

INCLUDING EVERYONE IN ANTICIPATORY ACTION: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF COLLECTING AND USING DISAGGREGATED DATA

THE ISSUE

ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Anticipatory Action (AA) has emerged relatively recently as an innovative approach to dealing with disasters and humanitarian emergencies. Switching from reactive (and costly) humanitarian responses during and after emergencies, to acting ahead of predictable hazards and crises with pre-arranged funding, holds great promise for protecting lives and livelihoods, reducing suffering, and paving the way for development. AA holds even greater potential for a community's resilience if all its members can access and benefit from it inclusively and equitably. To unlock this potential, it is critical to understand the different ways in which different segments of the population are at risk of disasters and other crises, and how individuals have different needs and face different barriers to addressing them. Accurate disaggregated data by disability, gender, and age can help shine a light on who are the most at-risk, where they are located, and provide a foundation to deliver informed AA programming that meets various needs. This does not go without challenges. Yet, [given concerning projections of growing humanitarian needs](#) due to conflicts, climate emergencies, and other drivers, acting early while leaving no one behind is needed more than ever.

DATA DISAGGREGATION: CONCEPT, RATIONALE, AND CHALLENGES

Anticipatory Action is a set of pre-identified interventions carried out ahead of an imminent hazard aiming at mitigating the impact on people and assets. They are informed by impact-based forecasting models and comprehensive risk assessments that help determine where the hazard would occur, danger levels, and triggers to act based on how vulnerable communities would be affected. Disaggregated data sets are critical to inform the latter, isolate specific subgroups and at-risk individuals, and subsequently design relevant AA interventions that meet the needs of community members in their diversity.

Disaggregating data means breaking down information into specific categories to better understand and address disparities within a population. It can help identify marginalised groups and the scale of the exclusion they face, tailor interventions, monitor progress, conduct evidence-based advocacy, and support Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). Disaggregating data by Disability, Gender, and Age (DGA) at the minimum is now a core principle in many humanitarian frameworks,

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along with the need to consider the intersectionality of these dimensions. The [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action \(2019\)](#) specifically mentions the collection and use of disaggregated data as one of four 'must-do' actions to ensure disability-inclusive humanitarian action. Tools have also been developed to support data disaggregation by humanitarian actors, such as the UN-approved Washington Group Questions (WGQ), a set of targeted questions on individual functioning intended to easily collect comparable disability data.

Yet, despite increasing efforts in recent years, data disaggregation is still not implemented at the scale required, whether in traditional humanitarian response or in AA programming. A short global survey conducted by Humanity & Inclusion (HI) in 2023 with a sample of AA practitioners showed that 92% of respondents consider that they do not sufficiently capture the specific needs of persons with disabilities in their risk assessments. Moreover, 48% were not aware of the WGQ. Common challenges reported by practitioners include technical, logistical, and financial barriers. Another limitation observed is that when disaggregated data is collected, it is generally not done in a harmonised fashion across stakeholders. The lack of uniform methods prevents the collection and use of comparable and high-quality data across locations. Moreover, oftentimes the data collected is not adequately analysed and used to inform action. Finally, a tendency to over-collect quantitative over qualitative data is also noted, which prevents a more granular understanding of most vulnerable people's realities. Overall, these challenges are driving the invisibility of certain groups and can jeopardise the potential of AA to reach impact at scale.



A meeting with a group of women in a fishermen's community in Bangladesh as part of a DRR project.
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DISASTERS AND OTHER CRISES IMPACT PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY AND CAN AGGRAVATE EXCLUSION

A “blanket” approach to collecting data and addressing vulnerability would fail to acknowledge that in situations of disaster, marginalised and socially excluded individuals are disproportionately affected and exposed to heightened risks. Social exclusion is driven by a complex interplay between various individual characteristics and prevailing perceptions, beliefs, and power relations in a given context. Disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, geographical location, ethnic origin, religion, and political opinion can generate discrimination and inequality, and shape a person's vulnerability. They also interact with one another, compounding vulnerability and exclusion. The critical ways in which social exclusion manifests itself include limited

access to services, information, economic opportunities, and social support systems, due to multiple attitudinal, institutional, physical, and communication barriers. Naturally, disasters and humanitarian crises exacerbate these pre-existing vulnerabilities for marginalised groups, which can lead to higher risks of death, injury, abuse, deprivation, and further exclusion. Weaknesses in the humanitarian response in terms of capacity to reach the most vulnerable with the assistance, protection, and services they need can also further aggravate vulnerability and risk.

Anticipatory Action offers a unique opportunity to protect vulnerable individuals and marginalised groups before the worst impacts of a crisis are felt. Planning ahead in “peacetime”, as opposed to reacting to shocks, provides the time and conditions for more qualitative programming that tackles persisting inclusion and equity gaps. Data disaggregation is a key instrument to reach such a goal.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE ANTICIPATORY ACTION THROUGH DISAGGREGATED DATA: GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anticipatory Action is structured around several building blocks, mainly risk analysis, impact-based forecasting, trigger development, and design of AA plans or Early Action Protocols (EAPs). While each stage of the AA project cycle provides entry points for the collection and

use of disaggregated data, it is particularly crucial for risk assessments. AA practitioners usually collect such information through secondary and primary sources. Accessing secondary data about people's vulnerability and the historical impacts of disasters on populations can be challenging. Challenges range from the data being inaccurate or outdated, incomplete, unavailable, or scattered across several institutions (National Disaster Management agencies, statistical agencies, social protection programs, humanitarian agencies, etc.), while not being harmonised (this is particularly true for disability indicators). This requires continuous advocacy for collaboration and coordination on data sharing. To make up for these gaps or triangulate available data, AA practitioners also generate and use their own risk analysis, often drawing from community-based vulnerability and capacity assessments combined with surveys. Data disaggregation is key at this stage, to inform trigger development and the co-design of EAPs. This will help identify specific vulnerabilities and needs, ensure that measures such as risk information and Early Warning Systems reach everyone, that pre-emptive evacuations consider the challenges of persons with mobility issues, and that cash-based interventions do not omit individuals in their targeting. Similarly, efforts to evaluate whether a shock is successfully mitigated should also use disaggregated data with harmonised indicators, to monitor inclusion, generate learning, and advocate for AA.



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Enhancing the collection and use of disaggregated data in AA is a collective responsibility. Practitioners are encouraged to build their capacity and systematically implement it while handling the data with care to avoid placing already vulnerable people at further risk. Along with data disaggregation, continued efforts are needed to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised groups throughout the AA process, to empower them and to remove barriers. Meanwhile, humanitarian policymakers and donors can foster an enabling and conducive environment for data disaggregation in AA, through technical and financial support, and by promoting stronger coordination on data sharing and more harmonised practices.

➤ HUMANITY & INCLUSION'S INCLUSIVE ANTICIPATORY ACTION PROJECT (I2A) :

To help address inclusion gaps and scale up good practice for people-centered AA, HI designed the I2A project, a 3-year intervention currently implemented in Haiti, Madagascar, and the Philippines, with funding from the German Federal Foreign Office and Aktion Deutschland Hilft. I2A works to develop and test inclusive and locally-led Early Action Protocols, informed by robust impact-based forecasting models. Activities are informed by disaggregated data and the meaningful participation of a range of stakeholders. The project also aims at building capacities of various stakeholders on AA and inclusion and strengthening local coordination mechanisms.



Kick-off workshop of the Inclusive Anticipatory Action project (I2A) in Madagascar with different stakeholders, including OPDs (Organisations of persons with disabilities).
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