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Introduction: What is anticipatory action?

Summary

This introduction gives you

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

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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?

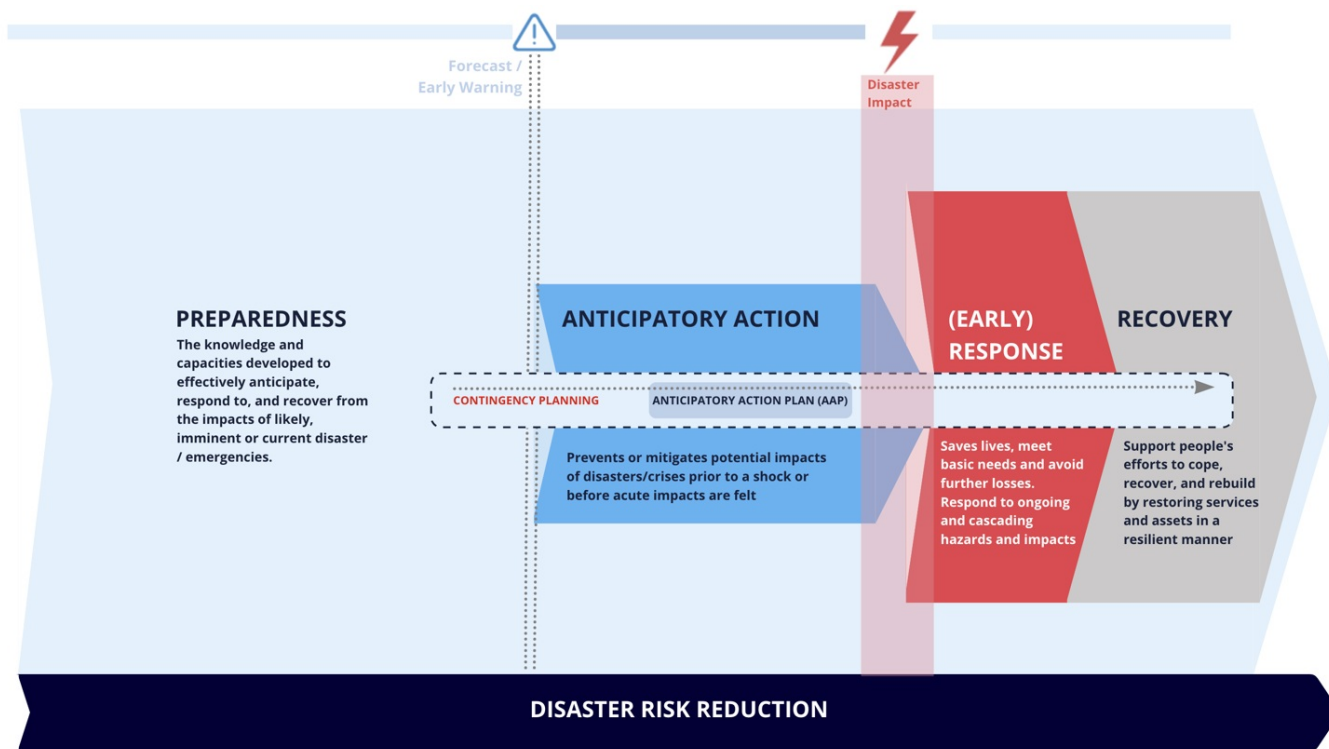
Even though anticipatory action can be implemented differently across organizations and with different approaches, methodologies, and scales, three key parameters are generally agreed upon and reflected in the formal definition:

- **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*

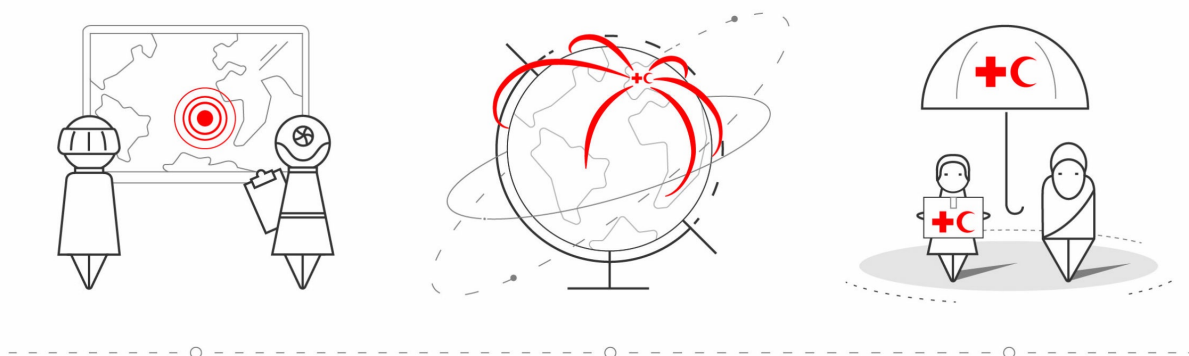
When is anticipatory action implemented?

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)