

Report

Review of the German Federal Foreign Office's approach to anticipatory humanitarian action

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	2
List of Tables	3
List of Abbreviations	3
Acknowledgments	3
1 Executive Summary	4
2 Introduction	11
3 Methodology and Process	12
4 Findings and Assessments According to the Review Criteria	14
4.1 Relevance	14
4.2 Effectiveness	19
4.3 Efficiency	27
4.4 Impact / Long-term Effects	30
4.5 Coordination	36
5 Conclusions and Recommendations	41
5.1 Policy and Strategy	41
5.2 Processes and Projects	46
5.3 Cooperation and Learning	48
5.4 Funding	50
5.5 Networking	52
6 Literature and reviewed documents	53
7 Annex	
7.1 Terms of Reference	
7.2 Theory of Change	
7.3 Evaluation Matrix	
7.4 Interview Guideline: national and international stakeholders	
7.5 Interview Guideline: GFFO representatives	
7.6 List of Interview Partners	
7.7 Online Survey Report	
7.8 Case Study Report	
7.9 Timetable of the Review	

List of Figures

Figure 1: Question 3a: "In general: Does the GFFO's approach to anticipatory humanitarian action reflect the needs in the humanitarian system?" (Number of respondents)	15
Figure 2: Question 10: "Do you agree: Anticipatory humanitarian action is weakening local and national DRR and community based early warning structures." (Number of respondents)	24

List of Tables

Table 1: Question 3a.....	15
Table 2: Question 10.....	24

List of Abbreviations

A-A	Anticipatory (humanitarian) Action
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (“Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit”)
CERF	OCHA’s Central Emergency Response Fund
COHAFA	Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
DREF	IFRC’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EAP	Early Action Protocol
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FbA	Forecast-based Action
FbF	Forecast-based Financing
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office
GRC	German Red Cross
IDA	International Development Association (World Bank Group)
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International non-governmental Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RCRC	International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SÜH	Structural transitional aid (“Strukturbildende Übergangshilfe”)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Programme

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1 Executive Summary

Many humanitarian crises arise from disasters that can be predicted and whose humanitarian impacts are foreseeable. Since the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa, humanitarian actors have continuously worked to expand and improve the planning, funding and implementation of anticipatory humanitarian action, in addition to reactive humanitarian action. In recent years, the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) has become one of the main actors in this field and has increased its support for Forecast-based Financing (FbF) from € 1.8 million in 2014 to € 30.4 million to develop anticipatory risk finance mechanisms and anticipatory humanitarian action. Germany allocates some of its funding to pooled funds, namely the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Start Network's Start Fund. Implementing partners who receive direct financing from the GFFO include the German Red Cross and the NGO *Welthungerhilfe*. In September 2021, Germany committed to allocating at least 5 % of its humanitarian funding to anticipatory humanitarian action by 2023, and more specifically to double its contributions in 2022, and to allocate € 100 million in 2023.

However, there is no fixed and internationally recognized definition of anticipatory (humanitarian) action (further referred to as A-A) – neither what counts as an 'action' nor the meaning of the term itself. The GFFO sees A-A within the spectrum of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and describes it as humanitarian actions that include each of the following criteria: Actions that 1) are taken in the context of a specific forecastable hazard (with available data); 2) start before the impacts of the hazard are felt or fully unfold; 3) are carried out when a forecast reaches predefined triggers and thresholds of probability, which are pre-agreed upon in specific contingency plans; and 4) respond to a hazard with an outsized impact – i.e., the impacts of incidents that are out of the ordinary, only occur every 5-10 years and are not considered regular or seasonal incidents. This distinction serves two main purposes: On the one hand, those dimensions differentiate A-A from longer-term resilience building, development efforts and other DRR measures that occur on a regular basis. On the other, it sets A-A apart from rapid response measures that aim to react as soon as possible after a hazard struck.

The subject of this review is the German approach to anticipatory humanitarian action and its strategic objective to contribute to a paradigm shift within the humanitarian system. The review has been carried out by FAKT Consult for Management, Training and Technologies on behalf of the GFFO Division S07 (formerly S08, Division for Humanitarian Assistance – Policy, International Organizations, Multilateral Coordination). The review began in August 2021 and ends with this final review report in February 2022.

The research team used a mix of methods for data collection and analysis to ensure a comprehensive approach to processing all available information: this included literature/document review, interviews with 33 GFFO-internal and international experts, three group discussions with the GFFO, online-surveys (with 52 analyzed responses), budget analysis and efficiency assessments, as well as remote country case studies in Bangladesh, Madagascar and Nepal (for

which the research team conducted 12 interviews with experts and received 31 responses to the case study online survey).

Findings and Assessments According to the Review Criteria

Relevance: A-A is a relevant approach. Intuitively, all actors are generally in favor of A-A. However, policymakers need to better understand and partially improve the practical steps necessary for its implementation. The GFFO plays an important role in financially supporting implementing actors who further this approach and in explaining the A-A approach to other donor countries.

The strength of A-A is that its inherent logic is shared by all actors. Following the humanitarian imperative, the humanitarian community is obliged to act if there is a possibility of mitigating or preventing human suffering, destruction and livelihood disruption. Anticipatory action represents an additional tool to aid the humanitarian sector in these endeavors. In practice, A-A implementation functions well in cases with well-established structures, but there are still many gaps (i.e., poor organizational capacity and low capacity of the A-A environment) to overcome before going ahead with a full scale-up. Based on the case studies, the research team identified the following aspects that could help bridge these gaps:

- a) Pre-agreed plans: encourage a “lighter” and faster process to developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Early Action Protocols (EAPs) or Anticipatory Action Frameworks, including amending already-existing frameworks;
- b) Thresholds and triggers: invest in improving the reliability of early warning systems with agreed-upon thresholds and trigger mechanisms;
- c) Organizational capacity: strengthen existing structures through dedicated funding for local capacity building and in line with the goal to support the Grand Bargain’s localization, rather than inventing new structures;
- d) Capacity of the A-A environment: systematically integrate A-A into existing national DRR and development funding strategies;
- e) A-A integration in national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policies: link new A-A to existing national DRM activities and better understand the local opportunities and limitations.

The GFFO’s design of the anticipatory approach was suitable and adequate over the past years: piloting the approach in multiple countries, integrating it into international funds and strongly advocating for its implementation was helpful and thus relevant.

Effectiveness: The approach is effective.

Objective 1, assuming a leadership role in making the humanitarian system more anticipatory overall, has been fully achieved. This assessment is based on feedback from international external experts and the fact that Germany is the leading donor with regard to A-A.

Objective 2, convincing more actors to get involved in anticipatory action, has been partly achieved. Within the humanitarian assistance community, a clear trend toward more A-A is noticeable. However, in financial terms, investments in A-A are still limited: both on an international level and in Germany (at least to date), less than 1.5 % of the overall budget for humanitarian assistance is allocated toward anticipatory measures.

Objective 3, expanding A-A to more contexts, has also been partly achieved. The A-A approach began with actions ahead of sudden-onset disasters, such as cyclones and floods. Since then, the approach has also been tested in slow-onset disasters like droughts, and discussions on applying it to fragile and conflict contexts are currently ongoing. Despite these efforts, the expansion of A-A remains limited: the time has come for scaling up A-A. To make it successful, Germany should shift from aiming to kick-off more pilots toward investing more in building an evidence baseline: building a momentum must be accompanied by continuous improvement of the approach by expanding on lessons learned. The GFFO should thus provide time and resources for critical self-reflection of all actors involved.

To allow for a continuation of a balanced approach between financing early actions and capacity building, the GFFO could further link its funding with other actors. For this, methods and strategies from partner donor countries, such as exploring opportunities to use development funding (like Sweden) or engaging more closely with research and advocacy institutes (like the United Kingdom), can serve as inspiration.

International experts emphasize the drawbacks if thresholds that trigger A-A are not well-balanced: if they are too low, A-A becomes a standard procedure in recurring events like annual monsoon floods in Asia or seasonal droughts in the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa and eastern Africa. If thresholds are overly high, however, activations occur too seldom to build up competence, and the transaction costs to maintain the system and remain vigilant become exorbitant.

An additional challenge presents itself if the A-A scale-up is too dependent on the GFFO's engagement and leadership. Without fostering greater responsibility sharing, the strengths of the A-A approach could be reduced. To avoid this, the GFFO should continue to involve more actors and invite them to play a crucial role in A-A, since being a "too effective" leader might not be sustainable in the long-term. At the same time, the number of people within the GFFO working on A-A is impressively low for the current amount of funding and projects, which is set to increase more in the coming years alongside the GFFO's growing ambition to contribute to a paradigm shift and further expand the approach.

The **efficiency** of the A-A approach is highly dependent on the context in which the measures are implemented. Existing efficiency studies which focus on specific regions and hazards conclude that the A-A approach is efficient. However, the review team would like to emphasize that this verified efficiency cannot be generalized to all contexts in which A-A projects are currently being implemented. There are convincing examples of efficiency in countries that already have well-established relief infrastructure (e.g., Bangladesh), which can thus integrate

the approach more easily into national DRR strategies. In other cases, the approach seems less efficient. For example, if new structures and mechanisms need to be built to implement A-A projects but are not taken up by national or local DRR structures or development cooperation programs and used after the A-A project ends, this can lead to inefficiencies in the A-A approach. The case studies in this review showed that Madagascar might be an example of such a context. However, donors should not stop funding A-A programs in Madagascar, but rather consider possibilities to connect their investments for developing A-A more closely with evolving DRR structures.

These challenges should not prevent donors from further investing in (scaling up) A-A. Impact studies in the field of development cooperation and traditional humanitarian action show that in complex situations, attributing impact to concrete actions is difficult. In many cases, very simple and straightforward causal relationships can be proven, but more complex relations cannot be established. Therefore, it makes sense to invest in A-A measures where efficiency is plausible with regard to specific criteria such as a supporting context – e.g., well-established infrastructures.

In addition, efficiency is more likely to materialize if humanitarian and development actors improve their collaboration both internationally and locally to avoid a duplication of initiatives. On this basis, funding can be scaled up to broadly promote proven approaches and foster new knowledge through additional stakeholders and pilot projects.

A crucial question is whether the scarce personnel resources of the GFFO's Division S07 should continue to focus on networking with international actors in the future. As described above, the GFFO has received positive feedback in that regard. GFFO staff should thus consider investing more resources in building a network with actors that received less attention in the past. Starting points for intensified GFFO engagement could include:

- Increased cooperation and collaboration with development actors;
- Exchange with and involvement of other political actors in Germany, such as the newly formed parliament, e.g., by informing and finding advocates among the members of the German Bundestag from different parties, especially the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid and working groups within the parties;
- Encouraging implementing partners to put a stronger focus on existing data and approaches provided by national and local governmental bodies in project countries;
- Increased information exchange and knowledge sharing with the German embassies in the partner countries; and
- Greater involvement of German and international NGOs in the A-A process.

Impact: The GFFO's A-A approach has had a large impact on the international discussion calling for modifications in the humanitarian sector. However, its impact on affected populations worldwide is still limited, as the initial focus of A-A was on pilot projects and only limited

funding has been allocated for A-A activations so far in comparison to traditional humanitarian response. Scaling up A-A should reinforce the impact in the coming years.

There is an appetite for anticipatory thinking and action in the humanitarian sector as well as in neighboring fields, including development cooperation. The GFFO is promoting this discussion, which in turn influences the policies in different donor countries and organizations. In many of these contexts, donors have agreed that funding can be allocated earlier – based on forecasts – to mitigate the impacts on affected people and to reduce the costs of humanitarian assistance.

In specific cases, evaluations showed that this approach has worked well. However, in terms of the overall humanitarian system, the GFFO's approach has only generated limited impacts in the project countries. This is understandable given the focus on pilot projects so far.

The A-A approach, with its close links to local structures, requires close cooperation between the actors involved in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, climate protection, as well as national and local governments. A-A actors report that the GFFO-BMZ cooperation (nexus) is not effective enough to meet the demand for interconnected cooperation between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. On the policy level, staff from both ministries should be familiar with the policies and realities in the project countries. Cooperation should not merely focus on better coordination of different (separately planned) approaches and activities, but rather start with data sharing and an initial joint risk analysis for a common baseline. This would allow for the development of planning processes that serve joint short- and long-term goals. Enhanced cooperation is possible despite the strict separation of funds for humanitarian assistance (GFFO) and development cooperation (BMZ), which is enforced through the German Federal Audit Office. Moreover, to build on the Grand Bargain commitments, interactions and exchanges with communities at risk should be increased and formalized.

Coordination: The GFFO's role in driving the A-A approach forward includes its engagement in coordination efforts. While close coordination remains crucial, especially when scaling up the approach, an “over-ambition” to create more coordination forums could lead to confusion.

In the coming months, the GFFO should put emphasis on prioritizing a coordinated scale-up and capitalize on different actors' strengths. This relates to all levels of cooperation: within the GFFO, on a German ministerial level, with other donor stakeholders, and with implementing partners.

While A-A actors should avoid duplicating and cannibalizing each other's efforts, “harmonization” should not necessarily be the ultimate goal at any cost: while building on existing triggers and replicating them for similar hazards is a helpful practice, individual actors can also focus on different hazards or regions to increase the field knowledge and expertise. For example, in Bangladesh, the START Network concentrates on A-A for hazards that are less often addressed (including dengue fever, riverbank erosions and landslides).

To avoid confusion, help implementing partners understand what Germany can and is willing to finance, and improve its own standing, the GFFO should continue to insist on clarifying definitions for its own approach to A-A in international forums. This becomes ever more important as the term “A-A” grows in popularity: with increased funding, the field risks attracting more implementing actors who claim that the implementation of their projects is “A-A,” even if their work is not in line with the GFFO’s definition due to a lack of guidance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the interviews, document analysis, efficiency analysis, online surveys, and country case studies, the review team encourages the GFFO to implement the following recommendations (R):

Policy and Strategy

R1: Continue working on and developing the pillars of its anticipatory action approach (piloting in countries, integrating A-A into international funds and strongly advocating at different levels) and add a focus on scaling up the A-A approach.

R2: Strive to improve coordination between humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and climate change impact mitigation and adaptation. This is particularly necessary and appropriate, as extensive capacities need to be built and maintained for effective implementation of A-A.

R3: Clearly commit to supporting the humanitarian system’s localization agenda, including through the funding commitment announced at the High-level Event (09/2021).

R4: Clarify and clearly mark which funding does – and does not – count as A-A support. Firstly, identify the criteria that defines the core aspects of A-A, the criteria for extended A-A that include further actions on a broader level, and activities that cannot be counted as A-A. Secondly, strengthen awareness around the complementarity of A-A and (rapid) response activities.

R5: Concentrate on pioneer and champion countries with a more intentional geographical selection rather than a scattershot approach.

R6: Find the right balance between informed involvement and a “hands-off” attitude, allowing implementing actors greater freedom when expanding the A-A approach to additional hazard types, geographic contexts and affected people.

Processes and Projects

R7: Share the lessons learned from different projects more broadly to consolidate takeaways from different types of implementation, while at the same time keeping in mind that there is no “one size fits all” approach.

R8: Focus on capacity development for implementing actors and international coordinating institutions.

R9: Encourage and support trigger and threshold harmonization between different implementing actors.

Cooperation and Learning

R10: Improve knowledge sharing and cooperation within the GFFO to capitalize on existing knowledge, data and partnerships within the ministry and in German embassies in project countries.

R11: Strengthen the capacity within the GFFO to efficiently accompany the scale-up of A-A.

R12: Foster an enabling environment “at home” with more German NGOs.

R13: In addition to taking the “fuel and build” approach to A-A, ensure independent and steady monitoring, and encourage gathering and building on lessons learned and research results.

Funding

R14: Consider more flexibility in the administration of A-A funds.

R15: Differentiate between A-A which should receive increased funding in the foreseen scale-up and A-A which requires more research and pilot projects before the scale-up can begin.

R16: Make funding amounts for A-A publicly available and internationally comparable.

Networking

R17: Clarify how to use the GFFO’s leading role to connect humanitarian actors with neighboring sectors and international stakeholders.

R18: Monitor the development of parallel and duplicative networks and continue to make an effort to involve new actors in the existing structures.

2 Introduction

Many humanitarian crises arise from disasters that can be predicted and whose humanitarian impacts are foreseeable. Since the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa, humanitarian actors have continuously worked to expand and improve the planning, funding and implementation of anticipatory humanitarian action, in addition to reactive humanitarian action. In recent years, the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) has become one of the main actors in this field and has increased its support for Forecast-based Financing (FbF) from € 1.8 million in 2014 to € 7.5 million in 2019,¹ and to € 30.4 million to develop anticipatory risk finance mechanisms and anticipatory humanitarian action.² Germany allocates some of its funding toward pooled funds, namely the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Start Network's Start Fund. Implementing partners who receive direct financing from the GFFO include the German Red Cross and the NGO *Welthungerhilfe*. At the recent "High-level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action: A Commitment to Act Ahead of Crises" on September 9, 2021, Germany committed to allocate at least 5 % of its humanitarian funding to anticipatory humanitarian action by 2023, and more specifically to double its contributions in 2022, and to allocate € 100 million in 2023.

However, there is no fixed and internationally recognized definition of anticipatory (humanitarian) action (further referred to as A-A) – neither what counts as an 'action' nor the meaning of the term itself. The GFFO sees A-A within the spectrum of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and describes it as humanitarian actions that include each of the following criteria: Actions that 1) are taken in the context of a specific forecastable hazard (with available data); 2) start before the impacts of the hazard are felt or fully unfold; 3) are carried out when a forecast reaches predefined triggers and thresholds of probability, which are pre-agreed upon in specific contingency plans; and 4) respond to a hazard with an outsized impact – i.e., the impacts of incidents that are out of the ordinary, only occur every 5-10 years and are not considered regular or seasonal incidents. This distinction serves two main purposes: On the one hand, those dimensions differentiate A-A from longer-term resilience building, development efforts and other DRR measures that occur on a regular basis. On the other, it sets A-A apart from rapid response measures that aim to react as soon as possible after a hazard struck.

A-A is part of a spectrum of short- and long-term disaster aid that can be viewed as cyclical: after Climate Change Adaptation processes, what often follows is Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR – including Mitigation, Prevention, Forecast, Preparedness, Early Warning/"Last Mile", Anticipatory Action), then Rapid Response, Emergency Relief, Early Recovery, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Development, Resilience Building, and again Climate Change Adaptation.

¹ Deutscher Bundestag (2020). Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulrich Lechte, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP. URL: <https://www.fdpbt.de/sites/default/files/2020-03/Hilfe2.pdf> (access on April 19, 2021).

² GFFO internal data

On a theoretical level, most stakeholders agree on the key aspects of A-A's terminology, but minor differences exist – e.g., regarding the extent of accepted temporal overlap between the different parts of the spectrum, and consequently, what projects can be financed through A-A funding. The parts of the spectrum/cycle to which A-A funding may be allocated range from Early Warning/Prediction to Emergency Relief.³

The subject of this review is the German approach to anticipatory humanitarian action and its strategic objective to contribute to a paradigm shift within the humanitarian system. The review will focus on both the strategic and systematic levels as well as the overall approach of the GFFO. The GFFO's engagement includes different strategies and plans, such as its Action Plan for Humanitarian Adaptation to Climate Change, its participation and hosting of events and working groups in multilateral forums, as well as its experiences with A-A in the case study countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar.

The review has been carried out by FAKT Consult for Management, Training and Technologies on behalf of the GFFO Division S07 (formerly S08, Division for Humanitarian Assistance – Policy, International Organizations, Multilateral Coordination). The review began in August 2021 and ends with this final review report in February 2022.

3 Methodology and Process

The research team used a mix of methods for data collection and analysis to ensure a comprehensive approach to processing all available information. The precise methods used for each review question are documented in the evaluation matrix (Annex 7.3) and include the following:

- a) **Literature/document review:** The research team analyzed evaluations, studies, assessments, and project reports from partner organizations, as well as internal documents shared by the GFFO (see Chapter 6, "Literature and Reviewed Documents"). Other documentation was gathered through independent research and the recommendations of interview partners, making use of the snowball effect.
- b) **Interviews** (video conference and phone): Interviews were the central data collection method alongside document analysis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no in-person interviews were possible. In total, 33 key experts were interviewed, including 10 internal experts from the GFFO (see Annex 7.6, "List of Interview Partners"). The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted between October and November 2021. All international interviewees were invited to fill out an online survey in advance and personalize their answers so that the research team could build on them during their interview. While interview guidelines served as a framework, the order of the questions and exact wording were non-binding.

³ Interviews with international experts

- c) **Group discussions** (video conference): After the online kick-off meeting in August 2021, the review team conducted three workshops with GFFO colleagues (September–November 2021) to discuss aspects such as strategy, processes, cooperation, steering, and learning. In the November workshop, the review team discussed preliminary findings with the GFFO (Division S07).
- d) **Online survey:** The review included several online surveys: The main survey was conducted among donor partners, implementing and coordinating partners (e.g., the GRC, *Welthungerhilfe*) and UN partners (e.g., FAO, WFP, OCHA). An adjusted version of this survey was sent to international interview partners prior to their respective interview (see point b above). In total, 77 experts were invited by e-mail to participate in the online survey, 34 of which sufficiently filled out the questionnaires (not all until the last question). These were analyzed together with the questionnaires completed by the international experts who were interviewed, as well as partners of the Anticipation Hub. In total, the research team analyzed 52 questionnaires. As an additional source of information, a second adjusted online survey was prepared for the country case studies (see point f below). The complete online survey documentation, including lists of all qualitative answers and graphs depicting all quantifiable answers, can be found in Annex 7.7 (“Online Survey Report”).
- e) **Budget analysis and efficiency assessments:** Data on budgets and the approach’s efficiency were reviewed in gray literature and official or GFFO-internal documents, and collected in interviews with three experts and during the country case studies. Initially, the research team intended to compare current processes and activities of an implementing organization’s approach to A-A to previous measures by the same organization. However, after consulting in-country experts from the selected case country Madagascar, this endeavor was deemed out of the scope of this review. Therefore, the research team analyzed existing efficiency analyses conducted by OCHA for Bangladesh and by FAO for Bangladesh and Madagascar.
- f) **Country case studies** (remote): Country case studies in Nepal, Bangladesh and Madagascar provided in-depth insight into the reality of individual projects and the in-country experiences with A-A. The three cases were selected by the research team and the GFFO to include different contexts and challenges into the review. The results are based on a small number of cases and interviews and therefore not representative of the entire A-A approach globally, but they do illustrate the practice in project countries. In total, the research team conducted 12 video conference interviews, and 37 respondents sufficiently completed the online surveys in English or French (not all until the last question, but every answered question was analyzed). The review team only analyzed activations of A-A. Particularly in Nepal, the level of first-hand experience with A-A was low as there was only one activation that occurred with WFP.

Due to this focus, the results are more substantial in the case of Bangladesh since it experienced a higher number of activations than Nepal and Madagascar. The case studies looked at the experience of the implementing agencies, satisfaction with processes and results, the implementation of EAPs/SOPs following their trigger, the reliability of forecasts, thresholds and triggers, and lessons learned. Further details are presented in Annex 7.8 (“Case Study Report”).

The research team received access to all requested information. Most selected interview partners were available and shared their insights with a high level of engagement, and the GFFO shared internal documentation. Moreover, the GFFO program management team participated in the workshops and was available for further questions and discussion.

4 Findings and Assessments According to the Review Criteria

In the following chapters, the information received during the interviews and online surveys will be presented and put into context according to the DAC-Evaluation Criteria:⁴ Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Coordination. First assessments will be made at the end of each chapter, with the detailed conclusions and recommendations following in Chapter 5. When speaking of “a couple of” experts who voiced an opinion, this refers to approximately two interviewed key experts, while “several” experts refer to three to four interviewed key experts, and “most” experts will be used to describe that at least 80 % of interviewees were in agreement.

4.1 Relevance

Currently, less than 1 % of international humanitarian assistance is invested into A-A.⁵ Counting both the development of anticipatory risk financing mechanisms and anticipatory humanitarian action, the funding amount looks similar in Germany: in 2020, the GFFO reportedly allocated €30.4 million for developing anticipatory risk financing mechanisms and anticipatory humanitarian action, which represents about 1.42% of the German humanitarian budget.⁶ In 2021, the amount spent on A-A increased to €33.9 million, representing 1.32 % of the annual humanitarian spending. In comparison to other donor countries, Germany is the most important donor in this field. This is made clear by the near unanimous consent to the objectives at the High-level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action: A Commitment to Act Ahead of Crises (further referred to as “High-level Event”) on September 9, 2021.

Donors appreciate the objectives of A-A, but not all of them completely understand how it can be implemented in practice.⁷ The strength of the approach to act ahead of crises is also con-

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

⁵ ODI and the Start Network: “Financial Flows. Mapping the Potential For A Risk Finance Facility For Civil Society”. URL: <https://start-network.app.box.com/s/cqzxnvgisun7covshe28z07bbymmpgke>

⁶ In total, the GFFO spent approximately €2.14 billion for humanitarian assistance in 2020 (GFFO internal data).

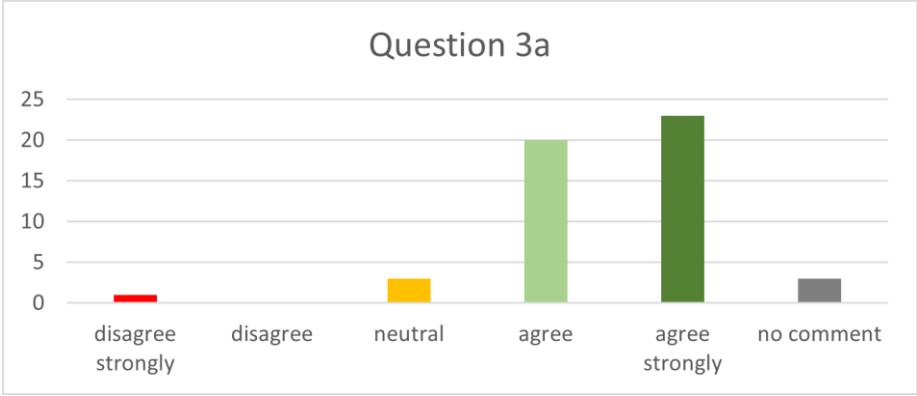
⁷ Interviews with GFFO colleagues who assisted in the High-level Event on September 9, 2021.

firmly by donor representatives and humanitarian organizations: almost all survey respondents agree (or strongly agree) that, in general, the GFFO's approach to A-A reflects the needs in the humanitarian system (see Table 1 and Figure 1).⁸

Table 1: Question 3a
Answers

Disagree Strongly	1
Disagree	0
Neutral	3
Agree	20
Agree strongly	23
No comment	3

Figure 1: Question 3a: "In general: Does the GFFO's approach to anticipatory humanitarian action reflect the needs in the humanitarian system?" (Number of respondents)



The case studies show that the inherent logic of A-A is shared by all actors. There is an obligation to act if there is a possibility to minimize human suffering, destruction and livelihood disruption (humanitarian imperative). A-A represents such a possibility. In recent years, preparatory measures have been initiated, pre-agreed plans – such as Anticipatory Action Frameworks or Early Action Protocols – were developed, first activations through available pooled funds achieved, and lessons learned processes utilized in the revision of framework protocols.

Several lessons can be drawn from the case study online survey:

- Pre-agreed plans:** Almost 75 % of the survey respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that SOPs/EAPs are a work-in-progress and have to be amended after every activation. For 64.5 %, the framework protocols are practical and flexible enough to fit different settings and situations, while 22.6 % of respondents disagree. While 35.5 % consider the process to establish SOPs/EAPs too time-consuming and overly bureaucratic, 19.3 % disagree and 38.7 % are undecided (“neutral”).⁹
- Thresholds and triggers:** The approach to react upon pre-agreed thresholds and triggers is well accepted and considered essential to A-A. A total of 64.6 % of the respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the system is working well in their country. However, there is an ongoing discussion that a single threshold for a large river basin like the Jamuna in Bangladesh may not be sufficient. Some experts recommend lowering thresholds in both Bangladesh and Madagascar. Among experts, there is uncertainty if and when to trigger in Nepal.

⁸ Online survey, question 3a: “Please rate the following statements on anticipatory humanitarian action and the GFFO's role: In general, the GFFO's approach to anticipatory humanitarian action reflects the needs in the humanitarian system.”
⁹ The aforementioned figures represent the results of 37 respondents of the case study online survey. Bangladesh is represented well with 25 respondents; Madagascar and Nepal are underrepresented with respectively 8 and 4 feasible questionnaires.

Despite substantial progress in activations in all three case study countries in recent years, A-A remains a work-in-progress. Two interview partners stressed the need to install more (meteorological) measurement stations to improve the forecasts overall and to allow for more specific results, especially in more vulnerable sub-regions.

- **Organizational capacity:** 71 % of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement that their organization is capable of reacting quickly and efficiently to an activation. At the same time, 64.5 % “agree” or “strongly agree” that they need more preparatory efforts and capacity building within their organizations. The implementing actors’ confidence in their own strengths is complemented by the understanding that organizational progress in preparing and implementing A-A measures is necessary to act as a competent A-A player in the future. This is particularly necessary for the “second generation” which is mainly composed of local NGOs, sometimes in combination with their international partners. For the government or UN organizations, these NGOs are important cooperation partners with their own sector-specific and regional expertise.
- **Capacity of the A-A environment (e.g., DRR/DRM policies, government capacity, forecasts, early warning systems, etc.):** Most interview partners for the case studies considered the weakness of the A-A environment to be one of the largest limitations to further scaling up A-A. There are too many unreliable or late forecasts (the lead-time is often too short to act more comprehensively), a low awareness and preparedness on the part of some government line agencies, insufficient early warning mechanisms to reach all affected people in time (the “last mile”), and a lack of community preparedness. Supporting this DRR-environment is necessary to go beyond small pilot projects. GFFO funding should reflect this need.

Particularly the interview partners from Bangladesh found A-A to be embedded in the wider field of DRR and depends on the quality of the framework. Reliable forecasts are essential, and a well-functioning early warning system obligatory in order to warn affected populations (the “last mile”). A-A has to be integrated into national DRM policies and take preparedness measures into consideration, and coordination mechanisms should be in place to act in a concerted manner and to allow for timely action, also in sudden-onset disasters. This includes at minimum the pre-arrangement of cash transfer modalities, pre-positioning of non-food items, and pre-selection of affected people who will receive support through A-A. Successful A-A is completed before the disaster strikes and direct impacts are felt. However, delays can and will always occur. For this reason, on the temporal spectrum outlined in the introduction, A-A will again and again drift into rapid response.

Looking at the experience of the monsoon floods in Bangladesh in 2020, WFP reached 93 % of all affected people with cash transfers before peak flood levels were measured.¹⁰ However, roughly 50 % of them responded that they had received the cash during the flood, which could be due to the local perceptions of flooding having a lower “threshold” than that of the “peak flooding” defined for this pilot. “Normal” monsoon rains lead to flooded areas as well, but

¹⁰ Progress report of WFP to GFFO (internal document shared with FAKT)

with non-critical depths. A few experts considered the actions in the context of the 2020 flood as rapid response, while most local experts considered them as a successful A-A. Both interpretations are based on valid arguments. The interviewed experts agreed that the speed was impressive in comparison to previous responses. The nature of the action was clearly A-A.

Other actions are clearly not A-A, even though they are formally recorded as such. In 2019, the NGO Jago Nari from Bangladesh initiated a support program for fishermen to ease the annual 65-days fishing ban during the spawning season. Jago Nari provided cash to fishermen and supported the development of a family contingency plan to deal with restrictions. According to Jago Nari, this was not A-A since the event occurred annually.

International partners stress that the GFFO's A-A approach was both suitable and adequate in recent years.¹¹ Regarding the three columns of its engagement – namely, piloting in countries, integrating financing into international funds and strong advocating – almost all survey respondents agreed that the GFFO should continue to prioritize these types of support to improve its A-A approach. External experts unanimously agree that the GFFO needs to scale up the approach, i.e., allocate more funds and move A-A into "normal operation". There are different positions among experts on how this normal operation should run. Some suggest clearly earmarking funds for A-A, while other actors emphasize that A-A should now be mainstreamed into actions and earmarking should stop in order to facilitate a quick scale-up.¹²

Concerning this debate among international experts around the question of “earmarking versus mainstreaming” of funds planned for A-A: One interview partner stressed that, previous preparedness (or early response) activities tend to simply be renamed as A-A.¹³ Another expert mentioned that without earmarking and pressure to change procedures in the implementing organization, the situation in the project countries would not change. In this case, organizations would continue traditional response activities instead of striving for more A-A. Arguments for avoiding earmarking and therefore promoting the A-A's mainstreaming include that mainstreaming would help integrate A-A into the humanitarian response system currently in place. Another expert noted that mainstreaming is needed to scale up A-A and reduces administrative costs. All international stakeholders interviewed appreciated the GFFO's active advocacy work and willingness to assume a leadership position. Given that on an international level, the approach and funding commitments of donor countries are still in their infancy, the GFFO is viewed as a pioneering actor. Taking risks and flexibly supporting innovative approaches is very relevant for an ambitious scale-up.¹⁴

¹¹ Interviews with external experts and online survey

¹² Interviews with external Experts

¹³ Interview with several external experts

¹⁴ The “scale-up” of the approach considers the aim to strategically and responsibly expand A-A to more geographic regions, to more contexts and types of hazards, and to more wide-ranging activities reaching more affected populations.

Assessment: *A-A is a relevant approach. Intuitively, all actors are generally in favor of A-A. However, policymakers need to better understand and partially improve the practical steps necessary for its implementation. The GFFO plays an important role in financially supporting implementing actors who further this approach and in explaining the A-A approach to other donor countries.*

The strength of A-A is that its inherent logic is shared by all actors. Following the humanitarian imperative, the humanitarian community is obliged to act if there is a possibility of mitigating or preventing human suffering, destruction and livelihood disruption. Anticipatory action represents an additional tool to aid the humanitarian sector in these endeavors. In practice, A-A implementation functions well in cases with well-established structures, but there are still many gaps (i.e., poor organizational capacity and low capacity of the A-A environment) to overcome before going ahead with a full scale-up. Based on the case studies, the research team identified the following aspects that could help bridge these gaps:

- a) Pre-agreed plans: encourage a “lighter” and faster process to developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Early Action Protocols (EAPs) or Anticipatory Action Frameworks, including amending already-existing frameworks;
- b) Thresholds and triggers: invest in improving the reliability of early warning systems with agreed-upon thresholds and trigger mechanisms;
- c) Organizational capacity: strengthen existing structures through dedicated funding for local capacity building and in line with the goal to support the Grand Bargain’s localization, rather than inventing new structures;
- d) Capacity of the A-A environment: systematically integrate A-A into existing national DRR and development funding strategies;
- e) A-A integration in national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policies: link new A-A to existing national DRM activities and better understand the local opportunities and limitations.

The GFFO’s design of the anticipatory approach was suitable and adequate over the past years: piloting the approach in multiple countries, integrating it into international funds and strongly advocating for its implementation was helpful and thus relevant.

4.2 Effectiveness

This section looks at the GFFO's main policy objectives, the current relationship to funding allocations, unintended effects of A-A, and the perceived effectiveness of partnerships and cooperation.

In general, the **overarching policy goals** of the GFFO were identified as: assuming a leadership role in making the humanitarian system more anticipatory overall; convincing more actors to become involved in anticipatory action; as well as to expand its own approach to include more contexts.¹⁵ The overarching majority of interviewees and survey responders clearly link these goals with the GFFO and confirm that they are met in a useful way. The objectives were separately analyzed with regard to the effectiveness of their implementations.

Objective 1: Assuming a leadership role in making the humanitarian system more anticipatory overall.

The GFFO has created a unique approach: external experts from other donor countries describe Germany as a “role model”, “instigator” and “innovator,” and value its “continued thought leadership” as well as its “excellent commitment to advancing the A-A agenda.”¹⁶ Experts from humanitarian organizations feel that their needs were heard and not only met with the GFFO's oral commitments, but also effectively put into practice through financing.¹⁷

When looking at individual pioneering actors, the progress toward increasing investment in the anticipatory approach becomes evident. For example, the CERF – for which Germany was the largest or second-largest donor annually since 2016 – started to plan for A-A in 2018, developed and activated three anticipatory action frameworks for a total of \$33.4 million in 2020,¹⁸ and, in the same year, announced that it would allocate \$140 million over 18 months.¹⁹ The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has continuously widened its approach, for example, by adding more countries and regions (from two pilots in Uganda and Togo in 2013, announcing an additional six countries in 2015²⁰, to 16 countries²¹ in 2019). Germany supports the CERF and IFRC through increased funding, enabling them to scale up their A-A. Globally, there are more than 60 countries with A-A projects and initiatives.²²

To reach its goal of a *leadership* position in making the humanitarian system more anticipatory overall, the GFFO prioritizes supporting international funds and pioneering implementing actors, as well as advocating for the approach in multilateral forums to bring other donors on board to contribute to a paradigm shift within the humanitarian system.

¹⁵ Strategy of the Federal Foreign Office Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad (2019-2023). URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/238812/145d15cc91bec5d173b87d75302b67e7/aa-strategie-humanitaere-hilfe-data.pdf> (access on November 17, 2021).

¹⁶ Interviews with external experts and online survey

¹⁷ Interviews with external experts

¹⁸ https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20Annual%20Results%20Report%202020_0.pdf

¹⁹ <https://cerf.un.org/news/story/early-funding-cerf-food-insecurity-somalia-projected-rise>

²⁰ https://www.drk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/FBF/FbF_Stephens_et_al._Forecast-based_Action_SHEAR_Final_Report.pdf

²¹ https://www.forecast-based-financing.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DRK_Broschuere_2019_new_era.pdf

²² <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/experience/anticipatory-action-in-the-world>

Objective 2: Convincing more actors to get involved in anticipatory action.

The second aspect, bringing other donors on board, is still an ongoing endeavor and hard to track. Since the concept of financing humanitarian actions based on forecasts was first mentioned as a necessary addition to current financing practices (many refer to the drought and famine in the Horn of Africa in 2011 which did not lead to anticipatory action despite existing and widely communicated forecasts), more and more actors have become involved. However, globally, the budget for A-A is still estimated at only 1 %, while over 90 % of humanitarian spending worldwide is allocated to response.²³

The major humanitarian donor countries, including the US,²⁴ the EU,²⁵ the United Kingdom,²⁶ Sweden,²⁷ and the Netherlands,²⁸ all joined anticipatory action networks and efforts in recent years. Their commitments are increasing, but their speed, priorities and specific funding approaches vary widely. For example, Sweden's strategy builds on tapping into development and climate aid funding,²⁹ while the Netherlands' funding support for anticipatory action is allocated via international humanitarian funds (the CERF, DREF, Start Network's Anticipation Window, etc.).³⁰

So far, there is no international overview of donor commitments and initiatives. Since there is no internationally recognized definition or funding marker, it is hard to track down or compare each country's contributions. Similarly, Germany's direct influence on other donors' contributions through its advocacy is hard to trace. Former GFFO staff attribute parts of the A-A's success to their work, including for continuously putting A-A on the international agenda of multilateral forums (e.g., during Germany's EU presidency). Germany used its international credibility³¹ to be present on all relevant platforms, multilateral forums and groups: firstly, to continuously explain the approach to other donors, implementing organizations and research institutes; and secondly, to advertise for more donors to take part.

Through this constant advocacy and clear communication regarding its own commitment (especially the 5 % commitment at the High-level Event), the GFFO managed to clearly mark its position as the main point of contact. At the same time, it also underlined that the A-A field needs more actors and funding from additional sources.

The interviews also showed that the GFFO's increased focus on joint multilateral approaches is welcomed. To show evidence concerning its goal of increasing the amount and broadness

²³ ODI and the Start Network, 2019: "Financial Flows Mapping - the Potential For A Risk Finance Facility For Civil Society". URL: <https://start-network.app.box.com/s/cqzxnvgisun7covshe28z07bbympgke>

²⁴ USAID joined *InsuResilience Global Partnership* and the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) in June 2021: <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/news/ifrc-welcomes-usaid-to-early-action-partnership>

²⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14202-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

²⁶ For example, the United Kingdom co-organized the High-level Event, is a major donor of the Start Network and the Centre for Disaster Protection.

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q908mqH262c>

²⁸ <https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2021/chapter-3-donors-and-recipients-humanitarian-and-wider-crisis-financing/>

²⁹ <https://www.climatecentre.org/6992/sweden-will-double-climate-finance-by-2025-minister/>

³⁰ <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/reports/2021/10/01/the-netherlands-submits-adaptation-communication-ahead-of-cop26/NL+Submission+to+the+UNFCCC+-+Adaptation+Communication.pdf>

³¹ Interview with former internal expert

of actors and to link it back to Germany's advocacy work, Germany and its international partners would need to supply more publicly available data on the actual A-A spending and provide more information on its definition.

Objective 3: Expanding A-A to include more contexts.

Implementing actors are active in expanding the A-A approach. Most projects are focused on anticipating hydro-meteorological hazards and acting upon their impacts.³² In recent years, research, pilot studies and eventually EAPs/A-A frameworks were developed for an increasing number of hazards, including for those with shorter and longer lead times.³³ By financing most A-A through international funds, the GFFO transfers the development and advancement activities to the implementing partners that aim to expand the approach – in that sense, the German approach is effective. While external experts confirm that the GFFO is open to suggestions for researching specific approaches and types of hazards,³⁴ there is no visible, proactive push or pioneering spirit for an expansion.

External experts and donor country partners suggest that Germany uses its leadership position to consider opportunities with neighboring fields to include more contexts. As conflicts are among the main drivers of humanitarian crises and most deaths occur from disasters in conflict areas and fragile states, the expansion of A-A to conflict situations is an ongoing discussion.

If the GFFO wants to drive this conversation forward, as explained in its *Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad*,³⁵ the effectiveness of the expansion could be enhanced through several steps:

- Actively promoting mainstream conflict sensitivity analysis to A-A for hydro-meteorological hazards in existing conflict situations (“type 1 of A-A in conflict situations”³⁶);
- Actively supporting research and actors who develop new plans for anticipating conflict impacts (such as forced displacement); and
- Actively pushing for more linkages with existing models of conflict prediction (“type 2 of A-A in conflict situations”³⁷). This includes encouraging the peace and conflict/security community (on an international level, between ministries and within the GFFO) to develop a concept of A-A for impacts within conflict situations and displacement.³⁸

However, introducing anticipatory action to conflict situations is a challenge.³⁹ An expert reported: “We know from pilot projects that humanitarian action to anticipate the outbreak or trends of

³² See <https://www.gppi.net/2020/09/22/an-agenda-for-expanding-forecast-based-action-to-situations-of-conflict> for more information.

³³ The Anticipatory Action Hub includes the following hazards in their overview: cold waves, cyclones or typhoons, drought, dzud, El Niño, flood, heatwaves, intense rainfall, and volcanic ash (<https://www.anticipation-hub.org/experience/early-action/early-action-database/ea-list#c844>)

³⁴ Interview with external expert

³⁵ Strategy of the Federal Foreign Office Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad (2019-2023). URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/238812/145d15cc91bec5d173b87d75302b67e7/aa-strategie-humanitaere-hilfe-data.pdf> (access on November 17, 2021).

³⁶ https://www.gppi.net/media/Wagner_Jaime_2020_Forecast-Based-Action-in-Conflicts.pdf

³⁷ https://www.gppi.net/media/Wagner_Jaime_2020_Forecast-Based-Action-in-Conflicts.pdf

³⁸ Interviews with external experts and donor country partners

³⁹ For more information on how to structure an expansion of the approach, please see: Wagner & Jaime, 2020, An Agenda for Expanding Forecast-Based Action to Situations of Conflict. GPPi. URL: https://www.gppi.net/media/Wagner_Jaime_2020_Forecast-Based-Action-in-Conflicts.pdf

violent conflict can be exploited by intentionally triggering false alarms, i.e., provoking that certain triggers (for example related to levels of violence or displacement) are reached in order to (mis)direct aid into a certain direction."⁴⁰

With regards to the **allocation relationship between capacity building and funding early action**, the investments of the GFFO in both pilots and knowledge gathering were generally welcomed and described as "strategic and smart."⁴¹ Most survey responders and interviewees underlined that more funding was needed overall without identifying a clear preference for increasing one aspect of the "fuel and build"⁴² approach specifically – and the dilemma of linking the coverage of affected populations and the readiness of the A-A approach is likely to be an ongoing issue. The survey respondents largely agreed that a good balance has been struck, with a slight preference for a focus on financing more capacity building. Interviewees seemed rather overwhelmed when directly confronted with the question. Certainly, an imbalance in the allocation relationship would have been more noticeable than a well-balanced approach. Two external experts working for implementing partner organizations stressed the point that GFFO's funding for capacity building only builds the capacity of their own organization. However, the GFFO does not finance systematic capacity building and advocacy for governmental bodies, thus hampering the integration of A-A in national DRM.⁴³

When moving from piloting to scaling up, however, one external expert recommended a shift toward investing relatively more in capacity building (of governments, hydro-meteorological services and humanitarian actors). Another external expert recommended to clearly communicate which part of the funding is allotted for capacity building, and what is allocated toward early actions through dedicated and marked funding windows. Depending on the relative advancement of a certain country or region, a different prioritization seems adequate: in other words, for regions with less progress, more capacity building is needed, while more experienced regions would likely benefit from "fuel" support.⁴⁴ When expanding to more complex disasters, including for A-A in conflict situations, investments in developing the approach and early actions are still needed.

The above observation is even more strongly reflected in the responses obtained through the case studies. Bangladesh is far ahead of Nepal and Madagascar in terms of A-A progress, but capacity building and improvement of the framework around A-A is still considered of prime importance by most actors.

For Nepal and Madagascar, money for capacity building is considered equally as important as funds for actual A-A. In Bangladesh, the scale-up is already ongoing, requiring different capacities than during the pilot phase. A harmonization of thresholds and triggers as well as the development of multi-hazard frameworks for more regions seem to be important aspects

⁴⁰ One feedback to online survey, question 5: What are weaknesses in the anticipatory humanitarian action approach of the GFFO related to the "do no harm" principle? Please elaborate.

⁴¹ Interview with external expert

⁴² Interview with GFFO expert

⁴³ Interviews with two external experts

⁴⁴ Interview with one external expert

of the capacities needed. For Nepal and Madagascar, the less established and structured A-A environment is the most significant factor inhibiting the scale up. In these two countries, capacities for successful pilots are under development, but not yet fully operational.

With regards to **unintended effects** of the A-A approach, few were mentioned: almost 75 % of the survey respondents indicated that they had never heard of unintended effects. Most of the unintended effects that were mentioned were not exclusive to those projects funded by the GFFO, but rather to A-A in general.

Highlighted **positive co-benefits** include:

- A positive influence on the International Development Association's (IDA) early response financing, which one respondent saw as a sign that the World Bank is trying to learn from the humanitarian sector;
- More interest in disaster risk financing and early warning systems in general;
- Improved monitoring and evaluation infrastructure for NGOs at both the national and local levels;
- Increased school participation;⁴⁵
- Increased private sector funding due to the attractiveness of the innovative approach; and
- Enhanced partnerships with academia.

Among the more **harmful unintended impacts**, interviewees and survey respondents mentioned:

- Impeded self-reflection due to the ongoing excitement around the approach;
- Risk of possible tensions within communities if high expectations cannot be met or if the choices of affected persons who receive support is not transparent; and
- A general perceived competition between different types of actors given the current hype and availability of funding.

One explanation for limited number of more detailed assessments could be that there is also a lack of communication or knowledge of intended effects.

While the investment in the Anticipation Hub as a center of knowledge as well as the GFFO's general openness to fund research and evaluations are widely recognized,⁴⁶ some interna-

⁴⁵ One co-benefit mentioned was that "girls who received dignity kits in Bangladesh ahead of flooding were more likely to continue going to school than those who didn't receive these." (Online survey)

⁴⁶ Interviews with external research and donor partners

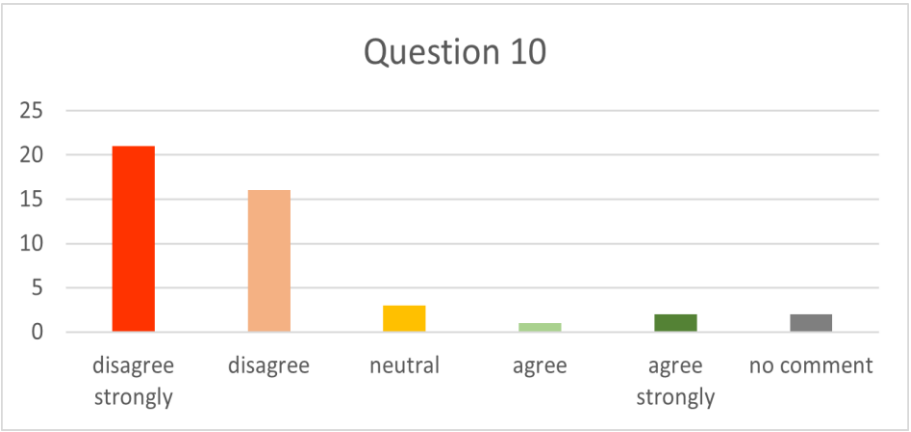
tional partners still emphasized the need to share lessons learned and evaluations more consistently.⁴⁷ To avoid negative and harmful unintended consequences in the future and to capitalize on the positive ones, a more consistent and wide-ranging analysis is needed to better understand in which circumstances A-A does – and does not – work and how.⁴⁸

In addition, the case studies did not reveal any noteworthy unintended effects of A-A in practice. A question in the online survey related to the do-no-harm principle yielded a mixed picture: almost a third of the respondents (32.3 %) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that continued A-A has the potential to weaken the self-help capacity of the target groups, whereas the majority (38.8 %) “disagreed” or “disagreed strongly” with the statement (and 29 % of respondents chose “neutral”). Regarding the effects on existing DRR and early warning structures in the project countries, the majority (82 %, or 37 respondents) did not find that A-A had a weakening effect.

Table 2: Question 10
Answers

Disagree Strongly	21
Disagree	16
Neutral	3
Agree	1
Agree strongly	2
No comment	2

Figure 2: Question 10: "Do you agree: Anticipatory humanitarian action is weakening local and national DRR and community based early warning structures." (Number of respondents)



Finally, an additional unintended, potentially harmful effect was not expressly mentioned by the interviewees but emerged from their impression of the gap the GFFO might leave if it were to step back from its commitments. Several interviewees and survey respondents mentioned that the GFFO not only played a significant role in shifting to more A-A in general, but claimed that the credibility of the entire A-A approach is largely dependent on the GFFO’s engagement and leadership. Currently, this impressions remains merely a potential warning sign, as **cooperation** with actors from the international humanitarian community is highlighted as one of the GFFO’s major strengths. For the current amount of funding and pilots, the number and the type of partners, as well as the GFFO’s tendency to increase its cooperation and coordination, seems adequate. In the future, the GFFO should pay specific attention to two points: firstly, it should be more flexible to co-developing the A-A approach with other actors rather than marking the territory around its own approach. Secondly, at the same time, its credibility

⁴⁷ Interviews with external partners
⁴⁸ Interview with external expert

needs to be upheld by delivering evaluations and independent analyses of possible unintended and intended impacts.

Despite its goal to contribute to a paradigm shift and further expand the A-A approach, the current number of people within the GFFO working on A-A is impressively low. Germany is in formal and informal working groups, and networks with all actors that also consider themselves to be active in the A-A field. Its actions are largely seen as complementary to those of other actors, although there is room for improvement. When scaling up, involving a larger group of actors seems unavoidable: this counts for staff within the GFFO working on A-A and those working on partnership management, including staff members who already contribute to a more anticipatory system (e.g., local stakeholders including hydro-meteorological institutes and those developing early warning systems and contingency plans). The current growing trust in (meteorological) forecasts, scientific models and data analysis makes sense in this regard, given the increasing reliability of the data.⁴⁹

So far, the GFFO restricts its funding to the RCRC (GRC and IFRC), UN organizations, the START Network, and individual NGOs (such as the *Welthungerhilfe*). A broader group of actors would strengthen the approach in Germany and create a more robust base of national experts on A-A to contribute to the advancement of the approach internationally. If the GFFO wants to stay a champion of the field, it also needs an enabling environment “at home,” including legitimacy with the leading humanitarian actors in Germany. At the same time, German NGOs can engage with their partners in A-A project countries, thereby strengthening local capacities.

The GFFO clearly “provided momentum,” and other actors – including donor countries – expressed that they felt supported in shifting toward more anticipatory action and consider their collaboration and knowledge exchange with the GFFO valuable. Implementing partners from the case studies confirmed the crucial importance of the funding opportunities through the GFFO. The challenging and innovative nature of the approach and inhibiting barriers within the receiving countries themselves make it even more important that GFFO remains a driving force.

In addition, various local experts from Bangladesh emphasized the need to create such a momentum in their country as well. Funding is not currently available for that purpose, but may be desirable to strengthen A-A advocacy at the national level. Nationalizing the momentum would place A-A in a more prominent position in the various countries, involve more actors, intensify discussions and approach advancements, and create a conducive environment for cooperation and harmonization. Such an approach would support efforts toward “localization” and “participation,” which are both important aims of the Grand Bargain. A-A champions like Bangladesh and others could be selected as pilots for supporting national momentum.

⁴⁹ Interview with external expert

So far, Germany mainly appears to learn from implementing and coordinating actors, as other donor countries rather follow the German leadership as their source of inspiration. In that regard, the GFFO could more actively seek to understand the other donors' barriers and interpretations in their A-A.

Interviewees and survey respondents felt that the momentum behind A-A could be enhanced if the supposed success of the pilot phases were now to be quickly and systematically confirmed by evidence to better understand the approach, also at working level, and if projects were scaled up based on these results. Moreover, the general openness to fund innovative methods as well as the 5 % commitment at the High-level Event was clearly well-perceived and sparked international interest. Thus, the current momentum is not likely to be enhanced, but could be prolonged by aligning their actions with the words.

Assessment: *The approach is effective. One of the GFFO's objectives is fully achieved, two others are partly achieved. The time has come for scaling up A-A.*

Objective 1, assuming a leadership role in making the humanitarian system more anticipatory overall, has been fully achieved. This assessment is based on feedback from international external experts and the fact that Germany is the leading donor with regard to A-A.

Objective 2, convincing more actors to get involved in anticipatory action, has been partly achieved. Within the humanitarian assistance community, a clear trend toward more A-A is noticeable. However, in financial terms, investments in A-A are still limited: both on an international level and in Germany (at least to date), less than 1 % of the overall budget for humanitarian assistance is allocated toward anticipatory measures.

Objective 3, expanding A-A to more contexts, has also been partly achieved. The A-A approach began with actions ahead of sudden-onset disasters, such as cyclones and floods. Since then, the approach has also been tested in slow-onset disasters like droughts, and discussions on applying it to fragile and conflict contexts are ongoing. Despite these efforts, the expansion of A-A remains limited: the time has come for scaling up A-A. To make it successful, Germany should shift from aiming to kick-off more pilots toward investing more in building an evidence baseline: building a momentum must be accompanied by continuously improving the approach and expanding on lessons learned. The GFFO should thus provide time and resources for critical self-reflection of all actors involved.

To allow for a continuation of a balanced approach between financing early actions and capacity building, the GFFO could further link its funding with other actors. For this, methods and strategies from partner donor countries, such as exploring opportunities to use development funding (like Sweden) or engaging more closely with research and advocacy institutes (like the United Kingdom), can serve as inspiration.

International experts emphasize the drawbacks if thresholds that trigger A-A are not well-balanced: if they are too low, A-A becomes a standard procedure in recurring events like

annual monsoon floods in Asia or seasonal droughts in the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa and eastern Africa. If thresholds are overly high, however, activations occur too seldom to build up competence, and the transaction costs to maintain the system and remain vigilant become exorbitant.

An additional challenge presents itself if the A-A scale-up is too dependent on the GFFO's engagement and leadership. Without fostering greater responsibility sharing, the strengths of the A-A approach could be reduced. To avoid this, the GFFO should continue to involve more actors and invite them to play a crucial role in A-A, since being a "too effective" leader might not be sustainable in the long-term. At the same time, the number of people within the GFFO working on A-A is impressively low for the current amount of funding and projects, which is set to increase more in the coming years alongside the GGFO's growing ambition to contribute to a paradigm shift and further expand the approach.

4.3 Efficiency

Analyzing the efficiency of A-A programs inevitably brings up discussions around the baseline of comparison: existing studies use purely financial indicators (i.e., "is it cheaper?"), compare the (perceived mitigation of the) impact for persons concerned, or measure the accuracy of the forecast and trigger.⁵⁰ Among the assessments studying the efficiency of A-A programs, results vary widely. They range from showing economic savings for individual programs of over several thousands of percent⁵¹ to concluding that there is currently no firm evidence that A-A measures are more efficient than other actions. The diverging results can be explained by differences in research methods, baselines and methods of comparison. Furthermore, in a number of pilot projects, the pre-planned actions were triggered for test purposes despite not having quite reached pre-agreed-upon thresholds.⁵² Weingärtner, Pforr and Wilkinson (2020) conclude: "*The range of counterfactuals used is also limited, so although acting early can be better than doing nothing, it is less clear whether it is also better than doing other things at different points in time.*"⁵³

Data provided from implementing actors in the country case studies highlight the following aspects in regards to the efficiency discussion:

- a) An internal discussion paper of OCHA analyzed the CERF activations in Bangladesh from 2017 (rapid response), 2019 (rapid response) and 2020 (A-A). It concluded that not only the unit cost of aid is lower prior to a disaster than post-disaster, but also that the impact of one unit of aid is greater prior to the disaster than post-disaster. At the

⁵⁰ See, e.g., World Food Programme 2019b: The evidence base on Anticipatory Action <https://www.wfp.org/publications/evidence-base-anticipatory-action>

⁵¹ See calculation in: World Food Programme 2019a: Forecast-based Financing in Nepal – A Return on Invest Study, p. 7

⁵² World Food Programme 2019b: The evidence base on Anticipatory Action; see also the review's Nepal case study

⁵³ World Food Programme 2019b: The evidence base on Anticipatory Action, p. 7

same time, in its impact analysis of the 2020 CERF activation in Bangladesh, FAO concluded that for every US dollar invested in A-A, families only received a return of 0.80 USD in direct benefits. These benefits included prevented loss of seeds and livestock. Results vary depending on the type of analysis conducted: these include expenditures per beneficiary or accrued benefit by the beneficiary per invested unit. The FAO study on the drought-related A-A in Madagascar in 2017-18 concluded that the benefit-cost ratio was 2.5 – meaning that for every US\$ 1 invested by FAO, households gained US\$ 2.5. FAO distributed improved seeds and irrigation devices. Hence, improved productivity is unavoidable, but not necessarily the result of A-A in the strictest sense.

- b) For most implementing actors, additional measures of efficiency apart from reducing human suffering are somewhat neglected. They explained that the humanitarian imperative is a sufficient condition to justify investments in A-A. However, UN organizations try to shed light on the positive effects on efficiency or return on investment through A-A.

The review team identified the following contexts and procedures that indicate more or less efficiency:

- a) In regions with established and well-functioning DRR infrastructures, the GFFO's approach can be absorbed and put into action more easily than in unprepared contexts. The comparatively well-established early warning mechanisms and DRR/DRM policies in Bangladesh enabled small pilot initiatives to quickly scale up.
- b) In regions that lack sufficient infrastructure, relatively high costs arise when comparing the amount of money spent to the real benefits of the people in need.⁵⁴ Basic DRR structures have to be built to allow A-A to evolve. As a result, the A-A context is more challenging in Madagascar than in Bangladesh. Quick results are less likely to materialize and currently, scaling up A-A does not seem to be a viable option.
- c) Before SOPs/EAPs are tested, they might be unreliable and thus inefficient. Therefore, preparing an isolated (and untested) plan for a hazard with severe impacts that only occurs every 5-10 years seems to be not efficient.⁵⁵ If these plans are linked more closely to existing early warning mechanisms for hazards occurring regularly (every 1-2 years / "normal preparedness") and if SOPs/EAPs can build on the lessons learned from those actions, it is plausible that the efficiency of the foreseen A-A measures increase.⁵⁶
- d) Experiences show that the efficiency of very detailed SOPs/EAPs is limited because they are too complex and difficult to update in changing contexts.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ See the current *Weithungerhilfe's* Madagascar A-A program.

⁵⁵ Assessment of an international expert.

⁵⁶ See experiences of the Start Network, interview with a representative.

⁵⁷ See experiences of the early IFRC SOPs, source: Interviews with international actors and the evaluation report: End Evaluation „2nd Phase of the Federal Foreign Office Action Plan of Humanitarian Adaptation to Climate Change" implemented by German Red Cross, 2020.

Efficiency of the GFFO's policy and advocacy efforts

Next to funding project implementation partners, the GFFO also invests in broadly advocating for the A-A approach on an international level. It aims to, on the one hand, widen the basis of donors and increase funding internationally and, on the other, to be recognized as a pioneering actor in this field. To this end, Germany is involved in several donor and other working groups, helped develop and fund the Anticipation Hub,⁵⁸ and organizes sessions and high-level events within the A-A community, among other activities.

All interviewees and survey respondents clearly highlighted the GFFO's role as a frontrunner. Especially donor country partners emphasized that they recognize and value Germany's persistence in prioritizing the topic in different forums, such as during its EU presidency, in the COHAFA, at the CERF advisory board, and as a co-organizer of the High-level Event. Having a dedicated team within the GFFO that knows the A-A community and the topic, and that gives the approach a face, is clearly efficient in this regard and widely recognized.

Assessment: *The efficiency of the A-A approach is highly dependent on the context in which the measures are implemented.*

Existing efficiency studies which focus on specific regions and hazards conclude that the A-A approach is efficient. However, the review team would like to emphasize that this verified efficiency cannot be generalized to all contexts in which A-A projects are currently being implemented. There are convincing examples of efficiency in countries that already have well-established relief infrastructure (e.g., Bangladesh), which can thus integrate the approach more easily into national DRR strategies. In other cases, the approach seems less efficient. For example, if new structures and mechanisms need to be built to implement A-A projects but are not taken up by national or local DRR structures or development cooperation programs and used after the A-A project ends, this can lead to inefficiencies in the A-A approach. The case studies in this review showed that Madagascar might be an example of such a context. However, donors should not stop funding A-A programs in Madagascar, but rather consider possibilities to connect their investments for developing A-A more closely with evolving DRR structures.

These challenges should not prevent donors from further investing in (scaling up) A-A. Impact studies in the field of development cooperation and traditional humanitarian action show that in complex situations, attributing impact to concrete actions is difficult. In many cases, very simple and straightforward causal relationships can be proven, but more complex relations cannot be established. Therefore, it makes sense to invest in A-A measures where efficiency is plausible with regard to specific criteria such as a supporting context – e.g., well-established infrastructures.

In addition, efficiency is more likely to materialize if humanitarian and development actors improve their collaboration both internationally and locally to avoid a duplication of

⁵⁸ <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/>

initiatives. On this basis, funding can be scaled up to broadly promote proven approaches and foster new knowledge through additional stakeholders and pilot projects.

A crucial question is whether the scarce personnel resources of the GFFO's Division S07 should continue to focus on networking with international actors in the future. As described above, the GFFO has received positive feedback in that regard. GFFO staff should thus consider investing more resources in building a network with actors that received less attention in the past. Starting points for intensified GFFO engagement could include:

- Increased cooperation and collaboration with development actors;
- Exchange with and involvement of other political actors in Germany, such as the newly formed parliament, e.g., by informing and finding advocates among the members of the German Bundestag from different parties, especially the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid and working groups within the parties;
- Encouraging implementing partners to put a stronger focus on existing data and approaches provided by national and local governmental bodies in project countries;
- Increased information exchange and knowledge sharing with the German embassies in the partner countries; and
- Greater involvement of German and international NGOs in the A-A process.

4.4 Impact / Long-term Effects

This subchapter looks at the longer-term impacts of the GFFO's approach, its contribution to a paradigm shift, its unintended overarching impacts, and its interaction with broader initiatives of neighboring fields.

Almost all interviewees and survey respondents agreed that the A-A approach represents a **paradigm shift** (only one person indicated "neutral") and that the GFFO plays a significant role in shifting toward more A-A (only one person indicated "neutral", and one disagreed). The ministry is clearly seen as a pioneering actor, setting the pace for many other governments who aim to support A-A. The recent announcement to allocate 5 % of its humanitarian budget to A-A until 2023 left a deep impression. The large participation in the High-level Event underlined the broad interest and engagement of other donors. Some argue that building on this recent involvement, more actors – and donor countries specifically – could be involved despite the inherent risk that every state will have its own specific approach.⁵⁹ The GFFO, however, should keep an overview and keep the A-A approach aligned and coordinated.

⁵⁹ Interview with donor country partner

Some external experts criticized that the GFFO sends an inconsistent or unclear message regarding the nature of this envisaged paradigm shift: it is not clear to all actors that the GFFO aims to shift the paradigm by *adding* a new financing mechanism based on forecasts rather than shifting the entire humanitarian system from a needs-based to a purely risk-based approach.⁶⁰ Several external experts emphasized that to call it a “paradigm shift,” the GFFO would need to further integrate the perspectives of development cooperation and discussions about climate adaptation strategies within the A-A approach. These experts based their assessments on the rather limited impact of the approach due to the still-restricted funding amounts for A-A. Increasing the funding and thus achieving a paradigm shift could only be achieved through more intensive cooperation with the development sector and with climate funds.⁶¹

Local experts from the case studies are convinced that this approach is innovative and will become more important in the future. The transformative aspect of the approach and the excitement about it have been clearly articulated. However, some of the local experts stressed the importance of viewing A-A in connection with the potentially necessary response. If a forecast is correct in its prediction of disastrous impact, A-A is part of a continuum offered to affected people.

In sudden-onset events like floods and cyclones, the mitigation of the physical destruction as a primary impact of a hazard is not possible, or only to a very limited extent (through sandbags, clearance of canals, reinforcement of shelters, etc.). In such a situation, A-A reduces livelihood disruption as a secondary impact of the hazard by offering cash or non-food items as a form of preparedness, by protecting movable assets (including livestock), and/or by evacuating people to (cyclone) shelters. The actual physical destruction and the accompanying hardship for the affected populations will still materialize. A-A increases “resilience” for a concrete event and supports affected people to minimize so-called negative coping mechanisms like eating less or cheaper food, losing or selling livestock at low prices, and taking out loans to survive. In this way, A-A flattens the “disruption curve” and speeds up recovery. However, significant emergency relief is still a part of the picture. A good example is the monsoon flood in Bangladesh in 2020. Successful and fast CERF and DREF activations were followed by a substantial response: the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society mobilized € 550,000 through the DREF mechanism for A-A and € 3.9 million through an IFRC emergency appeal for the response.

As a (or the) major donor, the GFFO’s funding is seen as very relevant to further advancing the approach. Germany’s engagement in supporting collaboration between different actors is widely recognized by all interviewees and survey respondents. In comparison to other donors, the GFFO clearly stands out as the donor with the largest contributions and clearest commitments. All in all, through its engagement in multilateral forums, groups and networks,

⁶⁰ Interview with external expert

⁶¹ Interviews with several external experts

through hosting events, through its collaboration with implementing, coordinating and funding bodies, and not least due to a personal commitment on the part of the GFFO's staff, Germany's actions for A-A are clearly more **visible** than those of other actors. One interview partner stressed that now would be the right time to hand over the steering wheel to the other actors to allow for a scale-up. Furthermore, the GFFO should refrain from reiterating that it invented the A-A approach: this does not speed up the uptake of A-A by other stakeholders.⁶²

A widespread concern about A-A is that the approach could further reduce scarce humanitarian aid resources by investing funds in building structures, which would then no longer be available for concrete relief activities.⁶³ These developments would be classified as negative unintended impacts. The case studies in Nepal and Madagascar show that reduced funding for relief activities as a result of funding for A-A is indeed possible if the development of infrastructures for AA is comprehensive and is not linked to development cooperation funds in the long term.⁶⁴

Humanitarian experts estimate that the A-A approach does not have more negative unintended effects on the resilience of people than strictly response operations.⁶⁵ In particular, as one interview partner pointed out, traditional short-term response where humanitarian actors come in with little contextual knowledge and leave quickly after the implementation ("flying in – flying out"⁶⁶) can lead to considerable unintended negative effects and can serve as important lessons for A-A. For example, the operations in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti (2010) would be a devastating example of such negative unintended developments.⁶⁷ Given that plans for A-A are based on advanced knowledge about the context, it is considered an important approach to avoid unintended effects.

In the online survey, no **unintended overarching impacts** were mentioned apart from those few unintended side-effects mentioned above (see Chapter 4.2, "Effectiveness"). This is in line with the state of affairs of the previous studies, which found no significant (additional) negative side effects of A-A.⁶⁸ With only one exception, interviewees and survey respondents agreed that from a theoretical perspective, not only applying but also expanding the approach makes sense, if done well. At the same time, there is a small risk that measured short-term success and excitement around the entire A-A approach could stand in the way of questioning certain elements of its implementation – to its own detriment.⁶⁹ In this regard, constructive criticism and a more honest, transparent and accessible evaluation of its impacts and long-term effects can help to continue the successes and learn from mistakes.

⁶² Interview with external expert

⁶³ Interviews with GFFO experts and external experts

⁶⁴ Analysis of the case studies

⁶⁵ Interviews with external experts

⁶⁶ Interview with an external expert

⁶⁷ Interview with an external expert

⁶⁸ See, for instance, WFP (2019): The evidence base on Anticipatory Action

⁶⁹ Survey result

Over the course of the implementation of pilot projects in Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar, several impact-related issues stand out. The COVID-19 pandemic was an important framework condition for most activations. The remaining four topics are still work-in-progress and are not fully solved on an operational level. Among others, lessons-learned processes should take these elements into account:

- **COVID-19 pandemic:** All activations in 2020 and 2021 had to be implemented under restrictions due to the pandemic. It is impressive that implementing organizations were able to reach affected people quickly and safely despite partial lockdowns, home office procedures and measures preventing a further spread of the virus (e.g., for cyclone shelters). However, movement restrictions imposed by the government in Madagascar led to significant delays in rolling out A-A.
- **Selection of affected people:** In sudden-onset events, the selection of people receiving support is a challenge. Because of time constraints, pre-selection is necessary, and time and staffing limitations mean that on-the-ground verification is not always possible. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has a comparative advantage in this respect due to its extensive system of volunteers. In Nepal, more than one third of the pre-selected individuals had to be excluded from the actual cash transfers during the monsoon flood activation in 2020 due to errors in the data base, such as duplications or the lack of Nepali citizenship certificate. Almost two thirds (61.3 %) of the survey respondents confirmed that reaching those most vulnerable is especially difficult in sudden-onset events.
- **Operational modality for cash transfer mechanisms:** All implementing organizations experiment with different modalities. WFP Nepal used bank account transfers in the monsoon flood activation of 2020, which led to delays and the exclusion of persons without Nepali citizenship certificate.

As a lesson, WFP used remittance agents during the recent autumn flood event in 2021. In Madagascar, mobile money was used. However, the framework conditions in the target area led to further problems: *Welthungerhilfe* had to distribute mobile phones and SIM cards, as many people do not own a phone and high illiteracy rates make the usage of cell phones difficult. Mobile money is well established in Bangladesh and efficiently provided by a local company, *bKash*.

- **Speed:** A-A for sudden-onset events in Bangladesh (monsoon flood in 2020, cyclone Amphan in 2020, cyclone Jaas in 2021, Dengue fever in 2020, riverbank erosion in 2020, etc.) and Nepal (monsoon flood in 2020, autumn flood in 2021) was impressive and timely. In total, 90.3 % of the survey respondents confirmed that A-A reaches affected people significantly earlier than conventional reactive approaches.
- **Impact assessment:** Impact and post distribution assessments are sometimes conducted. However, the knowledge base concerning the actual impact – defined as significant and/or lasting change in living conditions – should be improved through more

ambitious studies. Cash transfer amounts are generally harmonized with national guidelines, if there are any. However, transfer amounts remain small. For example, in a destruction-intensive event like the monsoon flood in Bangladesh in 2020, only € 46 per household was transferred, and in drought-related A-A in Madagascar in 2021, monthly support amounted to € 11. However, 90.4 % of the survey respondents confirmed that A-A has a significantly more positive effect on the lives of people in comparison to conventional reactive approaches.

The review team found that the GFFO's **interaction with broader initiatives** on climate and crisis risk financing as well as other humanitarian agendas seems less advanced and publicly communicated than other aspects of its approach: internal and external interview partners are less certain when speaking about specific linkages.

While Germany's participation – and even leadership role – in different multilateral or multi-stakeholder forums is recognized, a clear vision of how to engage with the climate and crisis risk financing community in a coordinated and concerted way seems less systematic. The GFFO's actions do not seem to be directly linked to its desired outcome of linking the A-A approach to initiatives of climate and crisis risk financing (see Chapter 7.2, "Theory of Change"). While external experts recognized that, on a conceptual level, it is more challenging to *match* the approach with more general disaster risk reduction efforts than it is to *mix* them, they recommend building more direct linkages.⁷⁰

Nearly all interviewed international experts pointed out that more cooperation between humanitarian and development actors in Germany should be encouraged to further expand A-A. Among experts, there is some confusion as to why the GFFO and BMZ cooperate so little. One expert stressed that, for example, the concept of sustainable food security does not currently include humanitarian assistance on the global level. More coordination and alignment between the humanitarian and development sectors could increase sustainable food security for people on the ground.⁷¹ Three other experts suggested more cooperation between the development and humanitarian sectors (especially in regards to A-A) within the domain of resilient recovery.⁷²

The distinction between humanitarian aid and development cooperation – which, in Germany, is institutionalized through the separation of mandates between the GFFO and BMZ – also exists in many other donor countries. The non-cooperation between these areas, i.e., "silo thinking", is also noticeable in implementing and other donor organizations.⁷³ One interviewee summarized: "*Donors often like to work in silos.*"⁷⁴

To ensure a broader buy-in from different types of actors, humanitarian financing instruments must be complemented and harmonized with climate finance and development funding

⁷⁰ Interview with external expert

⁷¹ Interview with an external expert

⁷² Interview with three external experts

⁷³ Several interviews with external experts

⁷⁴ Interview with external expert

streams. Other advice includes engaging more with neighboring fields such as conflict and displacement (also see Chapter 4.2: Effectiveness).⁷⁵

Strict administrative laws are a further challenge of the German humanitarian system, which challenge the localization of humanitarian assistance in general, including A-A.⁷⁶ As one expert put it: *“It is funny: on the one hand, Germany is a pioneer in A-A, and on the other hand, it has the strictest administrative regulations that make good A-A work very difficult.”*⁷⁷

Moreover, the *effort* to have the A-A approach accompanied by localization endeavors is clearly perceived by different actors. While the GFFO recognizes that existing contingency plans and local early warning systems can often facilitate participation and buy-in from the affected populations, the link and access to international funds has not been established. Similarly, the concrete link in both implementation and policy goals is still in its infancy and needs to be spelled out more clearly.⁷⁸ Several interviewees and survey respondents demanded a more ambitious approach, for example, by requiring more direct leadership and decision-making power from institutions and individuals in crisis-affected countries.⁷⁹ Any efforts by the GFFO in this direction and aiming to integrate A-A with existing system at the local or national level remain hard to pinpoint.

The **focus of future project support** is difficult to determine as, in general, the donor base is not sufficiently varied. Most interviewees and survey respondents highlighted a crucial missing link between A-A and longer-term development efforts. The cooperation and coordination between development and humanitarian actors is a long-existent challenge. Oftentimes, this lack of coordination can lead to suboptimal results.

Many see the A-A approach as a good entry point for increased alignment with development actors, given the relatively long preparation time of A-A (which allows for more coordination and adjustment than usual) on the one hand and larger funding pots on the development side on the other (which other actors aim to – or already have – draw upon).⁸⁰ A-A and development approaches should follow the nexus idea: starting with data sharing and an initial joint risk analysis for a common baseline, planning processes could foster agreements on joint short- and long-term goals. Moreover, actions that can also be found in classical development approach, e.g., for the education cluster, could be more coordinated.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Online survey

⁷⁶ Almost all interviewed international experts

⁷⁷ Interview with external expert

⁷⁸ Interviews with external experts

⁷⁹ Survey result

⁸⁰ Interviews with external experts

⁸¹ Interview with donor country partner

Assessment: *The GFFO's A-A approach has had a large impact on the international discussion calling for modifications in the humanitarian sector. However, its impact on affected populations worldwide is still limited, as the initial focus of A-A was on pilot projects and only limited funding has been allocated for A-A activations so far in comparison to traditional humanitarian response. Scaling up A-A should reinforce the impact in the coming years.*

There is an appetite for anticipatory thinking and action in the humanitarian sector as well as in neighboring fields, including development cooperation. The GFFO is promoting this discussion, which in turn influences the policies in different donor countries and organizations. In many of these contexts, donors have agreed that funding can be allocated earlier – based on forecasts – to mitigate the impacts on affected people and to reduce the costs of humanitarian assistance.

In specific cases, evaluations showed that this approach has worked well. However, in terms of the overall humanitarian system, the GFFO's approach has only generated limited impacts in the project countries. This is understandable given the focus on pilot projects so far.

The A-A approach, with its close links to local structures, requires close cooperation between the actors involved in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, climate protection, as well as national and local governments. A-A actors report that the GFFO-BMZ cooperation (nexus) is not effective enough to meet the demand for interconnected cooperation between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. On the policy level, staff from both ministries should be familiar with the policies and realities in the project countries. Cooperation should not merely focus on better coordination of different (separately planned) approaches and activities, but rather start with data sharing and an initial joint risk analysis for a common baseline. This would allow for the development of planning processes that serve joint short- and long-term goals. Enhanced cooperation is possible despite the strict separation of funds for humanitarian assistance (GFFO) and development cooperation (BMZ), which is enforced through the German Federal Audit Office. Moreover, to build on the Grand Bargain commitments, interactions and exchanges with communities at risk should be increased and formalized.

4.5 Coordination

This subchapter looks at coordination within the A-A field and specifically the GFFO's perceived role and coordination efforts.

To accurately assess harmonization and complementarity in this regard, this review distinguished between coordination with actors involved in project implementation on the one hand, and coordination on policy and funding structures within different GFFO departments, with different ministries, as well as with other donor countries or coordinating bodies on the other.

In general, the challenge of duplication was not raised by the interviewees and survey respondents (apart from mentioning it as a potential risk when scaling up pilots⁸²). Survey respondents considered the GFFO-financed A-A measures as complementary to those of other donors, and feel that the GFFO is actively supporting collaboration between different actors. Its leadership by, for example, co-chairing the High-level Event shows clear commitment to coordinate between different actors.⁸³

All actors of the country case studies are a part of national coordination systems, as well as members of A-A working groups, UN Cluster meetings, coordination meetings, and bilateral cooperation agreements. The online survey among experts in the three countries revealed that coordination with national and regional government offices works better than among RCRC Societies, the UN and NGOs. More than three quarters (77.7 %) of the respondents considered coordination with government offices well established, whereas only 51.6 % consider coordination with non-state actors as well established. Local practitioners indicated that some organizations “do their own thing.” For this reason, coordination with every actors has its limitations. In general, local experts are well informed about the actions of other stakeholders. However, there are limitations: organizations use different triggers, or at least different thresholds for the same trigger. It is clear that harmonization is necessary, but has not yet been achieved.

It can be observed that organizations move at a different speed and have a range of capacities. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society is a strong organization with a vast network of volunteers in every district of the country. But not every RCRC Society is in such a position. The same is true for NGOs and UN agencies. In addition, different organizations work on different hazards. Each of the organizations only work in regions where they already have a foothold since they are present with other programs. In the future, frameworks should concentrate on multi-hazard risks, and the extension of these frameworks to the entire country will be the next step. For that purpose, efficient coordination will likely become even more important.

Synergies and complementarity with the related fields of DRR and development initiatives are seen as mixed or critical by the colleagues from the case studies.

In Bangladesh, taken together, more than a third of respondents “agree” (25 %) or “strongly agree” (10 %) with the statement that A-A is poorly integrated into existing DRR/DRM systems. However, respondents from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society “disagree” (55.6 %) and “strongly disagree” (22.2 %). When comparing the data with Madagascar, the different stages of advancement of the two countries are made evident: in Madagascar, more than three quarters of respondents “agree” (66.7 %) or “strongly agree” (11.1 %) with the above statement. The linkages to development initiatives and climate change adaptation are generally considered as underdeveloped: 51.6 % of the respondents “agree” with this statement, and 19.4 % “agree strongly.”

⁸² Interview with donor country expert

⁸³ Interview with donor country partner

Unsurprisingly, on the ministry level in Germany, donor country partners recommended that the BMZ and GFFO increase collaboration, for example, on risk identification, planning and funding.⁸⁴ International partners expressed a lack of clear communication (or vision) around Germany's ambitions for good coordination between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation.⁸⁵ In general, a common understanding of the A-A approach is crucial to avoiding unnecessary competition and ensuring a trust-based cooperation.⁸⁶ With increased coordination on the ministry level, the nexus can be approached more directly on country level, for example, by harmonizing the use of anticipatory data models and common short- and long-term planning.⁸⁷ Several interviewees emphasized the need for better coordination around financing mechanisms, and encouraged the GFFO to look into more funding sources, including classical development instruments like insurances.⁸⁸

Within the GFFO, the holistic prevention strategy⁸⁹ of the Division 5 seems particularly well suited to combine the different anticipation approaches. Various external and internal experts suggested a more concerted approach, for example, by expanding working groups on anticipatory humanitarian action to colleagues working on predicting and preventing political crises, including in fragile and conflict contexts.⁹⁰

While on the one hand, the **need for a coordinated approach** – especially in the scale-up and mainstreaming phase – is consistently highlighted, interviewees and survey respondents also expressed a certain degree of confusion around the role of different networks and groups: a gap coordination is not felt, rather the contrary.⁹¹ This particularly relates to the policy level, where interviewees highlighted that the increasing number of actors leads to the fact that “sometimes, it’s a mess, a soup.”⁹² On a country level, Germany could support the improvement of coordination mechanisms by better linking them to international mechanisms or by supporting the improvement of national mechanisms. This aspect has already been mentioned in Chapter 4.2 (“Effectiveness”) in the sense of creating a momentum in the receiving country as well, and not only internationally.

Regarding neighboring fields, the vast majority of key experts responding to the online survey agreed (43.3 %) or partially agreed (also 43.3 %) that the GFFO's funding contributes to link A-A projects with existing DRR projects. In addition, the vast majority disagreed or strongly disagreed that A-A is weakening local and national DRR and community-based structures. However, more than half (56.7 %) found that the GFFO-financed A-A measures are not linked to existing development cooperation projects (see above).

⁸⁴ Interview with donor country partner

⁸⁵ Interviews with donor country partners

⁸⁶ Interview with internal expert

⁸⁷ Interview with internal expert

⁸⁸ Interviews with donor country partners

⁸⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/170614-leitlinien-krisepraevention-konfliktbewaeltigung-friedensfoerderung-dl-data.pdf>

⁹⁰ Interviews with external and internal experts

⁹¹ Interviews with external experts and donor country partners and survey results

⁹² Interview with donor country partners. Moreover, the announcement of the CRAF'd at the High-level Event created some confusion in the A-A community as its future role remains to be clarified. (Interviews with donor country partner and external expert)

Internationally, the GFFO's financial support for creating the Anticipation Hub as cornerstone of coordination among different actor groups is highly welcomed.⁹³ However, the role for different actors, such as donor governments, could be outlined more clearly. Germany is also encouraged to continue its thought leadership in multilateral forums such as the G7, and on an EU-level as a follow-up to having successfully pushed the approach on the international agenda within the UN General Assembly and OCHA.⁹⁴ One aspect that could be coordinated more specifically is the selection of affected persons who will benefit from A-A: currently, modalities are still diverging. The GFFO could explore whether joint databases and common vulnerability criteria for different actors are feasible and helpful.

The question of **common definitions and terminology** needs to be addressed from two angles (and more thoroughly than possible within this review): firstly, do different actors have the same *understanding* of specific terms on a conceptual basis?; And secondly, do different actors have the same *conviction/strategy* of what A-A should be on a procedural basis (i.e., what they consider A-A, regardless of which term is used)? In the current phase where scale-up requires more and diverse involvement, it seems impossible and not necessarily helpful to enforce a certain definition on a global basis – in this regard, close coordination seems “good enough.” However, some donor countries seem to try different approaches that partly go against the definition suggested by the GFFO.

The practitioners interviewed for the case studies do share a common understanding: A-A is a way of acting before the impacts of a disaster are felt based on a scientific forecast, a pre-agreed action framework and immediately available funds. The GFFO should avoid diluting these core elements so that interpretations are possible without sacrificing the innovative essence of the approach.

Almost all of GFFO's partners consider the **knowledge sharing of lessons learned** as valuable. This is particularly true on an informal level: the GFFO and its staff are considered to be both helpful and accessible. Germany is also lauded for its strategic bilateral dialogue, also on more senior levels, including on a thematic level regarding policy priorities.⁹⁵

On a more formal level, the effort to share lessons learned in multilateral groups is evident as well. For the moment, this relates more to exchanging information quickly and understanding the concepts rather than exchanging evidence concerning longer-term impacts. To make this happen, the GFFO is encouraged to share pilot results, factsheets or studies to support trust building around the approach.⁹⁶ Moreover, to avoid that monitoring and reporting efforts of implementing organizations lead to less trust in the A-A approach (given they are not independent and generally less robust), more independent research to identify intended and unintended impacts is crucial, especially when funding increases.⁹⁷

⁹³ Interview with donor country partner

⁹⁴ Interview with donor country partner and internal expert

⁹⁵ Interviews with donor country partners

⁹⁶ Interviews with donor country partners

⁹⁷ Interview with external expert

Lessons-learned processes from organizations with activations in the three country cases show that critical and self-reflective information is both available and shared. After an activation, all organizations enter a lessons-learned process and revise framework protocols. These activations still have an experimental character, be it because it is the first time the country is implementing A-A or it is the first A-A activation for this specific hazard. Naturally, sub-optimal performances occur, and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic further complicated activations over the last one and a half years. However, the A-A approach is not questioned by any of the stakeholders. For this reason, it is not necessary for the GFFO to “justify” the approach, but a critical discourse around unresolved core issue would be desirable to advance the approach. Among others, these issues include unreliable forecasts, early warning systems that do not reach all affected population groups, pre-selection of affected people (including the use of social protection databases), cash transfer modalities in countries where efficient mobile money providers are not available, and impact assessments including counterfactual considerations and studies. Thus, the lessons learned from implementing actors working on these core issues should be equally as promoted as the approach itself. More research and analysis will broaden the evidence base to improve the approach in practice.

Assessment: *The GFFO’s role in driving the A-A approach forward includes its engagement in coordination efforts. While close coordination remains crucial, especially when scaling up the approach, an “over-ambition” to create more coordination forums could lead to confusion.*

In the coming months, the GFFO should put emphasis on prioritizing a coordinated scale-up and capitalize on different actors’ strengths. This relates to all levels of cooperation: within the GFFO, on a German ministerial level, with other donor stakeholders, and with implementing partners.

While A-A actors should avoid duplicating and cannibalizing each other’s efforts, “harmonization” should not necessarily be the ultimate goal at any cost: while building on existing triggers and replicating them for similar hazards is a helpful practice, individual actors can also focus on different hazards or regions to increase the field knowledge and expertise. For example, in Bangladesh, the START Network concentrates on A-A for hazards that are less often addressed (including dengue fever, riverbank erosions and landslides).

To avoid confusion, help implementing partners understand what Germany can and is willing to finance, and improve its own standing, the GFFO should continue to insist on clarifying definitions for its own approach to A-A in international forums. This becomes ever more important as the term “A-A” grows in popularity: with increased funding, the field risks attracting more implementing actors who claim that the implementation of their projects is “A-A,” even if their work is not in line with the GFFO’s definition due to a lack of guidance.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Interview with donor country partner

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the conducted interviews, document analyses, efficiency analyses, online surveys, and country case studies of this review.

5.1 Policy and Strategy

Recommendation 1: Continue working on and developing the pillars of the GFFO's anticipatory action approach (piloting in countries, integrating into international funds, and strongly advocating at different levels) and add a focus on scaling up the A-A approach.

Different stakeholders consider the GFFO to be a pioneer of A-A due to its continuous commitment to different pillars: supporting the implementation of anticipatory actions in early and pilot phases, integrating the approach into international funds (CERF, DREF and the Start Fund) through financial contributions, and strongly advocating on an international level and in multilateral forums. This multifaceted approach is appreciated among humanitarian actors and other donor countries, but also widely recognized among several development actors. For this reason, these efforts should be continued. Germany is clearly perceived as a thought leader, source of inspiration and role model by other donors. In this way, the GFFO's main goals have thus far been successfully realized. The GFFO should continue working on and further developing these different pillars simultaneously, while also adding a focus on scaling up. The recommendations below further specify possible procedures and steps.

Recommendation 2: Strive to improve the coordination between humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and climate change impact mitigation and adaptation. This is particularly necessary and appropriate, as extensive capacities need to be built and maintained for effective implementation of A-A.

The vast majority of interviewed international experts and actors recommend better cooperation and coordination between development and humanitarian actors to improve the A-A work and scale it up.

In the view of almost all interviewed international experts, the GFFO and BMZ should cooperate more in order to better address mutual challenges and the increasing demand for humanitarian assistance over longer periods of time. Already existing initiatives and shared strategies, such as the "Chapeau approach," are not known to these international actors.

This issue could be approached from four angles:

- a) More exchange between the GFFO's Division S07 and BMZ's Division 420 ("Climate policy"), Division 223 ("Peace and security, disaster risk management"), and Division 222 ("Crisis management, transitional development assistance, reconstruction, infrastructure in crisis situations"). To further develop the strengths of the A-A approach, Division S07 and the BMZ should familiarize themselves with each other's strategies and relevant approaches for A-A.

- b) Move from pilot projects to pilot country programs that focus on an integration of A-A into national DRM systems and crisis response. For A-A to be efficient, the approach requires structures that clearly fall under the traditional mandate of the development sector (when coordinating with or directly supporting local governmental structures), including hydro-meteorological forecasts, early warning systems and social safety networks. If national systems are not sufficient, building on existing structures built by development actors is the most efficient form of A-A. With this goal-oriented mindset, humanitarian and development actors are already working together in project countries. Often, local implementing organizations do not distinguish that rigidly between mandates within their programming. This also needs to be mirrored in the funding structures of donor countries.

For example, the GFFO and BMZ could jointly promote and scale up A-A pilot country programs that link to traditional development cooperation, DRR and climate activities. This cooperation should not focus merely on better coordination of different (already separately planned) approaches and activities, but should follow the nexus idea: starting with data sharing and an initial joint risk analysis for a common baseline, planning processes could serve to foster agreement on joint short- and long-term goals. These could serve as a solid foundation for distributing tasks and finding unity on shared funding approaches. Coordination must happen on an ongoing basis.

- c) Support pilots that include the complementary perspectives of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Regarding A-A, the above-mentioned enhanced cooperation between GFFO and BMZ might be used for funding pilot projects.
- d) Encourage more traditional development actors to participate in A-A debates (for example, the World Bank). Strategic partnerships with traditional development actors can help further develop the A-A approach in practice. Feedback from international actors indicates that partners such as the World Bank, FAO and local development organizations have extensive know-how to support A-A.

Recommendation 3: Clearly commit to supporting the humanitarian system's localization agenda, including through the funding commitment announced at the High-level Event (09/2021).

A-A is often already disrupting the status quo, as the approach is based on data, security safety nets and contingency plans at the local/regional level, and builds on other local structures and networks, including through cooperation with governmental bodies. For this reason, it appears logical to use A-A as one crucial pillar to advance the localization agenda. In practice, the drivers and most-funded actors of A-A are the RCRC movement, UN agencies and international NGOs. Thus, strengthening the local environment for A-A is important. To place itself as a crucial actor in the humanitarian system's localization agenda, it could follow USAID's announcement⁹⁹ to act upon the Grand Bargain commitments. A-A is a good starting point to

⁹⁹ <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/speeches/nov-4-2021-administrator-samantha-power-new-vision-global-development>

increase localization efforts, and the GFFO could link these measures to its 5 % goal, for example, by pledging a certain percentage for local organizations directly or by encouraging more NGOs to become members of the Start Network.

The GFFO has been successful in creating an international momentum for A-A. Nationalizing this momentum in partner countries by supporting national coordination mechanisms and advocacy at various levels, including through the promotion of community preparedness, would strengthen the “localization” and “participation” objectives of the Grand Bargain. Particularly A-A champions like Bangladesh or countries with similar A-A experience would qualify for such a process.

Recommendation 4: Clarify and clearly mark whether which funding does – and does not – count as A-A support. Firstly, identify the criteria that defines the core aspects of A-A, the criteria for extended A-A that include further actions on a broader level, and activities that cannot be counted as A-A. Secondly, strengthen awareness around the complementarity of A-A and (rapid) response activities.

Conceptual clarity is important to avoid A-A becoming an eroded and ultimately empty concept. Especially considering efforts to scale up A-A, it is important that the A-A approach not be seen as, or eventually become, a merely fashionable term. The GFFO should thus clearly communicate what counts as A-A, what might be considered close enough and what should be left aside. To leverage existing experiences and approaches in neighboring fields and consider those actions that would at least partially qualify as A-A, an extended definition could help.

The **criteria that define the core aspects** of A-A might include:

- a) Anticipatory actions are taken in the context of a specific forecastable hazard (with available data);
- b) Before the impacts of the hazard are felt or fully unfold;
- c) On the basis of predefined triggers and thresholds, pre-agreed upon in specific contingency plans;
- d) In the case that the impacts can be prevented or at least mitigated; and
- e) If the impacts of a hazard are forecasted as “out of the ordinary” and thus more severe than regular or seasonal hazard impacts – i.e., incidents that only occur every 5-10 years.

The **criteria for extended A-A aspects** that deviate from the strict definition but could be still funded under A-A might include:

- a) Anticipatory actions that are taken in the context of a specific forecastable hazard that can be forecasted through available scientific data *and/or more qualitative assessments of experts in the project countries*;
- b) Before *or quickly after* the impacts of the hazard are felt or fully unfold (if the preparation started before the impacts began);

- c) On the basis of predefined triggers and thresholds, pre-agreed upon in specific contingency plans *and/or professionally appropriate or customary procedures in the region*;
- d) If the impacts of a hazard are forecasted as “out of the ordinary” and thus more severe than annual or seasonal hazard impacts – i.e., they are incidents that only occur every 5-10 years. *However, while in pilot phases and in regions with poor resilience, initially, thresholds could be lowered to severe events that occur more often than every 5-10 years.*

The criteria for **activities that cannot be funded** under GFFO’s A-A funds might include:

- a) Actions responding to needs assessments done after the impacts are felt;
- b) Aiming to reduce impacts of seasonal disasters;
- c) Immediately reacting to observed needs caused by hazards that cannot be (or were not) forecasted;
- d) Aiming to support general resilience or affected people or strengthen the infrastructure at long-term.

More details on how to move toward more transparent funding and international comparability will be given in recommendation 15.

With regard to the above-mentioned A-A aspects, the complementarity of A-A and traditional humanitarian action (including rapid response) should be emphasized. The local experts from the case studies are convinced that A-A is innovative and will become more important in the future. However, some of the local experts stressed the importance of viewing the approach in connection to the response activities that may be necessary in addition to A-A.

If a forecast is correct in its prediction of disastrous impact, A-A is part of a continuum offered to affected people. In sudden-onset events like floods and cyclones, the mitigation of physical destruction as a primary impact of a hazard is not possible, or only to a very limited extent (e.g., through sandbags, clearance of canals, reinforcement of shelters, etc.). In such a situation, A-A reduces livelihood disruption as a secondary impact of the hazard by offering cash or non-food items for preparedness, by protecting movable assets (including livestock), and/or by evacuating people to (cyclone) shelters. The actual physical destruction and the accompanying hardship for affected populations will still materialize. A-A increases “resilience” for a concrete event and supports affected people to minimize so-called negative coping mechanisms like eating less or cheaper food, losing or selling livestock at low prices, or taking up loans to survive. In this way, A-A flattens the “disruption curve” and speeds up recovery. However, significant emergency relief is still a part of the picture: thus, the different activities will directly build on each other in most cases. The GFFO should clearly communicate that the ambition to shift toward more anticipatory action and a more risk-based approach is not a call for completely refraining from needs-based humanitarian action.

Recommendation 5: Concentrate on pioneer and champion countries with a more intentional geographical selection rather than a scattershot approach.

The case studies showed that all three examined countries were in different phases with A-A at the time of this review. Bangladesh had five activations of different frameworks for various types of disasters since 2020, including a CERF activation with a volume of € 4.5 million. Most experts from Bangladesh regard A-A as already being in a scaling up process. The pilot phase is completed, and the current topics center on multi-hazard frameworks, harmonization of thresholds and triggers, and the inclusion of more actors, regions and affected people. With this understanding, Bangladesh can be considered as an *A-A champion*. Nepal and Madagascar are at a different stage in the A-A process. Since 2020, both countries have undergone two activations, each with one activation with an incorrect forecast and one activation that is still ongoing or currently in the process of collecting lessons learned. In this respect, Nepal and Madagascar are *A-A pioneers* in an experimental pilot stage. Active implementing organizations in both countries claim that they are ready to scale up their A-A activities, but the DRR/DRM environment seems less established than in Bangladesh and the number of actors is limited.

Recommendation 6: Find the right balance between informed involvement and a “hands-off” attitude, allowing implementing actors greater freedom when expanding the A-A approach to additional hazard types, geographic contexts and affected people.

When it comes to implementing A-A (pilot) projects, the GFFO takes an arms-length approach vis-à-vis implementing actors by supporting international funds or national RCRC societies through the GRC. The GFFO is open to suggestions for researching specific approaches and types of hazards.

So far, the push or pioneering spirit for an expansion is more limited than it is for A-A in general. If the GFFO wants to further develop and expand A-A, it could support specific approaches by funding more targeted research and financing implementing local actors directly, or by encouraging international funds to invest in certain types of hazards to reach the people most affected.

Germany could use its current leadership position to consider opportunities for coordination or cooperation with neighboring fields. For example, as conflicts are among the main drivers of humanitarian crises, the expansion of A-A to conflict situations is an ongoing discussion (including in the German Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance Abroad), and the GFFO should participate more intently in this discussion if it wants to drive this effort forward. One way would be to engage more with Division S05 (responsible for PREVIEW, early warning, Analysis, Information Management, and CRAF'd), which analyzes ongoing and emerging conflicts and critical developments in crisis situations. Moreover, it could leverage information from staff in project country embassies and establish feedback channels to integrate expert judgements into planning processes.

In addition, given that extreme weather and climate events are already occurring more frequently, A-A actors could also work more closely with actors engaged in climate change (impact) mitigation and adaptation. By default, this could flow into the trigger analysis for appropriate “out of the ordinary” thresholds, as contingency plans (EAPs, frameworks, etc.) should be adapted more regularly. Thus, the GFFO should support coordination among different actors and ensure that current research on global and regional climate change impacts constantly feeds into A-A considerations. Germany could build on its advocacy experience and utilize its convening power to also encourage greater contributions from German development actors by linking development funding schemes to its A-A approach.

5.2 Processes and Projects

The recommendations in this chapter are mostly based on the country case studies, which include experiences with A-A in Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar. Making any sweeping generalizations across these countries with framework activations should be avoided. However, certain experiences and lessons most likely represent the reality in practice well enough to allow for drawing more general conclusions.

Recommendation 7: Share the lessons learned from different projects more broadly to consolidate takeaways from different types of implementation, while at the same time keeping in mind that there is no “one size fits all” approach.

Lessons from the first activations in Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar show that certain topics have been of prime importance to determine the success of implementation.

- **Forecasts:** Incorrect forecasts triggered unnecessary actions or no support for disastrous, unpredicted events. For this reason, the quality of forecasts is of prime importance. The entire A-A concept rests on reliable and timely forecasts to allow for sufficient lead time to prepare for action. The A-A-community is well aware of the trade-off between the higher uncertainty for earlier warnings and the longer lead-time to react. Currently, existing thresholds and triggers seem to be a first attempt to balance lead-time and reliability. However, the current state seems to still be a work-in-progress and partially experimental.
- **Early warning:** Experiences from Bangladesh and Nepal indicate that affected people receiving support through A-A have been warned earlier than affected people not receiving support. Early warning systems that do not manage to reach the “last mile” or people in (very) remote and isolated areas are a serious limitation.
- **Selection of affected people:** In sudden-onset events, the selection of people receiving support is a challenge. Pre-selection is necessary because of the time constraints, and on the ground verification due to time and staffing limitations is not always possible. However, “correct” identification is necessary to guarantee legitimation and to avoid conflict and disappointment.

- **Operational modality for the cash transfer mechanism:** All implementing organizations experiment with different modalities. In the monsoon flood activation of 2020, WFP Nepal used bank account transfers that resulted in various problems. Based on this lesson, WFP changed its approach and used remittance agents during the recent autumn flood event in 2021. In Madagascar, mobile money was used. However, the framework conditions in the target area led to further challenges: *Welthungerhilfe* had to distribute mobile phones and SIM cards, as many people do not own a phone and high illiteracy rates make the usage of cell phones difficult. In Bangladesh, mobile money is well established and efficiently provided by a local company, *bKash*.
- **Speed:** A-A in the sudden-onset events in Bangladesh and Nepal was impressive and (for most affected people) timely. A total of 90.3 % of the survey respondents confirmed that A-A reaches the affected people significantly earlier than conventional reactive approaches. However, partial delays occur, and will also occur in the future. COVID-19 restrictions made activations more complicated and put an additional work burden on implementing staff. A-A will again and again be too slow to reach all affected people before the impacts of events are felt, and will thus fall into the timespan of rapid or early response. Experts in Bangladesh stressed the importance of seeing A-A and (rapid) response as connected and to plan accordingly. Otherwise, response delays will follow.
- **Impact assessment:** Impact and post distribution assessments are partially available. However, knowledge on the actual impacts defined as significant and/or lasting change in the living conditions of affected people could still be improved.
- **Organizational capacity:** Most local experts confirmed that the institutional capacities of their organizations have significantly improved in recent years and that they are able to implement A-A in an effective way. However, particularly representatives from RCRC Societies and local NGOs stated that repeated capacity building is necessary due to staff turn-over or changing needs in the A-A system. Most local experts are worried about certain government line agencies where awareness and capacity are still weak.

Recommendation 8: Focus on capacity development for implementing actors and international coordinating institutions.

- **Capacity building (environment):** As A-A is embedded in the wider DRR field, its success is dependent on functioning elements such as reliable forecasts, efficient early warning systems, existing government DRM policies and structures capable of rolling out these policies when needed, national and international mitigation and prevention efforts, and (community) preparedness. In many countries, this environment still needs to be (partially) improved. Capacity building with a systemic approach could be a desirable next step to eliminate national bottlenecks.
- **Capacity building (institutions):** RCRC Societies and NGOs still see the need to regularly invest in institutional capacity building to deal with new hazards, overcome the

weaknesses of previous activations and retain institutional alertness and readiness despite frequent staff turnover. UN agencies significantly depend on these capacities in actual activations. Government structures are frequently seen as the weakest part of the A-A system. It is not possible to assess if this observation is fair given that the view of government personnel is not well represented in the case studies.

Recommendation 9: Encourage and support trigger and threshold harmonization between different implementing actors.

Organizations frequently use different thresholds and/or triggers for the same hazard in the same regions. Harmonization is a major topic in Bangladesh due to its relatively wide range of A-A actors. As A-A could benefit from an exchange of lessons learned and from building on existing trigger analyses, the GFFO's role could be to fund extra costs that occur through coordination efforts among different actors regarding harmonization processes.

5.3 Cooperation and Learning

Recommendation 10: Improve knowledge sharing and cooperation within the GFFO to capitalize on existing knowledge, data and partnerships within the ministry and in German embassies in project countries.

GFFO personnel working on A-A could inform their colleagues in other divisions within the *Directorate-General for Humanitarian Assistance, Crisis Prevention Stabilisation and Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (Directorate-General S) in a more systematic way about the A-A approach, given regular rotation and staff turnover.

At the same time, the GFFO could also encourage connecting existing data and in-house expertise with the humanitarian approach for a more informed and holistic scale-up of A-A. Moreover, it could leverage information from staff in embassies located in project countries and establish feedback channels to integrate expert judgements into planning processes.

Expanding the A-A approach depends on a concerted effort within the GFFO and could be enhanced through improved knowledge transfer and common goal setting. This could start through regular meetings of a dedicated task force that extends beyond the staff working on humanitarian action, or via further cross-division participation in key events. For example, during the High-level Event, Division S05 announced the creation of CRAF'd. The new *Complex Risk Analytics Fund* was thus clearly marked as important for humanitarian actors and could serve as a basis for further engagement. Apart from the Directorate-General S, the GFFO could initiate regular exchanges with other departments to inform them about the progress and challenges of A-A. For example, the divisions responsible for preparing Germany's presidency for the upcoming G7 summit in 2022 (the Planning and Protocol Task Force for the Organisation and Implementation of the Presidencies of the Council of Europe Committee of

Ministers and of the G7, OR 12 and Division 200¹⁰⁰) could be involved early on to make A-A one of the focus areas. A more holistic and strategic approach could also be enhanced through discussions with the Parliament and Cabinet Division (011) to support a coordinated whole-of-government approach.

Recommendation 11: Strengthen the capacity within the GFFO to efficiently accompany the scale-up of A-A.

In international comparison, GFFO desk officers have to implement relatively more funding and projects than their counterparts in other countries,¹⁰¹ and the ministry is notoriously understaffed – including in Division S.¹⁰² For a successful scale-up, more resources are needed to increase cooperation and collaboration with development actors, other political actors in Germany such as the newly formed German Parliament, actors of national and local governmental bodies in project countries, German embassies in partner countries, and to foster greater involvement of German and international NGOs in the A-A process. To ease the burden on the relatively limited personnel, increase its impact and adequately accompany the scale-up and expansion of its A-A approach, the GFFO should consider strengthening its own capacity and establish more cross-sectoral expertise with actors from different fields, as well as with experts understanding both the policy approach and the technical aspects of A-A. For example, closer exchange or short-term secondments from local organizations could help to shape a strategic scale-up of A-A.

Recommendation 12: Foster an enabling environment “at home” with more German NGOs.

So far, the GFFO restricts its funding to the RCRC (GRC and IFRC), UN organizations the START Network, and individual NGOs (e.g., *Welthungerhilfe*). A broader group of actors could strengthen the approach in Germany and create a stronger base of national A-A experts contributing to advancing the approach internationally. If the GFFO wants to keep its role as the leading actor in A-A, it also needs an enabling environment “at home,” including legitimacy with the leading humanitarian actors in Germany. At the same time, more German NGOs are connected and able to engage with their partners in A-A project countries, thereby strengthening local capacities.

Recommendation 13: In addition to taking the “fuel and build” approach to A-A, ensure independent and steady monitoring, and encourage gathering and building on lessons learned and research results.

So far, partnerships with scientific networks and researchers to scrutinize, question and improve the A-A approach has not been one of the GFFO’s openly declared focus areas. The importance of independent and steady monitoring as well as impact assessments is not put into question and, in general, the GFFO is open for results sharing and building on the lessons

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/215272/7589c67d13d448cc26d1f6c6424dd1cb/organigramm-en-data.pdf>

¹⁰¹ <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/239/1923978.pdf>

¹⁰² <https://www.gppi.net/2020/04/08/the-german-foreign-office-at-150-time-to-shake-things-up>

learned of pilots and regional projects. For the planned scale-up, it is crucial to support implementing partners in gathering lessons learned and building on the results of scientific monitoring. Moreover, to keep its good reputation as a donor, the GFFO should increase its own capacity to accompany its “fuel and build” approach and its three pillars sufficiently: more diverse expertise and better understanding can improve its support for funding anticipatory actions, encourage international funds to follow this approach and help convince more donors and other actors through evidence-based advocacy.

To prevent A-A’s measured short-term success and the excitement around the entire approach from hampering the questioning of parts of its approach, the GFFO should lead by example and encourage an open culture of constructive criticism. Honest, transparent and accessible evaluation of the A-A approach’s impacts and long-term effects can help to continue the successes and learn from mistakes.

5.4 Funding

Recommendation 14: Consider more flexibility in the administration of A-A funds.

Administrative requirements lead to significant challenges in implementing the A-A approach. International partners reported that the Norwegian and Swiss governments are more flexible and helpful when it comes to the implementation of humanitarian assistance projects. The rigidity regarding the allotment of funds on an annual basis and accounting adjustments to a fiscal year should be made more flexible. Rolling funds could be a good first step for the GFFO to push toward. In this case, funds are paid in and successively flow out over several years, while further financing top up the fund on a continuous basis.

These resources do not have to be repaid, but the amount of new funding can be adjusted based on prior expenses and current funding levels.

The wish for decentralized (i.e., national or geographically specific) funds from some experts in Bangladesh may be unrealistic for GFFO funding modalities. However, if the GFFO desires to expand the global and national group of A-A actors, new funding possibilities are needed. As a first step for German humanitarian organizations, existing funding possibilities could be utilized in the following ways:

- Integrate A-A as a contingency fund in projects or regional programs of the GFFO;
- Integrate A-A as a contingency fund in transitional development assistance projects (BMZ-SÜH); and
- Utilize the “Chapeau Approach” to fund A-A projects through the GFFO and improve cooperation with neighboring fields to enable efficient A-A through the BMZ.

Recommendation 15: Differentiate between A-A which should receive increased funding in the foreseen scale-up and A-A which requires more research and pilot projects before the scale-up can begin.

For scientific research, it is still a challenge to precisely assess the efficiency of A-A programs. However, this should not prevent donors from further investing in (scaling up) A-A: impact studies in the field of development cooperation and traditional humanitarian action show that in complex situations, attributing impact to concrete action is difficult. Often, only very simple and straightforward causal relationships can be proven, but complex relations cannot be established. The differentiation for the scale-up may be as follows:

- a) Countries/regions are (*ready for*) *scaling up* if they have established and well-functioning DRR infrastructure. In these cases, the A-A approach can be absorbed more easily and put into action. An example for such a country is Bangladesh, where A-A is already in the processing of scaling up.
- b) Countries/regions with a lack of necessary infrastructure may still face challenges that need to be resolved before an A-A scale-up. The costs that arise from starting A-A programs are high as compared to those contexts described above, as basic DRR infrastructure has to be built so that anticipatory action can evolve. Quick results are less likely and a scale-up would not currently be an option. In structurally less developed contexts, the labor to maintain framework conditions and protocols will produce higher costs. A-A could be promoted where DRR is under development and DRR structures are emerging: a current example of such a country is Madagascar.

To ensure efficiency, A-A programs should work closely with development actors and national actors/governments and no parallel structures should be established. Scaling up does not only mean increasing funding or planning A-A as one concerted national response. In Bangladesh, it also includes the development of multi-hazard frameworks and frameworks for new hazards (e.g., heat waves in urban areas), the integration of additional geographical regions, the inclusion of more affected people, and the need for more actors.

Recommendation 16: Make funding amounts for A-A publicly available and internationally comparable.

So far, there is no international overview of donor commitments. Since there is no internationally recognized definition or funding marker, it is hard to track down or compare each country's contributions – one would have to collect and analyze these data points directly from donors and implementing organizations rather than from public platforms. Germany could use its international influence to further strengthen joint multilateral approaches and bring forward the goal of increasing the amount and broadness of actors. While a common definition of what counts as A-A would be helpful to compare commitments and actual allocations internationally, Germany should focus on increasing its own funding transparency. As a first step, the GFFO should lead by example and make the case for making funding data publicly available, for example, through reporting via the IATI. Secondly, the GFFO should promote

internationally comparable reporting standards by deciding on a clear explanation of indicators and definitions used that mark the amount spent as “anticipatory”. This can serve as an orientation for other donors who can follow this suggestion or, if needed, clearly mark distinctions.

5.5 Networking

Recommendation 17: Clarify how to use the GFFO’s leading role to connect humanitarian actors with neighboring sectors and international stakeholders.

The GFFO is successfully promoting its own approach: the ministry is widely perceived and admired as an A-A champion and thought leader. In particular, its contributions to events and networks such as the High-level Event as well its announced monetary commitment are highlighted by others. Through its advocacy work, the GFFO and its staff are primary contacts for international partners. To keep this leading role, the GFFO should continue to put the topic of A-A on the policy agenda in different multilateral forums and decision-making bodies, including in the EU, UN Security Council and G7. To leverage its influence in a responsible way, the GFFO should also clarify which role it wants to play in coordinating and cooperating with neighboring sectors. For example, in project countries, there are direct linkages with DRR actors through the A-A implementation plans and with development actors, especially for A-A for slow-onset disasters.

Recommendation 18: Monitor the development of parallel and duplicative networks and continue to make an effort to involve new actors in the existing structures.

The structure and organization of the A-A field is partly unclear to some actors. Currently, the existence of various networks and groups and the development of new initiatives can be convoluted and overwhelming for new actors, as the networks’ specific roles are not yet clearly distinguished – or rather, not clearly explained to all stakeholders. This includes networks and groups such as REAP, the Crisis Risk Financing Donor Working Group and the Anticipatory Action Task Force (formerly Early Action Focus Task Force). Germany should continue working with partners such as the Anticipation Hub, which serves as a platform for exchanging knowledge and connecting different actors.

On the one hand, the GFFO should be cautious about developing new structures and funding opportunities to ensure they are not duplicative and do not work in parallel to existing formats. On the other, it should further support those who create and lead coordinating bodies by explaining different structures and networks to its partners, including to other donor countries. Importantly, the role of the CRAF’ d for the humanitarian sector is unclear, at times even confusing, to some actors and should be communicated more clearly once its financial support is available. Providing more funding for scale-ups comes with the risk that A-A is not considered a *tool* but rather a *goal* that one can apply for and receive funding. Clear roles and structures can help avoid fueling a trend instead of a real improvement of humanitarian action.

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