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Enabling Anticipatory Action at Scale to Address the Challenge of the Climate Crisis

Policy Brief for G7 Countries

By the Anticipatory Action Task Force (AATF)

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The climate crisis is a humanitarian crisis

Climate change is no longer a distant threat. Extreme weather and climate events such as storms, heatwaves, droughts, flooding and wildfires, have become more frequent and intense¹. They are now the greatest risk factor for human suffering alongside armed conflicts. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) estimates that the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance due to extreme weather events could rise from 108 million to over 200 million annually².

Taking an anticipatory approach is one way to reduce humanitarian needs and minimize and avert loss and damage caused by climate change. Anticipatory action aims to help people before an impending hazard has occurred and is based on a prediction of how the event will unfold. Anticipatory action can reduce the scale and severity of a potential crisis, and possibly avert it.

The impact of anticipatory action

The rationale for increasing investment in anticipatory action is becoming increasingly clear: A growing bank of evidence shows that these approaches are a more effective, cost-efficient and provide a dignified way to manage risks before they become humanitarian disasters³. For example, in Mongolia, livestock keepers who received animal care kits and cash before severe winter cold saw fewer of their animals die⁴. In Bangladesh, at-risk communities who received anticipatory cash ahead of flooding were more likely to evacuate and save livestock, essential agricultural and fishing equipment, and were less likely to borrow money to cope with the aftermath of a flood⁵. In Ethiopia, anticipatory actions enabled schools to remain open within the context of a drought; cash and access to water allowed families, who would have otherwise been forced to migrate, to keep their children in school and better withstand the ensuing socioeconomic impact. Anticipatory action provides value for money. In Mongolia, for every 1 USD invested in an anticipatory action project, families

¹IPCC (2021). Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

² IFRC (2019). Cost of Doing Nothing Report: <https://oldmedia.ifrc.org/ifrc/the-cost-of-doing-nothing/>

³ WFP (2020). The Evidence Base on Anticipatory Action: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/evidence-base-anticipatory-action>

⁴ Gros, C. et al (2020). The effectiveness of forecast-based humanitarian assistance in anticipation of extreme winters: Evidence from an intervention for vulnerable herders in Mongolia. Disasters:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/disa.12467> & FAO (2018) Mongolia: Impact of early warning early action. Protecting the livelihoods of herders from a dzud winter: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/1161388/>

⁵ Pople et al (2021). Anticipatory cash transfers in climate disaster response:

<https://www.disasterprotection.org/publications-centre/anticipatory-cash-transfers-in-climate-disaster-response>

Gros, C. et al (2019). Household-level effects of providing forecast-based cash in anticipation of extreme weather events: Quasi-experimental evidence from humanitarian interventions in the 2017 floods in Bangladesh, International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, Volume 41 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101275>.

BDRCS (2021). Evaluation of the Flood Early Action Protocol (EAP): Quantitative Impact Assessment of the 2020 EAP Activation

WFP (2021). Acting Before a Flood to Protect the Most Vulnerable: An Independent Review of WFP's Anticipatory Cash Transfers in Bangladesh: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/acting-flood-protect-most-vulnerable-independent-review-wfps-anticipatory-cash>

counted benefits worth 7 USD⁶. The World Bank estimates that upgrading early warning systems to support early action capacity in all developing countries can save an average of 23,000 lives per year and avoid losses worth between USD 300 million and USD 2 billion per year⁷. Finally, anticipatory action helps to preserve people's dignity as this approach does not wait for human suffering to unfold for humanitarian actions to be implemented. In Senegal in 2019, the number of households reporting going a whole day without eating reduced by 19% during a six month anticipatory project for drought⁸.

This compelling evidence has helped to create significant political momentum to scale up anticipatory action in recent years, including UN Resolutions (A/RES/69/243, E/RES/2017/14, and A/RES/74/218 and A/RES/76/124), the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crisis Compact⁹, the DG ECHO Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness¹⁰, the EU Adaptation Strategy¹¹, and the US PREPARE Initiative¹², which all call to strengthen anticipatory action in relevant policies and instruments. At the high level event on anticipatory action in September 2021, co-hosted by the United Nations, Germany and the UK, more than 75 governments and 60 aid agencies, international financial institutions, and private-sector companies committed to acting early and many donors made new pledges of support for anticipatory action¹³.

A call for G7 countries to scale-up anticipatory action

Despite these encouraging developments, we are still not seeing the scale-up of anticipatory action at the required pace. Anticipatory finance continues to represent a minimum share of total humanitarian finance¹⁴; a very small percentage of humanitarian financing is pre-arranged, available when warnings materialize and used in an anticipatory manner. With the climate changing at an alarming rate, concerted efforts are needed to scale-up anticipatory action¹⁵.

G7 countries have already been playing a key role in contributing to pooled funds which enable anticipatory action. G7 countries can continue to play a leadership role in mobilizing the financial and technical resources and encouraging the collaborations and policies that are needed to make anticipatory action a core element of the humanitarian system and an integral part of disaster risk management plans, national adaptation plans (NAPs) and nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

⁶FAO (2018). Mongolia: Impact of early warning early action. Protecting the livelihoods of herders from a dzud winter: <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/1161388/>

⁷Hallegratte, S (2012) A Cost-Effective Solution to Reduce Disaster Losses in Developing Countries: Hydro-Meteorological Services, Early Warning and Evacuation. © World Bank: <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/1813-9450-6058>

⁸Start Network (2020) ARC Replica Payout Internal Evaluation: <https://startnetwork.org/resource/arc-replica-payout-senegal-2020-internal-evaluation>

⁹G7 Humanitarian Prevention and Humanitarian Crisis Compact(2021):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communiqué/g7-famine-prevention-and-humanitarian-crises-compact>

¹⁰ECHO (2021). DG ECHO Guidance Note: Disaster Preparedness:

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/system/files/2021-04/dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness.pdf

¹¹EU (2021). Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:82:FIN>

¹²USAID (2021). Robust Targets to Advance President Biden's PREPARE Climate Initiative:

<https://www.usaid.gov/climate/adaptation/prepare-initiative>

¹³GFPO (2021). Statement by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the High-Level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action: [Statement by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the High-Level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action - Federal Foreign Office \(auswaertiges-amt.de\)](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/statement-by-foreign-minister-heiko-maas-at-the-high-level-humanitarian-event-on-anticipatory-action-2021-09-23)

¹⁴Weingärtner, L and Spencer, A (2019). Paper 2: Analysing gaps in the humanitarian and disaster risk financing landscape. ODI and START Network:

<https://startnetwork.org/resource/financial-flows-mapping-paper-2>

¹⁵IPCC (2022). The Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report:

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/>

Key policy ask #1: G7 countries should provide funds to build anticipatory action systems

G7 countries should consider: i) allowing existing and new humanitarian funding to be used in a flexible and anticipatory manner; ii) ensuring that climate finance can support anticipatory action approaches; and iv) allocating funding with the aim of strengthening locally-led anticipatory humanitarian action.

In order to protect more people from disasters and crises, funding is required to build anticipatory action systems. This involves building anticipatory action expertise, early warning systems and the operational processes to implement anticipatory programming.

To ensure these anticipatory systems are able to trigger anticipatory financing, additional investments are needed to develop predictable, and flexible financing mechanisms. While more and more hazards are predictable, a minimum share of humanitarian funding is currently available for anticipatory humanitarian action¹⁶. When funding is available, it is most often limited to single-agency, small-scale projects. Existing pooled funds are the ideal channel to increase funding for anticipatory action that is coordinated, timely, and at scale. G7 countries should consider increasing their contributions to instruments such as Start Network's Start Funds and Start Ready, FbA by the DREF, CERF and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs).

G7 countries could use their leverage to expedite the work under way to reform global climate finance processes and disaster risk financing architecture so that they better support anticipatory action system development which complements and protects longer-term adaptation efforts. This could involve increasing the share of financing that is channeled to local actors and implementing agencies on the ground, easing funding accreditation processes, speeding up disbursement processes and supporting actors in accessing funds. The Santiago Network for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which aims to catalyze technical assistance on loss and damage, could be one entry point to support anticipatory action system building and could contribute to the ambitions set out in the Glasgow Climate Pact concerning loss and damage.

Finally, to increase the sustainability of anticipatory action approaches and to strengthen the resilience of at-risk people who have the greatest vested interest in acting early as they face the challenges of the climate crisis first-hand, funding should be allocated with the aim to strengthen locally-led anticipatory action¹⁷. G7 countries should consider increasing their support to existing instruments that allow direct access to financing to local NGOs.

¹⁶ Weingärtner, L and Spencer, A (2019). *Paper 2: Analysing gaps in the humanitarian and disaster risk financing landscape*. ODI and START Network: <https://startnetwork.org/resource/financial-flows-mapping-paper-2>

¹⁷ Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (2020). Exploring the feasibility of SEADRIF in the Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies: <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/Documents/Reports/SEADRIF-Feasibility-Study-Philippines-and-Myanmar-RC-March2020.pdf>

Key policy ask #2: G7 countries should support the mainstreaming of anticipatory action approaches into national disaster risk management plans and climate change adaptation frameworks

G7 countries should consider: i) advocating for and supporting the uptake of anticipatory action approaches by national governments; and ii) supporting global efforts which support the uptake of anticipatory action by governments.

In order for anticipatory action to be truly sustainable, early warning systems and innovative financing mechanisms need to be nationally owned and embedded in national and local disaster risk management policies, laws, and processes. The integration of anticipatory action systems into existing disaster risk management structures and climate adaptation frameworks (e.g. NAPs, NDCs) is the best way to complement existing efforts to reach larger parts of the population and make sure anticipatory action becomes “business as usual”. Moreover, updating national and local disaster risk management strategies to include anticipatory action, will support national government efforts to achieve Target E of the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction¹⁸.

G7 countries should support key global efforts to scale up anticipatory action through cross-organisational knowledge exchange, evidence-based learnings, the development of tools, guidance material and innovation through platforms like the Anticipation Hub, the InsuResilience Global Partnership, Start Network’s FOREWARN, REAP and the Centre for Humanitarian Data.

The Anticipatory Action Task Force (AATF)

The Anticipatory Action Task Force (AATF) brings together the key agencies implementing anticipatory action on the ground. The AATF consists of: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Start Network, The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP), The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The mission of the AATF is to promote the use of anticipatory humanitarian action to risks¹⁹ and supports evidence-based policies that make anticipatory action possible. The AATF draws on a wealth of experience from implementing anticipatory action initiatives in over 60 countries.

¹⁸ Target E is “Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020”; <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

¹⁹ Anticipatory Action Task Force (AATF) Terms of Reference https://www.anticipation-hub.org/Documents/Other/Anticipatory_Action_Task_Force_ToR_JAN_2021.pdf