

VOICE OUT LOUD

#37

ANTICIPATORY ACTION:

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



VOICE

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**ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING
THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN
RESPONSE**

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Editor: Jaime Martin Farelo
Co-editor: Francesca Giubilo

Cover photo: Shaibu Mohammed
rolls his irrigation pipes in his farm
located in Dasin Hausa community,
Fufoire LGA, Adamawa State
Nigeria. After receiving cash, he also
purchased a generator-driven water-
pump for irrigation and pipes for his
dry-season farming.

©Photo: Taiwo Aina/ International
Rescue Committee

VOICE wishes to thank the
contributors of this issue.
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Editorial



In a world increasingly prone to disasters, both natural and man-made, the humanitarian sector faces unprecedented challenges ([INFORM Report 2024](#)). The imperative to not only respond to crises but to anticipate and mitigate them before they unfold has never been more critical. This edition of the VOICE out loud delves into the potentially transformative approach of Anticipatory Action (AA), exploring how foresight and proactive strategies can and should reshape humanitarian aid.

Anticipatory Action represents a shift from reactive humanitarian models to one that is proactive, leveraging forecasting and early interventions to reduce the impact of disasters — and consequently reduce the level of human suffering. Despite its potential, AA currently receives a minimal amount of humanitarian funding ([The State of Pre-arranged Financing for Disasters 2023](#)), underscoring the need for a broader commitment and a re-evaluation of funding priorities. To truly maximise the effectiveness of anticipatory efforts, it is essential to forge stronger collaborations not only within the humanitarian sector, but also across other areas, such as development and climate action.

In this issue of VOICE out loud, we delve into some of the innovative approaches to AA that are being pioneered by VOICE members. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe outlines that way in which they have effectively integrated localisation with AA, enabling communities in Southern Africa to lead crisis response efforts. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions, but also fosters sustainability and community ownership, both of which are key pillars for long-term resilience.

Building on the theme of inclusivity, Humanity & Inclusion highlights the critical role of disaggregated data in ensuring that AA reaches all segments of society. By addressing data collection and utilisation challenges, they improve the appropriateness of anticipatory measures, ensuring that interventions are both effective and equitable. In addressing the urgent need for proactive humanitarian responses, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) stresses the effectiveness that AA approaches can have in fragile settings. Through innovative programmes like anticipatory cash transfers, IRC demonstrates how pre-emptive support can significantly enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities.

VOICE members play a role in the field of AA also through digitalisation and innovative strategies. Welthungerhilfe employs Disaster Risk Financing tools to proactively manage risks in a world increasingly prone to frequent and severe disasters. Similarly, Acción Contra el Hambre leverages advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to refine the profiling of vulnerabilities and enhance the accuracy of early warning systems, significantly transforming traditional disaster management practices.

In our 'A Closer Look' section, International Medical Corps describes their responsive efforts following the catastrophic flooding in Derna, Libya, demonstrating the crucial role of rapid intervention in disaster situations. Additionally, the interview with Dr Michael Köhler, Grand Bargain Ambassador, looks at the broader scope of AA in humanitarian aid. Dr Köhler highlights the importance of pre-emptive measures and enhanced funding to mitigate disaster impacts before they occur, advocating for a paradigm shift towards more proactive humanitarian strategies.

As this edition of the VOICE out loud illustrates, the shift towards AA is not merely a preferable alternative, but an essential evolution in humanitarian aid. By proactively addressing risks before they escalate into crises, we can significantly amplify the impact of our interventions and enhance the resilience of the most vulnerable communities. VOICE members, with their extensive field expertise and commitment to innovation, are crucial in leading these efforts. However, realising the full potential of AA requires a unified and robust commitment from humanitarian, development and climate actors. We urge donors, policymakers, and practitioners to prioritise and expand funding for AA, collaboratively develop and refine innovative strategies, and integrate these proactive measures into their core humanitarian and development operations.

Dominic Crowley

VOICE President

ADVANCING ANTICIPATORY ACTION THROUGH LOCALISATION: INSIGHTS FROM MOZAMBIQUE, MADAGASCAR, AND MALAWI

THE ISSUE

ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



Sensitisation was carried out in Atsinanana Region, Madagascar, by community disaster response committee members before Cyclone FREDDY made landfall. The committee members are wearing yellow bands to demonstrate that a Cyclone is approaching and that the community should be on alert. A red band would be the next stage meaning that it is confirmed that the cyclone would reach their community and a green band signifies that the situation is back to normal. The community has been trained on the EWS (Early Warning System).

©Photo: SAF/FJKM

In recent years, the concept of Anticipatory Action (AA) has gained significant traction in the realm of humanitarian response. It refers to actions taken to reduce the humanitarian impacts of a forecast hazard before it occurs, or before its most acute impacts are felt. The decision to act is based on a forecast, or collective risk analysis, of when, where, and how the event will unfold (IFRC, 2020; Anticipation Hub, 2020). At its core lies the principle of localisation - empowering local responders within affected countries to take the lead in delivering humanitarian aid. The goal of localisation is to enhance the capacity and resources of local organisations to effectively respond to crises and foster long-term sustainability (ECHO, 2024).

Since 2021, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH) has been actively engaged in Southern Africa, collaborating closely with esteemed partners including GNDR¹, CEDES², CARD³, and SAF/FJKM⁴, thanks to funding provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Together, we have championed localisation approaches to advance AA in Mozambique, Madagascar, and Malawi. Our concerted efforts have fostered significant partnerships between local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), governments at various levels, disaster management authorities, and grassroots community structures. Additionally, our initiatives have provided a platform for our partners to engage in constructive dialogue on AA matters at national, regional, and global levels, thereby amplifying the impact of our interventions and fostering cross-learning opportunities.

1. Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction
2. Comité Ecuménico para o Desenvolvimento Social - Mozambique
3. Churches Action in Relief and Development - Malawi
4. Sampanasa Fampandrosoana FJKM - Madagascar

“Through our pilot intervention, we have learnt that community-led responses facilitate swifter, more adaptive, and cost-effective local action.”

INSIGHTS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

Our experiences in Mozambique, Malawi, and Madagascar have provided invaluable insights into strengthening AA from local to national and even global levels.


- 1. Empowering Community-led Responses to Crises:** Empowering communities to lead responses during crises is pivotal. Through our pilot intervention, we have learnt that community-led responses facilitate swifter, more adaptive, and cost-effective local action. Notably, implementing Community Cash Grants has empowered communities to autonomously allocate resources, thereby enhancing local resilience and response capabilities.
- 2. Investing in Localisation Initiatives:** Localisation is not about reinventing the wheel but complementing existing National Coordination Mechanisms. Our focus has been on empowering and strengthening local response mechanisms rather than replacing them. However, challenges persist, particularly regarding support and funding tools. For instance, while DKH can authorise emergency response funds within a 72-hour window, logistical constraints such as absence from the country or insufficient pre-finance capacities by local partner organisations can impede timely AA responses, highlighting the critical importance of Crisis Modifiers and alternative financing mechanisms for fast onset disasters.
- 3. Cultivating Synergistic Partnerships and Networks:** Collaboration lies at the heart of successful AA. Beyond interactions with local partners, establishing robust connections with key stakeholders well in advance of emergencies is crucial. This includes engagement with National Disaster Authorities, Local Authorities (formal and informal), United Nations (UN) Clusters, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and CSOs. When we foster these relationships, we can collectively leverage resources, expertise, and networks to enhance our response capabilities.

By embracing these lessons, we strengthen our collective ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to disasters in Southern Africa. As we continue our journey, it is imperative that we remain committed to fostering collaboration, investing in local capacities, and empowering communities to lead their own response efforts.

➤ **CASE STUDY:** Between 20 Jan 2022 and 17 Mar 2022, DKH supported 5 AA responses (2 in Mozambique, 2 in Madagascar, and 1 in Malawi) to Tropical Storm Ana, Cyclone Batsirai, and Cyclone Gombe, with support ranging from EUR 4,950 to EUR 10,000. Actions included Food Aid, WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene), NFIs (Distribution of Non-Food Items), Evacuation Support & Information Sharing, and Community Cash Grants. All of these interventions had been discussed and designed at community level as possible responses during scenario planning prior to the 2021/2022 cyclone season, making community-led humanitarian interventions possible 72 hours before the cyclones made landfall, based on meteorological reports and projections.



A community member receiving a waterproof tarpaulin and manila rope from her fellow community members which she used to cover her house. 242 families in 5 villages received tarpaulins and manila rope. (Nsanje District, 4 days before Cyclone Freddy reached Malawi). ©Photo: CARD



“Anticipatory Action will not work without adequate engagement of community members and local authorities prior to an emergency.”

GUIDE TO LOCALLY LED ANTICIPATORY ACTION

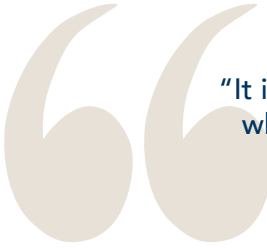
Our partner GNDR has developed a [comprehensive guide and toolkit](#) aimed at facilitating locally-led AA. This resource empowers civil society organisations to engage with communities and local actors, enabling them to take a central role in planning and establishing mechanisms for AA. It outlines three main approaches: (1) community-led early action, (2) locally-led early action, and (3) enhanced participatory contingency planning, connecting local and national stakeholders in forecast-based action planning.

CONCLUSION

Our journey in advancing AA through localisation in Mozambique, Madagascar, and Malawi has been marked by significant achievements and invaluable lessons learned. As we continue to navigate the complex humanitarian landscape, we remain committed to fostering partnerships, investing in local capacities, and supporting community-led responses to build resilient and inclusive communities.

Anticipatory Action will not work without adequate engagement of community members and local authorities prior to an emergency. These individuals and institutions need to consciously choose to engage in AA initiatives for them to be successful at the community level. The humanitarian community, on the other hand, needs to continue: (1) Supporting community-led responses to crises, (2) supporting localisation initiatives for strengthened and effective AA, and (3) promoting existing Partnership & Network platforms at local, national, and global levels.

Mathew Masinde, Regional Director Asia Hub
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe



“It is our ability to choose which makes us human”

Madeleine L'Engle

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,

“Disaggregating data by Disability, Gender, and Age (DGA) at the minimum is now a core principle in many humanitarian frameworks, along with the need to consider the intersectionality of these dimensions.”

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.
©Photo: Humanity & Inclusion

“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.”

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.

“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.”

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).
©Photo: Humanity & Inclusion

Jennifer M'Vuama,
Policy and Development Lead, Disaster Risk Reduction and
Climate Change Adaptation

Louise Bonnet,
Inclusive Anticipatory Action Project Coordinator
Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

FOLLOW THE FORECAST: ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN FRAGILE SETTINGS

THE ISSUE

ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



Shaibu Mohammed rolls his irrigation pipes in his farm located in Dasin Hausa community, Fufiore LGA, Adamawa State Nigeria. After receiving cash, he also purchased a generator-driven water-pump for irrigation and pipes for his dry-season farming.
©Photo: Taiwo Aina/ International Rescue Committee

The climate crisis demands proactive humanitarian responses in fragile settings. From drought in [central-southern South America](#) to prolonged drought and sudden onset flooding in East Africa, the increasing frequency and severity of climate disasters in fragile settings are devastating already vulnerable peoples. In the last three years, [44% of all individuals](#) affected by natural disasters resided in just 16 conflict-affected states, which represent 10% of the global population. Their businesses and homes are often damaged or destroyed, livelihoods lost or damaged, lives uprooted, and they are forced to find ways to secure enough food. Based on parametric triggers and early warning systems, at least half of humanitarian crises are foreseeable and more than 20% of disasters highly predictable. If we know where and when shocks are highly likely to occur, why not act now? As evidenced in the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) research, donors should Follow the Forecast and fund Anticipatory Action (AA) in fragile settings.

IRC found that anticipatory cash in fragile settings empowers vulnerable households' resilience and mitigates the damaging impacts of a climate shock. AA refers to interventions like transferring cash or providing in-kind support to vulnerable households before

the peak impacts of a disaster hit. Despite the impact, today [only 1% of ODA](#) goes to AA. Vulnerable populations in fragile and conflict settings are least resilient to climate shocks when they occur. Climate-vulnerable, conflict-affected communities contribute the least to climate change, bear its worst impacts, and yet have been consistently left out of the business-as-usual approach to climate action focused on stable settings.

IRC'S ANTICIPATORY CASH PILOT - COMPARING PRE- TO POST-SHOCK TRANSFERS

IRC's research is the [first experimental evidence](#) from a randomised controlled trial (RCT) in a conflict-affected environment demonstrating how anticipatory cash compares to post-shock cash transfers. [From 2021 to 2023](#), IRC worked with Google, International Food Policy Research Institute, Center for Disaster Protection, and local hydrometeorological agencies such as the Nigerian Meteorological Agency to measure the impacts of cash distribution among agro-pastoralist communities in rural Northeast Nigeria which has high exposure to natural hazards and conflict.

“Based on parametric triggers and early warning systems, at least half of humanitarian crises are foreseeable and more than 20% of disasters highly predictable.”

Many households living in flood-prone areas lack access to effective systems and technologies that disseminate real-time current information about climate shocks and risks. The IRC created a flood-risk monitoring platform with local partners that incorporated indigenous knowledge, hydrological data, meteorological data, and satellite information to set forecast-based thresholds and provide evidence on hydrological and meteorology parameters for triggering anticipatory cash payments. The data from this forecast would then be shared with community members and local stakeholders through a network of community-based early warning workers. In the 2022 flood season, the IRC delivered lump sum cash payments of the equivalent of just under 400 EUR—195,000 in Naira—to 1,450 households randomly assigned. Of these, 725 households received cash in advance when triggered by the flood monitoring platform’s risk thresholds. The remaining 725 households received the same cash payment following the flood.

ANTICIPATORY CASH BUILDS CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN FRAGILE SETTINGS

IRC found that anticipatory cash helps build resilience in people living in fragile settings. Both sets of households saw improvements in food security because of the cash transfer, but the households who received the pre-shock transfers saw additional benefits.

The pilot found that anticipatory cash helped households not only reduce coping mechanisms for food security, but also protect their livelihoods, make productive investments, and reduce their vulnerability to climatic shocks. In the case of floods, the anticipatory cash transfers reduced households’ negative coping strategies for securing enough food and protecting their livelihoods compared to households that received cash after the flood. For example, they were less likely to reduce the number of meals or portion sizes and were less likely to sell off livestock and assets or take on debt and spend their savings to meet their basic needs.

The cash transfer had a significant impact on the number of pre-emptive actions taken by households to protect economic livelihoods in anticipation of flood shocks, such as harvesting crops early, stockpiling food, and evacuating households. Importantly, the anticipatory cash transfer increased productive investments, including agricultural assets and productive livestock, on average, relative to the group that received the cash transfers afterwards. Since productive investments could increase a household’s future income-generating capacity and reduce its vulnerability to future shocks, anticipatory cash may help build long-term resilience to climate shocks.

“The pilot found that anticipatory cash helped households not only reduce coping mechanisms for food security, but also protect their livelihoods, make productive investments, and reduce their vulnerability to climatic shocks.”

MORE ANTICIPATORY ACTION AND RESEARCH REQUIRED IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT SETTINGS

Of course, AA should not be the only response to the climate crisis in fragile settings. As outlined in [IRC’s COP28 position paper](#), global leaders need to centre conflict-affected communities, make climate financing more equitable and accessible, and invest in adaptation measures. On average, conflict-affected communities receive just [one-third](#) of the adaptation funding that people in stable settings receive per capita. That said, AA is a promising tool to mitigate the compounding effects of climate shocks in already vulnerable communities. The UN’s FAO [calculated benefit-cost ratios](#) for AA and found that in their Ethiopia and Mongolia AA interventions, investing 1 USD in AA led to over 7 USD in prevented losses and added benefits for beneficiaries. Humanitarians need more research on how to best implement AA in fragile settings. Anticipatory Action models tested to date face challenges in effectively identifying where and when to act, whom to pay, and how to quickly disseminate effective early warning messages and deliver cash to widespread geographies before floods hit. The IRC is implementing several pilots to answer those questions.

“The UN’s FAO calculated benefit-cost ratios for AA and found that in their Ethiopia and Mongolia AA interventions, investing 1 USD in AA led to over 7 USD in prevented losses and added benefits for beneficiaries.”

We are conducting a follow-up, expanded pilot in north-east rural Nigeria with Google.org and local partners. This model combines forecasting strategies, early warning systems, and digital infrastructure to target, enrol, and pay vulnerable people remotely and accurately. The pilot targets 3,000 households to leverage machine learning to identify and fill in household knowledge gaps on climate-resilient actions, and partners with telecommunications to deploy targeted early warning messages. The IRC is also developing anticipatory cash pilots in Kenya and two other countries on AA, to evaluate cost-efficiency and differential impacts of anticipatory cash transfers by primary livelihood activity and gender.



Portrait of Salihu Yahaya (42); a livestock farmer and his family in front of his house located in Dasin Hausa community, Fufoire LGA, Adamawa State Nigeria. Salihu Yahaya is a beneficiary of the Google climate resiliency project. According to Salihu, he would have absconded and abandoned his family, in search of a means of earning if not for IRC’s climate shock-reducing cash intervention. After receiving the cash from IRC, he was able to engage in dry-season farming and solve the immediate needs of the family.

©Photo: Taiwo Aina/ International Rescue Committee

More research needs to evaluate what can be done in urban settings, too. Through a partnership with DG ECHO, the IRC is piloting and testing an operational model that combines AA and disaster risk reduction in urban areas, in particular flooding in Yola, Adawama state, Nigeria. The model has been adapted to urban areas by building on learnings from IRC’s implementation of the urban-focused ‘Response to Resilience’ project in Maiduguri, which was also funded by ECHO.

The model asks communities to build on their strengths such as associations, institutions, culture, physical and natural assets, and economic opportunities to develop a Flood Early Warning System, establish AA protocols, and implement short and longer-term anticipatory actions through a community-led approach.

Building on the first pilot’s findings, IRC is developing further evidence to guide AA implementation for communities in fragile settings. By improving their resilience, households can anticipate weather forecasted climatic shocks more effectively and rely on less aid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If we are to truly get ahead of increasing climate disasters, proactive measures like AA in fragile settings should be supported to help communities more effectively prepare. This means that donors should:

1. Commit at least 5% of humanitarian budgets towards AA, with a strategy for further expansion. It is good news that the German Federal Foreign Office committed 5% of its budget towards AA and the United Kingdom is now scoping out a [fund of up to 15%](#) of its humanitarian budget towards better disaster preparedness in fragile and conflict settings. European donors should lead the way, too.
2. Prioritise climate-vulnerable, conflict-affected states, where needs are greatest, when scaling up AA programmes.
3. Dedicate more funding towards innovation and evidence generation on proactive interventions like AA so organisations can respond to the evolving needs of humanitarian populations.
4. Link multi-year funding to forecasted, parametric triggers through more agile, accommodating financing mechanisms.
5. Encourage local governments and agencies to develop early warning systems with local partners and experienced NGOs, in addition to collaborating with private sector actors who have been driving innovations in this space.

Humanitarian leaders need to Follow the Forecast and fund Anticipatory Action. We should help the most vulnerable people beforehand, instead of spending money only after a shock to build back community livelihoods.

Kazim Habib,
Senior Officer, Board and Innovation

Clare Clingain,
Researcher, Economic Recovery and Development
International Rescue Committee

LEVERAGING INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE ANTICIPATORY ACTION

THE ISSUE

ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



Johnny Rabemananjara, a fisherman and farmer, received Early Cash transfers for a period of six months to enable his family to stockpile supplies and invest in alternative income sources in the event of crops losses. Madagascar, 2023.
©Photo: Toni Haddad

In a world of increasing technological advances, we can now forecast many hazard types, predict their impacts, and monitor their emergence. Given these capabilities, it is neither ethical, dignified, nor effective to delay humanitarian action. Changing the way we deal with disasters and their impacts requires a shift from largely reactive to more anticipatory approaches to disaster management. We need to emphasise the need to act based on risk and to ensure that funds and resources are not only available, but pre-arranged to allow for timely action before lives are lost and damage occurs. Such a shift is crucial not only in the context of climate change and escalating humanitarian needs, but also in the context of a widening funding gap. To stretch available funding and maximise its impact, traditional humanitarian funding mechanisms must be transformed, and new strategies explored.

Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) encompasses a range of budgetary and financial strategies already used by countries, organisations, and communities to manage the financial impacts of disasters. Terminology around DRF varies, but in essence, it refers to mechanisms to pre-arrange financing that are activated upon the occurrence of a disaster.

“Changing the way we deal with disasters and their impacts requires a shift from largely reactive to more anticipatory approaches to disaster management.”

Anticipatory Action (AA) represents a paradigm shift in humanitarian action and disaster risk management (DRM). By definition, AA involves acting ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. In return, this requires pre-agreed plans that identify partners and activities, reliable early warning information, and pre-agreed financing, released rapidly when an agreed trigger point is reached.

Making use of DRF tools to enable AA represents a pivotal evolution in the humanitarian and DRM sectors. When used in tandem, the combined approach can significantly enhance the way we manage disaster risks and their impacts allowing for a proactive rather than reactive response to disasters.

FINANCIAL STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT A MORE EFFICIENT ANTICIPATORY ACTION:

- Utilising DRF instruments and mechanisms to channel existing humanitarian funds to AA represents a significant shift towards a more proactive, and efficient DRM approach. Leveraging approaches such as Forecast-based Financing, released ahead of a shock based on forecast information, is critical to bridging the gap between long-term Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and rapid humanitarian response.
- Global pooled and contingency funds like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), and the Start Network's funding mechanisms play crucial roles in supporting AA. These initiatives offer quick and, in most cases, pre-agreed funding for AA, while risk pooling ensures that the available funds are used more efficiently, stretched further, and protect more people while reducing insolvency risk.
- The establishment of **innovative collaborations** such as the African Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica initiative, which enables humanitarian agencies to "replicate" the insurance coverage that sovereign governments have purchased from ARC. As another example, a reinsurance policy was secured for the DREF that quickly replenishes the fund if expenditures for AA and humanitarian response cross a pre-defined threshold, thereby ensuring liquidity in times of extraordinary or overlapping crises. Both examples demonstrate the viability of collaborations that link parametric insurance with humanitarian efforts and enable more efficient AA.
- Implementing **layered DRF strategies** can address a broad spectrum of disaster risks by aligning different financial instruments to various levels of risk intensity and frequency. For example, (re)insurance solutions provide coverage for catastrophic events with return rates of decades to centuries, while contingency funds and loans cover smaller, more frequent risks. Typically, AA is located in between and focuses on events with medium intensity and medium return rates of three to five years. By recognising the applicability of each instrument and creating a layered risk cover, sovereign states and humanitarian partners can ensure that financial disaster risks are effectively covered and, hence, populations effectively protected.
- Developing **comprehensive DRM frameworks and strategies** at national and regional levels that incorporate AA linked to DRF can significantly improve preparedness, anticipation, and response efforts. This can foster an environment that promotes and supports the integration of AA with DRF instruments and enhances coordinated responses and efficient resource allocation.



Sandrine Rahaingonirina, a washerwoman, was given Early Cash transfers for six months. This allowed her family to accumulate supplies and explore additional sources of income in preparation for potential crop failures. Madagascar, 2023.

©Photo: Toni Haddad

➤ DISASTER RISK FINANCING INSTRUMENTS POTENTIALLY APPLICABLE FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION:

- 1. Parametric Insurance:** Pays upon a pre-determined trigger event, such as hurricane wind speeds, enabling quick disbursement, making it suitable for AA. In Guatemala, for example, the World Food Programme (WFP) explores such a forecast-based parametric insurance covering small farmers against climate-related risks.
- 2. Catastrophe Bonds (cat bonds):** High-yield debt instruments raising money for states and insurers in a crisis event, adaptable to support AA by risk transfers. Notably, [the World Bank issues cat bonds for natural hazard-prone countries](#), enabling financial support for AA efforts.
- 3. Sovereign Risk Pools:** Mechanisms like the African Risk Capacity (ARC) allow member states to share and transfer disaster risk, securing coverage under more favourable terms. The ARC, for instance, has [a contingency planning component](#) that ensures that payouts support pre-determined measures which opens possibilities for AA.
- 4. Contingency Funds (budgets & loans):** Reserves set aside for disaster events, providing a readily available financing source for timely response activities, including those initiated ahead of a hazard. Examples include the [Philippines' Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Funds \(LDRRMF\)](#) for both emergency response and AA actions and the [World Bank's Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Options \(CAT DDOs\)](#), which permits loans on pre-determined conditions upon reaching risk thresholds. While not active yet, contingency loans also show potential to be designed for anticipated events.

“Localised mechanisms ensure that financing is quickly accessible where it is needed most, and that AA is closely aligned with local realities.”

➤ HUMANITARIAN DRF INSTRUMENTS THAT CURRENTLY SUPPORT AA:

- OCHA's Country Based Pool Funds (CBPF)
- OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)
- IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF)
- Start Network
 - Start Fund Anticipation
 - Start Ready
- WFP Immediate Response Account (IRA)
- FAO Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA)
- ECHO Crisis Modifier
- ARC Replica
- WHH's WAHFAFA and similar NGO-based funds

LIMITATIONS TO THE APPLICATION OF AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM

Approaches combining Disaster Risk Financing and Anticipatory Action encounter various limitations. Firstly, both DRF and AA rely on accurate hazard and risk information, which may be lacking in contexts without robust forecasts and early warning systems, rendering AA infeasible. Similarly, DRF instruments like insurance require precise risk modelling, often hindered by inaccessible data. Additionally, stakeholders may lack the capacity to effectively utilise and/or understand such information for AA and DRF mechanisms. Challenges such as unstable financial infrastructure for DRF and limited access for AA further complicate matters. Moreover, differing goals, mandates, and operating methods of the stakeholders involved create barriers that lead to a lack of mutual understanding and trust. For instance, humanitarian principles may conflict with the purchase of insurance policies using humanitarian funds. Additionally, varying interpretations of risk hinder effective coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. Lastly, the commitment to innovative finance for AA remains limited, with a small fraction of humanitarian funding allocated to integrated AA and DRF despite significant potential. Political commitment to AA and DRF is also lacking, as ex-ante disaster management entails more political risk and generates less political capital than responsive action.

WHAT IT TAKES FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND EFFECTIVELY FINANCED:

- For the integration to be effective, investments in improving the accuracy of forecasts, expanding the coverage of early warning systems, and developing localised risk models are crucial. The United Nations Secretary General's '[Early Warnings for All](#)' initiative is promising in this regard. In addition, quality risk models and forecasts should be made available to all relevant and especially local stakeholders on fair conditions to ensure equitable participation in DRF and AA.
- Ensuring political commitment is crucial for making AA a core element of the humanitarian and DRM system. The significant [commitments made by the G7 in 2022](#) illustrate a growing recognition and dedication to integrating AA within DRF but are still to be realised in their full potential – an urgent task G7 states should prioritise. At the same time, well-crafted DRM strategies ensure a favourable environment for AA, DRF, and integrated approaches.
- Encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation that includes academia, humanitarian, development, and climate communities¹, governmental stakeholders and the financial and insurance sector is vital to bringing together a wide range of resources, expertise, and perspectives but also necessary for DRF and AA to be efficient. This, in turn, constitutes a crucial element in supporting the humanitarian-development nexus, fostering resilience and safeguarding development gains.
- Integration of global and localised financing mechanisms ensures that DRF strategies are robust, flexible, and accountable. Global funds can pool risk and provide the large-scale financial backing and stability needed for major disasters and foster innovation in financial instruments, risk modelling, and early warning systems. [Localised mechanisms ensure that financing is quickly accessible](#) where it is needed most, and that AA is closely aligned with local realities. Likewise, allowing direct access to financial mechanisms by local actors ensures acceptance and ownership of AA. Finally, to ensure accountability towards the community that co-created AA protocols and plans, pre-arranged funding must grow equally to the number and reach of the systems to guarantee that people are actually protected.

Hannes Serocki,

Junior Expert for Humanitarian Action

Jessica Kühnle,

Expert Advocacy and Communications
for Anticipatory Humanitarian Action
Welthungerhilfe

1. While this article discusses various financing strategies to support Anticipatory Action (AA), it's important to acknowledge the potential of climate financing in this context. Due to limited space, this aspect is not explored in detail here. Future discussions could beneficially examine how climate financing can be effectively integrated into AA initiatives, contributing further to resilience building.

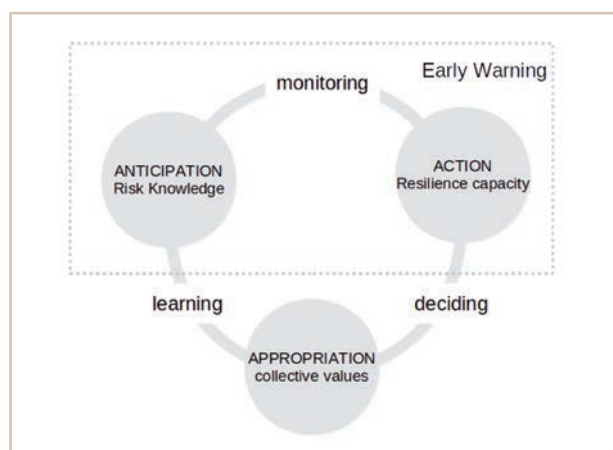
ANTICIPATORY ACTION IN ADAPTIVE RISK GOVERNANCE

THE ISSUE

ANTICIPATORY ACTION: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

THE 3 As OF ADAPTIVE RISK GOVERNANCE

According to the prospective theory or foresight¹, Anticipatory Action (AA) relates to appropriation. Early warning systems (EWS) are necessary, but not enough to move towards AA. In terms of adaptive risk governance (ARG), this means that risk knowledge (anticipation) — related to climate change geohazards and georesources interlinked with armed conflicts, both triggering economic crisis— and response capacity to foster the resilience of vulnerable populations at risk (action) must consider a collective goal based on shared values and articulated through governance mechanisms being in place. In the context of ARG, AA may be defined as the capacity to anticipate action through appropriation considering social learning and decision support systems.



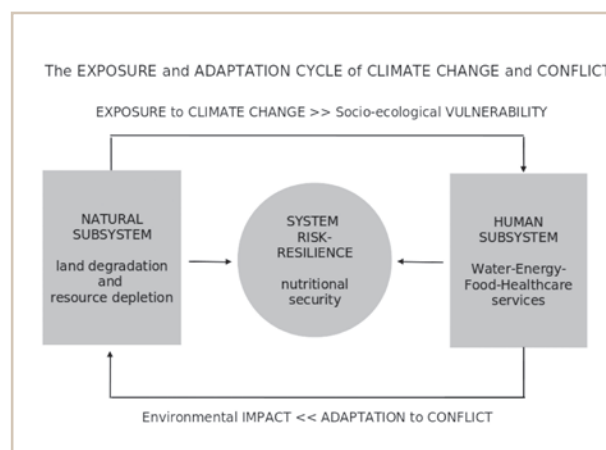
The 3As of Adaptive Risk Governance

A FOCUS ON NUTRITION SECURITY RESILIENCE

[Action Against Hunger International](#) defines nutrition security as the outcome of good health, a healthy environment, good caring practices, as well as household food security. Nutrition security is achieved when all household members have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences. Additionally, a sanitary environment, access to clean water, adequate health services, and appropriate care and feeding practices are necessary to ensure an active and healthy life.

“By considering the focus on resilience, it is possible to measure the effectiveness of intervention strategies and policies on different types of vulnerable groups according to prospective scenarios through benchmarking.”

The increasing importance of climate change and conflicts in relation to water, energy, food security, and healthcare exposes vulnerable populations to risk. At the same time, populations struggle to access the delivery of basic services, increasing social tensions and conflicts. Inappropriate adaptation strategies may have an impact on environmental degradation which, in turn, increases the exposition to the effects of climate change (induced hazards) and environmental services. Therefore, the exposition-adaptation cycle characterises Human Earth Systems Complex Intersections (HESCI).



The exposure-adaptation cycle

Both vulnerability and impact determine the resilience of the system under risk. Resilience happens when vulnerable populations adapt to different coping strategies over time to achieve a new level of vulnerability. The feedback loop of the cycle can be positive or negative. By considering the focus on resilience, it is possible to measure the effectiveness of intervention strategies and policies on different types of vulnerable groups according to prospective scenarios through benchmarking.

1. Godet, M. (1994). From anticipation to action: A handbook of strategic prospective, coll. Futures-oriented Studies. Paris: Unesco Publishing. The French version of this book was published in 1991 by Dunod: De l'anticipation à l'action: Manuel de prospective et de stratégie.

SOME CONCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS

The exposure-adaptation cycle involves two key points when considering risk knowledge. The risk equation $Risk = Hazard \times Vulnerability$ considers the vulnerability when exposed to a hazard. However, social-ecological vulnerability² is shaped by the political ecology of a territory, in a way that exposure to a hazard is intrinsic to vulnerability. Vulnerable individuals and communities, in terms of economic capacities and governance in the allocation and distribution of food and basic services delivery under the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (including a clean environment), become exposed to geohazards and related armed conflicts. Which occurs due to territorial asymmetries of power, involving situations of spatial justice³. This means risk exists when the hazard is individually perceived and collectively accepted as such.

The second point is that rethinking risk knowledge involves the adaptation capacities of vulnerable groups and their resilience. Considering the possible positive and negative feedback effects of adaptation actions may increase the impact of geohazards and related conflicts on these groups. The early works of Cendrero and Panizza⁴ on social geosciences, may help to understand the relationship between risk and impact through resilience as $Risk\ hazard = Impact + Resilience$ (where resilience refers to the capacity of adaptation of an exposed vulnerable group over time).

An example of such an approach was developed on the scope of a land evaluation in Chinandega, Nicaragua,⁵ where food security resilience was calculated in terms of affordability to basic food baskets by household income. Household production units of small tenants or land use types managing different land use units may adapt to adverse climate change events such as “El Niño” through production diversification in home gardens. This would help in reducing their vulnerability and exposure, as well as impact on soil erosion on slopes, avoiding landslides.

Consequently, the risk-resilience equation is not only affected by the probabilistic temporal and spatial

occurrence of a hazard that determines the intensity of damage (vulnerability). Most risk analyses are based on forecasting with excessive quantification and extrapolation based on past data. But when dealing with the human factor in the context of Human Earth Systems Complex Intersections (HESCI), the exception is the rule (“black swans”) and the past does not explain the future (“stochastic parrots”). As dangerous is dismissing the importance of path dependence, as overrating emergency phenomena. As exposure changes so does adaptation, involving the need for foresight scenarios coupling the probability of occurrence with adaptation strategies over time. Thus, risk analysis should focus on explanatory and normative modelling to give a better insight into how to restore resilient communities through innovation in territories.

SOME GEOETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Modelling is a key element in ARG because results have a great influence on decision-making and the whole of society, highlighting the role of social geosciences. Therefore, there are several points to take into consideration from a geoethical point of view. Models are valuable exercises, but certainly, they may limit the holistic understating of Human Earth Systems Complex Intersections (HESCI) because of the inherent irreversibility and uncertainty when analysing the interrelatedness and interdependence of complex systems. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind prevention and responsibility principles. Prevention, which is implemented by adopting strategies that improve the resilience of human communities and reduce the extent of economic and environmental effects of geohazards to restore and improve environmental health and human well-being, is an ethical duty⁶. In turn, the responsibility principle refers to the socio-ecological implications of geosciences research to (a) produce and implement valid and tailored scientific results according to societal needs, (b) develop geo-educational and dissemination tools, and (c) cooperate with and support decision-making processes with key social actors in relation to prevention⁷.

2. Depietri, Y. (2020). The social–ecological dimension of vulnerability and risk to natural hazards. *Sustain Sci* 15, 587–604 . <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00710-y>

3. Soja, E.W. (2010). *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

4. Cendrero, A. & M. Panizza (1999). Geomorphology and Environmental Impact Assessment: an introduction – *Suppl. Geogr. Fis. Dinam. Quat.*, 3 (3): 167-172.

5. van der Zee, J.J. et. al. (2001): Convenio Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación en Desarrollo Rural – Solidaridad Internacional España (2001). Identificación de opciones productivas y manejo ecosostenible de seis municipios del norte de Chinandega.

6. Peppoloni, S. & Di Capua, G. (2022). *Geoethics: Manifiesto for an Ethics of Responsibility Towards the Earth*. Cham: Springer. ISBN 978-3030980436. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98044-3>

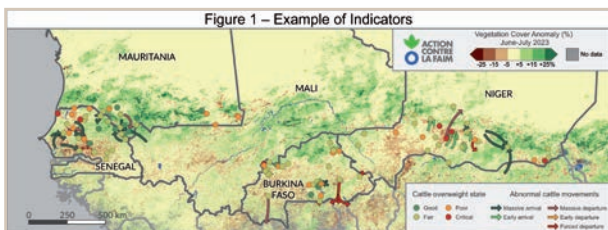
7. Peppoloni, S. (2023). Geoethics to Face Natural Risks by Improving Societal Resilience. In: Malheiro, A., Fernandes, F. & Chaminé, H.I. (eds) *Advances in Natural Hazards and Volcanic Risks: Shaping a Sustainable Future*. NATHAZ 2022. Cham: Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25042-2_1

“As spatial dimension and field evidence is straightened out, it seems interesting to combine artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques in profiling vulnerability with a case study qualitative approach.”

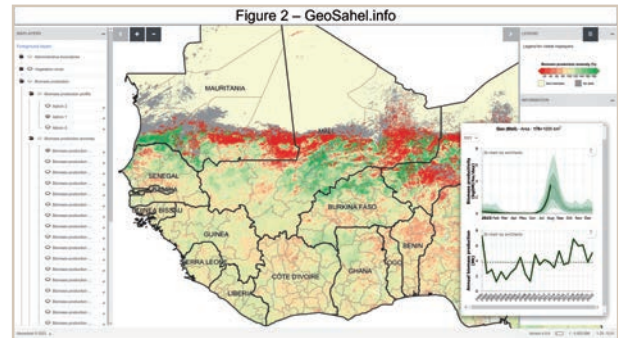
Two points of special interest to consider the geoethical approach in a model are how the models are built and how the models are used. Because the second refers to the appropriation of AA above mentioned, the first deserves further elaboration. Considering the human geoethical aspect in adaptation when modelling has some nuances⁸. Furthermore, science is not a neutral process, and values are largely within the modeller's thinking framework. So, the dimension of values in the model is largely influenced by the modeller's views of reality and how modellers assumed reality operates. Some good practices that may help to overcome such challenges are:

1. Stakeholder's participation in setting objectives, processes, and results aiming for legitimacy.
2. Recognition of the diversity of knowledge, values, and nature agency by bottom-up modelling.
3. Spatial representation of unequal distribution of basic services and environmental degradation.
4. Ensure a transparent methodology and results using modelling protocols.
5. Due accountability of results through open peer-reviewed evaluation.
6. Secure durability and governance for effective decision-making through institutional integration.

Acción Contra el Hambre Spain has taken forward some of these practices in the Pastoral Early Warning System (PEWS). Although PEWS does not provide risk scenarios, it performs as a surveillance system covering pastoral areas in the Sahel. It disseminates pastoral surveillance information to pastoralists' nomadic population through communication channels, strengthening the link between monitoring and the humanitarian response to droughts and climate events.



Example of PEWS Indicators. Cattle overweight was reported by the pastoral sentinel network at the start of the rainy season 2023 overlay, with the instantaneous total vegetation coverage including green vegetation and dry vegetation retrieved from MODIS satellite observations (product source: GEOGLAM RAPP).



The [GeoSahel.info](https://geosahel.info) interactive cartographic platform illustrates the biomass production anomaly for the rainy season of 2023, featuring both map visualisations and temporal profiles, along with a comparison to previous years.

SUMMING-UP

In the context of Adaptive Risk Governance, Anticipatory Action needs to adopt a geospective approach. A geospective purpose is not finding the best prediction or the best solution to a problem, but it aims at better understanding future changes to enrich the decision-making process considering that spatial dimension takes a major role in the modelling⁹.

As spatial dimension and field evidence is straightened out, it seems interesting to combine artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques in profiling vulnerability with a case study qualitative approach. Case studies use triangulation in data analysis. Comparative aggregation of case studies does not only allow calibration of model results but has a considerable role to play in a better interpretation of the results building a coherent narrative. Furthermore, risk knowledge is not seen as an extractive process, but is continuously referred to for the most vulnerable, improving our understanding of the evolution of a territory.

In conclusion, risk modelling is rather a bottom-up process that allows capturing a certain interrelatedness that is not achievable by statistical processes alone, making sense of data (data outside a spatial context do not have any meaning and are an open door for enlightened digital absolutism in how to comprehended reality). In turn, it has a considerable impact in terms of humanitarian work taking into consideration the technical user's expertise and knowledge, giving voice to the most vulnerable.

Francesc Bellaubi,
Dr. rer.nat. Senior Advisor
Acción Contra el Hambre Spain- Member of [IAPG](https://iapg.org)

8. Kunsch, P.L., Theys, M. & Brans, J.P. (2007). The importance of systems thinking in ethical and sustainable decision-making. *Cent. Eur. J. Oper. Res.*, 15, 253–269. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10100-007-0029-8>

9. Voiron-Canicio, C. & Fusco, G. (2021). Knowledge challenges of the geospective approach applied to territorial resilience. In: Garbolino, E. & Voiron-Canicio, C. (eds) *Ecosystems and Territorial Resilience. A Geospective Approach*. Elsevier, pp.57-84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818215-4.00003-1>

BRINGING LIFESAVING HEALTHCARE TO FLOOD-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN LIBYA

A CLOSER LOOK



Talal Burnaz, IMC Country Director in Libya, surveys the damage in Derna in September 2023.
©Photo: International Medical Corps

On 10 September 2023, Storm Daniel struck Libya, bringing winds of up to 80 kilometres per hour and record-breaking rainfall. The next day, two dams upstream from the city of Derna collapsed, causing catastrophic flooding that destroyed approximately 25% of the city and displaced nearly 45,000 people. A portion of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) still reside in precarious conditions, giving rise to heightened protection risks and increased vulnerabilities. One of the most pressing concerns has been access to clean water. Without it, waterborne diseases can spread, leading to illness and potentially death.

To address this, International Medical Corps (IMC) contracted a fleet of specially equipped trucks to deliver safe drinking water directly to flood-affected communities across the Derna region. These water-truck tanks undergo rigorous water-quality monitoring at the water sources and during transportation. Each truck is capable of transporting 12,000 litres of water. So far, we have delivered about 7.5 million litres of clean water via 928 water trucks, providing relief to about 15,500 people.

“One of the most pressing concerns has been access to clean water. Without it, waterborne diseases can spread, leading to illness and potentially death.”

The disaster caused infrastructure damage and shortages in medical equipment, medications, and staff, exacerbating the already limited capabilities of health facilities in the region. To meet these challenges, International Medical Corps has deployed 12 emergency medical teams (EMTs) over the course of its response, including some in fixed placements and some mobile units that have operated out of 31 health facilities, bringing lifesaving health services to thousands of displaced people. The organisation currently has 11 EMTs in place—three in fixed locations and eight mobile units that provide services to 25 health facilities across eight municipalities.

“When I arrived in Derna after the floods, the damage I saw was devastating,” explained Talal Burnaz, IMC’s Country Director in Libya. “Buildings were destroyed, thousands were displaced. It was unimaginable. Our EMTs have been critical in providing care to those who need it most. It is why we are here—to help.”



IMC staff members install the water tank near Ahmed’s house in February 2024.

©Photo: International Medical Corps

Our teams provide an integrated package of emergency and primary healthcare services, including reproductive health, child health, mental health care, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, health education sessions, training, and medication distribution. So far, our 12 EMTs have completed more than 21,000 outpatient consultations with IDPs from flood-affected areas.

HELPING AHMED AND HIS SON ACCESS SAFE WATER IN DERNA

Ahmed¹ is a father who lost several family members in the flood, including his wife and two of his children. Now, he lives with his only son. Ahmed lived in a temporary accommodation that did not have access to water, forcing them to buy costly water bottles. He and his son struggled with minimal water use and had concerns about their hygiene.

“We could not use the house bathroom for almost 15 days,” Ahmed explained. “We fully relied on water bottles.”

International Medical Corps recognised the critical need to provide access to safe water in Derna. In addition to launching a water trucking program, we installed 32 water tanks across the city, each with a capacity of 2,000 litres. IMC initially focused on the Alshail area in Derna, where Ahmed lives, because of the area’s poor infrastructure and sanitation crisis. Our team installed a water tank, which now gets filled every week, near Ahmed’s house.

“International Medical Corps was the first organisation to help and support me in this,” said Ahmed. “Water is the basis of life, and you gave me that.”

The impact of the water delivery program has gone beyond just delivering water—International Medical Corps has provided a lifeline to countless families, restoring hope and dignity in the face of despair.

IMC was the first international humanitarian organisation present in Libya after the 2011 conflict began. Since then, it has been providing critical health, nutrition, protection, mental health care and water, sanitation and hygiene services across the country.

Elizabeth Austin Levoy,
Senior Communications Specialist

Kosai Souff,
Communications and Social Media Specialist
International Medical Corps

1. Name changed to protect his privacy.

Interview with Dr Michael Köhler, Grand Bargain Ambassador



> 1. In February 2024, the Grand Bargain launched the Caucus on Scaling up Anticipatory Action. As Grand Bargain Ambassador, what was your vision in launching the Caucus on Scaling up Anticipatory Action, and how do you see it transforming the landscape of humanitarian aid?

Anticipatory Action (AA) is not new, but despite being increasingly discussed it is not yet very widespread. In 2023 data shows that only [0.2% of humanitarian funding goes into AA](#) — for which we also need to take into consideration the definition of AA.

As in every aspect of life, it is better to prevent than to cure, and therefore, it makes sense to promote AA to intervene faster, help resilience-building, and reduce the needs and costs at a moment in which the funding gap is going through the roof. Therefore, we thought it was essential to give AA a push. In June 2023, the 67 signatories of the Grand Bargain 3.0 (GB) agreed that AA should be one of the core issues that the GB should be working on. At the moment, it is clear that AA holds a big promise, but at the same time, it encounters many problems such as making financing available or addressing coordination needs. Consequently, the GB will try to figure out how to promote AA in a more efficient way, which is why the decision to launch a specific caucus on scaling up AA was taken in February 2024.

Since the inception of the GB process in February this year, there has been thankfully a lot of dynamism, with many States and organisations willing to contribute. This shows a strong interest in AA as a means to overcome some of the problems of humanitarian aid. What is clear is that AA would not just be a new instrument of humanitarian aid implementation. Taking AA seriously means performing a paradigm shift — a different way of organising and providing aid —, moving from the traditional role of responding to crisis to a mode that foresees crises. For this change to happen, we would need a different humanitarian aid approach that would include different forms of aid funding, the practical reliance both on performing foresight tools and increasingly also on local knowledge, sound logistics policies as well as a much improved and intensified cooperation with development, climate action, and peacebuilding efforts.

The added value of the GB in this context is not to develop the concept as such but to create a bigger group of supporters for AA, defining the conditions and harnessing

the political will to go all the way from the incumbent response towards the hoped-for future AA-based paradigm of humanitarian aid implementation. Currently, the GB is the only structure where you can find every category of humanitarian stakeholder, from the biggest donors to local NGOs, and therefore the GB is the appropriate forum to frame and push for this approach.

> 2. Securing funding commitments to enhance coordinated Anticipatory Action stands as a pivotal goal for effectiveness. Could you elaborate on the specific challenges in achieving this and the strategies being employed to overcome them?

On the one hand, there is the eternal problem known to everyone who works in humanitarian aid: given the general scarcity of funding, you always want to first and foremost save the life that is at risk. And there is the dilemma: every euro or dollar that goes into prevention or AA is money that is not allocated to the person who is already suffering from hunger, needs protection, or is having a health issue. Our entire sector is focused on responding to crises rather than anticipating and preventing them. This characterises our financial system. Problems here are not only the general lack of funding but often enough also the rigidity of financial instruments.

There are additional difficulties. When humanitarian funding goes into AA, spending can become more difficult to track, and often it does not appear as clearly in statistics as in direct crisis response. Spending might appear, for example, in the development or the environment statistics rather than in the humanitarian tracking lists. In the case of the EU, much of what effectively constitutes AA is categorised under civil protection, or at least involves the activation of civil protection instruments, which complicates tracking efforts.

As far as local organisations are concerned, we see that despite being key to implementing any form of humanitarian aid, they hardly ever benefit from AA spending; they look very much cut off from funding streams in general. This is simply because so far they have not yet become part of this new game. A problem that has to be overcome.

However, there is also a more general challenge. Over the last year and a half, I noticed time and again that while everybody speaks about AA, the understanding of what it really signifies, and what not, seems to be quite different. Not everybody is very clear about its meaning. Some

donors, including the European Union, have hardly made an extra-clear distinction between proper AA and, for example, disaster prevention, which is a very useful tool, but different from AA. Others, however, do so. Thus, there is a need to clarify and create a common base for discussion and taking commitments.

Lastly, AA has a communication problem. In general, it is more striking to talk, and report, about delivering aid to thousands of people in need than about bringing in supplies before a disaster strikes. In the extreme case, if through AA you lower a disaster's or a crisis' humanitarian impact—which is the main purpose of it in addition to shrinking the cost of operations—, then doing so does not hit the headlines as much as classic crisis response. There is therefore also a visibility issue, which must not be taken lightly since visibility is often enough key to our ability to mobilise resources, including for humanitarian aid and in particular when additional resources are needed to exceed initially programmed baseline amounts.

➤ 3. What is the importance of localisation and leadership by local actors in Anticipatory Action? How is this being pursued, and what benefits have you observed or anticipated from this approach?

All the reasons that speak in favour of a stronger localisation approach in classic humanitarian aid are even more relevant when it comes to AA.

We see that in all major crises, most of the action is being implemented by local partners as they are quite regularly being subcontracted by most of the bigger international implementing organisations. But beyond this fact, they know the local context, power structures, and decision-making needs. They can engage with the communities concerned, and they speak the local language, which makes them indispensable humanitarian actors.

When you intend to anticipate, it is obviously very important to understand the local context. You want to gain the confidence of local leaders so that they engage in foresight analysis and your foresight is based on correct data and meaningful assumptions. Additionally, a sound local basis will help to make sure that solutions are produced sustainably.

Therefore, it is a particularly delicate and regrettable fact that so far local organisations are hardly involved in AA and often enough have no possibility of receiving direct funding.

We need solutions for this problem. This is one of the reasons why I am very happy that the NEAR Network is part of the caucus on scaling up AA. NEAR can bring in both local and national civil society actors from the Global South and, I hope and trust, provide examples of good practices that could be followed or scaled up. The process will not be simple, but both donors and implementing organisations need to completely rethink how

they work and bring in the local dimension.

More localisation would hopefully also produce another benefit: If we want to engage new donors, including some from the Global South, it is indispensable to establish humanitarian aid as a collective global duty serving a common public good. This is one argument that could encourage nations like Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, or Türkiye to engage more in humanitarian aid funding and relevant coordination efforts. Such emerging donors, however, would very legitimately want to empower their own aid organisations and focus on local actors in the countries they want to work in. Consequently, there is not only a technical argument but also a political one that should make us aim for more localisation – at least as long as we want to keep the relevance of our sector to effectively address humanitarian crises in the future.

➤ 4. Drawing on your experience as the former Deputy Director General of DG ECHO, what are in your view the principal challenges DG ECHO faces in scaling up Anticipatory Action? What are your thoughts on how to tackle these challenges?

In many regards, DG ECHO has been a de facto leader of AA. For several years, DG ECHO has benefited from being allocated a specific budget line on disaster prevention. Even though not exclusively dedicated to AA, implementing such a –admittedly limited– fund has allowed DG ECHO to start early on with pursuing an approach that has been somewhat different from the classic response to disasters we are accustomed to seeing: acting before the disaster and financing action that would minimise possible disaster impact.

Furthermore, during the tenure of Commissioner Lenarčič, DG ECHO has developed specific logistic policies to rationalise operations and reduce costs. Today, DG ECHO has warehouses in five destinations around the world, from Panama to Kuala Lumpur, where they stock tents, blankets, water purification material, medicine, and other aid items for rapid deployment in the relevant target region. These developments mark already a very big step in the right direction for implementing AA more generally.

However, there are also challenges. For example, consequent AA implementation requires much stronger coordination with other forms of aid intervention. This has become more complicated at the EU level right now with EU development policies increasingly shifting towards the Global Gateway, which admitted is not focused on fragile countries where from a humanitarian point of view AA would be particularly useful and necessary.

Another issue to be addressed is that it would be necessary to invest much more in a system of operational and performing mechanisms that could trigger AA inter-

ventions – basically, something that would ring the alarm before a disaster strikes or a crisis gets acute and activate all the force, means, and capacity that the EU system has already in place. It would be the type of toolbox and methodology that would allow humanitarian actors to be on top of the curve. This stands in the way of developing a much stronger profile in AA.

Against this background, I am delighted to see that DG ECHO is supporting the new caucus on AA very assertively. I hope that the caucus will produce very concrete recommendations that can be then implemented to overcome these and other remaining challenges.

➤ 5. To scale up Anticipatory Action, engaging with a broad range of stakeholders is crucial. With your double hat, how can collaboration with the wider humanitarian, development, and climate sectors be enhanced to foster a unified approach towards Anticipatory Action?

In the context of the EU, but also in other aid systems, there is still quite some way to go in this regard. We need a functional Nexus in action. While I think that the bulk of work regarding the Nexus will always be in the humanitarian area, development cannot completely slip away from it. In my view, one of the most important bridges between both of them is in fact climate action. An important part of the European development budget has been earmarked to finance climate action, including adaptation and mitigation. And AA can be one of the tools in this regard.

As part of my role in the Grand Bargain set-up, I am also in charge of the Nexus work. One of my intentions is to bring together high-level decision-makers from both the development and humanitarian aid sectors. The aim is to facilitate a very honest discussion on the reasons why we do not see more Nexus work, despite significant developments in this regard over the last few years, and what it would require to dynamise Nexus cooperation.

Nobody can deny that we increasingly encounter fragile contexts worldwide. However, at the same time, we see two worrying trends. First, development work is generally reducing its engagement in many of these crises. And secondly, often enough even peacebuilders and mediators are leaving these contexts instead of dealing with fragility. This leaves humanitarian aid playing a central role in countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Yemen, and Syria – in some way, an even too central role. Despite the key role of humanitarian aid in these contexts, the bad news is that in such cases there is hardly sufficient focus on systemic improvements and longer-term solutions because this is neither the task nor the focus or strength, of humanitarian aid. Anticipatory Action, however, can only benefit and find better framework conditions where such improvements are being pushed, even if success may only be very partial.

It is important to ask donors and the EU how they plan to deal with fragility in the future. For humanitarian reasons but not only. What is clear is that if we do not deal with fragility, fragility will deal with us – in the form of terrorism, organised crime, destabilisation of societies and countries, forced displacement, war, and so on, as we have seen in many countries. Addressing this set of challenges necessitates building effective bridges within the Nexus framework, connecting different policy areas and available funding streams.

➤ 6. Looking ahead to the outcome document of the caucus to be presented at the Annual Meeting in October 2024, what key commitments or actions do you hope will be outlined?

The first outcome that we would like to see is an agreement on very concrete funding commitments. It could be in the form of a recommended amount of humanitarian aid to be used in the form of AA. Or it could be that some countries or donors would want to provide a fixed percentage for AA. Whatever the agreement will be, we would wish to set up a self-reporting and financial tracking system. Of course, in the coming years, we would then monitor to see who is working in the right direction according to the commitments made.

Secondly, we need reliable pathways for humanitarian organisations to improve their readiness to implement AA. The AA approach does not only need commitments by donors but also implementing partners need to show how they would implement AA and how they want to get organisationally ready in this context.

Thirdly, in terms of coordination, we need solid action that can be put in place and make the case for AA. It would be desirable to focus on two or three convincing cases that prove the effectiveness of AA and demonstrate how it helps lower the cost of humanitarian intervention. Such specific actions could then be taken as an example to be followed to improve coordination between the right sectors and actors.

Once we see more cases of best practices, I trust this will influence operationally the way players at various levels in the system operate. As soon as donors set up specific funds for AA, the implementing sector will follow. They will be motivated not only by the availability of funding but also by the increased effectiveness of these approaches. Therefore, I am not without hope that the Grand Bargain caucus on AA will lead to improvements sooner rather than later.

Once that happens, we could not only see emerging an additional tool, but such development might trigger a total rethink in the way humanitarian aid operates. Anticipatory Action is indeed very important in our effort to reform and make the entire sector fit for the future.

Interview conducted by Francesca Giubilo and Jaime Martín Farelo on 11 April 2024.

VOICE MEMBERS 2024

AUSTRIA

- CARE Österreich
- Caritas Österreich
- SOS Kinderdorf International

BELGIUM

- Caritas International Belgium
- HIAS Europe
- Médecins du Monde (MDM) Belgium
- Oxfam Solidarité - Solidariteit
- Plan Belgium

CROATIA

- International Medical Corps Croatia

CZECH REPUBLIC

- ADRA Czech Republic
- Caritas Czech Republic
- People in Need (PIN)

DENMARK

- ADRA Denmark Nødhjælp og udvikling
- CARE Denmark
- Dansk Folkehjælp Danish People's Aid
- DanChurchAid (DCA)
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Mission East Mission Øst
- Save the Children Denmark

FINLAND

- Fida International
- Finn Church Aid
- World Vision Finland

FRANCE

- Action Contre la Faim
- ACTED Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
- CARE France
- Handicap International Humanity and Inclusion
- La Chaîne de l'Espoir
- Première Urgence Internationale
- Médecins du Monde (MDM) France
- Relief International
- Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial Caritas
- Secours Islamique France
- Secours Populaire Français
- Solidarités International
- Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)

GERMANY

- ADRA Deutschland
- Aktion gegen den Hunger
- Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) Deutschland
- CARE Deutschland
- Deutscher Caritasverband Caritas Germany
- Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
- International Rescue Committee Germany
- Die Johanniter. Aus Liebe zum Leben
- Malteser International
- Medico International
- Plan International Germany
- Welthungerhilfe
- World Vision Germany

ITALY

- Caritas Italiana
- CESVI - Cooperazione e Sviluppo
- COOPI
- INTEROS Organizzazione Umanitaria Onlus
- JRS Jesuit Refugee Service
- Oxfam Italia
- Terre des Hommes Italy
- WeWorld

IRELAND

- Concern Worldwide
- GOAL Global
- Trócaire

LUXEMBOURG

- Caritas Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

- CARE Nederland
- Cordaid
- Mercy Corps
- World Vision Netherlands
- Oxfam Novib
- Save the Children Netherlands
- War Child
- ZOA

NORWAY

- CARE Norway
- Norwegian Church Aid
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Save the Children - Redd Barna

POLAND

- Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

SLOVAKIA

- Habitat for Humanity International

SPAIN

- Acción Contra el Hambre
- Alianza por la Solidaridad-ActionAid
- Ayuda en Acción
- Caritas Española
- EDUCO
- Médicos del Mundo
- Oxfam Intermón

SWEDEN

- LM International (Läkarmissionen)
- PMU Interlife
- Svenska kyrkan - Church of Sweden

SWITZERLAND

- Medair

UNITED KINGDOM

- CAFOD
- Christian Aid
- Plan International UK

89 members
19 countries





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VOICE is the network of 89 European NGOs promoting principled and people-centred humanitarian aid. Collectively, VOICE aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of the European Union and its Member States' humanitarian aid. The network promotes the added value of NGOs as key humanitarian actors.

www.VOICEeu.org

voice@VOICEeu.org

+32 (0) 2 541 13 60

 @VOICEeu_

 VOICE EU

VOICE asbl
Rue Royale 71 1000 Brussels Belgium
Company number: 0475213787 RPM Brussels



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