How anticipatory action makes a difference

What is anticipatory action?

Anticipatory action is an innovative way to minimize the loss and damage-caused by different hazards, including those being exacerbated by climate change. The Anticipation Hub describes anticipatory action as "a set of actions taken to prevent or mitigate potential disaster impacts before a shock, or before acute impacts are felt. The actions are carried out in anticipation of a hazard impact and based on a prediction of how the event will unfold" **(IFRC 2020).**

Various organizations implement and promote anticipatory action around the world, including the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the Start Network, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Anticipatory action takes different forms and happens on a range of scales, depending on the mandate, the context, the hazard that people are facing, and the available forecasts. There are common parameters, however:

- the actions to be taken, and the roles of each stakeholder, are agreed in advance

- actions are based on forecasts of when and where a hazard will occur

- there is pre-agreed financing in place to allow these actions to be implemented.

Anticipatory action should not be seen as a substitute for longer-term investment in disaster risk reduction; instead, it aims to strengthen people's capacity to manage risks.

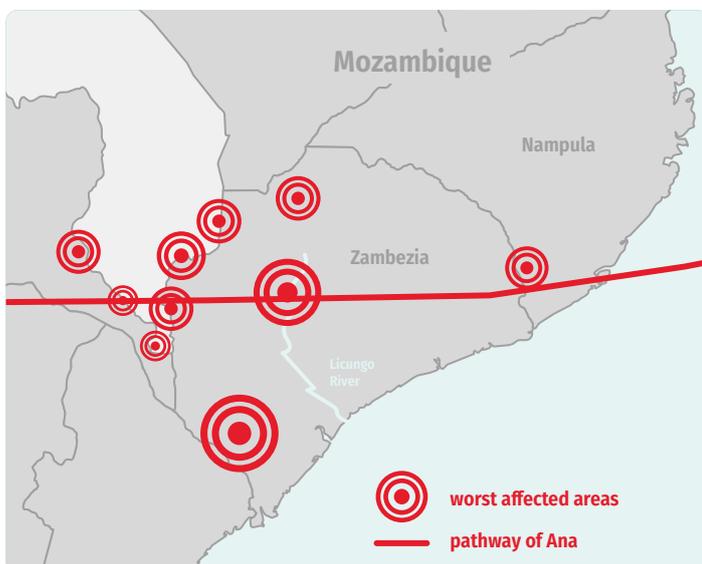## Acting early to protect people from floods in Mozambique

On 16 January 2022, Météo-France, the Indian Ocean Regional Intervention Platformand Mozambique's Instituto Nacional de Meteorologia issued an alert that a tropical storm was forming in the Indian Ocean, and due to head west towards Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique. Tropical Storm Ana hit Nampula Province in northern Mozambique eight days later (24 January). The storm brought heavy rainfall to Nampula and Zambezia provinces, causing water levels to rise rapidly in the Licungo River.

The trigger level for anticipatory action - water at 8.34m on the Licungo River, as set out in Mozambique's **Early Action Protocol (EAP) for Floods** - was reached on 25 January. On 26 January, the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) allocated 112,238 Swiss francs (107,140 euros) from its Forecast-based Action by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (FbA by the DREF) financing mechanism. Water levels peaked around two days later (27-28 January).

This funding enabled the Mozambique Red Cross Society to implement the actions set out in its EAP. Staff and volunteers immediately began to support 850 households (around 4,250 people) in the Licungo basin. These actions, targeted at the people predicted to be most affected, included:

- disseminating early warning messages to at-risk communities about the rising water levels

- providing emergency supplies including mosquito nets, mugs, buckets, tablets for water purification, and vacuum plastic bags to protect personal documents.

Figure 1. Map of Mozambique

worst affected areas

pathway of Ana

Box 1. Mozambique's EAP for Floods

This protocol sets out the actions to be taken ahead of forecast floods. It was finalized in 2020 as part of a forecast-based financing project implemented by the Mozambique Red Cross Society, with support from the German Red Cross. The project established a series of forecast-based triggers for four river basins in Mozambique, including the Licungo. These are based on critical water levels for flood magnitudes with a 1-in-5-year return period.

Sources: OCHA 2022; WFP 2022

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There is growing evidence that **anticipatory action saves lives and livelihoods (WFP 2020).** For example, in Bangladesh in 2017 and 2020, recipients of anticipatory cash were more likely to evacuate their families and livestock before floods, and less likely to borrow money to cope with the impacts **(BDRCS 2021a; Pople et al. 2021; Gros et al. 2019).** Due to early warnings, they were also able to safeguard essential equipment such as tools, fishing equipment and pumps.

In 2019/2020, vulnerable herder households suffering extreme winter conditions (dzud) in Mongolia received unconditional cash and animal-care kits from the Mongolia Red Cross Society and FAO. Households served by the Mongolia Red Cross Society were 17 per cent less likely to sell their valuable assets, and recipients of FAO packages were 43 per cent less likely (FAO and IFRC, forthcoming). Actions during the 2017/18 dzud saw households that received anticipatory assistance lose 50 per cent fewer horses than comparison households **(Gros et al. 2020).**

An increasing number of studies show that **anticipatory action helps to preserve people's dignity.** In Senegal in 2019, during a six-month anticipatory action project to support communities at risk from drought, the number of households reporting going a whole day without eating reduced by 19 per cent **(Start Network 2020).** During Cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh in 2020, beneficiaries of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's anticipatory actions reported better conditions at evacuation shelters, including increased access to water (+20 per cent), hand sanitizer and COVID-19 masks (+29 per cent) and light (+13 per cent) **(BDRCS 2021b).** These improvements occurred due to efforts to adapt anticipatory action plans in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is also evidence that **anticipatory action provides value for money.** In Ethiopia, for every pound (GBP) that the Start Network spent on early actions ahead of drought, recipients obtained an average of 2.58 pounds in benefits, in terms of maintained income and the health and stock of their livestock, compared to those only benefitting from the standard humanitarian response **(Atkinson 2018).** Similarly, FAO estimates that for every US dollar spent on cash and animal care kits prior to the 2017/18 dzud in Mongolia, recipients received benefits worth 7 US dollars **(FAO 2018).**

Box 2. About the Anticipation Hub

The Anticipation Hub is a platform to facilitate knowledge exchange, learning, guidance and advocacy around anticipatory action. It is hosted by the German Red Cross in cooperation with the IFRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, with funding from Germany's Federal Foreign Office. Its evidence database collates empirical evidence about the impacts of anticipatory action, which is used to inform policy and demonstrate how this approach makes a difference to vulnerable people. See: www.anticipation-hub.org/experience/evidence-database/evidence-list

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