

POSITION PAPER

Unlocking the Full Potential of Anticipatory Action

This position paper represents the views of the members of the VOICE Resilience-Nexus Working Group, which aims to provide the humanitarian NGO perspective on the European approach to resilience, climate change and the implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Humanitarian needs are rising rapidly as conflicts, climate-related disasters, health emergencies and other risk drivers create and reinforce a vicious cycle of crises. The interconnected nature of these challenges fuels new emergencies, undermines development gains, and pushes millions of people into deeper vulnerability, especially in fragile contexts. Those living in vulnerable positions are disproportionately affected by the growing complexity of crises, which exacerbate an already dire humanitarian outlook and hinder global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Many of these crises are predictable or highly predictable.

[Anticipatory Action](#) (AA), defined as acting ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold, is an increasingly vital approach to prevent or mitigate humanitarian needs. By using forecasting and risk analysis, ideally combined with pre-defined actions and pre-arranged financing, AA enables targeted and timely interventions that serve to reduce suffering, protect vulnerable communities, and prevent crises from spiraling into larger emergencies. Whether preparing for floods, droughts, conflict, or the effects of multiple hazards, this proactive approach helps mitigate the humanitarian impact of predictable crises and better protect hard-won development gains.

Over the past five years, the EU and its Member States made several commitments related to the scaling up of AA: the 2021 [EC Communication on HA](#), the [OCHA High-Level Event on Anticipatory Action 2021](#), the [Early Warnings for All Initiative](#), [G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on Strengthening Anticipatory Action](#), the [Charter on Finance for Managing Risks](#), the [COP 28 Declaration on climate, relief, recovery and peace](#) and the [Grand Bargain caucus on AA](#). Nonetheless, several challenges persist in advancing and mainstreaming AA, such as insufficient financing instruments and a lack of coordination of different AA initiatives. The situation is even more challenging in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, due, for instance, to restrictions on data collection and humanitarian space.

The experience of [humanitarian NGOs](#) provides solid evidence of the value of AA. It is clear that AA needs to be scaled up, but it cannot be done by humanitarians alone, who are already suffering from shrinking resources. Development and climate actors need to maintain, step in and take on a substantive part of the burden related to the response spectrum, from preparedness to longer-term solutions. This includes for instance exploring how climate finance can complement humanitarian funding streams for AA. This position paper outlines some recommendations for different actors and calls for a nexus/multisectoral approach that bridges humanitarian, development, and climate efforts.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES:

1. Increase and diversify funding for Anticipatory Action
2. Prioritise inclusive and locally led Anticipatory Action
3. Integrate Anticipatory Action into humanitarian, development, climate donors' policies and programming

1. Increase and diversify funding for Anticipatory Action

From a humanitarian perspective, despite the increase in [funding](#) available for AA frameworks in 2023, it still represents less than 1% of the total funding for international humanitarian action. Currently, AA has been siloed within humanitarian action. However, since this sector is already under significant strain, joined up actions and financing are required across humanitarian, development and - where relevant - climate funding. [WFP evidence](#) shows that AA not only saves a significant amount of money in the immediate response - up to \$34 for every \$1 invested over 20 years - but also further reduces long-term recovery needs and costs. Therefore, we encourage humanitarian donors at EU and Member States level, including DG ECHO, to translate commitments into actions. This includes increasing accessible funding for implementation of AA, for example via pooled funds.

At the same time, we call on development donors, such as DG INTPA, to ensure and strengthen their contribution to AA, and to increase sustained investment in AA mechanisms, including through disaster risk financing. This is essential to ensure that funds are available for the planning and forecasting component of AA mechanisms - the so-called “build” funds. It is equally necessary to activate AA frameworks when a trigger is met - the “fuel” funds. Development donors should also support the piloting of different forms of AA, for example by investing in the research and analysis behind AA to explore innovative approaches to protecting development gains. It is essential to invest in forecasting capacity and harmonised information/data collection, which should be shared among key partners to ensure an evidence-based approach to AA that focuses on reducing vulnerability and minimising losses among different groups. In addition, the EU and its Member States should allocate additional climate finance resources to AA as part of a broader disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness programme. This is particularly relevant in fragile and especially conflict affected contexts, due to the increasing magnitude of climate-related disasters and the limited amount of climate financing received. [Analysis](#) shows that countries facing both climate change and conflict receive, on average, only one third of the amount of climate financing on a per capita basis received by those affected by climate change alone. Overall, funding needs to reach and be more accessible to local actors, who are currently struggling to access this funding.

2. Prioritise inclusive and locally led Anticipatory Action

The multiple crises we face around the world, whether man-made or climate-related, disproportionately affect those living in the most vulnerable and marginalised conditions, especially women. Taking this into account, communities and local actors, including humanitarian NGOs, are not only key frontline responders to the crises but are also fundamental to understanding the needs of these affected people and supporting them in building realistic resilience programmes. Effective AA requires stronger coordination between all actors working at different levels who have extensive experience in community engagement and protection of those living in the most vulnerable conditions. To this end, donors at EU and Member State level, should invest in leveraging the community-based expertise/knowledge on early warning system/AA and the capacity of national actors to develop and implement inclusive anticipatory measures in crisis forecasting and risk monitoring. Robust local early warning systems and strong preparedness measures are key to ensuring effective locally led AA. Donors should also enable local actors - whether local government, Disaster Risk Management agencies, NGO consortia or other civil society actors - to participate meaningfully from the outset in the development and where possible institutionalisation of AA frameworks. This co-creation of AA systems by communities also allows for the integration of local and indigenous knowledge to make the systems more accurate, inclusive and accessible, and to increase community ownership and acceptance of the systems. Early warning and action plans can also be complemented by citizen monitoring mechanisms of access to basic services, to enhance accountability and the resilient provision of such services.

3. Integrate AA into humanitarian, development, climate donors’ policies and programming

Despite the complexity of the crises and the recognition of the need for a nexus/multisectoral approach to address the skyrocketing humanitarian needs, its implementation is far from complete. There is an urgent need to go beyond the emergency response that humanitarian actors can offer and work more toward preparedness and long-term disaster risk reduction to build resilience. Investing in AA is key to reducing the scale of potential humanitarian needs, especially in fragile contexts where the humanitarian situation is already dire, and the impact of hazards is even more devastating. To this aim, development and climate services, whether at the EU or Member States level, must be less risk-averse by ensuring that AA and disaster risk reduction interventions are kept high on the political agenda. Humanitarian, development and climate funding mechanisms should allow for flexible funding, including crisis modifier budget lines which can be used to anticipate potential crises and increase humanitarian assistance, depending on the needs of the operational context. Integrating AA into the policies and programming of humanitarian, development and climate donors is therefore essential. Donors should have common standards, understandings and frameworks for AA and pay particular attention to mainstreaming protection, gender - including gender-based violence - and inclusion in all policies and plans. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, a special focus should be reserved to conflict sensitive approaches, compound risk analysis, multi-hazard early warning and early action systems.

This is a call to action for all actors - humanitarian, development, and climate - to act NOW, breaking silos and taking joint measures to unlock the full potential of Anticipatory Action.

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