

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

*Acting prior to the onset of a predictable shock makes for a more dignified, more human, and more cost-effective response. It protects livelihoods, saves more lives and **reduces suffering**.*

António Guterres (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

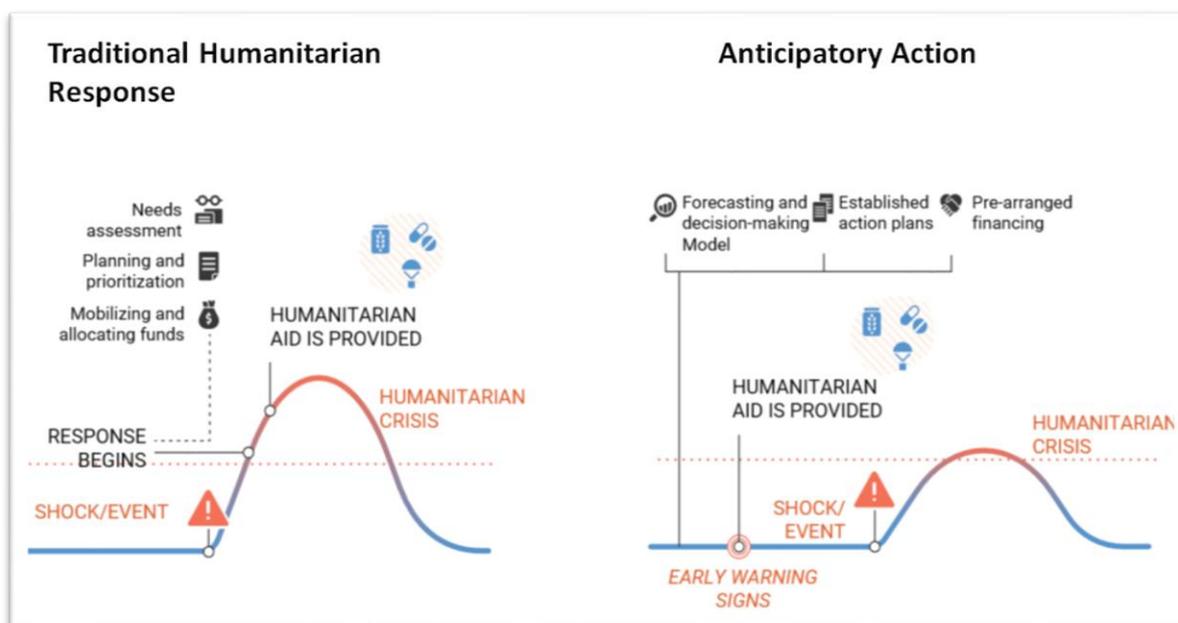
**SYNOPSIS**

Following the [SDC DRR Network Newsletter N°2/2021](#), the present E-Discussion aims at continued exchange and understanding on the topic of Early Warning - Early Action and Anticipatory Action. It provides you with an opportunity to spotlight your experiences, link to relevant expertise and peers, and sharpen your thoughts about how to push the topic further in your sphere of influence.

<b>Registration</b>	<a href="#">Here</a> , open to members and non-members of the SDC DRR Network
<b>Timing</b>	From 19.01.2022 to 08.02.2022, including three weekly cycles of dialogues
<b>Audience</b>	All persons interested in the topic, with or without notable experience
<b>Modalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asynchronous exchange in a closed user group including thematic experts and practitioners, facilitated by the SDC and its backstopper from Skat</li> <li>- A mid-way 'life event' is planned (1<sup>st</sup> of February, per different languages / time zones involved) as amplifying group exchange and Q&amp;A session</li> <li>- An advanced webinar is expected to follow the event for processing its outcomes and starting to disseminate the results</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weekly recaps (short summary documents produced at the end of each discussion phase)</li> <li>- Synthesis document (reviewing the dialogue and highlighting the insights)</li> <li>- Proposal for advanced documentation, dissemination and continued learning journey opportunities (as per the ideas expressed in the dialogues)</li> </ul>
<b>Languages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-Discussion invitation, guidance and weekly recaps are all provided in English, French and Spanish.</li> <li>- Individual contributions in one of the three languages are welcome, but will not be translated: participants are invited to use online translators such as <a href="#">DeepL</a> or <a href="#">Google</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Instructions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instructions on how to actively participate in the e-discussion will be shared on the 18th of January with the registered participants.</li> </ul>

**TOPIC**

Shifting focus from traditional humanitarian response to anticipatory action holds great potential for avoiding loss of lives and livelihoods from geophysical or weather and climate-related disasters. Spending USD 800 million on early warning systems in developing countries would potentially avert losses of USD 3-16 billion per year stated the [Global Commission on Adaptation](#) in 2019 already.



Early action - also known as forecast-based action or integral part of an anticipatory action framework<sup>1</sup> - happens between an early warning trigger and the actual disaster or crisis. It entails the provision of timely and meaningful information enabling people to take steps to reduce the impact of hazards. Forecast-based early action and early warning systems are integral components of disaster resilience and have the potential to reinforce one another, enhancing the effectiveness of these tools for greater risk reduction, management and response. They obviously do not replace disaster prevention and preparedness.

A growing body of evidence has shown that anticipatory action works (see text box for further details). In 2018, animal herders in Mongolia who received from the FAO animal care kits and cash before severe winter saw fewer livestock die. In Bangladesh, an anticipatory intervention funded by the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund in 2020 reached more people with assistance at half the cost compared to previous years. In Senegal, State relief contingency plans funded by timely insurance payments allowed more than 335,000 people at risk to cope with severe drought.

### Three selected examples showcasing what anticipatory action entails in specific contexts

**Mongolia - protecting the livelihoods of herders from a dzud winter:** A dzud is a very harsh winter, during which the ground is so solidly frozen that animals cannot reach pasture usually already scant after a hot and dry summer. Weather and climate forecasts together with the dzud risk map of the Mongolian Meteorological Service are the driving force for risk information. Early warning thresholds are established, and once they are reached, action on the ground is triggered. When the warning signs of an upcoming dzud in 2017/18 were clear, the approach was twofold: destocking-for-cash and the distribution of livestock packages addressing both the short- and long-term needs of vulnerable herders. Beneficiaries were also provided with fodder and nutrient supplements during the peak of the winter season to support breeding and yearling stock. FAO reports that for every 1 USD in the project, families counted benefits worth 7 USD. This meant they were able to protect their livelihoods and did not suffer hunger throughout the winter.

**Bangladesh - innovative approach to dealing with the effects of severe flooding:** Using the latest data and predictive analytics to forecast major monsoon floods, on 4 July 2020, a high probability of severe flooding was calculated for mid-July along the Jamuna, with one-third of the area's total population likely to be affected. This was the trigger to release \$5.2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to help communities prepare and protect themselves. The money enabled to distribute cash, livestock feed, storage drums, and hygiene, dignity and health kits. On 11 July, the activation trigger was reached when forecasting predicted the floods would reach critical levels in five days. At this point, workers began distributing the aid. By the time the water reached life-threatening levels, more than 220,000 people had received assistance. Once the floodwaters receded, unspent funding was reprogrammed to provide additional multi-purpose, unconditional cash on a needs-driven basis to those people most affected by the flooding.

<sup>1</sup> See [here](#) for one of the typical glossary of terms in this regard.

**Senegal – ex-ante relief contingency plans funded through insurance pay-outs:** The African Risk Capacity (ARC) helps nations to proactively manage climate-related humanitarian risks via macro-insurance. In July 2019, the Start Network and the Government of Senegal each purchased an insurance policy against drought. If rainfall levels drop below a pre-defined threshold, they would receive pay-outs to implement timely and coordinated actions to protect communities at risk. When the pre-agreed triggers were met in November 2019, a pay-out of US \$12.5m was made to the Government of Senegal, and another US \$10.6m to Start Network. Throughout 2020, both worked together to deliver assistance to Senegalese families ahead of a severe large-scale drought. They distributed enriched flour and made cash transfers to more than 335,000 people. This enabled families to protect livestock and other valuable assets and avoid resorting to ‘negative coping strategies’, such as skipping meals or sending children to work instead of school.

No matter how different and complex the numerous successful examples of Early Warning – Early Action approaches may be, they all appear to embrace the same three key ingredients. Namely:

- 1) Actors willing and committed to invest in pre-arranged financing mechanisms – the money;
- 2) Robust forecast-based trigger embedded in a clear decision-making process – the model;
- 3) Pre-agreed action plans that can efficiently mitigate the impact of the event – the delivery.

Despite encouraging developments, the full potential of anticipatory approaches has not yet been realized. Over 50% of all humanitarian crises are reportedly somewhat predictable, yet less than 1% of crisis funding is pre-arranged to enable anticipatory actions ([OCHA, 2021](#)). Typically, the latter tend to focus on immediate and visible events rather than on creeping and less visible crises or complex hazards. In addition, their geographic scope and volume of delivery is still relatively limited. While early research exist on the topic<sup>2</sup>, anticipatory approaches have not yet been widely applied in the context of fragility, conflict, and violence. Not later than past September, a [High-level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action](#) spurred a collective push to act ahead of crises.

## DISCUSSION

Against this backdrop, the first ever E-Discussion of the SDC DRR Network focuses on the subject of Early-Warning – Early Action (EW-EA). It provides the participants with a learning, reflection and networking opportunity on how to best advance anticipatory approaches in specific contexts. The outcomes of the dialogue are expected to push the topic prominently within the SDC and its operational partners as a core element of disaster risk reduction. For this, the dialogue aims at:

- Shedding light on EW-EA mechanism and practices in different settings, whilst getting insights into the potentials, prerequisites and stumbling stones for their application;
- Spotlighting practical experiences in implementing EW-EA, whilst identifying opportunities for adding relevance to the work within the typical sphere of influence of the SDC;
- Prompting key messages and entry points to advocate for the topic of EW-EA in order to promote it meaningfully among donors and implementing partners.

To trigger structured thoughts and debates on the above aspects, the E-Discussion will lead step-wise through a set of phased and continuative questions addressed over three weeks as below.

Time	Orientation	Subject
Week 1	Sharing of experiences, stories and insights to define and outline the topic	<i>From your knowledge and experience:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is EW-EA, and how to put it into practice?</li> <li>• Which are its core elements, promises and stumbling stones?</li> </ul>
Week 2	Exploring the topic’s scope of application and transposition into action	<i>Based on the above collective stocktaking:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under what conditions is EW-EA a winning DRR measure?</li> <li>• How can I make it relevant in my work / sphere of influence?</li> </ul>
Week 3	Drawing conclusions on the topic’s novelty and selling points	<i>As a consequence of the above scope and potentials:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When advocating for EW-EA, how to position and package it?</li> <li>• Is EW-EA ground-breaking or just another buzzword?</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> ODI and WFP (2020): *The Evidence Base of Anticipatory Action*, see [here](#).