

10th Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action

Lessons from anticipatory action: are we getting it right?

6-8 December 2022, Berlin and online

Concept note

Date and location

6-8 December 2022 in Berlin, Germany, and online.

The event

The **10th Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action** will be hosted by the Anticipation Hub, a joint initiative of the German Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. It will be held as a hybrid event, with an in-person conference and live studio in Berlin, as well as virtual sessions involving participants from around the world, under the theme **‘Lessons from anticipatory action: are we getting it right?’**.

The event is being organized in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Start Network and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with support from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Background

What if we invest in protecting people from the impacts of hazards, rather than waiting for the worst to happen? That’s the **guiding principle of anticipatory action**, a disaster risk management approach that more and more agencies and governments around the world are using to reduce the impacts of climate-related, human-induced and other hazards on vulnerable people.

The [G7 defines anticipatory action](#) as “acting ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. This requires pre-agreed plans that identify partners and activities, reliable early warning information, and pre-agreed financing, released predictably and rapidly when an agreed trigger-point is reached.” It represents a fundamental shift in how we approach crises – from reactive to proactive – and has gained significant momentum in recent years. To date, around 70 countries have, with support from members of the Anticipatory Action Task Force,¹ engaged in the planning and implementation of anticipatory action processes.

¹ These include the Red Cross Red Crescent network (IFRC and many National Societies), FAO, WFP, OCHA and the Start Network.

In 2014, the German Red Cross, the IFRC, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and WFP, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office, initiated the **first Global Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action**² to capture the lessons from the pioneering first projects and share ideas on how to move anticipatory action forward. Since then, the event has become established as an annual space for exchange and learning around this subject.

Global Dialogue Platforms gather diverse actors in this field – senior managers, practitioners, scientists and experts, drawn from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, governments, academia, the private sector and the financial sector – from around the world. In 2021, the [virtual edition](#) attracted 1,120 participants from 131 countries. This year, **it will be held as a hybrid event.**

Topics

Considering the growing wealth of lessons, outcomes, experience and evidence from more than eight years of implementing anticipatory action, the 10th Global Dialogue Platform will allow everyone with experience, expertise or an interest in anticipatory action to convene, reflect on what we have learned so far, and consider where we need to go next. It will be a chance to ask: are we getting it right? And what is the way forward? To answer these questions, the focus topics this year are as follows.

1. Listening to the science, and learning from the evidence, to improve practice

A diverse body of science, evidence and experience has been gathered in the eight years since the first Global Dialogue Platform. How do these guide us in shaping anticipatory action in the future? What kind of feedback have we heard from the people who anticipatory action has reached – and those it has not reached? Where are there examples of failure and what can we learn from these? What do we still not know? What are the most urgent areas to focus on, in terms of specific hazards and/or contexts to support the most vulnerable people? What role can anticipatory action play in protracted crises, and the existing humanitarian programmes that seek to address these?

The evidence to date also highlights some ongoing challenges.

- **Short activation windows.** These can delay activations when combined with complicated access and logistics, and strained local capacity – with serious impacts for those in need.
- **Data availability for risk analyses and trigger development.** The triggers that initiate anticipatory action do not always catch extreme events reliably, and the strong focus on data can make it difficult for local actors to truly own these triggers. How much data does anticipatory action really need?
- **The challenge of activations.** There are many frameworks and plans for anticipatory action that are ready to be activated, but activation rates are low. Given the accelerating rate of climate change, and the fact that vulnerability is increasing in many places due to compound risks, which shocks – of which type and magnitude – should anticipatory action address?
- **Typhoons, cyclones and tropical storms.** In the past two years, these have often rapidly intensified in the 24 hours before landfall. As a result, triggers with lead

² Initially called the Dialogue Platform on Forecast-based Financing.

times of 72 hours are not always appropriate. Can we adjust forecasts to ‘catch’ these events more consistently? If not, which early actions beyond evacuations – which are already done in most countries – are feasible in the last 24 hours?

- **The need for localization.** How can locally led approaches to anticipatory action strengthen the drive for implementation on a larger scale? How can evidence and learning be used to improve accountability to the people targeted by anticipatory action?
- **Increased flexibility.** Implementing anticipatory action depends on pre-agreed triggers and predefined actions. These allow for quick implementation, but financing structures limit the flexibility of the actions undertaken. How can we make anticipatory action more flexible, so that it can be adapted to unforeseen circumstances during activations?
- **Compounding shocks.** Plans and frameworks for anticipatory action often have strict trigger-based rules, which mean that funds cannot be allocated to other, emerging needs. But in places where the humanitarian situation is complex, and the needs for existing responses are already high, a strict decision-making framework with scientific and technical triggers can be frustrating and perceived as being detached from reality. Developing anticipatory action approaches that address compounding shocks remains a huge challenge.

2. Investment and finance to build and implement systems for anticipatory action

Since the first Global Dialogue Platform, activations have progressed from small-scale pilots covering a few communities to more flexible activations reaching thousands of people. Yet more people still need to be reached. This requires not only more funds, but also investments in distribution channels and local capacities for implementation. Are the available resources going where they are needed – and when they are needed – to protect the people most at risk? How can we increase the resources available?

The recent [Finance for Early Action](#) report by the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) concluded that the largest amounts of humanitarian funding still go towards financing for unplanned crisis responses, with significantly less going to pre-arranged finance – and very small amounts to anticipatory action and early action. While there are indications that the overall amounts for anticipatory action are growing, these are nowhere near the scale required to respond to the increasing frequency and severity of hazards.

The question of financing, and the nexus – or lack of – between the humanitarian, development and climate sectors, is critical to the future of anticipatory action. This disconnect – between the resources being provided and what is required – can at least partly be attributed to the programming and financing silos that exist between these sectors, as framed in chapter 7 of the IFRC’s [World Disasters Report](#) (2020, p.310): “International aid architecture and domestic structures are characterized by siloed frameworks, institutions and technical communities of practice. Although the soft boundaries between categories of aid should enable flexibility and collaboration, all too often financing operates in fragmented silos.” How can the anticipatory action community contribute to breaking down these silos? Answering this question – and including both implementing and donor countries in the conversation – will help to build the systems needed to scale up anticipatory action.

3. Scaling up anticipatory action: limits and possibilities

Experience on the ground is essential for scaling up anticipatory action. Multistakeholder plans (e.g., feasibility studies, common triggers, and national frameworks in which all actors have clear roles and responsibilities) can help to mainstream this approach and increase its scale. What are the key ingredients, based on the experiences of the organizations and countries that are already seeing success? And what are the main barriers for those just starting out?

Furthermore, the many global and regional initiatives for anticipatory action launched in recent years have helped to increase the knowledge base about, and commitment and investment to this approach. Examples include advocacy efforts through partnerships (e.g., the Anticipation Hub, REAP, the Anticipatory Action Task Force), government statements (e.g., the G7 Foreign Ministers' [Statement on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance](#)), complementary initiatives (e.g., the UN's [Early Warning For All initiative](#)) and regional frameworks (e.g., the [ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management](#)). What are we learning from these, and what needs to happen to ensure that these initiatives actually scale up anticipatory action?

We know that anticipatory action helps to protect longer-term gains in development, adaptation and resilience from the immediate impacts of a shock, while also facilitating emergency response and recovery phases. There are many ongoing efforts to integrate anticipatory action within national and governmental disaster risk management frameworks. What possibilities – and impossibilities – can anticipatory action offer for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation? How can anticipatory action be integrated into existing national disaster risk management systems? How can early warning systems be better connected to anticipatory action to further scale up this approach?

Furthermore, there remains a goal to increase local ownership and engagement, and to implement locally led systems at larger scales. What opportunities are there to increase local leadership and ownership of anticipatory action? How can locally led initiatives complement larger-scale systems, and vice versa?

Partners



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