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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

DESCRIPTION

The typhoon EAP trigger is based on a model that forecast the number of houses to be damaged by the winds. The EAP will activate when the model forecasts with a 3-day lead time more than 10% of houses being totally damaged in at least 3 municipalities.

LEAD TIME:

3 days

Philippines

DESCRIPTION

The cyclone EAP is triggered based on forecast information distributed 72 hours before the event indicating a category 3 cyclone with a speed of 120 km/h or more making landfall. The trigger of early actions will depend on the released forecast and an official announcement made by the Technical Committee for Disaster Management (CTGC) to activate actions.

LEAD TIME:

3 days

Mozambique

DESCRIPTION

The flood EAP is triggered based on a flood prediction model that provides three types of color-coded alerts produced by the Niger Basin Authority. Early actions are triggered with a 3-day lead time when the orange level is met, corresponding to a 5 year return period. A table is available to identify when the 5 year return period threshold is reached for each of the 7 measuring stations. There is a 20% probability of the flood trigger being activated in a given year.

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.