

# Integrating child protection, education and gender-based violence into anticipatory action

Humanitarian disasters are increasingly complex. The climate crisis is exacerbating disaster risk ([IPCC 2022](#)), which is further compounded by conflict in many countries (see Box 1). These challenges disproportionately impact girls and boys in all their diversity. While children's rights in disaster situations are gaining recognition ([UNICEF 2021a](#); [Committee on the Rights of the Child 2023](#)), protecting girls and boys in all their diversity from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation during disasters, alongside their right to meaningful participation in decisions that affect them, remain significant gaps ([The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action et al. 2020](#)).

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's *Strategy 2021-2025* ([The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action 2021](#)) prioritizes the centrality of children and their protection within humanitarian action as both essential and life-saving. Similarly, a joint study on the status of gender equality and women's leadership in disaster risk reduction ([Picard 2021](#)) recommended that gender-based violence should be a key priority in disaster preparedness, anticipatory action, early and ongoing response activities, and early recovery activities.

To realize these ambitions, and to achieve disaster resilience for all, anticipatory action must be inclusive and gender responsive. This briefing, written by the Anticipation Hub's Working Group on Protection, Gender

and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action, explains the main challenges and critical gaps that exist. It also makes recommendations for governments, practitioners and donors to ensure that anticipatory action addresses the specific needs of girls and boys in all their diversity.



Santulan Elementary School, Santulan *barangay*, Malabon, Metro Manila, Philippines. © Madeline Wilson / IFRC

## Box 1. Anticipatory action to reach those at risk from climate change and conflict

Anticipatory action refers to the actions taken ahead of a hazard or crisis to reduce the expected impacts. It refers to interventions implemented between an early warning being made based on a forecast (the 'trigger') and the onset of the hazard, or its peak impacts being felt (e.g., during a drought).

This approach is based on analysis of **risk** and **expected impacts**, rather than an assessment of post-disaster needs. As such, anticipatory action systems are usually designed based on the available hydrometeorological data, predictive analysis tools, vulnerability data and other evidence. This guides the identification and prioritization of the risks to be addressed, which in turn determines the actions to be taken ahead of the hazard, and when (and how much) finance is released for these actions.

As well as being a mechanism to reduce the impacts of climate-related hazards, anticipatory action can also assist the most vulnerable people in conflict-affected contexts, which includes girls and boys in all their diversity. Climate and conflict act in a complex feedback loop, as threat and vulnerability multipliers. All anticipatory action should be conflict-sensitive as a minimum, to ensure it protects people's lives and development gains, and reduces humanitarian needs and costs, even in the most volatile settings. This includes ensuring that it is designed in a way that considers the specific needs of girls and boys, in all their diversity, in conflict situations.



## Protection, gender and inclusion in anticipatory action

The *World Disasters Report 2020* ([IFRC 2020](#)) emphasized that it is necessary to scale up anticipatory action in order to reach its full potential as a pre-eminent source of disaster resilience for the most vulnerable people. Yet, acting early does not guarantee equitable outcomes. Anticipatory action must therefore be designed and implemented using an inclusive and gender-transformative approach, one that accounts for the specific needs of girls and boys in all their diversity, people with disabilities and marginalized groups. For example, anticipatory action systems must emphasize protection outcomes, including the mitigation of gender-based violence and child-protection risks to ensure that those at risk are reached effectively, and in a non-discriminatory and equitable manner.

The integration of protection, gender and inclusion is an important step towards achieving this, helping to maintain the dignity, access, participation and safety of all people affected by disasters. This requires understanding how intersecting factors – such as, but not limited to, gender, age, socio-economic status, displacement status, physical and mental abilities – affect a person’s vulnerability and resilience. Integrating protection, gender and inclusion is therefore a fundamental step to avoid compounding existing, or creating new, protection risks and ensuring that no one is left behind.

### Inclusion and participation

Anticipatory action must be developed on the basis of a clear understanding of how people are affected differently. The inclusion of marginalized groups across stable, fragile and displacement contexts is critical if it is to be an effective and efficient mechanism to address increasing and compounding shocks and stresses for all. The climate crisis puts almost every child at risk ([UNICEF 2021b](#)) and their needs, determined by factors such as gender – with adolescent girls and young women disproportionately and specifically impacted – disability, poverty, age, ethnicity and legal status, must be accounted for.

Equally, girls and boys in all their diversity have a right to participate in decisions that impact them. If enabling environments are in place, they can also lead anticipatory action, for example by identifying actions to protect themselves ahead of crisis, developing and disseminating child-friendly, life-saving messages, and educating their communities.

Anticipatory action stakeholders must proactively strive to ensure inclusivity ([Jones et al. 2020](#)). They must systematically include girls and boys in all their diversity, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups, for example in anticipatory action platforms, processes and decision-making spaces. However, there are limited good practices to learn



Nepalese pupils learn how to take shelter from earthquakes, how to mitigate the effects of landslides and how to give first aid.

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from, and gaps in guidance to support such inclusion in anticipatory action can hinder progress. Higher quality, more diverse and disaggregated data is also needed to inform anticipatory action decisions and design.

Encouragingly, there has recently been progress with this. For example, in 2022 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) supported the development of a training module on gender equality and social-inclusion-responsive anticipatory action ([ASEAN 2023](#)); dissemination of this module is ongoing and policy-makers in other regions can learn from and contextualize this approach.

For practitioners, guidance on conducting assessments in an age-, gender- and disability-inclusive way, and on the identification of barriers and enablers for different people in the context of anticipatory action (e.g., access, communication, attitudinal and institutional aspects) is crucial. Existing tools for promoting child- and youth-led climate adaptation, such as Y-Adapt<sup>1</sup>, could be further developed to include gender-transformative anticipatory action components.

Cross-sectoral approaches are key to ensuring inclusivity and the Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action Working Group is connecting with education networks – including the Global Education Cluster,<sup>2</sup> the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector<sup>3</sup> and the Greening Education Partnership<sup>4</sup> – to better align with education systems for a sustainable approach. This approach must then be directly linked to disaster risk management and anticipatory action systems to ensure the systemic uptake of inputs from girls and boys in all their diversity. Donor support is needed to establish a co-design process, one that works with girls and boys in all their diversity, to create, test and roll out the tools created.


1 See: [www.weadapt.org/knowledge-base/y-adapt](http://www.weadapt.org/knowledge-base/y-adapt)

2 See: [www.educationcluster.net](http://www.educationcluster.net)

3 See: <https://gadrrres.net>

4 See: [www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future](http://www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future)

### Protection and education of girls and boys in all their diversity

Girls and boys in all their diversity face higher risks of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in emergencies, and represent a high portion of the population affected. Despite this, the links between child protection and anticipatory action are not being clearly made or documented ([IFRC 2021](#) ) . There are few practical examples of anticipatory action that address the specific needs of girls and boys in all their diversity, despite the clear need to do so and the lack of services available to them.


Some groups of girls and boys in all their diversity – such as adolescent girls, those connected to the streets, in labour, with disabilities, married or at risk of child, early or forced marriage, or at risk of recruitment to gangs and armed groups – have particular protection risks in emergencies that need to be prioritized, and climate-related and human-induced emergencies will intensify these risks. When designing anticipatory action systems, deliberate actions are needed to ensure the needs of girls and boys in all their diversity are recognized and their protection is ensured. This includes guaranteeing their continued access to protection and education services, and to the best possible quality, in safe and inclusive environments; understanding local laws; organizations having internal safeguarding systems in place; local coordination systems for their safe referral between agencies and government bodies; and evaluating planned anticipatory actions in ways that involve the meaningful participation and leadership of girls and boys in all their diversity.




A shift in thinking and approach is required to better integrate preventative, mitigative and responsive approaches to anticipatory action. For this, practitioners must be sensitized on the specific needs and concerns of girls and boys in all their diversity. Correspondingly, child protection, education and other sectoral practitioners must engage in anticipatory action processes to ensure that protection, gender and inclusion considerations are effectively integrated.


Entry points for such collaboration will only stem from a shared understanding of the impacts that forecast hazards have on girls and boys in all their diversity's survival, well-being and resilience, the intended impacts of contextually developed early actions on those risks, and clearly defined complementary roles and responsibilities between the involved stakeholders. And this can only be done by strengthening coordination, carrying out intersectional gender and diversity analysis, and ensuring the meaningful participation of, as well as accountability to, children themselves.

### Mitigating the risk of gender-based violence

Crises of all kinds increase the risk and incidence of gender-based violence, and force people to resort to negative coping strategies that affects girls and boys in all their diversity differently. These include child marriage, child

labour, violence towards and the exploitation of girls and boys in all their diversity. Furthermore, climate change creates chronic and acute stressors which exacerbate pre-existing risk factors for gender-based violence against women and girls (e.g., poverty, rigid gender roles, personal and community conflict). A recent study confirmed the association between climate-related events and child marriage, a prevalent form of gender-based violence; historical data of unexpectedly high or low levels of rainfall showed that a 10 per cent deviation in either direction is associated with a 1 per cent increase in levels of child marriage ([Girls Not Brides 2023](#) ) .

With some promising practices starting to emerge, anticipatory action offers an opportunity to prevent and mitigate gender-based violence and strengthen the capacity of women and girls, as well as men and boys, to better cope with recurring shocks and stresses ([Jay 2021](#) ) . In this way, it aligns to Inter-Agency Standing Committee *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action* ([IASC 2015](#) ) . The GBV Area of Responsibility Helpdesk guidance ([Jay 2021](#) ) outlines risk-mitigation measures that could be implemented by different organizations within their anticipatory action approaches. However, specific 'how to' guidance on integrating such measures systematically in anticipatory action frameworks and plans is still needed, given the distinct systems, processes and timelines of anticipatory action.

Improved access to education is one way to reduce the risk of gender-based violence. For example, this can delay early marriage; most girls drop out of school and then get married, not the other way around ([UN 2023](#) ) . Promoting a cross-sectoral approach to mitigating gender-based violence within anticipatory action systems – in this case, collaboration with the education sector (see Box 2) – will help to ensure that there is funding available for this, and that research systems and programmes in this sector address women's and girls' specific vulnerabilities to climate- and human-induced shocks and stressors.

## Box 2. Education as a key sector for protection, gender and inclusion in anticipatory action

A greater focus on anticipatory action within the education sector can reduce the impacts of forecastable humanitarian crises on education; it can also contribute to protective outcomes. Crucially, climate education can support and inspire the inclusive, gender-transformative participation of girls and boys in all their diversity in anticipatory action decisions and action, if aligned with wider anticipatory action systems.



## Key messages and recommendations

### 1. Protection, gender and inclusion must be integrated across all anticipatory action approaches to better respond to the rights, needs and priorities of girls and boys in all their diversity, alongside marginalized groups.

Government ministries – including those for disaster risk management, environment, climate change, meteorology, civil protection, women and girls, social affairs, gender and education – should:

- recognize the importance of protection, gender and inclusion in anticipatory action and integrate this across climate and disaster risk reduction policies, plans and actions at all levels, including in National Adaptation Plans
- increase the availability of socio-demographic data disaggregated by sex, age and disability to inform anticipatory action approaches across sectors and levels
- develop and utilize multi-risk assessments, differential vulnerability assessments, gender and diversity analysis
- fund and implement inclusive early warning systems that are age-, gender- and disability-responsive, and are accessible to all community members, and to the education and protection sectors.

**"When the 'Forecast Based Early Action' project began, I had the opportunity to join many consultations and interviews. After observing and participating in these activities, as a young woman, I realized that we should be better represented. Girls and young women can also take part in early action planning and monitoring processes. I'd like to see more attention for gender-related issues, like menstrual health and hygiene. And to put a stop to more abuse. I'm also a part of the project's facilitating group, so I get to interact with the local children's club, 'Champions of Change'. Even though they are still very young, they are full of energy and collaborate with us on initiatives."**

- Phuc, a 24-year-old from Thanh commune, Hường Hóa, Quảng Trị, Viet Nam. © Plan International Vietnam

Practitioners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) should:

- ensure child protection, gender-based-violence and education practitioners and frontline staff understand and contribute to anticipatory action
- develop practical tools and guidance for anticipatory action, child protection and gender-based violence risk mitigation, and ensure these align with existing tools (e.g., the GBV Pocket Guide) and relevant frameworks
- increase the piloting and documentation of integrating child protection, protection against violence, inclusion and education in anticipatory action programmes, and build the evidence base.

Humanitarian and development donors should:

- jointly invest in flexible, long-term financing to enable the conceptualization, development, piloting and dissemination of anticipatory action approaches, guidance and tools that advance child protection, protection against violence, inclusion and education in anticipatory action.

Donors that fund anticipatory action should:

- ensure a greater focus on the implementation and documentation of anticipatory action approaches related to protection, gender and inclusion.





**2. Uphold and promote the right of girls and boys in all their diversity to participate in anticipatory action decision-making and actions at all levels.**

Government ministries should promote the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of girls and boys in all their diversity in anticipatory action. This could include measures to:

- address and reduce age-, gender- and disability-specific barriers to the participation of girls and boys in all their diversity in the design, implementation and monitoring of anticipatory action programmes
- ensure girls and boys in all their diversity are supported with skills, knowledge, resources and finance to meaningfully participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of anticipatory action programmes, including in displacement, fragile and conflict-affected settings

Government ministries should also create safe spaces for girls and boys in all their diversity, to engage meaningfully in anticipatory action decision-making processes at all levels, including by:

- respecting and valuing their views and recommendations
- developing and implementing safeguarding mechanisms for their safe engagement
- budgeting for translation and interpretation services, data packages and honorariums/remuneration for their participation
- supporting them in all their diversity with any issues they face related to passports, travel visas and other travel restrictions
- creating opportunities for them to engage in anticipatory action processes through formal and informal channels, such as schools, clubs and social media
- supporting access to formal spaces for anticipatory action at local, regional, national and global decision-making forums
- reduce the 'digital divide' and improve electricity, internet and computer access to enable them to join online anticipatory action spaces.

Practitioners, NGOs and CSOs should:

- ensure anticipatory action data is disaggregated by, as a minimum, sex, gender, age and disability, to inform anticipatory action protocols that strengthen the resilience of girls and boys in all their diversity
- develop and implement practical, educational tools and resources to support and inspire girls and boys in all their diversity to participate in anticipatory action design, decisions and implementation, building on and aligning to existing climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction tools and participation resources
- ensure national and local anticipatory action protocols and policies are informed by girls and boys in all their diversity and respond to their specific needs, with actions tailored and implemented accordingly.

**3. Improve cross-sectoral collaboration and invest in effective coordination mechanisms for anticipatory action, to ensure that all community members – including girls and boys in all their diversity and marginalized groups – have continuous access to basic services for protection and education.**

All stakeholders – including government ministries, agencies, CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, academia and scientists – should:

- build multi-sectoral coordination and response systems across the anticipatory action community and the protection, gender, inclusion and education communities in which practitioners on all sides can learn from each other and collaborate in the identification of risks and the development, implementation and monitoring of triggers and anticipatory actions
- coordinate efforts to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning on protection, gender and inclusion in anticipatory action.

## Further information

This briefing represents the views of the Anticipation Hub's Working Group on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Anticipatory Action. For more information, visit: [www.anticipation-hub.org/exchange/working-groups/wg-on-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-anticipatory-action](http://www.anticipation-hub.org/exchange/working-groups/wg-on-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-anticipatory-action)

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