



ON THE FRONT FOOT: Envisioning a model for anticipatory action in the Pacific



PRACTICE PAPER SERIES



PIANGO



Food and Agriculture
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ADVISORY GROUP



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Acknowledgements

Research team: Anna Saxby, Sam Quinn, Vinthara Goluhewage (HAG); Akmal Ali, Siale Ilolahia (PIANGO); Catherine Jones, Malia Talakai (FAO)

Editor: Eleanor Davey

Copy editor: Campbell Aitken

Peer reviewers: Emma Louise Flaherty, Yao Xiangjun, Raushan Kumar

Graphic design: Jean Watson

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About PIANGO

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) functions as a regional secretariat to a network of umbrella organisations or platforms registered in 24 countries, territories and states across the Pacific region. PIANGO's primary role is as a catalyst for collective action, to facilitate and support coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern, and to strengthen the influence and impact of non-governmental organisations' efforts in the region.

About FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations, leading global efforts to eliminate hunger and achieve food security for all. With 195 members, including 194 countries and the European Union, FAO operates in over 130 countries worldwide. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands work closely with governments to improve disaster risk management and promote sustainable agriculture livelihoods. Emphasising anticipatory action, both offices prioritise expanding this proactive approach.

About Humanitarian Advisory Group

Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice and training that contributes to excellence in humanitarian practice. As an ethically driven business, we combine humanitarian passion with entrepreneurial agility to think and do things differently.

About the Humanitarian Horizons program

Humanitarian Horizons 2021–24 is the second iteration of HAG's partnership-based, sector-wide research program. Focusing on Asia and the Pacific, Humanitarian Horizons aims to progress thinking on the role of the humanitarian sector and produce evidence about ways to achieve better outcomes for crisis-affected people. The program is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The research program for 2021–24 builds on the achievements of the 2018–21 iteration and HAG's experience in supporting the sector for almost 10 years. Humanitarian Horizons has three interlocking streams: 1) Power, People and Local Leadership, 2) Greening the System, and 3) Real-Time Analysis and Influence. It is underpinned by a fourth stream comprised of governance, accountability and monitoring, evaluation and learning processes.

The Real Time Analysis and Influence stream aims to explore emerging issues and thematic areas across the humanitarian sector and publish timely outputs. Practice papers like this one are concise and high-level analysis pieces intended to inform practices within response and recovery efforts and support decision-making and discussions about future action.

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Abbreviations

APCP	Australia Pacific Climate Partnership
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCA	climate change adaptation
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVA	Cash Voucher Assistance
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [Australia]
DRF	Disaster Risk Finance
DRFS	Disaster Risk Finance Strategy [Tonga]
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FALE	Facility Aiding Locally Led Engagement
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRDP	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
GEDSI	Gender, Disability And Social Inclusion
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
OPD	Organisation of People With Disabilities
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PRP	Pacific Resilience Partnership
REAP	Risk-informed Early Action Partnership
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UN	United Nations
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme



Introduction

Anticipatory action is gaining increasing momentum across the development, humanitarian, and resilience-building landscape as an effective approach to prevent or mitigate the impacts of disasters. The approach is based on a simple principle: linking early warning information and foreseeable impacts to pre-emptive action. It is seen as a way of better protecting lives and livelihoods – rather than waiting for the worst to materialise.¹

Work on anticipatory action at the community level is widespread and expanding in the Pacific, as is the energy to implement anticipatory action systems at national and regional levels. It is timely to consider how establishing and scaling up anticipatory mechanisms, through collaborative action that respects, supports and leverages Pacific, knowledge, values and priorities, can strengthen the existing resilience architecture.

WHAT DOES THIS PAPER DO?

This paper explores good-practice approaches to implementing anticipatory action in the Pacific. Section 1 identifies existing elements across the Pacific upon which anticipatory action systems can build, as well as the key barriers to their implementation. Section 2 explores the evidence base on anticipatory action, identifying the strengths, opportunities and lessons learnt from anticipatory action systems worldwide that may inform suitable approaches for the Pacific. Section 3 presents a pathway for collective work towards establishing anticipatory action systems in the Pacific, followed by recommendations for key stakeholders, including Pacific governments, regional bodies and donors.

¹ de Wit, S (2019), *Getting ahead of crises: A thesaurus for anticipatory humanitarian action*

WHAT IS ANTICIPATORY ACTION, AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE?

Although regional and global forums have embraced the term ‘anticipatory action’, there may be a need to revisit its original roots in the Pacific context or engage in national-level dialogues to assess the feasibility and support building the capacity of Pacific actors to transition to anticipatory action as a broadly used terminology within the region. During the Pacific Anticipatory Action Week, held in Nadi, Fiji, in March 2023, the use of multiple terms was acknowledged, and further discussions on terminology were deemed necessary, as it is important to consider both local terminology and the need for the region to engage globally on anticipatory action.²

The Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) defines anticipatory action as

“**acting ahead of predicted hazardous events to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold.**”³

Anticipatory action distinguishes itself from general disaster preparedness, prevention, and resilience-building as it is “*based on a forecast or early warning*”. Firstly, anticipatory action focuses on taking action *before a disaster occurs*. Unlike most disaster response efforts, which occur after a disaster has already struck, anticipatory action involves planning and implementing activities beforehand. Anticipatory actions are specifically designed to address an imminent danger and mitigate the impacts of that specific event. Its focus is not solely on long-term resilience or vulnerability reduction but on responding to an identified hazard. Anticipatory action is activated based on pre-agreed and risk-informed triggers, while preparedness is the overall state of being ready for different situations, whether they are anticipated or not. This proactive approach aims to reduce the impact of the disaster on people’s lives and livelihoods, although it has been referred to by different institutions using various terms since its rise in popularity in 2016.⁴ Three common descriptors include forecast-based financing (FbF), forecast-based early action (FbA), and early warning early action (EWEA). Despite variations in their definitions and usage across contexts, these terms share the same core building blocks (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Anticipatory Action Building Blocks⁵

 Risk information, forecasting and early warning systems	 Planning, operations and delivery	 Pre-arranged finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water forecasts• Seasonal outlooks• Impact analysis• Situational monitoring• Pre-disaster risk assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard Operating Procedures• Menu of potential anticipatory actions• Sectoral anticipatory action plans• Anticipatory action protocols in contingency plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated anticipatory action funds in DRM budgets and contingency plans• DRF instruments include anticipatory actions and link to anticipatory action triggers/protocols

Box 1: Technical Standards

The Technical Standards developed by the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action supports understanding of anticipatory action. It is a guide for government and humanitarian and development partners, and addresses both terminological and technical concerns.

2 United Nations, SPC, PIFS, SPREP & IFRC (2023), *Pacific week of anticipatory action*

3 REAP (2022), Glossary of early action terms

4 Asia Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action (2023), *Technical Standards*

5 Adapted from: ASEAN (2022), ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management, p. 10



METHODOLOGY

This practice paper was led by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO), and the FAO. Research methods included key informant interviews (April–June, 2023), a validation workshop (June 13, 2023), case studies and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders based in the Pacific and internationally. PIANGO led data collection in Pacific Island countries, including interviews and a validation workshop in Suva, Fiji. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands provided strategic support to the research process, including technical assistance and expertise on anticipatory action, contributing to document analysis and writing, design of research tools, and the identification of key informants.

Figure 2: Methodology



SECTION 1: THE STATE OF PLAY IN THE PACIFIC

The Pacific is among the world's most vulnerable regions to the impacts of climate- and weather-related hazards. Between 2011–2020, the region experienced numerous disasters that inflicted wide-ranging damage upon its nations and communities (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Disasters and their impacts in the Pacific, 2011–2020



Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of disasters, there is a need to urgently adapt and scale up resilience and early warning systems to enable effective and coherent pre-emptive actions and thereby ensure the wellbeing of communities.

ENTRY POINTS

Existing local practices

Many resilience-based practices across the Pacific resemble elements of anticipatory action, demonstrated through early warning systems and locally driven initiatives at the community level that have existed for centuries. Pacific communities have used traditional knowledge to forecast weather patterns, identify natural disaster triggers, and take actions to minimise the impacts of disasters before they happen. For example, communities have predicted extreme weather from their observation of natural patterns in crop maturation and bird migration, enabling them to take anticipatory action to meet essential needs such as food, water and shelter.⁷

“ In the Pacific, traditional knowledge has been passed down through generations and holds valuable insights into local environments, weather patterns, and natural phenomena. By incorporating traditional knowledge into anticipatory action initiatives, we can enhance our understanding of the specific risks and vulnerabilities faced by Pacific communities. – (Pacific regional actor)⁸

⁶ DFAT (2021), *Pacific Risk Profile*

⁷ Interviews 16, 22 & 23; Campbell, J (2009), 'Islanders: Vulnerability and resilience in Oceania', *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, 3: 85–97

⁸ Interview 23

Existing architecture

Across the Pacific, there is currently no long-term formal anticipatory action system or process connected to flexible financing at national or regional levels. Despite this, the extensive resilience architecture in the Pacific contains fundamental building blocks that can support the establishment and scale up of anticipatory action systems: existing frameworks, bodies, mechanisms, local leadership, networks and traditional knowledge. By integrating anticipatory action into national financial and legislative frameworks, particularly the development of a disaster risk financing framework, governments can ensure dedicated funding for anticipatory measures, enabling timely and effective response to hazards. Box 2 below provides an example of effective disaster risk financing in Tonga.

Box 2: Disaster Risk Financing in Tonga

Over the past five years, the Kingdom of Tonga has faced numerous climate- and human-induced shocks, including devastating cyclones, storm surges, and volcanic eruptions; most notably, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold in 2020 and the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai disaster in 2022. Recognising the risks it faces, the Tongan government developed its Disaster Risk Finance Strategy (DRFS) 2021–2025, which builds on earlier national resilience policies such as the Emergency Management Act of 2007 and the Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025. The DRFS establishes a framework for coordination among key stakeholders, ensuring the implementation of concrete activities with the shared objective of strengthening the financial resilience of the Tongan government, households, and businesses in the face of disasters, and allows for anticipatory action mechanisms to be embedded in its national systems.

Anticipatory action falls under priority 6 of the strategy: *Develop national DRM policy framework and plan and invest in national DRR priorities to mitigate and minimise the effect of future economic disaster shocks, including those exacerbated by climate change.* The Tongan government has expanded its proactive measures significantly, and is gathering evidence to support the wisdom of these efforts. Additionally, its commitment to developing disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) regulations and policy frameworks at both national and local levels creates new opportunities for anticipatory action. For example, the new DRM policy 2023-30, can enable anticipatory actions through its *imminent* state of disaster powers.⁹

Although anticipatory action mechanisms are not yet systematically established at regional or national levels, climate and disaster risk financing architecture is developing rapidly and could support anticipatory action mechanisms. The Pacific is home to strong resilience champions, particularly at the local and community levels, who oversee the region's disaster and climate preparedness systems, representing a solid foundation for a strong and effective anticipatory action model. Initiatives such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and the 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent encourage anticipatory action mechanisms, while the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) could assist in coordination.¹⁰

“ By fostering stronger coordination and utilising established frameworks, regional mechanisms can better support national engagement and ensure a more cohesive and efficient approach to anticipatory action implementation. – (Pacific regional actor)¹¹

⁹ United Nations, SPC, PIFS, SPREP & IFRC (2023), *Pacific week of anticipatory action*

¹⁰ Interview validation workshop; 1, 2, 6, 7, 13, 15, 17–19, 21–24, 26 & 27

¹¹ Interview 23

While there is further work needed to strengthen the capacity of social protection systems in the Pacific, programs during the COVID-19 and TC Harold responses have seen regional systems in the Pacific become more shock responsive, disaster responsive and adaptive in ways that are essential for anticipatory action.¹² This can support anticipatory action mechanisms to deliver timely cash support to at-risk communities, while there is an opportunity for anticipatory action developments to further strengthen the capacity of existing social protection systems.

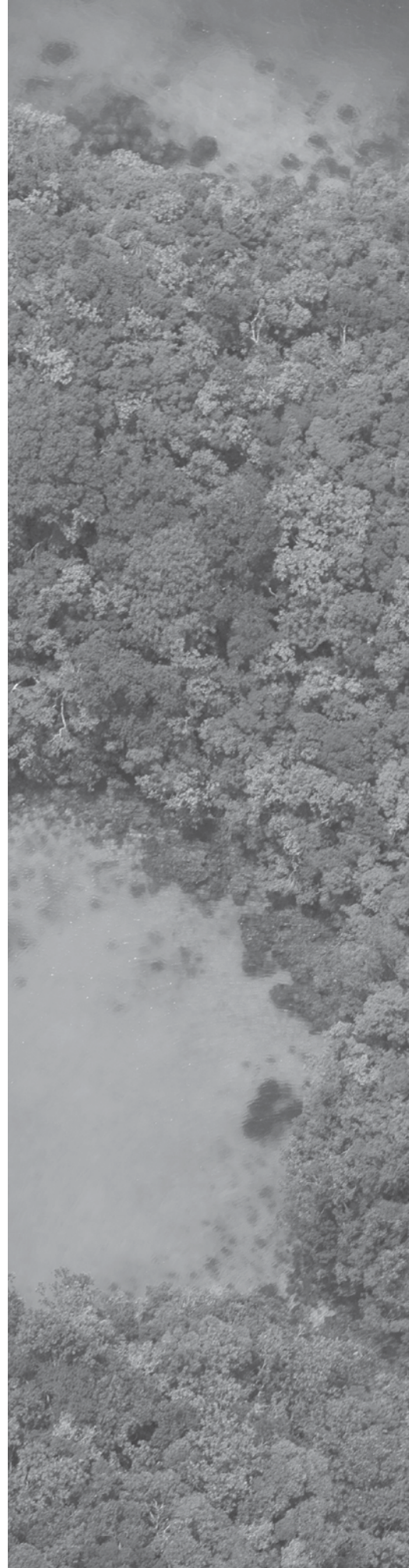
Existing actors

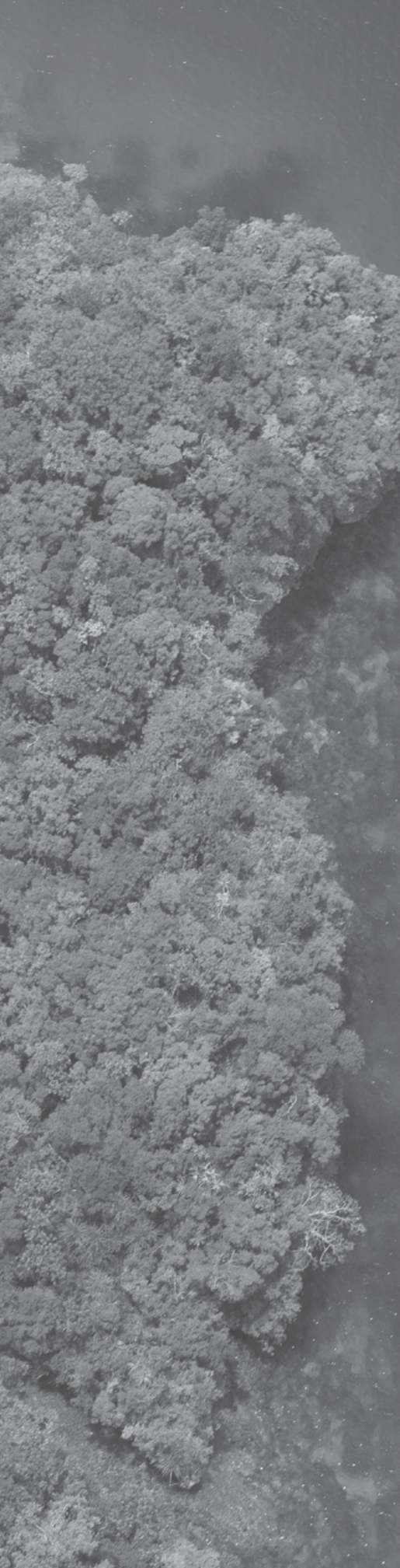
The Pacific also has a strong network of regional and inter-governmental bodies such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) and PIANGO, which can support coordination and collective action for establishing anticipatory action systems and knowledge sharing. Additionally, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) are also key actors in the region, and can play an important role in elevating anticipatory action mechanisms.

Linking these regional bodies with national governments, civil society, humanitarian and DRR actors (including UN bodies), meteorology agencies, social protection systems, insurance providers, the private sector and academia is important for establishing effective national and regional anticipatory action mechanisms.¹³ The research highlighted the importance of elevating local leadership in developing anticipatory action mechanisms across the region. Local actors – including NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs), faith-based groups, women’s groups, organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), and youth groups – are the first responders to disasters and have strong networks within their communities. Many local actors manage their own early warning systems, positioning them to lead and manage elements of anticipatory action systems. Box 3 provides an example of a Pacific civil society network coordination initiative that can be leveraged for building anticipatory action mechanisms.

¹² SPACE (2021), [Social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific: a tipping point for the sector?](#); DFAT (2022), [Australia's COVID-19 response package for the Pacific and Timor-Leste – independent review 2020–2022](#); PRCWG (2022), [Cash responses in Fiji: 2020–2021 – what has been learned and where are we now?](#); CERF (2020), [Fiji rapid response Cyclone Harold 2020](#)

¹³ Validation workshop; interviews 1–7, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21–24





Box 3: Facility Aiding Locally Led Engagement Pasifika

The Facility Aiding Locally Led Engagement (FALE)-Pasifika, an initiative led by PIANGO and the START Network, facilitates a locally led humanitarian system in the Pacific that empowers local communities to lead decision-making during crisis response. Since its foundation in 2019, the initiative has established six national hubs (in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu), all of which oversee localised humanitarian programming, whilst operating under their own localised governing system with support from its member NGOs and CSOs.

FALE-Pasifika seeks to elevate the voices and roles of local and national CSOs, which are too often under-represented in national and UN-led humanitarian coordination systems. This results in the exclusion of affected communities' voices from decision-making processes that are directly related to their needs, reducing their access to funding, and hindering the empowerment and capacity building of locally led humanitarian networks. The initiative has three priorities:

- Supporting a well-informed CSO humanitarian structure
- Building the leadership capacity of local actors
- Supporting locally led anticipatory action initiatives through the FALE Financing Facility.

The FALE Financing Facility is supporting locally led anticipatory action systems, including looking at ways to integrate traditional knowledge into early warning systems and funding mechanisms. It is also exploring ways to support civil society networks to design anticipatory action triggers and lead decision-making and planning that can enable more timely and localised anticipatory action networks.¹⁴








“ Strengthening early warning systems through the integration of traditional knowledge is another avenue to explore. Through our work on the FALE program, we have recognised the potential of incorporating traditional knowledge to enhance anticipatory action initiatives. – Siale Ilolahia (Executive Director, PIANGO)

¹⁴ Interviews 20, 21, 23 & 25

Existing initiatives

A number of emerging initiatives relating to anticipatory action are taking place across the region that can provide lessons learned and guidance to inform future regional developments. Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the existing initiatives.

Figure 4: Anticipatory action initiatives in the Pacific

-  **The IFRC** is working with Pacific National Societies to develop early action protocols
-  **The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)** is in the process of implementing an anticipatory action framework in Fiji in association with the Central Emergency Response Fund
-  **The Australian Humanitarian Partnership** is set to pilot an anticipatory action program focussing on the community level in the Pacific and Timor-Leste through the Disaster READY initiative
-  **The United Nations Capital Development Fund's (UNCDF)** Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Program has established an anticipatory action component that links to social protection systems in its second phase.
-  **The Australia Pacific Climate Partnership** is an active player in the region and exploring the economics of anticipatory action
-  **The Regional Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action Asia-Pacific** provides a coordination hub for key stakeholders across the Asia-Pacific region
-  **The Disaster Risk Financing Technical Working Group** brings together governments, CROP agencies, UN bodies, donors and other key actors, and is supported by the PRP and PIFS to inform DRF processes in the Pacific

These initiatives can provide a learning and evidence base that can inform the development of long-term mechanisms that build from the community level upwards for realising national- and regional-level anticipatory action systems.

Existing appetite

The values and priorities of Pacific governments, communities and other Pacific-based stakeholders must be incorporated into anticipatory action systems. The research highlighted the strong desire for regional anticipatory action mechanisms to be Pacific built and owned;¹⁵ the region's existing resilience architecture will facilitate achievement of this objective. Anticipatory action mechanisms implemented elsewhere can inform equivalents in the Pacific, but should not provide guiding principles.

“ Any introduction of financial support through anticipatory action should complement the work done by countries so far and shall be driven by the countries themselves. It should not create any parallel systems. – (Pacific Government actor)¹⁶ ”

15 Validation workshop; Interviews 1–7, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21–29

16 Interview 19

BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Lack of government ministry coordination and data sharing. Coordination between stakeholders remains poor across the Pacific, representing one of the major barriers to anticipatory action in the region. Scaling up anticipatory action to national level is hindered by lack of data and insufficient data sharing between ministerial bodies. Many Pacific agencies, including meteorology agencies, national disaster management offices (NDMOs), and government ministries who hold responsibility for population and social protection-related data, collect and hold only moderate amounts of largely low-quality data due to lack of capacity and resources. Meanwhile, siloed structures remain prevalent within Pacific governmental systems, limiting data sharing across Pacific ministries.¹⁷

🗨️ **To enhance national-level uptake and engagement in anticipatory action, regional mechanisms and approaches should prioritise effective engagement mechanisms that promote collaboration rather than working in isolation. Clear and explicit communication is essential to ensure clarity and understanding. By fostering stronger coordination and utilising established frameworks, regional mechanisms can better support national engagement and ensure a more cohesive and efficient approach to anticipatory action implementation. – (Pacific regional actor)¹⁸**

Difficulty in measuring disaster vulnerability. Understanding the distribution of risk is a persistent challenge in the Pacific, not only for anticipatory action, but across the development and humanitarian sectors. Those most at risk cannot take anticipatory action because they have no resources, so early warning systems are of little help (see Box 4).¹⁹

Box 4: The role of vulnerability assessments

Vulnerability assessments are commonly used to ensure the right people and households are being targeted by anticipatory action measures, but the geography of the Pacific, poor literacy, lack of government data on risk, and lack of social protection systems hinder their identification.²⁰ In addition, the context of vulnerability is critical. Someone may be vulnerable today but not tomorrow, and only with respect to certain hazards. As part of measuring vulnerability, it is critical to measure people's existing strengths and capacities, and their ability to cope and take action before disasters as part of anticipatory action plans.

Difficulty in identifying the right anticipatory action triggers for disasters. Anticipatory action relies on the use of climate and weather-related data, such as cyclone windspeed, rainfall and pathway, or combined drought indices (precipitation, El Niño–Southern Oscillation, temperature, soil moisture, groundwater data and vegetation health indices), to predict hazards and impacts. It also requires efficient communication to populations and particularly vulnerable groups, in order to leverage social protection systems and cash distribution. The widespread distribution of populations across most Pacific countries reduces the accuracy of predictions about disaster impacts. Uncertainty about whether a tropical cyclone will hit mainland cities can dissuade donors and governments from releasing early funding.²¹

¹⁷ Validation workshop; 1, 2, 7, 10, 13 & 17; HAG (2022), *Beyond barriers: Behaviours to enable a more resilient Pacific*

¹⁸ Interview 23

¹⁹ Validation workshop; Interviews 9 & 16; HAG (2022), *Pacific cash learning event 2022: report*

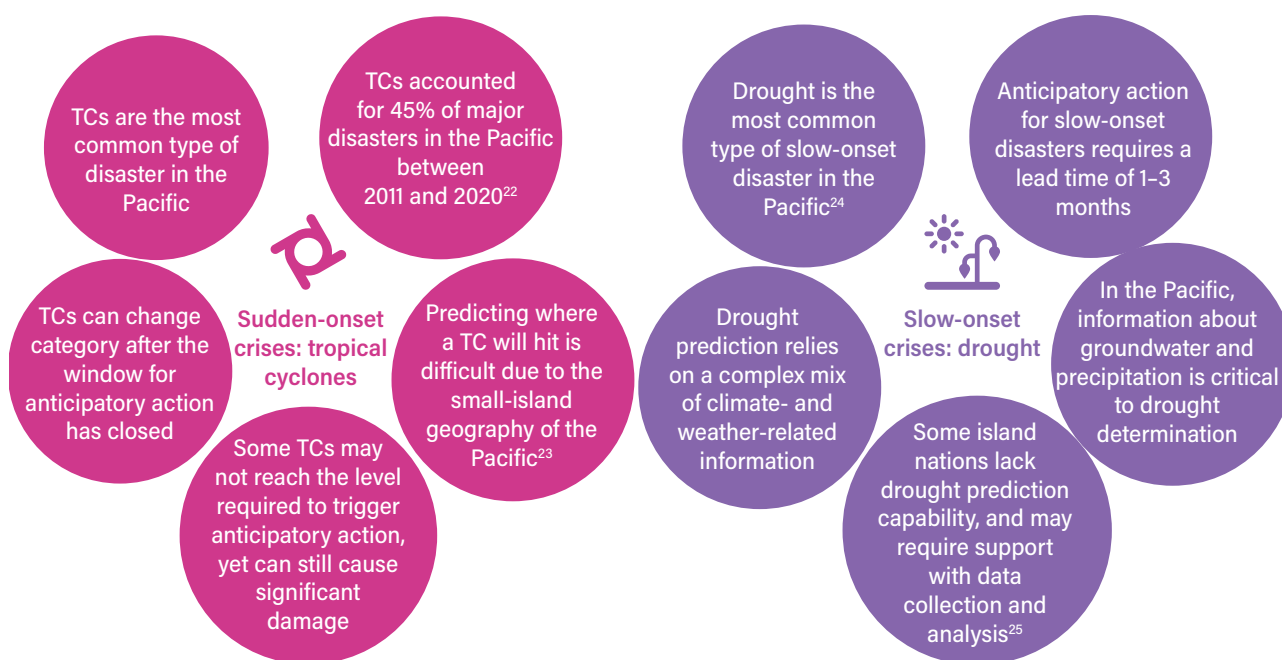
²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Interviews 6, 11, 13, 15 & 18

“ It’s hard to forecast cyclones with accuracy until they’re very close, and even in the six-twelve-hour forecast, they can still move two hundred kilometres in terms of where they’ll hit a small Pacific island. It might not even hit. If you’re looking at a category three to five tropical cyclone however, there will be many geographically vulnerable places where it would be catastrophic in terms of humanitarian needs. – (Pacific regional actor)²²

Figure 5 provides further detail on the problems of anticipatory action trigger design for common disasters in the Pacific.

Figure 5: Challenges to prediction of disaster triggers



Reliance on rapid disbursements of cash to at-risk populations. Anticipatory action relies on assisting those in need in a timely manner. Disbursing cash to at-risk populations immediately once a trigger is reached is vital for a functioning anticipatory action system, but Pacific banking and regulatory systems struggle to do so. In many Pacific countries, banking systems are unsophisticated and automation is minimal, resulting in frequent banking errors and data management and privacy breaches²⁷ and reducing the effectiveness of cash voucher assistance (CVA) as part of anticipatory action. In addition, many people, particularly those living on remote islands and those with low literacy, lack access to or choose not to engage with the banking system.²⁸ Innovative options such as blockchain and digital wallets have been trialled, but these require access to technology and digital literacy, which many of those at most risk do not possess.²⁹

22 Interview 6

23 DFAT (2021), *Pacific risk profile*

24 Interviews 5 & 8

25 DFAT (2021), *Pacific risk profile*

26 Centre for Humanitarian Change (2022), *Anticipatory action to mitigate drought-induced crises: tracking drought impacts and aid responses in Kenya and Somalia*; UTS & FAO (2022), *Phase 1 summary: Pathways towards anticipatory action in Pacific Island countries*

27 Validation workshop; interview 16

28 Interviews 17

29 Interviews 16 & 18; Oxfam & PRCWG (2022), *Unblocking cash in Vanuatu: A blockchain revolution in digital cash (Pacific Cash Learning Event 2022)*

“ The challenge for the Pacific is our geographical location because we are scattered as islands. The remote locations make resource mobilisation a huge challenge. The fact of the matter is that remote communities are always left behind. Reaching out to them is nearly impossible. – (Pacific regional actor)³⁰

Challenges in linking anticipatory action to social protection systems. Linking to social protection systems has been a critical component of anticipatory action mechanisms worldwide (see section 3 below). Much of the Pacific’s social protection systems – like its banking systems – are underfunded, and as a result, their incapacity to reach those in need in a timely and efficient manner is likely to hamper establishment of anticipatory action mechanisms at national level.³¹

Challenges in ensuring cash assistance and non-cash anticipatory action interventions are applied together. Anticipatory action should be equitable and reach people at most risk rapidly. While cash is a common modality of anticipatory action assistance, it is not the only one. It is important that anticipatory action mechanisms in the Pacific go beyond cash disbursement, to ensure they support a culture of disaster resilience, preparedness and action, rather than short-term actions that fail to result in sustainable outcomes for communities.³² Figure 6 below provides an overview of non-cash actions that could be taken across the region.

Figure 6: Non-cash actions of anticipatory action



“ The challenges I believe are the need to develop targeted engagement programs that are fully funded to support engagements in key vulnerable areas such as water security, infrastructure, institutional capacity, community governance and participation and engagements of all sectors [...]. Anticipatory action is focused too much on operational arrangements and less on the engagements aspects of resilience, which are critical in increasing people’s capacity to adapt and take mitigating actions before a disaster strikes. – (Pacific regional actor)³³

30 Interview 20

31 Interviews 1, 3 & 11; ILO (2021), *The world social protection report 2020–22: Regional companion report for Asia and the Pacific*; ESCAP (2020), *Disaster-responsive social protection: Policy brief for the Pacific Small Island Developing States*

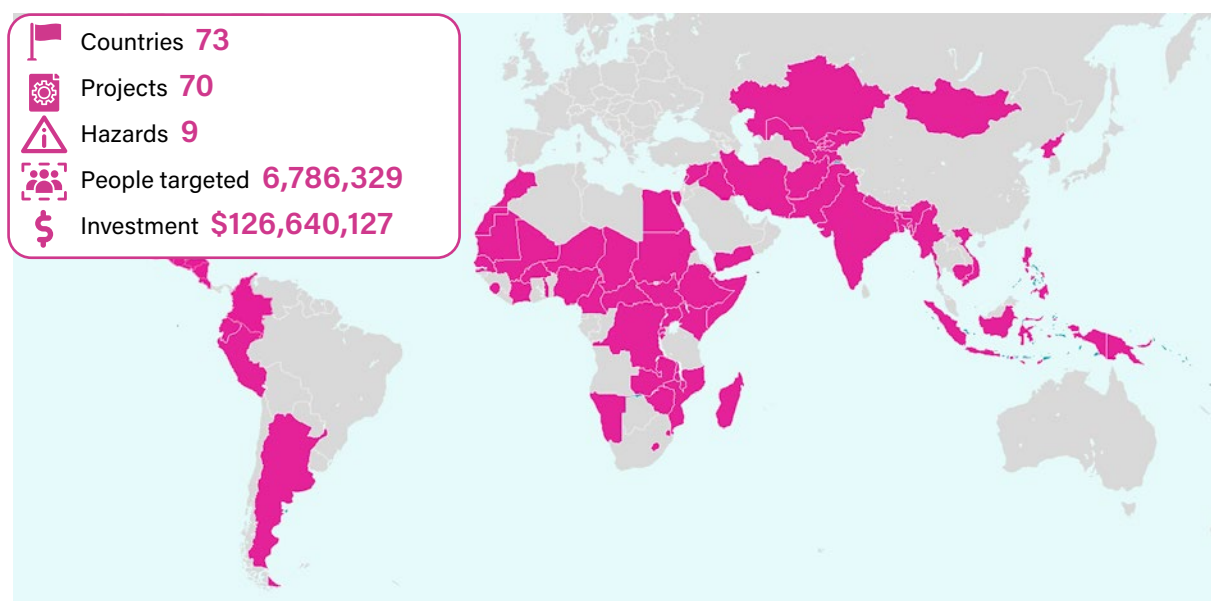
32 Interviews 22 & 23

33 Interview 22

SECTION 2: GLOBAL LESSONS THAT CAN SUPPORT ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN THE PACIFIC

Anticipatory action mechanisms have been piloted and implemented in several regions, offering lessons that can inform approaches in the Pacific. Figure 7 provides a snapshot of key anticipatory action mechanisms around the globe.

Figure 7: Key anticipatory action initiatives around the globe



(Adapted from: Anticipation Hub (2023), [Anticipatory action at a glance](#))

The research identified the following findings that can inform Pacific-led anticipatory action approaches.

Anticipatory action has a high return on investment. Despite the difficulty of convincing donors and national governments to fund preparedness efforts in the pre-disaster phase, early evidence about anticipatory action globally shows it is cost-effective. Global research on donor funded anticipatory action pilots indicate

\$ Every \$1 can have a return of \$7 in avoided losses and added benefits.³⁴

Researchers have estimated that every \$1 invested in early warning systems in the Pacific saves \$6.³⁵ Whilst this data is specific to early warning systems, and further research in the Pacific is needed to predict return on investment for anticipatory action more broadly, it is a promising start, and should help persuade governments and donors of its merits.³⁶

³⁴ WFP (2020), *The evidence base on anticipatory action*; Anticipation Hub (2022), *How anticipatory action makes a difference*; FAO (2018), *Mongolia: impact of early warning action*

³⁵ SPC (2022), *First ever Pacific disaster reduction declaration to drive political leadership and build a safer region endorsed by Ministers*,

³⁶ FAO (2023), *FAO statement at UNDRR Risk Reduction Hub event–Risk-informed agrifood systems in a changing risk landscape*

Anticipatory action systems are all about the front-end work. Most of the operational work needed to establish anticipatory action systems happens well before a disaster strikes. Protocols for defining the triggers, actions and mechanisms require considerable work and interaction with national regulatory systems,³⁷ and Pacific nations need support to undertake and complete it.

Disaster law and political will must allow for pre-disaster financing. Unlocking financing barriers to anticipatory action remains a prominent issue nationally, regionally and globally, largely due to national regulations. Despite the benefits of being proactive, reluctance to commit funding for future disasters persists. National governments are more willing to provide funding after a disaster has occurred, when they know its scale and extent and can disperse funds accordingly. Governments are concerned that releasing funding prior to a disaster that is less severe than anticipated will waste scarce resources and prompt perceptions of fiscal irresponsibility. In some countries, restrictive disaster laws and policies prevent the early release of funds despite triggers being activated.³⁸ Increased flexibility from donors, awareness raising around the benefits of anticipatory action, and improved disaster prediction accuracy may be solutions. Governments can also engage with disaster risk finance (DRF) experts and bodies to modify national disaster law to enable anticipatory action.

Anticipatory action needs to focus on building resilience, not only on operational arrangements.

Whilst much of the work to establish and embed anticipatory action systems is operational, building resilience, meaning increasing people's capacity to adapt and take mitigating actions before a disaster strikes, should not be neglected. To build resilience against future disasters, governments and anticipatory action practitioners should increase focus on matters such as water security, food security, resilient infrastructure, institutional capacity building, community governance and community participation, not just the systems, mechanisms and operationalisation of anticipatory action.³⁹

Linking anticipatory action and social protection is critical, but tough. The link between social protection and anticipatory action is increasingly recognised, because social protection systems enable support to reach the most at-risk members of society. Social protection systems – which may include financing systems for livelihoods, health, education, elderly, maternal and child services and people with disabilities – can enable anticipatory action mechanisms to target groups with specific needs or high exposure to risks. Existing social protection systems can be modified in several ways to include anticipatory actions.



Vertical expansion

Increase the amount or frequency of cash transfers for existing beneficiaries



Horizontal expansion

Temporarily include new individuals and households as beneficiaries

Expansion of social protection to incorporate anticipatory action requires a functioning system, collaboration across various government ministries, and predictable and adequate financing.⁴⁰ Conversely, strong anticipatory action mechanisms can strengthen the capacity of national social protection systems.⁴¹

37 Interviews 3, 6, 8, 9, 11 & 15; Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action (2023), *Technical standards on anticipatory action in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok

38 Interviews 3, 4 & 8; UNDRR (2023), *Analysis of barriers in financing and operationalising linkages between anticipatory action and social protection systems*

39 Interviews 3, 4, 11 & 22

40 ESACP (2020), *Disaster-responsive social protection in the Pacific small island developing states*, p. 13

41 Interviews 1–4 & 12; UNDRR (2023), *Analysis of barriers in financing and operationalising linkages between anticipatory action and social protection systems*; Feinstein International Centre (2022), *How can social protection systems be leveraged for anticipatory action?*; WFP (2022), *Integrating anticipatory action and social protection*

Anticipatory action systems cannot be siloed – they must be integrated, and all sectors must work together collaboratively. Establishing and managing anticipatory action systems requires input from a wide range of actors from public governance and administration, law, health, social protection, emergency and disaster management, non-government, finance and banking and other private sector stakeholders, among others. Figure 8 provides examples of potential collaborations between sectors.

Figure 8: Cross-sectoral collaboration⁴²



Adaptive social protection, which involves combining social protection, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation (CCA), could help reduce the negative impacts of global problems such as food insecurity and climate change, as well as mitigating their interaction with natural hazards such as floods and cyclones



Social protection programs focused on livelihoods or health could be adapted to cover injuries, loss of income, or other impacts of disasters



Donors, governments and the private sector could collaboratively develop innovative insurance schemes, or approaches using blockchain, could be used to establish anticipatory action systems in the Pacific⁴¹

Consider inclusion and equity when developing and implementing anticipatory action systems.

The design and management of any system will have implications for gender, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). When developing anticipatory action systems, it is critical to engage different inclusion-focused groups – including women’s groups and OPDs – to predict and mitigate any negative impacts on GEDSI, as well as identify opportunities to improve GEDSI.⁴³ Women, girls and people with disability are affected disproportionately by disasters and in the post-disaster phase,⁴⁴ highlighting the need for anticipatory action mechanisms to incorporate appropriate procedures for mitigating harm. Figure 9 presents important elements of inclusive anticipatory action.

Figure 9: Inclusion and equity in anticipatory action



Representation of women and girls’ groups and OPDs in decision-making about anticipatory action



Provision of GEDSI education to DRR and CCA operators



Pre-arranged transport of people with disabilities prior to a disaster



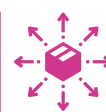
Early planning to ensure disability accessibility in evacuation processes and centres



Early planning to ensure safety for women and girls in evacuation processes and centres



Identification of relief items specific to the needs of different groups



Distribution of goods to households who are unable to reach distribution centres



Funding and setting up additional gender-based violence and psycho-social hotlines, clinics and services

42 Interviews 1–3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14 & 16

43 Interview 9

44 World Bank (2023), *Women’s and girls’ vulnerability to gender-based violence in the aftermath of disasters*; CBM, Inclusion Advisory Group, International Disability Alliance & the Pacific Disability Forum (2022), *Our lessons: An approach to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction – based on consultations with people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific regions*

Regional and global examples provide knowledge and best-practice approaches. The Caribbean, East Africa and the ASEAN region have achieved anticipatory action successes that provide lessons for Pacific-based actors (see Figure 5). Global and regional stakeholders should share knowledge and lessons from piloted approaches, and identify best practice approaches, opportunities and weaknesses to inform future anticipatory action initiatives. In addition, examples and case studies of anticipatory action in the Pacific at community, national and regional levels, should be documented and shared to support learning between Pacific stakeholders and build the evidence base within the region.⁴⁵ The following example illustrates previous experience that can inform Pacific-based practices.

INSIGHTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES' DROUGHT ANTICIPATORY ACTION

In the Philippines, as in the Pacific, farmers and fisherfolk face constant threats from natural hazards such as droughts, floods and cyclones. These recurring shocks can have devastating consequences, especially when combined with population growth and climate change. The increasing costs of disasters, along with existing vulnerabilities, make it increasingly difficult for communities to recover when disaster strikes.

In 2018–19, the Philippines became the site of a pioneering anticipatory action pilot aimed at mitigating the risks associated with drought. The FAO, in collaboration with the government, established an early warning monitoring and trigger system across the island of Mindanao. This system tracked indices of El Niño, rainfall, vegetation coverage and soil moisture through remote sensing. By November 2018, the early warning system alerted authorities to a high probability of drought in Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces, threatening the food security of at-risk families. With solid evidence in hand, FAO activated its Anticipatory Action Fund and quickly mobilised resources. Leveraging an existing anticipatory action protocol for Mindanao, FAO designed interventions tailored to the local context. The project targeted 1,500 households in Pigcawayan, Cotabato, and Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao. Measures were implemented to safeguard livelihoods and food security, including cash-for-work programs to clear irrigation canals, small-scale irrigation systems for water management, and the distribution of fertiliser and drought-tolerant rice and vegetable seeds.

To assess the impact of these interventions, FAO, alongside government counterparts and local partners, conducted interviews and surveys with families in Cotabato and Maguindanao after the project's conclusion in June 2019. Analysis revealed impressive outcomes: for every dollar FAO invested, families gained \$4.40 in avoided losses and new benefits. The benefits included fewer crop failures and higher yields than families without access to drought-tolerant seeds and training. The project also enabled families to cultivate larger plots of land and grow a diverse range of vegetables, improving nutrition and food security. On average, each family harvested approximately 182 kg of vegetables during the project. The success of this initiative highlights the transformative power of anticipatory measures in building resilience among farming communities. By combining early warning systems, targeted interventions and timely financing, the project demonstrates the potential for anticipatory action to yield substantial benefits and contribute to sustainable agricultural practices in the face of climate-related challenges.

“ We experienced drought very badly three years ago. Drought creates additional work for women in my community – it is more effort to take care of our plants. It makes us question: when is the next time we will get food? We were less worried about this year. We got vegetable seeds, which we could easily plant to grow food for the family. Cynthia Oliveiras, Pigcawayan, Mindanao.⁴⁶

45 Interviews 3–5 & 11

46 FAO. (2019) *Philippines: Impact of Early Warning Early Action*.



SECTION 3: THE WAY FORWARD

The key takeaway from this research is that **anticipatory action mechanisms for the region must be Pacific built and Pacific owned**. The region is home to a strong and extensive resilience network for systems to build upon, and it is crucial that traditional knowledge that has long supported preparedness at the community level is preserved and leveraged to support initiatives at the national and regional levels. Importantly, the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities associated with anticipatory action in one region may not mirror those in others; therefore, anticipatory action should not be applied in standardised approaches. Instead, they should integrate with the existing resilience architecture, bodies and initiatives within each region.

Establishing anticipatory action systems in the Pacific relies primarily on streamlining and strengthening the various existing resilience initiatives, bodies and risk financing mechanisms in ways that support the priorities of Pacific stakeholders. The following steps outline a roadmap for establishing anticipatory action mechanisms in the Pacific, informed by the research process and validated with Pacific-based actors.

“ It’s more about looking at what’s working at community level first and then build the bigger national level architecture later. We must support that coherence at a local level, rather than have it driven externally. – (Pacific regional actor)⁴⁷ ”

47 Validation workshop

THE WAY FORWARD FOR ESTABLISHING ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN THE PACIFIC



STEP 1

BUILD UPWARDS FROM THE COMMUNITY LEVEL, WHERE ANTICIPATORY ACTION ELEMENTS ALREADY EXIST, AND AVOID EXTERNALLY DRIVEN PROCESSES.

- ▶ Avoid jargon and build common understandings and terminology of anticipatory action that align with community-level practices
- ▶ Support locally led decision-making to develop Pacific-tailored and -led anticipatory action protocols at the community level, which can be simulated and operationalised at a small scale to showcase how anticipatory action works
- ▶ Preserve and elevate traditional and indigenous knowledge, values and practices, and build bridges between traditional and scientific knowledge
- ▶ Incorporate knowledge and best practice from the global evidence base on anticipatory action in ways that support and respect Pacific values; avoid externally driven approaches to developing anticipatory action processes
- ▶ Work with community leaders, local government and civil society to enable community knowledge to inform anticipatory action mechanisms at sub-national and national levels.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL CAPACITIES BEFORE TRYING TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE REGIONAL MECHANISMS.

- ▶ Link mechanisms to provincial and national disaster risk financing systems
- ▶ Identify entry points for anticipatory action systems within the existing resilience architecture, policy and legalisation in government ecosystems: national frameworks, disaster risk financing plans, initiatives, policies and plans. Support Pacific governments to strengthen local and national capacities that are essential to anticipatory action mechanisms, such as social protection systems, banking and finance, vulnerability assessment processes, data sharing, and ministerial coordination
- ▶ Work collectively to build evidence that shows anticipatory action can work in the Pacific. Collaborate with governments to identify the information they need to be convinced to scale up and mainstream the approach. Have the long-term goal in mind.



STEP 2

ESTABLISH A GUIDING BODY AND SET OF PRINCIPLES AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL THAT CAN INFORM GOVERNMENTS' IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC ANTICIPATORY ACTION MECHANISMS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.

- ▶ Establish guiding principles, standards and criteria at the regional level that align to the FRDP and other key resilience initiatives; these can inform national-level anticipatory action mechanisms
- ▶ Establish a Pacific anticipatory action working group or technical working group within the PRP architecture to oversee progress, develop guidance and support coordination
- ▶ Ensure civil society and community leaders are represented within regional processes and working groups to ensure community needs and knowledge inform decision-making processes
- ▶ Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to help build an evidence base that informs anticipatory action processes.



STEP 3

ACTIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

To support the three steps proposed above, the following recommendations outline actions key stakeholders can take to progress the establishment of anticipatory action mechanisms. Whilst all these recommendations are applicable to multiple stakeholders, they are targeted to Pacific governments, regional bodies and donors, based on insights from the Pacific and global evidence.

ACTIONS FOR PACIFIC GOVERNMENTS

- 1. Elevate local leadership in anticipatory action.** Establishing anticipatory action presents opportunities for greater localisation of disaster response, not just in terms of funds or goods distribution, but decision-making.

“**If local actors are the first responders to a disaster, then they should be the first anticipators.** – (international actor)⁴⁸

Localisation will support ‘do no harm’ and ‘no regrets’ approaches. To enable this, local actors – particularly decision makers such as community leaders and local government authorities – must be given a strong voice in anticipatory action decision-making processes via designated seats within national decision-making forums and donor-run forums such as clusters. Governments and donors should ensure local actors are well resourced and have access to climate and disaster hazard and risk information that support them in decision-making processes. Governments should also work with local actors to link local anticipatory action systems with national mechanisms.



Example: Local actors can deliver timely relief to households, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas (outer islands); identify at risk people; provide preparedness information and education; and lead decision-making processes about community-level triggers, which could be based on traditional knowledge (and combined with scientific knowledge).

- 2. Integrate traditional knowledge, values and practices into anticipatory action processes.** Pacific communities predict climate and weather patterns, practices that governments and aid agencies should acknowledge and incorporate into their anticipatory action processes. Policymakers, governments and programming leads must work with traditional knowledge holders to identify how scientific and traditional practices align and/or complement one another. Capture and record traditional knowledge so it can be used in systematic decision-making processes.



Example: Traditional knowledge and practices themselves could underpin anticipatory action triggers in communities, or in conjunction with scientific knowledge. Also, information about longer-term changes, such as in traditional practices of fishing or agriculture, are important to capture and feed into anticipatory action processes.

“**Indigenous communities in the Pacific have developed sophisticated observation techniques and oral traditions that allow them to predict weather changes and anticipate potential hazards. By combining these traditional forecasting methods with modern technology, such as satellite imagery and weather monitoring systems, we can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of impending risks.** – (Pacific regional actor)⁴⁹

48 Interview 6
49 Interview 23

- 3. Include anticipatory action in national strategic disaster plans and national disaster risk financing strategies.** Governments should ensure their national policies, planning and financing accommodate and allow for anticipatory action processes (e.g. Box 2, page 10). They can also establish specific funding allocations for anticipatory action; these should be accessible to local actors and CSOs to deliver timely funding to at-risk and hard-to-reach communities.

“ Governments should establish a specific anticipatory action component within their national budgets. This component should be accessible to civil society organisations once disasters and crises are triggered. Additionally, it is crucial to develop a community access framework that outlines the procedures for accessing anticipatory action resources. By integrating anticipatory action into their financing frameworks, governments can ensure dedicated funding for anticipatory measures, enabling timely and effective response to potential risks and hazards. – (Pacific regional actor)⁵⁰

ACTIONS FOR PACIFIC REGIONAL ACTORS

- 1. Build on what is already happening by embedding anticipatory action mechanisms within the resilience architecture in the Pacific.** Explore pathways to embed anticipatory action mechanisms within existing elements of the region's resilience framework (see *Existing architecture*, page 10). Identify how anticipatory action can align with and strengthen the priorities of the FRDP, 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent, and national DRF systems. Leverage the PRP as a platform for regional coordination between governments, civil society and regional bodies to plan and scale up anticipatory action processes at the national and regional levels.
- 2. Establish a guiding body and set of principles at the regional level that can inform national governments to implement specific anticipatory action mechanisms.** There is a need for a unified approach to anticipatory action at the regional level, but this should be flexible and inform country-specific contextualisation at the national level. The Pacific's cultural, social and political values – as well as national capacities, needs and priorities relating to meteorological, risk financing and disaster response systems – vary considerably.



Example: a regional technical working group could develop guiding principles, standards, and indicators to measure progress. Another way of strengthening anticipatory action at the regional level is by drawing on other existing disaster management frameworks, such as the well-established ASEAN framework, and replicating those regional frameworks in the Pacific.⁵¹

- 3. Focus on building common understanding and avoid unclear risk terminology and jargon.** Advocates of anticipatory action should identify where and how anticipatory action elements at the community level are operationalised, and build common understandings to facilitate the development of anticipatory action in the Pacific. Avoid jargon, and elevate regional terminology and understandings relating to anticipatory action that respect and elevate Pacific values. What matters most is the presence of the three fundamental building blocks – triggers, anticipatory actions, and pre-arranged financing – as a unified system, while the terminology can be adapted accordingly.⁵²

⁵⁰ Interview 23

⁵¹ Validation workshop

⁵² Interviews 15

ACTIONS FOR DONORS

- 1. Support and facilitate structures, systems and processes that are owned and driven by Pacific actors.** Donors should actively support Pacific governments, including Ministries of Finance, Sectoral Ministries and NDMOs, as well as local actors and communities, to lead anticipatory action approaches in the region. Donors should work with the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP agencies), and Pacific governments to facilitate processes that embed anticipatory action mechanisms within disaster- and climate-related policies and mechanisms. This should be done in a way that supports governments' priorities, rather than setting up parallel structures that they do not manage or own.

“ The Pacific is extremely far ahead of the pack in terms of the way they use risk finance instruments as well as the buy in from governments and PIFS and regional bodies. But if you don't have the governments in the scene from the start, and if you're not looking from the start at all the ways crises are financed, you're going to miss out on so many opportunities for systemised government-led approaches to anticipatory action. – (International actor)⁵³



Example: work within existing systems and regulations to set up CVA mechanisms or in-kind support. CVA and banking systems are weak in the Pacific, so need investment to build capacity. The same can be said for in-kind support; sectoral ministries may already have seed banks or veterinary care they can provide to communities easily.⁵⁴

- 2. Ensure donor coordination.** It is important for donors to inform, guide and collaborate with, and support collaboration between Pacific stakeholders, to develop anticipatory action mechanisms. To do this, donors should avoid funding multiple partners (including government ministries) to develop independent triggering systems. Donors should also streamline funding requirements, programs and timelines wherever possible. Additionally, donors must implement adequate, flexible funding mechanisms, provide early funding budget allocations, and work with governments and actors to support anticipatory action mechanisms that align to disaster risk financing systems in the Pacific.⁵⁵
- 3. Fund impact evaluations of anticipatory action mechanisms and responses.** Despite the work happening in anticipatory action globally, there is still little evidence about what works in the Pacific region.⁵⁶ To build evidence to support the business case for anticipatory action, donors should fund impact evaluations of anticipatory action approaches, in accordance with the Pacific Resilience Standards; this will ensure alignment with the 10 guiding principles of the FRDP. Additionally, given anticipatory action is relatively new, there is a need for donors to invest in understanding how to effectively conduct anticipatory action evaluations, as well as adjusting their systems to address the challenge of funding not being activated in the case of triggers not being met.

53 Interview 6

54 Interviews 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 20–26

55 Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6 & 9

56 Feinstein International Centre (2022), *Anticipatory action in motion: Recapping the most recent evidence and illuminating a pathway forward*

ACTIONS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

One of the strongest findings to come out of the research is that all stakeholders must collaborate on a Pacific-tailored and Pacific-owned anticipatory action model. Effective anticipatory action relies on the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders, leveraging existing communication and information-sharing platforms to enable dialogue and decision-making. Figure 10 demonstrates how stakeholders can best coordinate the design, development and implementation of effective anticipatory action mechanisms in the Pacific.

Figure 10: Coordination of actors in realising anticipatory action



CONCLUSION

This paper offers a pathway for implementing effective anticipatory action mechanisms in the Pacific, informed by Pacific voices at all levels. Anticipatory action can mitigate the impacts of disasters on communities in the Pacific; however, its success in the region hinges on it being implemented in a coherent and unified way. It is critical to acknowledge that embedding anticipatory action at national and regional levels in the Pacific will take time and perseverance. As such, processes for developing anticipatory action mechanisms must be underpinned by a long-term vision for resilience in the Pacific, align with and strengthen the region's existing resilience architecture, and support the priorities of Pacific governments, regional bodies, and communities.

