

# 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).

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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 GNDR<sup>1</sup>, CEDES<sup>2</sup>, CARD<sup>3</sup>, and SAF/FJKM<sup>4</sup>, 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

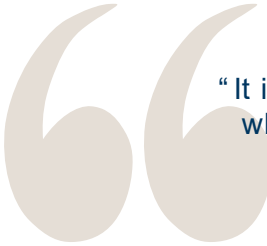
Our partner GNDR has developed a [comprehensive guide and toolkit](#) aimed at facilitating locally-led AA. This resource empowers civil society organisations to engage with communities and local actors, enabling them to take a central role in planning and establishing mechanisms for AA. It outlines 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