CONTENT

STEP 4: ENGAGE

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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.