

# TIP SHEET: Ensuring Attention to GBV in Anticipatory Action

Jeanne Ward | March 2024 | Update and adaptation of Jay, H. (2021) *GBV and Anticipatory Action Approaches*. GBV AoR Helpdesk.



## Introduction

Anticipatory action is an approach that acts ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they occur. By using early warning systems and other scientific approaches for predicting the onset of disasters, anticipatory action seeks to take advantage of “the window of opportunity” between the prediction of the disaster and the disaster’s onset, to plan for, organize and trigger interventions specifically designed to mitigate the negative effects of disasters.<sup>1</sup>

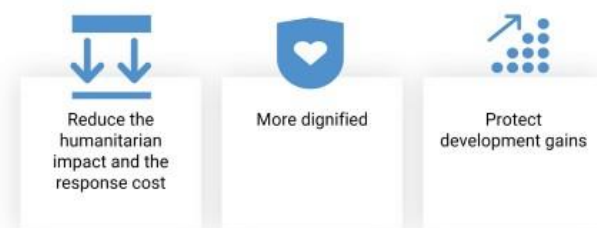
The focus within anticipatory action on *acting before a hazard occurs* is conducive not only to reducing immediate risks and incidents of GBV, but also to facilitating actions that prevent GBV from occurring. After several years of piloting anticipatory action approaches around the world, OCHA and other humanitarian agencies are scaling up anticipatory action in humanitarian settings globally.<sup>2</sup> This presents an opportunity for GBV practitioners to engage proactively in integrating attention to GBV in anticipatory action efforts.

This tip sheet—which updates and provides a summary of a longer report on GBV and anticipatory action<sup>3</sup>—is meant to serve as a primer on anticipatory action for GBV actors and those supporting GBV risk mitigation interventions.

## What is anticipatory action?

Anticipatory action refers to **a set of planned and pre-financed measures taken when a disaster is imminent, prior to a shock or before acute impacts are felt.**<sup>4</sup> Aimed at **“reducing or mitigating the impact of disasters and enhancing post-disaster response” anticipatory action is driven by early warning systems.**<sup>5</sup> A rationale for anticipatory action is provided in image 1 below.

### Rationale for anticipatory action



**Image 1: Rationale for anticipatory action<sup>6</sup>**

Anticipatory action as an approach has largely been applied to contexts of disasters – particularly climate-related hazards. However, anticipatory action is distinct from other models commonly used in disasters, particularly disaster risk reduction and preparedness, in that **it responds to an imminent and specific crisis that has been forecasted.**

See Figure 1. on page 2.

Sheet also draws from the GBV AoR Helpdesk [Guidance Note on Prevention of, and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Settings Affected by Natural Disasters](#).

<sup>4</sup> Wilkinson, Emily., Pforr, Tobias. & Weingartner, Lena. (2020) *‘Integrating ‘Anticipatory Action’ in Disaster Risk Management.* ODI

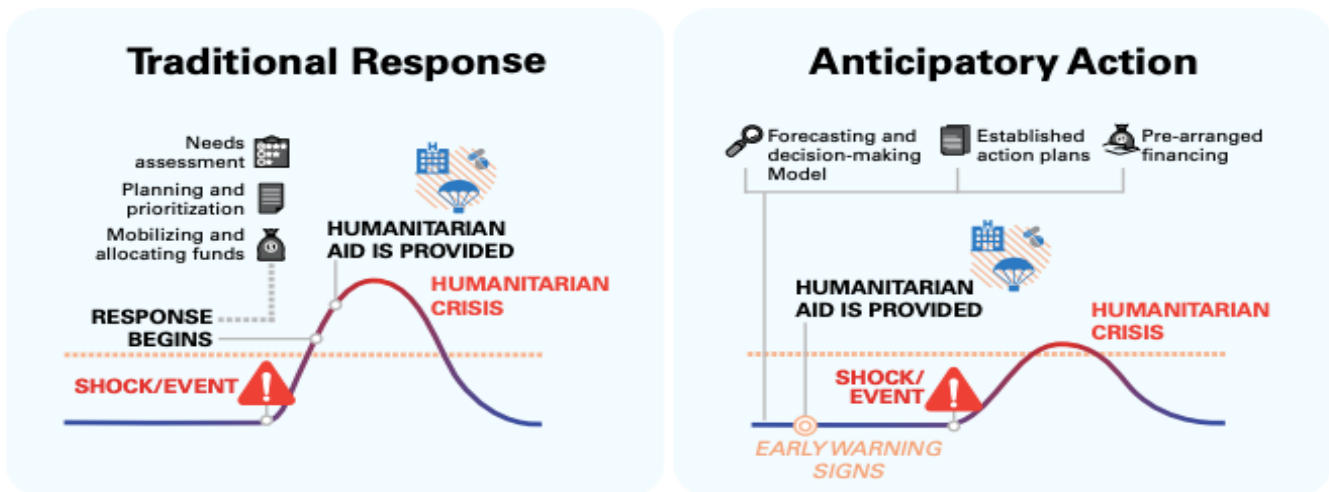
<sup>5</sup> Weingartner, Lena and Wilkinson, Emily (2019). *Anticipatory Crisis Financing and Action: Concepts, Initiatives and Evidence*. Pg. 6

<sup>6</sup> From UNOCHA (2020). [Anticipatory Action Plan for Drought in Ethiopia](#).

<sup>1</sup> Summarized from OCHA landing page on anticipatory action, <https://www.unocha.org/anticipatory-action>

<sup>2</sup> In its [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#), OCHA commits to “support and facilitate a systemic shift to coherent and embedded anticipatory approaches, including anticipatory action. OCHA will use its own financing tools to facilitate, generate evidence for and scale up collective anticipatory action.”

<sup>3</sup> This 2021 research query on GBV and anticipatory action remains an important reference for more detailed information and includes case studies. See Jay, H. (2021). [GBV and Anticipatory Action Approaches](#). GBV AoR Helpdesk. This Tip



**Figure 1: Traditional Humanitarian Response versus Anticipatory Action**

Anticipatory action is not a substitute for disaster risk reduction and is complimentary to longer-term work to reduce vulnerability and strengthen people’s capacity to manage risks and adapt to a changing climate. Nor is anticipatory action likely to eliminate the need for humanitarian response following a crisis event, but it should reduce it, in some cases significantly. Even with anticipatory action, an appropriate and timely humanitarian response will need to deal with the aftereffects and residual risks of a disaster to ensure that further suffering is avoided.<sup>7</sup>

### What are the basic elements of anticipatory action?

The decision on when to initiate an anticipatory action approach in relation to an impending humanitarian emergency will vary. For disasters, decisions on applying an anticipatory action approach will typically be done in conjunction with the National Disaster Management Office, or an equivalent. Although there are differences in the approaches of the various anticipatory action models that have been applied globally (depending on lead agency, donor and context), there are some shared elements among all models.

Notably, much of the work is preparatory to undertaking the anticipatory actions; it involves understanding risk, creating early warning systems, identifying forecast triggers, and

having a plan in place to act quickly when a trigger occurs. Key steps to introducing anticipatory actions include:

- **Assess risks and impacts** to better understand the potential impact of extreme weather events on communities and to inform the design and targeting of anticipatory mitigation actions.
- **Assess the capacity of existing early warning systems** to produce and transmit reliable and timely information and forecasts for the implementation of anticipatory actions ahead of an extreme weather event.
- **Decide when to act by setting forecast triggers.** Establish triggers for action when certain risk thresholds are reached based on multiple factors, including forecasting capacity, hazard type, and the time and cost necessary to complete sector-specific anticipatory actions.
- **Develop an anticipatory action plan that outlines agreed actions,** along with the actors, costs, thresholds, triggers, and predetermined funds to be mobilized in anticipation of an extreme weather event. The action plan should be aligned with national disaster risk management

<sup>7</sup> Costello, Cecilia, et al. (2017). [Scalable and sustainable: How to build Anticipatory Capacity into Social Protection.](#)

plans and validated together with key actors through simulations.

- **Monitor forecasts and act** in response to a trigger, and following a fast disbursement of financing, coordinate with key stakeholders to implement anticipatory actions as per the action plan.<sup>8</sup>

The timeframes and approaches for implementing anticipatory actions differ depending on the hazard (see Box 1).

### **Box 1: Lead Time From Forecasting to the Onset of the Climate Disaster**

- **Short lead times (typically days):**  
\*pluvial flooding, heat/cold waves, cyclones/typhoons/ hurricanes
- **Intermediate lead time (typically days to weeks):** \*fluvial flooding (depending on river basin size)
- **Longer lead times (months; up to 12 months):** drought and food security hazards.

\*A pluvial flood occurs when an extreme rainfall event creates a flood independent of an overflowing water body. Fluvial flooding occurs when the water level in a river, lake or stream rises and overflows onto land.

*Source: Wilkinson, E. Et Al. (2018)*

The tools used for predicting the onset of different types of hazards are also various. Some systems use forecasting information, while others use real-time monitoring information, or some combination of both. Information can be drawn from meteorological forecasts, community-based early warning information, historical data on impacts of hazards, disaster risk analysis and socio-economic information.

Systems using forecasts can generally provide longer lead times than those based on

monitoring information, although real-time monitoring can provide long lead times in more slowly evolving systems such as droughts. Some systems operate over a range of forecast lead times, drawing on forecast information from seasons through to days. This can allow for the progressive staging of actions. One example is the Red Cross extreme rain/flood hazard system in Peru, which involves preparedness actions triggered automatically by forecasts at various lead times (days/months/seasons).<sup>9</sup> **For GBV actors, understanding forecast lead times means understanding how much time there is to develop a plan for anticipatory actions that can address specific GBV risks.**

While the anticipatory action model is distinguished by a particular process and timing for action, **it does not describe pre-determined or fixed activities: anticipatory action is a way of working, rather than a set of deliverables.** The *actions* within anticipatory action will vary according to setting, type of emergency, response sector and many other factors. As well, none of these actions will be completely novel or unique; they will draw from strategies used during other phases of humanitarian action. From a GBV programming perspective, an anticipatory action approach may combine some activities that would typically be viewed as GBV preparedness activities, alongside other activities more commonly seen in humanitarian response.

### **What are examples of GBV-targeted anticipatory action activities?**

Taking an anticipatory action approach does not dictate the type of GBV activities to implement. The selection of GBV-related activities will vary depending on context, including the type of hazard and lead time available for planning, as well as the drivers of violence, GBV risks and capacity for implementation. A few examples

<sup>8</sup> IFRC (2019). [Forecast-based Financing: A new era for the humanitarian system.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Wilkinson, E. Et Al. (2018). [Forecasting Hazards, Averting Disasters: Implementing Forecast Based Early Action at Scale.](#) ODI. March 2018.

of GBV activities that may be selected for an anticipatory action approach include:

- Distribution of dignity kits;
- Deployment of roving GBV counselling teams;
- Establishment or expansion of GBV hotlines/ helplines or available telephone counselling services;
- Distribution of information and communication materials on how to access GBV services;
- Analysis of gender-sensitive livelihoods needs assessments and market analyses in partnership with food security actors and marginalized women to identify profitable, accessible and desirable livelihoods activities that are not susceptible to economic shock.

As noted previously, when GBV actors have a sense of forecast lead times, they can determine how much time there is to develop a plan for anticipatory actions that can address specific GBV risks. When lead times are short, interventions may focus on getting out essential resources and messages to affected communities. When lead times are longer, this may allow for anticipatory action interventions that take more time, such as building social protection programs for women and girls that they can utilize in the wake of an emergency or focusing on other types of resilience programming as a form of anticipatory action.

**Whatever the context, it is important for GBV actors to consider how to promote attention to GBV in settings where anticipatory action is implemented.**

### What are good practices for GBV integration in anticipatory action approaches?

There is some emerging evidence on general good practice integrating attention to GBV within anticipatory action approaches, collected

through assessments and evaluations, which is useful for GBV actors to consider when undertaking anticipatory action work. These are summarized as:

**Build on good practices for disaster preparedness.**<sup>10</sup> Anticipatory action should build on existing good practices for GBV-related preparedness and contingency planning efforts. Some of these include:

- √ Conduct service mapping, monitor continuity of GBV services and update referral pathways. Pre-position commodities and IEC materials.
- √ Assess existing staff capacity and availability of staff in the geographic area identified within forecasts; identify surge capacity needs and establish procedures for deployment to areas of anticipated emergency, including staffing for coordination of GBV response. Provide trainings and other capacity building activities.
- √ Establish “preliminary” standard operating procedures (SOPs) or guidance for referral pathways for multi-sectoral response by engaging (at minimum) health, MHPSS, security and protection actors. Ensure that SOPs and referral pathways guidance remain relevant to the crisis context and that the systems linking survivors to services remain functional. Integrate economic empowerment and livelihood programmes into GBV SOPs, and referral systems.

**Support participation and leadership of women and girls.** The voice and representation of women and girls in identifying risks and understanding both historical and potential impacts of hazards is crucial to informing effective anticipatory action. For slow-onset disasters and cyclical emergencies, longer planning timeframes provide the opportunity for more partners to be involved in

*Emergencies Programming* provides key actions on preparedness throughout each standard. These should both serve as useful tools for designing anticipatory actions.

<sup>10</sup> The *Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Emergencies* sets out clear guidance on GBV preparedness and contingency planning. In addition, the *Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in*

anticipatory action. Having pre-prepared sub-grantee agreements is particularly important for supporting a partnership approach.

**It is also important to ensure that local women's rights and women-led organisations lead/ co-lead -or at a minimum are resourced to engage- to ensure the language of anticipatory action, e.g., forecasts, triggers, etc., is communicated to women and girls in**

**communities** in a way that is accessible and clear and that communication with women and girls in affected communities happens throughout the planning and implementation of anticipatory actions.

#### **Build partnerships with government.**

Technical strengthening and engagement with government agencies is important to implement the legal and regulatory frameworks needed to scale up attention to GBV in anticipatory action. For GBV actors, this means supporting relevant line ministries and ensuring these efforts are linked to any existing technical strengthening on disaster risk reduction and preparedness capacity building. National women's machineries should be involved in all stages of anticipatory action, including risk analysis processes that formulate both the trigger and set the action plan and any related standard operating procedures for anticipatory action.

**Ensure GBV expertise informs any risk analysis and development of early warning systems and specific triggers.** GBV researchers, coordination partners and practitioners must engage with risk analysis processes and crisis timeline development to ensure GBV risks and historical impacts (e.g., learning from prior emergencies about GBV) are captured. This includes understanding and advocating for the integration of needs of GBV survivors and those at risk in the design of early

warning systems, and ensuring GBV-related early warning indicators are included in operational planning processes. This can be especially important for slow-onset disasters such as drought, where early warning indicators linked to women and girls (e.g., decreasing school attendance rates for girls) are not typically included in early warning systems.

GBV experts must also be aware of triggers and understand the lead times associated with them to inform the design of any GBV actions in anticipatory action approaches. The identification of unambiguous, agreed-upon triggers that can be monitored in real time are central to an effective anticipatory action approach.<sup>11</sup> In some contexts, the use of subnational triggers will be implemented. Subnational-level triggers have several benefits, including allowing identification of pockets of extreme need within a country and allowing for more precise triggering of anticipatory actions.<sup>12</sup> Resourcing and strengthening GBV sub-national coordination is critical to ensuring GBV anticipatory action at the sub-national level.

#### **Promote the use of social protection mechanisms for women and girls as part of anticipatory action.**

Shock-responsive social protection programmes can provide strategic entry points for the integration and sustainability of anticipatory action. In response to a trigger, social protection systems can use their registry and distribution channels to scale up timely assistance for both current beneficiaries as well as new ones.<sup>13</sup> An expansion of social protection programmes provides an opportunity to extend support to individuals and groups not sufficiently covered by social safety nets.

Existing national social protection programs may require beneficiaries to meet conditions in

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<sup>11</sup> Ideally, triggers are pre-agreed by government to circumvent the need for official emergency declarations (which may delay response operations), and to ensure government and non-government anticipatory action is triggered simultaneously to maximize synergy and minimize

gaps. See [UNDRR: Scaling up disaster risk reduction in humanitarian action](#).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations CERF (2020). *Anticipatory Action Update*. CERF Advisory Group Meeting, 1st June, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Costella, C, et al. (2017). [Scalable and Sustainable: How to Build Anticipatory Capacity into Social Protection Systems](#)

order to continue to receive payments (for example, attendance at health clinics or school). Undertake advocacy to remove or relax conditionalities from social protection payments linked to anticipatory action to alleviate time pressures.

on women and reduce demands on staff to monitor compliance. Engage ministries of social welfare or those involved in social protection programming to advocate for women and girls currently not or insufficiently covered by social safety nets.<sup>14</sup>

### **Support GBV risk mitigation efforts.**

Established knowledge and practice on how to effectively mitigate GBV risks in humanitarian action are applicable to anticipatory action.<sup>15</sup>

That said, anticipatory action brings its own distinct systems, processes and timelines related to GBV risk mitigation. It is useful for GBV actors to be aware of some of the core actions that non-GBV specialists should take in anticipatory action related to GBV risk mitigation, in order to offer support and technical assistance as requested. Some risk mitigation measures that may be applied by different sectors in their anticipatory action approaches include collecting disaggregated data on GBV risks in needs assessments<sup>16</sup>; integrating GBV risk mitigation measures in anticipatory action plans; training sector partners on the IASC GBV Guidelines and, for frontline staff, in GBV referral pathways; conducting regular monitoring through safety audits or other mechanisms to address potential GBV risks associated with sector interventions.<sup>17</sup>

## **Moving Forward: Building the Case for GBV Integration in Anticipatory Action**

As the evidence builds on the effectiveness of an anticipatory action approach to minimize impacts of crises, it is crucial for GBV actors working in humanitarian response to engage with anticipatory action to ensure attention to GBV is prioritized. For GBV specialists, there is an imperative to build knowledge and expertise on anticipatory action approaches, and on the related systems, processes and financing mechanisms. For example, understanding forecast types and lead times for natural hazards will enable effective engagement in anticipatory action from the early stages. Understanding the operational planning processes will facilitate advocacy for critical lifesaving GBV actions to be included in anticipatory action plans.

Finally, it is critical that GBV actors support data collection on good practices. There is currently a dearth of information on the extent to which anticipatory action approaches have included attention to GBV. Many of the documented findings that relate to gender and GBV are anecdotal or include only a small sample size of women with limited analysis of any change to gender power relations and GBV risks. Advocating for greater investment in understanding both the gendered impacts of anticipatory action, as well as documenting the effectiveness of gender equality and actions to address GBV within anticipatory action is critical to ensuring that gender and GBV are appropriately included in anticipatory action moving forward.

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<sup>14</sup> For guidance on supporting GBV survivors through social protection, see CARE (2019). [Cash & Voucher Assistance and GBV Compendium: Practical Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners](#)

<sup>15</sup> The recommendations provided in the IASC *Guidelines on Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action* are the central guidance for all clusters

on mitigating GBV risks in their activities implemented as part of anticipatory action.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, UNICEF (2019). [Annex 3. Tip Sheet: Consulting with Women and Girls](#).

<sup>17</sup> A list of resources to conduct safety mapping have been collated in the following GBV AoR Helpdesk (2019). [Research Query: Mapping of Safety Audit Tools and Reports](#).

## Further reading and resources

This section contains a selected further reading and resource list on anticipatory action. For more detailed information on anticipatory action and GBV it is recommended to read the extended GBV AoR Helpdesk publication on this topic: Jay, H. (2021). *GBV and Anticipatory Action Approaches*. GBV AoR Helpdesk. as this also contains a fuller bibliography.

Costello, Cecilia, & Jaime Catalina, Julie Arrighi, Erin Coughlan de Perez, Pablo Suarez and Maarten van Aalst (2017) Scalable and sustainable: How to build Anticipatory Capacity into Social Protection Systems. IDS Bulletin, Vol. 48, No. 4.

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## [bangladesh](#)

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<https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Gender-Based-Violence-in-Emergencies-Operational-Guide-May-2019.pdf>

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<https://odi.org/en/publications/anticipatory-crisis-financing-and-action-concepts-initiatives-and-evidence/>

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Wilkinson, Emily, Lena Weingartner, Richard Choularton, Meghan Bailey, Martin Todd, Dominic Kniveton and Courtenay Cabot Venton (2018) Forecasting Hazards, Averting Disasters; Implementing Fore-cast Based Early Action at Scale. ODI. March 2018.

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