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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