Approaches for National Societies to implement anticipatory action

Approaches for National Societies to implement anticipatory action

Summary

This chapter outlines the main approaches through which a National Society can implement anticipatory action and presents four common entry points: the development of a full or simplified Early Action Protocol (s/EAP), the use of a Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation for an imminent event or crisis (also known as an imminent DREF), embedding anticipatory action within community-based disaster risk reduction, and supporting governments at national and local levels in the auxiliary role.

Each approach is described according to core characteristics, such as activation and trigger mechanisms, funding modalities, risk assessment requirements, intervention area, and capacity considerations. While the following chapters focus in detail on the development of a full or simplified Early Action Protocol as the most formalized and comprehensive anticipatory action mechanism within the Movement, the other pathways presented in this chapter may also offer flexible or incremental entry points depending on context. Specific guidance on some of these pathways can also be found at the end of this manual.

Introduction

There are several ways to implement anticipatory action for a National Society which are dependent on the level of planning, access to funding, existing governmental systems for anticipatory action, the scale and level of implementation and the capacity of the National Society.

The following chapter gives an overview of the different approaches that a National Society can use to implement anticipatory action – all with their very good reasons to be used depending on the context.

Each approach will be briefly outlined and described along the same factors, e.g. activation and trigger or funding.

Early Action Protocols

An EAP consists of three main components: trigger, actions and funding mechanism. The EAP delineates roles and responsibilities for quick action when a trigger is reached and constitutes the Red Cross Red Crescent's approach to formalized anticipatory action frameworks. National societies can access IFRC-DREF funds with a

- full EAP
- simplified EAP

Details on the differences between full and simplified EAPs as well as templates and guidance on EAPs can be found inchapter 4 of the Manual's main body.

The focus of this Manual is the development of a full EAP, as it represents the most comprehensive and formalized approach to anticipatory action within the Movement. The simplified EAP is a lighter-touch version of the full EAP and is thus covered inherently.

Activation and trigger	s/EAPs have a pre agreed threshold at which the EAP is activated and actions are implemented. There is no need to go through any additional approval processes for funds to be released once a threshold is met, thereby gaining valuable time to reduce the impact of a disaster.
Funding	Once approved, funding is guaranteed through the Anticipatory Pillar of the DREF.
Selection of actions	Actions are pre-agreed and are in many cases tested before in a simulation and / or an imminent DREF (see below).
Intervention area	Communities are not pre-selected but the hazard forecast in combination with vulnerability information will indicate where anticipatory action is needed most.
Risk assessment	The development of an s/EAP usually allows for a more rigorous analysis of the historical impacts and vulnerability of the population leading to a more targeted and potentially effective intervention.
Capacity	National Societies can access readiness funds through the EAP. However, the development is often (but doesn't have to!) done in a project with a partner.

Imminent DREF

Imminent DREFs are a low-threshold opportunity for National Societies to take proactive action for sudden onset disasters. It can be used in the context where a disaster has not yet unfolded or where impacts have not yet peaked, but where a formal EAP is not in place or, for whatever reason, cannot be activated. National Societies can hence request a DREF for early action and early response based on a forecast or other prediction of an imminent disaster. Imminent DREFs are therefore an excellent opportunity for a National Society to implement anticipatory action without an EAP or to test early actions for an EAP which is not finalized.

Top tip

You can have pre-filled imminent DREF request in the drawer to be used once a trigger is reached.

Activation and trigger	The imminent DREF can be requested at earliest one month before and latest three days before the expected disaster impact, or once a forecast or other prediction is issued, with evidence of a high likelihood of the event materialising. Hence, this limits the time for planning, approval and implementation of the anticipatory actions.
Funding	Funding is disbursed based on technical review on a case by case basis. These requests should be approved or declined within 24 hours. By applying for an imminent DREF, National Societies can access up to 75,000 CHF to implement early actions.
Selection of actions	Actions need to be planned and budgeted for in an Emergency Plan of Action. The National Society should rely on actions which they are already familiar with.
Intervention area	The intervention area is defined through the forecast but has not been preselected.
Risk assessment	No in-depth risk assessment is required or feasible in this short time frame.
Capacity	DREF for imminent event needs to be planned based on the existing capacity and experience of the National Society, due to the limited timeline.

Guidance and specific considerations on the use of the imminent DREF for anticipatory action can be found in the later chapters of this Manual.

Anticipatory action as part of community-based disaster risk reduction

Community work is at the core of all National Societies as volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent are deeply embedded in their respective community structures. One central guiding framework of the RCRC Movement in CBDRR is the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2CR) via the enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA). It is a participatory community risk assessment process which enables communities, with the support of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies when needed, to assess and analyse the risks they face, explore where these risks come from, which members of the community are most exposed, what coping capacities are available, and what initiatives can be undertaken to strengthen coping capacities and reduce the risks. As part of the R2CR via EVCA process, a Plan of Action is developed which elaborates risk reduction measures. This comprehensive community plan could contain the development of an anticipatory action plan, bridging longer-term mitigation and preparedness measures to immediate early actions for prioritized risks

As you can see in the table below, embedding anticipatory action in community-based disaster risk reduction can take many different forms. Which pathway is feasible and most effective varies highly, depending on factors like local context, needs, institutional setup or available resources.

Activation and trigger	The National Society and the community can implement anticipatory action in a pre-defined or non-defined manner. To trigger anticipatory action, community-based early warning systems or national warnings can be used, either defined in an anticipatory action plan, as part of a more vast contingency plan or needs-based, only when a forecast indicates an imminent disaster.
Funding	There is no global funding mechanism for anticipatory action at the community level. However, low cost or no cost actions could be explored or other local funds could be obtained, e.g. through a written anticipatory action plan with a budget and making the case for anticipatory action.
Selection of actions	Actions could be planned prior to the hazard in an anticipatory action plan for the community. Ideally, these actions are really tailored to the community and build on the EVCA, where available.
Intervention area	As the focus is on a particular community the intervention will take place in that specific community once a forecast indicates an imminent disaster.
Risk assessment	The EVCA is an in-depth risk assessment which allows a thorough impact analysis which could serve as a basis for the selection of anticipatory actions.
Capacity	The implementation of actions is dependent on the community, ideally incorporated in the key roles and responsibilities of the Community Resilience Committees, and their resources to invest in the community action plan and the anticipatory action plan accordingly, if applicable.



Guidance and specific considerations on the use of the community based approaches for anticipatory action can be found in the latter chapters of this Manual.

Auxiliary role and support to the government

The auxiliary role of a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society is a unique, legally recognized partnership where the National Society supports public authorities in the humanitarian field – covering health, disaster, and social welfare – while remaining independent. As outlined above, National Societies can implement anticipatory action in different ways, yet in order to reach scale and sustainability government ownership of anticipatory action is essential. National Societies can support their government in making the shift to more pro-active and risk informed disaster management, in embedding anticipatory action into existing structures for disaster risk management, and also in the implementation of anticipatory action. This support can happen on national level or also on subnational and municipal levels.

Activation and trigger	If a national or local government anticipatory action framework is available, triggers could be pre agreed in that plan or the government calls for anticipatory action after an early warning has been issued.
Funding	Funding could be made accessible through the government.
Selection of actions	Actions could be outlined in the government framework or planned only when the disaster is imminent.
Intervention area	The anticipatory action would take place in the area forecasted to be affected. In addition, coordination mechanisms might exist that ensure implementing partners complement each other geographically within the affected areas.
Risk assessment	Depending on the availability of the government anticipatory action framework, thorough risk assessments might exists. Governments might also be able to draw on more extensive data from social protection registries or other government-owned sources that might substantiate or complement ongoing risk assessment efforts.
Capacity	The development and implementation of actions is dependent on the existing staff of the National Society and capacities made available by the government. Often, the valuable experiences National Societies bring in (proactive) disaster risk management, can help reinforce capacities in a targeted way, where needed.

Complementary and evolving pathways

The approaches outlined above represent the most common entry points for National Societies to engage in anticipatory action. However, in practice, these approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor rigidly distinct.

For many contexts, elements from different approaches overlap or reinforce each other. For example, a government-owned anticipatory action framework with nationally defined triggers may be closely linked to a formalized EAP developed by the National Society, allowing for coordinated activation and complementary activation. Similarly, a municipal anticipatory action plan developed with the support of a National Society may build directly on years of community-based disaster risk reduction work, including EVCA processes and volunteer networks. An imminent DREF may also serve as a stepping stone toward the development of an EAP, or as a testing ground for early actions later formalized in a more structured framework. National Societies are therefore encouraged to view these approaches not as isolated models, but as entry points and adaptable components within broader anticipatory action ecosystems.

Importantly, the approaches presented in this chapter are not exhaustive and additional pathways may exist depending on the operational, institutional and donor landscape. For instance, anticipatory elements can be integrated into longer-term programmes through crisis modifiers: A crisis modifier refers to an agreed adjustment to a pre-existing project or intervention that allows funds to be (re-)allocated or activities to be adapted in anticipation of an imminent shock. The feasibility and design of crisis modifiers, however, depend heavily on donor agreements, project configurations and flexibility, and therefore vary significantly across contexts. Beyond crisis modifiers, some National Societies have also established own pooled or contingency funds to finance anticipatory action independently or in advance of international support.

Moving from awareness to exploration

This chapter introduced the main approaches through which National Societies can engage in anticipatory action. As outlined, these pathways differ in terms of formality, funding mechanisms, scale, and institutional integration. They are not mutually exclusive and may evolve or be combined over time as capacities, partnerships and opportunities develop. Hence, at this stage, the aim is not yet to decide on a specific pathway, but to become familiar with the range of possible entry points and understand how anticipatory action can be embedded in different operational and institutional contexts.

Building on this overview, the next chapter moves from orientation to exploration: It guides National Societies through the process of assessing whether and how anticipatory action could be feasible and valuable in their specific contexts. This includes scoping opportunities and capacities, identifying potential hazards and partners, and determining whether to pursue a more formalized anticipatory action system such as an Early Action Protocol.

In general, the following chapters focus in detail on the development of a full or simplified Early Action Protocol (s/EAP). As the most comprehensive, institutionalized and formalized approach to anticipatory action within the Movement, an s/EAP provides access to pre-agreed funding for a defined multi-year period and establishes clear and predefined triggers and actions. However, as outlined above, it represents only one pathway among several, and may be pursued progressively as capacities and institutional readiness evolve. Specific guidance on other pathways can be found at the end of this manual.

01. Scope possibilities for anticipatory action

01. Scope possibilities for anticipatory action

Summary

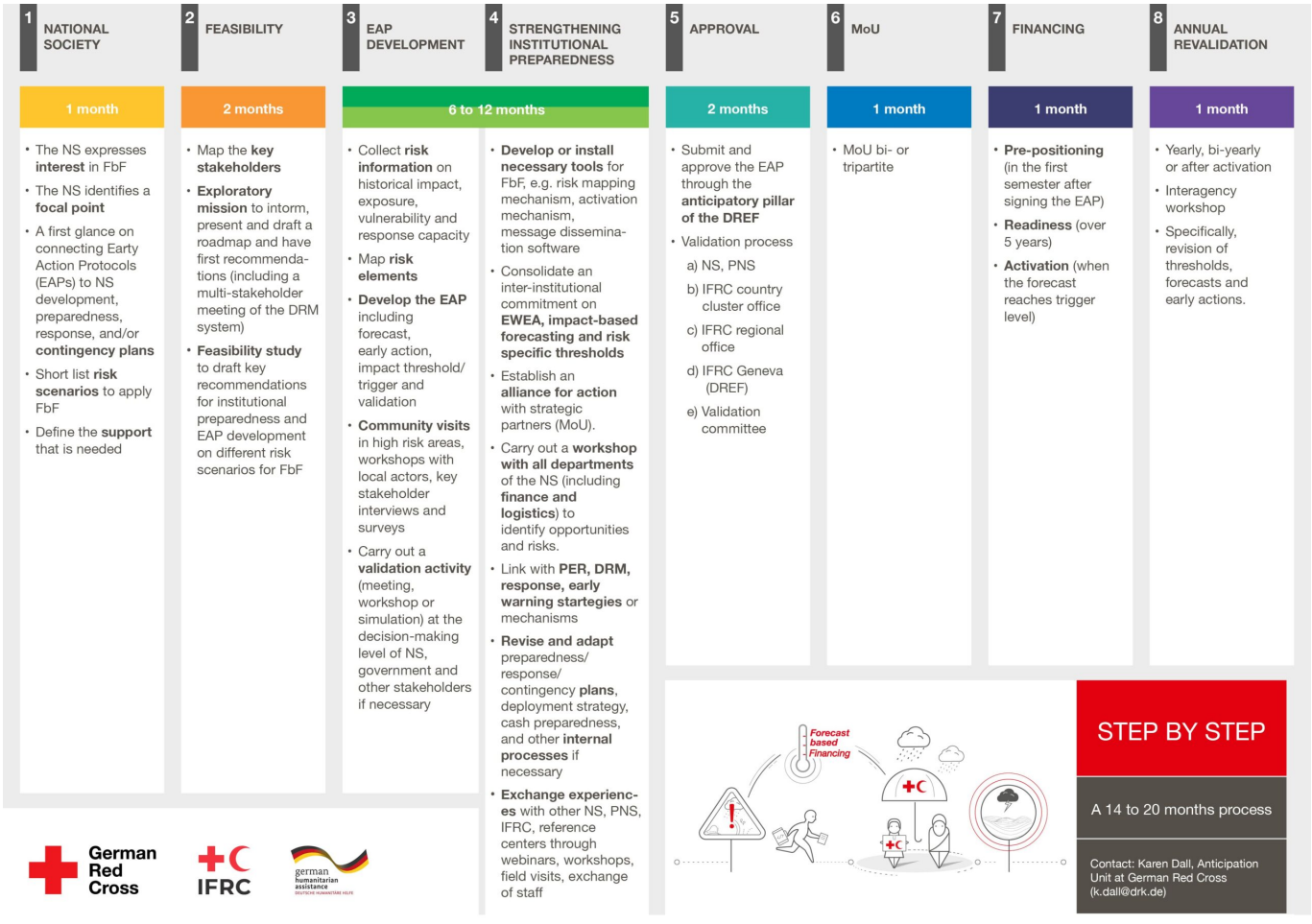
This chapter outlines the initial phase of scoping possibilities for anticipatory action which includes introductions to anticipatory action and a potential scoping study. It supports National Societies in moving from awareness of anticipatory action to exploring whether and how it could be implemented in their specific context. To this end, it introduces an initial scoping process that helps clarify not only whether anticipatory action is feasible, but also which form it could take and how it may best align with institutional priorities, capacities and partnerships.

To initiate anticipatory action, a National Society is advised to thoroughly understand anticipatory action first before committing to it, especially when developing EAPs as the setup period typically takes between 14 and 20 months for the first (full) Early Action Protocol (EAP). Ways to gain an introduction to anticipatory action include reaching out to various organizations such as the Anticipation Hub, IFRC, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, German Red Cross, or other Partner National Societies for virtual introduction sessions, attending regional or global dialogue platforms, participating in regional trainings facilitated by IFRC, or joining e-learning courses. Initial discussions should focus on integrating Anticipatory action into existing plans and mechanisms, fostering ownership at various levels, and assessing readiness.

Building on this introductory engagement and, where appropriate, a scoping study, National Societies can identify suitable hazards, partners, funding opportunities and operational pathways, including whether to pursue a formalized system such as an Early Action Protocol or begin through other entry points such as an imminent DREF or community-based approaches.

Step 1: Start exploring anticipatory action

Before you start with anticipatory action or a scoping study make sure that you understand anticipatory action well enough to determine whether it is something your National Society wants to commit to and invest in. For example, the development of a full EAP can take between 14 and 20 months (see figure below).



Content and design after Mathieu Destrooper, FbF Coodrinator in LAC (GRC) and Juan Bazo, Climate Science Advisor (RCCC)

There are several ways to inform yourself and your National Society about Anticipatory action basics and to better understand the approach.

- Reach out to the Anticipation Hub, the IFRC , the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre , German Red Cross, or any other

Partner National Society and request a virtual introduction session for your National Society and/or senior management staff.
- Attend a national, regional or a global dialogue platform. These platforms usually include an introductory session.
- Participate in a regional training. For example, IFRC facilitates introductory trainings on anticipatory action. For more information, please reach out to your colleagues at the IFRC country or regional office.
- Join an e-learning course. The IFRC developed a course "Anticipatory Action: A Proactive Approach to Disaster Risk Management" and partners like FAO, WFP and START Network also have great introductions to anticipatory action. toolbox below.
- Various introductory materials are linked in the toolbox below and in the library (e.g., brochures and presentations on FbF).
- To get an impression of the basic concepts and mechanisms as well as operational entry points to anticipatory action, make sure you have also read the introduction and first chapter of this Manual.

Step 2: Identify a focal point for anticipatory action

For all the following steps, it is crucial to appoint a focal point within the National Society. Ideally, this person is close to the decision-making level and is involved in disaster risk management within the National Society. Initial tasks for the focal point can include:

- leading discussions on what approach to take with regards to anticipatory action
- leading initial discussions on how to integrate anticipatory action into existing plans and mechanisms
- supporting the scoping study, if applicable (e.g., supporting data collection, arranging meetings, providing documents)
- advocating for anticipatory action and onboarding the National Society's leadership

Step 3: Initial discussions on how to integrate anticipatory action in existing plans and mechanisms

The focal point should arrange meetings, workshops, or discussions on what approach to take with anticipatory action. It is important to foster ownership of the anticipatory action approach at the political and strategic level, starting with the National Society president and secretary general and board members. The leadership should support the vision of integrating anticipatory action into the National Society's disaster risk management strategies, as the National Society will be more successful in advocating for anticipatory action with the government if it is institutionalized within its own strategies and plans. In the toolbox below and the library you will find induction material. You can also revisit the guidance on how to build messages in chapter 2 of the manual.

How to understand whether anticipatory action is a good fit at this point in time

The list below provides some questions that can be discussed internally before you start working on anticipatory action or a scoping study process. The engagement in anticipatory action, such as developing a full or simplified EAP (sEAP), can shape strategies, build capacities and create buy-in across the organization. However, these questions help clarify whether anticipatory action is relevant, realistic, and provides added value in your specific question. You don't need to answer all the questions with *"yes"* in order to move forward. Rather, these reflections support a strategic discussion on whether to pursue anticipatory action at this stage.

Questions to help you decide whether to start working on anticipatory action

- Commitment and motivation
  - Is your National Society's senior management motivated and willing to commit to anticipatory action? Are they willing to commit 1.5 years to development and to subsequent maintenance of the system?
  - EAP development is based on research and scientific analysis. Is your National Society open to exploring this data driven approach to program design?
- Partnerships and resources
  - Are there other organizations working on anticipatory action in your country?
  - Is there an ongoing anticipatory action regional programme your National Society could join?
  - Is a Partner National Society interested and available to support you in this process?
  - Are there countries within your region who have submitted s/EAPs, or have already begun setting up anticipatory action systems, that experience similar hazards?
  - Do communities see the value of acting in the window between a hazard forecast and impact?
- Strategies and mechanisms
  - How could anticipatory action add value to your National Society's existing strategies and programmes?
  - What are potential institutional barriers to anticipatory action? How would you overcome them?
- Existing capacities within the National Society (Note: These are not a prerequisite as these could be worked on in the scope of the anticipatory action process)
  - Does your National Society have the capacity to dedicate at least one member of staff to manage anticipatory action efforts?
  - Does your National Society have experience in developing contingency and emergency response plans? Are these plans tested?
  - Does your National Society have a solid volunteer base that can be mobilized within a short time (e.g. 24 to 48 hours for

fast-onset hazards)?
    - Do you have a (good) relationship with the government, hydro-meteorological services and other stakeholders that could support in accessing country-level risk data (e.g., historical disaster data, vulnerability, exposure, and data related to conflict, violence, inequality, etc. as relevant)?

If you are considering the implementation of anticipatory action focused on an area that is experiencing conflict or other types of fragility, there can be additional concerns regarding institutional capacity and operational feasibility. Refer to the "Anticipatory action in fragile, conflict-affected and violent settings" toolkit's Module 1 on feasibility studies, included in the toolbox below, for additional guiding questions in such settings.

Step 4: Reflect on suitable anticipatory action approaches in your context

If after your discussions you decide to start working on anticipatory action, it is recommended to revisit chapter 1 and broadly explore how anticipatory action could be operationalized. Keep in mind though that, as explained in chapter 1, the different approaches to anticipatory action are not rigidly distinct but complement and build on each other: Using an imminent DREF, for example, may serve as a stepping stone toward s/EAP development or as a testing ground for early actions that would later be formalized in a more structured framework.

The definitive decision on which approach to take does not have to be taken at this stage and can be informed by the outcome of a potential scoping study (see next step). However, reflecting on suitable and realistic entry points might already provide a valuable orientation for a National Society in which direction to move.

Questions to help you reflect which entry points to anticipatory action would be suitable in your context

Existing practice and experience:

- In which areas does the National Society in general have extensive operational experience with relevant programming and related capacities?
- Do you have experience with an imminent DREF as a response DREF? Would it be possible to implement early actions instead? What experience does the National Society have with community-based disaster risk management, community early warning systems, and community action planning through EVCA?
- Would you have the capacity to implement anticipatory action in an area that has not been preselected as needed for, e.g. EAPs and imminent DREF?

Institutional and governmental environment:

- Is there a national or subnational anticipatory action framework in place that could be built upon, e.g. by the government or other humanitarian actors?
- Does the government express interest in risk-informed or forecast-based action?
- Does the National Society have established partnerships with other National Societies or other partners that have experience with anticipatory action?

Funding landscape:

- Are there any institutionalized funding mechanisms for anticipatory action at the national or subnational level?
- Are crisis modifiers or contingency funds already embedded in ongoing programmes?
- Do you have experience with an imminent DREF or a response DREF?

Scale and ambition:

- Is the objective to test anticipatory action in a limited geographic area or to establish a formalized, multi-year framework?
- Does the National Society aim to strengthen community-level resilience, national systems, or both?

Once you have a general commitment to work on anticipatory action and a rough orientation on potential entry points, the next steps of this Manual will help you decide whether you want to do a scoping study or not. If you have funding for a study now (or other reasons why a study now would be good) but the timing is not ideal for the National Society, you can carry out the scoping study and then start your anticipatory action programme at a more suitable time; however, be aware that some of the analysis in the scoping study might change over time (e.g. available data, forecasts or staff capacity).

Step 5: Understand and define the value of a scoping study for your context

Now that your National Society has decided to start an Anticipatory action program, you should decide whether you will first

conduct a scoping study. A study can be a good starting point for building an Anticipatory action system, but it also requires significant investment of time and resources. If you decide not to do a scoping study, you can proceed with chapter 2 Engage your stakeholders and 3 Set up an anticipatory action programme.

What is the value of a scoping study?

A scoping study should provide your National Society a roadmap for anticipatory action. It entails the collection and analysis of information upon which recommendations for the set-up of a anticipatory action system in general and (simplified) EAPs in particular can be made. The roadmap and recommendations should include the following aspects:

- **Priority hazards**

Based on an analysis of community priorities, past impacts, available forecasts, the National Society's operational capacity, mandate and priorities, the scoping study should rank potential hazards, outlining why some hazards are preferred over others.

- **Data availability and gaps**

The study should give a broad overview of available risk data (e.g. past impact, vulnerability, capacity and exposure data) for the country and recommend which data gaps to fill or where to look for further data.

- **Funding mechanism**

The study should recommend whether to start with a simplified or a full EAP or, if this emerged from the initial reflections, a different pathway might even be the most suitable option in that context (see chapter 2). In some cases, it might already be clear that skill analyses (assessments of the quality of forecasts) are not available for the full EAP. Hence, for the priority hazards, recommendations regarding the s/EAP should be included.

- **Operational and institutional capacity building needs**

This section should pinpoint challenges with regards to operational and institutional capacity and outline plans to build those capacities. For example, would current logistics and finance systems allow implementation of early actions to be adopted in the lead time of the selected hazard? How experienced is the National Society in data collection, protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), community engagement and accountability (CEA), MEAL processes or managing funds from the DREF? This analysis could be based on assessments such as the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER; please find documentation of linkages between PER and anticipatory action below in the toolbox). Moreover, recommendations should be made on how to institutionalize anticipatory action within strategies and plans of the National Society to ensure sustainability.

- **Strategic collaborations with stakeholders**

This section should include a stakeholder analysis and recommend stakeholders to be strategically engaged in the anticipatory action process. Be sure to consider stakeholders with subject matter expertise, such as agriculture, social protection, education, migration, health and many others. The analysis should include a small policy environment analysis and point out mandates, existing MoUs and partnerships, and potential interests in collaboration.

- **Potential early actions**

Depending on the depth of the analysis, the scoping study can brainstorm potential early actions based on the analysis of National Society experiences or conversations with communities and other stakeholders. Showcasing potential early actions and how these could reduce hazard impacts helps to make the case for anticipatory action when sharing the results of the study.

A scoping study is not a prerequisite for starting an anticipatory action process. If you see little added value in collecting the information outlined above (e.g. because you have a good overview over those aspects already), you can skip conducting a scoping study. However, aside from the data provided by such an assessment, there are co-benefits of conducting a study:

- Establishing contact with stakeholders/relationship building: A scoping study offers the possibility to begin engaging with other stakeholders on the topic of anticipatory action especially when the focal point is present in all the interviews.
- Capacity building: The focal point and other staff of the National Society can use the study as a learning opportunity by technically and logistically supporting the data collection, reviewing report drafts.
- Reference document: The study can serve as a reference document, e.g. needs assessment, to design a project proposal or to generate buy-in within the National Society or other stakeholders. To ensure this, it is crucial that the study is validated and endorsed by the leadership and other stakeholders like government agencies.

Step 6: Define the support that you need for the study

Before starting the study, consider what type of support you need for the scoping study:

- Who could support your study, e.g. financially or technically?
- Are there partners, e.g. UN or NGOs who would be interested in a joint study? If possible, organize a meeting in an existing forum to scout these options.
- Who needs to be involved from the National Society and perhaps other movement partners? In some countries, it proved successful to establish steering committees for the study that consist of staff of the host National Society, a Partner National Society and the IFRC at national level.
- If there is a possibility that you will be working in a conflict setting, be sure to involve the ICRC delegation in your country in the planning from the beginning.

Step 7: Design the Study

The first step of any study is to make a plan for data collection and analysis. As your budget will be a major determinant of how much you can do, begin by establishing how much you are able to spend. Within that budget, prioritize your objectives, and set the scope and timeline. It is also important to think about which partners should be involved, and what their role should be. For example, if there are other organizations considering or already working on anticipatory action, it may make sense to build upon their knowledge or conduct joint studies. If anticipatory action is new in your country, the scoping study can be an excellent opportunity to start sharing knowledge with stakeholders and holding informed discussions on the concept. Each of these components – budget, objectives, scope, timing, and partner involvement – will be documented in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the study. You find different sample ToR in the toolbox below with a focus on EAP development.

The study usually consists of three phases which should be broadly outlined in the ToR:

- A desk review phase to review existing data and reports that gathers secondary data and informs the in-situ data collection
- A primary data collection phase in which data is collected through stakeholder interviews such as government actors or NGOs (including community-based organizations), through visits to high-risk communities or through interviews and discussions with the National Society (especially senior management and disaster management department) and other Red Cross Red Crescent movement partners. In many cases, the primary data collection phase also includes a workshop to present initial finding and brainstorm design ideas.
- A report writing and validation phase, in which the information is consolidated in a report with design recommendations. This phase usually includes some rounds of feedback loops of which one can be a presentation of the final results to the National Society and potentially external stakeholders that were involved in the study.

Step 8: Select the person or team to conduct the study

There are different options for selecting someone to conduct the study. Please find some considerations below:

- Experience has shown there are many benefits to selecting someone with knowledge of anticipatory action, the stakeholder landscape and forecasting science.
- Selecting someone from within your National Society, a partner agency – such as the hydrometeorological service – or even a local university has the added benefit of building knowledge, capacity and connections within the country (see Lebanon below).
- If no one with the above profiles is available, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre has significant experience in conducting anticipatory action scoping studies and providing technical support to independent consultants.



The Lebanon scoping study, conducted in early 2022, pioneered a novel approach by integrating expertise and collaboration effectively. Key entities involved were the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), the National Council for Scientific Research Lebanon (CNRS), and the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRMU) under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, forming a cooperative triangle.

Responsibilities were strategically divided, with an independent Disaster Risk Management (DRM) consultant overseeing the study and CNRS experts handling technical aspects. This division enabled thorough technical analysis and comprehensive examination of data and structures at both national and local levels.

Local experts spearheaded both the study and its implementation, ensuring sustainable knowledge retention within the country. A working group comprising LRC, CNRS, and anticipatory action experts from German Red Cross collaborated on hazard prioritization and action plan development.

Key outcomes:

- Clear roadmap and action plan: The study provided a clear Anticipatory action implementation roadmap, aligning objectives with national and National Society strategies.
- Stakeholder engagement: Inclusive engagement garnered critical insights and promoted collaboration among stakeholders.
- Holistic analysis: The study delved into diverse disaster management aspects, with the aim of enhancing overall resilience and not only Anticipatory action.
- Community buy-In: Field visits secured community support, aligning anticipatory action with local needs.
- Identification of gaps: Identified gaps paved the way for future investigations and data collection.

The study's inclusive approach fostered capacity building and teamwork, resulting in tangible benefits for the LRC and its partners. It underscores the significance of expertise, collaboration, and tailored approaches in achieving impactful results.



FbF Kick-off workshop after the scoping study (Source: Lebanese Red Cross)

Step 9: Conduct desk review

Note: Below steps provide guidance on how to do the study, what information to collect and what questions to ask. This can be helpful in designing the ToR. The person conducting the study may also want to consult steps 8 to 12 more in-depth.

Looking back at the added value and co-benefits of a scoping study, in step 4, as well as the ToR for the study, you can start with the desk review. This desk review provides the foundation for the in-country data collection by reviewing existing information related to anticipatory action. Ideally, the FbF focal point should support whoever is conducting the study in accessing relevant reports and assessments. Below you find suggestion regarding what to look for in the review phase:

as well as the ToR for the study, you can start with the desk review. This desk review provides the foundation for the in-situ data collection by reviewing existing information related to anticipatory action. Ideally, the anticipatory action focal point should support whoever is conducting the study in accessing relevant reports and assessments. Below you find suggestion regarding what to look for in the review phase:

1. **Priority hazards**
    - Secondary data and reports on extreme events for all hazard types (both weather as non-weather related hazards), including information on the magnitude of past events, their impacts, whether the events were forecasted, and previous humanitarian responses. Be open to various hazards and do not overlook *"hidden"* ones such as heatwaves. You can narrow down the list after the desk review.
    - Available risk data on exposure and vulnerability for different hazards. National agencies may have data at high spatial resolution. If not, global databases such as Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) , EM-DAT or Desinventar may have relevant data. See toolbox for more info.
    - Information on expected trends as a result of climate change, land-use change, conflict, major infrastructural developments.
    - Review of the skill (the accuracy of the forecast) of global forecasting products for the hazards of interest in the country, and any documentation of the skill of forecasts produced nationally or locally (if available).
2. **Operational and institutional capacity building needs**
    - Existing reports (e.g. PER, OCAC) on the institutional capacities of the National Society to better understand the National Society's strengths and needs. The IFRC GO Platform also documents operational learning that might be of interest.
    - The National Society's strategic documents such as policies, strategic plans and contingency plans.
3. **Strategic collaborations with stakeholders**

- Reports or documents on other anticipatory action initiatives begun or established in the country, who they involve, and what they entail.
- Online search and guidance from National Society regarding institutions (e.g. government or UN agencies, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partner NGOs, technical working groups) working in the anticipatory action, early warning/hazard forecasting, DRR, preparedness, risk assessment, climate adaptation or early action space within the country, including academic research programs.

4. **Potential early actions**
   - Existing reports on IFRC-DREF responses to understand strengths and experiences of the National Society.
   - Reports on early actions from stakeholders in-country that show evidence of their effectiveness.
5. **Data availability and gaps**
   - Initial identification of existing information management platforms (these are increasingly becoming open source and accessible online in recent years).

While you are collecting the different information, please have the**following recommended steps** in mind. These steps should be accomplished before the primary data collection starts.

- Based on your stakeholder mapping, prepare a**draft list of interviewees**. Together with the anticipatory action focal point you can start making appointments. Note that this should be a "living" list to which additional contacts can be added to throughout the data collection. In the toolbox, you find a template for the interview list and guidance on how to select those.
- Together with the anticipatory action focal point, ensure that you**plan interviews** with different departments in the National Society. Please also look at the guidance in the toolbox.
- Be prepared that you will need to **present anticipatory action to stakeholders** in country. Often not all staff of the National Society, government technical services (e.g. hydrological and meteorological), and other institutions that may be involved in the set-up of the anticipatory action system know what anticipatory action is. Make sure that you bring a presentation that explains the concept and the context of the study as well as brochures and other explanatory material. A more thorough understanding of anticipatory action will help stakeholders to better answer scoping questions so the consultant can determine what is feasible.
- If of interest to the National Society or the steering group, a**remote presentation of desk-review results** could be organized with the National Society to outline the following:
  - Suggest which hazards to prioritize in the in-country phase. For example, you can narrow down the hazards to only three, based on your initial assessments. Please have a look at the suggested decision matrix in the toolbox.
  - Outline the methodology to be used for the in-country data collection.
  - Present and discuss list of stakeholders and community visit.
  - Discuss any open organizational or content-related matters that need to be addressed before the primary data collection work starts.

Step 10: Collect primary data in-country

The in-situ phase serves to fill information gaps and to answer questions remaining after the desk review. To encourage buy-in from the National Society's senior management, make sure they are informed about the activities and that the anticipatory action focal point accompanies the data collection.

Methodology

The following phases and methodologies represent the minimum steps toward primary data collection. You may also collect complementary data through surveys or other tools as time and resources permit.

Key informant interviews (KII)

Before meeting stakeholders, make sure that you introduce yourself and the study. You can also ask interviewees to sign a research consent form.

As you will speak to very different stakeholders, interview questions need to be adjusted to each participant based on their area of expertise. You can use the compilation of guiding questions provided in the toolbox as a starting point and narrow them according to your needs. It may not be possible to answer all of these questions in the limited time frame of the study, but they can serve as a guideline to identify open questions and gaps.

Experience from other countries has shown that it is beneficial to begin speaking to data stakeholders and begin working toward data sharing agreements from the early stages, as this can be a lengthy process. Guidance about how to set up a data sharing agreement can be found in the toolbox.

Community visit

A community visit including participatory data collection is another way to understand the disaster impact and resulting needs. Given the likely resource constraints, you will not be able to gather information from all potentially affected communities.

Nevertheless, consulting communities can assist you in understanding the realities of intended recipients. Based on the results of the risk assessment, the prioritization of hazards from the desk review, and key determinants of vulnerability and exposure, purposefully select communities in close cooperation with the anticipatory action focal point and the National Society. If there is an ICRC Delegation present in the country, seek the latest security advice ahead of visiting any field locations.

There are many methods for working with communities. Please refer to the eVCA (enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment) tools in the toolbox for participatory methods. The People-first Impact Method (P-FIM) is another promising approach to shaping your anticipatory action program. Rather than taking the need for anticipatory action as a given or necessity, it builds trust and two-way communication, allowing communities themselves to define their priorities and what should be done, when, and by whom. A longer description of the approach is provided in the MEAL chapter, and links to supporting documents and contacts for training are available in the toolbox.

Stakeholder workshop

If time and budget allows, consider organizing a stakeholder workshop to get feedback on the study results, fill remaining data gaps, and develop recommendations for the anticipatory action set-up. Such workshops are also a good opportunity to generate interest in anticipatory action and build the relationships needed to carry the concept forward.

Please find examples of agendas in thetoolbox.

Step 11: Write report

Write up a report containing the elements outlined above. Overall, the study should serve as a road map that recommends concrete next steps and activities. Please find a *suggested outline with some templates* below in the toolbox.

Some points for consideration:

- The recommendations should be as actionable as possible.
- Ensure that all the requested points from ToR are addressed.

The report could also include a suggested preliminary roadmap based on the findings of the study to provide the National Society with some concrete recommendations for next steps and activities. For this, a red-yellow-green categorization could be used to help prioritize the various actions. See for example the feasibility study for South Sudan in the toolbox.

Step 12: Validate results with stakeholders (National Societies and partners)

Based on the data you collect above, we suggest you hold a validation workshop with stakeholders to share and validate the results, obtain their feedback, and plan next steps. The length of the workshop depends on your resources and the materials you wish to cover.

This discussion may be a good place to decide whether there is sufficient information, expertise, and capacity to develop a full EAP or whether a simplified EAP, the use of imminent DREF or community-based approaches might be more appropriate given the forecasts, data, hazard-type or other capacities available at the time.

Step 13: Report the results

Based on the data and feedback from the validation workshop, report on the results and circulate the findings back to stakeholders as appropriate.
Ideally, a folder with all the material should be shared which includes

- Interview guides
- Meeting schedule
- Workshop agendas
- Presentations used
- Transcripts (if available)
- Photos
- Criteria / list of interviewees
- …and more!

Step 14: Decide the next steps

Once the study is final and the results are validated by stakeholders and National Society management, the National Society must make the following decisions:

- Whether to start working on anticipatory action
- Which approach to choose
- Which hazard to work on
- With whom to partner for your anticipatory action work

Toolbox

Strategy documents anticipatory action until 2025

- Council of delegates resolution on anticipatory action (RCRC, 2022)
- IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025 (IFRC)
- G7 Statement on AA (German Federal Foreign Office, 2022)

Regional strategy documents

- ASEAN Framework on AA in DM (ASEAN, 2022)
- IGAD Regional Roadmap for Anticipatory Action (2024)

e-learnings

- IFRC AA training
- RCCC Climate training Kit
- OCHA AA Toolkit
- START Network Disaster Risk Financing
- START Network Risk analysis in DRF
- FAO Developing an AA System
- FAO Building a crisis timeline
- FAO Early Warning indicators
- FAO Examples of Anticipatory Actions

IFRC anticipatory action guidance

- FedNet

- Practical Information for NS on Anticipatory action and funding from the IFRC-DREF
- Overview EAPs for IFRC leadership
- Guidance on the Simplified EAP

Tools and templates

- EVCA toolbox (IFRC)
- EAP template and criteria (both simplified and full) on FedNet
- Additional guidance for scoping studies in fragile, conflict-affected or violent settings (AA in FCV toolkit)
- Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (2022): Contributing paper. Enriching impact data by mining digital media. (UNDRR, 2022)
- Sample ToR for scoping studies
- TEMPLATE interview list and selection
- TEMPLATE hazard decision matrix
- Guiding questions for interviews
- TEMPLATE Report outline
- Nepal feasibility study
- Anticipatory Action Readiness Index
- Anticipatory Action Readiness Index Reference Guide

Other key reads, documents and websites

- Anticipation Hub
- Humanitarian Data Exchange
- Desinventar
- EM-DAT

02. Engage your stakeholders

02. Engage your stakeholders

Summary

This chapter provides guidance on engaging relevant actors – from organizational leadership to potential NGO partners and government institutions – in the development and implementation of anticipatory action. While engaging a wide variety of stakeholders is crucial when developing a formalized (simplified) Early Action Protocol, it is equally important across other anticipatory action pathways, such as community-based approaches or institutionalization within national systems. This chapter outlines why such engagement matters, how to tailor messages to different stakeholders, common methods for fostering collaboration, and how to plan and track engagement over time. Each National Society knows their context best and should tailor these steps accordingly.

Step 1: Understand why engaging stakeholders is important

A National Society is one of many actors in your country's disaster risk management landscape. Because they are auxiliary to government, it is important that National Societies not work on anticipatory action in isolation or without connection to existing DRM systems. In addition to educating newcomers about anticipatory action, engaging stakeholders is critical to permitting stakeholders to learn from one another and to fostering broader institutionalization and longer-term sustainability. In countries where multiple actors (e.g. NGOs, UN, Red Cross Red Crescent) are designing and implementing anticipatory action systems, coordination can prevent duplication or the development of parallel structures and permit the government to assume an important coordinating role, should they desire one. Engaging key stakeholders from the beginning is also likely to help you with the following down the line:

- Securing the support of hydrometeorological services for trigger development and monitoring
- Obtaining validation or sign-off from government on the s/EAP
- Integrating anticipatory action into government disaster risk management systems and plans (e.g. contingency plans)
- Obtaining relevant data or information from government institutions
- Scaling up anticipatory action in conjunction with other humanitarian actors in the country (seeBangladesh case study, for example)

Step 2: Understand whom to engage in your context

If your National Society conducted a scoping study, the results of this study are a good place to begin, as they likely include a preliminary identification of stakeholders. If your National Society conducted a scoping study but over a year has passed, you should revisit and update those results as necessary, since potential stakeholders, data sources, and forecasts may have changed. You will not have to conduct a comprehensive scoping study, but it may be helpful to revisit chapter 1 to help you determine which elements may need updating and how to do so.

If your National Society did not conduct a scoping study or include a stakeholder mapping in the scoping study, begin by mapping relevant stakeholders for your context. The toolbox below contains a variety of links and resources on how to conduct a stakeholder mapping or analysis.

Generally, the intensity and type of engagement required will vary depending on the anticipatory action approach pursued. For example, developing an s/EAP usually requires close collaboration with national hydrometeorological services and disaster management authorities, while community-based approaches may place stronger emphasis on civil society organizations and community structures.

In the video below, Sheikh Khairul Rahaman talks about his experiences in involving stakeholders in anticipatory action projects in Bangladesh.

Stakeholder mapping for the drought EAP in Somalia

During the induction workshop in Hargeisa (2022), the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) did a first mapping of stakeholders who might be influential with varying interest to support the development of the drought EAP. In this first mapping, SRCS mapped out to what degree stakeholders are influential to the development of a drought EAP and also what their interest in a drought EAP might be. Crucial are particularly those stakeholders that are very influential but not very interested. Hence, for those a plan needs to be developed on how to engage them.

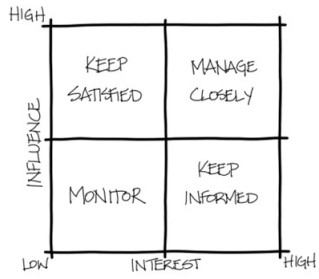


Photo credit: InsideProduct

At a minimum, you should engage one or more representatives from the following institutions:

- National hydrometeorological services (for weather-related hazards)
- Government agencies or ministries responsible for (or involved in) disaster risk management
- Government agencies involved in social protection (if your National Society intends to provide cash as an early action and/or explore linkages to social protection).
- Any organizations already working on anticipatory action in your country
    - **NOTE:** If other non-governmental actors are working on/implementing anticipatory action, it is essential that these organizations coordinate their efforts to engage the government and ensure their key messages align. For an example of such coordination see the case study on how BDRCS and WFP worked together in Bangladesh
- Participants in existing technical working groups related to anticipatory action
- Experts in sector specific or crosscutting concerns, such as agriculture, social affairs, protection gender and inclusion, education, migration, (mental) health etc. as appropriate
- If you are working in a conflict setting, ensure to engage the ICRC. They will be able to provide guidance on what else to consider and who else to engage in your context to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers. The “Anticipatory action in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected settings” toolkit (see toolbox below) includes resources on conflict analysis and stakeholder mapping that can additionally support you at this step.

You may also want to consult with or engage donors, especially as a source of information for relevant programmes.

After you have a comprehensive list of stakeholders, you will need to prioritize them and identify their potential role in developing, implementing, enabling or otherwise supporting your anticipatory action system. As mentioned above, the role and relevance of specific stakeholders will depend on the anticipatory action pathway pursued. For example, for community-based approaches, community-based organizations and civil society actors may play a particularly central role. For approaches focused on institutionalization of anticipatory action within existing disaster management systems, national-level authorities may be the primary entry point. The table below outlines a potential format for clearly identifying what stakeholders can bring to the anticipatory action system and how essential their participation is for your success, with a particular focus on s/EAP development.

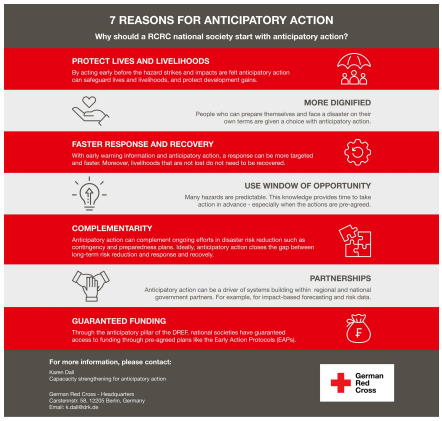
Table: Sample stakeholder mapping/analysis

From Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder	Stakeholder What are they doing in AA?	What do you need from them? / What role could or should they have in the project?	How important / influential / essential is their involvement?

Step 3: Build your message(s)

Stakeholders – both within the National Society and in the broader DRM system – must believe in the benefits of anticipatory action if they are to be receptive to your invitations to engage in development and implementation and sustain their involvement and support. This section details a variety of approaches or strategies for peaking and sustaining interest in anticipatory action to be selected and employed as appropriate to your context. These benefits may apply or appeal to National Societies as well as external partners / actors. It is important to strike the right balance between generating "excitement" for the new and innovative approach and creating expectations that anticipatory action cannot meet.



A. Showcase effectiveness/benefits:

One of the easiest ways to convince stakeholders of the value of anticipatory action is by pointing to evidence of its effectiveness. Evidence increasingly demonstrates that anticipatory action is an effective and dignified approach to humanitarian action. In 2025, different agencies compiled meta-analyses of existing evidence across their programmes. The full metastudies can be found in the toolbox. As summarized in a blogpost on the Anticipation Hub, their main findings demonstrate across agencies and contexts that…

- Anticipatory action improves food security and reduces harmful coping strategies: Acting ahead of crises improves household food access and reduces reliance on harmful coping strategies, meaning families are less likely to sell productive assets, withdraw children from school, or take other damaging measures during shocks.
- Anticipatory action can achieve stronger outcomes through combined support: Anticipatory interventions are most effective when cash- and voucher-based assistance is paired with early warnings, clear communication, and complementary in-kind support, enabling households to prepare earlier and make better-informed decisions.
- Anticipatory action can be more cost-effective than reactive response: Acting before crises generally delivers higher returns than post-shock response by lowering procurement and delivery costs and preventing losses, although comparisons across programmes remain difficult due to varying calculation methods.
- Anticipatory action yields better results with strong local ownership: Interventions designed and implemented with local actors and informed by community knowledge tend to be more trusted, timely, and aligned with local realities. Within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, EAPs are owned by the National Societies as auxiliaries to national governments, and implementation is driven by branches and their volunteers, embedded in the very communities at risk. This locally rooted structure strengthens legitimacy and ownership at national and local levels.

More sample evidence

A 2022 Policy Brief by the Anticipatory Action Task Forcealso summarized earlier evidence, including specific examples from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement:

- In Mongolia, livestock keepers who received animal care kits from theMongolian Red Cross and FAO as well as cash before severe winter cold saw fewer of their animals die.
- In Bangladesh, multiple activations by different actors (BDRCS, UNOCHA, WFP) have shown that at-risk communities who received anticipatory cash before floods peaked were more likely to evacuate, more likely to save livestock, essential agricultural and fishing equipment, and less likely to borrow money to cope with the aftermath of a flood.
- The World Bank estimates that upgrading early warning systems to support early action capacity in all developing countries can save an average of 23,000 lives per year and avoid losses worth between USD 300 million and USD 2 billion per year.
- In Senegal in 2019, the number of households reporting going a whole day without eating was reduced by 19 per cent during a six-month anticipatory project for drought funded by the Start Network.

Furthermore, experience from previous programmes suggests that these have a positive impact on National Society capacities and systems (e.g. logistics, procurement, and preparedness) leading to faster more proactive operations and improved response overall (for more information, see Tozier de la Poterie et al, 2023). For more information on evidence and learning around anticipatory action, visit the chapter on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).

B. Show concrete examples of how anticipatory action can help

You can enhance the case for anticipatory action by combining general evidence from anticipatory action projects (see A) with anecdotal examples from communities. As the goal of anticipatory action is to prevent and reduce suffering for recipients of early action, who better to speak to the effectiveness of anticipatory action than those who participate? Media stories can also be an effective tool for generating interest. See for example video from Honduras explaining what anticipatory action is and how it helped people before tropical storm Julia in 2022.



Practical Example: Bangladesh
Statement: (Write a simple statement.)

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

Impact: (Give an example of humanitarian impact.)

It is ranked by the Climate Change Vulnerability Index as the country most at risk globally. This is also a result of its geophysical features. Just under 70 per cent of the country is vulnerable to flooding, and cyclones hit coastal areas almost every year. Evacuation can last up to four weeks, and farmers or daily labourers receive little to no income during that period. They must often sell assets or take up high interest loans to evacuate, plus pay for food, and health expenses during evacuation and after.

Example: (Use an example or personal story from your own/assisted person's experience.)

Alefa Katun (40) works as a daily worker in the fields in Bogra. During flood events she loses all income as fields are inundated and cannot be worked on, and her cows can no longer graze.

Action: (Now put your message into action.)

In 2017, the anticipatory action pilot community of Bogra received an SMS alerting those in need of impending cash distribution. Recipients then needed to show up at the various distribution points to collect the money.

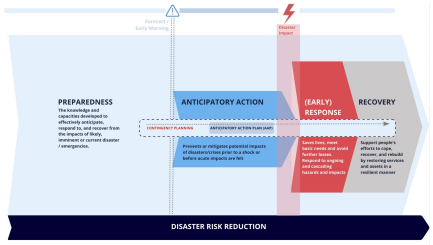
According to Alefa, "[t]hanks to the timely forecasts and EAP activation, we were able to receive cash three to seven days in advance of the flood peak. I am so grateful for the cash. I bought fodder for my cows and could evacuate them. Without the cash, I would have had to sell them, but they are good cows, they deliver good milk and are very healthy."

Evidence: (Present findings of impact evaluation following the activation)

Studies by GRC, BDRCS and RCCC following the activation found that families who received anticipatory assistance had to take out less high-interest loans to cover their needs, that they suffered from fewer stress, and had better access to nutrition.

C. Promote anticipatory action as complementary to contingency plans, EWEA and DRR:

Another way to make the case for anticipatory action is to highlight how it can complement and fortify existing disaster risk management frameworks and plans. When anticipatory action is promoted as a "new" or "innovative solution" some government actors may worry that it undermines their existing work in DRR and EWEA. Be clear about where anticipatory action fits in the disaster risk management continuum, and stress that it does not or should not replace DRR. Instead, emphasize that despite existing DRR efforts, there are many communities where DRR has not been implemented, and not all risks can be reduced by long-term prevention and mitigation measures. Anticipatory action is therefore a valuable tool for managing residual risk (see figure on the right). Furthermore, anticipatory action can provide access to funding for early actions that is often lacking in existing contingency plans or early warning systems. Therefore, rather than creating parallel systems or replacing existing efforts, anticipatory action can fill gaps in existing structures.



Anticipatory action within the disaster risk management continuum
Source: IFRC

Step 4: Engage

A. Request government focal point

If you have not already done so in the scoping (seechapter 1) and / or set-up phase (chapter 3), it may be appropriate to request focal points from the most relevant government agencies. Focal points can serve as liaisons between the National Society and key agencies, providing guidance, accountability and ownership in the development of the anticipatory action system and one or more s/EAPs within their respective organizations. An effective focal point will have the authority and influence to drive change within the partner organization. In settings where government agencies are already engaged in or working on anticipatory action and the National Society seeks to leverage its auxiliary role to support institutionalization processes at the national level, establishing government focal points is particularly important.

B. Establish or join existing support systems

The development of s/EAPs or other anticipatory action plans and set-up of systems for their implementation requires a team of dedicated people with different skill sets. A technical working group (TWG) can be an excellent way to bring people with the necessary skills together to support anticipatory action. If an anticipatory action or relevant TWG for other relevant / related topics exists, check first to see if you can join it rather than creating a new structure.

If no relevant bodies exist, consider creating an anticipatory action TWG. The TWG should be recognized by the government and have a mandate to review, guide, and validate anticipatory action processes. Ideally, at least one representative of the national disaster management agency should participate, but this is not mandatory (e.g. Bangladesh). Other members should include representatives of relevant government ministries, humanitarian organizations, and academia. Refer to your stakeholder mapping when deciding whom to invite. Consistent collaboration among TWG stakeholders can give legitimacy to anticipatory action systems, facilitate alignment of systems across organizations, and contribute to cross-organizational learning and scale up over the long-term.

Please find examples of ToRs for TWG groups below:

- Bangladesh
- Somaliland

For other anticipatory action approaches, such as anticipatory action integrated into community-based disaster risk reduction, engagement and support structures may be less formalized. In such contexts, support systems can include local authorities, community-based disaster risk management committees, local civil society organizations, or existing community platforms responsible for early warning and / or preparedness. Rather than engaging in or establishing national-level technical working groups, National Societies may build on these existing mechanisms for coordination and support to jointly plan and implement anticipatory action at community-level, ensuring that local knowledge, capacities and priorities inform the design of interventions.

C. Exchange visits

There are already many countries implementing anticipatory action for a range of hazards and contexts. Exploratory missions to consult with anticipatory action stakeholders in countries with established anticipatory action systems – "site visits" – can be an

excellent way to foster relationships, learn from experiences, and consider how to adapt existing anticipatory approaches to your context. Even after your programme is more established, exchange with practitioners within and / or across regions can aid your National Society throughout all stages of anticipatory action planning and implementation.

D. Dialogue Platforms & Workshops

Anticipatory action stakeholders have been hosting global, regional and national dialogue platforms since 2014.

These platforms have been instrumental in sparking interest in and awareness for anticipatory action. Among other things, these platforms bring stakeholders together (e.g. government agencies, scientists, UN agencies, NGOs and Red Cross Red Crescent Networks active or interested in anticipatory action and EWEA) to exchange ideas and lessons learned, increase their technical understanding of anticipatory action, explore concrete examples, and / or outline next steps for anticipatory action in their regions.

Whether to attend a global, regional, or national dialogue platform will depend upon your resources and objectives. In-person attendance is limited for the global dialogue platforms, but they can be an excellent way to introduce high-level officials to the topic if there has been little previous anticipatory action work in your country or region. Speak to your IFRC country and / or regional office if you wish to extend an invitation to key stakeholders in your country. Regional dialogue platforms are an excellent way for stakeholders to engage with counterparts from neighbouring countries and can foster regional solutions and problem-solving. Seeing how other governments already engage with anticipatory action can provide inspiration and increase interest and confidence in the feasibility of anticipatory action programmes.

Local and national dialogue platforms are more common once there is a critical mass of interest and experience with AA in your country. For example, after several years of working jointly on anticipatory action, the Bangladesh Red Crescent, the WFP country office, and the government of Bangladesh organized a national dialogue platform to bring actors together to learn from each other and discuss national strategies for advancing anticipatory action in Bangladesh.

National-level workshops are also an excellent way to foster collaboration. In Vietnam, for example, the Vietnam Red Cross' launch workshop brought together a broad coalition of stakeholders including representatives from the Vietnamese government, United Nations agencies, international and non-governmental organizations and sister National Societies.

E. Involve stakeholders in planning for anticipatory action and / or s/EAP development

The degree to which external stakeholders can participate in the development of anticipatory action plans or systems will depend on the time and resources they can commit. When developing a formalized framework such as a simplified or full EAP, key government and humanitarian stakeholders should ideally be involved in every stage of the process. Developing relationships with the following agencies is particularly critical: national disaster risk management authorities and technical or scientific agencies such as hydrometeorological services and/or research institutions. Engaging government in the development of the anticipatory actions plans helps with data sharing, coordination, transparency and long-term planning. Such engagement can be achieved through regular bilateral meetings or through technical working groups. The potential for buy-in, integration with existing systems, and sign-off on the protocols will be much greater if you involve key stakeholders from the beginning rather than asking for sign-off once the s/EAP or other anticipatory action plan is complete.

In some contexts, it will be possible for the National Society and government officials to co-produce all or parts of the s/EAP. This might entail jointly setting the triggers with disaster management officials and forecasting agencies, selecting early actions with disaster management officials, and / or allocating funds and selecting recipients in collaboration with local governments or UN agencies.

In countries where anticipatory action is not yet a priority, National Societies should invite stakeholders to participate and aim to increase their interest and engagement over time. Regardless of the level of interest from potential partners, it is important to involve government stakeholders as much as possible. Results and learnings from simulations, drills, and most importantly activations, should be shared with all the stakeholders engaged in anticipatory action collaboration for more effective joint impact.

For other anticipatory action approaches, stakeholder engagement may take different forms. When anticipatory action is implemented through community-based disaster risk reduction, engagement may focus more strongly on local authorities, community disaster risk management committees, civil society organizations and community leaders. These stakeholders can be involved in risk analysis, scoping early warning information, selecting appropriate early actions and supporting implementation. In cases where anticipatory action is implemented through an imminent DREF, coordination may focus on operational partners and authorities involved in emergency response and / or early warning dissemination; however, this engagement might differ across contexts and follow a less structured approach. Where National Societies leverage their auxiliary roles to support governments with anticipatory action, engagement may primarily take place through government coordination structures, with the National Society contributing technical expertise, operational capacity or community outreach. Further guidance on these pathways can be found in the dedicated chapters at the end of this manual.

F. Work with hydrometeorological agencies to develop triggers

In most cases, strong involvement of a counterpart within the national hydrometeorological service (NHMS) is essential for weather related hazards, to ensure the long-term sustainability of trigger models. Where possible, ask NHMS to provide data, assist with analyses, and develop triggers rather than bringing in external consultants. This joint work will strengthen intra-national collaboration and capacities to maintain the system in the long run. In an ideal scenario, hydrometeorological services will "own" the trigger, integrating it into their own forecast monitoring systems and alerting your National Society and other actors when the trigger is reached. For more on how to engage NHMS, see the guidelines provided in the toolbox.

G. Work with universities on studies/research

Working with national universities on risk analysis and / or the identification of early actions can build or strengthen interdisciplinary alliances while developing in-country knowledge and expertise for anticipatory action that can be useful for future research, monitoring and evaluation, or other collaborations.

Lesotho: joining forces with the university

The drought EAP of the Lesotho Red Cross was backed up by scientific research conducted by academic actors. For example, Lesotho University conducted a study which investigated the links between cash-based shock-responsive social protection and anticipatory actions for drought in Lesotho.

Later, Lesotho University joined the Academic Alliance for Anticipatory Action (4As), a global consortium of universities that sought to increase the evidence base for anticipatory action. The consortium collaborated with humanitarian agencies that are implementing anticipatory action, including the Red Cross, WFP, OCHA, and START Network. The consortium project was funded by USAID and terminated in February 2025.



Photo credit: Lesotho Red Cross

H. Build on existing products / programmes

Wherever possible, it is preferable to build on existing forecasting products, early warning systems, or DRM programmes. These should be identified during your scoping study or stakeholder analysis. The examples below demonstrate how building on existing products or systems can strengthen anticipatory action in the long run.

Mongolia: utilizing the government impact-based forecasting product for dzud

As a result of the feasibility study in Mongolia, it was decided that the government-led impact-based forecasting product (dzud map), developed by the Mongolia Met Service and Nagoya University of Japan, was adequate to trigger early action for dzud. By engaging government agencies from the beginning of the set-up process, the anticipatory action system of Mongolia Red Cross is one of the most sustainable cases for anticipatory action, given the fact that their trigger system is the basis for early actions of different humanitarian actors in-country.



Photo credit: IFRC

Bangladesh: Tapping into preparedness programs

The Bangladesh Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) is a joint programme by the government and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) that provides a robust early warning system and evacuation facilities for the coastal population. The cyclone EAP was built upon existing CPP capacities, and early actions for cash-based assistance and livestock evacuation were jointly developed through discussions with BDRCS, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, and the Department of Disaster Management.



Photo credit: BDRCS

H. Include stakeholders in simulations/drills

Including government authorities in simulations and drills is crucial to jointly testing the effectiveness of plans, protocols, guidelines, and the capacity of those responsible for implementing early actions.

Please see two examples below.

Vietnam: Fostering support after doing

Heatwaves are not a new phenomenon in Vietnam; however, not much is known about their impact and anticipatory action to prevent this impact did not yet exist. The government of Vietnam was initially supportive but not convinced of the effectiveness of early action. Testing early actions ahead of two heatwaves in July and August of 2019 allowed the government to see the impact of anticipatory action firsthand. Cooling centres and cooling vans, offering first-aid, water and resting opportunities served over 3,000 visitors.



Photo credit: GRC

Peru and Ecuador: Strengthening collaboration through simulations

In Peru and Ecuador, simulations and drills were integral to ensuring that the national hydrometeorological service and DRM agencies understood how anticipatory action could support their DRM work and, vice versa, how they could support the National Society with anticipatory action The drills showed governments concrete examples of actions that can be taken before extreme events to reduce losses. The simulations also ensured that all agencies involved in the EAP activation knew their roles and responsibilities for each point in time during the activation.

Step 5: Monitor and track your engagement

Once you have completed the above steps, it may be worthwhile to develop a plan for engaging key stakeholders. For example, you could use the table below to combine the key stakeholders from your stakeholder mapping with the engagement strategies above to plan and monitor your key actor engagement.

Table: Planning and Monitoring Stakeholder engagement

From Stakeholder mapping			Advocacy plan			
Stakeholder	What are they doing in AA?	What do you need from them? / Role in the project?	How important / influential	Key contacts (point people)	Engagement strategies (list from step 4)	Status of engagement/engagement tracking

What can go wrong in stakeholder engagement?

Despite our best efforts and intentions, stakeholder engagement does not always go as planned or as desired. Here are some challenges other National Societies have encountered when trying to engage stakeholders in anticipatory action as well as some initial thoughts on what they might do differently next time. Contact Karen Dall or Sören Schneider to share your experiences – positive and negative – and to discuss how you might overcome these challenges in the future.

A. Stakeholders do not understand anticipatory action

As anticipatory action is still a relatively new topic, it often takes time for DRM practitioners to understand the concept. It is therefore essential to prioritize education and outreach from the early stages of anticipatory action planning. In addition to workshops and dialogue platforms, regular meetings or forums (such as technical working groups) can be used to reiterate the basic principles and serve as a platform for people to engage more regularly with the topic. They may also help to address problems of staff turnover by inviting new staff or partners to learn and ask questions.

B. Obtaining commitment/engagement from key stakeholders

In some countries, National Societies have found it difficult to get responses or consistent engagement from key ministries or partner organizations. Consider the following strategies:

- **Involve the secretary general or National Society leadership:** Some National Societies have had more success reaching out to government partners and solidifying partnerships when the invitations come from National Society leadership. Invitations from leadership demonstrate a commitment beyond the scope of a single project and are essential to developing memorandums of understanding (MoUs).
- **Let the government lead outreach/invitations:** Forming a technical working group and / or letting national disaster risk management agencies take the lead on outreach may raise the profile of these meetings and encourage other agencies to dedicate time and resources.

C. Sustaining engagement considering competing priorities

Even if government, UN, and NGO stakeholders are enthusiastic about anticipatory action, in some contexts they may face barriers to regular engagement, such as limited funding and / or staffing, competing (political) priorities, travel or time constraints, or high staff turnover. Other National Societies have overcome these challenges in the following ways:

- **MoUs / high-level buy-in:** Involve high-level officials in the process and securing their interest, commitment, and buy-in is essential to securing commitment from technicians and agency staff. Stakeholders must see engagement in AA as something relevant and important to their job descriptions rather than another meeting being added to their to-do list. It may take time for relevant officials to understand the concept and added value of anticipatory action; therefore, you may need to focus on education and outreach for some time. Once high-level interest is secured, it may be appropriate to designate a focal point (or focal team) and / or consider an MoU to formalize the cooperation.

- **Redundancy:** Involve several people or a team of focal points from key agencies. When communications and invitations are extended to several people within relevant ministries, it is less likely that no one will be available to attend key meetings or provide necessary feedback. However, this strategy must be weighed against the possibility of diluting responsibility for engaging with anticipatory action such that no one attends because they think it is someone else's responsibility. This strategy therefore works best if there is a formal team within each organization and each member understands and agrees to work together to provide feedback to the National Society, attend meetings, and update each other.
- **Flexibility:** Be flexible in your strategies and adapt your engagement strategies as necessary. If large group meetings are not working, follow-up with bilateral meetings. If a piecemeal approach to engagement is causing problems, consider setting up formal structures such as working groups. Monitoring your outreach and the involvement of key stakeholders (using Table 2.2 as a baseline, for example) is essential to identifying challenges in involving key stakeholders and adjusting strategies accordingly.

D. Living up to expectations

- In countries where other organizations or agencies are already working on anticipatory action, some National Societies have had difficulties engaging government stakeholders, as they do not have the financial resources to support staff time or capacity strengthening. In such cases, it may be beneficial to partner more closely with organizations that have established programmes or dedicated resources and / or build upon their models and programmes. It will also be important to manage expectations and explain why and how the Red Cross Red Crescent model differs from and meaningfully adds value to the potential support other partners are able to provide.

E. Considering sensitivities and power dynamics

- In some countries, particularly in contexts affected by fragility or conflict, relationships between stakeholders can be difficult and some topics may be (politically or otherwise) sensitive. If stakeholder engagement is not done in a conflict sensitive way, National Societies may miss important dynamics and may be perceived to take the side of one stakeholder over another, which can damage trust and reputation. Conducting a conflict sensitivity analysis and considering power dynamics as a part of stakeholder mapping reduce the risk of such unintended consequences.

Overall, effective stakeholder engagement lays the foundations for developing the pathway to anticipatory action most suited to your context. The following chapters build on this by outlining how anticipatory action systems can be developed and operationalized, with a particular focus on the development of an s/EAP.

Toolbox

Evidence

- Policy brief by the Anticipatory Action Task Force
- • WFP's evidence base on Anticipatory Action 2015-2024
- • Start Network Evidence Review: Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Interventions – Impact, Challenges & Best Practices in uncertain times
- A Cost Effective Solution to Reduce Disaster Losses in Developing Countries: Hydro-Meteorological Services, Early Warning, and Evacuation (WB, 2016)
- ARC Replica Payout, Senegal 2020 - Internal Evaluation (START Network)
- Anticipatory action to manage climate risks: Lessons from the Red Cross Red Crescent in Southern Africa, Bangladesh, and beyond (Tozier de la Poterie, 2023)

Case studies

- Lesotho: cash-based SP and AA for drought
- Video: Flood-EAP activation in Honduras
- Case study Bangladesh: Coordination RCRC and WFP
- Case study in Mongolia

Tools and templates

- Collaborating with national climate and weather agencies
- Conflict sensitivity and stakeholder mapping (Module 2) in the Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings toolkit

Other key reads, documents and websites

- Dialogue Platforms

03. Prepare your National Society for anticipatory action

03. Prepare your National Society for anticipatory action

Summary

This chapter outlines key steps for preparing your National Society to engage in anticipatory action. It focuses on leadership ownership, careful planning, and the involvement of key stakeholders across various sectors. The chapter highlights how anticipatory action can be integrated into existing disaster risk management strategies, how partnerships with government authorities can be strengthened, and how capacities can be assessed and developed over time. While these steps are broadly applicable to different forms of anticipatory action, the chapter focuses in particular on laying the institutional and operational foundations for the development of a simplified or full Early Action Protocol (s/EAP). While many of the elements described here may also support other approaches to anticipatory action, specific guidance on these can be found in later chapters of the manual.

Step 1: Double-check ownership at leadership level for anticipatory action

If not done before, a focal point for FbF should be identified (seechapter 1, step 2: Identify a focal point for anticipatory action). Secondly, the leadership of the National Society (e.g. president and secretary general) should have ownership of anticipatory action as a strategic approach before embarking on the planning process and translating ambitions into concrete programming. Hence, the leadership should have a vision of how anticipatory action fits into the National Society's disaster management strategies and how this links to its development plans. If this is not the case yet, explore some options in Chapter 1 (Step 1-3) that includes workshops, meetings and room for discussions.

Step 2: Develop a plan to prepare your National Society to engage in anticipatory action

While the scoping study can guide on what hazards would be viable for anticipatory action in the given context and what relevant capacities the National Society already has, the National Society needs to decide how to internally prepare your National Society to work in ways that enable early action ahead of predictable shocks. This involves clarifying priorities and roles, or planning how anticipatory action can best be integrated into existing strategies, programmes, or partnerships.

In many cases, this process will lay the institutional foundation for the development of one or more EAPs or simplified EAPs; in other contexts, however, anticipatory action may initially be implemented through community-based disaster reduction initiatives, through the activation of an imminent DREF, or by supporting governments in their work on anticipatory action. Chapters 1 and 2 provide guidance on how to familiarize yourself with different approaches and how to identify suitable entry points. Regardless of the chosen approach, when developing a plan to prepare your National Society to engage in AA, it is important to determine timelines for the chosen approach, which concrete operational entry points exist, what capacities are needed to leverage these entry points, and who within the National Society should be involved in working on the chosen approach.

When implementing anticipatory action through community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives has been identified as a suitable entry point, for example, the planning process might involve mapping relevant projects, tools and structures, such as enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (eVCAs), community contingency plans, branch activities, and volunteer networks, and determining which teams should be involved in exploring these opportunities further. When the National Society seeks to explore the imminent DREF more closely as an entry point to anticipatory action, the focus may be on identifying how existing preparedness and response mechanisms could support earlier action in the future, e.g. by reviewing past operations to understand where early action could potentially complement existing response practices. Finally, planning for supporting governments in their work on anticipatory action might involve mapping relevant government counterparts and reviewing existing coordination mechanisms. In any case, the plan should outline which teams, staff, and external stakeholders would need to be involved and how they can be familiarized with the relevant concepts and mechanisms of anticipatory action.

If the National Society opts for a more formalized approach, i.e. an Early Action Protocol, a few extra considerations arise, for example, how many EAPs or simplified EAPs do they want to develop in what timeframe, which type of EAP to go for (simplified or full EAP) and whether a dedicated project is available to support the process. In many cases, such a dedicated anticipatory action project, including a proposal and logframe, can help to plan the process and to fund the process of s/EAP development. This is particularly relevant for s/EAP development as experiences from the past years have shown that it can take between 18 and 24 months for a National Society to develop a full EAP and be activation ready. However, Kazakhstan Red Crescent and Ghana Red Cross are good examples of how to develop a simplified EAP in a short time and without a full-fledged project.

Review scoping study and select hazard

In case you have done a scoping study (seechapter 1),

you should review the roadmap and the recommendations. This should already give you indications of:

- Priority hazards

- Operational and institutional capacity building needs
- Strategic collaboration with stakeholders
- Potential early actions
- Data availability and gaps

These insights can help the National Society identify where anticipatory action could realistically be pursued and what preparatory steps may be required. In some cases, particularly when developing an EAP or sEAP, it may be useful to initially focus on one or two hazards. Experience shows that once the first s/EAP is developed, the development of additional s/EAPs is faster. In other approaches, such as supporting communities or governments in anticipatory action, the emphasis may instead be on identifying relevant programmes, partnerships, or coordination mechanisms through which anticipatory action could be explored.

Develop a plan of action and a budget (if required)

Depending on how anticipatory action preparation is funded, you may need to develop a logframe and budgets. Even when a dedicated project is not established, it is useful to develop a plan of action that outlines milestones, responsibilities and timelines for preparing your National Society to engage in anticipatory action. Depending on the chosen approach, the workplan may be organized around different work packages:

- *Development of an s/EAP*
  If the National Society plans to develop a simplified or full Early Action Protocol, one key work package will be drafting the protocol itself. A detailed outline of the required components can be found in the s/EAP template and quality criteria (see chapter 4). For example, it includes the definition of the trigger, the selection of actions, but also a budget. Templates and milestone examples for s/EAP development can be found in the toolbox below.
- *Integration and testing of anticipatory action processes*
  Regardless of the specific approach, anticipatory action needs to be integrated into existing National Society structures and procedures. This may include testing (adjusted) procedures through simulations or drills, clarifying internal roles and decision-making process, and ensuring that relevant operational mechanisms, such as logistics and volunteer mobilization, can support early action when needed. When developing an s/EAP, it is important that all agreements – with IFRC but also with other partners that play an active role in the process – are signed.
- *Capacity and process strengthening of National Society staff and partners for anticipatory action planning and implementation*
  Preparing the National Society to engage in anticipatory action often requires strengthening staff and partner capacities. This may include familiarizing staff with anticipatory action concepts, reviewing operational procedures, and identifying where existing capacities, such as logistics, volunteer management or coordination with authorities, may need to be strengthened. Staff from branches to national headquarters, as well as relevant external partners, may require orientation or training depending on their role in future initiatives.
- *Policy and advocacy around anticipatory action*
  It is important that regional and national organizations and government institutions understand the key elements of anticipatory action so that an enabling policy environment can be established. Hence, raising awareness through meetings, advocacy material, and invitations to regional or the global dialogue platform can be considered. See chapter 2 for additional ideas on how to engage stakeholders.

Design different work packages according to your available resources, timeline and institutional priorities. Examples of logframes for anticipatory action projects can be found below (kindly note that some of these documents still use the term “Forecast-based Financing”, which, in this context, refers to a specific and formalized approach below the umbrella of anticipatory action).

- Model log frame for anticipatory action project log frame for National Societies with a partner
- Anticipatory action log frame (empty)
- Anticipatory action log frame example (filled)

Who should be involved in the planning and implementation?

- All relevant departments from the National Society that will set up and develop and implement anticipatory action including technical sectors such as health, WASH, logistics and support services such as finances.
- Experience shows that it is useful to have an anticipatory action coordinator within the National Society, who is responsible for all work related to anticipatory action in general as well as set-up and s/EAP development and implementation in particular, if applicable.
- In case the anticipation project is implemented in collaboration with a Partner National Society, the partners should also be involved in the planning, as they can often share examples and experiences from other countries.

Step 3: Put together and onboard a team for anticipatory action

Preparing the National Society to engage in anticipatory action requires collaboration across multiple departments and technical areas. Depending on the anticipatory action approach chosen, this may involve a dedicated team, a small(er) coordination group, or simply clearly defined roles across existing units. For example, developing an s/EAP might involve a more structured team (that may or may not be funded through a project), while community-based DRR, imminent DREF activations, or supporting governments may rely more strongly on existing staff, volunteers and coordination mechanisms.

In some contexts, National Societies have established a small internal working group to coordinate anticipatory action efforts. Regardless of the structure chosen, it is useful to identify key focal points and clarify responsibilities early on.

Who needs to be on the team?

Who?	What?	When?
Anticipatory action focal point or project coordinator	Coordinates AA activities across departments, ensures internal alignment and acts as the main contact point for partners	Ideally identified early in the preparation phase. Their role may be more intensive during planning and development phases (e.g., s/EAP development), but they may also support coordination during activations or other anticipatory initiatives. If an s/EAP is developed, the National Society can partially cover the salary costs using the readiness budget of the s/EAP to ensure sustainability.
Technical advisor, (e.g., hydro-met, risk analysis or forecasting expert)	Provides technical guidance on risk analysis, early warning information and risk-informed decision-making. Particularly relevant when developing triggers or working closely with forecasting agencies.	Entire process with heavy engagement during planning and analysis phases. If an s/EAP is developed, you can partially cover the salary costs from the readiness budget of the s/EAP to ensure sustainability
Information Management (IM), GIS	Impact-based mapping and activation map generation; digitalisation of beneficiary selection and warehousing	Ideally, an IM person is already onboarded at the beginning of the process. Particularly for s/EAP development, the collection of impact and risk data is one of the first steps. If possible, this person should stay on throughout the whole development process and perhaps longer to support the monitoring of the trigger and the implementation, if applicable.
Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER)	Development of M&E plan, theory of change for early actions, impact study post activation	A dedicated PMER staff for the AA project can be helpful, for example, when developing the MEAL plan of an s/EAP. In any case, the PMER department should be looped in to also support MEAL after an activation (one to two months). For more information on MEAL and respective support, please refer to the chapter on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL).
Cash expert	Identification of financial service provider, minimum expenditure basket	If cash is considered as an early action, a cash expert should be looped in once this decision is taken. They can help you to design appropriate cash interventions and to ensure that cash delivery systems can accommodate the rapid timelines required for anticipatory action, especially for fast-onset hazards.
Logistics	Ensure that early actions can be delivered in time	A logistics expert or the logistics department should be engaged once first early actions are brainstormed to assess logistical feasibility.
Other experts, e.g. livelihood; veterinary; shelter; Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI); etc.	Early action development	Subject-matter experts in designing specific early actions. In most cases, their services will only be needed temporarily to assist with the development of specific sections or plans.

Job descriptions

You can find various job descriptions for the above-named positions in the toolbox below. If you have other job descriptions to share from your work, please reach out to us.

Train the team

Once key roles have been identified, it is important to ensure that the relevant staff have a shared understanding of anticipatory action and of the National Society's chosen approach. This may involve introductory trainings, internal briefings or workshops to familiarize team members with anticipatory action concepts, planned activities and coordination mechanisms. For teams working on s/EAP development, more in-depth training may be required on the methodology and validation requirements.

Step 4: Agree on information management system

During the preparation and implementation of anticipatory action, you will collect all kinds of information: primary data from interviews and focus groups, secondary data from reports and websites, forecasts and risk datasets. In many cases, this information will be used by staff from different departments of the National Society and, depending on the chosen approach to anticipatory action, also by external partners such as government agencies, technical institutions, community organizations or other humanitarian actors. Establishing a clear and accessible information management system early on can therefore help ensure that relevant information and documents remain organized, accessible and usable over time.

For example, when developing an s/EAP, it is important to store data and documentation in a structured and retrievable way, as after an activation the s/EAP needs to be resubmitted and ideally the anticipatory action coordinator will still be able to access the

information that was used for the development of the previous version of the s/EAP. When supporting governments, it is important that arrangements ensure government counterparts can access and use the relevant data and documents in accordance with their institutional regulations and potential restrictions. Finally in community-based approaches, it is important to ensure that information systems remain accessible to local actors and do not rely on tools or platforms that are difficult to access, require expensive licenses, or depend on specialized technical capacities.

In practice, this may involve agreeing on a shared platform or system that can safely store relevant files and allow appropriate access to team members and / or partners. Many National Societies use platforms such as MS Teams or Google Drive or any other system that is recommended from your National Society or a partner that is working with you. The key consideration is that the chosen system support collaboration, transparency and long-term accessibility of information related to anticipatory action activities.

Step 5: Sensitize other key staff of the National Society, government focal points and other stakeholders involved

Preparing a National Society to engage in anticipatory action requires that key staff and partners understand the basic concepts, objectives and potential implications of this approach. As highlighted in previous steps, anticipatory action can take different forms (see Chapters 1 and 2), and the specific roles of staff and partners will depend on the pathway chosen. Nevertheless, building a shared understanding early on is essential to ensure institutional ownership, coordination across departments and alignment with external partners.

National Society staff

Again, it is critical to ensure National Society ownership of anticipatory action. Leadership plays a particularly important role, as senior management and governance bodies will ultimately need to endorse strategic decision (such as signing and validating any s/EAP before it is submitted to the IFRC-DREF; see chapter 12), authorize activities for activation, allocate staff and financial resources, and support the integration of anticipatory action into existing disaster risk management or resilience efforts. They therefore need a clear understanding of what anticipatory action as well as the chosen approach entails and how it may affect the National Society's operations and partnerships.

Beyond leadership, several departments might be involved in preparing and implementing anticipatory action activities. While the exact configuration will depend on the chosen approach, relevant units may include:

- Disaster risk management
- PMER
- Operational units, such as surge, communications and logistics
- Administrative and finance units
- Information Management / Knowledge Management
- MEAL
- Thematic units, such as health / WASH, shelter, or cash

Ensuring that key personnel within these departments understand the basic concepts and potential operational implications of anticipatory action will facilitate coordination and integration into existing structures.

Staff and volunteers in the National Society and other actors at local level

Red Cross Red Crescent branches (or chapters) and volunteers, sub-national DRM authorities and civil society often play an important role in implementing anticipatory action, particularly when working through community-based disaster risk reduction. Sensitizing staff and volunteers at branch level is therefore essential to ensure that anticipatory action concepts are understood beyond headquarters and that local actors are aware of potential roles in risk monitoring, early action implementation or coordination with communities.

One way to sensitize National Society staff and partners is through induction workshops in which you introduce key concepts, present project plans, and confirm next steps in a participatory format. The box below proposes some possible agendas for induction workshops.

Induction workshop

- **Participants**: National Society leadership, thematic and administrative units of the National Society (see above), disaster management authorities, meteorological service, DRM committees, perhaps staff from National Societies branches, other stakeholders such as UN agencies or NGOs
- **Content**: Overview of anticipatory action concepts, discussion of possible entry points (see Chapters 1 and 2), presentation of scoping findings if available, and discussion of potential next steps
- **Format**: 3 days, in-person
- **Material**: Induction material (see chapter 1), AA Manual, s/EAP criteria and templates (see chapter 5), if applicable



Induction workshop with the Malagasy Red Cross

Examples of induction workshop agendas

- Lebanon
- Somalia
- Madagascar

Read more: Philippine anticipatory action brochure, the global map on the anticipation hub

Train as many people as possible! Experience shows that there can be high staff turnover within National Societies, so it is always best to spread the knowledge as widely as possible.

Government authorities & external stakeholders

As the National Society is an auxiliary to the government, it is important that its activities in anticipatory action align with national and sub-national level DRM strategies and plans. Government focal points and other external stakeholders should therefore be sensitized about anticipatory action and involved in the process from the beginning to foster alliances. See chapter 2 for information on how and when to engage these stakeholders.

This is particularly important when the National Society aims to support anticipatory action systems that are coordinated by national governments or integrate anticipatory action into national disaster risk management frameworks. In such cases, government counterparts may play a central role in shaping priorities, providing data coordinating actions or facilitating integration with existing systems.

Step 6: Assess existing capacities, strategies and plans

Anticipatory action builds upon the existing experience of the National Society in disaster risk reduction, early warning systems and response. Understanding how and where anticipatory action fits into and adds value to the existing preparedness, contingency and response strategies is essential for sustainable implementation. Many of the capacities required for anticipatory action already exist within National Societies. For example, strong volunteer networks, operational logistics systems, or experience with cash assistance or other sectoral interventions can all support anticipatory action initiatives.

The specific capacities required will depend on the approach chosen. For instance, community-based approaches may build on existing community engagement structures and disaster risk reduction programmes; imminent DREF activations may rely on timely decision-making and rapid response capacities; while supporting governments may require strong coordaintion with national authorities and technical agencies. When developing an s/EAP, you will work on strengthening capacities and institutional readiness for anticipatory action throughout the entire process. Both EAP templates include a section on the capacity of the National Society. For example, the full EAP asks you to do the following:

- *Describe how the National Society has operative and administrative capacity to implement the s/EAPs.*
- *Describe the National Society's experience in the implementation of the selected early actions (Livelihoods, including Cash and Voucher Assistance; WASH; Food Security; Shelter; etc.).*
- *If the National Society does not have experience in these areas, indicate the steps taken to improve its capacity in the respective sector to implement the s/EAP effectively and efficiently.*

There are different ways to assess existing capacities, strategies and plans and it depends on the National Society which of the options they would like to choose. It is recommended to build on a tool that your National Society already uses. An overview of the manifold assessment tools (OCAC, BOCA, SAF, CHS) the Movement offers may be found here.

- *Scoping study*: Those National Societies that have conducted a scoping study might already have an overview of operational and institutional capacities that enable anticipatory action.
- *Preparedness for Effective Response (PER process):* Using PER can also show where anticipatory action can contribute to improving the overall capacity of your National Society and provide a baseline capacity assessment against which to measure capacity strengthening down the line even if you do not conduct a full PER assessment. More complete guidance on the various ways to integrate PER and anticipatory action is available in the toolbox. PER processes (including all types of assessments: self-assessment, simulations, operational or post-operational) offer a step-by-step approach to identifying and prioritizing areas that require attention and resources to ensure that the National Society is effective, efficient and timely. A number of National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are at various stages of the PER cycle. For an overview of the National Societies and their status, visit the GO Platform. For more information on building capacities from the beginning and throughout the process see Chapter 11 .
- *Internal review:* If you either have already a good overview of your capacities, you can also decide to use that or do a lighter internal review process through workshops and working sessions.

The steps described in this chapter aim to create the institutional, operational and partnership foundations required for anticipatory action. In many cases, these preparations will support the development of an s/EAP as the most formalized approach to anticipatory action within the Movement. However, the capacities, coordination mechanisms and institutional awareness developed through this process can also support other pathways, such as community-based approaches, imminent DREF activations or support to government agencies. Specific guidance on these approaches can be found in later chapters of this manual.

Toolbox

Capacity assessments

- Overview of capacity assessment tools within the RCRC movement (IFRC)
- PER Checklist
- GO Platform

Tools and templates

- TEMPLATE Milestones EAP Template
- Model log frame anticipatory action project logframe for National Societies with a partner
- Anticipatory action log frame (empty)
- Anticipatory action log frame example (filled)
- Job descriptions

Workshop agendas

- Somalia

Lebanon

Madagascar

04. Get to know the EAP criteria and the management process

04. Get to know the EAP criteria and the management process

Summary

The process for accessing funding from the Anticipatory Pillar of the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) involves several key elements. In this chapter you will get to know why it is important to engage with your IFRC delegation early on, learn about the differences between the available funding mechanisms, understand the s/EAP review and approval process but also respective management processes until resubmission after an activation (kindly note that s/EAP refers to both EAPs and simplified EAPs). In the toolbox you also find links to all relevant templates and resources. For any approaches to anticipatory action other than an EAP, please visit the later chapters of this manual.

Step 1: Reach out to IFRC delegation

For National Societies choosing to pursue anticipatory action through the development of an s/EAP, early engagement with the IFRC is essential. Every National Society is covered by an IFRC Country Delegation, Country Cluster Delegation or Regional Office. Engaging with the IFRC should start from the beginning of the EAP development phase. The IFRC can provide technical support, including coordination with other in-country capacity strengthening initiatives, advice from IFRC sectoral experts, explanations of IFRC standards and guidelines, providing lessons learned from response operations and anticipatory action.

Support on the IFRC operational matrix and budgeting structure can be provided by the IFRC focal point at country or regional level. The s/EAP budget should be developed using the IFRC budget template (see toolbox), and advice on the budget can be provided by IFRC finance staff. Ultimately the finalized s/EAP will be submitted to the IFRC delegation for technical review and funding from the IFRC-DREF. Not involving the IFRC early in the s/EAP development process could result in delays in the technical review and approval of the s/EAP. The IFRC-DREF does not provide funding for development of plans for anticipation or for response. National Societies should look for different sources of funding for these activities.



Funding your Anticipatory Action Plan

The IFRC DREF is only one funding mechanism open to National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies. It is also the funding mechanism that the manual will look at most closely.

Other funding options that may be open to National Societies include funding from:

- national government or local authorities
- crisis modifiers in existing operations or projects
- the National Society's own resources
- private or institutional donors (including UN)

Step 2: Familiarize yourself with s/EAP templates and eligibility criteria

Since 2018, the Anticipatory Pillar of the DREF has provided funding for developed EAPs and since 2022, has provided funding for developed sEAPs. The sEAP is an additional ex-ante funding mechanism for National Societies and seeks to complement the other funding mechanisms under the DREF including the 'longer term' EAPs (i.e., five years) and 'shorter term' DREF for imminent events (i.e., 1 to 4 months).



The EAP and the sEAP have separate templates and eligibility criteria which can be found at the end of this chapter or on FedNet (see the toolbox). Technical review and approval of the s/EAP is based on the respective quality criteria. It is important consider each of the quality criteria when developing the s/EAP.

Each s/EAP should usually focus on one hazard, but a National Society may develop multiple s/EAPs for different hazards. At this time, a National Society can have an unlimited number of both full EAP and sEAP.

The s/EAP is made up of three types of activities: prepositioning activities, readiness activities and early action activities.

- The **stock activities** are allocated in the first year following approval for both a full EAP and sEAP, however the full EAP can budget a second round of stock for a second activation. Stocks should have a shelf life of five years for a full EAP or two years for the sEAP. The National Society should pre-position the materials needed to undertake the selected early actions, especially those that may require a longer procurement process such as shelter or hygiene kits. A second allocation for stock will be done for a full EAP, following the first activation.
- The **readiness activities** should be done annually to ensure that the National Society remains ready to act early. These activities may include refresher training, coordination meetings, and simulations. Readiness may also include any ongoing costs and services (human resources and logistics) that are deemed indispensable for subsequent trigger-based activation of an s/EAP. Readiness activities are capped around 35% maximum. The National Society will need to provide justification for readiness costs that exceed 35% of the total budget.
- The balance of the budget (at least 35%) is earmarked for**early action activities** which are done in the lead time, between when a trigger is reached and the impact of the hazard. The early actions will be unique to each hazard and context but should reduce or mitigate the impact on at risk communities. Examples of early action activities include evacuation of at-risk communities and/or livestock in advance of a cyclone, early harvest of crops in advance of cyclone or floods, and / or the covering water sources and provision of water treatment, hygiene kits or mosquito nets in advance of floods.

A full EAP can include a second round of early action activities (early action + prepositioning activities).

Key conditions of the full and simplified EAP

	Full EAP	Simplified EAP
Available to:	Any National Red Cross Red Crescent Society	Any National Red Cross Red Crescent Society
Duration / Lifespan:	5 years	2 years
Activation(s) within Lifespan:	2 times (in 5 years)	1 time (in 2 years)
Total Budget:	CHF 950,000	CHF 220,000
Budget for NS:	CHF 845,070	CHF 187,793
Budget for IFRC:	CHF 50,000 max	CHF 20,000 max
Targeted Population (min.):	10,000 people	2,000 people
Eligible Activities:	Readiness, Stock, Early Action	Readiness, Stock, Early Action
Assessed against:	EAP quality criteria	Simplified EAP quality criteria
Reporting:	Annual, final report or activation report	Annual, final report or activation report

	EAP and sEAP	DREF allocation for imminent crisis
Timing	early actions are planned well in advance of the forecast. The approved EAP and allocated funding give the National Society additional time (and funding) to include actions that may require more long-term preparatory work and pre-positioning of stock required for the early action.	Can only be requested when the hazard is on the horizon, that is once a forecast has been issued, which limits the time for planning, approval and implementation of the early actions.
Vulnerability assessment	more rigorous analysis of the historical impacts and vulnerability of the population leading to a more targeted and potentially effective intervention	
Capacity	The Forecast-based Financing process takes a holistic approach, often starting (but doesn't have to!) with a Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) assessment with the aim of develop the best possible EAP for the hazard and the context and takes time to systematically addressing organizational gaps and capacity development needs. While the sEAP is developed using the National Society's own resources and is planned based on the existing capacity, however annual readiness activities means that the National Society can maintain a good level of readiness.	DREF for imminent event needs to be planned based on the existing capacity and experience of the National Society, due to the limited timeline – however, if a National Society doesn't have a pre-approved protocol, DREF for imminent event enables any National Society to act in advance of a hazard.
Activation	The National Society can initiate the pre-agreed early actions as soon as the pre- defined trigger threshold is reached. There is no need to go through any additional approval processes, thereby gaining valuable time to reduce the impact of a disaster. The financial support is automatically released.	The National Society must develop an Emergency Plan of Action and budget for anticipatory action, which needs to be reviewed and approved, with a signed project agreement in place before the funds are released. There is no guarantee the DREF request will comply with all the requirements for approval.

Step 3: Submit and validate the s/EAP

Only National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are eligible for funding from the DREF.

Registration of a s/EAP with the IFRC DREF

When a National Society decides to start working on a s/EAP, the National Society or IFRC Delegation are requested to inform the DREF Global team by sending an email to the IFRC DREF email box: DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org

s/EAP submission process to IFRC DREF

Once the s/EAP narrative and budget have been developed, the National Society should submit the documents to DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org for technical review and funding from the IFRC-DREF.

Upon submission, the s/EAP will undergo a simultaneous technical review (conducted by the IFRC Delegation, the IFRC Regional Office and Validation Committee), which will take 14 days. The technical review is based on the quality standards outlined in the quality criteria for an EAP and a sEAP (there are separate versions for both, see the toolbox below).

Who is the Validation Committee?

The Validation Committee is comprised by members of the IFRC, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Netherlands Red Cross 510 Initiative, the Red Cross Livelihoods Centre and National Societies active in anticipatory action.

Once the technical review has been finalised, the feedback will be sent to the National Society. The National Society has three months to address the feedback directly in the checklist and make changes in the s/EAP narrative in tracked changes. At any stage during the validation process, the National Society can request an *optional* feedback call with the Validation Committee. Within the three-month deadline, the National Society should submit the:

- s/EAP narrative with tracked changes;
- s/EAP budget;
- s/EAP review checklist with detailed comments

The package of documents should be sent toDREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org.

The Validation Committee will then take 7 days to review the changes made and will decide to technically validate the s/EAP, technically validate the s/EAP with conditions that need to be met in advance of s/EAP approval or may send the s/EAP back to the National Society for further work.

If the s/EAP is sent back for further work, the National Society will have one month to revise and resubmit the s/EAP for technical validation. Again, the Validation Committee will take seven days to review the changes made. At this stage, if the s/EAP cannot be (conditionally or unconditionally) technically validated, the s/EAP may be sent back one further time with a deadline of one month. If, at this stage, the sEAP cannot be technically validated the s/EAP will be closed. The National Society can take as long as required to work on the s/EAP before resubmitting to the IFRC DREF.

For more details, please consult chapter 2 of the IFRC guidance package (s/EAP validation process). This guidance provides a step-by-step overview of the EAP and the simplified EAP approval, maintenance, activation and revalidation process. It is designed for IFRC staff; however, it will also give National Societies and partners an overview of the IFRC processes. However, kindly note that as of mid 2025, this guidance package is under review and being updated to align with the new DREF procedure. For the old version, see toolbox

Imminent DREF

In addition to the EAP and sEAP, the third funding mechanism under the DREF's Anticipatory Pillar is the imminent DREF. Any Red Cross Red Crescent can have access to funding for early action via an imminent DREF. The imminent DREF is for sudden onset hazards and can only be requested when the event is on the horizon. The imminent DREF could be used while developing a s/EAP and can be used to test your early action activities.

For more information on the imminent DREF, review the IFRC-DREF procedures (see the toolbox) or visit the IFRC website.

Step 4: Get IFRC approval and sign legal agreements

Once an s/EAP has been technically validated, the s/EAP can proceed through the approval process by the DREF Appeal Manager. Once this process is complete, the DREF's Anticipatory Pillar will allocate the full budget (for annual readiness, for stock and for early action activities) to the IFRC delegation closest to the National Society. IFRC will then produce an EAP summary (for a full EAP) or edit the s/EAP and publish it, along with the budget, on the IFRC website. The IFRC and the National Society (potentially also with a partner) will sign a project agreement and the closest IFRC delegation will disburse funds for the year one readiness activities, including the one-off pre-positioning costs, as outlined in the s/EAP.

Once updated, please refer to chapter 3 of the IFRC interactive guidance (s/EAP Approval) for more detailed information.

Step 5: Managing the s/EAP

Once the s/EAP has been approved, the National Society should procure and preposition the stock required for early action activities. Throughout the life span of the s/EAP annual readiness activities need to be implemented to ensure that the National Society sustains the capacity to act early. Hence, the National Society will need to request the budget from IFRC and implement readiness activities. Reach out to your IFRC project manager to ensure you follow the correct process, including annual financial and narrative reporting.

Once updated, please refer to chapter 4 of the IFRC guidance package (s/EAP Management) for more detailed information.

Step 6: Activate the s/EAP

When an s/EAP's trigger is reached, the National Society should initiate early action activities. The National Society notifies the IFRC of the activation using the activation notification template (this document should be published on the IFRC website). The IFRC will release the pre-agreed funding for the early actions according to the approved budget. In most cases it will either come from the IFRC delegation closest to the National Society, or the IFRC regional office. As all the administrative processes have been taken care of in the s/EAP approval phase, the funding for early actions can be released immediately.

Once updated, please refer to chapter 5 of the IFRC guidance package (s/EAP Activation) for more detailed information.

Step 7: Monitor, evaluate and learn from the activation

The s/EAP includes a basic M&E plan and budget that should include monitoring of activities during the activation, post-intervention assessment, and a lessons learnt workshop or evaluations (please see chapter 9 of the FbF manual). These activities must take place within the operational timeframe of the s/EAP and should feed into a activation report (narrative and financial report) no later than 60 days after the end of the activation (see the s/EAP Project Agreement for detailed reporting requirements and due dates). Completion of the lessons learnt workshop and report is a minimum prerequisite to revalidating the s/EAP.

Full EAPs are eligible for two activations within the five-year lifespan, if the trigger is reached within the five year lifespan of the EAP.

The second EAP activation should be *sequential* and not *simultaneous* with the first activation. That is, funds for second allocation of stock will be transferred once the activation report has been approved. Annual readiness activities will continue, with annual transfers based on the annual reports. If the EAP is triggered again for a second time, then the National Society can activate via submission of the activation notification template. The National Society goes through steps 6 and 7 in this chapter, before proceeding to step 8.

Step 8: Revalidate your s/EAP

Using information from evaluations and findings from the lessons learnt workshop, the National Society should determine what changes need to be made to the s/EAP narrative and budget. IFRC suggests making edits using *track changes* so that it is easy to identify what adjustments were made. Once the revised version is available, it should be sent to the IFRC delegation to start the revalidation process using the quality criteria.

Toolbox

IFRC guidance

- IFRC DREF Procedures (2025)
- IFRC DREF Guidelines (2026)

	FedNet
	EAP template
	sEAP template
	EAP Quality Criteria
	sEAP Quality Criteria
	s/EAP processing guidance
	s/EAP Budget template

05. Collect risk, early action and impact information

05. Collect risk, early action and impact information

Summary

Depending on what approach you select for anticipatory action you will have different time and resources at hand to do the collection of risk, early action and impact information. For example, you may have a full-fledged project to build an EAP, or you may only put together a plan in an imminent DREF when the disaster is already on the horizon. In any case, you need different kinds of information throughout the processes of developing (and later evaluating) your plans and implementation. As the goal of anticipatory action is to prevent or reduce the impact of extreme events, it is of crucial importance to understand hazard impacts, how these impacts occur, who and what is most affected, and why. For EAPs, answers to these questions will inform risk assessments that feed into intervention maps and the selection of early actions.

To answer these questions, you can use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For example, quantitative data will help you understand how many people are impacted, the extent of the damage that is caused, and who and what have been damaged by previous events. This will help you identify which variables to monitor for your trigger and determine trigger thresholds. Qualitative approaches will help you understand why and how people are affected and which impacts are most difficult for households to overcome, which can inform the development of early actions.

This chapter outlines a range of potential sources, tools, and methods to support you in collecting risk (vulnerability, exposure, capacity) information, for documenting historical impacts, and for brainstorming potential early actions. It builds on concrete examples from contexts of anticipatory action for extreme weather events. For non-weather-related hazards, such as epidemic outbreaks, population movement or volcanic ashfall, similar steps and methods are applicable but sources for data might differ. How to compile forecast data for both weather and non-weather related hazards, including available options and assessing skill, is covered in chapter 6. As all chapters that focus on the operationalization of anticipatory action in practice, the emphasis on this chapter is on the development of a full Early Action Protocol, as this requires a comprehensive set of information on past disaster impacts and the distribution of risks.

In the video below, Arielle Tozier de la Poterie explains how to identify impacts and select early actions for an EAP, and talks about experiences made in Mozambique.

Step 1: Understand key terms and related questions

The methods you use to collect information should always be directly linked to, and appropriate for, the questions you are asking. This section outlines the key questions you will need to examine and answer while developing your anticipatory action plan and EAPs in particular.

Exposure

- Who and what suffers or is affected the most from the prioritized impact and how?
- Which sub-groups of the populations are exposed?
- What elements of the built environment are most affected and how (for example, houses, schools, cross, natural resources, water points, roads)?
- Where are those exposed elements located (for example, households living on at-risk parts of embankments)?

Vulnerability

- What characteristics of people and/or things lead them to be disproportionately impacted by a particular hazard?



Clarification: Exposure vs. Vulnerability

The terms exposure and vulnerability are often confused, but they are not interchangeable. Exposure refers to people, places, or things that are hit by an event, regardless of whether they are (likely to be) negatively impacted. Vulnerability describes the characteristics of those things that make them more likely to suffer from impacts. For example, a cement house and an adobe house may be located side by side in a flood zone. Both houses are exposed to flooding, but because of its construction, the adobe house will be more vulnerable to flood waters than its cement neighbour. When collecting data and information for your anticipatory action plan, you need to understand both exposure and vulnerability.

Drivers of vulnerability

While exposure can often be directly learned from hazard maps (if available) or from the knowledge of the community which area is often flooded, vulnerability is more complex. Different individual and community characteristics can contribute to the vulnerability of individual people, and influence how badly they may be affected by a hazard. On the individual level, people could be more vulnerable based on their age, gender, disabilities, level of education, or livelihood, for example. Communities in their entirety may be more vulnerable than others if they have been historically

marginalized and received fewer resources to strengthen their resilience. Often, drivers of vulnerability are not static, and people's vulnerability can change over time. These are particularly complex dynamics in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The toolkits on Protection, Gender and Inclusion and on Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings in this chapter's toolbox offer useful resources to identify and monitor relevant drivers of vulnerability.

Impacts

- What are the (humanitarian) impacts of a particular hazard?
- What impact databases or other records, e.g., narratives from older adults / elderly individuals or media archives are available for the selected hazard?
- How confident are you in the quality of the historical records?
- What hazard magnitude produces key impacts?
- What impacts do people find most difficult to deal with in their daily lives?
- Which sectors have been historically affected the most (health, shelter, agriculture, infrastructure, etc.)?

Early actions

- What do affected populations currently do (or have they historically done) to prevent or cope with negative impacts of the hazard in question?
- Could any of these responses be implemented before the event occurred to reduce later impacts?
- Could current preparedness actions be reinforced or improved with anticipatory action?
- What more could stakeholders do (in the window between the forecast and the hazard impact) if they had additional support or resources?
- What (if any) evidence is there that the action we are proposing will work?

Step 2: Understand how you will use the data

Depending on your anticipatory action approach – and the type of plan you're developing (e.g., a community-based plan, an imminent DREF, a plan developed jointly with government, an EAP, or another format) – you will collect information on exposure, vulnerability, and impacts at a level of detail that reflects the time and resources available.

At a minimum, you need to understand

- Which impacts you want to address with your early actions and why?
- Which early actions have the potential to reduce the impact and why?
- What magnitude of the hazard creates that impact at which you want to activate your plan?
- Where do you want to implement the early actions? What information do you need to decide that?

For the EAPs (full and simplified) you will need the data you collect using the methods below to meet a number of EAP criteria (see link to the full and simplified EAP criteria in the toolbox). The following table lists the Validation Committee criteria and the data necessary to meet them that can be obtained using the methods in this chapter. Additional criteria and data sources specific to forecast selection and trigger definition are covered in chapter 6.

EAP criteria	Data to be gathered using the methods in this chapter
The EAP triggers are based on a combination of the analysis of risk factors and the forecast in line with the steps of the trigger methodology outlined in the AA manual.	Primary or secondary data on vulnerability, exposure, and coping capacity contribute to the risk analysis that feeds into the trigger.
The EAP provides an analysis of historical impacts for the selected hazard and provides an evidence-based analysis of exposure and vulnerability.	Primary or secondary data on historical impacts, exposure, and factors contributing to vulnerability.
Data must be provided that shows that an event of the magnitude/strength of the event that the trigger is based on has caused disastrous humanitarian impact in the region in the past.	Secondary impact data and/or consultations with stakeholders demonstrate humanitarian impacts of previous events.
There is a map or a clear methodology that will tell the National Society where action should be taken based on a combination of vulnerability, exposure, and the forecast when the EAP is activated based on the trigger model.	Primary or secondary data on exposure and factors contributing to vulnerability and locations in the country that are at the highest risk based on vulnerability and exposure criteria.
Forecast-based early actions are selected based on the reduction of risk that they will provide. And, for each early action selected, the EAP must include a theory of change and show that the action chosen is appropriate to reduce the specific risk.	Evidence from other interventions, the evidence database, and / or consultations with stakeholders indicate that the actions proposed are appropriate and likely to reduce the impacts in question.
Selected actions should be socially acceptable according to the context and there should be evidence of its effectiveness.	Primary data community and stakeholder consultations indicating that the proposed actions are socially acceptable.
The EAP clearly explains how the target beneficiaries within the intervention areas will be selected.	Targeting criteria are justified based on secondary vulnerability data and/or consultation with stakeholders indicating the relative susceptibility of targeted populations to the hazard impacts being prioritized.

While the data and analyses required for sEAPs are not as rigorous, data gathered through the methodologies are applicable to the following criteria, again taken directly from the sEAP validation criteria:

sEAP criteria	Data to be gathered using the methods in this chapter
Hazard selection is supported with evidence related to the historical disaster impact.	Secondary impact data and/or consultations with stakeholders demonstrate humanitarian impacts of previous events.
The risks being prioritized are relevant to the hazard's main impacts.	Secondary vulnerability and exposure data and/or consultations with stakeholders indicate that the impacts being targeted are produced by the hazard.
The simplified EAP has a clear trigger statement.	Secondary impact data and/or consultations with stakeholders can help to determine an appropriate threshold for humanitarian action.
Selected early actions seek to reduce the possible impacts of the risks prioritized by the National Society.	Evidence from other interventions, the evidence database, and/or consultations with stakeholders indicate that the actions proposed are appropriate and likely to reduce the impacts in question.
The simplified EAP clearly explains who will be targeted with the early action activities.	Targeting criteria are justified based on secondary vulnerability data and/or consultation with stakeholders indicating the relative susceptibility of targeted populations to the hazard impacts being prioritized.

Step 3: Gather your data

Using the questions above (and any others you find relevant) and depending on your time and resources, review the methods below. If you have a bit of time and resources, you can make a preliminary plan for how to answer the questions above (see toolbox for research planning template). Over the course of data collection, you may find that some sources of data do not exist in your context, requiring you to revise your plan by searching elsewhere or using other methodologies.

Method A: Consult secondary data: impact and risk databases

When available, data from the government and national ministries are a valuable source of information on the impacts of past events and current exposure and vulnerability of populations at risk. Gathering historical impact data to conduct the risk analysis can be

done using sources at the local, regional, national, and sometimes even the international level.

The following ministries (e.g. on national but also district level) may have relevant information regarding general or sector-specific disaster impacts and risk factors, including for non-weather-related hazards like epidemic outbreaks or the sector-specific humanitarian impacts of displacement crises:

- National Disaster Management Agency (Disaster Risk Management Agency)
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ministry of Climate / Energy
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry responsible for infrastructure / land use and / or housing
- Ministry for water and sanitation
- Agency responsible for national statistics
- Department of Welfare
- National Research Institutions

Keep in mind that some ministries may be more open and willing than others to share their data. It may be necessary to clearly explain your need for this data or enter into formal agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), to have access to government data. Begin the process of secondary data collection early to ensure that you do not experience delays.

In addition to government entities listed above, the following international databases and offer country-specific impact data:

- DesInventar
- EM-DAT
- Montandon
- DeltaResilience

For data on risk factors, these information management sources may also be useful:

- INFORM index
- World Risk Index
- ThinkHazard
- HDX
- OpenStreetMap
- ALNAP

See the toolbox for links to these resources.

Method B: Consult secondary data and conduct literature review

A literature review allows you to gather information on impacts and potential early actions from existing work such as reports, studies, policies and other documents. Evaluations or systematic reviews in the international disaster response and risk reduction literature can also identify actions that have been tested in other humanitarian settings and provide evidence about whether, when, why, and how such interventions are effective in preventing or addressing disaster impacts relevant to your context.

When reading through contingency plans, policy documents, studies, or reports on past disasters, consider the questions under “early actions” (step 1) above. In the case of reports specific to anticipatory action, consider whether the early actions and / or lessons learned identified in the literature are transferable to your context.



Qualitative (interviews and focus groups) vs. quantitative (surveys) primary data

Primary data is data you collect yourself rather than obtain from existing sources or databases. This can include both qualitative (e.g. interviews and focus groups) or quantitative (e.g. survey) data.

When deciding between data collection methods or tools, it is essential to consider what kind of information is needed and why, as well as the best source for obtaining such data. While it may be tempting to quantify the impacts of past disasters using a survey, asking people to recall the consequences of past events is unlikely to yield reliable quantitative information, unless it is done immediately following an event. Qualitative data about past impacts will likely yield more detailed information regarding how and why disasters cause problems for communities. People are more likely to remember what they did and how they experienced an event than exactly how many acres of crops they lost. Government statistics (a secondary source) may then be able to provide quantitative data to support these qualitative accounts.

Think about the level of detail you need (including information on causality), from whom (scale), and how reliable that information is likely to be (can people be expected to remember what you are asking?) when deciding which methods will get you the best data.

It is well known that disaster losses and damages datasets of governments and institutions should be improved. Advocacy and technical support to government agencies and other institutions responsible for capturing detailed disaster impact information is essential to improve the capacity to identify effective early actions, as well as to develop better triggers (see chapter 6 for more details).

Method C: Semi-structured, key informant interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conversations using a guide or a list of questions that need answering but that allow for the conversation to unfold naturally. They differ from structured interviews or surveys (in which questions are asked in specific way and answers are often pre-determined) in their open-ended nature.

In contexts where little literature or data on past impacts is available, semi-structured interviews with government and disaster management officials, community leaders, staff and volunteers of response agencies, National Societies, and civil society can help you gather information on priority hazards and their impacts. After identifying the key impacts and risk factors, semi-structured interviews with sector-specific experts are extremely valuable to probe deeper into potential early actions. You can find examples for semi-structured interview guides in the toolbox.

How many interviews are enough?

Depending on the time and resources available, it is best to continue to conduct interviews until subsequent interviews no longer yield new information (this is called saturation). In some instances, you may also exhaust the list of relevant informants.

In the Mozambican context it was not possible to reach saturation in every sector that is impacted by floods and cyclones. Due to time constraints, the team focused instead on interviewees from the sectors most aligned with the Mozambique Red Cross capacities and priorities.

Examples of semi-structured interview guides for government stakeholders, community leaders or members (if applicable), and sector-specific experts and guidance on how to conduct a semi-structured interview are available in the toolbox.

Method D: Focus group discussions

A focus group is a guided discussion, preferably conducted with a relatively homogenous group of individuals. You can conduct focus groups at various levels, including with national stakeholders, provincial or district officials, community leaders, or groups of practitioners.

Focus groups are ideal for understanding how communities have experienced or coped with previous hazard events and for brainstorming potential early actions. Examples of focus group discussion guides for community members and guidance on how to conduct a focus group discussion are available in the toolbox.



FDG in Bangladesh



eVCA workshop in Madagascar



Data collection in Somaliland



Flood EAP in Pakistan

Method E: (Post-disaster) Community visits

Walking through a community with leaders or representatives can be a valuable way to contextualize and deepen understanding gained through interviews and focus groups. Both structured transect walks or less formal tours of a community allow the team to observe local conditions first hand, hear stories, and ask questions that might not arise in a more formal setting. Although visits shortly after an extreme event allow for direct observation of impacts, walking through disaster-prone communities can provide valuable insights at any time. IFRC guidance on Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments provide guidance on how to conduct a transect walk which you find linked in the toolbox.

You can also use the SketchMap tool which is an easy-to-use tool for participatory mapping through offline collection, digitization, and georeferencing of local data (see toolbox).

If your National Society is interested in a more community-led approach to defining your program and/or interventions, the P-FIM approach may also be appropriate. This methodology allows communities to take the lead in identifying their priorities and designing programs. More information on the approach is provided in the MEAL section and general information on how to use the approach and contact information is available in the toolbox.

Practical guidance: Manage expectations

It is always important to be respectful in the timing of your focus group or visit and consult local leaders or representatives beforehand. For example, when visiting Nampula, Mozambique, shortly after a tropical depression, local officials requested a walk through the village with local leaders rather than conduct a focus group (as planned) so as not to raise expectations of assistance.

Method F: (Participatory) stakeholder workshops

Stakeholder workshops can elicit stakeholder opinions and ideas while reinforcing the concept of anticipatory action and promoting stakeholder engagement in the anticipatory action process. They can be used to identify and prioritize impacts to be addressed by the anticipatory action framework and also to prioritize early actions, revise theories of change (see M&E guideline) and discuss how to operationalize early actions. Be sure to involve experts from relevant sectors, such as shelter, agriculture, WASH and health, or disaster management. Practical Guidance boxes and the resources in the toolbox provide examples of workshop formats to identify, prioritize, and critically examine potential early actions.

Practical guidance: Sample 1-day Provincial workshop agenda based on activities in Mozambique

- Presentation: Overview of the concept of anticipatory action
- Presentation: Update on s/EAP development

Break

- Review finding on the impact of floods (substitute hazard(s) in questions)
- Individual activity: questionnaire asking stakeholders to rank priority impacts

Lunch

- Group activity 1: Ranking of key impacts in small groups (Mozambique team divided participants according to the districts from which they came).
    - Presentation of rankings to the group
- Group activity 2: Small group brainstorming and prioritization of actions that could be taken to address the priority impacts (Climate Centre game "Ready")
    - Presentation of actions to the group

Practical guidance: Sample 2-day National Workshop Agenda based on Activities in Mozambique

Day 1

- Registration and official opening

Break

- Presentation of the Early Action Protocol
- Questions and answers
- Individual Activity: Questionnaire asking stakeholder to rank impacts

Lunch

- Presentation of the research findings: primary impacts and evidence for potential early actions
- Group discussion: what early actions are missing?
- Individual Activity: Post all potential early actions (including those added by small groups) on the wall and have each person vote (with stickers) for the three priority early actions by placing their stickers on the appropriate paper.

Day 2

- Presentation of results of Day 1
- Individual questionnaire results: which impacts were prioritized?
- Results of early action prioritization: which early actions did the stakeholders prioritize? Based on the above, which actions will the group recommend?

Break

- Group work – Revising and Refining the Theory of Change: As many 1.5 hours sessions as needed (with lunch as appropriate) to workshop key theories of change in small groups. In Mozambique, we divided participants according to their expertise, so that WASH experts were working on WASH-related theories of change, shelter experts on shelter, and so on. Disaster managers more generally were divided evenly among the groups.

Method G: Surveys (such as knowledge, attitudes, and practices)

Unlike qualitative interviews and focus groups, surveys can allow your team to obtain quantifiable data and reach a larger number of respondents. This can be useful when asking people to prioritize impacts and early actions to be addressed by your anticipatory action plan. Given the resources involved in establishing a representative sample and problems with recall, we do not recommend using surveys to establish the impacts of past events (see first practical guidance).

Surveys are also an excellent tool for measuring the impact of early actions relative to no action or to traditional response (a comparison group). However, both survey questions and data collection procedures must be well thought out in order generate meaningful conclusions. Furthermore, depending on the scale of your intervention, it may be time and resource intensive to collect survey data from a representative sample. If you are looking to assess the impact of your activated early action protocol, consult chapter 8 and seek guidance from a researcher experienced in designing and implementing surveys that use propensity score matching or other statistical techniques. The Red Cross Climate Centre has experience supporting National Societies in designing and executing impact assessments.



Example: Surveys to understand impacts in an urban context

The Vietnamese Red Cross (VNRC) together with the GRC, IFRC, and the Climate Centre started the anticipatory action project focusing on heat waves in Vietnam in 2018. This was the first to bring anticipatory action into an urban context. But in a densely populated city with 16 million people, how do you find out who is most vulnerable and how extreme heat impacts them? The VNRC launched the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey, randomly sampling more than 1200 respondents in specific areas of Hanoi. Based on residents' understanding of heat wave impacts, results from the KAP study were used to inform the selection of the early actions.

Method H: Policy and practice review

While this could be considered part of an extensive literature review, consulting local policy documents can be a source of potential early actions and help you to understand how anticipatory action will fit within existing systems.

Documents to seek out include the following:

- Disaster risk management laws, rules, regulations, and plans: It is important to understand how the overall system works in order to ensure that actions complement existing structures.
- Contingency plans: These will help you to understand existing responses from the national to the community level.
- Climate change adaptation plans: Although usually aimed at longer-term interventions, they may include plans for acute response or contain actions that could be adapted to different timeframes.
- Evaluations of previous programs or humanitarian interventions: These will help you to understand what has been tried, what has worked, and what has not worked in your context.

Method J: Community (or stakeholder) ranking activities

Participatory community ranking exercises, whether in the context of a focus group discussion or not, may also be helpful in identifying priorities at the community-level. The IFRC Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (eVCA) toolbox offers valuable guidelines on how to conduct such activities.

Toolbox

Examples

- Anticipatory action for Heatwaves in Viet Nam

Tools and templates

- Research planning template
- Template for potential Guiding Questions
- Focus group discussion guide for flood
- Examples and guidance for semi-structured interviews (typhoons)
- General guidance for focus group dicussions
- Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (eVCA) guidance (IFRC)
- Toolkit on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in anticipatory action
- Risk assessment and vulnerability analysis (Module 3) in the Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings toolkit
- SketchMap Tool

Other key reads, documents and websites

- IASC Early Action to El Niño/La Niña
- DesInventar
- EmDat
- Montandon
- DeltaResilience
- INFORM Index
- WorldRiskIndex
- ThinkHazard
- OpenStreetMap
- ALNAP
- full EAP templates and criteria
- simplified EAP templates and criteria
- Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)

06. Determine activation trigger

06. Determine activation trigger

Summary

Forecasts and triggers are among key components of anticipatory action that will guide the National Society, the community or other practitioners to when and where early actions need to be implemented. For s/EAPs, when a pre-agreed threshold of a forecast is reached, the National Society activates the s/EAP and funds will be automatically dispersed.

Anticipatory action is designed for those events that are predicted to have a severe impact exceeding the coping capacities of the people. Therefore, it is not enough to know what the forecasted windspeed will be. Instead, you must know whether the storm will cause impact. For this reason, as impact-based forecasts are not usually available the development of the trigger requires an understanding of past impacts that can be related to a certain hazard threshold, e.g. windspeed.

The methodology elaborated below can be applied and adapted for a variety of hazards. It is derived from work on weather-related hazards, such as floods, storms and droughts, but it can also be adapted to non-weather hazards, such as epidemics or locusts, if appropriate.

This chapter will guide you through the trigger development process from a technical perspective with a focus on trigger development for EAPs. It will also advise you on technical cooperation and share examples and good practices. However, many steps can be taken for the other approaches in a lighter touch depending on your available time and resources. You find guidance for this throughout the text and the specific guidance at the end of the Manual.

Please note that the development of the trigger often runs in parallel with the selection of the early actions, as the development of the s/EAP is an iterative process. For example, if the action is “evacuation”, you would select a different triggering forecast than if the action is “spread awareness about cholera risk”. Thus, some steps from chapter 7: *Select your early actions* are needed to advance with the trigger development.

In the video below, Catalina Jaime, expert on anticipatory action, climate and conflict, explains how to build upon a feasibility study, and complete a risk analysis.

Step 1: Select hazard

If not done during the scoping study, you need to decide which hazard you will address with your anticipatory action system. In the s/EAP you will be asked to provide a brief rationale about the selection of the hazard and when it has caused various humanitarian impacts in the past (Section 3.1 in full EAP). This should include:

- A table that outlines the most severe events of this hazard in the past (see a simple template in the toolbox).
- A written description of what the impacts of this hazard were, who was affected and why, how many people were affected, and what were the main sectors affected

Please refer to chapter 5: *Collection risk, early action and impact information* to learn more about the data collection of these information.

Step 2: Understand what needs to go in a trigger

The trigger will allow the National Society to know when and where to act, regardless of whether the hazard is meteorological, epidemiological or socio-political in nature. For the s/EAPs, please verify the quality criteria for the trigger and the s/EAP activation processes that are linked in the toolbox below. For most anticipatory action approaches, you need to include three components of an operational trigger system:

- A clear trigger statement: When are you going to act based on which forecast and with how much lead time? Please refer to step 10: Develop a trigger statement.
- Intervention map: How will you select the communities in which early actions are implemented? Please refer to step 11: Develop a mechanism that defines the intervention area. Note that this only applies when you don’t work in a preselected area.
- A trigger monitoring and activation system: How are the forecasts monitored and how are relevant actors alerted? Please refer to chapter 8: Develop EAP activation system.

Intervention map: When do you need it?

Depending on the anticipatory action approach, you may already know where to act once the trigger is reached, but in other cases, this is not yet clear. For example, when working with a specific community, you can develop a trigger and an anticipatory action plan tailored to that community. In such cases, an intervention map is not necessary.

For s/EAPs, however, the situation is different. They usually cover a larger geographic area, and the intervention area is not defined in advance. Only once the forecast is available does it become clear which communities are likely to be affected. This information is then often combined with vulnerability data to prioritise the communities expected to face the greatest impact.

Step 3: Establish coordination mechanism

In order to ensure sustainability, ownership and alignment of the trigger, it should ideally be embedded in the national early warning and alert system. At the very least, key actors should be involved in or endorse the trigger development process and its outcomes. Ideally, as trigger development can be a very technical process, you cooperate with meteorological services, disaster management authorities, and other experts and institutions that work in the field of interest. This also enables other government agencies to participate in anticipatory action. To begin with, you can think about the following aspects that might also shape your advocacy strategy (please refer to chapter 2: Engage your stakeholders).

Mandates
Who has the mandate to issue forecasts and early warning messages? Ensure that you are in line with the official regulations and procedures. For extreme weather events, for example, the meteorological service usually has the mandate to issue forecasts and early warning messages together with disaster management authorities. For epidemic outbreaks, however, the ministry of health might be the relevant authority for surveillance and / or early warning. Regardless of the hazard in question, integrating or the very least aligning the trigger with relevant mandates is important to avoid confusion, which could happen if there were many actors issuing their own alerts.

Existing initiatives

In many cases, the national meteorological agency is already involved in initiatives around impact-based forecasting or anticipatory action. For example, in Mozambique the government partnered with the World Food Programme (WFP) to develop harmonized drought triggers that are owned by the government. If such early warning mechanisms already exist, you should tap into those to avoid a duplication of work. Perhaps there are existing agreements, MoUs, or trigger activation systems already established.

On the regional level, technical working groups also shape the anticipatory action landscape and thus trigger development. There are several examples in Africa, but also in Latin America and Asia Pacific. Please find an overview of the regional technical working groups here. These technical working groups can often provide overviews of existing initiatives that are relevant to the trigger development in the context of interest.

On local level there might already be a community early warning system in place that can be built upon and adapted for anticipatory action or municipal authorities might have plans in place that include elements of anticipatory action.

Technical standards in the Asia-Pacific region

As anticipatory action is gaining momentum in Asia-Pacific, there is a growing demand for coherent terminology and approaches to building an anticipatory action system. Recognizing the need, the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action (TWG AA) has collectively developed Technical Standards on Anticipatory Action in Asia and the Pacific through a consultative process with its members. The document draws upon the definition and three key building blocks set out in the ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management. You can access the document via the toolbox.

ASIA PACIFIC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON ANTICIPATORY ACTION

Anticipation Hub

Guiding questions to establish a coordination mechanism:

- Who are the key actors issuing forecasts and early warning messages?
- Are there existing initiatives on anticipatory action, such as technical working groups?
- Are there existing agreements or risk information systems that could be used for any of the three parts of the trigger (trigger statement, intervention selection, and trigger monitoring and activation processes)?
- Is there political will within the government to own and maintain the trigger monitoring and activation processes?

Step 4: Define hazard variables to monitor based on impacts and early actions

In order to understand which forecast(s) would be most suitable for your trigger, you need to understand the impact it should forecast. For example, when talking about impacts of cyclones you need to understand what has caused the impact: the winds, the rains or the storm surge? Hence, here you need to review the work that you have done on impact analysis and potential early actions. Please refer to the guidance in chapter 5: Collect risk, early action and impact data and chapter 7: Select early actions regarding the prioritization of impacts and early actions.

Hazard	Cascading hazard	Potential primary and secondary impacts	Variable and drivers
Heavy rains	Riverine Flood - Landslides	Damaged houses - Damaged crops - Livestock dead - Cholera outbreak	Water level - Flood extent
Cyclone		Damaged houses - Damaged crops	Wind speed - Strong rains - Cyclone-induced floods - Storm surge
Drought	Agricultural droughts - epidemics	Death of livestock due to insufficient pasture - Crop failure	Vegetation condition - Rainfall - ENSO

Guiding questions to define hazard variable

- Which impacts were prioritised?
- What has caused the impact?
- What variable can be used to best forecast the prioritised impact?
- How much lead time is needed to implement the early actions? What early actions would be feasible in a given lead time?
- Can this variable be forecasted with the needed lead time?

Note that a trigger system does not necessarily need to rest on a single variable as described more extensively under step 10 in this chapter. The trigger for the cholera EAP in Cameroon, for example, rests on a combination of climatic indicators that are known to impact WASH infrastructure and thus make transmission more likely on the one hand, and an indicator for suspected or confirmed cholera cases in relevant districts on the other that is based on surveillance data. Keep this in mind when selecting relevant variable(s), especially for non-weather-related hazards.

Step 5: Compile a menu of forecasts

In order for anticipatory action to allocate funding when a trigger is met, there must be a certain probability of the event. To safeguard this, it is crucial to select the best-suited forecasts. For weather-related hazards, this involves meteorological forecasts. For non-weather hazards, this could involve disease surveillance systems, early outbreak detection models, displacement monitoring tools, or qualitative alerts. Regardless of the hazard in question, for s/EAPs, but particularly full EAPs, an analysis of forecast and / or data verification, type, reliability, lead times, and sources of data for forecasts should be presented as an inventory, to allow an informed decision about which one to use. If the disaster is already imminent and you want to use an imminent DREF, you would most likely rely on a national early warning or similar information which has been already issued.

Note that forecasts do not need to be analysed or calculated by the National Society but can be jointly worked on or led by hydro-meteorological services, research institutions, or other experts.

Guiding questions for the forecast selection:

- Which agency produces relevant forecasts on local, national, regional or global level? Are there any community early warning systems that could be used or established?
- What kind(s) of forecast(s) are produced or how is the forecast produced? Tip: Choices include observed data (e.g. gauged precipitation), statistical forecasts (e.g. extrapolation of an upstream river flow to a downstream location, or an index based on El Niño sea-surface temperatures), and dynamic models (e.g. numerical weather-prediction systems and large-scale hydrological forecasting models). Check the toolbox for more information.
- What outcome is the forecast forecasting? E.g. seasonal total rainfall, flood levels, windspeeds.
- Is the forecast deterministic (showing a single outcome without conveying potential error and uncertainty) or probabilistic (showing the probabilities of one or more discrete outcomes or categories) or issued as an interval (showing an explicit upper and lower limit between which a value is expected to occur)?
- What is the spatial (e.g. what is the level of detail?) and temporal (e.g. how often is the forecast produced in a month?) resolution of the forecast?
- What is the lead time for each forecast, e.g. what is the time between forecast issuance and the shock?
- What regions are covered by the forecasts?
- What is the skill (the quality) of the forecast? How has the skill been assessed (e.g. skill at a specific location, skill at predicting extreme events)?
- Is the forecast available throughout the year? Does the accuracy / skill of the forecast change over time?
- Is the forecast reliable? Meaning that the forecast should be regularly and consistently produced and the forecasting agency should have the capacity to produce these forecasts throughout the lifespan of the s/EAP.

The menu of forecast required in the full EAP (section 4.2) requests to provide the following information about the available forecasts and requests to include an explanation about which forecast will be used and why. Especially for non-weather-related hazards, this menu might include relevant non-meteorological monitoring or surveillance systems (e.g. health or protection sector dashboards, and Internally Displaced People (IDP) tracking systems).

- Name of forecast
- Source
- Lead time
- False alarm ratio and missed events
- Number of times the forecast has been issued for this hazard in the last 10 years

You can download a template for the menu of forecast table and find a more comprehensive guide on forecast verification or skill analysis in the toolbox below.



Menu of forecast and skill analysis for the simplified EAP

For the sEAP a less thorough assessment can be done. The rationale is that perhaps there is less data available to assess the forecast skill which is particularly true for non-weather-related hazards. However, if data is available, information should be included as you want to avoid false alarms or missed events that will jeopardise the reputation of the National Society but also the mechanisms of anticipatory action.

Menu of forecast and skill analysis for community-based approaches

For community-based or very localized approaches, there may not be the capacity to carry out an in-depth forecast skill assessment. However, you can still compile an overview of the forecasts and warning information available, such as national forecasts, community-based early warning systems, and traditional or Indigenous forecasting methods.

Even at community level, you will need to select a forecast or signal to prompt early action. This selection process may not be as scientifically rigorous as in other contexts, but what matters is that the community trusts the information enough to act on it. For that reason, validating the chosen forecast or signal with the community is essential.

If there is significant uncertainty about forecast reliability, consider focusing on no-regret actions.

Step 6: Set impact threshold

In whatever anticipatory action approach you selected, you want to address hazards of a specific magnitude. For example, the purpose of the DREF is to fund humanitarian operations by National Societies. Hence, the anticipatory pillar of the DREF provides funding for anticipatory action for events of a magnitude that can be linked to significant humanitarian impact in the past. For your

community-based approach this threshold might be lower or the government might also set different thresholds. Still, it is helpful to collect information on the previous impacts of the selected hazard in the country or context to determine and justify the selected impact level. Please revisit chapter 5: Collect risk, early action and impact information if you still need to collect impact data.

Guiding questions

- From your impact assessment, which years show humanitarian impact, e.g. because a significant number of people was affected, a significant number of houses destroyed?
- In which years did the National Society respond to a hazard, e.g. with a DREF allocation or with other humanitarian funding?
- Which years or events were perceived as disastrous by communities, branches, experts or other stakeholders?
- When was a disaster declared for the selected hazard?

The discussion should result in a decision at what impact level you would want to activate your plan. For example, you could use reference events stating that you are targeting events like a cyclone with windspeeds greater than a certain amount, which happened in the past in your country.

Note that sEAPs target the same type of events: those that have caused humanitarian impact in the past. However, the magnitude of the event will differ between an EAP and a sEAP. Exceptions are cases where only very little data is available.

The full EAP (section 4.3) asks you to do the following:

- explain why you selected a certain magnitude of the event,
- how your impact level was defined,
- how much impact can be expected based on the strength of the event,
- indicate to which return period the selected impact level corresponds



Why do EAPs target only events that have caused humanitarian impacts in the past?

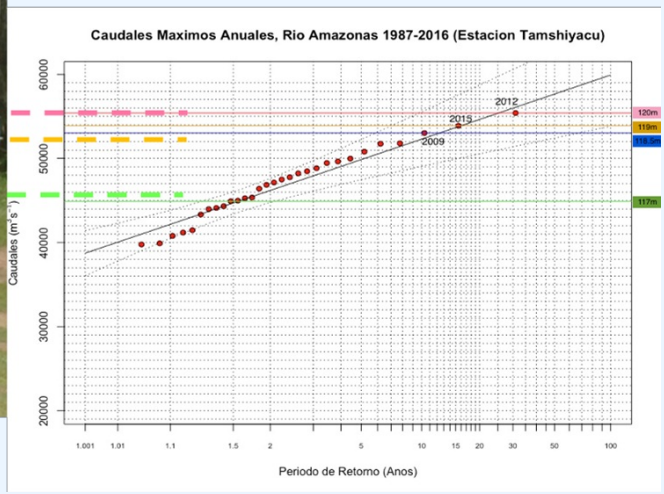
Anticipatory action is not the silver bullet to solve all challenges in disaster risk management or address skyrocketing humanitarian needs across the globe. Anticipatory action aims at managing residual risk that cannot be addressed by long term investments in disaster risk reduction. For example, in a flood prone area you would try to build a dyke or put houses on poles if the houses are flooded on an annual or bi-annual basis rather than setting up an anticipatory action system for those recurrent events. On the other hand, you are unlikely to have enough funding to build a dyke so high that it will also reduce the risk of a major flood. Anticipatory action can be critical to evacuate people and their livelihoods before that kind of major flood.



Setting impact magnitudes

The image can help in explaining which events we target with anticipatory action. You can see that people can cope with recurrent floods (green line) by building their houses on poles. Stronger events (orange and red lines) that occur less often will then also have impact and require action, e.g. evacuation of people and their assets.





Step 7: Link impact and hazard magnitude

After having defined what magnitude of impact you want to target, you need to link the impact magnitude with the hazard magnitude, e.g. estimating what windspeed would cause houses to be destroyed. Depending on your availability of data (both impact and hazard), you can plot historical events on an x-y axis, with the hazard magnitude (e.g. windspeeds) on the x-axis, the impacts (e.g. houses destroyed) on the y-axis. This is called a “hazard-impact curve” and can help you decide at what level of hazard would be important to use as your trigger, because you know it causes substantial impact.

Approaches to hazard-impact curves

Example 1: Philippines Floods – Simple - Impact data

For floods in Philippines, the analysis of a lot of impact data is taken into account depending on the flood level, such as the price drop of rice crops depending on their reproductive stage and the percentage of crop loss on municipal level that is considered critical in a five year return period event. The Philippines are employing a very impact and data-driven approach.

Example 2: Ecuador Volcanic Ash - Expert estimation

In Ecuador, the impact of volcanic ash is categorized into three main areas: crop loss, damage to livestock, and health effects on people. Estimated impacts for each category are determined by the quantity of volcanic ash present in the region. As a result, three distinct and practical levels of impact have been clearly delineated, providing a structured framework of thresholds. It is important to note that this model relies heavily on expert opinions, with less reliance on empirical and experimental data.

Example 3: Bangladesh Cyclone – Vulnerability data crossed with historical data

In Bangladesh the impact on houses is prioritized, therefore several factors are combined, such as the distance of houses from the coast, the proportion of kutcha and semi-pucca houses and the wind reduction factor to estimate the damage of a certain wind-speed to these houses. This information is triangulated with historical data about house destruction. When a storm approaches, the forecasted wind speed is transformed into an exposure map. This map, combined with impact curves, estimates the percentage of houses likely to be affected by the forecasted storm. The result is a map highlighting the percentage of houses at risk of destruction within each union in the exposed district. Priority for intervention is assigned to unions where more than 25% of rural houses are potentially damaged.

Example 4: Mongolia Dzuds – Prior Events

In Mongolia not a lot of data is available on both the forecast and impact aspects, making it difficult to draw definite conclusions about the level of impact. The action threshold defined in the trigger section is derived from analyzing the limited data available for the past few years. It represents the best estimate to identify years when the herder population and provincial government may find it challenging to safeguard herder livelihoods from substantial losses.

Step 8: Define and justify trigger threshold and forecast variable

After having analysed the link between impact and hazard magnitude you should be able to determine and justify the level of impact and the corresponding hazard magnitude at which you want to trigger your plan or s/EAP. Hence, the output of this step should be a threshold of a given forecast variable and its justification. For the full EAP two more aspects are specifically mentioned in the criteria which might also be useful to think about in the other approaches:

- Frequency of the threshold being reached: Please show in which years (if the data allows) you would have reached the trigger and what is the frequency of the trigger being reached
- Humanitarian impacts: Rather than looking at specific return periods, you will need to demonstrate that your threshold is linked to events, which have caused significant humanitarian impacts in the past (see below).



Dynamic or flexible triggers

Triggers are very useful when pre-agreed. Moreover, most of the triggers in s/EAPs are static which means the threshold is set on one specific value, e.g. windspeed of 120km/h. However, what if the reality doesn't follow your plan, e.g. the very same region is hit by a cyclone again, we have consecutive drought years or communities are more vulnerable because of conflict outbreaks and even a small flood will have huge impacts? This could be addressed by more flexible or dynamic triggers that take into account changing vulnerabilities and contexts.



Impact-based forecasting

The idea of impact-based forecasting (IBF) is to predict what the weather will do and not what the weather will be like. However, IBF requires substantially more data than only weather forecasts, e.g. meteorological data in combination with risk information.

Please find a guide to impact-based forecasting in thetoolbox.



Step 9: Define stop mechanism (if applicable)

For anticipatory action plans with a lead time longer than three days, a stop mechanism may be useful to be considered and is required for s/EAPs. A stop mechanism stops the activation of early action activities in case there is a significant change of the forecast, and the threshold is no longer reached, or it is still met but in a different location. Hence, the stop mechanism should include the description of what the National Society will do if, according to the forecast, the hazard is projected to change in intensity or location within the last days before the event. That means that also actions need to be planned accordingly, so that they can be stopped at the point of the stop mechanism.

Bangladesh Flood EAP

DESCRIPTION

The flood EAP has two triggers. Trigger one which initiates preparatory actions is met if the 10-day forecast indicates a probability greater than 50% of a 10-year flood lasting more than three days. The second trigger, which initiates the early actions, is met if the 5-day deterministic forecast confirms that floods are still imminent and that flooding will damage more than 25% of households' assets or affect 40% of the population.

LEAD TIME:

1st trigger (Pre-activation) 10 days; 2nd trigger (Activation): 5 days

In the trigger statement of the Bangladesh flood EAP, you can see that they introduced a 10-day pre-activation trigger in which they start to pre-register families. However, only when the 5-day activation trigger is met, the early action is implemented. If the 5-day trigger is not reached or confirmed, the activation and thus the early actions will be stopped.

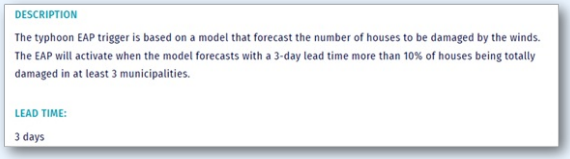
Step 10: Develop a trigger statement

The trigger statement is a key component of your pre agreed anticipatory action plan (section 4.1 in the full EAP) and it should exactly state when your plan will be triggered. The trigger statement should be clearly understood by all stakeholders involved in order to avoid confusion about when a trigger is reached.

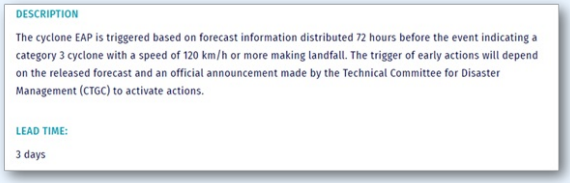
A trigger statement typically includes the following ingredients:

- Forecast used and forecast source: The forecast used and forecast source should clearly state which forecast, e.g. a certain rainfall forecast is being used and from what source, e.g. national meteorological service
- Variable: the variable should clearly state which variable of the forecast is being used. Hence, this should be an indicator such as Standardised Precipitation Index (SPI3) or heat index, or water levels at a specific station.
- Threshold of that parameter: Here you put the threshold that you have identified in the previous step. Make sure that your forecast provider is calculating this threshold, e.g. if the forecast is issued in mm of rainfall, but your trigger is based on the standardized precipitation index (SPI), who will calculate the SPI?
- Lead time: The lead time defines when the conditions must be met for the anticipatory action to be effective. This helps ensure that interventions are timely and proactive.
- Probability: If available, you should add the probability of the event to happen. For example, the trigger could be a forecasting showing 80% chance or greater of 30mm of rainfall or more.
- Stop mechanism: If your plan has a stop mechanism, it should be mentioned in the trigger statement.
- Monitoring system: You need to decide how your forecasts are monitored and who is responsible for this. We will elaborate this further in chapter 8.

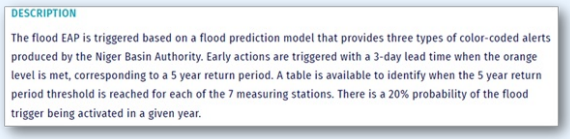
Examples of trigger statements



Philippines



Mozambique



Niger

A complete trigger statement can look like this:

When the *[Source of information]* forecasts *[Threshold of climate variable OR Threshold of impact]* at *[Lead time]* and with a *[measure of probability]*, actions will be taken. If *[stop mechanism]* occurs, activities will be paused. This system will be monitored closely by *[Monitor]* in the following way *[System]*.

Staggered or phased triggers

In order to win valuable time, some National Societies have introduced phased or staggered triggers. That means that they have a pre-activation trigger and an activation trigger. The Bangladesh example above introduced a phased system to their flood EAP. They use a pre-activation trigger at day -10 to pre-register households and get some logistics ready, to then be ready to implement their actions, e.g. cash distributions at day -5. This gives them valuable time as without the readiness trigger, the actions could not be implemented in the short lead time.

These triggers also constitute important approaches to anticipatory action for non-weather hazards, since events like

epidemic outbreaks or displacement crises are difficult to anticipate relying on a single (meteorological) variable. Instead, anticipatory action for epidemic outbreaks might rely on a combination of climatic indicators (e.g. rainfall levels for cholera) that are known to favour transmission as pre-activation triggers and surveillance indicators (e.g. suspected or confirmed cases in neighbouring districts) for the actual activation of the plan. Likewise, triggers for displacement might rest on border-crossing reports and a subsequent assessment of coping capacities in estimated host communities.

Note that funds are only allocated from the IFRC-DREF for an s/EAP once the activation trigger is met. If funds are needed during the phase between readiness or pre-activation trigger and activation trigger, the National Society has to find them or need to account for them in the annual readiness costs of the s/EAP.



Combination of forecasts for drought

In some cases, a combination of different forecasts and variables might be needed. In a Validation Committee meeting in 2023, the members suggested to combine different forecasts in drought triggers. The rationale is that rainfall forecasts alone will not suffice as they do not give any information on the impact (due to the time lag and also the timing of rainfall and its impacts on vegetation). Hence, rainfall forecasts should be complemented with measures of vegetation condition, food security or any other measure that reflects the prioritised impacts.

Combining information on different aspects and / or from different sources is also important for non-weather hazards. As outlined above, triggers for epidemic outbreaks or displacement might rest on a combination of indicators that are associated with their occurrence, such as monitoring and surveillance data, occupancy levels of reception or healthcare facilities, or political and / or weather-related drivers.

Step 11: Develop a mechanism that defines the intervention area

Once you receive information about the trigger being reached you should also know in which geographic regions the trigger is reached. If you work in a preselected community or area designated by the government, you activate your anticipatory action plan. For anticipatory action plans that cover larger areas like s/EAPs, you need to know how to prioritize the municipalities and where to intervene. Note that you and the National Society will probably not have the capacity to act in all municipalities and support everyone, hence you will need to prioritise in a transparent manner. The full EAP criteria state:

There is a map or a clear methodology that will tell the National Society where action should be taken based on a combination of vulnerability, exposure, and the forecast, when the EAP is activated based on the trigger model. (Section 4.4 in full EAP template)

Currently there are two main ways to define the intervention area:

Impact-based forecasting

In case you have an impact-based forecasting system, it should tell you which locations might be most affected. For example, if your National Society has the capacity to act in three municipalities you can select those three municipalities that are forecasted to be most affected.

Indicator-based risk assessment

If no impact-based forecast is available, you can use a regular weather forecast and overlay this with exposure and vulnerability information. This can serve as a proxy to predict where impacts will be highest. The simplest way to do this is to use an indicator-based risk assessment by using the vulnerability and exposure indicators that you have identified in your risk assessment (see chapter 5: collect risk, early action and impact information). This method is used in most EAPs so far.

There is a variety of methodologies to do indicator-based risk assessments. However, the most prominent one is probably the INFORM Risk Index methodology.

Automatization in QGIS

When an EAP activation is near, speed matters. An intervention map is essential for planning and communicating your response, but creating such maps usually takes hours and advanced GIS skills. With QGIS automation, the process can be reduced to minutes.

QGIS is a free and open-source GIS used worldwide, supported by a strong community. Its automation features allow you to run predefined processes with a single click – no coding required. As long as your team has basic QGIS skills, you can create, adapt, and troubleshoot automated workflows. Unlike many tools tied to administrative boundaries, QGIS enables precise geospatial analysis, helping you target the areas most at risk.

Specialized QGIS Training for Automated Trigger Models

The IFRC Network QGIS Training Platform is the main resource for building QGIS skills in a humanitarian context. It includes a dedicated exercise track on developing automated trigger workflows, based on the Madagascar Cyclone EAP model. Documentation of the operational model is also available on the platform.

Through this exercise track, practitioners learn how to:

- Build a model from scratch.
- Adapt existing models.
- Tailor outputs (e.g. generate spreadsheets).
- Apply predefined styles and map templates for rapid map production.

The track is embedded within the wider training platform, giving easy access to video tutorials, additional exercises, and in-depth guidance on GIS analysis. You can find a link to the training platform below in the toolbox.

There is no defined methodology to derive the intervention map. Hence, if you have another established methodology, please make sure that you explain it well in the EAP document. You can find examples from Madagascar and Somalia below.

Example 1: Cyclone trigger development in Madagascar

For the AA project in Madagascar, the activation trigger is set as follows: if the Météo Madagascar (DGM) forecast indicates landfall of a tropical cyclone with wind speeds above 118 km/h within the next 48–72 hours.

Once this condition is met, an automated QGIS model defines the intervention area and estimates expected impacts. The model buffers the forecast cyclone track by 200 km and intersects it with multiple datasets: the exact locations of health and education facilities (OpenStreetMap), and a 1 × 1 km raster grid containing population (WorldPop), number of buildings (Google Buildings), and agricultural area (Copernicus Land Cover).

The model outputs both geospatial layers and spreadsheets. Predefined style files and map templates allow users to quickly generate:

- An overview map highlighting the affected districts.
- Thematic maps for each sector, showing the exposed population, buildings, agricultural land, and health and education facilities.

The model relies on one dynamic input – the forecast cyclone track – while all other datasets remain static. These static datasets are not always the most up-to-date or perfectly accurate, but they have a crucial advantage: they are freely available, cover the entire country, and even exist globally. This makes the workflow simple, fast, and reliable.

Ground-truth data, such as detailed government surveys or field assessments, can provide higher accuracy and local relevance. However, these datasets are often costly, slow to collect, and only available for limited areas. Global datasets, by contrast, may be less precise at the local scale, but their consistency and coverage allow organizations to build models that are immediately operational and can be easily updated when new versions become available.

Other trigger models can achieve higher precision by relying on advanced technologies or highly detailed datasets. Yet these approaches often come with trade-offs: higher costs, greater technical complexity, and reduced local ownership, as many organisations lack the resources or expertise to maintain and adapt such systems. The Madagascar cyclone model shows that a straightforward QGIS-based approach can remain both effective and sustainable within existing capacities.

The QGIS trigger workflow for Madagascar can be found in the toolbox.

Example 2: Drought trigger development in Somalia

For the anticipatory action project in Somalia, a whole workflow was developed in the open source geoinformation software QGIS for the trigger which is owned and run by the Somali Red Crescent Society.

For the development of the Somaliland-Somalia Drought Trigger mechanism various data sources were thoroughly analysed. Finally, the main parameters chosen for the trigger, based on the historical impact assessment, are the twelve-month Standard Precipitation Index (SPI12) and the IPC acute food insecurity classification. The exact data used are the documented and forecasted SPI12 (source: ICPAC) and the forecasted IPC classification (8-month forecast, source: FEWSNET), that is used to calculate a population weighted index of food insecurity. The trigger thresholds for both components were optimized towards the most favourable proportion of hit rate and false alarm rate. The emerging thresholds were <-1 for the SPI12 and >=0,7 for the IPC-based index. The triggering is done on district level and per district just one trigger activation per year is possible.

This information of the threshold is then overlaid with an indicator-based risk assessment which identifies the most at risk districts. The QGIS trigger workflow for Somalia can be found in the toolbox.

Toolbox

Tools and templates

- IFRC Network QGIS Training Platform
- TEMPLATE Hazard Selection Table
- TEMPLATE Menu of Forecast
- Full EAP template and criteria
- Simplified EAP template and criteria

Impact-based forecasting

- Guidelines on Multi-hazard Impact-based Forecast and Warning Services
- IBF methodology drought Zimbabwe (510)
- IBF methodology Uganda floods (510)

Forecast skill assessment

- Guideline on forecast verification or skill assessment (RCCC)
- Forecast skill powerpoint (RCCC)
- Ensemble forecasting explained

Drought related guidance

- Decision Tree - Questions and Pathways to FbA for Drought
- Financement basé sur les prévisions et actions précoces en cas de sécheresse
- Arbre de décision - Questions relatives aux ABP pour la sécheresse et marches à suivre pour les concrétiser
- Drought learning series

Non-weather hazards

- Anticipatory Action for epidemics (Briefing)
- Demystifying anticipatory action for dislpacement: a menu of operational options
- Working Group on Anticipatory Action for Displacement
- EAP Summary: Honduras - Population Movement
- EAP Summary: Cameroon - Cholera
- Start Network guidance on conflict anticipation

Other key reads, documents and websites

- Technical working groups (topics and regions)
- QGIS Trigger Workflow for Somalia
- QGIS Trigger Workflow for Madagascar
- Trigger approaches and risk monitoring (Module 4) in the Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings toolkit

07. Select early actions

07. Select early actions

Summary

Early actions are at the heart of anticipatory action and of each s/EAP. In the case of s/EAPs, National Societies must demonstrate that the actions proposed will reduce key impacts and are feasible given the forecast lead time. It is therefore critical to devote time and attention to identifying impacts, to prioritizing those that can and should be addressed through anticipatory action, and to identifying and operationalizing early actions that will help at-risk populations mitigate negative impacts. Careful identification, prioritization, and selection of early actions helps ensure that actions:

- Reduce priority risks
- Are adapted to the local context
- Are feasible to implement in the lead time before the extreme event with the capacities and resources at hand
- Align with the priorities of communities, local disaster risk management actors (e.g. local governments or NGOs) and relevant preparedness plans
- Fit within government disaster risk management policies and regulations.

This chapter outlines a recursive process for identifying and selecting early actions that can be implemented ahead of predicted hazards. While the process is particularly designed to support the development of s/EAPs funded through the Anticipatory Pillar of the IFRC-DREF, many of the steps and considerations described are also relevant for other anticipatory action approaches.

Regardless of the chosen approach, the steps below – implemented iteratively – will help you to answer the following key questions:

- What are the main impacts caused by the hazard in question?
- What early actions will best reduce these impacts)?
- Which of these early actions are currently feasible given the existing context and organizational capacities?

Because s/EAPs require explicit justification and validation, the steps and criteria in this chapter are presented in a structured and evidence-based way. When applying this guidance in other anticipatory action approaches, the same principles may still apply, but the process may be adapted depending on the operational context, institutional arrangements and funding mechanisms.

Step 1: Define your team

If you have not already defined your team, please seechapter 3, step 3: Put together and onboard a team for FbF development If your team is not yet cross-departmental, you may need to engage your National Society's experts in WASH, shelter, livelihoods, and other sectors relevant to the early actions you consider.

In addition to your core team, the steps below require consultation with as wide a range of actors as possible, including community residents, community committees, civil society organizations, local and national governments and agencies, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society branches, other humanitarian and development organizations, research institutions (including the climate science community), and the private sector. The exact composition of actors involved may vary depending on the anticipatory action approach pursued (e.g. community-based initiatives, imminent DREF activations, support to governments in their anticipatory action work, or s/EAP development).

Step 2: Develop a data collection plan to do the following

Although the steps below are presented sequentially, you will save time and resources by selecting your methods and developing a data collection plan and tools that gather information on all four simultaneously (identifying impacts, prioritizing impacts, identifying and brainstorming early actions, narrowing early actions) or iteratively. Each step below lists and links to methods from chapter 5 that will help you to identify hazard impacts, to understand how different stakeholders experience and perceive the severity of these impacts, and to elicit potential early actions.

Use the methods in chapter 5 and steps 3 to 7 below to define a plan for collecting relevant data and testing your results. If you are developing an s/EAP, make sure that you document the process of selecting the early actions: who was consulted and how and what other assessments were considered? Documenting this process is also useful for other anticipatory action approaches to ensure transparency and facilitate future learning. See the toolbox of this chapter or the toolbox of chapter 5 for examples of research plans and templates.



Practical guidance: Sampling a range of communities

When developing an s/EAP, communities are not pre-defined. National Societies decide which communities will receive assistance at the time of activation based on risk and forecast data. Despite this national-level, flexible

approach it is important to gather community-level data to ensure that the impacts being addressed, the risk factors, and the support provided are relevant across the area of potential intervention. As you will not be able to consult all exposed or vulnerable communities in your country, you should develop a plan to strategically collect data from the broadest range of communities possible given the resources available. This means paying attention to factors such as geographic location and exposure, the type of housing, differences in agricultural or other livelihood patterns, road access, and other factors relevant to the early actions you are planning.

You may not be able to gather all types of data from each community, but by using different tools or data sources (e.g. focus group discussions, key informant interviews, community visits) in different locations, you will be able to better compare across contexts and assure the relevance of your early actions across potential intervention areas. For community-based anticipatory action approaches, this process may instead focus on gathering detailed information within specific communities or programme areas where early actions will be implemented.

Step 3: Identify impacts

As the goal of early actions is to prevent or reduce the humanitarian impact of anticipated extreme events, it is of crucial importance to understand the impact that the hazard in question causes, how these impacts unfold and who is most affected. If you have not already done so through a scoping study, you should develop a comprehensive list of impacts for the hazard in question. This can be done using a combination of the following methods outlined in chapter 5 of this manual:

- Impact and risk databases
- Literature review
- Key informant interviews
- Focus groups discussions
- (Post-disaster) community visits
- (Participatory) stakeholder workshops.

These methods can be applied across different anticipatory action approaches. For example, community-based initiatives may place stronger emphasis on participatory consultations with communities, while government-supported anticipatory action systems may also draw on national risk assessments or sectoral studies.

Step 4: Prioritize impacts

Once you have developed a comprehensive list of impacts, you must decide which you can and should focus on. The choice of how to prioritize will depend upon your context and needs. While anticipatory action can contribute to mitigating some disaster risks that have not been otherwise reduced or managed via long-term disaster risk reduction, it cannot address all potential disaster impacts. Prioritizing impacts is therefore essential in order to focus available capacities and resources on those impacts where acting early can make a meaningful difference.

To develop realistic and effective anticipatory action initiatives, particularly when developing an s/EAP, you will need to prioritize the impacts and select your area of focus. This is an important step, as the selection of impacts will influence the early actions that you design to reduce those impacts as well as the indicators or decision-making rules used to determine when early action should be taken. For example, if your selected impact is destruction of houses due to strong winds you will need to design early actions that prevent or reduce such destruction. In the case of an s/EAP, windspeed might therefore become an important variable for your trigger mechanism.

If you are developing an s/EAP, you should be able to clearly state the impacts that you are going to address and explain why. For example, you may prioritize an impact based upon suffering caused to vulnerable populations, overall economic impact, stakeholder priorities (disaster management priorities, National Society priorities, community priorities, etc.), organizational capacity and expertise, and/or after considering the selection criteria for early actions presented in Step 6.1 below. As each of these methods yields opportunities, trade-offs, and challenges, a combination is likely most appropriate. The following previously explained methods can support your team's impact prioritization:

- Impact and risk databases
- Literature review
- Semi-structured, key informant interviews
- Focus group discussions
- (Post disaster) Community visits
- (Participatory) Stakeholder workshops
- Surveys

Step 5: Review and scope existing early actions

Before developing a long list of potential early actions, it is useful to review what types of early actions are already being implemented in your country or in comparable contexts to address the impacts you have prioritized in the previous step. In many countries today, anticipatory action initiatives already exist or have been piloted by governments, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, UN agencies, NGOs, or other communities themselves. In some contexts, governments or technical working groups have even defined or are working on standard catalogues of tested early actions as a "menu" to choose from. Reviewing these experiences and practices can help you understand what has worked well, what challenges have emerged, and how your National Society's actions could meaningfully complement existing efforts.

This review does not need to be extensive, but it can provide valuable insights into:

- Early actions that have already been tested
- Operational challenges encountered during implementation
- Opportunities to align with or complement existing initiatives.

Sources for such a review may include discussions with government disaster management authorities, consultations with other humanitarian organizations and UN agencies, scoping existing anticipatory action plans, documentation from previous activations or pilot projects, or resources such as the Anticipation Hub. Insights from this review can inform the brainstorming of early actions described in the next step.

Step 6: Identify and brainstorm potential early actions

As you begin to understand and prioritize the impacts of most concern and relevance to communities and your National Society as well as which actions are already being or have been implemented, you can dig deeper into early actions that might reduce those specific impacts. Be sure to involve experts from relevant sectors, such as shelter, agriculture, WASH, health, or disaster management. The following methods can be used to identify or brainstorm potential early actions:

- Literature review
- Semi-structured, key informant interviews
- Focus group discussions
- (Post disaster) Community visits
- (Participatory) Stakeholder workshops
- Policy and practice reviews
- Early action database
- Community (or stakeholder) ranking activities

The way early actions are identified may differ slightly depending on the anticipatory action approach. For example, community-based anticipatory action may rely strongly on participatory consultations or ranking exercises and local knowledge, while government-supported anticipatory action may build on national standard operating procedures that are developed and agreed on within Technical Working Groups or other coordination mechanisms.



Practical guidance: Brainstorming early actions

In our experience, when brainstorming early actions, stakeholders tend to default to traditional response actions, as that is what they are most familiar with. During workshops, focus group discussions, interviews or other consultations, push participants to think outside the box. This could include proposing new actions or shifting the content and timing of existing actions to make them suitable for anticipatory action.

Try asking: Are there things you do not currently do, but that you could do (between the forecast and hazard onset/peak) to mitigate impacts if you had additional resources or support? Are there actions that are currently implemented only after a disaster but that could instead be implemented earlier to reduce impacts? Is this action more effective as an early action or as a response?

Mozambique: Government-led coordination on anticipatory action

In Mozambique, all anticipatory action initiatives are formally coordinated by the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGD). INGD chairs a Technical Working Group where different partners, including the Mozambique Red Cross (CVM), work on national-level Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for different hazards. As of early 2026, such SOPs were in place for floods, droughts and tropical cyclones.

These national-level SOPs include harmonized trigger thresholds and transparent decision-making rules as to when the government will formally declare an activation and partner organizations initiate implementation of early actions as spelled out in their respective frameworks and protocols. Building on these existing SOPs and the actions included in different protocols, INGD are working towards a standardized catalogue of early actions for each hazard. This ensures that early actions implemented in Mozambique are aligned, coordinated, and tested. It also avoids creating conflicting expectations among at-risk communities across different activations, contexts or implementing partners.

Additional partners starting to work on anticipatory action in Mozambique might therefore not determine “new” early actions on their own but rather implement actions from the SOP catalogue in accordance with their respective mandate and expertise.

Practical guidance: Connecting early warning messaging to Public Awareness and Public Education (PAPE) through the Prepare Messages platform

Early actions identified by National Societies often include the distribution of early warning messaging to help inform communities on actions to take to help keep them safe in hazard scenarios.

When developing these messages, reference thePAPE guide (Public Awareness and Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction) for guidance on adapting and adopting messages at the national level. A link to the guide can be found in the toolbox.

The IFRC’s Prepare Messages platform (link in thetoolbox) is a database tool for National Societies to publish their early warning messaging. Published messages can be distributed via multiple channels, including through Google SOS Alert, local media, and IFRC digital platforms. Connect with the Global Disaster Preparedness Center for support on developing messages and distributing messages on the Prepare Messages platform.

Step 7: Narrow and prioritize list of early action

Once you have used the methods outlined above prioritize impacts and identify early actions, it is time to determine which actions are most feasible and most likely to reduce suffering and losses.

There is no “right way” to prioritize early actions. There are many criteria that you can apply to assess and rank early actions and to guide you in your selection process. The list below contains criteria other National Societies have found helpful in evaluating and prioritizing early actions. These criteria can be applied across different anticipatory action approaches; however, they are particularly important when developing a simplified or full Early Action Protocol. Click on the link for examples of how the different criteria could benefit the prioritization of early actions. When developing an s/EAP for submission to the Anticipatory Pillar of the IFRC-DREF, the Validation Committee will explicitly use the following criteria when assessing your s/EAP:

(1) Evidence base: provide an evidence base for your selected early actions and reference to academic research, empirical studies, interviews with key informants/experts, among other sources of evidence. You may also consult the evidence database, which collates the findings from empirical studies of anticipatory action. Providing such evidence strengthens the justification for early actions in any anticipatory action approach and is particularly important for the validation of a full EAP.

(2) Feasibility: the implementation process shows that each step of the activation has been thought through and considered and that implementation in the lead time available is possible. When developing an s/EAP, the National Society capacity section will require you to demonstrate that the National Society has the capacity to deliver the action in terms of operational, thematic and administrative capacity, in terms of alignment with strategies of the National Society, and in terms of capacity to advance funds.

(3) No regrets/do no harm: describe how the selected actions contribute to the well-being of the population even if the expected event does not materialize. Beyond s/EAP development, this principle is crucial for all anticipatory action initiatives, regardless of the chosen approach.

(4) Lifespan of prepositioned items: To ensure the feasibility of the rapid distribution of items in the short timeframe between forecast and event, prepositioning of goods may be necessary. When planning prepositioning for an s/EAP, prepositioned items should have a lifetime of at least the lifecycle of the s/EAP and should only be replenished after an activation.

In addition to these criteria, the following methods may help you to prioritize your early actions:

- (Participatory) Stakeholder workshops
- Consult secondary data on effectiveness and evidence
- Community (or stakeholder) ranking activities

Additional considerations for the selection of early actions:

When developing an s/EAP, reflecting on the criteria above is a crucial part of the process in order to get your s/EAP approved. Below you find a list of additional considerations that might help you determine which early actions might be suitable choices in your context.

Policy fit

Question to ask yourself

- Is the action consistent with government policies and/or other institutional contingency plans?

Example of Policy Fit: Cash transfers in Mozambique

When the cyclone EAP was being developed in Mozambique, the National Institute for Disaster Management – the government agency overseeing disaster response – did not allow cash transfers. This meant that although cash transfers could theoretically have been used to mitigate many cyclones impact before a storm hits, the National Society could not include cash transfers in the EAP. Following cyclone Idai in March 2019, the government began making changes to these policies. This means that cash transfers may be an option for future EAPs in Mozambique.

Complementarity

Question to ask yourself

- Does the action complement or build upon early actions already implemented or planned by other actors?

Complementarity refers to ensuring that selected early actions build on, reinforce, or strategically complement anticipatory action or disaster risk management activities already implemented by governments, communities, and other organizations. In many countries, government disaster management agencies, UN agencies, NGOs, local organizations or communities may already implement or work on anticipatory action related to the same hazard and / or impacts. When selecting early actions, you should therefore assess what actions already exist or have previously been implemented and consider how your initiative can complement rather than duplicate these efforts. Complementarity may involve filling operational gaps, reinforcing actions implemented by other actors, or focusing on areas where the National Society has a comparative advantage.

Scale

Question to ask yourself

- Can this action be set up and implemented at the desired scale?

Examples of Scaling

Uganda
Uganda was the first anticipatory action pilot focused on a small geographical area. After test activations and further analysis, it was acknowledged that anticipatory action systems for National Societies are most effective if they can be implemented anywhere that a forecast predicts severe impact. For example, in the event of an impending flood, impact-based forecasts will tell the National Society which communities are likely to be most severely impacted so they can act accordingly. Given this approach, it is essential to understand if the National Society has the capacity to implement the selected early action in all the potential locations that can be impacted.

Mozambique
During consultations, stakeholders in Mozambique identified evacuation support as a way to bring people to safety before floods or cyclones. However, in developing the theory of change, they realized that, given current capacities, it would be impossible for Mozambique Red Cross to put agreements in place nation-wide to assist people with transport. As they could not predict exactly where evacuation assistance and transport would be necessary, the National Society abandoned evacuation assistance and agreed to revisit it, should national shelter or evacuation systems change.

Evidence of effectiveness

Question to ask yourself

- Is there evidence that the action would be effective in reducing the prioritized impact(s)?

The quantity and quality of evidence for potential early actions varies greatly. Some interventions, such as water purification and mosquito nets, have been tested in a variety of humanitarian and non-humanitarian contexts. Many, however, have not been tested as early actions (implemented in the short window of time before an extreme event).

In such cases, evidence from effectiveness in other contexts can be used to extrapolate potential effectiveness as an early action. For example, if an action is difficult to execute properly over a longer timeframe, it is unlikely to be viable for short-term implementation.

Although still limited, there is a growing volume of evidence and studies about the effectiveness of certain early actions. Links to rigorous studies of the effectiveness of anticipatory action can be found on the Anticipation Hub Evidence database.

Approved EAP summaries with an overview of different early actions can be also found on the IFRC website.

Examples of Evidence of effectiveness

Mongolia
In Mongolia, the Mongolia Red Cross assisted 2,000 herder households with unrestricted cash grants of USD 100 in December 2017 and with animal care kits delivered to the pastoralists in January 2018. Research showed that providing tailored animal care kits and a small unconditional cash grant in anticipation of extreme winter and drought conditions – known as dzud – was effective in reducing livestock mortality by roughly 50% and increased offspring survival rates.

Bangladesh
In Bangladesh, a test intervention in 2017 demonstrated that families who received cash transfers ahead of floods accrued significantly less high-interest debt, otherwise a common coping strategy, and experienced less psychosocial stress during and after the flood period; they also had more reliable access to sufficient and nutritious food (for more information, see Gros, et al. (2017)).

Feasibility

Question to ask yourself

- Is there evidence that the action is feasible?

The two key aspects of feasibility are the time required and access considerations:

- Is it possible to execute the action effectively with the given forecast lead-time?
- Are there any factors (road or travel conditions, conflict/security, social tensions) that could interfere with access to the communities and hence successful implementation?

The capacity of the National Society is also closely linked to feasibility. In approaches where anticipatory action is implemented jointly with government actors or community-based actors, the capacities of these actors should also be considered when assessing feasibility.

Social acceptability

Question to ask yourself

- Is the proposed action something the community will support?

Example of social acceptability: Taking houses apart before a storm

Mozambique
Some actions, while effective, might not be something communities are willing to engage in. During conversations with shelter experts, it was suggested that deconstructing houses and storing the most valuable components, such as windows, doors, and metal roofing, might be a good way to reduce losses during cyclones or floods. An action such as this can only be effective if the community also believes the work entailed is worth the potential risk or reward. When the CVM team conducted focus groups, one high-risk community was already doing something similar, however, many others felt that such an action was too time consuming and was unlikely to be effective. If only a few communities are likely to cooperate with your early action, it is unlikely to be successful overall. Therefore, before including actions that might meet community resistance in an anticipatory action initiative, it is essential to consult with a large sample of potential beneficiaries to ensure the action is socially acceptable.

Capacity to implement

Question to ask yourself

- Does the National Society have the institutional capacity (thematic, logistic, administrative, financial, human resource) to implement the action effectively given the lead time and scale?

In cases where anticipatory action is implemented in partnership with government agencies, community-based structures or other operational partners, it is also important to assess the capacities, roles and, where applicable, mandates of these actors to ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and feasible.

Value for money/efficiency

Question to ask yourself

- How does the cost for the action compare to the expected (or proven) benefit? Are there other actions that could achieve the same impact for less?

Example of Value for Money/Efficiency: Water tanks vs. individual supplies for water purification

In some cases, different actions may aim to address the same anticipated impact – but with varying levels of cost, complexity, and effectiveness. In Mozambique, for example, the team explored options to supply at-risk communities with clean water and reduce the risk of waterborne diseases. One proposed action involved the installation of large water tanks at central locations, while another suggested the distribution of household-level water purification kits, such as chlorine tablets and jerry cans. While both options targeted similar impacts, the water tank installation involved significantly higher logistical costs, whereas the household kits were easier to procure, store, and distribute. Although comprehensive cost-effectiveness data is not always available, the Mozambique example demonstrates how to use available evidence and consultations to assess which option offers better value for money. Whenever possible, National Societies should compare the anticipated benefit of different interventions against their relative cost to maximize the benefits of available funding for anticipatory action. This consideration is particularly relevant when designing early actions for an s/EAP as these come with predefined budget caps but can also support decision-making in other anticipatory action approaches where resources may be limited.

Alignment with organizational mandate and priorities

Question to ask yourself

- Does the National Society or other organization implementing early actions have the mandate, expertise, and authority to implement the action?

Example of alignment

The National Society does not have expertise or the mandate to protect roads or bridges. This is often the mandate of a government line ministry such as Ministry of Transportation or Ministry of Infrastructure. While this may be a priority for at risk communities, it is outside the mandate of most National Societies. In such cases, national Societies may instead support government actors through coordination, advocacy, or complementary actions that fall within their mandate.

Timing

Question to ask yourself

- Is the action beneficial at any time of the year, or does it depend on when the event occurs?

Example of timing: Harvesting crops before a flood

Some actions, while potentially very beneficial and effective, may only be possible during a very short window of time. For example, harvesting crops to save them before they are damaged may only be relevant / effective if the event occurs when crops are close to maturity. Because a cyclone or flood may hit at any time during the season, the team in Mozambique decided not to include this in their EAP. Another option might also have been to make certain actions dependent upon the precise timing or season, only activating those actions when the timing would make sense. The potential benefit of such seasonal actions would then have to be weighed against the administrative and readiness costs of preparing for many different early actions.

Such considerations are particularly important for s/EAPs where early actions are clearly defined in advance, but they can also inform anticipatory action embedded in community-based or government-led disaster risk management systems.

Action lifetime

Question to ask yourself

- How long will the action benefit people?

Example: Shelter strengthening and mosquito nets

When planning your action, it is important to consider how long the action can and should benefit the people. For example, if you intend to distribute water purification kits so that people have access to clean water immediately after the event until response aid arrives, you need to consider how long such a response usually takes. If not, people may run out and resort to drinking dirty water anyway, rendering your action less effective.

There are also other elements to consider regarding the action lifetime. In the case of materials to reinforce shelters, it is probably unrealistic to assume that materials distributed during one cyclone season will be available for use in the next season. Mosquito nets, on the other hand, have an average life of 3 years in many contexts. If your activity is contingent upon specific training or skills to be effective, how long can people be expected to remember what they learn? Determine how long you need your materials or actions to benefit people and adjust your actions accordingly.

Benefit of acting early

Question to ask yourself

- How long until the action has benefit? Is early action necessary to get the benefit, or could the action be done after the event?

Example: Timing of early actions to take effect

Some early actions may be executed quickly but take time to take effect. For example, alpaca vaccinations begin to take effect after a few days. Anticipatory vaccination can therefore reinforce animal health before the impacts of cold and wind and provide benefits before response usually reaches remote villages.

In cases where the impact of an action is not felt for weeks after a disaster, traditional response might be more efficient and easier to target. However, if certain areas are known to be cut off from supply routes (e.g. flooding affects roads and transport) early action may reduce the need for air support or complicated logistics. If the action can be executed just as efficiently and effectively through existing early warning and response systems or immediately following an event there may be no reason to risk acting in vain.

Assessing whether the timing advantage of anticipatory action provides a clear benefit is therefore an important step across different anticipatory action approaches.

No regret actions

Question to ask yourself

- Will people still benefit from the action even if the event does not occur?

It is the nature of anticipatory action that sometimes a forecasted event will not occur as expected or will deviate to a new location. For this reason, you may end up “acting in vain.” When developing an s/EAP, the template asks you to consider how your proposed actions will help people if a projected disaster does not strike. Materials from a shelter kit, for example, might be repurposed or used for general repairs. Water purification materials can be kept for a future flood event. Because people can use unrestricted cash for whatever they choose, households will find a use for it no matter how the situation unfolds.

Be aware that acting in vain can affect National Society credibility or reputation. Repeatedly performing large-scale evacuations in vain might not be beneficial over time. This consideration is crucial across anticipatory action approaches, particularly when actions are highly visible or require significant community mobilization.

Do no harm/avoid generating new risks

Question to ask yourself

- Will the selected action be in line with the principle of*Do No Harm*? Will the selected action create new risk?

In fragile contexts, people may be targeted because of assistance they receive, or people may hear of the support and come from nearby communities with the expectation of also accessing support. Displaced people may be more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Migration of this kind can also increase tensions within communities and strain local services and resources, potentially increasing vulnerability to external shocks. These considerations apply as well when anticipatory action is implemented through community-based initiatives or in collaboration with government actors, where actions may affect broader social or institutional dynamics.

Example: COVID-19

Bangladesh
During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, a cyclone struck Bangladesh, activating the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's (BDRCS) EAP (see more info here). Assistance with evacuation to cyclone shelters was one of the early actions, but encouraging people to congregate with strangers ran counter to public health guidance encouraging social distancing. To mitigate these risks, BDRCS added personal protective equipment and WASH support for evacuees to their interventions to reduce the risk of spreading COVID.

Environmental sustainability

Question to ask yourself

- Will the selected early action minimize environmental harm and avoid creating additional environmental risk or waste as far as possible?

Environmental sustainability refers to considering the potential environmental impacts of early actions and selecting options that minimize environmental harm wherever possible. Early actions may reduce environmental risks, for example by preventing contamination or resource depletion, but they can also unintentionally create environmental impacts through logistics, procurement, waste generation, or pressure on natural resources. When selecting early actions, you should therefore consider how environmental impacts can be minimized and whether more sustainable alternatives are available. At the same time, environmental considerations must be carefully balanced with humanitarian outcomes, the lived realities of at-risk communities, and the primary objective of anticipatory action to protect lives and livelihoods from the humanitarian impacts of predictable shocks.

Examples from Lesotho and Lebanon:

When developing an Early Action Protocol for cold waves in Lesotho, one of the potential early actions discussed was the use of salt for gritting roads. However, the team identified significant environmental concerns and ultimately did not select the early action. In addition to selecting early actions, environmental sustainability can also influence how early actions are implemented. When designing heatwave kits, the Lebanese Red Cross chose to include reusable water bottles rather than distributing single-use bottled water. This approach reduced plastic waste while ensuring access to safe drinking water during heat alerts. Finally, procuring items for in-kind anticipatory assistance locally wherever possible, is always good practice to reduce logistics-related emissions.

Budgetary constraints regarding prepositioning

Question to ask yourself

- Do you have sufficient budget to procure all the items that need to be prepositioned? If not, how will this gap be filled?

Depending on the hazard, there may be only a few days between activation and the extreme event. If early actions depend on relief items that cannot be procured on short notice, prepositioning might be necessary. For s/EAPs financed through the Anticipatory Pillar of the IFRC-DREF, up to 65 percent of the budget to be used for readiness and stock. Hence, if your early action consists in prepositioning of items for an amount that go beyond this percentage, either different early actions need to be identified, or stocks financed by other sources or other procurement arrangements (e.g. virtual warehouses) made. For other anticipatory action approaches, prepositioning arrangements may differ and can include collaboration with government warehouses, community-based stock systems, or integration with existing disaster preparedness mechanisms.

Lifetime of prepositioned relief items

Question to ask yourself

- Can the prepositioned items be stored for the valid lifetime of the s/EAP (five years for the EAP or two years for the sEAP respectively)? If not, how will items be replaced if they expire before an activation or revalidation?

An IFRC-DREF approved EAP can have two activations within the five year lifespan before it needs to be revised and resubmitted for another five years and a full budget allocation. An IFRC-DREF approved sEAP can only be activated once, this finishes the sEAP and then it needs to be revised and resubmitted for another two years and a full budget allocation. If the early actions you are considering depend on the use of prepositioned goods, it is important that these items do not perish before the five or two years are over. For other approaches to anticipatory action, rules for prepositioning might be less rigid, since prepositioning may be done jointly with government structures or within communities, if at all applicable.

Example: Distributing hay and veterinary kits

Peru
In an early phase of anticipatory action programming, Peru tested distributing hay and veterinary kits to herder families in the Andes. One of the priority impacts of cold waves is that alpacas lack access to grass and become susceptible to diseases, leading herders to lose their animals. Hay and dried concentrated food would have needed to be prepositioned to ensure availability at short notice. As both items' shelf lives were less than five years, there was a risk they would spoil before the EAP was activated, and they could not be included in the EAP.

Practical guidance: Challenges in prioritizing impacts and actions – verifying and weighing stakeholder perceptions

While key informants have valuable insight into their contexts, people may also have beliefs based upon misinformation or make assumptions about cause and effect and the severity of impacts that are not supported by systematic data. For this reason, you should always seek to verify data from as many data streams as possible (e.g. focus groups and databases). A lack of data does not automatically mean people's observations are wrong, but it is always best to validate stakeholder perceptions using secondary data, when possible.

For example, humanitarians will often prioritize reducing loss of life over other impacts. However, it may be that, overall, the event in question causes few deaths on average. Early warning messages alone may be successful in reducing mortality, and it may be difficult to predict and prevent remaining fatalities. In such cases, the decision to focus early action financing on preventing immediate loss of life may still make sense, but the decision to do so should at least be informed by critical evaluation of actual mortality rates and the likelihood of reducing it. Understanding patterns in mortality and the circumstances contributing to fatalities can help determine whether anticipatory action is likely to reduce these impacts effectively.

In another example, stakeholders often believe that flooding leads to an increase in diseases (such as cholera), leading to additional hardships such as loss of income or time out from school. National health statistics, however, may reveal that overall caseloads and mortality rates remain the same or are more closely related to other factors. This data could be incomplete; however, it should be presented to stakeholders and considered along with stakeholder perceptions when determining which impacts to address and early actions to take.

If stakeholder priorities are contradicted by evidence, it may be appropriate to try to influence those priorities. When contradictory data does not exist, is not seen as reliable, or is not readily available, it may be necessary to rely more heavily on qualitative data and stakeholder perceptions.

Taken together, the criteria above provide a practical framework for systematically assessing and prioritizing early actions. While some of these criteria are explicitly required when developing an s/EAP, the same considerations can also guide anticipatory action planning in community-based initiatives, imminent DREF operations, or systems coordinated by the government.

Example of applying the criteria: the process in Mozambique

It is unrealistic to assume there could be a fixed, context-independent order in which criteria can or should be applied. The team in Mozambique found it impossible to apply these criteria in a linear fashion. Instead, they considered potential early actions using an iterative process of narrowing actions, focusing on promising interventions, collecting additional data, and then reconsidering actions against the background of newly acquired knowledge. The discussion below provides examples of how the above criteria were applied in Mozambique to gradually arrive at the most realistic and beneficial early actions.

In Mozambique, certain criteria were particularly useful in immediately reducing the field of potential early actions and focusing future research. These include *policy fit, alignment with organizational mandate and priorities, capacity to implement, and feasibility*.

Policy fit was an essential consideration in Mozambique because, cash transfers – an area of action of particular interest in anticipatory action programming – were explicitly prohibited under Mozambican laws at the time. While cash-transfer actions might be effective in reducing the impacts of floods and cyclones in Mozambique, the team elected not to spend time investigating early actions that would not be possible within the project timeline. If cash-based interventions become an option in the future, further work will be needed to explore feasibility and to develop theories of change.

In Mozambique, two criteria – *alignment with organizational mandate and priorities* and whether CVM had the *capacity to implement* the action – were interrelated. National Societies are the default recipients of IFRC anticipation funding. As Red Cross staff and volunteers in Mozambique do not have the experience nor the mandate to attempt to reinforce public infrastructure or power lines, any early actions in these sectors would be better planned by the government transportation authority and funded by other means. For this reason, actions related to reinforcing roads, bridges, and electrical lines were eliminated from consideration early on.

Feasibility is likely to be an essential criterion in any context. If the action cannot be performed given the forecast lead time, it should not be considered. However, if no one has tried your intervention, it may not be immediately clear whether an action could be successfully implemented within the given timeframe. This was the case for shelter

reinforcements in Mozambique. Because damage to houses is a major impact of cyclones according to historical data and stakeholders at all levels, CVM elected to conduct simulations to see whether the Red Cross volunteers could distribute materials, conduct trainings, and execute the actions within the time afforded by the forecasts.

The *scale* at which action could be successfully set up and executed was also critical in Mozambique. Providing families with evacuation assistance for themselves, their animals, and their belongings might have increased rates of evacuation as well as loss of life and livelihoods, but CVM did not have the capacity to develop transportation agreements for all communities that might be affected by a cyclone. Such an action would be more feasible to set up within specific communities rather than on a national scale, and it was therefore ruled out.

Criteria, such as the *timing* of the action or *social acceptability*, were only applied once other criteria were met. It was determined that helping people to harvest their crops before a storm would be too difficult because it would require setting up cash-for work systems in a short period. In terms of timing, it would also only be a viable action if the flood or hurricane hit late in the growing season. The possibility of deconstructing houses to store and save expensive components only arose in later conversations with experts, therefore the social acceptability at the community level was not explored until later in the process of defining actions.

While demonstrating *evidence of effectiveness* is desirable, because anticipatory was at that time and continues to be in some contexts a relatively new concept, there is little definitive evidence for many actions. Considering this, CVM tried to build an evidence base for anticipatory shelter reinforcements by testing the intervention in its protocol.

Finally, some criteria were briefly considered but were not useful in the Mozambican context. *Value for money / efficiency*, for example, could only be considered when there was reliable, comparable data regarding the relative costs and effectiveness of different interventions seeking to address the same impact. This data was generally unavailable, but it was factored into decision-making when available. For example, the team considered evidence that installing large water tanks requires higher logistical costs than household distribution water purification kits.

After completing the process of identifying priority impacts, considering each action in relation to the criteria above, eliminating the actions that do not meet key criteria, identifying gaps in knowledge, collecting additional information, and reassessing the options (as many times as necessary) your team will eventually be left with the actions that make the most sense in your context.



Accounting for challenges and limitations in fragile and conflict-affected settings

Fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) can affect the feasibility and suitability of early actions, influencing many of the selection criteria outlined above. Most notably, they can lead to very practical challenges or limitations on different actions. For example, a planned evacuation route may no longer be safe due to an outbreak of violence, or cash-based assistance is no longer effective as economic fragility disrupted local markets. The toolkit on anticipatory action in FCV settings contains an extensive inventory of potential challenges and suitable adjustments or contingency plans for different types of early actions, addressing challenges related to: humanitarian access; disruption of critical infrastructure; insecurity; displacement; corruption; loss of trust; weak governance structures; constraints to data availability; social tensions; and the specific characteristics and vulnerabilities of different population groups at risk. The toolkit also addresses conflict-sensitive early action planning, taking into account different types of harm early actions may inadvertently do.

For more information, consult AA in FCV Toolkit Module 5 in the toolbox.

Step 8: Develop theories of change

Once you have identified several promising early actions, it is time to operationalize them and test the logic behind those ideas using theories of change. A theory of change (ToC) is a comprehensive illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It means describing step-by-step how and why the desired outcome (in our case reduced humanitarian impact) will be attained by implementing the selected early actions. It will help you to visualize, and eventually test whether your early actions are likely to reduce the prioritized impact. Your ToC should also encompass prepositioning and readiness activities that make the early actions possible upon activation. Depending on the anticipatory action approach, this may include readiness measures such as training volunteers, establish or support coordination mechanisms with government actors, or sustain community-based implementation structures. See chapter 4 for more on readiness and prepositioning,

A ToC is often created as a series of "if… then…" statements and then put into a visual representation, like a flowchart (see example below). It helps to think of a ToC as a map on which you mark the spot where you want to go: the desired result or problem solution. Then you draw a route on the map that you think is best to get you from A to B. This is a description of the expected chain of results, from action to solution. Along this route, you will make assumptions. For example, you may have to assume that a particular bridge is passable or that you can cover a certain distance per day. You also note down landmarks you expect to see on your way (intermediate results or milestones). It is important to use all available evidence when building a theory of change, so that every "if… then…" relationship is built on information and evidence rather than conjecture.

A ToC can also be used as a basis for a log frame and monitoring and evaluation framework. When developing an s/EAP, your team should therefore develop a detailed ToC for each early action being considered for inclusion in the protocol. For other anticipatory action approaches, theories of change can similarly help clarify the logic of early actions and support planning, monitoring, and learning. The choice of how many ToCs to develop at this stage will depend upon your team's needs and your process for narrowing and testing your early actions. At the end of this process, your team should have a sound understanding of how and why each action will contribute to your desired results. ToCs for each early action you include in your protocol need to be included in the EAP submitted to the IFRC-DREF.

The ToC process is a crucial step in your identification of actions, make sure to follow this guidance on steps to take.

At least four steps are involved in developing a theory of change:

Step 1

- Start from a specific goal, meaning the positive change the anticipatory action initiative seeks to induce to address a problem that has been identified.

Example: "Reduce the incidence of diarrheal diseases in vulnerable communities when there is flooding in Exemplandia".

Step 2

- Map out the process of change, working backwards from the specific goal. Ask: "What is required to bring about this change?" It is useful to do this as a team and consulting relevant and knowledgeable stakeholders.

Tip: Note down process steps on post-it notes and put them on a flip chart (see example below). Visualizing a ToC helps team members to understand it more easily and question its logic.
Example: Visual representation of a ToC for Exemplandia (see below).

Step 3

- Write a narrative summary expressed as a sequence of logically linked events ("if… then…" statements) and support them with available evidence.

Example 1: "If all households in flood-affected communities have 30-days' worth of water purification tablets and receive information how to use them, then they will purify their drinking water. If they purify all their drinking water, the incidence of diarrheal diseases will decrease."
Example 2: "The ability to deliver water purification tablets is dependent on the assumption that the national society has procured and pre-positioned the necessary supplies and has them ready to be moved and distributed to the population immediately upon activation."

Step 4

- Make implicit assumptions about how changes happen explicit and reference supporting evidence.

Tip: Note assumptions on post-it notes in a different color and add them in between the process steps.

Example : "The ability to deliver water purification tablets is dependent on the assumption that the National Society has procured and pre-positioned the necessary supplies and has them ready to be moved and distributed to the population immediately upon activation."

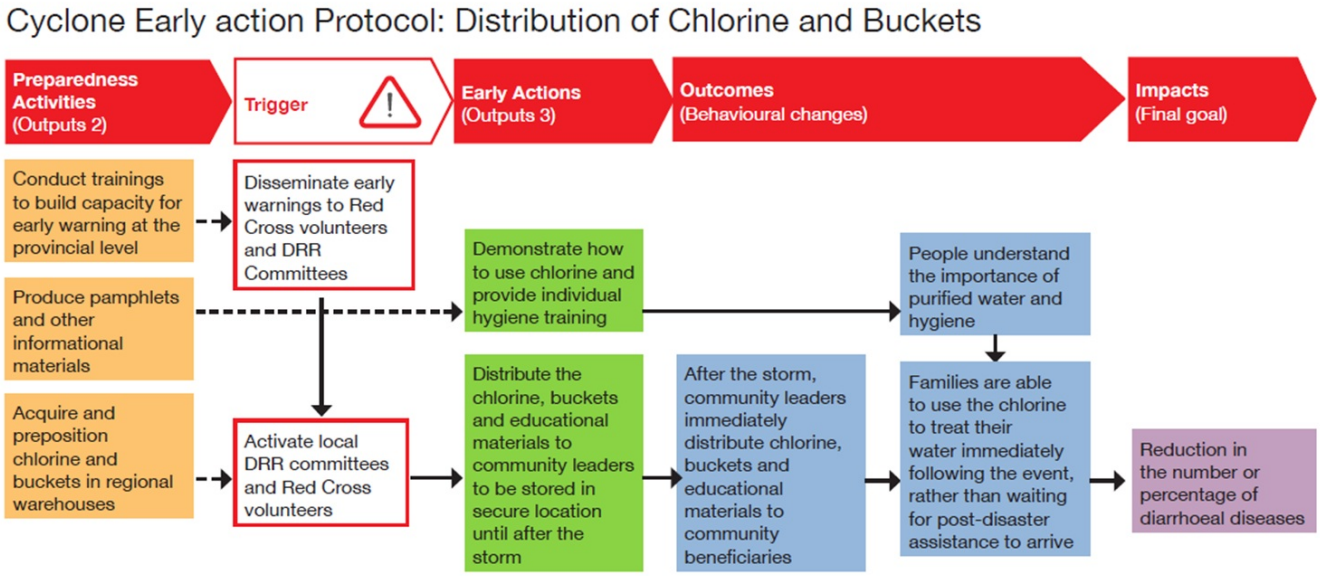
In the previous example, many assumptions are made that would need to be confirmed by evidence. For example, it is assumed that households understand and appreciate the information they have received about the importance of water purification or that they already have the knowledge and awareness to use purification tablets. But what if pre-existing knowledge about water purification is low?

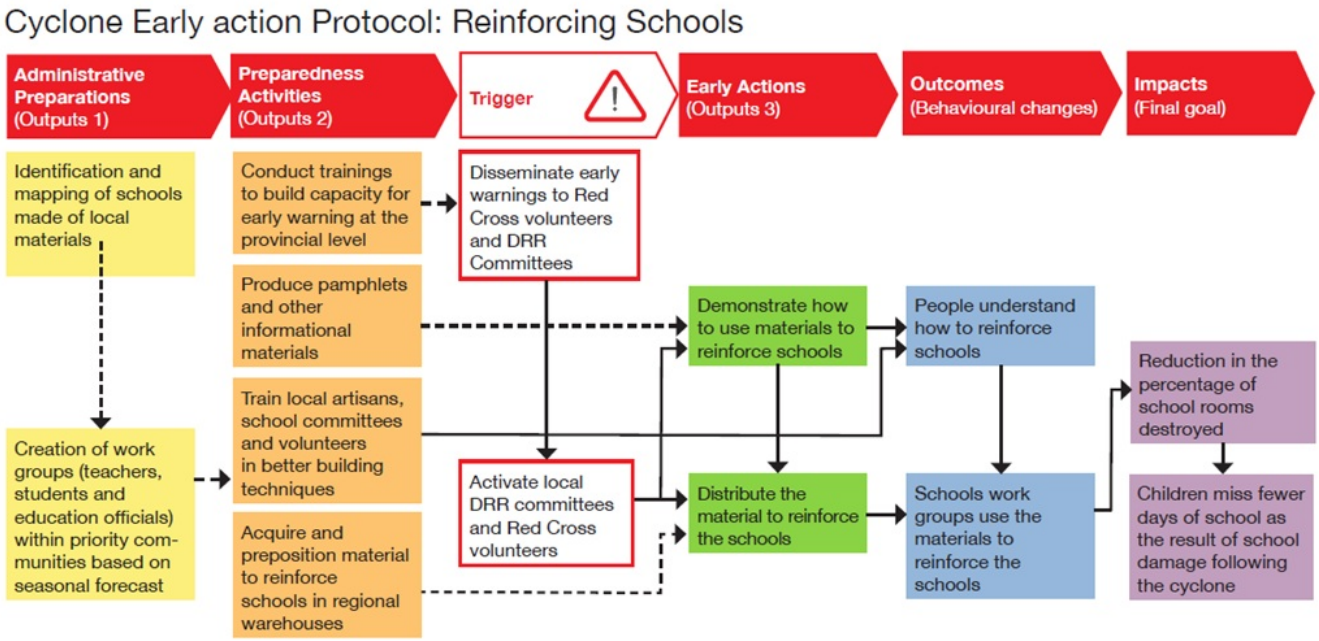
What if written information materials are given to a household whose members cannot read? What if there are community members who speak a different language? What if there are reservations against using blue pills or tablets based on previous bad experiences or rumors? What if households purify their drinking water but they do not purify the water used for washing food items? What if safe hygiene practices are relatively unknown and household members do not wash their hands with soap and water before preparing

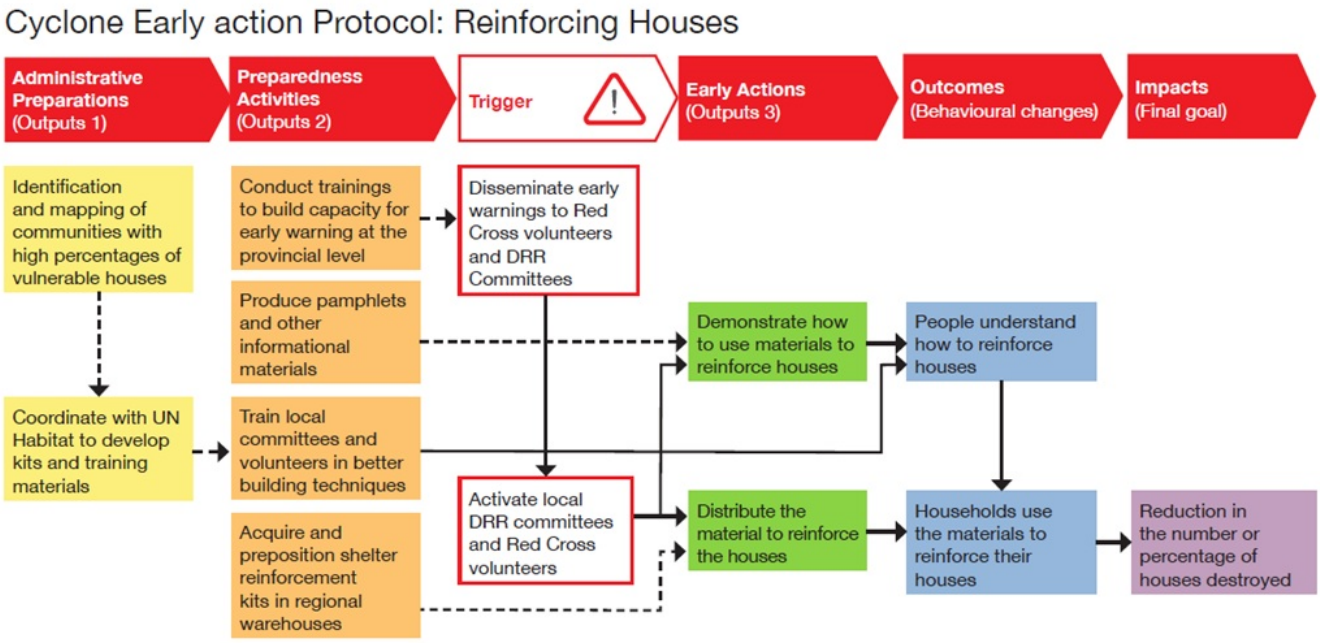
food and before eating?

All assumptions, as trivial as they may seem, should be made explicit and checked against evidence to see whether they are reasonable or need to be addressed as part of the early action protocol or anticipatory action initiative.

For more detailed guidance on how to develop a ToC, see the ToC presentation in the toolbox.







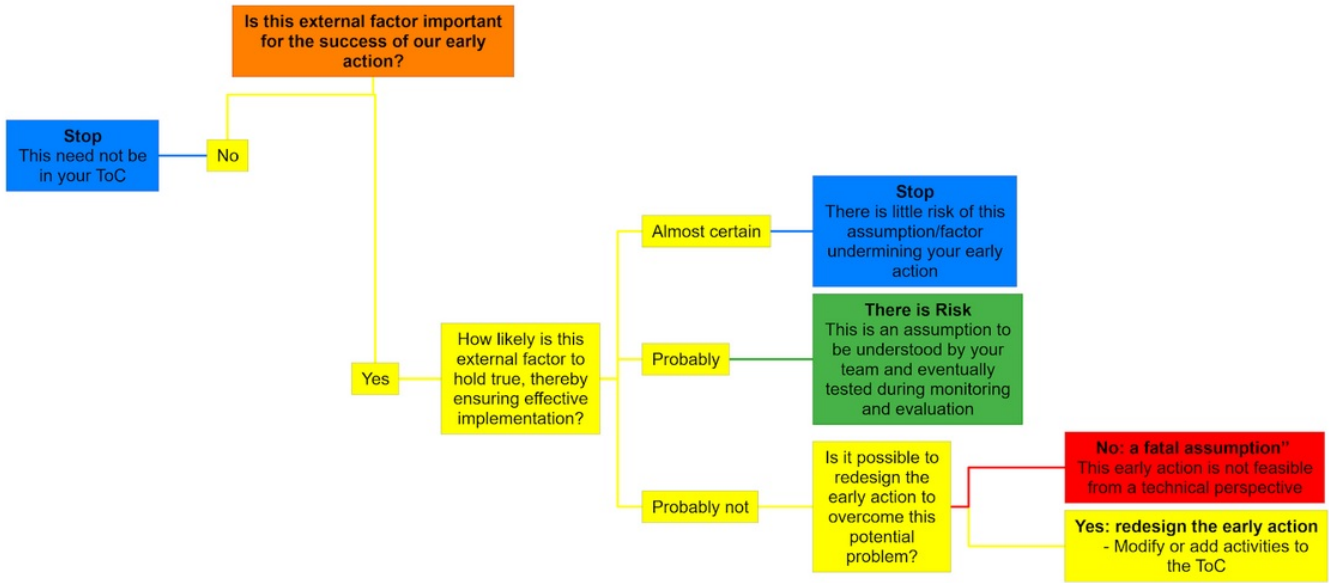
Step 9: Test or workshop - Theory of change

Once your internal team has developed theories of change, it can be useful to test or validate these theories of change with external stakeholders. Perhaps the most important step of this process is making your assumptions explicit and making sure there are not any fatal assumptions to undermine your success. This can be done using the following methods described above:

- Interviews with sector-specific experts
- Stakeholder workshops
- Community consultations

Depending on the anticipatory action approach, relevant external stakeholders may also include local authorities, government technical agencies, or community-based organizations involved in implementation.

Fatal Assumptions Decision-tree



Step 10: Finalize early actions

Based on the external feedback you receive from the consultations in step 8, select the early actions to be included in your anticipatory action initiative and finalize the ToCs. If you are developing an s/EAP, this means selecting the early actions to be included in the protocol. Likewise, in other approaches, it may mean agreeing on the early actions to be integrated into community-based plans, imminent DREF planning options, or government SOPs.

Step 11: Develop an activation plan for selected actions and test it

Design how, by whom and when the selected early actions will be implemented after a trigger has been reached or once the agreed decision-making threshold or activation process has been met. Conduct a tabletop exercise, drill, or full simulation (see chapter 11) to ensure your actions are feasible in the time frame given by the forecast or early warning window. For community-based approaches, this may also involve testing roles and responsibilities at branch or community level. For government-supported anticipatory action, it may include clarifying how National Society actions and implementation processes align operationally with government SOPs or coordination structures.

Step 12: Make rationale explicit your anticipatory action plan

Once you have made the final selection of early actions to be included in your s/EAP, including developing and validating your theories of change, it is essential to document how and why you came to the selection you did. Section 5.2 of the EAP requires that you outline which methodologies and data sources you used to identify impacts and actions and to justify how you came to select the actions in your EAP (note that a Theory of Change is not required in an sEAP). This will allow the Validation Committee to understand why the early actions in your protocol are most likely to mitigate the impacts of the hazard in question on the target population. Being explicit about your rationale will also help those responsible for revisions of the EAP to understand why these actions were selected, to consider what may have changed since those actions were selected, and to decide if the rationale is still valid for future versions of the EAP. Even when working outside the s/EAP mechanism, documenting the rationale for selected early actions is good practice. It can support transparency, coordination with partners, future revisions, and learning across activation or anticipatory action pilots.

Final lessons and recommendations

The methods and processes described above can assist you in identifying and selecting early actions. Keep the following suggestions in mind as you apply them to your context.

The identification and selection of early actions is an iterative process

- As indicated above, exploration of early actions is not a linear process. As you narrow in on the most promising actions, new questions may arise. Follow the gaps in your knowledge until you are confident in the actions you are selecting.

Keep an open mind

- The people within your organization may be attached to actions they are familiar with in a response context. Be sure to talk to as many experts and external stakeholders as possible to widen the possibilities. This may also include government counterparts, community organizations, and technical partners depending on the anticipatory action approach you are pursuing.

Do not pick something just because you have to

- It may be that after completing this process there are few, if any, actions that can be properly executed. In such cases, it may be necessary to discuss a way forward with the project sponsors/donors or look for simple actions (such as reinforcing early warning) that can have an impact.

Be critical – develop theories of change and test them where possible

- Developing a clear theory of change will help you to really assess how your action will contribute to reducing the prioritized impact and whether it can truly be successfully executed given the lead- time available to you. Stakeholders may be overly optimistic (or pessimistic) about the feasibility or effectiveness of a proposed action. Simulations or small-scale pilots are

valuable ways of testing your theory of change and operational capacity and will strengthen the quality of your anticipatory action initiative, especially when developing an s/EAP.

One criterion is not enough

- As you can see from the process above, there are many factors to consider when selecting early actions. An action that has proven extremely effective in one place, for example, might be impossible in another because of political, logistical, or other constraints. You must therefore gather evidence for each of these criteria rather than being guided by a single one.

Look to existing early actions for inspiration

- There are a growing number of countries and partners implementing anticipatory action for a range of hazards. Look to other National Societies or anticipatory action initiatives for guidance based on existing good practices.

Build your own evidence

- Anticipatory action is still an evolving field. This means that you may identify an action that has not been tested in your context. If your innovative action has the potential to help people and there is sufficient support from the partners involved, it may be worthwhile to test the action and develop your own evidence. This evidence can eventually be shared with the broader anticipatory action community, contributing to the Early Action Database and helping others in the process of identifying and assessing early actions.

Involve experts

- Although community involvement is crucial in the selection of the actions, it is important to include sectoral experts in the brainstorming process to identify the best measures to reduce the prioritized impacts, as some solutions might be innovative that communities at risk might not yet be aware of.

Make sure early actions apply the principle of *Do No Harm*.

Toolbox

Early action selection

- Resources for early action selection in FCV settings (Module 5) in the Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings toolkit
- Guidance on Public Awareness and Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Prepare Messages Platform

Theory of change

- Theory of change (English)
- Theory of change (Spanish)
- Decision Tree Fatal Assumptions
- Theory of change vs. logic models

DFID review of the use of ‘theory of change’

Learning for Sustainability

Data collection and post-activation guidance

TEMPLATE Data collection methodology planning

Mozambique Guidance and Tools for Post-activation Evaluation of the Cyclone Protocol

Financiamento baseado em Previsão em Moçambique

Other key reads, documents and websites

Cash and Voucher Assistance in Bangladesh (Gros et al.)

Anticipatory action in the age of Covid-19: lessons from Cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh

07.1. Link Early Actions to Social Protection

07.1. Link Early Actions to Social Protection

Summary

Scaling up and embedding anticipatory action into national risk management structures is important for sustainability and effectiveness. Scaling anticipatory action depends on the capacity of the system to pre-identify potential impacts and people that will need support, to effectively implement actions in the short window of time between a forecast and the occurrence of the hazard or when its impacts fully unfold. One of the strategies for doing this includes working with national social protection systems that are often in place and could scale up in anticipation of shocks. Under this sub-chapter, we cover:

- What is social protection?
- Why should we link anticipatory action and social protection?
- Why is it relevant to the work of National Societies and the humanitarian sector?
- What does the integration of anticipatory action and social protection look like in practice?
- Which social protection instruments can be used for anticipatory action?
- What should be kept in mind when linking anticipatory action and social protection?

What is Social Protection?

Social protection includes policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty, inequality and vulnerability (Costella et al., 2022). Social protection is also termed as social security and/or social policy in different countries. With increasing climate related risks, social protection programs are becoming increasingly relevant as they can help protect people from the impacts of climate shocks and stressors, protecting their lives and livelihoods.

Traditionally, social protection has supported vulnerable groups to address risks that occur during one's life cycle (e.g. unemployment, disability, old age). But due to the worsening impacts of climate change, it is expected that more people will be unable to meet their basic needs and will need additional assistance. For this reason, it is important to see how social protection systems can be strengthened and adapted to provide the necessary support against climate risks, especially in anticipation.

Social protection systems that respond to address climate shocks are commonly known as shock responsive social protection (for more info, see IFRC brief on SRSP in the toolbox), whereas systems that systematically integrate climate risk, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to strengthen households' capacity to prepare for, cope with and adapt to evolving climate impacts are termed as adaptive social protection. For more specifically on social protection related priorities, see the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre Position Paper on Social Protection. Both resources can be found in the toolbox.

Why should we link anticipatory action and social protection?

By integrating anticipatory action and social protection systems, we can harness synergies for taking anticipatory action before disaster impacts materialize, playing a critical role in reducing disaster impacts, building resilience and protecting development gains, especially by supporting some key aspects:

Timely response

Anticipatory action relies on predictive models to anticipate in advance of disasters. By coupling it with existing social protection systems, support can be provided in a timely manner to vulnerable communities before a disaster strikes. As people are already in the social registry, targeting becomes faster. This pre-emptive action can help save lives and minimize the impact of the disaster.

Speed

In the last years, many governments and donors have invested in making social protection programmes shock-responsive to ensure they are able to rapidly scale up during a crisis and scale back once the crisis is over. An anticipatory action mechanism would be a key piece of such a system, helping establish objective indicators and pre-agreed plans of action as well as ring-fenced financing to enable anticipatory action through social protection.

Scale

Social protection, where they exist for a long time, comprise of large scale, long-term, nationally owned systems. These systems can reach significant sectors of the population: Safety net programs, for instance, cover 2.5 billion people globally currently (Banerjee et al., 2022) and are continually being expanded. Anticipatory action programs that use existing social protection programs can reach larger populations and newer geographies.

Risk reduction

By using anticipatory action, social protection systems can be equipped to reduce climate/disaster risks by allowing investments in preparedness measures, such as cash for work schemes that help in reinforcing community infrastructure before a cyclone or offering training on disaster risk reduction that helps in adopting appropriate coping strategies.

Enhanced Resilience

When both systems are linked, communities can become resilient over the long term, across the overall disaster management cycle. When anticipatory action works through social protection, it in turn focuses on strengthening systems as well, which over time **is better equipped to** manage residual impacts and improve resilience.

Cost efficiency

Integrating these systems can result in cost savings by reducing the expenses associated with setting up parallel emergency response and recovery efforts after a disaster. Costs for registration, verifications or communications needed for anticipatory action can be reduced by piggy backing on existing social protection programs components like beneficiary databases.

Improved coordination

Linking anticipatory action and social protection can promote the coming together of country actors and stakeholders in a meaningful way, to coordinate and achieve co-benefits across sectors that contribute to a long term and shared vision of resilience.

Inclusivity

Social protection systems often target the most vulnerable groups in a society who are also most at risk from climate related shocks, as they are likely to reside in exposed areas, have pre-disposed vulnerabilities, and limited adaptive capacity. Linking these systems ensures that the most vulnerable populations are targeted for support and protection even under anticipatory action programs.

Why is it relevant to the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and the humanitarian sector?

Climate change impacts are intensifying, disproportionately affecting those who are already most vulnerable. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, these impacts intersect with ongoing violence and instability, placing even greater strain on already overburdened humanitarian actors and systems. Cumulative needs are coupling as countries reel under the impacts of compounding crises. Under such circumstances, based on the advantages discussed above, it is increasingly practical for anticipatory action actors including National Societies to consider social protection as a tool for delivering timely humanitarian assistance, at scale. At the same time, it offers a strategic pathway towards supporting structures for Red Cross Red Crescent partners.

When implementing anticipatory action through social protection initiatives, National Societies can play a crucial role as a key partner for governments, humanitarian and development organizations, as well as donors. They can assist national governments, leveraging extensive networks of volunteers, including those in hard-to-reach areas where government presence may be limited. With representation at the village, district, and national levels, their auxiliary function, combined with experience, networks, community outreach, and expertise, enables them to contribute to the enhancement of social protection systems in a number of ways:

Be quicker
by being flexible, agile and adaptive, present and ready to respond.

Reach those in need
by using community engagement, reaching remote areas and advocating on behalf of vulnerable people.

Reduce duplication
by improving and extending the systems that target who is eligible to receive assistance and register people for the various programmes.

Be more cost effective
by using their existing networks of volunteers, existing national capacity and experience of creating agile mechanisms.

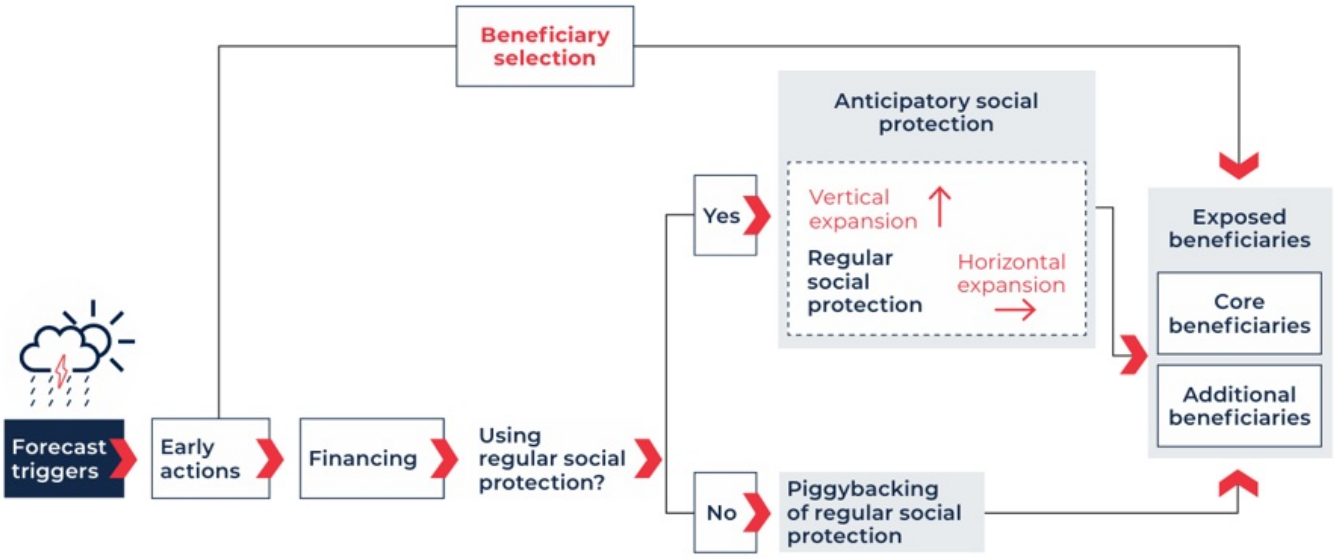
Be more predictable
by helping improve early warning systems, connecting with community preparedness initiatives and increasing the use of early action protocols.

Be more sustainable
by linking with longer-term programmes, drawing on other National Society experiences and drawing on existing relationships with community groups and other key stakeholders including local and national government structures

What does the integration of anticipatory action and social protection look like in practice?

In practice, linking anticipatory action and social protection can happen in two ways:

1. **Anticipatory Action actors integrate Social Protection:** When setting up an anticipatory action program in a country and determining the list of anticipatory actions to be taken, National Societies can consider whether existing national social protection programs (e.g. cash transfers, old age pensions, cash for work etc.) can be used for taking the anticipatory actions identified as relevant for the community.
2. **Social Protection actors integrate Anticipatory Action:** Social protection actors can improve their policies, program design and implementation processes by including climate risk information that prepares the system for anticipatory action. For example, National Societies can share trigger information developed as part of the EAP process with social protection actors, and help integrate it as part of the program design to trigger social protection payouts before an imminent shock.

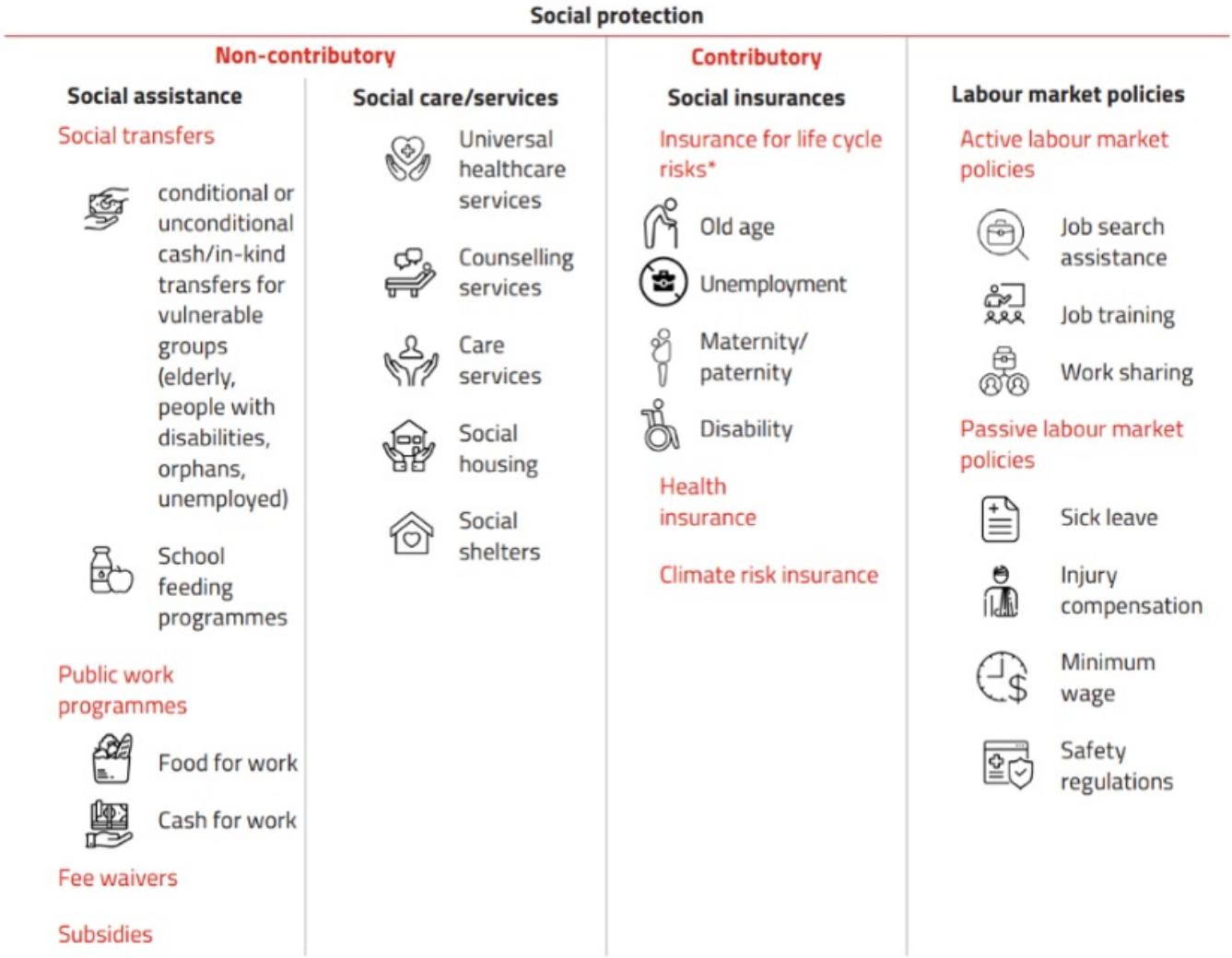


Which social protection instruments can be leveraged for anticipatory action?

A country's social protection system generally includes a combination of different instruments that are contributory (contributions financed) or non-contributory (tax financed) in nature, as seen in the figure above. Many of these instruments are already familiar to

National Societies and mirror modalities they use in their own programs, which means there are relatively low barriers to adopting a more integrated approach to implementing anticipatory action through social protection. Depending on what instruments are existing and operational in a country, National Societies can have different options:

- **Social transfers**, (instruments like cash/food/assets transfers, disability benefits, old age pensions etc.), can be used to deliver anticipatory cash or in-kind support through existing delivery systems, building directly on National Societies' experience with disaster response programming.
- **Public works,** can be leveraged (cash/food for work) programs to see whether anticipatory activities within the available lead time after a trigger is reached, such as relocating productive assets to safe locations, constructing/reinforcing shelters on higher ground, or clearing drainage to reduce flood risks.
- **School feeding and child focused programs** could offer readily available enrolment lists with schools or Ministries of Education that National societies can use to target children, and pre-position relief material, food packages, vouchers or cash to help support families with children in school.
- **Social care services**, similar to health and psychosocial support provided by National Societies in many countries, offer a concrete pathway for National Societies to link up with such networks and facilities to leverage their coverage, access and capacities, and deliver targeted health messaging, referrals and essential services to at-risk populations during the window between a trigger and the anticipated impacts**.**



How can National Societies engage in integration of anticipatory action and social protection?

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and the National Societies in particular, have a long history of engaging with national social protection systems (see the two example boxes below). Additional information on these examples can also be found in the toolbox.

Supporting the Integration of Anticipatory Action into National Social Protection Systems in Kenya

The Kenya Red Cross Society been actively engaged in reviewing the National Social Protection Policy, and in developing the harmonized household registration tool for registering households into the Enhanced Single Registry (ESR). Most recently, KRCS has supported people to access social protection via the ESR in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. In the case of KRCS, just like many other National Societies, its established auxiliary role, long-standing relationships with government actors, and community relationships uniquely position it to support the integration of anticipatory action and social protection systems.

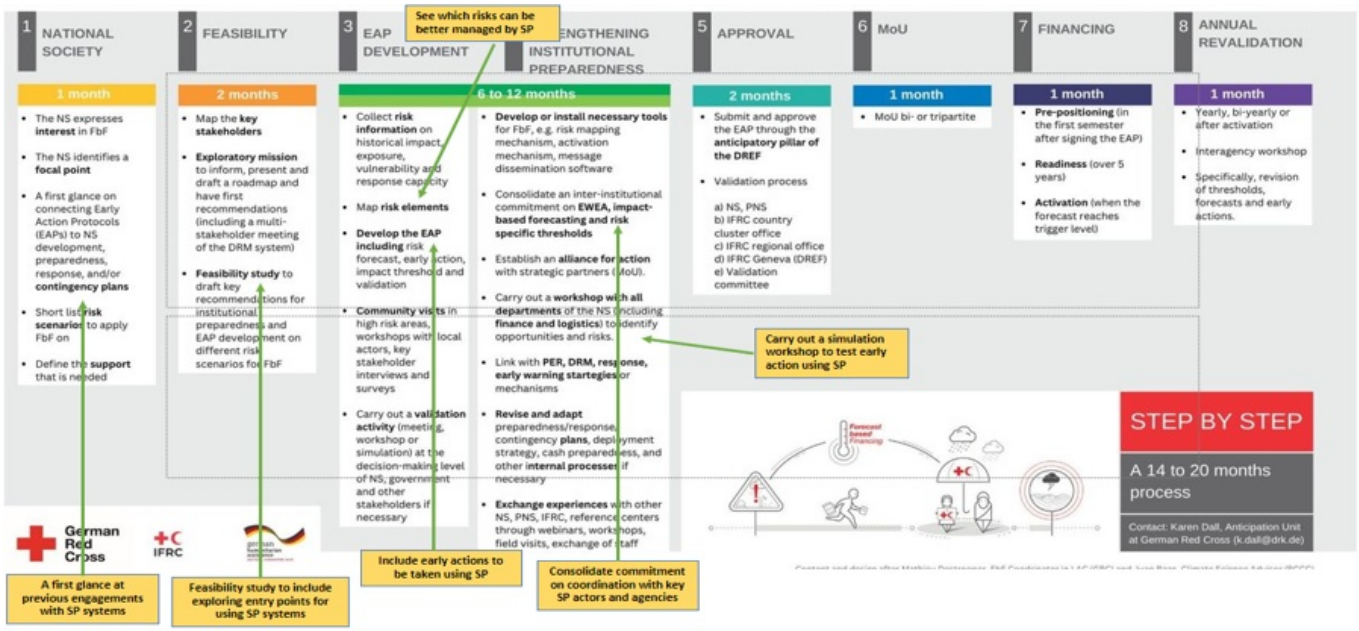
Using Social Protection Systems to Deliver Anticipatory Cash Assistance in Nepal

Another example is from 2021, when the Danish Red Cross transferred emergency funds to the Nepal Red Cross Society and supported the delivery of multi-purpose cash assistance to vulnerable groups within a month of peak floods. This was accomplished by utilizing Nepal's Social Security Allowance (SSA) program, leveraging beneficiary lists to target households. Cash was directly disbursed to SSA bank accounts, addressing essential needs and aiding the early recovery of individuals prior to the visible effects of the flood. This experience demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing the government's social protection system to efficiently and cost-effectively provide cash assistance on a large scale before or after a disaster. For more information, see the toolbox.

Depending on the technical and financial capacity of the country, different opportunities for engaging with anticipatory action exist. In general, there are some common ways by which National Societies can leverage social protection systems, irrespective of the instrument type. This includes:

- Aligning anticipatory cash transfer amounts with existing social protection program's benefit levels
- Using the same targeting strategy for a new group of beneficiaries or new geographic area
- Using already existing social protection payment channels/banks accounts
- Using existing social protection databases/social registries/community lists of vulnerable people and previously affected groups to identify vulnerable groups
- Using the same communication channels and trusted means of information dissemination

Concretely, to take this agenda forward, National Societies will need to work together with relevant sectors, such as social protection practitioners, disaster risk managers, climate and social science scientists and align with ongoing priorities and initiatives. In the infographic below, the key points where National Societies could seek to engage and integrate with social protection system within the Early Action Protocol development process has been identified.



Step 1: Understand the context

First, it will be important to understand the existing national social protection policy and program context to identify entry points and feasibility of leveraging existing systems. Apart from leveraging existing programs, a scoping can be done to determine if any new social protection policies are being drafted or an old one is being updated/reformed, and to explore opportunities to ensure that a future social protection program is anticipatory by design.

Step 2: In-depth technical analysis

As part of the design of an anticipatory action programme, it is important to understand how hazards impact people's lives and livelihoods. When linking with social protection mechanisms, it will be key to conduct robust technical analysis that show where and how climate vulnerabilities and exposure overlap with existing social protection programme beneficaries and delivery channels (e.g. bank account coverage), so that anticipatory action using such systems can reach those affected wherever, whenever. In this regard, it will be important to understand what data is available with whom, how it relates to climate-related vulnerabilities, how frequently it is updated, etc.

Step 3: Advocate linkages between anticipatory action and social protection programs and systems

When social protection programs already exist and there is a common interest in making them scalable by integrating anticipatory action, it will be important to jointly advocate and collaborate to agree on the specific actions that can be taken through such programmes; and for this, capacity and resources are key. As part of the anticipatory action scoping study and advocacy strategy, it is essential to identify and agree on who is doing what and where in terms of social protection (past, present and planned interventions). If studies show that social protection programs might not be ready to take anticipatory action, there might still be opportunities to use components of systems, like beneficiary registries and payments/communications channels.

Step 4: Prioritize dialogue and understanding

It is key to promote dialogue and understanding across sectors and establish a process that aims to align and converge objectives of social protection and anticipatory action interventions at policy and program level. This needs to be anchored by coordination platforms/working groups that allow for continued dialogue and exchange.

Step 5: Start simple, build commitment

Depending on the local situation, anticipatory action could be introduced in phases, first targeting the most predictable hazards with relatively simple and affordable anticipatory actions using common social protection instruments (e.g. cash transfers), and then expanding to more complex actions or less predictable events. It will be important that donors and governments commit to fund this and assess the outcomes of their social protection investments to look at whether anticipatory actions have been taken and what difference they have made.

What should be kept in mind when integrating anticipatory action and social protection?

There are several opportunities when linking the two approaches, but also a few challenges and considerations to be aware of. Some of these include:

Accuracy of forecasts and reputational risks

The success of anticipatory action relies heavily on accurate and timely weather or disaster predictions. Uncertainties in forecasting can lead to false alarms that trigger unnecessary interventions or missed events that prevent timely action. Since social protection systems are often nationally owned and implemented by government actors, it is important to design and incorporate anticipatory action in a way that carefully considers the credibility and reputation concerns.

Data Limitations

Reliable data is crucial for effective integration, but many vulnerable regions lack adequate/updated data on climate risks, social vulnerabilities, institutional capacities, and the specific needs of communities. Insufficient data can hinder the provision of accurate forecasts and effective social protection measures. To address this, National Societies may need to map and coordinate with multiple stakeholders and identify who holds what data that could support an integrated intervention. Social protection ministries are a particularly important data source, as they typically maintain beneficiary registries containing household-level information that can directly support geographic and demographic targeting of anticipatory transfers. Once relevant datasets and the responsible institutions have been identified, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be established with the data-holding ministry, setting out the terms for data collection, storage, use, and disposal in the context of the anticipatory action intervention. An example template has been developed to support National Societies in this process and can be used as guidance (see toolbox).

Targeting Strategy

While social protection programs often target the most vulnerable, in some cases, those most affected by a particular climate hazard might not be those that are traditionally considered vulnerable under a social protection approach and are enrolled in existing programs' registries. Understanding climate-related vulnerability to individual or multiple hazards is key to aligning targeted populations for a joint anticipatory action-social protection approach. To support this, National Societies could play a crucial role in expanding social registries or developing beneficiary lists to complement existing social protection databases and include indicators on climate vulnerability. For guidance on targeting strategies see (see toolbox).

Choice of Early Actions

Understanding specific climate-related vulnerabilities and the historical impacts of disasters is essential for prioritising actions within a joint anticipatory action-social protection system. For instance, the type of support originally provided through a social protection mechanism (public works, cash or in-kind) might not help households to address, cope with or prepare for the impacts from a specific shock that the anticipatory action program is intended for. An understanding of potential shock impacts on targeted populations and the type of support needed is key. Also, anticipatory action is not likely to eliminate completely the need for ex-post response – though it could significantly reduce it – and appropriate response actions will still be needed.

Coordination and collaboration

Integrating anticipatory action with social protection requires collaboration between various stakeholders, including meteorological agencies, government bodies, humanitarian organizations, and local communities. Achieving effective coordination among these diverse entities can be challenging due to differing priorities, mandates, and operational structures. A practical starting point in this regard has been the establishment of cash working groups (e.g. the KRCS is part of the Kenya Cash Working Group) and anticipatory action technical working groups and the inviting of social protection actors to engage in such platforms.

Policy and institutional barriers

Differences in policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks across the social protection and disaster management sectors (primary sector leading national anticipatory action efforts) and levels of government can impede integration efforts. Establishing a coherent legal and regulatory environment that supports the integration of anticipatory action and social protection is essential. Sometimes, this could be addressed if National Societies engage with contingency plans or disaster management plans of the government, promote anticipatory action and social protection approaches and help establish this as a priority for relevant sectors and officials in national governments.

Capacity Building

Many regions, particularly in low-income countries, may lack the capacity to implement and sustain integrated systems. This includes technical capacity for forecasting, institutional capacity for social protection, and community capacity for preparedness and response. National Societies could start by improving their own capacity in terms of understanding social protection and implementing anticipatory action and identifying opportunities in linking the two and then engage in activities with relevant actors as well as communities to share lessons learned and find ways to build on this vision.

Financing requirements

Financing of an anticipatory action system requires overcoming significant challenges in the way funding is structured. Integrating the two may pose challenges in terms of securing adequate funding, aligning budgetary cycles, and ensuring sustained support for both proactive and reactive measures. However, channelling financing through an existing social protection system might be cost-efficient, and contingency funds or budget reserves from programme funds could be used. Additionally, sustainable sources of financing would be required for longer term, sustained action at scale, and National Societies could potentially seek to engage with climate financing and global climate funds that can provide funding to social protection programs for taking anticipatory action.

Toolbox

Virtual Trainings

- Minimum training package on AA by the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group- Module 9: Institutionalization
- Introduction to Social Protection for the Poor – United Nations University / Maastricht University / UNU-MERIT
- Social Protection: A Primer - Irish Aid

Publications

- Synergies in social protection and WASH: What should National Societies know?
- Social protection as an enabler in scaling up anticipatory action using impact-based forecasting
- Linking anticipatory action and social protection: Why should National Societies care?
- Policy coherence between social protection and climate action: Initial findings from global studies and projects
- Dignity in Action: Key data and learning on cash assistance in the RCRC Movement
- Social protection as an engine for anticipatory action "7 things to know about managing climate risk through social protection"
- Shock responsive social protection
- Adaptive Social Protection: Building Systems that withstand Climate Shocks
- Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre Position Paper: Addressing Climate Risks through Social Protection
- Template MoU to access Social Protection Databases

Case Studies

- Scaling up social protection in Nepal
- Supporting effective access to social protection: The role of the Kenya Red Cross Society in supporting people to access social protection via the Enhanced Single Registry in Taita Taveta County, Kenya
- Piloting Shock Responsive Social Protection in Nepal Through Cash Assistance

Platforms and Support

Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre Priority areas: Social Protection

Social Protection on the Anticipation Hub

08. Develop activation processes for your anticipatory action plan

08. Develop activation processes for your anticipatory action plan

Summary

This chapter delves into the development ofeffective activation processes for your anticipatory action plan. Acknowledging the time sensitivity in implementing early actions, the chapter emphasizes the need for a streamlined process. It introduces three pivotal components:

- Forecast monitoring and activation processes ,
- Early action implementation process and timeline,
- Communication protocol.

The primary objective of establishing these processes is to clarify steps, roles, and responsibilities duringan activation. A key recommendation is the creation of a comprehensive implementation process chart or activation plan, outlining activities from trigger monitoring, activation through to communication protocol (see step 2 below).

The practical implementation is broken down into five steps, including setting up a forecast monitoring system, crafting a communication protocol, and ensuring the necessary technical setup.

Note that the guidance below was designed for EAPs. However, you can use that in anyanticipatory action approach in which you have time and resources to develop a plan in advance. Please adjust the steps accordingly.

Step 1: Set-up a forecast monitoring and activation processes

Now that you have developed a trigger, you need to ensure there is a system or processes in place to monitor the forecasts (and / or trigger-related indicators) and alert relevant actors when a trigger is reached to initiate the early actions (Section 6.2 in full EAP template). The best option is to develop an automated system that monitors the forecasts, creates an intervention map and sends an automatic alert message to relevant actors. If automation is not possible, you will need to find another way to ensure consistent monitoring.

For EAPs, ideally, the national meteorological agency or a regional forecasting agency will monitor the forecast. However, National Societies have developed different monitoring systems, including the following:

- The National Society has access to the forecasting data (e.g. via an ftp server) and processes the data themselves. This could be done by the National Society's Emergency Operation Centre (EoC).
- The forecast is monitored by the meteorological agency. When a trigger is reached, the Met office communicates the alert and where the trigger was reached to the appropriate actors within the National Society (e.g. emergency centre of the National Society) for further processing.

Particularly, if there are several anticipatory action initiatives in a context, it is helpful to have the trigger owned and monitored by a governmental authority in order to harmonise triggers across agencies (e.g. harmonizing with WFP, FAO or other anticipatory action actors). In that case, the meteorological agency or disaster management authority provides an analysis of where to intervene to the National Society.

Please find an examples of monitoring and activation processes below.

Harmonized triggers in Mozambique

In Mozambique, government and its National Disaster Risk Management Agency (INGD) have collaborated with humanitarian partners to develop Standard Operating Procedures for anticipatory action. As of early 2026, these SOPs have been developed for floods, droughts, and cyclones, and include trigger thresholds for each hazard at different severity levels.

The forecasts and hazard variables underpinning these thresholds, such as forecasted windspeeds for tropical cyclones or the Standardized Precipitation Index for drought, are monitored by official government entities, including hydrometeorological agencies. Once a threshold as defined in the SOPs is met, the government issues an official for humanitarian partners to operationalize their protocols or frameworks and implement anticipatory action.

The Mozambique Red Cross, for example, has implemented early actions from its Early Action Protocols on floods and cyclones following an official activation declaration by the government in 2025 and 2026.



Multi-agency after action review in 2025

Source: Anticipation Hub

In other cases, however, National Societies might also develop own systems for trigger monitoring and activation: To create a practical forecast monitoring and activation system for their drought EAP, the Somalia Red Crescent Society (SRCS), in partnership with the German Red Cross and HeiGIT, developed a straightforward approach using QGIS.

Case Study: Forecast Monitoring in Action

In Somalia, droughts can have severe impacts on food security. To address this, SRCS needed a way to predict when communities might face critical shortages and activate resources quickly. This led to a system based on two key indicators:

- Drought Conditions: Measured by the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI-12), which assesses long-term rainfall patterns.
- Food Insecurity: Assessed through FEWSNET's food insecurity projections, a standard tool for monitoring and projecting food access across Somalia.

When these indicators reach specific thresholds – for example, when SPI-12 shows a drought level below -1 and FEWSNET's food insecurity index reaches at least 0.7 – the system signals an activation. This activation allows the SRCS to plan and mobilize resources with a 90-day lead time.

I

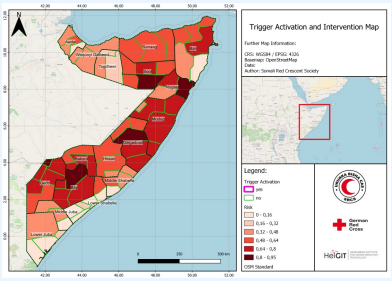
Implementing the system: Key steps

- Setting up monthly folders: Each month, SRCS staff create a new folder with the latest forecast data, using templates to keep records organized. This ensures they are consistently prepared with up-to-date data.
- Gathering key data: Staff download SPI-12 data from ICPAC and food insecurity data from FEWSNET. This data is the basis for monitoring drought conditions and food access issues in Somali districts.
- Loading data into QGIS: In QGIS, a mapping software, team members open a project file and load all the data they need for analysis. This includes district boundaries, population data, and the latest forecasts for drought and food insecurity.
- Running the trigger model: With all data loaded, they activate a pre-built model in QGIS. This model processes the data and automatically checks each district to see if the drought and food insecurity thresholds are met. If these conditions are met in a district, the model indicates that the trigger is reached.
- Map visualization and sharing: Finally, the team creates a clear visual map that highlights any districts where the trigger is reached. This map, complete with labels and key information, can be saved as an image or PDF for easy sharing with decision-makers.

Impact of the forecast monitoring system

Through this system, SRCS can anticipate critical drought-related food shortages and respond before they reach a crisis level. By visualizing drought and food security risks monthly, SRCS can prioritize districts in need and allocate resources for the most vulnerable communities, ensuring that anticipatory action is implemented on time.

Please find more info on the QGIS workflowhere.

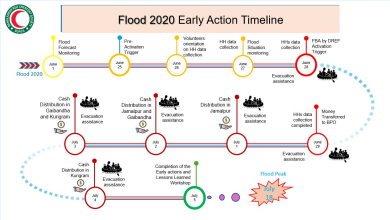


Example of trigger activation and intervention map (Source: SRCS and HeiGIT)

Flood Early Action Protocol in Bangladesh – Jamuna River Basin

Background

Bangladesh's geography and climate, combined with its extensive river systems, make it extremely vulnerable to annual flooding, particularly along the Jamuna River. Floods disproportionately impact low-income populations living in low-lying areas with fragile housing and high dependency rates. The direct effects of these floods include loss of life, spread of waterborne diseases, infrastructure destruction, and significant agricultural and livestock losses. The economic cost of floods is substantial, with the 1998 flood losses reaching $2 billion, equivalent to six per cent of the national GDP.



Source: BDRCS

Early Action Protocol (EAP) objectives

The Early Action Protocol (EAP) by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) aims to reduce the impact of flooding by implementing proactive measures based on forecasts. This protocol is focused on safeguarding lives, protecting livelihoods, and minimizing household asset loss in flood-prone regions, particularly along the Jamuna River. The EAP's primary goals are:

- Reducing human casualties through early warnings, evacuation support, and provision of first aid.
- Minimizing livelihood losses by protecting livestock, crops, and other essential resources.
- Preserving household assets by providing cash grants to enable families to make preventive and recovery efforts.

Core components of the EAP

- *Unconditional Cash Grants*
  Targeting 4,200 vulnerable households, the cash grants provide essential financial resources to support early preparations and recovery, including food purchases and livestock protection. Studies have shown that these grants help families reduce livestock losses and avoid negative coping mechanisms like selling household assets.
- *Evacuation Support by Boat*
  The EAP provides evacuation services for families at high risk of being stranded by floodwaters. This includes mobilizing boats to help 200 families relocate to safer areas, reducing the risk of drowning and other flood-related hazards.
- *Early Warning Dissemination*
  An effective early warning system is in place to alert communities to upcoming floods, giving them crucial lead time to take protective actions. The dissemination of warnings is coupled with instructions on evacuation procedures and safety measures to increase community preparedness and responsiveness.
- *Basic First Aid Provision*
  First aid resources are available to address immediate health needs arising from the flood. This includes care for injuries, snakebites, and initial treatments for waterborne diseases, aiming to reduce health risks among displaced and affected populations.

Implementation strategy and geographic scope

The EAP is executed with a focus on the most vulnerable districts within the Jamuna River Basin, covering three to four districts. Early actions are triggered by the Flood Forecast and Warning Centre (FFWC) and global forecast models, which monitor water levels to predict the likelihood and severity of floods. Upon reaching the danger level, the EAP is activated, facilitating timely intervention in at-risk areas.

Please find the summary of the EAP here.

Step 2: Develop a communication protocol

During an activation, it is crucial that everyone knows what to do and whom to inform. Especially for fast onset hazards, information getting stuck or being slowed at any stage can undermine the timeliness of the entire activation. The communication plan or protocol indicates who should communicate to whom, what and when through the entire process of forecast monitoring, trigger activation, funding release, distributing warning messages, implementing early action(s), monitoring activation through to evaluating the intervention. This can also be part of the activation plan that is outlined in the next step.

The table below provides an example communication protocol that you can adjust according to your needs (e.g. add names and telephone numbers of the responsible parties). You can also find a simple template in the toolbox at the end.

Phase	Institution	Person	Informs who?	Means of communication	Purpose of communication
Phase 1: 8-24 hours after activation	Hydrometeorological agency	Head of department	Head of DM	Email, phone	Inform about the hazard, trigger being reached and where
	HQ National Society	Head of DM	Director General	Email, phone	Informing about the upcoming hazard in the respective region(s)
	HQ National Society	Director General	All respective department managers	Emergency briefing	Taking decisions on initial steps and distribution of tasks
	HQ National Society	Director General	IFRC	Email	Report on the activation of the EAP
	HQ National Society	Head of DM	Provincial Branches	E-mail, phone, WhatsApp	Informing about the upcoming hazard in the respected region(s) and preparation of resource mobilization
Phase 2: 24-96 hours after activation	HQ National Society	Head Finance and Logistics	Local suppliers and transport company	E-mail, phone	Preparing/packing of distribution items
	...	...	...	...	---

Step 3: Develop early action implementation process

Section 6.1 of the full EAP asks you to outline an implementation process showing that each step of the activation has been thought through and that implementation in the lead time available is possible. This implementation process should cover all activities from the moment the trigger is reached (day X) to staff/volunteer deployment, transport, distribution and the completion of post-distribution monitoring and/or impact evaluation (Day Y) with clear timelines and responsibilities.

Note that this timeline is different from the IFRC operational matrix that will also outline main tasks of the EAP but over the lifetime of the EAP rather than only the activation.

For any approach of anticipatory action, e.g. on community level or imminent DREF, the implementation plan is a helpful tool to guide you in the implementation. Of course, you can adjust the level of detail according to your needs.

To ensure everyone is aware of their tasks, distribute the plan or process chart widely. This can be done by designing tailored training materials for staff and volunteers and/or the distribution of “pocket EAPs,” which outline key EAP information on a single sheet for rapid reference. You can find an example of a pocket EAP from Latin America below in the toolbox .

You find different templates of the implementation process which are also partly pre-filled, in the toolbox below.

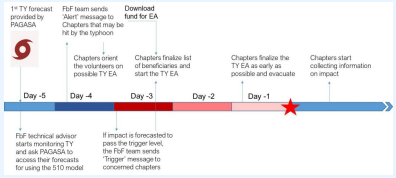
Establishing an implementation process for typhoons in the Philippines

Objective and Approach

To reduce typhoon impacts, the EAP mobilizes pre-emptive actions based on forecasts, coordinated by the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) with regional and local partners. This involves prepositioning Shelter Strengthening Kits (SSKs) across key PRC warehouses and enabling quick activation to protect vulnerable communities.

- *Preparatory Actions*
  Essential SSK items–nylon ropes, nails, tie wires, and iron bars–are stored in five regional warehouses (Subic, Albay, Tacloban, Cebu, and Surigao del Sur). Additional tools and protection materials are set for local procurement upon activation. Simultaneously, 3,000 information material copies are pre-printed to guide residents on shelter and livestock safety, ensuring community awareness in advance.
- *Alert Stage (Day -4)*
  When a typhoon nears, automated alerts with impact forecasts are sent every six hours. Chapters in at-risk areas prepare for possible activation by coordinating with local suppliers and participating in Pre-Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) meetings to prioritize response actions.
- *Activation Stage (Day -3 to Day 0)*
  If forecasted impacts surpass trigger thresholds, a “trigger” message activates response, guiding chapters to implement protective measures. Barangays receive SSK materials, residents undertake protective steps like early harvesting and drainage clearing, and pre-emptive evacuations are completed by Day -1.

In the pocket EAP you also find a very detailed checklist of who has to do what at which point in time. In the slider below you also find the checklist.



Source: PRC

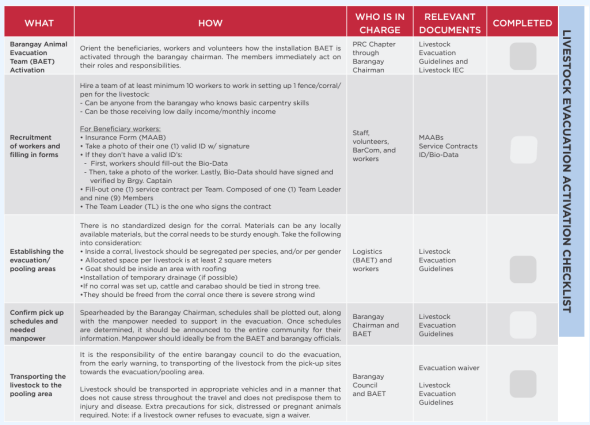
Phlippine typhoon EAP checklists

SHELTER STRENGTHENING ACTIVATION CHECKLIST

WHAT	HOW	WHO IS IN CHARGE	RELEVANT DOCUMENTS	COMPLETED
Orient the beneficiaries (including workers) & disseminate protective equipment	Orient the beneficiaries, workers and volunteers how the installation is done and the flow of work (see **IEC material**). **HOW:** 5 steps: (1st) make strong anchors (2nd) hold down roof (3rd) tie down the roof frame (4th) close down doors and windows, and (5th) brace the walls.	Staff and volunteers	Guide to Shelter Strengthening (SSK IEC)	
Fill in forms	For beneficiary HH • Beneficiary card (c/o chapter) • Award distribution sheet • Goods received note (GRN) For beneficiary workers • Insurance form (MAAB) • Take a photo of their one (1) valid ID • If they don't have a valid ID's: - First, workers should fill-out the bio-data. - Then, take a photo of the worker. Lastly, Bio-data should have signed and verified by Brgy. Captain. • Fill-out one (1) service contract per Team. Composed of five members (2 skilled and 3 unskilled). Each team should have one skilled team leader. • The Team Leader (skilled) signs the contract	Staff, volunteers, BarCom, and workers	Beneficiary card Award distribution sheet GRN MAAB Service Contract (per team) Photo of the workers' ID/ Biodata	
Start installing the SSKs	It takes approximately one hour toinstall one SSK. This means that one team can install around 8 SSKs/day.	Carpenters (with guidance from Staff, Volunteers and BarCom)	Guide to Shelter Strengthening (SSK IEC)	
Payment to the workers (on day -2/in the end of each day. Payment needs to be processed before the impact)	Workers should sign in the following documents: • Attendance sheet • Acknowledgment receipt Conduct cash-distribution (recommendation is PhP 500.00/day/pp. However, unskilled workers are paid less) Payment for Skilled and Unskilled Workers (Skilled Workers = Php 500.00/day) (Unskilled Workers = Php 350.00/day)	Staff and volunteers	Attendance Sheet Acknowledgement receipt	
Finalization of work	On day -1 (or until the weather allows) finish the work and relocate the staff & resources to a safe location).Z	Staff, volunteers and workers		

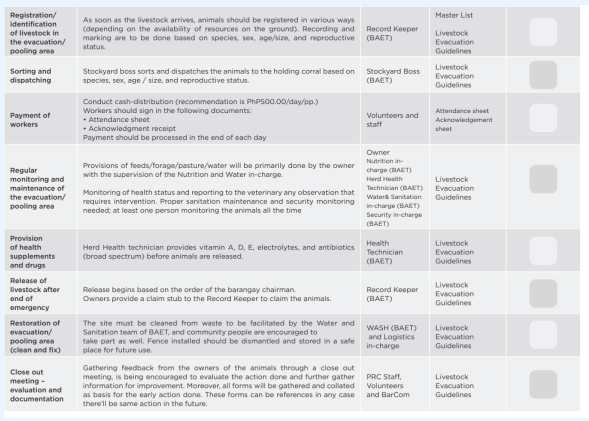
EARLY HARVESTING ACTIVATION CHECKLIST

WHAT	HOW	WHO IS IN CHARGE	RELEVANT DOCUMENTS	COMPLETED
Hire a team of workers and validate the beneficiary farms (based on the vulnerability criteria and the stage of the crops)	Hire a team of at least 10 workers from the target/nearby barangays for early harvesting. It is estimated that it takes about a day/10 worker to harvest 1 HA. Workers can be a tenant, laborer, or fishermen or low those receiving low daily/monthly income. Only choose farms where the crops have developed.	Staff, volunteers and BarCom		
Fill in forms	For beneficiary HH/workers: • Insurance form (MAAB) • Take a photo of their one (1) valid ID • If they don't have a valid ID's: • Insurance Form (MAAB) • Take a photo of their one (1) valid ID w/ signature. • If they don't have a valid ID's: - First, workers should fill-out the Bio-Data - Then, take a photo of the worker. Lastly, BioData should have signed and verified by Brgy. Captain • Fill-out one (1) service contract per Team. Composed of by (1) Team Leader and (9) Members • The Team Leader (TL) is the one who signs the contract.	Staff, volunteers, BarCom, and workers	MAAB Service Contract (per team) ID/Biodata	
Go through (i) reaping the crop, (ii) hauling the cut crops to central location for (iii) preparing bags of paddy	To fasten the process of harvesting, threshing and cleaning are not included in early harvesting of rice within the lead time. For abaca, the workers can either do (a) tumbling and store it in safe location, or (b) trimming of abaca leaves. Then assigned person should count the number of tumbled/trimmed abaca trees.	Workers (with guidance from staff, volunteers and BarCom)		
Transport the cut crops to a storage place	The cut crops need to be transported to a safe storage place/ marketplace.	Workers (with guidance from staff, volunteers and BarCom)		
Payment of workers	Conduct cash-distribution (recommendation is PhP500.00/day/pp) Workers should sign in the following documents: • Attendance sheet • Acknowledgment receipt	Staff, volunteers and workers	Attendance Sheet Acknowledgement receipt	



LIVESTOCK EVACUATION ACTIVATION CHECKLIST

WHAT	HOW	WHO IS IN CHARGE	RELEVANT DOCUMENTS	COMPLETED
Barangay Animal Evacuation Team (BAET) Activation	Orient the beneficiaries, workers and volunteers how the installation BAET is activated through the barangay chairman. The members immediately act on their roles and responsibilities.	PRC Chapter through Barangay Chairman	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines and Livestock IEC	
Recruitment of workers and filling in forms	Hire a team of at least minimum 10 workers to work in setting up 1 fence/corral/ pen for the livestock - Can be anyone from the barangay who knows basic carpentry skills - Can be those receiving low daily income/monthly income For Beneficiary workers: • Insurance Form (MAAB) • Take a photo of their one (1) valid ID w/ signature • If they don't have a valid ID's: - First, workers should fill-out the Bio-Data - Then, take a photo of the worker. Lastly, Bio-Data should have signed and verified by Brgy. Captain • Fill-out one (1) service contract per Team. Composed of one (1) Team Leader and nine (9) Members • The Team Leader (TL) is the one who signs the contract	Staff, volunteers, BarCom, and workers	MAABs Service Contracts ID/Bio-Data	
Establishing the evacuation/ pooling areas	There is no standardized design for the corral. Materials can be any locally available materials, but the corral needs to be sturdy enough. Take the following into consideration: • Inside a corral, livestock should be segregated per species, and/or per gender • Allocated space per livestock is at least 2 square meters • Goat should be inside an area with roofing •Installation of temporary drainage (if possible) •If no corral was set up, cattle and carabao should be tied in strong tree. •They should be freed from the corral once there is severe strong wind	Logistics (BAET) and workers	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Confirm pick up schedules and needed manpower	Spearheaded by the Barangay Chairman, schedules shall be plotted out, along with the manpower needed to support in the evacuation. Once schedules are determined, it should be announced to the entire community for their information. Manpower should ideally be from the BAET and barangay officials.	Barangay Chairman and BAET	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Transporting the livestock to the pooling area	It is the responsibility of the entire barangay council to do the evacuation, from the early warning, to transporting of the livestock from the pick-up sites towards the evacuation/pooling area. Livestock should be transported in appropriate vehicles and in a manner that does not cause stress throughout the travel and does not predispose them to injury and disease. Extra precautions for sick, distressed or pregnant animals required. Note: if a livestock owner refuses to evacuate, sign a waiver.	Barangay Council and BAET	Evacuation waiver Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	



Registration/ identification of livestock in the evacuation/ pooling area	As soon as the livestock arrives, animals should be registered in various ways (depending on the availability of resources on the ground). Recording and marking are to be done based on species, sex, age/size, and reproductive status.	Record Keeper (BAET)	Master List Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Sorting and dispatching	Stockyard boss sorts and dispatches the animals to the holding corral based on species, sex, age / size, and reproductive status.	Stockyard Boss (BAET)	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Payment of workers	Conduct cash-distribution (recommendation is PhP500.00/day/pp.) Workers should sign in the following documents: • Attendance sheet • Acknowledgment receipt Payment should be processed in the end of each day	Volunteers and staff	Attendance sheet Acknowledgement sheet	
Regular monitoring and maintenance of the evacuation/ pooling area	Provisions of feeds/forage/pasture/water will be primarily done by the owner with the supervision of the Nutrition and Water in-charge. Monitoring of health status and reporting to the veterinary any observation that requires intervention. Proper sanitation maintenance and security monitoring needed; at least one person monitoring the animals all the time	Owner Nutrition in-charge (BAET) Herd Health Technician (BAET) Water& Sanitation in-charge (BAET) Security in-charge (BAET)	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Provision of health supplements and drugs	Herd Health technician provides vitamin A, D, E, electrolytes, and antibiotics (broad spectrum) before animals are released.	Health Technician (BAET)	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Release of livestock after end of emergency	Release begins based on the order of the barangay chairman. Owners provide a claim stub to the Record Keeper to claim the animals.	Record Keeper (BAET)	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Restoration of evacuation/ pooling area (clean and fix)	The site must be cleaned from waste to be facilitated by the Water and Sanitation team of BAET, and community people are encouraged to take part as well. Fence installed should be dismantled and stored in a safe place for future use.	WASH (BAET) and Logistics in-charge	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	
Close out meeting – evaluation and documentation	Gathering feedback from the owners of the animals through a close out meeting, is being encouraged to evaluate the action done and further gather information for improvement. Moreover, all forms will be gathered and collated as basis for the early action done. These forms can be references in any case there'll be same action in the future.	PRC Staff, Volunteers and BarCom	Livestock Evacuation Guidelines	

Step 4: Develop process for targeting people at risk

The intervention map (please refer tochapter 6: Determine activation trigger) is the first step to targeting the people most at risk from the forecasted hazard. The intervention map shows you which areas to target. However, your anticipatory action plan will also need to outline who you want to target with your early actions. To determine your community, household, or individual targeting criteria, you can refer to the impact and vulnerability assessment and data collected in chapter 5: Collect risk, early action and impact information. The full EAP template asks you to provide the following information:

- A summary of the target population (e.g. number, location, specific vulnerable group)
- Description of how the target population will be selected, e.g. based on vulnerabilities, protection and gender aspects including considerations regarding the selected in the given lead time
- If the EAP is intending to use social protection systems or other government beneficiary databases, indicate how the number of targeted households will be selected

Guiding questions for the targeting process across all approaches

- How are you currently targeting people? What are the criteria?
- Which criteria should be used to identify the household based on the prioritised impact
- How will local authorities, community groups and other organizations, e.g. youth or women-led be included in selection of households and distribution?
- Who will register the target families? With which tools (e.g. paper forms or digital systems)? How much time does this take?
- What information is needed from the community (signature, name, age etc.)?

Note that there are different approaches to recipient registration given the often short lead times associated with anticipatory action. For example, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society begins registering potential recipients for their flood EAP once the pre-activation trigger is reached. The Philippine Red Cross verifies the target population on an annual basis as part of their readiness activities.

In case you are using a social registry, please ensure to visitchapter 07.1. for more information.

Step 5: Review security guidelines

To ensure safety and security of staff and volunteers during the implementation of the early actions, review your existing security guidelines and decide whether an additional assessment or measures are necessary during the implementation.

Currently, anticipatory action is mainly implemented in non-conflict settings. However, the Red Cross Red Crescent movement is exploring how anticipatory action can be implemented during ongoing conflicts. This is a movement-wide initiative which includes National Societies, and IFRC and ICRC. The anticipatory action in conflict practitioners groupleads in developing guidance, methodologies and tools for anticipatory action in conflict settings, including a comprehensive toolkit for anticipatory action in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected settings.

Step 6: Document and institutionalize data storage and activation procedures

Especially for EAPs, your National Society should establish processes for storing relevant risk data, monitoring forecasts, and translating forecasts and risk data into activation maps when a trigger is reached. It should also document these locations and procedures to ensure smooth transfer of information in the case of staff turnover.

Some tips and considerations for efficient and sustainable data management:

- QGIS: open-source GIS software can help you to manage your risk data and process the intervention map.
- Shared folder: Ensure that the data is stored in a shared folder that can be accessed by several National Society staff (and all who may need access) rather than on an individual computer. Google drive or a shared Teams folder are simple options.
- EAP activation manual: The EAP document should guide you on what to do during an activation, but it is not necessarily an operational document. Therefore, you may need to develop a more detailed activation manual to guide you during the activation process.

How this data is stored and managed will depend upon whether this process is internal to the National Society or is performed by a technical, forecasting or government partner. Several National Societies have budgeted for technical staff in their EAPs to ensure that risk data is up to date and forecasts are monitored. Others outsource forecast monitoring and developing trigger maps to third parties. When it is time to review and resubmit your EAP, whomever oversees activation mapping should help review processes for trigger monitoring, risk analysis, and mapping activation areas.

Toolbox

Tools and templates

- QGIS Software
- TEMPLATE Implementation process
- FILLED TEMPLATE Chronological activation process – actions and responsible personnel

Examples

- QGIS Trigger workflow Somalia
- Pocket typhoon EAP Philippines

Other key reads, websites and documents

- Anticipatiory Aciton in Conflict Practitioners Group
- Toolkit for Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict- and Violence-affected Settings (FCV)

09. Prepare Activation Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning

09. Prepare Activation Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning

Summary

This chapter provides a quick introduction to key concepts in monitoring, evaluation, accountability & learning (MEAL) for anticipatory action followed by an explanation of what MEAL activities are required for DREF-funded (simplified) Early Action Protocols (s/EAPs) and a review of methodologies and resources to consider and explore when designing MEAL activities for anticipatory action initiatives more broadly. Its focus is on post-activation monitoring and evaluation, as such it does not cover general monitoring and evaluation for program or system set-up. Additional resources on Results-based Management and other approaches to more general program management can be found in the toolbox.

Section 5.2 provides brief descriptions of several methodologies that may be used to demonstrate impact. The intent is not for each National Society to know or implement all of them, but to provide an overview of possible methodologies to help your National Society assess options and link to additional resources. Note that the steps outlined in this chapter are intended as a reference. Many of these processes may occur in parallel or need to be adapted to a specific programme or institutional context, and therefore they do not necessarily follow a chronological order.

Introduction

While commonly discussed together as MEAL—and grouped under Result-based Management (RBM) and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER), among others—each component of these acronyms refers to distinct phases of or processes in programme management cycle. Table 2 defines each of these terms broadly and outlines their connection to processes of developing or implementing anticipatory action initiatives, programmes and protocols and how (if at all) they are covered in this guide.

The steps and resources that follow provide an overview of what is required as part of your s/EAP and links to guidance related to required elements. For National Societies or other actors exploring more in-depth evaluations, it also provides an overview of approaches and links to resources for a variety of other methods that have been used or could be adapted to evaluate anticipatory action programs. Especially this “menu of options” can be relevant, if your National Society is working on anticipatory action through approaches other than formalized plans or Early Action Protocols, such as community-based initiatives, support to national governments or the use of an imminent DREF.

Term	Definition	Specifics for anticipatory action	What you will find in this chapter
System planning / design	The planning or design phase is when you decide what will be done, which results you want to achieve, how to monitor and evaluate them, and which indicators you will use for this. Ideally, this will incorporate learning from any previous and relevant programs.	In anticipatory action, planning and design will occur when setting up a broader anticipatory action initiative or programme and/or when specific actions and protocols are being established for specific hazards and contexts. Planning and design will also be important when incorporating lessons and revalidating your s/EAP.	How to research and plan the development of an s/EAP is covered in chapters 1-8 and 10-12 of the manual.
Monitoring	Monitoring tracks the performance of the implementing actors vis-a-vis their agreed and planned roles and responsibilities.	In anticipatory action this may refer to monitoring of the project or programme to set up the anticipatory action system in your country, monitoring of readiness and prepositioning activities, or monitoring of the activation after a trigger is reached.	This guide focuses on monitoring of s/EAP implementation, which begins when the EAP is triggered and extends after the activation until data collection and analysis are complete. Monitoring data will help you to reconstruct events and eventually identify and evaluate any shortcomings, constraints, or bottlenecks that need to be addressed before the next activation.
Evaluation	Evaluation refers to attempts to capture lessons and impacts (see the info box further below for definitions) resulting from programme setup or implementation.	Evaluations of anticipatory action may seek to evaluate system capacity building, activation processes, or outcomes and impacts (see Table below).	This guide includes resources for evaluating the activation process as well as outcomes and impacts.
Accountability	IFRC defines accountability as “the obligation to demonstrate to stakeholders to what extent results have been achieved according to established plans. This definition guides [IFRC’s] accountability principles as set out in Strategy 2020: explicit standard setting; pen monitoring and reporting; transparent information sharing; meaningful beneficiary participation; effective and efficient use of resources; systems for learning and responding to concerns and complaints“ (IFRC M&E guidance 2021).	Humanitarians must be accountable to the populations they work with (at-risk populations), partners, and donors. Given the added layer of uncertainty associated with anticipatory action, it is important to verify that early actions are reaching the right people, meeting their needs, and therefore constitute an wise investment of resources. Post-activation evaluations can help to verify accountability to affected populations, but as suggested by the definition, accountability to stakeholders should be integrated throughout the design and implementation process.	This guide links to existing IFRC guidance on CEA.
Learning	Learning refers to the acquisition and integration of knowledge and skills gained through experience. Gathering information and lessons from the previous steps without applying or acting upon that information should not be considered learning. Learning only takes place to the extent that lessons or knowledge from previous design, monitoring, evaluation and accountability activities are incorporated into new plans and protocols.	In anticipatory action, when working through formalized plans, the revalidation of s/EAPs is a critical moment for ensuring that lessons identified during monitoring, evaluation, and accountability processes are actually learned by adjusting new versions of the s/EAP to overcome identified weaknesses and build upon identified strengths.	How to incorporate learning and resubmit your s/EAP is covered in chapter 13 of the manual.

Step 1: Set up your MEAL team

At the very least, your MEAL team should include people from the disaster risk management department, staff dedicated to anticipatory action, and one representative from your National Society’s monitoring and evaluation department. Ideally, you should involve your National Society’s MEAL or PMER department throughout the development of anticipatory action initiatives and protocols, including the development of s/EAPs where relevant. This will help them to better understand the concept of anticipatory action, what the anticipatory actions are trying to achieve, and how MEAL for AA may differ from MEAL for other programs or operations.

With this understanding, they will be able to better support you in designing and implementing appropriate methodologies and tools. If longer-term engagement is not possible, the MEAL department should at a minimum be involved in designing and writing the MEAL section of the EAP or other formalized anticipatory action plans to ensure that you have the expertise and resources necessary to execute your plans. It is also an opportunity for PMER staff to learn about anticipatory action in general and the sEAP in particular, and how MEAL for anticipatory action may differ from MEAL for response.

Step 2: Understand MEAL requirements in the s/EAP template and assessment criteria

If your National Society is working on s/EAPs as your approach to anticipatory action, everyone involved in monitoring and evaluating your s/EAP interventions should understand the minimum requirements set out in the s/EAP template and be involved in deciding how to meet them. Requirements for the sEAP and full EAP are slightly different. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning are referenced in two areas of a full EAP: section 7 requires you to outline your plans for monitoring, evaluating, and learning from EAP activations and the IFRC Operational tables require you to plan activities and processes for Community Engagement and Accountability. Quality criteria for the full EAP require you to have a plan for the following:

1. assess the impact of the early actions and the extreme event after each activation;
2. identify if all activities were carried out as planned and document how early actions were;
3. learn from the process to improve the system in the future.

Despite requesting a plan for evaluating impacts and the implementation process, at present, the IFRC-DREF only requires that National Societies conduct a (mandatory) lessons learned workshop following activation. The lessons learned workshop can provide insights into implementation (objective two) and can be used to learn from the process (objective three), but it cannot by itself used to assess impacts.

Instead the lessons learned workshop gathers actors involved in the activation to share experiences, identify and discuss achievements and challenges, and develop recommendations on how to improve future activations or subsequent versions of the s/EAP. When well designed, the workshop is an opportunity to engage external stakeholders and foster collaboration, buy-in and/or team building among relevant actors. IFRC guidance on how to conduct such a workshop and what it should cover is available in the toolbox. The activities and agenda are designed to be accessible to National Societies, should not require outside expertise or facilitation (unless desired), and can be planned after the activation has been completed. Examples of high-quality lessons learned workshop reports can be found in the toolbox.

Time to complete DREF-funded MEAL activities

If DREF funds will be used to fund an s/EAP lessons learned workshop or other MEAL activities, they must be completed within the operational timeframe. This timeframe is generally the lead-time plus 3-months, though the lead time for fast-onset events is included in the timeframe, as indicated below. National Societies may ask for a no-cost extension of up to three months if they are responding to the disaster that prompted the EAP activation or another hazard event. This allows them additional time to pay the expenses but does not increase the budget. National Societies may still complete lessons learned workshop or other activities after the end of the operational timeframe, but any associated costs cannot be paid by the IFRC-DREF.

Hazard Lead Time	Operational Timeframe
3-7 days	3 months
3 months	3 months + 3 months = 6 months
6 months	6 months + 3 months = 9 months

Requirements for the sEAP are somewhat lighter. Like the full EAP, an sEAP should include plans for monitoring, evaluation and community engagement and accountability in the operational matrix and budget. The only quality criterion explicitly required and considered in monitoring and evaluation section of the sEAP is that the protocol “must include a reasonable budget for a lessons learned workshop with partners and IFRC.” The objectives and guidance for the workshop are the same as for the full EAP (see above).

Step 3: Plan your PDM & CEA

When working with sEAPs, the lessons learned workshop must include a presentation and discussion of the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) completed following the early action activities. Surveys are the most common way of collecting PDM data, and while your National Society is likely familiar with the basics of PDM surveys from response operations, anticipatory action PDMs should be adjusted to include sections not found in traditional PDMs. A well-conceived and executed post-distribution survey will include questions relevant to the design and implementation of your early warnings and early actions, including the following:

- whether people understood and were able to act upon early warnings, when and how people received any warnings or aid

distribution
- how and when targeted people used any cash or other materials received,
- any challenges or problems recipients may have encountered during distributions
- their general satisfaction.

Examples of anticipatory action PDM surveys for various hazards that include standard questions regarding early warning, early action/preparation, when and how cash was used, and feedback/satisfaction can be found in the toolbox.

Appropriate timing is also essential to conducting a valuable PDM. Because it is difficult for people to recall specific details related to a disaster, it is important to conduct the PDM promptly following the distribution. Optimal timing will depend upon the hazard and the interventions in question, but you should aim to collect data when people can be expected to remember when and how they used the items in question. Three months after the activation, for example, is too long to expect people to remember. General guidance on post-distribution monitoring can be found in the toolbox.

Community engagement and accountability systems provide the opportunity for recipients to provide feedback (praise, complaints, or suggestions) regarding the process or content of assistance following an activation of a protocol or other anticipatory action intervention. Such systems contribute to learning and improvement and serve as a check against misconduct by community leaders, or National Society staff and volunteers. CEA mechanisms for anticipatory action need not differ greatly from mechanisms for longer-term preparedness or response. IFRC guidance on setting up community engagement and accountability systems can be found in the toolbox as well.

Step 4 (optional): Plan to go beyond the minimum MEAL requirements

MEAL activities play a vital role in any programme cycle, but they are particularly important for anticipatory action, as it is still an evolving approach to humanitarian assistance. Despite increasing evidence of the effectiveness of anticipatory action, evaluation is critical to learning from and sharing experience, improving the effectiveness of early actions, and demonstrating the value and impact of anticipatory approaches. RCRC evaluations and reports are available IFRC's Evaluations and Research repository, linked in the toolbox.

In addition to the post-distribution monitoring and lessons learned workshop required under an s/EAP, your National Society may wish to conduct more in-depth evaluation of the activation process or outcomes of your anticipatory action initiative. As indicated in Table 2, these could include an evaluation of the process, the outcomes or impacts of your protocol, and/or the trigger(s). If you decide to conduct trigger, process, or outcome/impact evaluations, steps 5.1-5.3 of this chapter introduce potential methodologies and link to resources on how to implement these elements of an evaluation should you decide to include them in your plan.

What is being monitored or evaluated	Objective
Set-up of an anticipatory action system	To ensure that project timelines and goals are being met and to document lessons for other actors or other contexts/hazards when establishing anticipatory action mechanisms.
Evaluation of capacity building or enabling environment	To determine how, if at all, the setup and/or implementation of anticipatory action initiatives or programmes contribute to broader disaster risk management capacity within your organization or within your country's disaster risk management system. While not covered in this chapter, additional guidance can be found in WFP's guidance on planning and monitoring country capacity strengthening for anticipatory action (in the toolkit). Some National Societies have also used IFRC's Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) as a baseline for National Society capacity and to identify areas for further development to effectively implement AA. A high-level explanation of the relationship of anticipatory action to PER and guidance and examples of how to use PER to inform or monitor anticipatory action capacity building can be found in the toolkit.
Process evaluation of activation	To determine whether activities were implemented as planned, what went well, what could be improved, and how.
Outcome and / or impact evaluation	To determine whether early actions achieved their goals (often as compared to aid delivered (or not) at other times or in different combinations).
Evaluation of trigger thresholds	To assess whether the forecast threshold and timing were appropriate so that it may be adjusted as needed (and feasible).

Step 5.1: Evaluation of the activation process

Process evaluations help you to understand whether the activation and implementation of early actions went as intended, to identify successes, challenges, and bottlenecks, and to improve processes in the future. This will include looking at communications, coordination, financial flows, logistics, and community engagement and accountability. Data collection methods and tools for process evaluation include the following:

a) Real-time monitoring

One way to track what happens during an activation or implementation of early actions is to keep a log of what happens so that you can accurately reconstruct events later, when memories may have faded. Information gathered during real-time monitoring can be combined with other sources of data (e.g. interviews, focus groups, workshop reconstructions), all of which can help to interpret or explain the results of any outcome or impact evaluations. Real-time monitoring templates can be found in the toolbox.

b) Reconstructing events after the activation

You can also reconstruct events after the activation or implementation of early actions by speaking to key stakeholders. Key informant interviews, focus groups discussions, or participatory workshops can be used to reconstruct the timeline and gather feedback on what went well, what did not, and how to improve in the future. The results of these activities should always be cross-checked with the results from real-time monitoring, where available. Example guides for process evaluation key informant interviews and focus group discussion can be found in the toolbox.

Step 5.2: Outcome & Impact Evaluation

Outcome and impact evaluations seek to determine whether early actions helped people to prepare for or cope with hazard impacts during or immediately after a hazard event (see the box on evaluation terminology below for definitions and clarifications on evaluation terminology and anticipatory action).

Outcome and impact evaluations seek to determine whether early actions helped people to prepare for or cope with hazard impacts during or immediately after a hazard event (see **Box 1: Evaluation terminology** below for definitions and clarifications on evaluation terminology and anticipatory action). Although there are too many approaches to outcome and impact assessment to list here, the subsections below introduce methodologies that have been used or may hold promise for future evaluations of anticipatory action. Where applicable, we provide lessons from National Societies who have attempted them as well as links to additional resources.

While your National Society may be able to execute some of these approaches using staff and volunteers, all will produce less biased results if implemented by an external team and will require—at the very least—support from your PMER department. Support may also be available from a Partner National Society, the Climate Centre, or another reference center. If you are working with or on an s/EAP, the s/EAP monitoring and evaluation budget cannot exceed 5% of the total budget. This implies that most of these methodologies will require additional funding. If your National Society would like to undertake a more complex evaluation, contact your regional DREF focal point to explore the use of the DREF coordination budget to support this work. If your National Society attempts a methodology not listed here, please contact GRC to have your experience added to the manual.



Evaluation terminology

Evaluators typically refer to three different categories of results. The definitions below use examples from anticipatory action and align to the definitions found in the IFRC M&E guidance (p. 77-82).

1) Outputs: Measuring outputs is generally easy: keep track of trainings held, households reached, or kits delivered. This should be available through standard record keeping, such as distribution and participant lists. For anticipatory action, output measurement should also include ***when*** these items were provided or delivered. Because they are easy to measure, it is often referred to (somewhat pejoratively) as "bean counting:" they tell you who was reached, with what, and when but nothing about what was done with the services, information, or materials provided.

2) Outcomes generally refer to specific changes or immediate benefits resulting from program outputs and activities. In the case of anticipatory action, outcomes often manifest as what people do that they would not have otherwise

because of the anticipatory support provided. Measuring outcomes of a shelter program for example, would entail determining whether households made the effort to strengthen their houses after receiving a shelter strengthening kit and participating in training on how to use it.

Tips for tracking outcomes:

If your National Society plans to conduct an outcome or impact evaluation, it will be important to identify groups of households who received ***exactly the same*** "package" of aid so that you can compare them to other groups who received different packages (or nothing at all). National Societies that have households sign for individual items rather than complete aid packages often have difficulties identifying exactly who received what. This greatly complicates sampling or selecting households for surveys, interviews, focus groups, or other data gathering activities. Where possible, develop distribution tracking systems that capture everything a household receives or allow you to easily cross-reference multiple lists to develop a master database.

3) Impacts are actual changes in livelihoods, well-being or other stated goals because of anticipatory actions. Impacts can only be measured after an intervention is complete. Given the relatively short duration of anticipatory action interventions and of the window of intended benefits, this may be as little as two weeks after an anticipatory action activation. Whereas outcomes measure whether people wash their hands more after a WASH training or how people spend anticipatory cash, impact measurement would determine whether they are less likely to fall ill because they are now washing their hands or whether they have better food security scores because of purchases made with the cash.

Outcomes vs impacts in anticipatory action: as in many discussions of terminology, exact usage and definitions often differ. Impacts as defined by the OECD/DAC are "positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended" (OECD Glossary p. 24). This definition reflects that the impacts of longer-term programs often cannot be measured in the short-term. For this reason, some practitioners think of outcomes and short-term results and impacts as long-term results. However, most anticipatory action initiatives are not seeking to effect long-term change (yet). Using the short- vs long-term definitions, outcomes would include both actions or changes facilitated by anticipatory support and any short-term impacts resulting from those changes. Nevertheless, the distinction between actions or other intermediate goals (e.g. using aid to prepare for a hazard based on a forecast by planting or harvesting crops, reinforcing houses) and the intended impact (e.g. a reduction in food insecurity, less damage to houses) is still important to understanding whether anticipatory action initiatives are meeting their goals. For this reason, this guide uses outcomes to describe changes in knowledge, resources, or action resulting from anticipatory assistance and impact to indicate a reduction in negative (or an increase) in positive results (not based on measurement of longer-term results or sustained impact).

a) Randomized Control Trials

Randomized control trials (RCTs) are a highly robust method widely used in academia and in practice for impact evaluation. In an RCT, vulnerable households will be randomly assigned to receive one of the intervention packages to be compared . Comparison groups allow evaluators to establish what academics and evaluators call a ***counterfactual,*** or an understanding of what would have happened with a different intervention or the lack of intervention. Relevant counterfactuals for anticipatory action include different packages of anticipatory aid, the same package delivered at different times (including different anticipatory timings and/or response), or (ambitiously) Outcomes and impacts are then compared across the groups, enabling evaluators to attribute differences to the intervention (assuming the recipient and non-recipient households have similar socio-economic characteristics and are similarly at-risk/affected by the hazard). Note that either the aid package or the timing must be the same for two groups to be compared, otherwise it is impossible to determine whether the package or the timing were responsible for any differences in outcomes and impacts.

While RCTs produce the most rigorous evidence, they come with tradeoffs. Designing and implementing RCTs for anticipatory action requires considerable technical expertise and consequent financial resources. If your National Society is interested in exploring an RCT, it should seek support from the Federation, external researchers, or consultants with expertise in applying RCTs in humanitarian or development settings. J-PAL, for example, provides resources on RCT and has considerable expertise in conducting them in humanitarian settings.

Ethical considerations may also play a role in decision-making. Some practitioners express ethical concerns about withholding aid from at-risk households. However, as organizations rarely have sufficient resources to provide anticipatory assistance to all households that might be affected by impending events, randomizing who among the most vulnerable receives assistance need not reduce the number of households reached overall. Using this method to compare anticipatory aid to traditional, post-response aid is another way to reduce such concerns. Nevertheless, randomization is significantly different from the community-based approach to recipient selection National Societies usually take when working with s/EAPs or sometimes also community-based approaches, thereby requiring considerable adjustment of normal protocols.

No National Society has attempted an RCT, other organizations engaging with anticipatory action have. A few other examples are

available in the toolbox though.

b) Quasi-experimental design

Quasi-experimental studies are another way to use comparison groups to determine the outcomes and impacts of anticipatory action. As with RCTs, this methodology quantitatively compares recipients of anticipatory action to households who receive nothing, receive response assistance, or who received different packages of anticipatory aid. Rather than randomly assigning households to intervention groups, evaluators identify comparison communities during or after early action implementation (see Box 2) and randomly select samples from relevant groups or communities for comparison. Demographic, socio-economic, and vulnerability characteristics are then used to control for differences between the two groups. Box 3 outlines the key requirements of this methodology as well as the steps required for implementation. Box 4 summarizes the sequence of data collection. Additional guidance on this methodology can also be found in WFP's Guidance on Monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory actions for fast and slow-onset hazards.

When to identify comparison groups

When to identify comparison groups will depend on the time you have during the implementation phase of early actions (i.e. whether your hazard is fast or slow onset) as well as the groups you are comparing to. For example, for drought activations WFP regularly identifies households that receive aid at different times and will collect baselines information for both groups. This enables them to compare outcomes over time. This is particularly valuable and feasible when National Societies know they will be providing response aid, as they can approach communities for baseline information without worrying about raising expectations, as both anticipatory action and response groups will eventually get assistance, only at different times.

Demographic, socio-economic, and vulnerability characteristics are then used to control for differences between the two groups. The two infoboxes below outline the key requirements of this methodology and the steps required for implementation as well as the sequence of data collection. Additional guidance on this methodology can also be found in WFP's Guidance on Monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory actions for fast and slow-onset hazards that is included in the toolbox.

Requirements and steps to implementing the quasi-experimental design

Before deciding to proceed with a quasi-experimental quantitative impact evaluation, ensure that your National Society will be able to do or provide the following:

1. Provide the number of people targeted in each community, including ***what*** they received and ***when*** they received it. The template available in the toolbox may help to compile this information.
2. A complete list of all the recipient households (i.e. the sampling frame). A corresponding map and/or contact information, while not required, will help you to more easily locate and survey the households and to sample in a way that controls for geographic location, if necessary.
3. Identify comparison communities that have similar characteristics to the recipient communities: the same livelihoods/socio-economic characteristics, the same exposure and vulnerability to the hazard and that have experienced the same intensity of impacts as the recipient communities. Guidance on selecting comparison communities is available in the toolbox.
4. A complete list or map of households living in comparison households (those not receiving aid, receiving a different package, or receiving the aid at a different time). This will serve as your sampling frame for the comparison group(s), allowing you to randomly select comparison households. Again, having a list and a map and/or contact details will be helpful in locating the randomly selected households.
   A note on comparing to non-recipient communities or households: when this methodology was attempted in Honduras and Ecuador, the National Societies found it difficult to obtain a complete list of households in non-recipient communities. No one (including community leaders) had access to complete overviews of community information. Both community leaders and the Red Cross were understandably reluctant to contact or gather people to develop comprehensive lists, as this raises expectations of aid. Unfortunately, the unavailability of lists or maps prevented the study team from getting a random sample, resulting in questionable data. For this reason, National Societies may find it easier to compare outcomes and impacts of aid received at different times.
5. The ability to collect data while outcomes and impacts can still be measured. The timing of data collection

should be based on when you expect the impact of your intervention to materialize and how long they can be expected to last. Additional guidance can be found in the WFP guidance in the toolbox.

Steps for quasi-experimental data collection

The following are the high-level steps for collecting quasi-experimental survey data. They are meant only to help you understand the process and decide if it is feasible for your National Society. If you are considering this methodology, you should also consult the guidance in the toolbox and seek external support as required.

- Decide who will collect data (National Society volunteers or external parties)
- Decide who will analyze data (National Society volunteers or external parties)
- Develop survey (examples from 4As and GRC library)
- Obtain lists and/or maps of all recipient and comparison/non-recipient communities (sampling frame).
- Use sample size calculators to determine how many households must be surveyed. Most multi-community interventions will require cluster sampling. We recommend you consult with a statistician to ensure you sample correctly and get a large enough sample size.
- Draw a random sample from the intervention and comparison groups.
- Create budget (sample budget from other contexts). **Note:** it is important to budget enough time and resources to reach ALL the households that appear on these random lists. This should be done by visiting them in their homes rather calling them to a single meeting point. Calling them to one place increases the likelihood of bias. Failing to speak to even one household introduces possible bias, making it difficult to generalize the results.
- Train the data collectors.
- Test the survey in the field and update the survey. **Note:** It is important to test the tool and make sure it is working correctly after each and every change to the tool.
- Collect data from all recipients ***before*** starting data collection for the non-intervention and/or response group. This allows you to calculate a vulnerability score (see ***Box 5***) and ensure that respondents from non-beneficiary households are comparable.
- After data from the recipients is complete, calculate the vulnerability scores and identify a range of scores that participants from comparison communities should fit it.
- Collect data from non-beneficiary households using the vulnerability score, again without omitting any households.
- When possible, qualitative data (from key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions) collection should be conducted at the same time to help interpret the quantitative results.
- Analyze the data & write the report

Two National Societies have successfully produced three quasi-experimental impact studies of anticipatory action: Mongolia and Bangladesh (see toolbox). Other National Societies have attempted this methodology, but encountered challenges, particularly in obtaining random samples.

Using vulnerability scores based on selection criteria to measure the similarity between communities

In quasi-experimental designs, it is necessary to ensure that the households you are comparing have similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics and that they have experienced the hazard in the same way. For example, you should not compare households with large livestock holdings to those who do not have any livestock or communities/households that can access irrigation during a drought to those who must walk several kilometres to get water. Often, the selection criteria for providing anticipatory assistance are an excellent starting point for ensuring that the populations are similar, as they point toward the critical factors contributing to vulnerability.

Based on the selection criteria and indicators of relative poverty or income appropriate for your context (such as livelihood and incomes sources or types of housing construction), you and your MEAL team will design survey questions relevant to each factor contributing to household vulnerability and assign relative scores to all possible answers. In this way, each household will be assigned a relative vulnerability score based on their circumstances. Sample vulnerability scores can be found in the toolbox.

Having and applying clear selection criteria when selecting recipient households will make it easier to establish questions and scores for your quasi-experimental impact evaluation.

c) Value for money studies: cost-efficiency, effectiveness, and benefit studies

Given an increasingly tight funding climate and interest from National Society partners, your National Society may wish to demonstrate the value for money of specific programmes or actions. Early attempts to measure the return on investment were not particularly transparent; however, emerging guidance (see toolkit) on how to conduct transparent rigorous value for money analyses of anticipatory action provides a good starting point for National Societies looking to conduct such analyses. Examples of costing studies can be found in the toolbox.

Cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and cost-benefit analyses are three different but related ways to demonstrate the financial benefits of programs. Each of the three methods below will require detailed analysis of programme budgets to determine the staff, overhead, and procurement costs that went into anticipatory action (and any alternative programmes to which it is being compared). They thus lend themselves more for use in the context of formalized programmes or protocols.

- **Cost-efficiency analysis** measures how much it costs to deliver a unit of output (e.g. cost per water purification kit delivered). It is useful for comparing the costs of delivering the same aid package at different times (e.g. anticipatory action vs response). Web-based programmes such as Dioptra, have developed standardized methodologies and tools to help aid organizations measure and compare the cost effectiveness of different interventions.
- **Cost-effectiveness analysis** measures how much it costs to generate a relevant outcome (e.g. cost per unit of improved food consumption score). This approach is useful when trying to compare outcomes or impacts that are difficult to monetize, such as loss of education or increases in protection. It can also be used to compare the costs associated with achieving the same outcome using different interventions.
- **Cost-benefit analysis** monetizes the values of outcomes or impacts and calculates whether those monetized benefits are greater than the costs. These kinds of analyses can produce a benefit-cost ratio, a net present value, and return on investment calculations. Such studies can be used to justify investments in anticipatory action

Note/Tip: To perform rigorous cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit analysis, you must first conduct a study to measure the outcomes and/or impacts. These studies are therefore only as rigorous as the outcome or impact studies supporting them.

A word of caution: In practice, the organization or consultant conducting the cost-benefit study will decide which costs to include and exclude (e.g. the value of setting up the programme or only the implementation of early actions itself) and how to monetize benefits. Because the final cost-benefit or return on investment numbers may be quite sensitive to these decisions or assumptions, being transparent about how and why particular numbers or assumptions were chosen will help to lend credibility to the results.

Additional resources on value for money in disaster risk finance and how to conduct cost-efficiency, -effectiveness, or -benefit analyses can be found in the toolbox.

d) Success case method

The success case method has been identified as a promising mixed-methods methodology for National Societies desiring some quantitative measurement of outcomes but without the capacity to implement an RCT or quasi-experimental survey. The approach begins with a survey that includes demographic and vulnerability questions as well as critical outcome and impact indicators. The survey data is then analyzed to identify households who benefitted more (“success cases”) and less (“non-success cases”) from the interventions. The research team then follows up with several households to conduct in-depth interviews aimed at understanding why those households had comparatively better or worse outcomes. If resources allow, it can be expanded to include data collection from non-recipient or other comparison groups. Guidance on how to adapt the success case methodology to anticipatory action can be found in the toolbox.

Note/Tip: If you are considering the success case method, your PDM survey is an excellent opportunity to collect survey data and identify households who benefitted more (“success cases”) and less (“non-success cases”) from your interventions. By adding questions on key impact indictors and requesting contact information and permission to follow-up for in-depth interviews, your PDM could fulfill the survey component without requiring a separate survey.



Experience from Ethiopia

Ethiopia Red Cross Society was the first to test this methodology in 2025. Tools used by Ethiopian Red Cross can be found in the toolbox.

e) Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)

The Qualitative Impact Protocol is a methodology designed to attribute change (i.e. outcomes and impacts) to an intervention through narratives, stories, and in-depth interviews with intervention recipients. Although it has been successfully used by humanitarian actors, it requires highly trained, independent data collectors, meaning that it may be challenging for National Societies with scarce resources. This method has not yet been used to evaluate anticipatory action programmes. More information on this methodology can be found in the toolbox.

f) Participatory Impact Assessment

Participatory impact assessment (PIA) is based upon participatory rural appraisal (PRA) which is similar in approach and philosophy to Red Cross Red Crescent vulnerability and capacity assessments. It has three main objectives:

- to identify the factors leading to change in people's lives;
- to determine which of these factors can be linked to a specific intervention;
- to determine the importance of each factor.

PIA allows communities to participate in the definition of indicators rather than relying on pre-determined or prescribed targets. Rather than attempting to compare results to non-participants in a programme, it asks participants to describe change over time. Many activities begin with a ranking or scoring activity, followed by an open-ended discussion to understand the results of the ranking. While the activities are often considered qualitative, when repeated in a standardized way, the ranking and scoring activities can yield some numerical data and quantitative insights or "participatory numbers." This methodology has been used outside of anticipatory action to evaluate livestock interventions, particularly in pastoralist settings. A guide to participatory impact assessment can be found in the toolbox.

g) People-first Impact Method (P-FIM)

The people-first impact method (P-FIM) is a community engagement tool that respects the right and ability of communities to take the lead in the design, implementation, and evaluation of aid programs. Ideally, it would be employed from the start (for example at feasibility study and EAP design stage), to ensure that anticipatory action initiatives in general, and specific actions in particular, address genuine community needs and integrate community abilities and solutions in an added-value cost-effective and sustainable approach. P-FIM builds trust, two-way engagement, and transparency between agencies and communities. It identifies the most critical areas for community-led action without introducing organizational bias or pre-conceived and (possibly) untested assumptions. Through two-way dialogue facilitated by trained local teams who live and work in the context, P-FIM brings to light what people believe are the most critical issues and forces impacting their lives, positive and negative. It is valuable in identifying appropriate interventions and adds value and relevance to existing agency tools by allowing communities to lead in the selection and development of MEAL plans and tools, such as theories of change or post-distribution surveys.

As a community engagement approach, P-FIM fits naturally with MEAL: engaging the community allows communities to shape MEAL components, ensuring they are easily understood by communities and agency frontline staff and volunteers. P-FIM challenges agencies to develop simple easily understood tools. Like PIA, it helps agency staff and volunteers understand what communities and organizations feel should be monitored and evaluated and how. In the P-FIM approach, the evaluation questions used in focus group, key informant interviews, and other discussions are defined by communities themselves with the National Society. Similarly, P-FIM engages communities in selecting and designing other (perhaps more academic) methods to be used for evaluation.

Welthungerhilfe uses the method to inform its anticipatory action programs. Thetoolbox includes a guide explaining the full P-FIM approach and an overview of how P-FIM two-way engagement can be applied to MEAL at all stages of a programme. Within those documents, you will find contact information to request a two-day, practical P-FIM training for your team.

h) INDABA

INDABA is an innovative participatory video process that allows communities to design, collect, edit and develop their own stories through a mobile application that can be used onsite and in remote contexts. IFRC's Strategic Planning Department in coordination

with National Society counterparts, developed and is supporting this qualitative approach in PMER for long term and emergency contexts. It has been rolled out in Colombia, Egypt, Eswatini, Gambia, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya and Namibia. Examples can be found on IFRC's PMER (Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting) YouTube page.

This qualitative approach relies strongly on community engagement in the process to allow for feedback not only at the community level, but also at the level of disaggregated groups (e.g. the elderly, women, men, and youth). The process is adaptable to context and uses different facilitation methods (photos, story boarding cards, sectorial cards with questions, tags, dice etc.) to engage participants, put them into the context of the project or programme and allow them to share feedback that can inform improvement. The online process has been simplified to allow community members to easily design, tag, edit and create their own videos.

Although not yet explicitly applied to anticipatory action, the INDABA method that could be relevant to anticipatory action for the following reasons:

- It is a community-based approach. Communities are the first to detect early warning signs of crises;
- The feedback collected through video stories can provide the IFRC network, partners and donors with real time feedback on anticipatory action rooted in local knowledge.
- Story telling is a strong tradition in many cultures. The production and sharing of video stories could allow people to describe their experience of anticipatory action in their own ways. It could also help promote peer-to-peer knowledge transfer in anticipatory action.

Step 5.3: Trigger review

Both activations and missed activations present a valuable opportunity to learn from and improve the triggering process and threshold, especially for formalized frameworks and / or s/EAPs. Questions developed by the Climate Centre and university partners for activations and missed events are available in the toolbox as well as example reports based on these templates. These questions can be answered during a dedicated session of the lessons learned workshop or other post-activation review processes, as applicable.

Step 6: Setting yourself up for success - lessons from experience

If your National Society wants to measure outcomes or impacts, you are more likely to be successful if the parties involved in designing your MEAL plan have already determined the approach and methodology, who will execute it, and when well before your s/EAP is activated or other early actions are implemented more broadly. This means that protocols, surveys and other tools, volunteers, and any necessary materials (e.g. tablets, phones, software licenses) should be pre-determined and ready for rapid training and deployment.

A common mistake National Societies make is waiting until after an activation to think concretely about monitoring and evaluation. While a lessons learned workshop can be organized after early action implementation, your team will get better data if the PDM is developed and planned for beforehand. Because most early actions do not seek to provide long-term impact, timely data collection is essential. For example, to measure whether cash or in-kind items mitigated food insecurity immediately after a flood, you would need to return to the community to collect data on food security indicators before the benefits of your assistance have waned. The precise timing of data collection will depend upon the methods and indicators you are using as well as the counterfactual scenario you are comparing to (when applicable). The table below provides a few (non-exhaustive) examples of common interventions and considerations for when to collect data.

Hazard	Intervention & expected duration (if applicable)	Expected impact	Notes on when to measure
Flood	Water purification kits to last 2 weeks (during and immediately after the flood)	Reduction in cholera cases	Cholera has an incubation period of 12 hours to 5 days. Data on illnesses experienced during and after the flood should be collected as soon as possible following the two weeks to ensure proper recall.
Drought	Animal fodder to last until the next rains produce pasture (e.g. 3 months)	Improve animal body condition and reduction in excess mortality	For body condition, you would want to measure at the end of lean season but before the rains arrive potentially allowing animals to recover once pasture is more widely available.
Drought	Cash to spend on food / basic needs for 3 months	Improved food consumption or security scores	Most food security indicators ask about food consumption for the preceding 7-days. One Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) asks households about the last 30 days. You should therefore collect this data after you would expect food consumption patterns to have diverged between the groups in question but before cash to spend on food has been exhausted.

For more information on the timing of data collection see WFP's M&E guidance that is available in the toolbox. Waiting until after an activation to begin planning an outcome or impact assessment, when the National Society is likely to be focused on implementation and on-going response, is likely to lead to delays that will compromise what you are able to measure.

No matter what approach you decide to take, defining the following will help to set you up for success:

- Define how and when you will monitor and evaluate your anticipatory action intervention or s/EAP activation (steps 1-3)
- Define/procure equipment and licenses you need (for example, phones, tablets, and/or licenses for digital survey data collection, e.g. Kobo or Open Data Kit).
- Define who will collect data and who will analyze it.
- Estimate a budget and identify where it will come from.

If you or someone on your MEAL team is interested in engaging regularly on MEAL for anticipatory action, the Anticipation Hub's MEAL Practitioner Group meets monthly to share experiences in monitoring and evaluation for anticipatory action. A link is available through the toolbox.

Step 7: Incorporate findings

No matter what approach you take to monitoring and evaluation, the effort is wasted if the findings do not feedback to practice. Lessons and recommendations from the PDM, lessons learned workshop, and any additional activities should be used to revise and strengthen future versions of your s/EAP or other anticipatory action mechanisms.

Step 8: Share your evidence

If you do conduct an evaluation, share it with the MEAL Practitioner Group to help others learn from your findings and experience. All links can be found in the toolbox.

Toolbox

Project Management Tools and Templates

- FbF Logframe Template
- FbF Logframe Example

FbF MEAL Plan Example

Guidance on Lessons Learned Workshop and PDM

IFRC Evaluation Repository

DREF AA Lessons Learned Guidance and Workshop Format

DREF AA Lessons Learned Workshop Feedback Form

IFRC Guidance and Examples for Post-Distribution Monitoring

WFP: Joint Post-Distribution Monitoring of Forecast-based Anticipatory Action Project

Trigger Evaluation Resources

Trigger Review Template

Example of completed Trigger Review Exercise

Guidance on Process Monitoring & Evaluation

Real-time Monitoring Template

Guidance on Assessment and Building of Capacities

WFP guidance on planning and monitoring country capacity strengthening for anticipatory action

Guidance on connecting Anticipatory action and PER (2024)

Connections between National Society Preparedness for Effective Response and Anticipatory Action (2019)

Resources around Value for Money Studies

Dioptra Tool for Rapid, rigorous cost-efficiency analysis

IRC: Livelihoods Cost-Effectiveness Brief – Anticipatory Cash Nigeria

Save the Children: Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the Early Action Fund

CGIAR; Cost effectiveness of anticipatory action: Lesotho, Madagascar, and Mozambique

The State of Cost-Effectiveness Guidance: Ten Best Resources for CEA in Impact Evaluations

Centre for Disaster Protection: Assessing Value for Money in Pre-arranged Financing for Disasters: A Practical Framework

Resources & Examples for RCTs & Quasi-Experimental Designs

Sample Size Calculator

- Sample Size Calculator for Cluster Samples
- TOR Template for Project Statistician
- TOR Template for Survey Firm / Academic Partner
- WFP Guidance: Monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory actions for fast and slow-onset hazards: Guidance and tools for Forecast-based Financing
- Introduction to Randomized Evaluations
- 2-page summary guidance on identifying comparison groups for FbF projects
- Overview of Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Methodology
- Example of Randomized Study Design (RCT): Impacts of Anticipatory Cash Transfers in the Context of Weather Disasters
- ICR Example of Randomized Evaluation

Resources for Qualitative Impact Assessment (QuIP)

- The Qualitative Impact Protocol Guidance

Resources for the Success Case Methodology

- 1 Success Case Method In-Depth Specifics for Anticipatory Action Studies
- Blog Post on Success Case Method

Resources for Participatory Evaluation Methodologies (PIA, P-FIM, INDABA)

- Participatory Impact Assessment: A Design Guide
- Example of Participatory Impact Assessment Study: Livestock Mortality in Pastoralist Herds in Ethiopia and Implications for Drought Response
- Participatory Video: Examples from Practice
- P-FIM: People-First Impact Method for Anticipatory Action
- Handout: Applying P-FIM to MEAL (Concept Note)
- INDABA Participatory Video Guidance

Anticipation Hub Resources

- Anticipation Hub's MEAL Practitioner Group
- Anticipation Hub Evidence Database

General Red Cross Red Crescent Movement MEAL Guidance

Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Framework (American Red Cross)
Project / programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) guide
IFRC Guidance on Community Engagement and Accountability

10. Design the s/EAP budget

10. Design the s/EAP budget

Summary

This chapter will guide you through the s/EAP budget and provide guidance on how to fill the budget template. You will familiarize yourself with the eligible types of activities in an s/EAP, learn where to find the latest version of the budget template and receive tips and tricks on what to consider and how to fill the template.

Introduction

This chapter explains how to develop the budget for a simplified or full Early Action Protocol. It focuses specifically on budgeting for s/EAPs using the IFRC budget template. Because s/EAPs require formal submission to the Anticipatory Pillar of the IFRC-DREF and follow a dedicated validation process, budgeting must follow a specific structures and regulations outlined in this chapter. Other anticipatory action approaches may require budgeting as well, but related formats, cost categories and approval processes may differ; they may be largely heterogeneous and are therefore not covered in this chapter. Specific guidance on the imminent DREF can be found in this chapter and budget considerations for the imminent DREF are addressed in chapter 3.5.4 of the IFRC DREF guidelines that are linked in the toolbox.

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the eligible types of activities in an s/EAP

The IFRC budget follows the IFRC plan and budget. This outlines the sector interventions that fall under the 'planned operation' and cross cutting 'enabling approaches'.

The operational matrix in the s/EAP and the budget should correspond to each other.*For example*, if two trainings are planned under shelter, settlement and housing in year 1 and year 3, then these trainings should be included under the same sector in the budget template, with one line each for YEAR_1 and YEAR_3 respectively.

Planned operations sectors and enabling approaches:

IFRC 'planned operation' sectors (11 in total)

- Shelter, Settlement and Housing; Livelihoods; Multipurpose Cash; Health; WASH; Protection, Gender and Inclusion; Education; Migration; Risk Reduction; Community Engagement and Accountability; and Environmental Sustainability

IFRC Enabling approaches (3 in total)

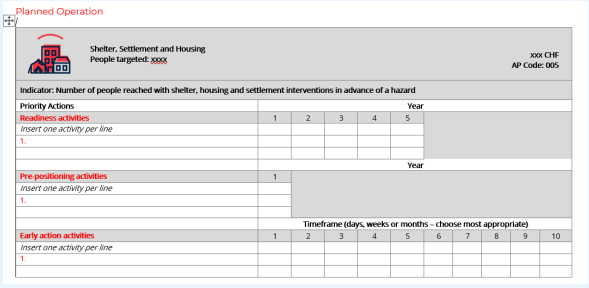
- Coordination and Partnership (activities for stakeholders external to the RCRC)
- Secretariat Services (dedicated for IFRC activities)
- National Society Development (dedicated for National Society activities)

Eligible types of activities in an s/EAP:

- **Readiness activities** are any ongoing costs and services, including HR and logistics, that are necessary for the National Society to remain ready to activate and implement early action activities These costs should be spread out annually over the five-year lifespan of an EAP or two-year lifespan for an sEAP.
- **Prepositioning activities** enable National Societies to procure and preposition the stock required for early action, so it is available once a trigger is reached. The stock should have a shelf-life of two years or five years, aligned with the respective lifespan of an sEAP or a full EAP respectively. The budget can include related costs such as warehousing, transportation and insurance. Note that stock that has a shelf life shorter than five years / two years such as nutrition, pharmaceuticals and medical items may not be eligible for prepositioning. As an alternative, National Societies should identify suppliers who can supply these items within the forecast lead time.
- **Early action activities** are activities that are done to reduce or mitigate the impact of a hazard on at-risk communities. Early action activities should be completed within the lead time; however, some expenditures will be eligible and follow up cost may be incurred after the end of the early action lead time (e.g. debriefing volunteers, monitoring activities, lessons learned workshop). These activities need to be completed within the operational timeframe, normally three months after the activation.

Examples of the operational matrix from the EAP template

Examples of the operational matrix from the EAP template



Planned Operation

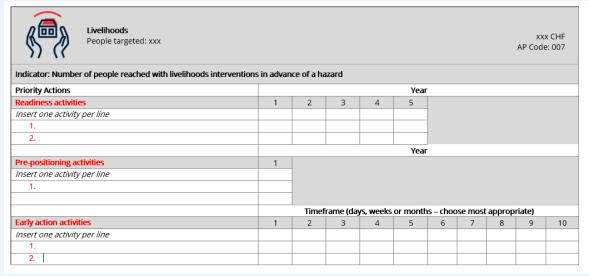
Shelter, Settlement and Housing
People targeted: xxxx

xxx CHF
AP Code: 005

Indicator: Number of people reached with shelter, housing and settlement interventions in advance of a hazard

Priority Actions	Year									
Readiness activities	1	2	3	4	5					
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
	Year									
Pre-positioning activities	1									
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
	Timeframe (days, weeks or months – choose most appropriate)									
Early action activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Insert one activity per line										
1.										

Planned operation sector: Shelter, Settlement and Housing



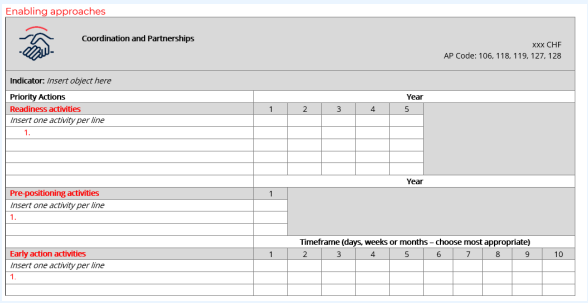
Livelihoods
People targeted: xxx

xxx CHF
AP Code: 007

Indicator: Number of people reached with livelihoods interventions in advance of a hazard

Priority Actions	Year									
Readiness activities	1	2	3	4	5					
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
2.										
	Year									
Pre-positioning activities	1									
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
	Timeframe (days, weeks or months – choose most appropriate)									
Early action activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
2.										

Planned operation sector: Livelihoods



Enabling approaches

Coordination and Partnerships

xxx CHF
AP Code: 106, 118, 119, 127, 128

Indicator: *Insert object here*

Priority Actions	Year									
Readiness activities	1	2	3	4	5					
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
	Year									
Pre-positioning activities	1									
Insert one activity per line										
1.										
	Timeframe (days, weeks or months – choose most appropriate)									
Early action activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Insert one activity per line										
1.										

Enabling approach: Coordination and partnership

Step 2: Download the latest version of the template

Before you start preparing your budget, make sure that you have the*latest version* of the budget template (currently dated 2026). You can download the budget template directly from FedNet or request it through the relevant IFRC delegation.

Step 3: Plan the budget and fill the budget template

Before you start inputting the budget – make sure you **select the *protocol type* in cell K5 –** from the dropdown menu**,** select either **EA Protocol or Simplified EAP.** This will automatically set the budget caps and will alert you if the budget cap is overspent.

Now that you have selected the correct template type (cell K5 = EA Protocol or Simplified EAP)*,read carefully* the last tab, 'guidelines' for completing the budget template. If you follow the principles here, you will understand how to use the budget template correctly

Budget caps for EAPs and sEAPs:

The maximum budget for a National Society for a full EAP is CHF 900,000. The maximum budget for a National Society for a simplified EAP is CHF 200,000. These figures must be inclusive of the IFRC indirect or programmes and services support recovery (PSSR) of 6.5 per cent.

The IFRC delegation supporting the National Society can add 20,000 for a simplified EAP or CHF 50,000 to support the maintenance and activation of an s/EAP. This sum must include the 6.5 per cent IFRC indirect or programmes and service support recovery (PSSR). The National Society and the IFRC should use the same budget template.

When filling out the budget template, most cells can be copy and paste, except for four columns, where options must be selected

manually from the dropdown menu:

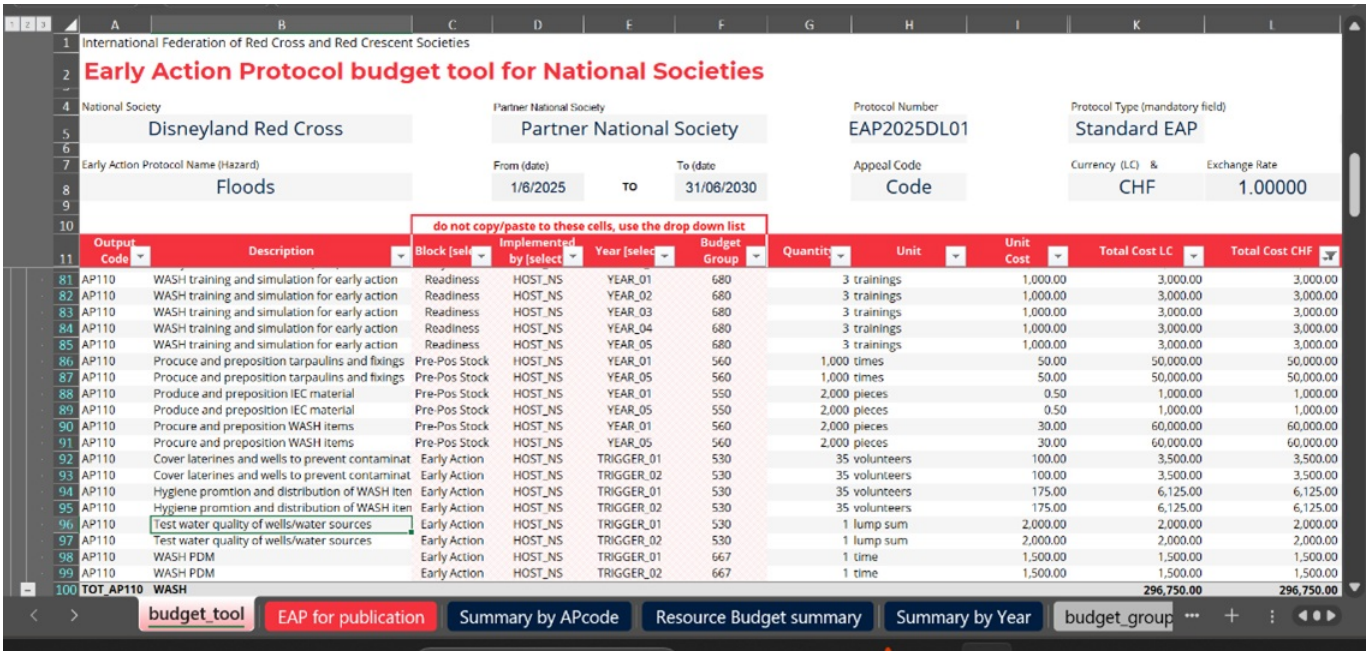
- **In column C:** use the dropdown menu to indicate the type of activity: Readiness, Pre Pos Stock 1 and Pre Pos Stock 2 (only EA Protocol uses Pre Pos Stock 2), and also Early Action 1 and Early Action 2 (only EA Protocol uses Early Action 2).
- **In column D:** use the dropdown menu to indicate who will be implementing the activity: Host NS, IFRC or PNS, if a partner has a role in the s/EAP.
- **In column E:** use the dropdown menu to indicate when the activity will be done.

  For readiness, indicate which year the activity will be done (YEAR 1 – YEAR 5 for an EA Protocol or YEAR 1 – YEAR 2 for a simplified EAP; If you don't see these options in the dropdown menu – make sure that you have selected the correct protocol type, cell K5, 'EA Protocol' or 'simplified EAP'.). If the activity is repeated annually and thus done five times, you will need to copy this column five times and allocate the five to 'YEAR 1', 'YEAR 2', through to 'YEAR 5'. *Note, you cannot budget the activity for five years in just one line.*

  For prepositioned stock, under the simplified EAPs, all stock is always budgeted in 'YEAR 1'. For a full EAP, stock should be budgeted twice, one allocation in 'YEAR 1' and one allocation for the second activation which should be coded to 'ACTIV_02'. Following the first activation, the second allocation will be transferred, so that the stock can be procured and prepositioned in advance of a second activation.

  For early actions, should be budgeted under 'ACTIV_01' for the sEAP and for a full EAP, the first activation is budgeted under 'ACTIV_01' and 'ACTIV_02' for the second activation.

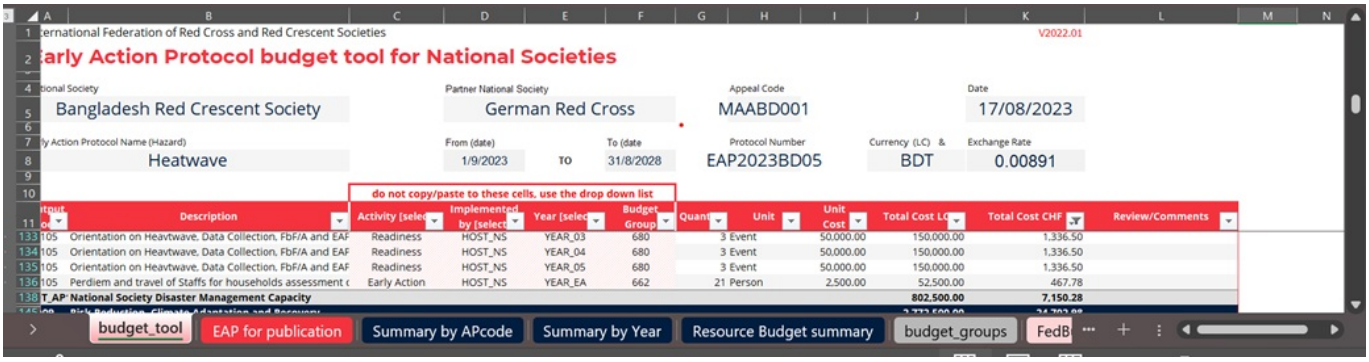
- **In column F:** indicate using the dropdown menu the appropriate budget group. The full list of budget groups can be found under the excel tab called '*budget group*'.



Output Code	Description	Block	Implemented by	Year	Budget Group	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Total Cost LC	Total Cost CHF
AP110	WASH training and simulation for early action	Readiness	HOST_NS	YEAR_01	680	3	trainings	1,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
AP110	WASH training and simulation for early action	Readiness	HOST_NS	YEAR_02	680	3	trainings	1,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
AP110	WASH training and simulation for early action	Readiness	HOST_NS	YEAR_03	680	3	trainings	1,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
AP110	WASH training and simulation for early action	Readiness	HOST_NS	YEAR_04	680	3	trainings	1,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
AP110	WASH training and simulation for early action	Readiness	HOST_NS	YEAR_05	680	3	trainings	1,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
AP110	Procuce and preposition tarpaulins and fixings	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_01	560	1,000	times	50.00	50,000.00	50,000.00
AP110	Procuce and preposition tarpaulins and fixings	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_05	560	1,000	times	50.00	50,000.00	50,000.00
AP110	Produce and preposition IEC material	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_01	550	2,000	pieces	0.50	1,000.00	1,000.00
AP110	Produce and preposition IEC material	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_05	550	2,000	pieces	0.50	1,000.00	1,000.00
AP110	Procure and preposition WASH items	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_01	560	2,000	pieces	30.00	60,000.00	60,000.00
AP110	Procure and preposition WASH items	Pre-Pos Stock	HOST_NS	YEAR_05	560	2,000	pieces	30.00	60,000.00	60,000.00
AP110	Cover laterines and wells to prevent contaminat	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_01	530	35	volunteers	100.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
AP110	Cover laterines and wells to prevent contaminat	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_02	530	35	volunteers	100.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
AP110	Hygiene promtion and distribution of WASH iten	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_01	530	35	volunteers	175.00	6,125.00	6,125.00
AP110	Hygiene promtion and distribution of WASH iten	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_02	530	35	volunteers	175.00	6,125.00	6,125.00
AP110	Test water quality of wells/water sources	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_01	530	1	lump sum	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
AP110	Test water quality of wells/water sources	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_02	530	1	lump sum	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
AP110	WASH PDM	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_01	667	1	time	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
AP110	WASH PDM	Early Action	HOST_NS	TRIGGER_02	667	1	time	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
TOT_AP110	WASH								296,750.00	296,750.00

Top Tips:

- Make sure that you *save the template as a .xlsm* (macro enabled workbook).
- Make sure that you select the *correct budget type*, cell 5K *(EA Protocol* or *Simplified EAP)*
- For columns C to F, use the dropdown menu *–you cannot copy and paste into these cells.*
- Make sure that all AP codes and budget groups are filled for each column, otherwise the other tabs will not calculate correctly.
- An example of a completed budget template can be found in the toolbox.



If the budget tool is completed correctly, then the spreadsheet tabs will automatically calculate:

- **EAP BUDGET FOR PUBLISHING,** which groups the budget by planned operation and enabling approaches.
- **SUMMARY BY AP CODE,** which gives a breakdown by planned operation and enabling approaches, broken down by readiness, preposition stock and early action.
- **SUMMARY BY YEAR,** which provides a breakdown of amount and percent of readiness, prepositioned stock and early action by Host National Society, the Partner National Society (if applicable) and the IFRC, by year. You will also receive alerts, if the budget caps are exceeded, or activities have been budgeted incorrectly. *Note for IFRC staff, this tab can be used when populating the IFRC project agreement.*
- **RESOURCE BUDGET SUMMARY,** which provides a more detailed breakdown by AP code across readiness, prepositioned stock and early action.
- **BUDGET GROUP,** here is the list of budget group codes which can be used to populate the budget tool, column F.
- **WBS,** this tab summarises the budget by implementing party and output to allow the IFRC-DREF Operations Project Manager an easy reconversion of the data into IFRC's D365 system.
- **GUIDANCE,** this tab provides additional guidance on how to complete the budget. We recommend that you **consult this tab before you start work** on the budget template.

Step 4: Double-check what goes where

What goes where?

- In principle, if there is a readiness activity or stock under any given sector, then there should be at least one 'early action' activity.
- As much as possible, ensure that activities are included in the appropriate sector under the planned operation. For example, if there is a general training which will cover Shelter, Health and PGI – rather than including a lump sum under 'National Society Strengthening', pro rata the costs under the relevant sectors – 33 per cent allocated to shelter, 33 per cent allocated to health, and 34 per cent allocated to PGI.
- Any costs related to the IFRC, should be included under 'Secretariat Services'.
- Any costs related to the National Society which cannot be attributed to a sector, or are related to National Society admin costs, lessons learned workshop and salaries, should be included under '*National Society Strengthening*'.
- Volunteer insurance should be budgeted under '*National Society Strengthening*'.
- Early warning and evacuation should go under '*Risk Reduction*'.
- Household items (mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, etc.) should be planned and budgeted under 'Shelter, Settlement and Housing'.
- The lessons learned workshop should normally be included under 'National Society Strengthening', always as an early action (ACTIV_01 for a simplified EAP or for a full EA Protocol ACTIV_01 for the first activation and ACTIV_02 for the second activation).
- At the time of initial submission Pre Pos Stock 1 = Pre Pos Stock 2 and EARLY Action 1 = Early Action 2. That is, the budget should be the same for both rounds of stock and both rounds of early action.
- Any coordination with stakeholders whether the Met Service or Government departments, whether readiness, stock or early action should be included under 'Coordination and Partnerships'.
- PDM related to health should be included under the health sector, however general CEA such as a community feedback mechanism should be included under '*Community Engagement and Accountability*'.
- The IFRC indirect costs, or PSSR, are automatically calculated as part of the budget template.

Step 5: Double-check that your budget meets all the guidelines

Before you complete your budget, make sure that it meets all the guidelines:

- Maximum 65 per cent of the total budget can be allocated for readiness activities and prepositioned activities combined. It is up to National Societies to decide how to allocate the budget over these two types of costs. National Societies that request a high proportion of readiness costs (more than 35per cent) may be requested to justify the allocation. Also, National Societies who have more than one EAP may be requested to demonstrate that readiness costs are diminishing.
- The National Society may include administrative costs of up to 5 per cent of the total budget. If the 5 per cent administrative rate is not used, the National Society will need to list out each administrative cost individually expected during the early action phase (finance, logistics, electricity, support staff, etc.)
- The monitoring and evaluation budget should be maximum 5 per cent of overall the budget (CHF 47,500 maximum for a full EAP or CHF 10,000 maximum for an sEAP).

Tip: If you need assistance with preparing your budget, reach out to your IFRC Delegation Financial Focal Point.

Toolbox

Tools and templates

FedNet
Full EAP template
Simplified EAP template
s/EAP Budget template
IFRC DREF Guidelines (2026)

11. Prepare for activation: build capacity and test your plan

11. Prepare for activation: build capacity and test your plan

Summary

Aligning with existing systems and developing required capacities and procedures for anticipatory action is a continuous task throughout the planning and the development of your anticipatory action plan, and specifically the s/EAP. However, once you have finalized your anticipatory action plan, you will know exactly what your National Society and its partners need to be ready to activate. Of course, this will depend heavily on the needs, resources, time and circumstances under which the plan is developed. For example, you might have less resources when developing a plan with a community as compared to a full-fledged anticipatory action project with a partner which aims to develop an s/EAP. This chapter guides you through the process of assessing existing capacities and procedures, identifying gaps, and planning accordingly. This involves reviewing existing documents, consulting relevant departments, and finalizing the organizational structure of the anticipatory action plan, but with a focus on s/EAPs. Another crucial element to prepare for an activation is training and developing guidance materials to ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. Finally, disseminating the anticipatory action plan and conducting simulations help test the plan and identify areas for improvement.

Step 1: Map capacities, resources and procedures needed for the implementation of the plan

With your draft anticipatory action plan almost done, you need to make sure that what has been put on paper can also be put into practice. To do so, it is important to first identify the capacities, resources and procedures that need to be in place. Begin by reviewing the (s/EAP) document and noting which capacities are needed, both in terms of skills and quantity. To understand how much time, how many people, and which skills you need to implement each early action, consult the disaster management department of the National Society (or the branch or someone in the community) and / or the person(s) in charge of the National Disaster Response Team (NDRT). If the National Society has experience carrying out these activities, they will know these details (e.g. how long time does it take to set up an emergency shelter and how many people are required to be part of it?). With this information, you can calculate how many people you will need on your intervention team and which skills they should have to be able to implement your early actions and reach the targeted number of households within the lead time. You can later test and verify this as part of a simulation exercise (see step 6 below).

If some of the activities are being carried out either partially or fully by partners, it is important to also note it for them. You also need to map which procedures are needed to ensure an efficient implementation of the anticipatory action plan (please see chapter 8).

While reviewing the s/EAP document or anticipatory action plan, note where potential bottlenecks could occur. If you have done a scoping study before starting your work on anticipatory action, you may have already identified some bottlenecks (e.g. with regards to logistics or financial procedures).

Once you are done with this step, you should have a list of capacities and procedures needed as well as a list of potential bottlenecks.

Step 2: Review existing assessments on capacities and procedures to identify gaps

Now that you know what you need to effectively implement the plan or s/EAP, it is time to look at what you have. Start by looking through existing anticipatory action scoping studies, PER assessments, or other assessments of the National Society's capacities, as well as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and contingency plans. For s/EAPs, it is important to assess the capacities at both national and branch level, as the s/EAP will be implemented at both levels.

Here you can also consult with the National Society's disaster management department or the NDRT to assess their capacity. Remember that the existing response capacities, including the NDRT, might need to be ready to respond to the hazard that your s/EAP is addressing, and it might therefore be necessary to ensure additional capacity so that the National Society can take anticipatory action while not limiting its ability to respond. In many cases, some kind of response will still be needed even though anticipatory action is taken.

As in step 1, if the anticipatory action plan is being implemented in collaboration with partners, make sure that their capacities are also assessed.

When reviewing the SOPs, pay special attention to whether the SOPs are designed in a way that facilitates acting in anticipation of disasters.

- Do the financial procedures allow for quick disbursement, e.g. to branches to initiate early actions?
- Do the logistical procedures allow for efficient disbursement of household items or cash?

To ensure that you get the full overview, set up consultations with heads of relevant departments to get their perspective. You can

do this by taking them through a scenario of how you envision the s/EAP or anticipatory action plan activation will be rolled out and at what speed and asking them to highlight where there may be challenges.

By comparing the reviewed existing capacities and procedures with the needed capacities and procedures, you should now have a clear overview of where potential gaps might be.

Step 3: Finalize the organizational structure for the implementation

Chapter 8 outlines how to design your activation process. Now, it is time to finalize the organizational structure so that organizational capacity for the implementation of your anticipatory action plan is achieved and maintained before (including the readiness activities) and during an activation. Note that the guidance below focusses on s/EAPs but have valid considerations for other plans, e.g. community-based plans or imminent DREF as well.

Some of the questions you should be asking yourself are:

- **Who is involved at national / HQ level?**
  Which persons and departments, as well as partners need to be involved in the activities related to the s/EAP at national level – both during and outside the activation period. For the external partners, it is a good idea to ask them to appoint an anticipatory action focal point and a backup, at their level, so that it is always the same people that attend. Otherwise, you might need to explain anticipatory action and the s/EAP every time you start a meeting or activity.
- **What is the structure at regional / branch level?**
  You need to design a structure for the implementation of the anticipatory action plan or s/EAP at regional/branch level. Where is anticipatory action and the s/EAP anchored in the branch? You can for instance, consider appointing an anticipatory action focal point at branch level, who will be the contact in the branch outside the activation period. They will then serve as the entry point to coordinate trainings, maintain contact lists, communicate anticipatory action in the branch, etc.

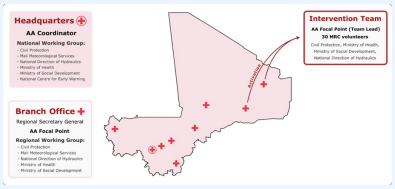
You will also need to design the setup of the branch during an activation. Who will be in contact with the HQ / national level? Who will be in contact with the intervention team? Which partners need to be involved?

- **What is the composition of the (s/EAP) intervention team and how are they organized?**
  The best composition of the intervention team depends very much on the context, as well as the early actions to be implemented, as some activities might be sensitive. In general, the intervention team should reflect the diversity of the community they serve. There needs to be gender diversity within the team, and potentially different languages of the communities must also be spoken in the team. In addition to that, there might be considerations on ethnicity, age, and other context-specific factors, which need to be considered. Reach out to your PGI advisor to get more support on this for your specific context.

You also need to determine the size of the team and how they will implement the early actions. For instance, you can divide them into sub-teams, which have different areas of responsibility. This will also affect who and how many you need to train in specific technical skills (see step 4).

- **At what levels are external actors involved? And how?**
  If external actors are involved in the s/EAP implementation, you need to identify at which level (national, regional / provincial / district, community) they need to be involved. You also need to make sure that their role is clearly defined and understood by them. This can be anything from coordination at national level to implementing specific early actions in the targeted communities.
- **Revise SOPs (if needed) to accommodate early actions (see step 2) or identify alternatives.**
  If you identified any procedures that potentially could become a bottleneck or otherwise be a challenge for the implementation of the s/EAP in step 2, you need to explore whether it will be possible to revise this procedure in a way so that it can accommodate the smooth implementation of the (s)EAP. This could either be done by doing a total revision of the procedure or by adding exceptions, where the normal procedures can be disregarded in order to, for instance, facilitate a quick transfer of funds to branch level. If it is not possible to revise the existing procedures, you need to identify alternative ways of dealing with the potential challenges. Would it, for instance, be possible to agree with service providers that they are paid for their services after the early actions have been implemented, so that the implementation is not delayed due to the transfer of funds being slow?

Mali Red Cross (MRC) has developed a multi-level coordination structure to be used both before and during an activation of their riverine flood Early Action Protocol. The overall engagement by MRC on anticipatory action is being managed by the MRC AA National Coordinator, who is thereby also responsible for the implementation of the EAP. Outside of specific activation windows, MRC is hosting a National Working Group at HQ, consisting of relevant technical services of the state and MRC itself. This group meets every two months to discuss and exchange on various topics or challenges related to the EAP.



Source: Mali RC

On regional level, all MRC branches have a designated AA focal point, which is a volunteer that has received specific training on anticipatory action and the EAP. The AA focal point is responsible for keeping the branch updated and ready, as well as being in regular contact with the National Society's AA coordinator at HQ level for training coordination, workshops and general updates, which also includes the monitoring data of the trigger level. Each MRC branch also hosts a Regional Working Group, which consists of the same technical services of the State as the national group, but just at the regional level. These regional working groups meet once a year, just before the onset of the rainy season to prepare and refresh their knowledge on the EAP.

All MRC branch regional secretary generals and their AA focal points also meet annually with the National Working Group and the relevant MRC HQ staff for a refresher training and a tabletop exercise on the EAP activation, as well as being informed of any potential updates or changes of the EAP. Due to Mali's vast territory and the conflict setting in parts of the country, MRC has decided to divide the prepositioned stock between five strategically chosen locations to ensure easy access and an efficient and rapid intervention.

During activation

During an activation of the EAP, the National Working Group together with MRC's heads of departments will act as the overall coordinating body of the early action intervention at national level. At the regional branch level of the area where the EAP is activated, the regional working group and the MRC branch management will similarly coordinate the intervention in their area and be responsible for deploying the intervention team. The intervention team is led by the MRC branch AA focal point and consists of 30 trained MRC volunteers, and agents from the various relevant technical services, notably the Civil Protection who plays a key role in implementing the early actions.

Step 4: Conduct trainings and develop guidance material

Especially when developing an s/EAP, where you have a bit more time, you have probably already conducted some trainings and introduced the wider organization to anticipatory action (see chapters 1 and 2). Now that you have a draft s/EAP, anticipatory action has become more concrete and tangible. It may also have been some time since other staff has been involved in anticipatory action work. It is therefore a good idea to conduct another round of training for the heads of departments at the national level of the National Society, for the relevant branches, and for other staff and volunteers who have a role to play. In addition to a general training on anticipatory action, this training should also focus on the specific content of the s/EAP in question (see Step 5 below), as well as the Anticipatory Pillar of IFRC's DREF modality (see chapter 4).

In addition to this, you must ensure that the staff and volunteers who have specific tasks in the s/EAP have the skills required to carry out these actions (e.g. how to set up an emergency shelter or organize a cash distribution). From your earlier assessment of the capacity needs and current capacities (steps 1 and 2 above), you should have an overview of the skills needed. Based on this, you can design your training for relevant staff and volunteers to ensure that they have adequate skills.

Besides skills specific to your early actions, you should ensure that staff and volunteers receive training or are sensitized on Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) aspects so that they can identify particular groups' specific needs, including marginalized groups, and know how to deal respectfully with people from different backgrounds. Also consider trainings on Psychological First Aid, First Aid, and Community Engagement and Accountability. Consult the NDRT to understand which general trainings staff and volunteers receive, as the content might be relevant for the anticipatory action intervention team as well.

As a full EAP is valid for 5 years (a sEAP is valid for 2 years), this training should not be a one-time event. There will be staff and volunteer turnover during the 5 years, and skills fade if they are not applied or refreshed regularly. It will therefore be important to plan new trainings and refresher trainings as part of your readiness activities throughout the a/EAP period (see chapter 10 on readiness activities).

Step 5: Disseminate the anticipatory action plan

It is important that the content of the s/EAP is widely known across the organization. The activation window is intense, and for sudden-onset hazards rather short. There will be little time to introduce people to anticipatory action and train them once the s/EAP has been activated. Personnel must have a general understanding of how anticipatory action, and specifically the s/EAP, works within the organization, so that the early actions can be implemented efficiently and do not get stuck in organizational bottlenecks.

All staff and volunteers who have a role to play in the s/EAP must know what is expected of them during an activation – including external partners. This can be done through dissemination of the s/EAP document either printed or virtually and through presentations at trainings or workshops. Preferably, it should be a combination of these, as this will increase the exposure to the document. It is important that this does not only happen at the headquarter-level, but also reaches all the relevant branches, so that they are also informed and knowledgeable about the s/EAP and its content.

One way to ensure that the content is easily accessible, especially during an activation, is to develop a "Pocket s/EAP" that summarizes the key elements of the s/EAP and provides an overview of its content (see example from Peru and the Philippines in the toolbox). The Pocket s/EAP can also be tailored so that different versions address different parts of the organization and highlight their specific focus areas: for instance, one version for the intervention team focusing on the early actions they need to implement in the communities, and another version for the heads of department at headquarters focusing on the decisions they need to make.

A good way to ensure that everybody has understood their role(s) and the content of the s/EAP, while also training them in carrying out their tasks is through simulation exercises, as discussed in the next step.

Step 6: Test your plan through a simulation

A simulation exercise, also known as a tabletop exercise or a drill, is a great way to test the effectiveness of developed plans, procedures, protocols, guidelines and capacities (please see chapter 8), whether your early actions are feasible within the given lead time, and whether roles and responsibilities are clear to everyone involved. A simulation allows the s/EAP to move from theory to practice, to evaluate, and eventually to refine its procedures.



The s/EAP is often developed heavily at the headquarter-level, but the implementation of the s/EAP is often the responsibility of branches and local governments. Ensure that you include branches and other relevant partners (e.g. local authorities and hydro-meteorological service) in the simulation.



Alejandro Terán talks about the importance of drills and simulations and his experiences with volcanic ash exercises in Ecuador:

Step 6.1: Understand why and when to use a simulation

IFRC and CADRIM's simulation guide (see toolbox) distinguishes between four types of simulation exercises:

Tabletop exercises: A discussion-based exercise whereby stakeholders discuss actions to be taken during a made-up disaster situation. The goal of a tabletop exercise is to identify and resolve problems while allowing participants to better understand each other's responsibilities, resources and operational procedures.

Objectives of a tabletop exercise for anticipatory action include:

- Evaluate the decision-making capacity of staff and volunteers responsible for implementing the early actions outlined in an s/EAP or anticipatory action plan.
- Validate the anticipatory action plan, e.g. s/EAP and its assumptions.
- Test the coordination mechanisms of internal and external stakeholders with a role in the anticipatory action plan.
- Prepare those with decision-making authority to manage relevant aspects of the anticipatory action plan during activation.

Drills: An operations-based exercise that requires mobilization and the use of resources during a made-up disaster scenario. The goal of a drill is to test a single specific operation, function, or system. For example, a drill for shelter strengthening kits can be used to test the National Societies procedure for this early action.

Objectives of a drill for anticipatory action include:

- Test the feasibility, viability and timeliness of the early actions.
- Identify possible challenges in coordination among stakeholders involved.
- Evaluate abilities and the use of techniques, tools, resources, and actions related to the implementation of the anticipatory action plan.
- Test the capacity of volunteers and branches to successfully implement the anticipatory action plan, e.g. s/EAP in order to identify gaps.
- Assess the general response of a sample community to the early actions foreseen, if applicable.

Functional exercises: A fully simulated operations-based exercise that tests the capacity of an organization to respond to a made-up situation. This exercise also requires the mobilization and use of resources, but it differs from a drill in that it is used to test multiple functions of an organization's operations plan.

Field exercises: A full-scale operations-based exercise that is conducted in a highly stressful environment, usually lasting up to several days. This type of exercise tests most functions within an operations plan as it involves the mobilization of all the equipment and emergency personnel needed in a real situation.



In 2019, the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) organized three simulations to test the Typhoon EAP early actions, namely: early harvesting of abaca trees in Catanduanes Island, shelter strengthening in Aurora Province, and livestock evacuation in Davao Oriental Province.

PRC Tabletop + Drill Format

Although the early actions tested varied, the three-day format for all PRC chapters remained the same:

Day 1

The first day was used for a tabletop exercise to review what must be done by the chapter to simulate the moment the chapter received the message that the trigger was reached (four-days before the typhoon will make landfall).

Day 2

The second day the PRC employed a drill, which covered the early actions to be taken three and two days before landfall.

Day 3

The final day was reserved for a thorough debriefing of the simulation exercise.

For each simulation exercise, PRC encouraged additional PRC chapters to join and also invited provincial government partners. The participants were split on the second day to go to different communities (with different early actions).

Each simulation required ample preparation prior to the exercise taking place. It is crucial that the simulation be jointly planned with all involved agencies at the province level as well as the involved communities at an early stage (at least a month prior).

The criteria below represent the minimum PRC preparation components:

- A typhoon scenario as close to reality as possible
- Engagement of all agencies and participants needed to execute all EAP roles and responsibilities
- Resources (e.g. transport, material, volunteers)

PRC's 2019 Simulation Report (in the toolbox) details the approach.

Practicing simulations has yielded significant benefits for the PRC. The German Red Cross Anticipatory action delegate at the time of the simulation put it like this:

"The simulation was a great help in enabling the Catanduanes PRC chapter to activate early actions December 2, 2019 prior to the landfall of Typhoon Tisoy. In past storms, when Abaca trees were destroyed, this not only meant significant losses for farmers, but also a continuous lack of income for those workers normally employed for processing the fibres. PRC volunteers were on their own as our team didn't manage to reach the island three days before typhoon landfall. However, the Catanduanes chapter took full agency of their early actions, and executed everything as planned: Five barangays (communities) were selected with Caramoran municipal authorities, and volunteers were deployed to each of them to (i) recruit 20 workers, (ii) validate the list of the farms that should be assisted in early harvesting of abaca trees, and (iii) supervise the early harvesting of matured abaca trees in the selected farms. Although coordination with provincial authorities could have been a bit better, the volunteers applied the learnings from the simulation exercise – and even tested leaf trimming for the young abaca trees.

Aside from the importance of training chapters, authorities and volunteers, simulation exercises are very important to validate some of the assumptions we make in the EAP: like the time needed to strengthen houses with shelter strengthening kits, how best we can orient workers and beneficiaries, how to do the registration of animals being evacuated, etc. All these learnings can be only gathered through real time testing (and if we don't have a typhoon to do activation, it is best to do simulations)."

Step 6.2: Decide what kind of simulation you would like to conduct and plan, design and organize the simulation

Many National Societies have lots of experience with different type of simulations. If you are less experienced, it is useful to start with a tabletop exercise and not with a full-fledged-field exercise.

Guiding questions to decide what type of simulation to do:

- What exactly do you want to test? Do you want to test early actions or processes? Select the approach that best fits what you want to test.
- How much experience do you have with simulations? If you have never done a field exercise but have conducted drills, start with a drill.
- What is your experience with this early action? Has it been implemented similarly as a response action or is this a completely new approach? If completely new, a drill might be more suitable than testing several actions simultaneously.
- Have the early actions already been tested or even implemented elsewhere? Can lessons be drawn from this for your anticipatory action plan?
- Who is being tested or will be involved? Are all parties willing or available to participate?
- When and where will the simulation take place? Is the timing appropriate?
- How involved were partners and local authorities in the developing of the anticipatory action plan? A simulation is a learning experience for all involved, but it should also not overwhelm partners. Select the kind of simulation according to partners capacity.
- Do you already assume where your National Society or partners might have gaps (e.g. in capacity, processes, knowledge)? This might be worth testing!
- How much budget and time do you want or have available to invest?

Reach out to IFRC for simulation support

Reach out to IFRC to support you with the planning and implementation of the tabletop exercise that tests the communication and administrative processes, particularly of an s/EAP activation. IFRC has supported several tabletop exercises for anticipatory action, including support of staff from the Anticipatory Pillar of IFRC-DREF. This is particularly helpful when this is your first s/EAP and processes are not yet clear to everyone.

After establishing the type of simulation, hold a first coordination meeting with the key partners. For example, this could include:

- The anticipatory action coordination team and other relevant staff from the National Society,
- Government authorities (e.g. national hydrometeorological services, disaster management and relevant sectoral departments),
- Volunteers of the respective branches,
- Community members,
- IFRC offices and relevant partner organizations.

Note: Have a look at the suggested team structure and their responsibilities in the IFRC CADRIM Simulation guide.

Generally, all types of simulations need thorough planning. Please refer to the respective section in the IFRC and CADRIM simulation guide which also includes templates. Some common aspects across all kinds of simulations include:

- Define the objectives of the simulation
- Determine the scope, outputs and activities for each objective
- Set your timeline for each output and activity
- Define the target audience and stakeholders
- Identify resources and logistical agreements needed
- Allocate a budget
- Final verification of preparations

Once you have a plan, design the simulation. Usually this includes the following steps:

- Develop the script or master truth (note: this is never shared with the participants beforehand!)
- Develop supporting materials (e.g. media reports, government statements)
- Develop injects (Injects are prompts or updates of the scenario that stimulates additional responses from participants)

Lastly, you need to organize the simulation before conducting it. This includes aspects like sending invitations, organizing accommodation arrangements, and confirming the venue.

Step 6.3 Conduct the simulation

Once you are done with all the planning and participants arrive at the scheduled place at the scheduled time, you can start your simulation. Again, here are some general steps for the execution of the simulation:

- Brief participants on process and objectives
- Brief evaluators on their roles and responsibilities
- Ensure that all participants are properly identified
- Manage the release of injects
- Manage discussions with participants
- Conduct a debrief immediately after the simulation
- Follow-up with participants



Inform the communities!

If you test a national plan, be sure that you inform the communities about the simulation so that it is clear to all members of the community. Also have people in mind who might not be able to hear or see understand that this is a simulation and not an activation of an anticipatory action plan. It needs to be clear to all that their homes will not be flooded in five days but that you are just simulating this.

Step 6.4: Evaluate and share lessons learned

An evaluation of the simulation is key to identifying the lessons learned and improving processes going forward. We want to know the following: What went well? What can be improved? What are lessons learned? What are ways to improve the mechanisms tested?

Usually there are two types of evaluations

Evaluation of the participants' performance during the simulation.

Participants and organizers should take a critical look at the following:

- Organization: The achievement of goals given the assumptions and conditions under which participants were working.
- Information management
- Decision making: Their ability to take appropriate and pertinent decisions under pressure. The use of innovation in the absence of critical resources.
- Coordination and integrated management of the situation.
- The logic and consistency of decisions made compared to the National Society Standard Operating Procedures.
- The specific performance of each of the participants (leadership, involvement, interest, teamwork, etc.).

Evaluation of the organization of the simulation

The evaluation of the organization relates to the planning, design and execution of the exercise.

Make use of existing resources

If you have already developed a MEAL plan (seechapter 9) you can use this to support the evaluation of your simulation.

Eventually, the evaluation team should meet to exchange notes and to analyse and compile a comprehensive assessment. A final evaluation document should include lessons learned and recommendations. Please find an example of Nepal in the toolbox.

Step 7: Integrate lessons learned in guidance and trainings

If your simulation has shown that certain assumptions, timelines, procedures, or arrangements of your anticipatory action plan are not realistic or feasible, revise the plan accordingly. For s/EAPs, also make sure to note in the s/EAP document that you have tested certain aspects of the s/EAP in a simulation. This will help the validation committee in better understanding your decisions.

If you have developed guidance, e.g. a pocket s/EAP or other training material, make sure that you also update this material and train the staff and other stakeholders accordingly.

Toolbox

Simulation guidance

- CADRIM Simulation Guide (2013)
- Guidelines for Developing Emergency Simulations and Drills (2011)
- Philippine Red Cross simulation report 2019 (PRC, 2019)
- Anticipatory Action Simulation Exercise Toolkit and Facilitator Manual from the Asia Pacific TWG (2025)

Examples from other countries

- Pocket typhoon EAP Philippines (2020)

Nepal simulation evaluation (2021)

12. Submit your s/EAP to IFRC for funding

12. Submit your s/EAP to IFRC for funding

Summary

Congratulations! You have prepared and tested your s/EAP and now it is ready to submit for funding.

One of the funding pathways available for National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies is via the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund, or DREF. This chapter guides you through the IFRC processes required to get funding for your s/EAP. Note that there is a specific chapter with guidance on the imminent DREF at the end of this Manual.



Step 1: Submit your s/EAP

Once you are ready to submit, all s/EAPs (narrative and budgets) should be submitted to **DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org** and the IFRC Delegation closest to the National Society. IFRC encourages National Societies to submit their s/EAP using the 'submission' proforma message, however, this is not compulsory. You will also find some of the suggested IFRC counterparts to copy in the submission email in the proforma template in the toolbox.

Step 2: Wait for feedback

Once submitted, the s/EAP will be simultaneously reviewed by the IFRC and the Validation Committee, which is guided by a set of quality criteria (please find them in the toolbox below). There is one set of quality criteria for a full EAP and another set for a simplified EAP. These criteria are publicly available and should be referenced during the development process. They are also introduced in more depth in chapter 4.

The technical review should take no more than 14 days. After the technical review process ends, the consolidated feedback will be sent back to the person / email address who first submitted the s/EAP.

What and who is the Validation Committee?

The Validation Committee is a voluntary group of Red Cross Red Crescent anticipatory action experts. The Validation Committee is made up of a group of core experts who technically validate s/EAPs. The core group can call up an extended group of subject-matter experts as needed.

Who are the members of the Validation Committee?

As of the end of 2024, the following entities have members on the Validation Committee: the American, Australian, British, Danish, Ethiopia, Finnish, French, German, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, Swedish , and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and 510 Initiative of the Netherlands Red Cross and the Red Cross Livelihoods Centre.

Step 3: Respond to and integrate the feedback

The National Society should respond to all the comments raised as part of the technical review. National Societies should make changes to the narrative s/EAP in tracked changes and provide detailed written responses to the comments in the checklist. By doing so, the Validation Committee can quickly identify what has been revised, making the next review smoother.

The National Society can request an optional feedback call with the Validation Committee. The feedback call is an opportunity to discuss how the s/EAP was developed, what was considered and included or discounted as part of the development process. It can also be a good opportunity to clarify any comments and prioritize what should be addressed for immediate approval and which suggestions can wait for future revisions.

Step 4: Submit the revised s/EAP

Once the National Society feels confident that they have addressed all the comments, it should resubmit the revised s/EAP, budget and checklist to the IFRC Delegation and the **DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org**, copying in the other contacts listed on the "resubmission proforma template" (see toolbox below).

The Global DREF team will then forward the revised versions to the Validation Committee, who will have one week for the follow-up review. Based on the responses provided by the National Society, the Validation Committee may decide to:

- Technically validate the s/EAP
- Technically validate the s/EAP with conditions
- Request further work or clarification from the National Society

If you want **more information on the validation process**, you can find more detail in the IFRC-DREF guidelines, (please find it in the toolbox).



If you want **more information on the validation process**, please read the IFRC-DREF guidelines.

Step 5: Sign the project funding agreement

My s/EAP has been technically validated, what happens next...?

There are a few steps that need to be completed before the s/EAP can be approved. The IFRC Project Manager is responsible for

- Cleaning the s/EAP narrative of tracked changes.
- Sending the s/EAP budget for validation by the IFRC Regional Head of Finance.
- Drafting the summary of the full EAP (a summary is not required for a simplified EAP).

Note that these steps are not sequential, they can be started and progressed simultaneously. Once these steps are completed by the IFRC Project Manager, the package is submitted to the IFRC-DREF Appeal Manager for approval. This step is quick once the package of documents is prepared.

When the s/EAP is approved by the IFRC-DREF Appeal Manager, the codes will be open (including an operational / MDR and project code), and the funds will be allocated to the IFRC Delegation closest to the National Society. The IFRC Regional PMER is responsible for publishing either the DREF/EAP Summary or the sEAP on the appeals page of the IFRC website.

If you have any **questions about the submissions process** or where your s/EAP is in the process, please reach out to: **DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org.**

Next, the IFRC Project Manager needs to draft the project agreement (PA for short) between the IFRC and the National Society. If a Partner National Society has a role in the s/EAP maintenance or activation, it may also be part of the project agreement. For example, in some instances, a Partner National Society may do the procurement on behalf of a National Society or may agree to advance the funds for activation to the Host National Society until the IFRC-DREF funds arrive.

Step 6: Access readiness and prepositioning funds

The project agreement outlines the budget for readiness, stock and early action and includes a payment and reporting schedule. The project agreement needs to be signed by the IFRC Head of Delegation and the National Society leadership (and Partner National Society, if applicable). The first transfer to the National Society will include the funds for stock prepositioning and for the first year of readiness and should be transferred to the National Society within ten days after the project funding agreement has been signed. The National Society should prepare and submit the 'request for payment' that they normally complete when requesting funds from the IFRC.

If you want more information on the **approval process**, please see the IFRC-DREF guidelines.

If you want more information on the **approval process**, please read the IFRC-DREF guidelines.

Step 7: Annual reporting

On an annual basis, a National Society should prepare a narrative and financial report on the activities achieved. Submission of this report is contingent for the next transfer of funds for readiness activities.

Changes to an s/EAP can be made at any stage. We recommend that you reach out to the regional IFRC-DREF focal point to discuss the proposed changes. Depending on the size and scope of the changes, the changes could be agreed by the global DREF team, others may need to be agreed by the IFRC-DREF Appeal Manager and others may need to be referred back to the Validation Committee. Once the changes are agreed on, they s/EAP and/or budget should be updated, and the changes announced via an operations update.

If you want more information on the **management process**, please read the IFRC-DREF guidelines.

Toolbox

IFRC guidance and tools

IFRC DREF Guidelines (2026)

- (s)EAP submission template
- (s)EAP resubmission template
- Full EAP template
- Simplified EAP template
- Full EAP Quality Criteria
- sEAP Quality Criteria

13. Activate, revise, and resubmit your s/EAP

13. Activate, revise, and resubmit your s/EAP

Summary

Once your s/EAP has been approved by the IFRC-DREF, it is time to procure and preposition the stock and conduct readiness activities, while monitoring the trigger. The National Society focal point, with support from the IFRC Project Manager should develop a workplan, in order to monitor implementation of readiness activities leading up to the hazard season,

This chapter briefly outlines the process for activating your s/EAP when the trigger is reached and eventually revising and resubmitting it for revalidation.

Step 1: Activate your s/EAP

If at any stage the preapproved trigger is reached, then the National Society can start implementing their early action activities. The activation needs to be confirmed by the global IFRC-DREF team, and this is done via the Activation template. The Activation template can be prepared in advance (since the early action and budget have been preapproved) and can be updated based on the specific details of the activation when the trigger is reached.

Activating without the pre-agreed trigger being met

The EAP and the sEAP are pre-agreed funding modalities, funding is guaranteed based on a preapproved trigger, a preapproved set of early action activities, and a preapproved budget. This means that whenever the preapproved trigger is reached, the National Society can immediately start doing the early action activities. But what happens if the preapproved forecast doesn't predict the hazard, but other forecasts sources are indicating the likelihood of the impending hazard? Or if the trigger threshold hasn't been reached, but severe impacts are being experienced by at risk communities? Or what happens if….

There might be many reasons why a National Society wants to activate their s/EAP. There is flexibility to activate if the pre-agreed trigger has not been reached, however this requires exceptional approval by the DREF Appeal manager in advance of activating the s/EAP. You should reach out to the regional DREF focal point and send as much information to justify the activation as possible to DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org. The DREF team aims to ensure as much flexibility as possible in order to protect vulnerable communities in advance of a hazard.

To access the early action budget, the National Society should submit the signed 'request for payment' along with the filled activation template to the IFRC Project Manager. The activation template is published on the IFRC website by the IFRC Regional PMER Focal Point.

If you want more information on the **activation process**, please read **chapter five of the IFRC interactive guidance package.**

Step 2: Post activation reporting

Under a full EAP, National Societies can plan for two activations. Following the first activation, the National Society does the post distribution monitoring, the lessons learned workshop (you will find more information on evaluations and lessons learned in chapter

9), produces an Activation Report. At this stage (or indeed at any stage) a National Society can make changes to the EAP and budget, based on the recommends emerging from the first activation. If everything went as planned, then the National Society does not need to make any changes to the EAP and budget. Once the report is published, the National Society can then request the second allocation for stock and continue with the readiness activities, while monitoring the forecast in case of a second activation.

Following the second activation of an EAP or the first activation of a sEAP, the s/EAP will end after the operational timeframe, normally three months after the activation. The IFRC Project Manager will revise the end of the s/EAP on IFRC's Ready and will create an Activation Report (all future pending reports will be cancelled). National Society follows the same process, conducting post distribution monitoring and facilitate a lessons learned workshop. These activities need to be done within the operational timeframe in order to eligible to be funded by the IFRC-DREF.

If it is not possible to do the post distribution monitoring or lessons learned workshop within the operational timeframe, a National Society should consider requesting a no cost extension via an operations update. This request should come before the end of the current operational timeframe. Please discuss this request with the IFRC Project Manager, who can contact the regional DREF focal point, or reach out to the Global DREF team via DREF.anticipatorypillar@ifrc.org.

The National Society also needs to complete the activation report and submit it to the IFRC according to the revised timeframe mentioned above. If you have any questions about the reporting deadline, please consult the IFRC Project Manager or your Regional IFRC-DREF Focal Point. Delays in submitting the activation report may affect the National Society's ability to access IFRC-DREF funding, so a National Society is recommended to complete the narrative and financial report as soon as possible.



What happens if I don't activate my s/EAP?

If during the s/EAP lifespan there is no activation (five years for the full EAP or two for the sEAP), the National Society should prepare a Final Report (narrative and financial) and submit it to the IFRC Delegation as per the project funding agreement. The IFRC Project Manager can support the approval of the report and will liaise with the IFRC PMER focal point to publish the report on the IFRC website.

Step 3: Revise and resubmit

Once you have completed any post-distribution monitoring, lessons learned workshops, or other evaluations (seechapter 9 for MEAL guidance), or if your s/EAP finishes without activating, you should review and revise your s/EAP and budget. Any changes should be made in tracked changes in the original approved s/EAP narrative (no need to rewrite the s/EAP), this will help the Validation Committee to quickly spot any changes made. If the activation went as planned, then no changes need to be made to the s/EAP or budget.



Lessons learned workshops

A lessons learned workshop normally runs for 1.5 to 2 days, however we recommend that you add on an extra day or two in the plan and budget to the lessons learned workshop to update the s/EAP directly. If this is not possible, and additional time is required to update the s/EAP with the recommendations, or if other stakeholders need to be consulted, then the National Society can use the additional day or two to develop a plan and timeframe for when the changes will be made.

A National Society doesn't need to make a lot of changes, if the activation went largely according to plan. Remember to take the latest templates from the AA Manual, or the DREF Guidelines, and make any changes to the narrative in tracked changes – this should help to speed up the revalidation process.

The Validation Committee will have access to lessons learned report shared with IFRC and expect to see how the lessons and recommendations have been incorporated. Be sure to adjust the budget as well based on any changes. Once you have revised your s/EAP and budget, resubmit the s/EAP following the process that begins at step 1 of chapter 12. The process will be the same as it was for the initial submission.

If you want more information on the **post activation** process, please read **chapter six of the IFRC interactive guidance package**.

Toolbox

IFRC tools and templates

- IFRC DREF Guidance (2026)
- IFRC activation and reporting template: EAP
- IFRC activation and reporting template: sEAP
- IFRC Website (for published summaries, activations, and reports)
- DREF AA Lessons Learned Guidance and Workshop Format
- DREF AA Lessons Learned Workshop Feedback Form

Specific guidance on the Imminent DREF for anticipatory action

Specific guidance on the Imminent DREF for anticipatory action

Summary

This chapter provides more specific guidance on the imminent DREF as a flexible funding modality for anticipatory action when no pre-approved protocol is in place. It explains when and why to use this mechanism, particularly in sudden-onset emergencies where credible forecasts or early warning indicate an imminent hazard and there is still a short window to act. The chapter outlines key features and requirements, including eligibility criteria, and clarifies how the imminent DREF relates to other anticipatory action approaches, such as (simplified) Early Action Protocols. Finally, the chapter provides practical guidance on how to request, design, and implement an imminent DREF operation, including timelines, budget limits, and operational parameters.

Introduction

The imminent DREF is a funding modality specifically designed for situations where a National Society does not have a pre-approved protocol (s/EAP) but has the opportunity to implement early action in advance of a hazard.

This modality is intended exclusively for sudden-onset disasters where the risk of disaster is clear and imminent. It enables National Societies to implement critical early action and early response actions when:

- A disaster has not yet occurred, but is highly likely to happen in the near future based on reliable forecasts or early warnings; or
- A disaster has begun to unfold, but has not yet reached its peak impact, and there remains a short lead time to mitigate the worst effects.



Imminent DREF at a glance

- **Trigger:** When the event is on the horizon
- **Requested:** max 1 month and min 3 days before the anticipated impact, or peak of the impact
- **Budget:** CHF 75,000 for NS, potential to include Rapid Response Deployment (Surge personnel)
- **Allocation:** min 75% for early action and max 25% for early response
- **Submission:** Via GO Platform, decision within 24 hours
- **Operational Timeframe:** 45 days (from approval)
- **Scale up:** Yes, with an allocation from response DREF

Imminent DREF should not be a replacement for longer-term anticipatory planning. Rather, it serves as a critical stopgap in situations where the National Society has had no time or resources to formalize a pre-approved protocol. It is also an entry point for a National Society that has not done early action before or is still in the process of developing an s/EAPs or has an EAP in place which covers a higher scale of disaster.

What is an Imminent DREF and when should you request it?

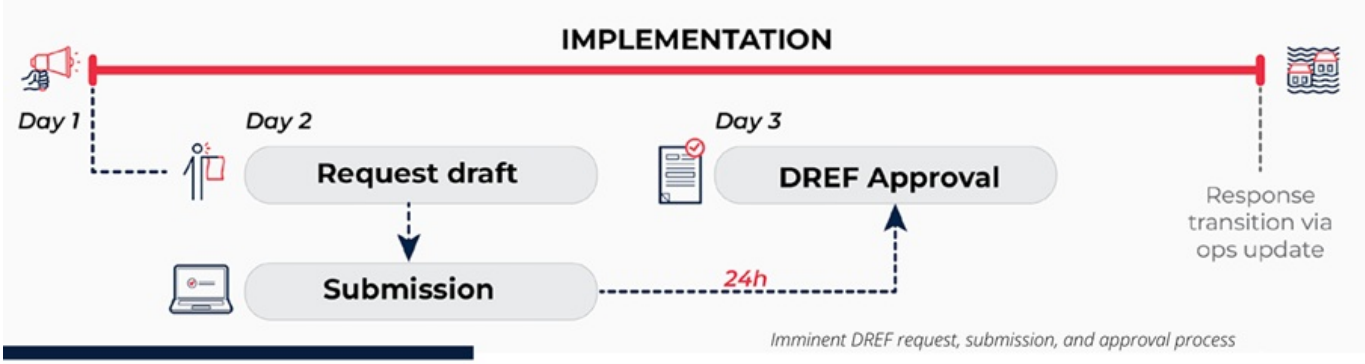
Purpose: an imminent DREF enables rapid access to anticipatory funds for immediate early action in advance of a disaster as well as early response to a disaster with short lead time (e.g., within days or weeks).

Trigger mechanism: no pre-agreed trigger; decision is driven by high-confidence forecasts or expert judgement of an imminent event (e.g. a government or national/regional weather agency issues a severe weather alert for a specific area with high certainty)

Connection with s/EAP: an Imminent DREF cannot be requested if the National Society has a simplified Early Action Protocol (sEAP), whether active or already triggered for this hazard, for the same hazard and covering the same geographical area. It also may not be used to scale up or supplement early actions already triggered under an s/ EAP. However, an Imminent DREF can be requested if the National Society has an active EAP for the same hazard *with a higher threshold*, and a new, reliable alert indicates a hazard at a lower scale would have humanitarian impact, i.e. when the EAP trigger has not been reached but early action is still warranted.

How can you request an imminent DREF and what does it cover?

Requesting an imminent DREF is done by completing a short and simple request template, submitted via the GO Platform, with a quick review and approval process. National Societies require strong and decisive decision-making processes to ensure timely implementation. An imminent DREF can be requested earliest one month and latest three days before the anticipated impact, or peak of the impact.



Imminent DREF request, submission, and approval process

The volume of an imminent DREF is up to CHF 75,000 for National Societies, plus the potential to include Rapid Response Deployment (Surge Personnel). The plan and budget of an imminent DREF must be split into two distinct components:

Early Action: These are activities that aim to prevent or mitigate the expected impact of a hazard before it occurs or before the peak of the impact occurs. They are time-critical and must be implemented quickly, typically within days of receiving a reliable alert. Examples of early action depend upon the hazard, but may include:

- Dissemination of early warning messages.
- Distribution of protective materials (e.g. masks, tarpaulins, plastic bags).
- Distribution of Cash and/or Voucher Assistance.
- Clearing storm drains, sandbagging, digging ditches or constructing dikes.
- Supported evacuation of at-risk communities (and their livestock and livelihoods assets).
- Setting up temporary safe spaces or evacuation shelters.

At least 75% of the total budget must be allocated for early action activities.

Early Response These activities are permitted only if the disaster unfolds within the operational timeframe of the imminent DREF (45 days from the approval day), and they must be implemented in the first hours and days after the impact. These activities are strictly limited to life-saving interventions. Examples of early response activities include:

- Emergency search and rescue.
- First aid and casualty evacuation.
- Assisted evacuation to hospitals or safe areas.
- Rapid needs assessments

No more than 25% of the total budget may be used for early response activities

Note, any stock needed must be procured and distributed within the 45 day operational timeframe. Stock cannot be prepositioned. If the National Society has stock available, this can be used and then replenished, as long as the replenishment can be completed within the 45 day operational timeframe. Like any DREF operation, unspent funds are returned to the DREF at the end of the operation.

A testimonial on the Imminent DREF from practice

"My National Society received an alert from the Met Service of imminent floods, which will affect the north of the country. My National Society has been working on developing a sEAP for floods, but it has not been finalized yet. We talked to our Secretary General and quickly decided to request an imminent DREF and test some of the early action activities we planned in the sEAP.

We drafted a simple imminent DREF request and budget. We couldn't test all the sEAP early actions, since we were missing some stock and capacity, so we prioritized the dissemination of early warning messages using PAPE messaging and assisted evacuation of at risk communities, and distribute multipurpose cash based to people registered in our National Society's social welfare programme.

Luckily the floods didn't have significant impact, so we didn't do the early response activities. We learned some good lessons during the implementation of the imminent DREF, which have been incorporated into the sEAP for floods.

Our experience with the Imminent DREF got us thinking about what sort of response operation we would plan to complement the early action activities in the sEAP, should the floods materialize."

National Society Operations Manager, Red Cross Red Crescent

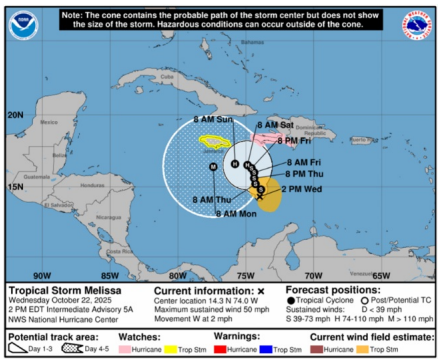
Scaling up: A National Society with an imminent DREF allocation can scale up with an additional allocation from the DREF for a disaster response, should the hazard materialise. The National Society transitions via an operations update. A final report is required after the end of the operational timeframe.

Experience from Jamaica in advance of Hurricane Melissa

Starting on 21 October, a tropical storm started forming in the Caribbean. Over the coming days it continued to intensify.

Jamaican Red Cross submitted an imminent DREF request on 23 October 2025, within 12 hours the approval was granted. The transfer of funds was made on the same day, 23 October, from the IFRC Americas Regional Office to the Jamaican Red Cross.

Over the following days, Melissa became better organized, and from October 25 to 27, rapidly intensified into a Category 5 hurricane before making landfall near New Hope, Jamaica, just below peak intensity, on October 28.



The forecasted track of Hurricane Melissa as of 22 October

Detailed budget and activities of the Imminent DREF operation for Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica

Proposed Actions

	Sector	Activities	Budget (CHF)
Early Actions	Shelter	• Setting up of emergency shelters • Mobilization and distribution of stock to 250 at-risk households through local branches and designated shelters before the impact of the tropical storm including 250 shelter kits, 250 hygiene kits, 250 cleaning kits, 500 tarps, 750 blankets.	
	NS Strengthening	• National Society strengthening, internal coordination and early response planning with local branches • Mobilization of staff and volunteers and preparation of support necessities (transportation, communications, visibility items, safety gear, etc.) • Support the operation of the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)	CHF 56,250
Early Response	NS Strengthening	• Support the operation of the National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)	
	CEA	• Initiate a Damage and Needs Assessment to collect information on existing needs after impact of the storm. • Advance CEA activities by establishing the feedback and complaint mechanism channel for the response.	
	Shelter	• Run emergency shelters • Procurement of supplies for registration and temporary sheltering of disaster-affected households. • Replenishment of items distributed during the early actions. • Distribution of relief items stocked in local branches and shelters to affected communities after impact of the storm. • Replenishment of relief items distributed during the early response.	CHF 18,750
		Sub-total	CHF 75,000
		Indirect Cost	CHF 5,000
		Total	CHF 80,000

"The early release of iDREF funding allowed the Jamaica Red Cross to move supplies quickly to branches ahead of

landfall, enabling immediate support to the most affected and hard-to-reach communities following Hurricane Melissa. These early actions significantly reduced delays after the hurricane and ensured that lifesaving assistance reached people when it mattered most."

Leiska Powell, Emergency Services Manager, Jamaica Red Cross

The imminent DREF operation was complemented with an Emergency Appeal of CHF 19 million, including a loan from the IFRC-DREF of CHF 1 million, to kick start response activities until public donations are received by the Appeal.

For more information on the IFRC's Imminent DREF, please review chapters: 3.2 "decision to apply for funds", or for more in depth information, "3.5 Imminent DREF", in the latest version of the IFRC-DREF Guidelines (2026).

Toolbox

IFRC DREF Guidelines (2026)

Specific guidance on anticipatory action in community-based disaster risk reduction

Specific guidance on anticipatory action in community-based disaster risk reduction

Summary

Anticipatory action can be implemented not only through national or sub-national Early Action Protocols (s/EAPs), but also by integrating it into community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM). Existing approaches such as the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R) and the enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) offer practical entry points to identify risks, warning signs, lead times and potential early actions together with communities. This chapter explains how anticipatory actionis already and can be embedded in community resilience plans of action, community early warning systems (CEWS) and contingency plans, linking triggers, early actions, roles and responsibilities, and sustainable resources to enable communities to act before a hazard causes severe impacts.

Introduction

This anticipatory action manual has a focus on a step-by-step guidance for (simplified) Early Action Protocols (s/EAPs), however there are also other approaches through which National Societies can implement anticipatory action. One of them is by integrating anticipatory action into community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM).

While this interlinkage from community level to national level and vice versa is very important when developing an s/EAP, in this chapter, however, we want to focus on how you can implement anticipatory action on a community-level through CBDRM.

The Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R) and its key tool, the enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA),are the main methods used within the Movement for CBDRM. They offer a structured methodology for communities to assess relevant risks, identify vulnerabilities, and strengthen their capacities. The central outcome of the R2R via the EVCA is the community resilience plan of action. It prioritizes activities that the community would like to take to reduce their risk. While the community resilience plan of action can encompass a range of risk reduction activities, community early warning systems (CEWS) and contingency plans often emerge as a priority.



Community resilience plan of action: Community resilience plans of action are the output of the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R) via the enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA). They prioritize activities the communities would like to take to reduce their risk. They are usually timebound and detail where the funding for each activitiy comes from (e.g. community funding, as part of Red Cross Red Crescent projects). Normally after one year, the community reviews the progress as well as any new risk developments and makes a new community resilience plan of action.

Contingency plan: A contingency plan is a management and operational tool that defines the scope, roles and responsibilities, resources, procedures, coordination and communication mechanisms, and specific operational activities that a community intends to implement in preparation for and during an emergency, based on the likelihood of a given scenario (adapted from IFRC 2025, Contingency Planning Guide; link in the toolbox).

Community early warning system (CEWS): Early warning systems are a set of capacities needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information to enable individuals, communities and organizations threatened by a hazard to prepare and to act appropriately and in sufficient time to reduce the possibility of harm or loss (from IFRC 2012, Community early warning systems: guiding principles; link in the toolbox). A community early warning system (CEWS) is a warning system that the community owns and runs. It is a people-centred, locally rooted mechanism through which at-risk communities themselves generate, interpret and act on warnings.

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R)

When working on risk reduction and management with communities, the Roadmap to Community Resilience (R2R) is your guideline to follow (link in the toolbox). The same applies if you want to integrate AA into your community-based engagement.The guideline offers many tools for you to use, where aspects of anticipatory action are already included. Some tools are highlighted in the steps below.

Step 2: Conduct an Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA)

To understand the risk and resilience of communities, the R2R guidance recommends using the Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment as a participatory community risk assessment. It enables the communities to assess and analyse together with the National Society the risks they face through a step-by-step guidance. Several EVCA tools already include aspects of anticipatory action or provide entry points to incorporate anticipatory action even more. Below is a list of some EVCA tools with ideas on what to consider for AA while conducting the EVCA:

Mapping

The mapping exercise is a way to visualize risk exposure and can show different vulnerabilities,capacities and resources. When exploring anticipatory action as part of the EVCA, consider including in the mapping exercise different magnitudes a hazard can take, if possible, even under future climate change scenarios. For example, for floods, try to map who and what is affected during floods that happen more regularly, for instance every monsoon season, and in comparison, floods that happen less regularly, but have a higher impact overall. A tool that can help you to digitalize your maps is the SketchMap Tool. Check with local disaster management or meteorological authorities if there are already existing government-led scientific hazard and/or risk maps. Connect results of these government maps with the community drawn maps to feed into each other.

Hazard characterization

As part of the EVCA, characterize together with the community different hazards with name, cause/origin, warning signs, lead time, frequency, period of occurrence and duration. This is a great entry point for anticipatory action. Important elements are especially the warning signs and lead time. It can give you an indication, if for a specific hazard the community already receives early warning with enough lead time to potentially conduct early actions.

Historical profile

The historical profile is a tool of the EVCA to build a picture of past events and impacts that had an effect on the community, including their impacts on people, livelihoods, infrastructure, services etc. During these discussions, you should ask community members about the impacts of specific past events, whether there were any indications or early warnings before specific events and if yes, how long before. In case any actions were taken by the community based on those early warnings, it is important to document the action, as this helps identify potential early actions that could be embedded within a community contingency plan or a community early warning system.

Seasonal calendar

The seasonal calendar explores the seasonality of events in a community over a one-year period. It is an EVCA tool that helps communities visualize when specific risks are most likely to materialize and how hazards have changed over the years to integrate discussions on climate change. It overlays the seasonality of weather with other key events in the community that can indicate vulnerability and risks. The seasonal calendar can later form the basis for a contingency plan that includes early actions on a specific priority hazard to develop a crisis timeline.
A crisis timeline focuses on one hazard and is especially useful for slow-onset events like droughts. A crisis timeline would for example include the timing of rainy and dry season, calendar of activities of different livelihood groups, timing of hazard's impacts on the different livelihood groups, timing of early warnings and potentially actions that could reduce the impact of the hazard. All this information is combined into an overall crisis timeline which helps to understand when hazards are occurring, when the impact is felt and at what time early actions would help to reduce the impact. You can access a 30–minute learning module on crisis timelines as part of anticipatory action on the FAO Learning platform (link in the toolbox).

Resilience Star Tool

The resilience star tool of the EVCA is used to produce,consolidate and analyse information about the vulnerabilities, capacities and risks of a community. It brings all the data from the data collection process together and categorizes capacities and vulnerabilities for each hazard separately. Through focus group discussions or workshops, communities discuss their vulnerabilities and capacities across all 11 dimensions of community resilience. In particular, the questions on the dimension on risk knowledge and management and the health dimension can support with helping to integrate anticipatory action, when talking with the community about awareness of risks, knowledge of warning signals and preparedness measures within the community. The answer to these questions can inform on potential early actions as part of a community contingency plan or community early warning system.
The facilitation guide on discussing the dimensions includes also specific questions on early warning early action that can help to anchor and improve anticipatory action in the communities (link in the toolbox).

Guide for Focus Group Discussions on Early Warning Systems

In addition, a structured guidance for conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) with communities and local authorities to assess the effectiveness, inclusivity, and trustworthiness of Early Warning Systems (EWS) is available through IFRC (link in the toolbox).

Questions to include on early warning systems are:

- Does the community have an early warning system in place?

- Which early warning signs are used in the community to anticipate different hazards?
- How does the community early warning system work? Or if there is no early warning system in place: Which early warning signs does the community know?
- Does the community trust the early warning system?
- How much time does the early warning system give the community before the impact of the hazard (lead time)?
- How is the warning information communicated across the community? Are there specific channels or trusted networks?
- What actions does the community take when a warning is received?
- Which health signs, symptoms, diseases, or unusual events are monitored and reported by the community?
- Who is responsible for identifying and reporting potential health threats, and through which channels is this information communicated to health authorities and other relevant actors?
- What role do Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers, the local branch and other community-based actors currently play when an early warning is received?

Step 3: Develop the community resilience plan of action, including AA aspects

The central outcome of the R2R via the EVCA is the community resilience plan of action. It prioritizes activities that the community would like to take to reduce their risk. While the community resilience plan of action can encompass a range of risk reduction activities, community early warning systems (CEWS) and contingency plans often emerge as a priority. You therefore do not have to include specific actions just on anticipation in the plan, but communities' priorities to develop CEWS or contingency plans are your entry point to include anticipatory action into the community's disaster risk management set-up. Don't set up parallel systems but include AA in the existing and newly developed DRM systems based on the community resilience plan of action!

Step 4.1: Develop a community early warning system (CEWS) action plan

If one of the activities included in the community resilience plan of action is to set up a community early warning system (CEWS), use it to include clearly identified early actions within the CEWS. For more details on how to choose early actions, please refer to chapter '07. Select Early Actions' in this manual.

As a first step towards the CEWS, run a CEWS workshop with the aim to develop a CEWS Action Plan, a single table that documents priority hazard, vulnerable groups, indicators to monitor, trigger, source of information, warning message, communication channel, early actions, and responsibilities. You build it with a selected group of community members over a short (around three-day) workshop, one part at a time. It is not a one-off event but part of your ongoing engagement, and it is strength-based: your role is to draw out local knowledge, not to teach from the top down. Keep the agenda flexible and adapt it to the community's context. Below are some tips on the CEWS workshop, for more guidance please consult the IFRC Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) Training Toolkit – Field Guide (link in the toolbox).



Additional tips for running a CEWS workshop

Prepare before you start: Ensure facilitators have completed the CEWS Training-of-Trainers and adapted the sessions to the local context. Depending on the hazards, involve relevant technical stakeholders, such as health workers for epidemics or agriculture extension workers. Together with the community, select around 25–30 participants, aiming for a 50:50 balance of women and men, including disaster committee members and volunteers, youth and elderly, people with disabilities and minority groups, as well as established and emerging leaders. Prioritize those willing to support the CEWS system. Gather relevant EVCA findings, national Public Awareness and Public Education (PAPE) hazard messages, and any s/EAPs or government anticipatory action plans covering the community.

Open the workshop and set the scene: Explain that the goal is to develop the community's own CEWS Action Plan and agree on expectations and objectives. Use a game, for example 'Before the Storm', to introduce early warning concepts, followed by a group discussion on the four components of an early warning system.

Identify hazards and vulnerabilities within the community: Review and validate the EVCA findings or develop a hazard list based on the community's lived experience. For each priority hazard, agree who is most at risk and why.

Agree on indicators and triggers: For each hazard, identify two or three indicators to monitor and define the trigger that signals when action should be taken. Note the lead time provided and the source of information.

Develop warning messages and identify communication channels: Develop clear messages covering what, where, when, how severe, what to do. Build on PAPE messages where they exist, and identify trusted, inclusive channels that reach everyone, including vulnerable and hard-to-reach people.

Agree on early actions: For each trigger, decide the early actions the community will take and the resources needed. Where relevant, link them to existing s/EAPs of the National Society or government anticipatory action plans.

Agree on governance, partnerships and funding: Clarify roles and responsibilities and identify partners, such as the meteorological service, local government, your RCRC branch or others, that can support and sustain the system. Make sure to identify suitable funding options. Early actions should be affordable and sustainable, including low-cost or no-cost options where possible. For unavoidable costs, explore locally available funding, such as government disaster risk reduction funds, local authorities, community savings schemes or local partners.

Document the CEWS Action Plan: Present the draft plan or do a 'gallery walk' and review it against the expectations shared at the start. Write the CEWS Action Plan by clearly documenting the triggers, actions, roles and responsibilities, including a backup for each key role, and the required resources. When defining roles and responsibilities, specify what happens once the trigger is reached. This can include who confirms and communicates the early warning, who mobilizes people and resources, and who carries out the agreed early actions. Where appropriate, National Society branches and volunteers can take on specific roles as well. Keep a safe second copy, agree how the plan will be updated, and note any resource gaps to advocate for.

Please find an example of a CEWS Action Plan in the toolbox below.

After the CEWS Plan of Action has been developed, test it with a simulation. For guidance on how to conduct a simulation for community early warning systems please consult the Cima Foundations Guidelines for simulation exercises on early warning systems for weather induced risks (link in the toolbox).

To avoid fragmenting the community's tools, integrate the CEWS Action Plan into the community's contingency plan, where such a plan is available or is being developed.



Case study: From community early warning to early action in Dominica

In Dominica, the Dominica Red Cross Society worked with communities to establish Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) for floods and other hazards. Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments helped identify communities at risk and informed the design of the systems. Community members were then trained to monitor rainfall and river levels, communicate warnings and take action when conditions became dangerous.

In Marigot, this system demonstrated how locally managed early warning can lead directly to early action. During a period of heavy rainfall, a trained community member monitoring the system identified an imminent flood risk and alerted people living near the river. One particularly exposed resident was warned and evacuated to a designated shelter before flooding occurred.

The experience highlights the importance of connecting risk assessments, locally monitored warning signs, clearly assigned responsibilities and agreed actions. It also shows why CEWS should be developed with communities and linked to local authorities and national warning systems, rather than operating as stand-alone mechanisms.

Key lesson: A community early warning system becomes an anticipatory action mechanism when a warning is connected to agreed actions that can be implemented before the hazard causes severe impacts.

Source: adjusted and shortened from Global Disaster Preparedness Center (2024), "Dominica Building Resilience Through Community Early Warning Systems" (link in the toolbox).



© IFRC

Step 4.2: Integrate the CEWS and AA into new or updated Community Contingency Plans

If one of the activities included in the community resilience plan of action is to develop or update a contingency plan, use it to include clearly identified early actions within it.

Community contingency planning focuses on priority hazards that the community identified in the assessment. It includes the development of scenarios (best, likely, worst case) and describes the hazard and its characterization, potential impacts and risks to people, properties, systems etc. Contingency plans also include decision making points when they will be activated, describing actions before, during and after the arrival of a specific hazard. Contingency plans are therefore perfect to include early actions. For example, a community contingency plan could specify early actions for one or several specific hazards, aligning immediate early actions based on a forecast/early warning with procedures, roles and responsibilities that are already described in the contingency plan, therefore creating a more comprehensive risk reduction tool.

The contingency plan can basically include a small and simpler version of a s/EAP, ensuring that integral elements are agreed upon and written down in one place. These elements include:

Definition of the trigger, e.g. based on community early warning systems or local early warning signs

To trigger early actions as part of a contingency plan, local early warning or national early warnings can be used, for example as part of a CEWS. The EVCA helps you to assess with the community, if national or local early warning systems are in place that can be used, or if the community wants to develop its own indicators to monitor locally (e.g. river gauges, traditional knowledge signs, urban heat islands etc) and set local specific triggers on when to act through a CEWS planning process. It can also help you to understand, how much lead time each early warning system would provide and if this lead time would be sufficient to conduct early actions.

Assess if national anticipatory action and trigger systems (e.g. s/EAPs of the national society, government frameworks) exist and could potentially be linked to or complement the community system. Always check if the government or other humanitarian actors have already developed a trigger for a specific hazard to implement early actions and if the community could have access to this trigger.

In case you decide with the community to use national forecast information as a trigger, please consult chapter '06. Determine activation trigger' in this manual.

Identification of early actions

Early actions should be identified together with the community, building on the EVCA wherever possible. The aim is to move from identifying risk and impact to agreeing on practical actions that can be taken in the lead time before the hazard occurs. These

early actions should be tailored to the local context, feasible within the available lead time and capacities and aligned with community priorities and existing risk reduction measures and plans. In practice, this may include simple, low-cost or no-cost measures such as community cleaning campaigns, protecting household assets, securing livelihoods, or mobilizing community volunteers to guide evacuations to safer grounds. Once identified, the early actions should be clearly documented, so that when an early warning is issued, it can trigger timely and concrete early actions in the community.

For more details on how to choose early actions, please refer also to chapter'07. Select Early Actions' in this manual

Definition of roles and responsibilities

The R2R guidance recommends creating community resilience teams with clear roles and responsibilities. Assigning somebody to be the focal point for anticipatory action will help ensure that ownership and responsibility remain within the community set-up.

The contingency plan is a natural home in writing the different roles and responsibilities down, as it already sets out roles, resources and actions before, during and after a hazard. Together with the community therefore also incorporate the different roles and responsibilities of the early actions in the contingency plan and the community resilience committee. Assess, if your local National Society branches and volunteers can support the community by also having agreed roles and responsibilities in activating the plan and implementing early actions.

Assessment of resources requierements

To ensure sustainability, it is essential to explore any available local funding mechanisms that can support the implementation of early actions. Explore together with the community, if there are any existing government risk reduction funds that could be leveraged for funding early actions or if it is possible to establish new funding channels through local authorities. Another option could be to explore the mobilization of funding through existing or new community funding schemes or non-government stakeholders.

Whichever way is chosen, if funding is secured, or the community decides to opt for no-cost early actions, it should always be ensured that the solution is sustainable and creates a system that fits the community best.

Ideally, the integrated community contingency plans also align with existing national, regional and municipal disaster management and anticipatory action systems and policies.

The case of the imminent disaster law in the Philippines

In September 2025, the Philippines signed the 'Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster Act' into law. It allows the national government of the Philippines to declare a state of an imminent disaster. This imminent disaster can be declared already when a hazard, likely to develop into a disaster, is approaching, instead of declaring a disaster only after the event. The bill institutionalized anticipatory action and allows local government units to use funds from their local disaster risk reduction and management fund for early actions.

When speaking about the integration of anticipatory action into CBDRR, this law gives communities the possibility to include early actions into their contingency or disaster risk reduction plans, with the choice of how they want to use the local DRR funds once the state of imminent disaster is declared. The declaration of the imminent disaster would act in such a case as a final trigger which releases the funds.



© Moritz Meyer / DRK

As with s/EAPS and CEWS, it is also important to test the community contingency plan through simulation exercises and drills If possible and if the National Societies s/EAP covers the same hazard,you can also link it with a simulation of the s/EAPs where the local branch is involved.

A simulation does not only test the plan's effectiveness but also helps increase visibility within the community and highlights capacities and gaps to institutional stakeholders, which can be the basis for community advocacy on funding and budgetary requirements.

Toolbox

- Road Map to Community Resilience v2
- Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA)
- Case Study on community based anticipatory action systems
- Case Study on Dominica from Global Disaster Preparedness Center (2024), "Dominica Building Resilience Through Community Early Warning Systems".
- SketchMap Tool
- Building a crisis timeline
- Community early warning systems – guiding principles (this guidance is currently being updated)
- IFRC Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) Training Toolkit – Field Guide (this package has been updated and the newest link will be shared once available)
- CEWS Action Plan (Example)
- Cima Foundations Guidelines for simulation exercises on early warning systems for weather induced risks
- Community Landscape Analysis Tool for Early Warning Systems
- Qualitative Guide to run Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with communities and local authorities on Early Warning Systems
- Community Trust Index for Early Warning Systems
- Contingency Planning for National Societies
- Early Warning for All (EW4All) initiative
- Public Awareness and Public Education (PAPE)
- Games from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Center
- Gallery Walk

Considerations for non-weather hazards

Considerations for non-weather hazards

Summary

This chapter reflects some of the particular considerations to take into account when applying anticipatory action to hazards and humanitarian impacts that extend beyond weather-related events. It introduces approaches and operational considerations for anticipatory action related to health and displacement impacts, and provides a brief outlook on emerging approaches for other hazards, such as wildfires or locust plagues. While the general steps to develop an s/EAP or pursue any other approach to anticipatory action are similar for weather-related hazards and non-weather-related hazards, this chapter carves out the particular challenges, rationale, and operational entry points to apply the concepts and mechanisms of anticipatory action to non-weather-related hazards. The chapter draws on operational experience, technical guidance and approved s/EAPs from across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and provides links to relevant templates, working groups, guidance documents, and examples for further exploration.

Anticipatory action and health

Why anticipatory action and health?

Disease outbreaks and epidemics cause widespread human suffering and loss while also generating significant social and economic consequences. Not everyone is affected equally: some people may have better access to healthcare, clean water, functioning sanitation systems, or be less susceptible to infection. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of understanding different vulnerabilities, and how these can be unequally intensified when multiple hazards, such as epidemics and climate change, coincide.

Our ability to predict outbreaks of some high-burden, endemic diseases is improving, as we improve our understanding of the underlying drivers of transmission and have more high quality historic data over many years from which to identify associations. For certain, 'climate-sensitive' infectious diseases (i.e. diseases which respond to small changes in the climate), it may even be possible to harness the use of climate and weather forecasts to better anticipate the risk of future outbreaks. These developments are creating new possibilities to design, implement, and scale anticipatory action in health, including efforts to prepare for infectious disease outbreaks.

A working group on anticipatory action and health

The Red Cross Red Crescent Working Group on Anticipatory Action and Health brings together colleagues from across the RCRC Movement to advance efforts to anticipate and prevent negative health and nutrition outcomes before they escalate. Open to staff working in disaster risk reduction, health, WASH, anticipatory action and related fields, the group serves as a platform for stronger collaboration, knowledge exchange and the development of practical tools and approaches. Building on the extensive experience of National Societies, particularly in outbreak preparedness and response, the working group seeks to strengthen the evidence base for anticipatory action in health and nutrition and support the development of early action protocols for specific health risks. A key milestone in this work was the publication, in October 2024, of the working paper *Applying Anticipatory Action Ahead of Disease Outbreaks and Epidemics: A Conceptual Framework for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* and a scientific publication *Integrating anticipatory action in disease outbreak preparedness and response in the humanitarian sector*(see toolbox below) on which the following guidance is based. Hence, if you want to know more please refer to those two resources.

Approaches to anticipatory action for disease outbreaks and epidemics

Four main approaches are emerging for the development of anticipatory action triggers for disease outbreaks, reflecting the different types of data, forecasts and risk information available in your contexts. These approaches range from the use of real-time surveillance data and climate or weather forecasts to combinations of observed risk factors and more advanced modelling to predict disease outbreak risk. The variety of possible trigger approaches offers a practical framework for selecting trigger systems suited to specific diseases, settings and operational capacities. Click on the approaches to learn more!

Approach A: Using real-time surveillance data

Real-time surveillance data can be used to trigger rapid outbreak responses when predefined thresholds are met, whether in affected communities, nearby cross-border regions, or during the emergence of new pathogens. Linking these triggers to automatic early funding could speed up action, improve detection, and help contain transmission before outbreaks escalate.

Approach B: Using forecasts of extreme climatic events

Weather forecasts can be used as early warning triggers for certain disease outbreaks because there is evidence that floods, cyclones, drought, or heat can create conditions that are conducive to increased disease transmission. The core idea is to use a forecast of an extreme weather event (as is used for hydro-meteorological hazards) to implement low- to no-regrets health related actions that are aimed at preventing disease transmission , especially in places where past evidence shows a strong link between specific climatic events and diseases such as cholera or diarrheal illness. This approach can help reduce outbreak risk in advance

and can later be paired with real-time surveillance to guide more targeted response if cases appear. This approach is already implemented in many EAPs.

Approach C: Using observations of environmental and socioeconomic risk factors in combination with real-time surveillance data

Observed environmental and socioeconomic risk factors can be combined with real-time disease surveillance data to trigger phased early action before outbreaks escalate. The main idea is that factors such as flooding, displacement, overcrowding, or conflict can increase disease transmission risk, and potentially give a few days to weeks (depending on the disease) lead time in which to act. Disease surveillance data can then be used confirm whether cases are emerging or increasing and where should be targeted for more intensive action to interrupt transmission. Using these signals together allows your National Society to ideally receive funding earlier, start broad low-regret preventive measures when risk is increasing, and then shift to more targeted outbreak control once suspected or confirmed cases appear.

Approach D: Using data-driven approaches for outbreak forecasting

Depending on the availability of historic disease data, in some cases it is possible to invest in the development of mathematical models for disease outbreak prediction on when and where outbreaks are likely to occur. The development of such models requires substantial historical disease, climate, environmental, and ideally demographic data (>10 years of weekly or monthly disease cases or incidence in addition to the same amount of climate, environmental and demographic data) as well as modelling, epidemiological, statistical, and disease specific expertise. Models can be developed that identify associations between the disease data and available climate and environmental data. For example, an outbreak of a disease may be associated with increased rainfall that happened 2 months prior to the outbreak. The model can therefore use observed rainfall to predict the likely occurrence of an outbreak 2 months later. If a forecast of rainfall is used in the model instead of the observed rainfall, this can potentially extend the lead time for early actions by more than 2 months. The model forecasts can then be turned into trigger thresholds for anticipatory action, helping to release funding and start preventive measures potentially weeks to months in advance. These trigger thresholds can be combined with real-time surveillance data to increase the release of emergency funding and target breaking the transmission chain if cases do emerge as predicted as a means to bridge to full-scale response.

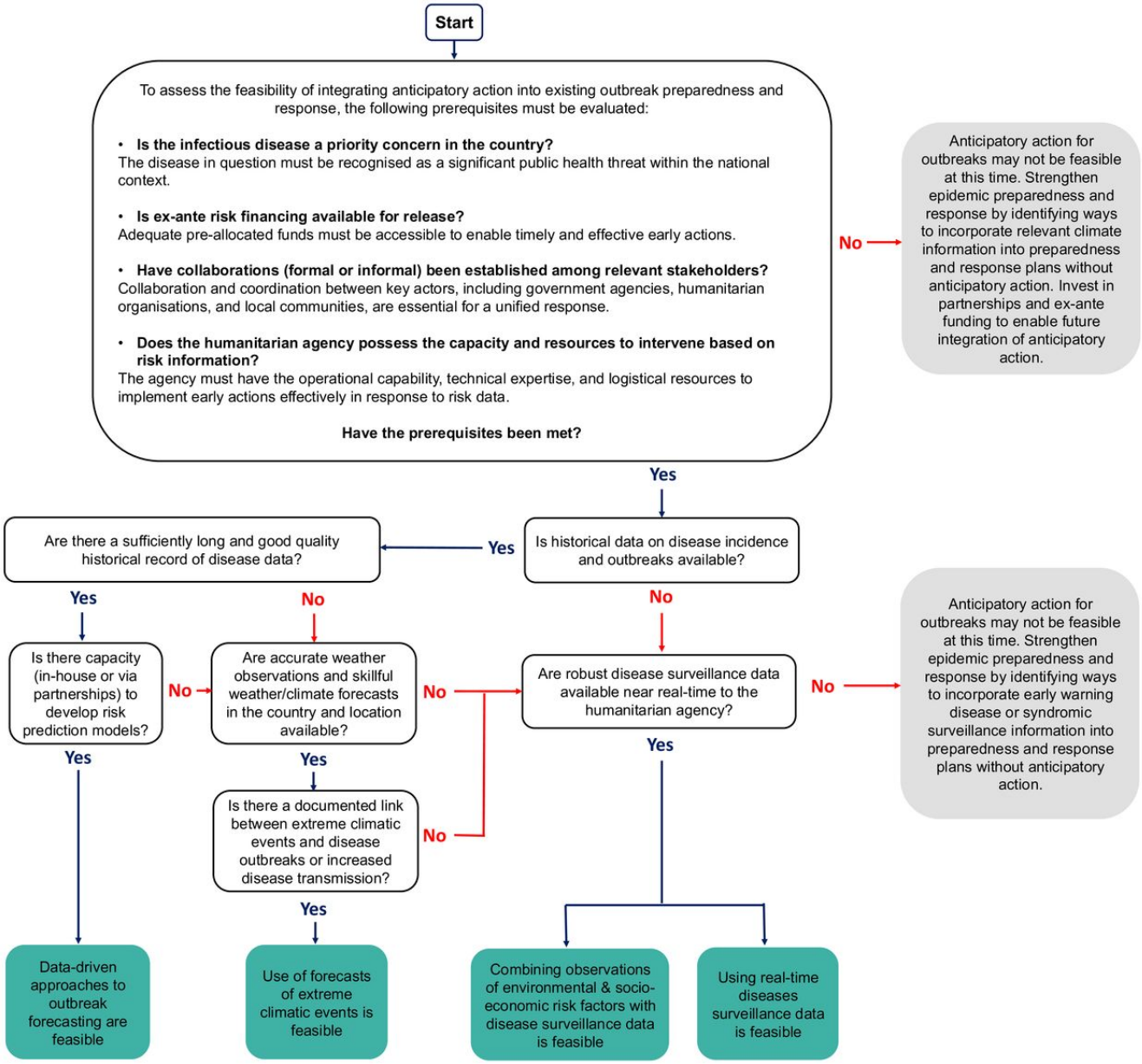


The Mozambican Red Cross as an example of using weather forecasts to trigger early action for waterborne diseases (Approach B)

The Mozambican Red Cross Cyclone EAP shows how weather forecasts can be used to trigger early actions to reduce the risk of diarrheal disease following tropical cyclones. In line with the national level Standard Operating Procedures for cyclones issued by the government agency for disaster risk management (INGD), the protocol uses a windspeed forecast with an activation threshold of expected landfall winds of at least 119 km/h, issued 72 hours in advance by Mozambique's national meteorological service, as the trigger for action. Because events of this magnitude are expected to cause substantial damage to water and sanitation infrastructure, the lead time is used to implement early actions such as refresher training for community volunteers on water treatment and hygiene materials, alongside the distribution of WASH supplies including buckets, mugs, jerrycans, soap, and water purification tablets. These actions are intended to reduce the risk of waterborne disease transmission before the cyclone makes landfall.

A decision tree to support discussions on anticipatory action for disease outbreaks and epidemics

In the publication *Integrating anticipatory action in disease outbreak preparedness and response in the humanitarian sector* by Alcayna et al. you find a decision tree intended to help National Societies and other organizations to assess whether anticipatory action for epidemics is appropriate in a specific context. It can help you identify which approach is likely to work best based on the disease of interest, the availability of relevant data, and the presence of partners, such as ministries of health or academic institutions, that may already be involved in early warning for disease outbreaks.



Source: Alcayna et al. (2025)

Funding for AA and epidemics under the IFRC-DREF

Anticipatory action for epidemics is not currently eligible under the Imminent DREF. However, funding for epidemic preparedness may be available through the response pillar. In such cases, the IFRC health team reviews the request and determines whether it should be approved as preparedness support or as a response intervention. Depending on the context and available evidence, requests may draw on forecast information, government surveillance data, and other relevant sources.

Anticipatory action and displacement

Why anticipatory action for displacement impacts?

Population movement, whether driven by conflict, economic hardship, food insecurity, climate stress, or a combination of these, can generate interconnected humanitarian pressure that extend well beyond the initial movement. People on the move might face disruptions to health, psychosocial wellbeing, family unity, and access to basic services and protection. Meanwhile, host and transit communities can experience strain on essential services, market fluctuations, and potential social tension. Surrounding environments come under pressure through unplanned demands on water sources, waste systems, and national resources. These (secondary) humanitarian impacts are often foreseeable, even when the precise scale and timing of the movement itself are not.

In this context, anticipatory action focuses on anticipating the humanitarian needs that arise as conditions shift from manageable to acute and acting early enough to reduce their severity, rather than aiming to predict displacement itself. Drawing on a combination of external data sources, government statistics, and community-level observations, National Societies can identify emerging signals and inflection points that indicate when coping capacities of migrants en route or host communities as well as the capacities of (humanitarian) support systems are beginning to deteriorate. This approach, grounded in the IFRC's technical guidance on anticipatory action for population movement (see toolbox), emphasizes low-regret actions based on credible information rather than certainty, shifting the focus from predicting events to positioning humanitarian actors to act earlier before humanitarian impacts peak and thus to act more effectively within the fluid realities of human mobility.

Coordination and working groups on anticipatory action and displacement

Within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the IFRC-DREF's Anticipatory Pillar convened a technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action for Population Movement from January 2024 to December 2025. Bringing together several National Societies (including the American, Australian, British, Danish, German and Netherlands Red Cross), IFRC departments, and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, this timebound initiative was tasked with clarifying when and how anticipatory action driven by Red Cross Red Crescent Movement actors could meaningfully apply to migration and displacement contexts, particularly where population movement is driven by multiple, overlapping pressures rather than a single hazard. Its work produced three main outputs: a technical guidance note, an sEAP proforma template tailored to population movement and considerations for s/EAP validation criteria, all of which inform the guidance in this chapter (see resources below). At the global level, the Working Group on Anticipatory Action for Displacement, co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and hosted by the Anticipation Hub, promotes broader technical collaboration, evidence-building, and joint advocacy to strengthen anticipatory approaches in displacement settings across the humanitarian systems. Both initiatives reflect the potential of anticipatory action to expand beyond climate and weather hazards to address the complex, multi-driver realities of human mobility.

Guiding principles for anticipatory action and population movement

Before identifying where anticipatory action can make a difference and how it can be operationalized along the displacement timeline, it is important to establish the principles that should guide the design, review, and implementation of anticipatory action in displacement contexts. The IFRC technical guidance sets out five central principles:

Readiness over prediction

The objective is not to forecast displacement precisely, but to strengthen readiness for when early signals of rising humanitarian need emerge. Anticipatory action focuses on positioning actors to act earlier rather than waiting for complete information or impact peaks to materialize.

Impact-orientation

Assessments should centre on humanitarian impacts, particularly when conditions indicate rising vulnerability or pressure on essential services, rather than on the scale or probability of movement alone.

Evidence proportionality

Expectations for data quality must be realistic and aligned with what is feasible and accessible in a given context. Where quantitative data are partial or incomplete, credible expert judgement and qualitative information remain essential for informing decisions.

Neutrality and safeguards

Anticipatory action must neither encourage nor deter movement. This extends to how triggers are designed and communicated, avoiding framing or data use that could influence migration choices or compromise the principled nature of humanitarian assistance.

No-categorization principle

Consistent with the Movement's principles of universality and impartiality, the guidance intentionally avoids diving population

movement into fixed types such as internal, cross-border, or mixed. Each context should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that all at-risk people are considered based on their needs, not their legal status.

These principles underpin both the analytical framework for understanding anticipated impacts and the operational approaches for acting on them, which the following sections outline.

Dimensions of anticipated displacement impacts

Having established why anticipatory action is relevant and what principles should guide it, the next question is what types of displacement impacts can be addressed through anticipatory action. Migration and displacement create interconnected humanitarian pressures that extend beyond the initial act of movement. The IFRC technical guidance identifies three dimensions through which these evolving impacts can be anticipated and acted upon.

- **People on the move** face disruptions to health, psychosocial wellbeing, family unity, and access to basic services and protection, including reliable information and safe referrals. In Djubouti, for instance, the sEAP documents how migrants transiting toward the Arabian Peninsula walk for weeks through arid terrain with virtually no access to water, food, or medical care, while remaining largely unaware of their rights or available services. In Colombia, people forcibly displaced by armed conflict in the Pacific region face prolonged periods in inadequate shelters, loss of livelihoods, and severe psychosocial strain.
- **Host and transit communities** experience pressure on essential services, market fluctuations, and potential social tension. In Djibouti, host communities along transit routes already provide the majority of informal support to people on the move, such as water, food, and economic exchange, but report that this assistance is insufficient to meet the scale of need when impacts peak. In Honduras, municipalities along common migration corridors see their local capacities regularly overwhelmed during peaks in transit flows.
- **Environment and infrastructure** come under stress through unplanned demands on water sources, waste systems, and natural resources, particularly in contexts of prolonged or large-scale displacement, where settlements are not always planned or designed for services to absorb sudden population increases.

By examining these three dimensions, National Societies can identify which risks are most relevant in their context. The following section outlines how anticipatory action for the identified risks and impacts can be operationalized along the displacement timeline.

Approaches for operationalizing anticipatory action along the displacement timeline

The previous section identified what anticipatory action for displacement impacts should address, while this section turns to how it can be put into practice. The IFRC technical guidance and the accompanying sEAP proforma template structure operational design around three stages of the displacement timeline: at the place of origin, in transit, and at longer-term displacement or settlement sites. Which early actions might be feasible or impactful might shift at each stage, and each intervention might be classified differently depending on where in this timeline it falls.

Approach A: At the place of origin

At the place of origin, anticipatory action may focus on early outreach, coordination with authorities, and measures that support safe decisions before movement begins or escalates. Lead times at this stage can be longer, but signals may also be less precise. The IFRC sEAP proforma template outlines a range of illustrative activities for origin contexts, including community information on rights and available services, health checks, distribution of dignity kits and other essential items, coordination with authorities, and the dissemination of messages to prevent family separation. As operational experience grows, this stage may become a more prominent feature of future protocols particularly in contexts where seasonal or cyclical movement patterns provide sufficient lead times.

Approach B: In transit

In transit, lead times are typically shorter and actions need to be implementable rapidly along known routes. The Djibouti sEAP, for example, is designed specifically around this stage: migrants crossing from the Horn of Africa toward the Arabian Peninsula walk for approximately two to three weeks across the country, providing a window to deploy services at entry points, along transit routes, and at regrouping and existing points. The protocol uses IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix weekly flow monitoring data as its trigger, with a fixed threshold that has been identified through return-period analysis of six years of historical data. When the threshold is met, the Djibouti Red Crescent activates early actions including safe water provision, hygiene kit distribution, first aid, and psychosocial support along the transit corridor. Similarly, the Honduran Red Cross EAP, that, two years after its initial approval, needed a revision to reflect shifting dynamics in Central America movement flows following changes in US migration policy, uses a two-indicator trigger combining upstream movement data from Panama with an assessment of national response capacity. When both indicate rising volumes of movement and diminishing capacities, early actions are implemented at humanitarian service points along the migration corridor, focusing on WASH, health, psychosocial support, restoring family links, and protection referrals.

Approach C: At longer-term displacement or settlement sites

At longer-term displacement or settlement sites, early action shifts towards preventing the secondary deterioration of conditions for both displaced populations and host communities. In Colombia, for example, the sEAP for complex crisis in the Pacific region

addresses this stage: it is activated when specific institutions issue alerts indicating that a mass displacement event linked to armed conflict has occurred or is imminent in one of the four target departments. Displaced communities typically arrive in larger towns or municipal capitals where they settle in temporary shelters that lack adequate infrastructure. The sEAP particularly targets the gap between the onset of displacement and the point at which local authorities can deliver the full response as mandated by national law, a period during which displaced people often have no access to clean water, health services, or psychosocial support. Early actions include deploying water treatment capacity and storage, distributing hygiene kits, providing physical and psychological first aid, broadcasting radio messages on safe behavior in the presence of anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance, establishing child-friendly spaces, and conducting community workshops on gender-based violence prevention. Critically, the protocol also targets host communities in receiving municipalities to mitigate tensions that might arise when capacities and local services are strained by a (sudden) increase of the local population.

Across all three stages, a degree of predictability is essential for anticipatory action to function. Anticipatory action for population movement does not aim to forecast movement itself with the same precision that is possible in case of weather-related extreme events. Yet, it does require sufficient evidence, that can, for example, be drawn from historical patterns, trend data or scenario analysis, to identify when peaks in movement or arrivals are likely to exceed existing capacities. The underlying logic is that displacement-related needs often follow recognizable patterns: movement along established corridors tends to fluctuate, and past events provide a basis for identifying thresholds beyond which available services and response capacity are overwhelmed and conditions begin to deteriorate. It is this predictive element that distinguishes anticipatory action from response. In contexts where no such patterns can be identified and displacement-related impacts cannot be modelled or anticipated with any reasonable confidence, an EAP may not be the appropriate instrument; other mechanisms such as the imminent DREF or response DREF may be better suited to address the crisis.

Where sufficient data and / or patterns do exist, the design of triggers and thresholds is a central operational challenge. The s/EAPs that have been approved illustrate different approaches to trigger design: The Djibouti sEAP, for instance, relies on quantitative flow monitoring data with a statistically derived threshold; Honduras combines upstream movement data with a structured capacity assessment and consensus-based expert judgement; and Colombia draws on official institutional alerts linked to department-level displacement thresholds. The IFRC guidance further distinguishes between single-phase triggers, which initiate action once a predefined threshold is reached, and multi-phase triggers, which enable an initial low-regret activation followed by more targeted actions once field confirmation is available. In all cases, triggers should be linked not only to movement volumes but also to indicators of humanitarian severity, such as rising unmet health or protection needs, reduced access to essential services, or strain on host community resources to ensure that activation reflects deteriorating conditions rather than movement alone.

Other hazards

While the preceding sections address health and displacement, two areas where dedicated technical guidance and multiple s/EAPs now exist, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is also beginning to extend anticipatory action to other hazards that do not fit neatly into established climate or weather forecasting systems. This section briefly outlines emerging considerations for such hazards. In these cases, operational experience remains limited; the guidance offered here is therefore deliberately concise and should be understood as reflecting early-stage practice.

Wildfires

Wildfires present a growing humanitarian challenge, particularly in regions where climate change, expanding agro-forestry land use, and the growth of settlements in fire-prone rural areas are increasing both the frequency and severity of fire events. The speed at which wildfires spread, combined with the scale of potential impact on homes, livelihoods, and human safety, makes them a hazard where acting ahead of impact peaks can significantly reduce harm, yet their inclusion in anticipatory action frameworks is still very recent.

The Chilean Red Cross sEAP for wildfires, developed with technical support from the German Red Cross, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, and the IFRC, is the first and currently only approved wildfire sEAP within the Movement. It was activated for the first time in January 2026 in the Araucanía region, marking a global milestone for anticipatory action on this hazard. The protocol targets communities in central-southern Chile exposed to wildfire risk and focuses on three priority impacts: damage and loss to homes, overexposure of people attempting to combat fires without adequate protection, and loss of livelihoods.

A distinctive feature of the sEAP is its trigger mechanism, which draws on fire-behavior forecasting rather than weather forecasts alone. The protocol is activated when conditions known as the “Red Button” are met: An ignition probability equal to or greater than 70%, wind speeds of at least 20 km/h, and relative humidity below 30% in the targeted territory, with forecasts maintaining these conditions eight days in advance. These conditions are monitored by Chile’s National Forestry Corporation (CONAF), which produces fire-spread forecasts, while the National Disaster Prevention and Response Service (SENAPRED) issues the formal alerts. The protocol also includes a stop mechanism: an updated forecast three days after activation confirms whether conditions still exceed the thresholds or whether the probability has decreased. Upon activation, the Chilean Red Cross implements early actions including multipurpose cash transfers, for example to cover costs for transportation, evacuation or storage of assets, as well as evacuation kits and protective tools for vulnerable households, and coordination with local authorities and community leaders. During the January 2026 activation, the protocol reached approximately 400 families within the eight-day implementation window, in an

area that had not yet been directly affected by the fires spreading elsewhere across the country.

The Chile experience illustrates several broader considerations for wildfire-related anticipatory action:

- Consider a combination of environmental variables, such as ignition probability, wind, and humidity, rather than a single forecast product as a basis for your trigger model. This requires close collaboration with national fire and meteorological agencies.
- Take into account that lead times tend to be short (days rather than weeks), which demands a high emphasis on readiness activities, pre-positioned supplies, and volunteer training. As with all sudden-onset hazards, these activities should already be in place before the fire season begins.
- Establish a robust stop mechanism. While this is good practice for many different hazards and a specific requirement in s/EAPs, the inherent uncertainty might be even bigger for fire-behaviour forecasting. Against this background, it is essential to have a solid mechanism in place that allows resources to be scaled down or relocated if conditions change.
- Capture and share learnings from wildfire-related anticipatory action initiatives even if they do not result in an s/EAP. As operational experience accumulates not only from this or future activations, but also from any other related initiatives, learnings should be captured systematically to inform the application of the concepts and mechanisms of anticipatory action in other fire-prone contexts.

Desert locusts

Desert locusts are among the most dangerous migratory pests in the world because they can rapidly multiply, form massive swarms, and move across countries in a short time. A single swarm can contain millions to billions of locusts, devouring crops, pasture, and natural vegetation wherever it lands. This makes them a major humanitarian threat, especially in vulnerable regions where people depend heavily on farming and livestock for food and income. When locust swarms destroy harvests and grazing land, they can trigger food shortages, loss of livelihoods, rising prices, and greater poverty.

The Somali Red Crescent Society has developed the first sEAP for desert locusts. It is designed to protect food security and livelihoods by acting before outbreaks reach crisis level. It focuses on high-risk pastoral and agropastoral areas and combines surveillance, early warning, advisory support, and multi-purpose cash assistance to help vulnerable households reduce losses.

The protocol follows a two-stage trigger system. First, a readiness trigger is activated when FAO bulletins and national monitoring show likely breeding or possible migration of locusts into Somalia within the coming six weeks. This leads to increased surveillance and preparedness. Second, an activation trigger is reached when the National Desert Locust Centre (DLC), using field survey results and satellite data, confirms that locusts pose an imminent threat to crops and food security. This then triggers wider early warning dissemination and targeted cash assistance.

The main actions include strengthening locust surveillance, sharing early warning and advisory messages through volunteers and media, and providing cash transfers to vulnerable households so they can take protective measures such as buying food, fodder, tools, or other essentials.

Implementation depends on close cooperation between the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS), which leads delivery on the ground, and the National Desert Locust Centre, which provides technical surveillance and trigger analysis.

Toolbox

Webinar series “The basics of forecasting for anticipatory action – Part five: non-weather hazards & potentials”

For health

Anticipatory action for Epidemics. Briefing (Anticipation Hub, 2023)

Working paper: Applying anticipatory action ahead of disease outbreaks and epidemics: a conceptual framework for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Alcayna et al. 2024)

- Integrating anticipatory action in disease outbreak preparedness and response in the humanitarian sector (Alcayna et al. 2025)
- Working group on anticipatory action and health on the Anticipation Hub
- Epidemic Preparedness Toolkit
- Anticipatory Action for Climate-Sensitive Infectious Diseases: East Africa Regional Assessment (2024)

For displacement

- Anticipation Hub Working Group on Anticipatory Action for Displacement
- IFRC technical guidance
- IFRC sEAP proforma template
- sEAP on population movement in Djibouti
- sEAP on complex crisis: forced displacement in Colombia
- EAP on population movement in Honduras (initial version)

For other hazards

- Anticipation Hub note on the first activation of the wildfire sEAP in Chile
- Chile wildfire sEAP

Glossary of Terms for Anticipatory Action

Glossary of Terms for Anticipatory Action

Summary

This glossary presents key terms related to anticipatory action. The terminology has been analyzed in detail by practitioners that are implementing anticipatory action interventions, as well as by a broad number of actors involved in Early warning and Early Action.

Acting in vain

Acting in vain happens in the following scenario:

Based on the trigger received, the Early Action Protocol is activated, and the early actions identified are implemented in anticipation of the extreme event. However, the event does not materialise as predicted. The implementation of these early actions in spite of the event not happening can be referred to 'Acting in Vain'. In general, FbF practitioners should avoid the term "acting in vain", as these actions should be designed in a way that they still benefit the population (for example in a future disaster), and the repeated benefits of acting based on the forecast may outweigh not acting at all.

Action lifetime

The length of time that the positive impacts of the action will last after the action is implemented. For example, if drains are cleared in a city to reduce potential flooding, the drains may remain sufficiently clear for a few weeks, having a temporary lasting effect.

Note:
If we take an action with a long lifetime based on a forecast, such as distributing a 30-day supply of chlorine tablets, we would not want to take that same action again until the lifetime of the first action was over. Reoccurring extreme events can reduce the action lifetime.

Anticipatory action

Umbrella term for "actions taken to reduce the humanitarian impacts of a forecast hazard before it occurs or before its most acute impacts are felt; the decision to take action is based on a forecast or collective risk analysis of when, where and how an event will unfold" (IFRC). Many stakeholders agree that this works best when certain key elements, such as rules for decision-making ('triggers'), actions and financing mechanisms are pre-agreed.

Forecast-based Financing is the Red Cross Red Crescent's approach to anticipatory action. See also: Early Warning Early Action.

Cash & voucher assistance

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) can be selected as an early action to prevent or mitigate the impact of extreme weather events. Cash assistance means giving people money instead of goods so they can meet their own needs before, during or after an emergency. CVA can allow humanitarian organisations to respond to multiple causes of vulnerability, and to tailor humanitarian programmes as closely as possible to national and local needs.

Climatology

The average climate of a specific location, which includes magnitudes of the hazard in that location. The climatology of a location can be expressed as return period maps that explain the probability of an extreme event happening in a given year.

Contingency planning

Establishing predefined arrangement and actions to enable timely, effective, and appropriate responses to possible future risks.

Note:
Governments and organizations have contingency plans to prepare for and respond to disasters. These plans can inspire the selection of forecast-based actions, and also serve as a guide for the development of Early Action Protocols. EAPs should be developed in a way that ensures coherence with existing contingency plans.

Deterministic weather forecast

A forecast of a future condition (e.g. weather event), which does not include the likelihood of whether or not that event will happen, for example “10 mm of rain tomorrow”.

Dialogue Platform

Dialogue Platforms on Anticipatory Action are held at national, sub-regional, regional and global level. At these regular events, humanitarian actors, scientists, government agencies, and others meet to share learning and shape the future of Anticipatory Action. It encourages collaboration and innovation across actors, countries and regions.

Drill

An operations-based exercise that requires mobilization and the use of resources during a made-up disaster scenario. The goal of a drill is to test a single specific operation, function, or system. For example, a drill for shelter strengthening kits can be used to test the National Societies procedure for this early action.

See also “Simulation”.

Early Action

What is considered an “early action”, differs among some organizations. However, those organisations implementing anticipatory humanitarian action or FbF have agreed on three key parameters:

1. time factor: the action happens in anticipation of a hazard impact;
2. the early actions aim to prevent or mitigate the impact;
3. the action is activated by a forecast and/or collaborative analysis predicting an event.

In the case of FbF, early actions are activated based on a forecast. Note that some organizations use the term “anticipatory actions” interchangeably.

Early Action Protocol (EAP)

An Early Action Protocol contains information on triggers and early actions and describes the step-by-step process for the implementation of early actions, once a trigger is hit. It provides guidelines for who takes action when, where, and with what funds. The activation of the protocol is triggered when a certain forecast reaches a certain level that indicates there could be severe negative impacts (see impact level). For the FbA by the DREF, the Early Action Protocol also serves as the document justifying the chosen triggers and early actions and thus contains analysis in this regard.

Early Warning Early Action

The general concept of taking early action based on a warning. Umbrella term that also covers Forecast-based-Financing. EWEA builds on the Early Warning Systems concept, emphasizing the need to reinforce actions as key outputs of the warning system.

Early Warning System

The set of capacities needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information to enable individuals, communities and organizations threatened by a hazard to prepare and to act appropriately and in sufficient time to reduce the possibility of harm or loss (UNISDR 2009).

Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS)

Forecast method that uses multiple weather forecast model runs to assess the uncertainty in that forecast. Ensemble Prediction Systems are numerical weather prediction systems that allow us to estimate the uncertainty in a weather forecast as well as the most likely outcome. Note: at a simple level, the percentage of ensembles exceeding a threshold (such as 10% of ensembles exceeding 100 mm of rainfall), is often communicated as the probability of that event occurring.

Epidemic

An epidemic is the rapid spread of an infectious disease within a specific area or population. Anticipatory action is increasingly

explored to reduce the impact of epidemic diseases like Cholera by warning communities, improving hygiene practices, and distributing health supplies before cases surge.

Exposure

The situation of people, infrastructure, housing, production capacities and other tangible human assets located in hazard-prone areas (UNDRR).

Extended-range Weather Forecasting

Beyond 10 days and up to 30 days description of weather parameters, usually averaged and expressed as a departure from climate values for that period.

Extreme Weather Event

Weather that is unusual or severe for a specific location, based on the range that has been seen in the past. Impacts of extreme weather events are considered disasters when they produce widespread damage and cause severe alterations in the normal functioning of communities or societies.

Impact-based Forecasting

(Also called Impact-based warning services)

A forecast of the potential consequences of a hydrometeorological event, in terms of its effects on people, infrastructure, etc. These types of forecasts and warnings are designed to provide detailed information precisely on who or what is exposed and vulnerable to the particular hazard. For impact forecast and warning services, exposure is explicitly considered along with the hazard and vulnerability (WMO 2016). This type of service changes the paradigm of hazard forecasting (what the weather will *be*) towards the integration of risk (what the weather will *do*).

Feasibility Study (FS)

The FS is a preliminary collection and assessment of information to make a recommendation as to under what conditions FbF can be set up in a specific country, and to begin exploring different design options for the FbF system, including choice of hazard(s) and risks to address, involved institutions, local buy-in, available forecasts and vulnerability and exposure data, and possible actions.

False Alarm Ratio (FAR)

The false alarm ratio is the number of “false alarm” forecasts (in which an event was forecasted but did not happen) divided by the total number of times the event was forecasted. (e.g. If 2 flood forecasts were false alarms and 2 flood forecasts resulted in floods, then the FAR would be 2/4 or 50%). In FbF, this criteria is considered when analyzing the skill of the respective forecast.

Forecast

A statement of expected meteorological and environmental conditions for a specified time or period, and for a specified area. In the case of FbF, the forecast provides information about the possibility of an extreme event happening in the foreseeable future.

Note:
Weather forecasts are often divided into short-term weather forecasts (less than 10 days), sub-seasonal forecasts (20-40 days) and seasonal forecasts (3-6 months).

Forecast-based Financing (FbF)

Approach of anticipatory humanitarian action used by Red Cross and Red Crescent. Based on forecast information and risk analysis, FbF releases humanitarian funding for pre-agreed early actions to prevent or mitigate the impact of extreme events. Funds are allocated automatically when a specific threshold (trigger) is reached.

Forecast Skill

How well forecasts compare to the actual observation of what was predicted, over a long period of time during wich forecasts were issued.

Hazard

A hazard is a potential threat or danger that can cause harm to people, property, or the environment. Examples for natural hazards include typhoons, floods, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions. However, there are also biological hazards like epidemics or man-made hazards like conflict and war.

Hazard-impact curve

The relationship between the magnitude of the hazard and the impact. For example, as windspeeds rise, the number of houses destroyed will rise. A graph of this relationship will look like a curve.

Hazard magnitude

This is the strength of a hazard. Most hazards are measured on a scale e.g. the Richter scale or the volcanic explosivity index (VEI). Generally speaking, the stronger the hazard, the more severe the hazard is.

Historical impact

Data on impacts of past disasters that will contribute to determining the impact level / trigger and to the selection of early actions. Gathering historical impact data is an important part of the initial analysis that is the first step of EAP development.

Historical forecast data / hindcasts

Historical forecasts are the archived forecasts that were issued in the past. They are analyzed to see how well a model performs. If a forecast model has not been operating in the past, hindcasts are made, so the model is run with past data to see what it would have forecasted during that time. Historical forecasts and hindcasts are used for forecast verification.

Inclusion

Inclusion means making sure all people – regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, or background – are considered and involved in planning and implementing early actions. Inclusive approaches help ensure that no one is left behind in times of crisis.

Intervention map

Is the graphical representation of the impact-based forecasting outputs. It combines the data of the forecast that has been selected for the trigger with the vulnerability and exposure indicators used to predict the prioritized impact (e.g. destruction of houses). As a result, the map shows those areas for which the highest impact is predicted and where the early actions should be implemented as a priority (e.g. districts where based on forecasted windspeed combined with quality of housing and proximity to coastline most houses will be destroyed).

Impact Level

The degree of forecasted loss and damage (human, livelihoods, infrastructure, environment etc.), or in other words the degree of humanitarian impact of an extreme event that would trigger action. If more than a predetermined probability of a certain amount of loss / damage is forecasted, we act.

Implementation Time

Time required to implement and complete the early actions.

Lead Time

The time from when the forecast is issued until the occurrence of the event that is forecasted to happen. For example, a forecast

issued on Monday for a storm to make landfall on Friday has a four-day lead time.

Menu of Forecasts

An analysis of forecasts that are available, and which could be used to trigger early action. This analysis includes the type, source, skill, lead time and also forecast verification, for example, the false alarm ratio, to determine what is the best possible forecast that can be used, or what combination of forecasts could be used. In the EAP template used by FbA by the DREF, the menu of forecasts is represented in a table format.

Meteorological Agency

A meteorological agency is a national or regional institution that monitors weather and climate conditions. They provide forecasts, that triggers for anticipatory action can be based upon, and are thus key partners to develop Early Action Protocols.

National Scale / Flexible Approach

In FbF 'national scale' refers to setting up the FbF system in a way that early actions should be appropriate and feasible to be carried out in all areas of a country that are potentially at risk of the respective hazard. Humanitarian emergency response acts in those areas where disaster impacts and resulting needs are highest, in the same vein, in FbF, early actions should be carried out in areas where the predicted impact is highest. Hence the system should never be set up only for some pre-selected communities, instead it should be set up in a way that the National Society can act early anywhere in the country where the forecasts indicate a high impact of the approaching extreme event. Sometimes, the term national scale is misunderstood, as meaning the early actions will be carried out in all areas at risk (i.e. to potentially millions of people), which goes beyond capacities. For this reason, the term "flexible approach" is preferred.

Preparedness for Effective Response (PER)

Aims to strengthen local preparedness capacities to ensure timely and effective humanitarian assistance. PER is a cyclical approach for a National Society to systematically assess, measure, and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of its response system, and to construct a work-plan accordingly.

The PER, with its 37 components in the areas of 1) policy, strategies and standards, 2) analysis and planning, 3) coordination, 4) operational capacity, and 5) operations support, provides coherence and guidance to National Societies on all elements and its interconnections which comprise a robust National Disaster Preparedness for Response Mechanism.

Predictive Analytics (in the humanitarian sector)

Term mainly used by OCHA for their anticipatory approach. Predictive analytics makes use of the increasing availability of data from a variety of sources, together with advancements in statistics and machine learning. The goal is to analyze current and historical data to predict an event or some characteristic of an event (the probability, severity, magnitude, or duration). (OCHA 2019)

Probabilistic forecast

A weather / climate forecast that gives information about the expected weather or climate conditions, as well as the probability of those conditions (e.g. 20% chance of at least 10 mm of rain tomorrow). This differs from deterministic forecasts, which do not include information on the uncertainty in the prediction.

Also see: Ensemble Prediction Systems

Probability Threshold

The value of forecast probability at which the chances of reaching the impact level are considered high enough to merit forecast-based action. The probability threshold can be defined based on comparing the risk of acting in vain, versus the risk of failing to act. The probability is agreed upon beforehand amongst all stakeholders. For example, we will act when there is a greater than 50% chance that the defined flood water levels will be reached.

Readiness

Readiness activities are any ongoing costs and services, including HR and logistics, that are necessary for a National Society to

remain ready for subsequent trigger-based activation of an Early Action Protocol.

Residual Risk

The risk of impact from a disaster that remains after disaster risk reduction measures are taken. The presence of residual risk implies a continuing need to develop and support effective capacities for emergency services, preparedness, response and recovery together with socio-economic policies such as safety nets and risk transfer mechanisms.

Note:
FbF can contribute to managing part of this residual risk by funding early actions and preparedness for response actions when a disaster is forecasted.

Return Period

How often a defined event tends to happen in a set period of time, e.g. 5 times in 100 years is a return period of 1 in 20 years. However, events are not spaced out equally according to the return period (e.g. you can have two consecutive years that have events of 1 in 20 years, but you can also go 40 years without a 1-in-20 year event occurring).

Shelf life

Shelf life refers to how long a product, such as food, medicine, or other relief items, can be stored before it becomes unusable or unsafe. Knowing the shelf life and aligning it with the lifespan of a (s)EAP (two or five years respectively) is important for managing supplies in pre-positioning for anticipatory action.

Short-range Weather Forecasting

12 to 72 hours

Simulation

Umbrella term for an exercise that aims to test the viability and timeliness of the early actions in real time. The exercise primarily consists of practical actions, performed by participants who will carry out their roles and responsibilities as assigned in the EAP. In a thorough simulation everything from the trigger notification through the selection of communities and channelling of the funds to the distribution to the target population will be tested, which means Hydro-met services, IFRC, local authorities, selected NS branches and communities are involved.

A simulation guide developed by IFRC and CADRIM distinguishes between four types of simulation exercises:

- Tabletop exercises
- Drills (see “Drill”)
- Functional Exercises
- Field Exercises

Social Protection

Social protection is a broad term to describe national and sub-national programmes and policies that aim to tackle poverty, inequality and vulnerability by helping people manage short and long- term risks. This includes:

- Social assistance or safety nets: cash transfers, cash-for-work programs and temporary employment programmes, school feeding programs
- Social insurance: pensions; health, unemployment or disaster insurance
- Labour market interventions: job market integration, job benefits, labor standards
- Social services: social care, nutrition services, disability services

Trigger

Triggers are predefined rules for decision-making, most often threshold in forecast data, such as a certain windspeed for storms or river level for floods, that are known to have caused severe humanitarian impacts in the past (impact-based forecast). Triggers signal when a hazard is likely to strike and early actions should be taken.

Triggers can be based on a hard threshold of a single variable or a combination of (qualitative and quantitative) information. Phased or staggered triggers consist of multiple steps, for example, a pre-activation or readiness trigger with greater lead time but less forecast accuracy, and then an actual activation trigger, as forecast accuracy gradually increases. An overview of trigger models for different hazards and contexts can be found in the Anticipation Hub's trigger database.

See also: Impact level.

Theory of Change

A comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a programme or change initiative does (its actions or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved.

In FbF, a Theory of Change is an essential tool to select those early actions that have the most potential to reduce the identified risks.

Verification

Connotes an objective comparison of forecasts and observations to establish accuracy, skill and veracity of the forecast.

Vulnerability

In Disaster Risk Reduction, vulnerability means the degree to which people or systems are likely to be harmed by a hazard due to factors like poverty, poor housing, health conditions, or lack of information.

Downloads

Downloads

Summary

Here you'll find all the downloads for every chapter, sorted by topic.

Files by tag

FCV contexts

- Resources for early action selection in FCV settings (Module 5) in the Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict-affected and Violent Settings toolkit
- Anticipatiory Aciton in Conflict Practitioners Group
- Toolkit for Anticipatory Action in Fragile, Conflict- and Violence-affected Settings (FCV)

Cash assistance

- Cash and Voucher Assistance in Bangladesh (Gros et al.)

Compound risk

- Anticipatory action in the age of Covid-19: lessons from Cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh

Non-weather

- Webinar series "The basics of forecasting for anticipatory action – Part five: non-weather hazards & potentials"