

Evaluation of the IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025

Final

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Executive Summary

The IFRC's Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action (AA) 2021–2025 has catalysed a major shift in humanitarian practice, positioning the Red Cross Red Crescent network as a global leader in acting ahead of disasters. The evaluation finds that, since 2021, the Framework has driven unprecedented momentum: nearly 90 National Societies are now engaged in AA, 90 Early Action Protocols (EAPs) have been developed, activated, and closed and millions of people have been supported through anticipatory mechanisms. The network's leadership has contributed to a sector-wide paradigm shift, with AA now recognised as a key solution for reducing disaster impacts, as reflected in high-level policy commitments and growing international collaboration.

Progress against the Framework's quantitative targets demonstrates significant achievements but also reveals some gaps in coverage, capacity, and sustainability. Nearly 90 National Societies are actively engaged in AA, with 57 having submitted 90 EAPs during the evaluation period. The DREF's anticipatory pillar has nearly doubled in value, reaching 11–12% of total DREF allocations, though still short of the 25% target. While over 7 million people have been supported in two years, systematic tracking of reach and effectiveness is lacking. Training has reached over 1,300 National Society staff and volunteers, but the translation of training into sustainable capacity remains challenging. The network's global footprint and community reach are widely recognised, but full potential is constrained by funding, strategy, and model design.

The Framework's seven pillars of action provide a structured lens for evaluating strengths and identifying areas for improvement. These pillars include human resources and ways of working, approaches and tools, coordination and mainstreaming, capacity strengthening, technical support, financing, evidence generation, and policy and advocacy. Each pillar has seen important advances but also faces challenges that hinder the scale-up and mainstreaming of AA.

Shortened recommendations are listed for each pillar of action. More detailed recommendations are included at the end of each report section and consolidated in the final chapter.

Human Resources and Ways of Working

The expansion of IFRC's AA support network, complemented by PNS and the Climate Centre, has increased National Societies' access to technical assistance but introduced new process inefficiencies and accountability gaps. IFRC secretariat staffing dedicated to AA has grown twofold since 2021, with new positions at regional levels. While this has created more touchpoints for National Societies, it has also resulted in multiple layers of intermediaries, leading to delays and situations where unclear responsibilities or follow-up leads to inaction. For example, if an EAP is revised but does not get validated and approved in time for an upcoming flood or cyclone season, it means the National Society does not have time to procure necessary items, conduct readiness activities and thus cannot activate even if the EAP trigger would be reached, although in this case a National Society can apply for an

imminent DREF. National Societies also report frustration with communication bottlenecks and lack of follow-through, particularly during EAP development when requesting information, guidance or waiting for feedback from IFRC delegations, regional AA focal points or the validation committee. Recent process revisions, such as allowing direct EAP submission to Geneva instead of having to go through cluster or country delegations, have improved efficiency, but inconsistent implementation and lack of designated accountability for ensuring speed and responsiveness to National Society requests remain issues.

Recommendations:

1. IFRC should review and redesign the roles and responsibilities of regional/cluster/country delegation personnel with AA responsibilities to leverage their potential as facilitators rather than bottlenecks, and coordinate with PNS and reference centres on National Society support.
2. Set up a tracking mechanism for support requests and response times, and establish a sponsor designation system – IFRC regional delegation personnel or PNS staff who take responsibility for supporting specific National Societies on particular EAPs – to improve responsiveness and accountability.
3. Incorporate 360-degree feedback from National Societies in performance evaluation systems for IFRC staff to incentivise result-oriented support. This could be extended to PNS and other supporting entities.

Approaches, Guidance, and Tools, and Implications for Coordination, Institutionalisation, and Mainstreaming

Comprehensive guidance and tools for AA have been developed, but practical uptake is limited. The IFRC and partners have produced extensive manuals and toolkits, but National Societies often struggle to navigate and apply them without strategic capacity development support.

The EAP model dominates at the expense of broader approaches. The focus on EAPs has sidelined other anticipatory approaches, reinforcing a perception that AA is synonymous with EAPs and limiting integration with broader disaster risk management (DRM) systems.

Coordination challenges and lack of systematic engagement with governments and other actors hinder integration and harmonisation. The current approach incentivises standalone EAP development rather than integration with national frameworks, increasing the risk of duplication and fragmentation. Efforts to institutionalise AA within government systems vary widely, with some National Societies appearing reluctant to adopt existing triggers or to align with umbrella frameworks due to formal EAP requirements or concerns about independence.

Recommendations:

4. Provide systematic support to National Societies to navigate, adapt, and operationalise AA guidance and tools, linking this directly to a strategic capacity development approach.
5. Consider broadening the operational and funding focus beyond EAPs to support diverse, quality-assured anticipatory approaches, including those outside the DREF mechanism.

6. Encourage National Societies to coordinate with governments and other AA actors to harmonise EAPs and other anticipatory approaches with existing national frameworks and systems.

Capacity Strengthening

Substantial investments in training and learning resources have not yet translated into robust, sustainable capacity within National Societies. While six regional face-to-face trainings and numerous online modules have reached over 1,300 individuals, the evaluation finds capacity for AA to remain “fragile” and often dependent on external support. The current approach is seen as top-down and narrowly focused on technical aspects of EAPs, with insufficient attention to organisational empowerment and integration of AA into broader strategies.

Partner National Society (PNS) support, while valuable, can create dependency and undermine long-term capacity development. Multiple partners working in the same country can lead to fragmented and conflicting efforts. Staff turnover and a project-based mentality further limit the retention and application of AA knowledge. Emerging solutions, such as starting with National Society priorities and using self-assessment tools like the American Red Cross AA Readiness Index, offer promising directions for more sustainable, demand-driven capacity development.

Recommendations:

7. Shift capacity development from one-off workshops to sustained investment in people and organisational systems, requiring longer-term relationships and support mechanisms.
8. Couple training and capacity strengthening with opportunities for practical application and implementation to allow National Societies to operationalise and solidify new learning.
9. Expand the approach to AA learning to extend beyond EAPs to address broader organisational development needs. This includes ensuring that AA capacity development is strategic and holistic, addressing the full range of organisational capabilities needed to successfully integrate and sustain AA approaches.
10. Coordinate and harmonise capacity development efforts across partners to improve efficiency and reduce fragmentation.

Technical Support

The IFRC has mobilised significant project funding and technical assistance for AA, but support remains ad hoc and lacks continuity. Major projects and partnerships have enabled National Societies to establish AA systems and EAPs, and relationships with hydro-meteorological services have improved. However, technical support is often one-off or focused on EAP development, with limited ongoing operational guidance. National Societies report challenges in accessing timely, adequate support, particularly for complex hazards and in the face of high staff turnover. The need for a systematic, network-wide approach to technical

support is widely recognised, including clear processes for requesting assistance and mechanisms to retain institutional knowledge despite staff changes.

Recommendations:

11. Establish a structured, ongoing, network-wide operational support mechanism for National Societies, particularly for National Society staff funded through readiness costs, to ensure continuous technical guidance beyond one-off EAP development or ad hoc requests.
12. Develop and communicate clear, accessible processes for National Societies to request and receive technical support, especially for complex tasks such as trigger development and adaptation to local contexts.
13. Expand and formalise the network of technical experts – potentially through a roster system – to provide right-sized, timely, and context-specific support to National Societies, reducing reliance on informal channels and uneven PNS-led coverage.

Financing

DREF allocations for AA have grown, but the model remains overly dependent on this single funding source, with limited progress in diversifying or localising finance. The DREF's anticipatory pillar now accounts for 11–12% of total allocations, but alternative funding streams are rare. IFRC is expected to secure Climate Risk & Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative accreditation, which will allow it to tap into both CREWS and Green Climate Fund (GCF) resources, an important step in the right direction. The EAP validation process is perceived as straining with the tension between objectivity and subjective judgement, creating uncertainty for National Societies. There is strong demand for more flexible trigger models and diversified funding instruments to suit different hazards and contexts. Part of the solution could be multiple tiers of EAP-like instruments with different budget envelopes: smaller funding amounts could be accessed more flexibly, while larger volumes would require more rigorous review processes and trigger models. Localised AA funding would add yet more flexibility to the suite of instruments for AA financing, as discussed below.

The sustainability and relevance of AA depend on accessing new funding sources and empowering National Societies to manage local finance. There is potential for accessing new international funding streams, such as through CREWS and the GCF for scaling up last-mile AA interventions. Examples of localised AA funds and partnerships with development actors are emerging but not yet widespread. Positioning AA within the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus is seen as essential for unlocking new resources, particularly development and climate funding for 'build' and preparedness activities and ensuring that humanitarian funds are reserved as 'fuel' for last-mile delivery.

Recommendations:

14. Clarify and streamline the validation processes. The EAP validation process should be made more transparent and consistent, with clear minimum standards, practical templates, and guidance to reduce subjectivity and build National Society confidence in the system.

15. Consider piloting a more diverse range of trigger models and funding instruments to balance scientific rigor with operational flexibility, such as hybrid scientific and contextual triggers as used for some imminent DREF activations, phased payouts, or differentiated return periods – to better match diverse hazard types, National Society capacities and demands, ensuring both credibility and relevance in AA funding decisions.
16. Diversify and localise AA funding, leveraging government budgets, pooled funds, and local fundraising to reduce reliance on the DREF and increase sustainability and relevance.
17. Position AA as nexus programming and tap into development funding for ‘build’ and readiness activities. Actively pursue development and climate finance for system-building and preparedness, reserving humanitarian funds for last-mile delivery.

Evidence Generation, Learning, and Knowledge Management

Knowledge exchange platforms and peer learning have flourished, but systematic evidence generation on AA effectiveness remains limited with the Red Cross Red Crescent.

The Anticipation Hub and Dialogue Platforms are widely valued for fostering learning and momentum, but robust outcome-level evidence is lacking. Monitoring and evaluation are focused on outputs rather than outcomes, and systematic data on reach and cost-effectiveness is scarce. Donors and partners increasingly expect rigorous evidence to justify continued investment in AA.

The absence of systematic research and outcome-focused evaluation limits advocacy and adaptive management. While some progress has been made, such as updated reporting templates and lessons learned methodologies, adoption has room to grow and opportunities for deeper learning are missed.

Recommendations:

18. Invest in systematic, outcome-focused evidence generation. Allocate dedicated resources to conduct robust evaluations on a representative subset of EAP activations, focusing on outcomes and impact rather than just process, to fill critical knowledge gaps and strengthen advocacy for AA.
19. Strengthen and standardise knowledge management practices across the network. Ensure consistent adoption of updated reporting formats and lessons learned methodologies by National Societies, and prioritise the identification and dissemination of a few critical lessons per activation to facilitate iterative improvement.
20. Expand research partnerships and support for studies on AA beyond hydrometeorological hazards. Develop a structured approach to identifying research opportunities and collaborating with global south institutions, academic partners, and other humanitarian actors to diversify and deepen the AA evidence base.
21. Establish a systematic process for capturing concrete examples and human interest stories from EAP activations and AA effectiveness. Moving beyond technical statistics on results, which are currently missing for most EAP activations, policy and advocacy efforts stand to benefit from a bank of real-world examples and images of AA impact.

Policy and Advocacy

High-level policy commitments, such as the Council of Delegates Resolution and the International Conference Resolution, signal strong global support for AA, but there is room to strengthen how these are translated into coordinated, practical action at country level.

Advocacy has led to increased government leadership and donor support, but the gap between global endorsement and operational integration persists. Consistency in terminology and messaging is critical, as distinctions between ‘early warning early action’ and ‘anticipatory action’ continue to cause confusion among stakeholders.

Ongoing advocacy engagement with donors and partners is needed to address emerging funding challenges and leverage new opportunities. Investments in National Society capacity are growing but remain fragmented. Advocacy must now focus on harmonising messaging, merging related agendas, and expanding joint campaigns to influence policy and funding at all levels.

Recommendations:

22. Continue and expand joint advocacy with external partners for a system-wide shift to AA. Engage humanitarian, development, academic, and private sector actors in collaborative advocacy campaigns, leveraging the collective voice to influence policy and funding.
23. Developing a new AA strategy for beyond 2025 by crafting a people-centred vision, establishing strategic principles, reimagining the operating model with National Societies at the centre, and reviewing internal processes to optimise collaboration and impact.

Conclusions

The IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action has driven significant advances. Realising its full potential requires a shift towards more flexible, inclusive, and system-oriented approaches. The findings of this evaluation confirm that the overall AA model and approach of the Red Cross Red Crescent network have been largely fit for purpose to scale up and mainstream AA and to enable National Societies and their partners to anticipate disasters and prevent or minimise their impact. Going forward, the evaluation highlights the need to move beyond an over-reliance on EAPs, streamline processes, invest in sustained, demand-driven capacity development, diversify and localise funding, strengthen evidence generation, and harmonise policy and advocacy efforts. By embracing these changes, the Red Cross Red Crescent network can consolidate its leadership in anticipatory action and deliver greater, more sustainable impact for vulnerable communities worldwide.

Appreciation from External Partners

“The Red Cross has a presence in every country. It can reach the community level like no other [actor]. It’s a real strength that sets it apart.”

“The Red Cross has this unique voice of having its district chapters and community volunteers, which means they are talking from a sense of what is locally feasible for AA.”

“In the early days of what was then called FbF, we saw the need to bring about a fundamental shift in humanitarian action. We wanted a paradigm shift towards anticipation. And now we are implementing that paradigm shift. The Red Cross played a big role in making this happen.”

“I’m amazed by all the work I’ve seen the IFRC and its National Societies do on AA.”

“I wonder whether the Red Cross underutilises its community presence. Its reach could be tremendous, but the funding envelopes and processes might stand in the way.”



1. Introduction

Unprecedented Momentum for Anticipatory Action

The Red Cross Red Crescent network has been a pioneer of anticipatory action (AA). After having developed and piloted the approach in different countries, in 2018, Forecast-based Action (FbA) by the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) was launched to provide systematic funding for National Societies to implement AA through pre-agreed plans or early action protocols (EAPs). In 2022, the Movement formally committed to scaling up anticipatory action through a Council of Delegates (CoD) resolution.¹ This commitment was further reinforced in 2024 at the 34th International Conference (IC) where the Movement and state representatives adopted an additional resolution to advance the approach.²

The network has continued to expand its commitment to the AA agenda, contributing to unprecedented global momentum. In 2024, the Anticipation Hub counted 154 active frameworks in 48 countries across all organisations.³ Combined, these covered over 13 million people and had 248 million US dollars in pre-agreed funding. The Red Cross Red Crescent network alone has developed, implemented and closed 90 EAPs to date, with more than 30 currently active, and 24 million Swiss francs (CHF) allocated in 40 National Societies.

The IFRC network's engagement in AA has been guided by its [Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025](#). The framework's overarching objective is to operationalise the scale-up ambition articulated in the CoD resolution on strengthening anticipatory humanitarian action (see footnote 1) and the 2021-2025 Federation Plan and Budget.⁴ This ambition is defined as to “scale up and mainstream anticipatory action as an approach across disaster risk management and climate change adaptation frameworks, plans and approaches to enable people at risk to protect their lives and livelihoods”, and to enable National Societies and their partners to anticipate disasters and prevent or minimise their impact. The framework's target audience are the IFRC Secretariat and the “membership already supporting or planning to support the scaling up of anticipatory action”. This includes National Societies, Partner National Societies (PNS) and the Anticipation Hub.

IFRC has commissioned an evaluation of the Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action to assess progress against its objectives and inform the network's engagement in AA going forward.

¹ 2022 Council of Delegates, Resolution 2: Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward (CD/22/R2). https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2022/06/CD22-R02-Anticipatory-action_22-June-2022_FINAL_EN.pdf

² 34th International Conference, Resolution 5: Protecting people from the humanitarian impacts of extreme climate and weather events: Working together to strengthen anticipatory action (34IC/24/R5). https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2024/11/34IC_R5-Anticipatory-Action-EN-1.pdf

³ Anticipation Hub: Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/download/file-4973>

⁴ IFRC Plan and Budget 2021-2025. <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/Plan-and-Budget-promo-doc-FINAL.pdf>

Evaluation Scope and Objectives

The scope of the evaluation is defined by the strategic priorities and pillars of action as framed in the Operational Framework.

The six strategic priorities of the IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025:

1. National Societies **increase their engagement** on anticipatory action, particularly with a view to expanding its geographical reach.
2. Expand the use of AA to **cover more hazards and risks** - notably slow-onset and less visible risks (such as heatwaves and droughts), compounding risks, in conflict settings, epidemics, food insecurity and displacement.
3. National Societies **integrate AA** into their disaster risk management strategies, policies, and plans.
4. National Societies have **increased access to disaster risk financing for AA**, whether through improvements in current financing mechanisms (e.g. FbA by DREF, imminent DREF) and or other sources.
5. IFRC and National Societies **advocate for the integration of AA** into national disaster risk management and climate change adaptation **policies and structures** and for **increased investments** in early warning early action.
6. IFRC and National Societies make use of and contribute to the **Anticipation Hub** by sharing activities, learning, scientific evidence on the impact of AA.

The evaluation was tasked with four specific objectives:

- Assess the **progress against key targets** under the IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025.
- Assess the appropriateness of the Red Cross Red Crescent network's AA **methodology from design to delivery**, and evaluate its **comparative advantage** compared to other organisations.
- Identify **areas needing improvement** or adjustment in approach or methodology for successful scale-up.
- Provide key **recommendations** for enhancing framework efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability to scale up AA moving forward

These objectives were summarised in two guiding evaluation questions:

Is the anticipatory action model and approach of the Red Cross Red Crescent network fit for purpose given the changing humanitarian context to achieve the Operational Framework objectives?

What are the key considerations and recommendations for how to move forward?

The recent 'humanitarian reset' – a reduction in funding and a global push for more efficiency and impact – make this evaluation and addressing its recommendations even more relevant. The humanitarian reset refers to an overhaul of the humanitarian assistance

system proposed by Tom Fletcher, the UN Emergency Relief Chief Coordinator, to improve efficiency and effectiveness in response to “a profound crisis of legitimacy, morale, and funding”.⁵ Although the reset was catalysed principally by the United States’ suspension and ultimately termination of nearly all international development and humanitarian assistance beginning in January 2025⁶, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) had already launched an initiative to simplify the humanitarian system and to reduce bureaucracy in 2024.⁷ The core objectives of the humanitarian reset, as further outlined in June 2025⁸, align with the [Grand Bargain](#) principles on efficiency, localisation, and accountability, and speak to the objectives of the [UN80 initiative](#) to “streamline operations and sharpen impact”. These developments have led many donor governments to reduce humanitarian funding and to prioritise spending further based on the severity of needs and the most impactful interventions. The four AA donor governments and agencies interviewed for this evaluation – Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) – have all confirmed this dynamic. They emphasised the mounting competition for scarce humanitarian resources and the need to continually justify the investment in AA.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the evaluation approach and methodology. Chapter 3 provides a succinct overview of the network’s performance against the quantitative targets of the Operational Framework, an exercise which will already highlight selected strengths and room for improvement. Chapter 4 traces the framework’s seven ‘pillars of action’, which provide a useful structure around which evaluation findings are organised to inform the network’s efforts to deliver impactful AA to vulnerable people. Chapter 5 draws conclusions and identifies strategic opportunities for strengthening AA that emerge from across the thematic areas. Chapter 6 provides recommendations for moving forward.

2. Approach and Methodology

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation is guided by three core principles: being utilisation-focused, inductive, and formative. Together, these principles ensure that the evaluation is not only rigorous and evidence-based, but also directly relevant and actionable for the diverse stakeholders across the Red Cross Red Crescent network.

⁵ T. Fletcher (2025). The Humanitarian Reset - ERC letter to IASC Principals.

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/humanitarian-reset-erc-letter-iasc-principals-0>

⁶ H. Pamuk (2025). As USAID stops foreign aid, Rubio says future US assistance will be limited.

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/usaid-stops-foreign-aid-rubio-says-future-us-assistance-will-be-limited-2025-07-01/>

⁷ J. Egeland and J. Msuya (2024). A simplified and more efficient humanitarian system.

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/simplified-and-more-efficient-humanitarian-system>

⁸ T. Fletcher (2025). The Humanitarian Reset – Phase Two: Statement by Emergency Relief Coordinator.

<https://www.unocha.org/news/un-relief-chief-pushes-humanitarian-system-even-more-rooted-communities-we-serve>

Utilisation-Focused

The evaluation takes a fundamentally utilisation-focused approach⁹, emphasising how ‘real people in the real world’ experience the evaluation process and apply the evaluation findings. In the context of AA in the Red Cross Red Crescent network, this means the approach is guided by the needs and priorities of the Operational Framework’s intended users, including IFRC, National Societies, PNS, reference centres and their partners. Stakeholder engagement is prioritised throughout the evaluation process, from the initial framing of evaluation questions to the interpretation and dissemination of results. By centring on the perspectives and decision-making realities of these users, the evaluation aims to generate findings and recommendations that are timely, relevant, and actionable, thereby enhancing the likelihood that the evaluation will inform ongoing and future efforts to scale and mainstream AA across disaster risk management and climate adaptation initiatives.

To this end, the evaluation offers stakeholders a safe space to discuss strengths but also to highlight challenges and room for improvement across the entire scope of the Operational Framework. Two cartoon artists accompanied the evaluation. Their artwork is featured throughout this report. The illustrations encapsulate what many key informants thought to be critical issues the Red Cross Red Crescent network should address moving forward.

Inductive

The evaluation adopts an inductive approach, designed to allow for emergence and accommodate the unanticipated. Rather than imposing a rigid, pre-determined framework, the methodology is open and responsive, enabling the identification of patterns, themes, and insights that arise organically from the data. Broad-based data collection methods – including interviews, focus groups, document reviews (see next section) – support a comprehensive



understanding of how AA is operationalised across diverse contexts. By working from specific observations to broader generalisations, the evaluation is positioned to capture both expected and unexpected outcomes, as well as the contextual factors that shape the effectiveness and scalability of AA within the IFRC network.

⁹ M.Q. Patton (2003). ‘Utilization-Focused Evaluation’. In: Kellaghan, T., Stufflebeam, D.L. (eds) *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*. Kluwer International Handbooks of Education, vol 9. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_15

Formative

The evaluation is explicitly formative, with a strong orientation toward learning and continuous improvement. Rather than solely assessing past performance, the evaluation seeks to identify opportunities for strengthening future iterations of the Operational Framework and its implementation mechanisms, such as EAPs and the workings of the Anticipatory Pillar of the DREF. The process is forward-looking, engaging stakeholders in reflective dialogue about what is working, what can be improved, and how the Framework can better support vulnerable communities in protecting lives and livelihoods. This learning-oriented stance ensures that the evaluation not only provides accountability but also serves as a catalyst for innovation and adaptive management within the IFRC network.

In summary, the evaluation approach is designed to maximise relevance, responsiveness, and learning, ensuring that the process and its findings are of tangible value to those working to advance anticipatory action at scale.

Methodology and Data Sources

The evaluation methodology comprises four key elements:

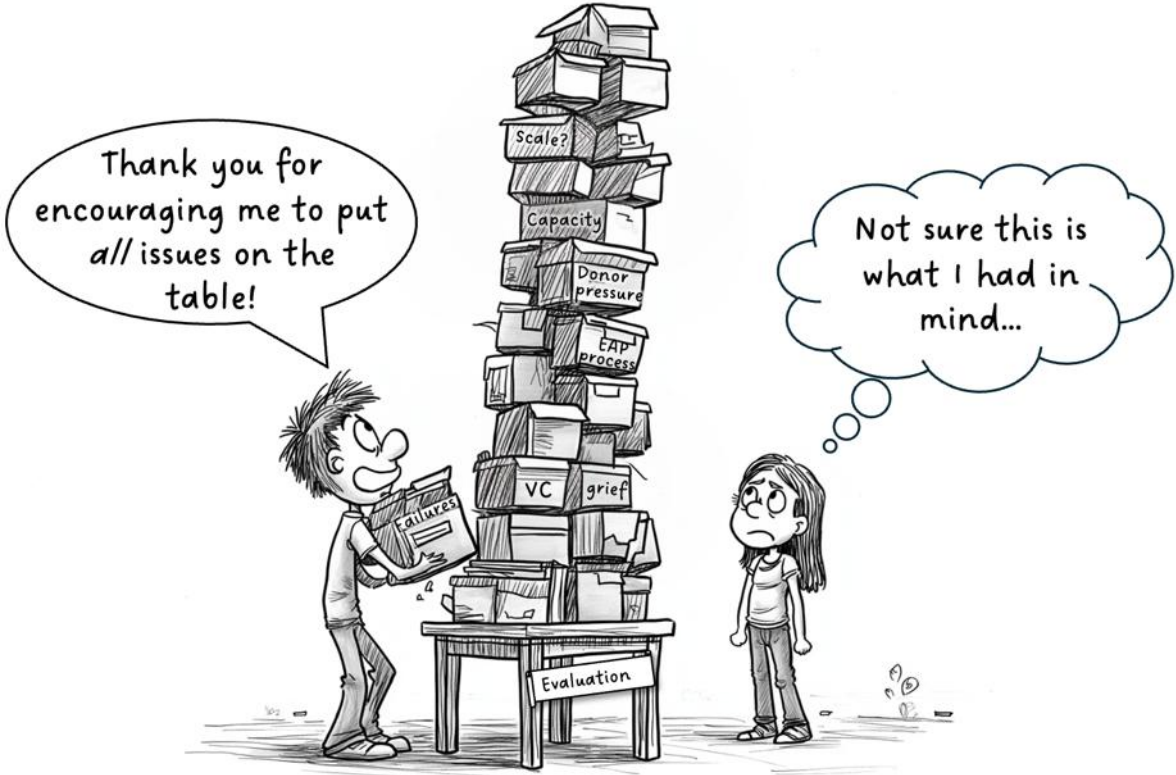
- a) **Desk review of available documentation.** This includes IFRC and DREF publications, internal records, previous evaluation reports, studies, and selected EAP documents.
- b) **In-depth interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.** The evaluation identified five distinct stakeholder groups to be involved in the evaluation as both providers of insights and target audience:
 1. **IFRC Secretariat, Climate Centre, Anticipation Hub, Global Disaster Preparedness Centre:** These entities represent the ‘facilitators/enablers’ of the operational framework, making sure the objectives and pillars of action reflected in the operational framework are effectively delivered.
 2. **National Societies:** They are the primary ‘clients’ and implementers of the IFRC Operational Framework.
 3. **Partner National Societies:** PNS often work as enablers or facilitators who support National Societies in interacting with the IFRC system, in developing EAPs and implementing AA.
 4. **External stakeholders:** They include AA implementing agencies such as UN organisations, international NGOs, and governments and hydro-meteorological services that are essential to the functioning of AA at country level. Their insights are important to (a) provide information on alternative AA funding and implementation models, and (b) to reflect on the comparative advantage of the IFRC Operational Framework vis-à-vis their own funding and implementation arrangements.
 5. **Donor agencies:** The evaluation engaged representatives of several of the main institutions that fund AA by the Red Cross Red Crescent Network and other partners to get their insights on strengths, weaknesses, and future prospects.

- c) **Tailored online surveys per stakeholder group.** Bespoke questionnaires were developed for the first four of the five stakeholder groups. The surveys solicited views on the overall AA operating model of the Red Cross Red Crescent network, specific questions organised around the Operational Framework’s seven pillars of action (for those familiar with the details), and open reflections. Unfortunately, the response rate remained low across all stakeholder groups. Therefore, instead of presenting quantitative findings from the surveys, this report mainly draws on the long-form responses to open-ended questions to harvest useful evaluation insights.
- d) **Validation workshop.** Stakeholders from the Red Cross Red Crescent network convened for two days in Geneva to validate emerging findings, prioritise issues deserving further attention, and co-develop solutions and recommendations. The roughly 30 participants discussed emergent evaluation results in plenary and worked in a total of eight sub-groups to dive deeper into issues, causes and potential solutions. All discussions and conclusions were documented by a team of rapporteurs. The workshop outcomes are incorporated throughout this evaluation report.

Table 1 summarises the number of data points collected per stakeholder group. In total, 36 key informants were interviewed across 25 conversations conducted with 21 different organisations, spanning all IFRC regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The list of all stakeholders consulted can be found in the Annex. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded into themes for analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and critical issues across the various areas of inquiry.

Table 1: Number of interviews and online survey responses by stakeholder group.

Stakeholders	Interviews	Survey responses	∑ data points
National Societies	8	17	25
Partner National Societies	3	16	19
IFRC secretariat, IFRC regional, Climate Centre, GDPC, Anticipation Hub	7	16	23
External partners (OCHA, WFP, WHH, NGOs, academia)	3	7	10
Donor agencies, implementing country governments	4	3	7
Total:	25	59	84



Created by the author with Midjourney

3. Performance Against Framework Targets

Key findings:

- The Red Cross Red Crescent network has mostly achieved the scale-up targets of the Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025, actively engaging National Societies in AA in 90 countries, supported by technical partnerships and research.
- The geographic expansion of AA has also been driven by a nearly doubling of funding allocated to the anticipatory pillar of the DREF, providing an incentive for National Societies to develop EAPs. However, this represents only 11-12% of the total DREF volume, falling short of the 25% target by 2025.
- Available data suggests that the framework’s targets for National Society training and capacity development for AA have not been met. This can be partly attributed to the lack of a strategic and holistic approach to National Society capacity strengthening overall. In contrast, IFRC staff familiar with the matter estimate that the target of 4,000 National Society staff and volunteers has been reached through PNS and Climate Centre trainings. However, this has not been tracked systematically and remains conjecture.

The IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025 set five quantitative targets to be achieved by 2025. The targets represent the overall scale-up ambition of the Red Cross Red Crescent network to implement AA in more countries to cover more vulnerable at-risk populations, with more funding, more skilled National Society staff and volunteers, and supported by technical and strategic partnerships and research.

This chapter evaluates the available data as of June 2025 to assess the extent to which the targets have been achieved. Since any gaps or challenges are primarily related to the more substantive issues discussed in the subsequent section on pillars of action, this analysis focusses on briefly reviewing progress towards each target, identifying shortcomings, and pointing to the relevant chapters of the report for further detail. It is important to note that there are still six months left to deliver on the Framework’s objectives. Additional progress might have been made by the end of the Framework’s validity period at the end of 2025.

Increase National Society Engagement in AA

Target: 80 National Societies engaged in AA planning such as through developing EAPs, integrating AA in their Contingency Plan and/or DREF funded emergency operations.



Achieved

Nearly 90 National Societies are already actively engaged in AA planning or implementation. In the 2021-2025 period, 57 National Societies have submitted a total of 90 EAPs. 28 of these National Societies are in the process of developing a second or third EAP for a

different hazard. 29 protocols have been activated 1 January 2021 and a 9 May 2025. An additional 33 National Societies are developing EAPs or simplified EAPs (sEAP).¹⁰

The integration of AA into National Society contingency or strategic plans is less advanced, and key informants for this evaluation had mixed views about how meaningful or important this is in practice. IFRC does not collect data systematically on whether any of the 191 National Societies integrate AA into their guiding framework documents. In April 2025, IFRC conducted an analysis which found that 31% of active simplified and full EAPs explicitly mention integrating early action protocols into government contingency and DRM plans. Some National Societies that were interviewed for this evaluation or responded to the online survey said they had integrated AA into their strategic plans, like Honduras, Lesotho, Rwanda and Uganda. Other National Societies, like Malawi, are in the process of reviewing their strategic plan and consider integrating AA into it. Several key informants commented on the issue and indicated that, while mainstreaming AA into strategic documents was generally desirable, “there must be something functional to integrate AA into”. These key informants flagged that National Society contingency or strategic plans do not always bear operational relevance because they “might have been developed a while ago in one project and then forgotten”. Another key informant said: “If we really want to enable AA in National Societies, it needs to be linked strongly to other programme approaches”. This is discussed in detail in chapter 4 in the section on approaches, guidance and tools.

Increase DREF Allocation to Anticipation

Target: 25% of DREF allocated to anticipatory action.



Not achieved

The share of the anticipatory pillar of the DREF has hovered around 11-12% of the total DREF volume between 2020 and 2024, but the fund has grown significantly and the AA allocation has nearly doubled (Figure 1). While the ambitious target of reaching a quarter of the total DREF volume in anticipatory funding has not been met, it is important to consider that the size of the DREF is a moving target. The total volume has grown from approximately 34 million CHF in 2020 to 85 million CHF in 2024. Over the same period, the AA allocation increased almost twofold from around 5 million CHF to over 9 million CHF.

¹⁰ This figure includes Palestine, Sudan and Myanmar whose National Societies started working on EAPs but paused due to operational contexts.

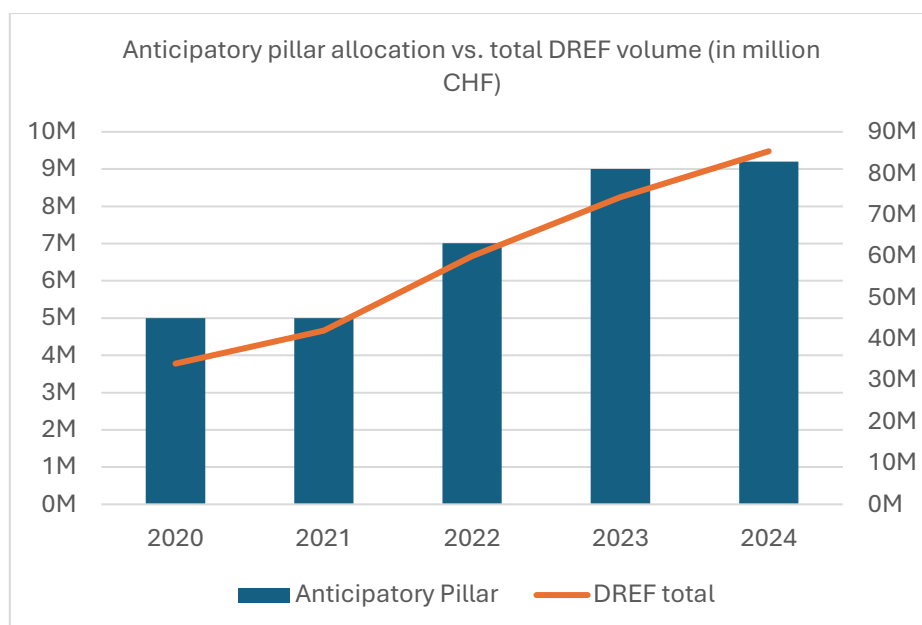


Figure 1: Anticipatory pillar funding allocation vs. total DREF volume, 2020-2024.

Red Cross Red Crescent network stakeholders at the validation workshop questioned whether the target of allocating 25% of the DREF to AA remains sensible or whether it should be revised. The proportion and total amounts of funding put into AA are ultimately programmatic and political decisions. Given the global momentum behind AA and the increasing commitments to make humanitarian assistance more anticipatory, including from the highest levels¹¹, indicate that it may be appropriate to allocate more than one quarter of available resources to AA. However, this is unlikely to be feasible with the current sourcing of the DREF being entirely focused on humanitarian funding.

There was near unanimity among evaluation key informants that it would be advisable for the Red Cross Red Crescent network to diversify the funding sources AA. It should position anticipation in the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) and climate programming nexus and tap into development funding for ‘build’ and preparedness activities. These issues and the corresponding recommendations are elaborated on in detail in the financing section of chapter 4.

Support over 4 million people through AA annually

Target: 4.3 million people engaged in annually and/or supported through AA.



¹¹ G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance, 13.05.2022. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/g7-anticipatory-action-2531236>

The anticipatory pillar of the DREF has supported 7.7 million people in the two-year period between June 2022 and June 2024.¹² Annualised data is not readily available. The ‘Live IFRC-DREF data’ dashboard on the IFRC website¹³ only shows the number of people targeted through EAPs and simplified EAPs. This currently stands at 2 million people targeted at the time of writing. This means that the majority of the over 7 million people ‘supported’ by the DREF anticipatory pillar over the two-year period was through the DREF instrument for imminent events.

IFRC has an opportunity to systematically track and report the number of people reached vs. targeted by AA, whether through s/EAPs or imminent DREF, which is currently not done systematically. This data can be considered a ‘low hanging fruit’ to serve basic accountability purposes and form the basis for further analysis on cost effectiveness and efficiency, as discussed in the evidence section of chapter 4.

Train 4,000 National Society personnel on AA

Target: 4,000 National Society staff and volunteers are trained on anticipatory action concepts and methodologies including but not limited to FbF through training of trainers’ approach.



Not achieved

IFRC reports that 1,320 people were reached through online trainings in the 2021-2025 period, and another 160 National Society staff and volunteers were trained through six regional face-to-face trainings. It is not known how many people were further trained by the 160 primary training recipients.

The Red Cross Red Crescent network has developed and collated an abundance of training and learning resources, but key informants unanimously felt that these were underutilised, partly owing to the absence of a comprehensive capacity development strategy for AA. The issue is assessed at length in the capacity strengthening section of chapter 4.

Support the AA agenda globally and in 80 countries through partnerships and research

Target: Technical and strategic partnerships and research support AA development globally and in 80 countries.



Achieved

¹² Council of Delegates (2024). Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward. Progress report. September 2024 (CD/24/15) https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2024/09/CoD24_15-Anticipatory-action-progress-report-EN.pdf.

¹³ <https://www.ifrc.org/happening-now/emergency-appeals/ifrc-disaster-response-emergency-fund>.

The Red Cross Red Crescent network’s support to AA has been effective in 90 countries, as underscored by the number of National Societies with EAPs under development or in place. Most s/EAPs clearly express the Red Cross Red Crescent’s intent to work in partnership and collaboration. The IFRC’s analysis conducted in April 2025 shows that all EAPs mention government stakeholders as key partners in the development and implementation of EAPs. National Hydrometeorological Services (NHMS) are the most frequently cited government cooperating partner.

External partners recognise the Red Cross Red Crescent network’s unparalleled global presence and community footprint as key strengths in scaling up AA worldwide. They credit the network for contributing to a paradigm shift in humanitarian action. Partners highlight the



RCRC’s unique ability to reach local communities through its extensive network of district chapters and volunteers, ensuring that AA approaches are grounded in local realities. Key informants also credit the Red Cross Red Crescent network with driving a major paradigm shift toward anticipation in humanitarian action and express admiration for the progress made. However, there is also a sense that the network’s vast community reach could be leveraged even further, though current funding and processes may limit its full potential, as discussed in more detail in the ‘approaches’ section of chapter 4.

“In the early days of what was then called FbF, we saw the need to bring about a fundamental shift in humanitarian action. We wanted a paradigm shift towards anticipation. And now we are implementing that paradigm shift. The Red Cross played a big role in making this happen.” (Key informant)

Partners also appreciate the network’s collaborative approach globally and at country level, although some noted that the level of coordination varies by location. The feedback highlights positive experiences working with delegates and national societies, noting effective communication and a supportive environment. Partners value the network’s ability to leverage complementary strengths throughout all stages of the AA lifecycle. Since coordination varies from country to country, several key informants noted that the best outcomes are seen where the Red Cross Red Crescent network works closely with UN agencies and government counterparts.

“There are many positive examples of collaboration in all stages of the AA process, from early warning, trigger development, definition of the actions, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.” (Survey respondent)

Performance Summary

In summary, the Red Cross Red Crescent network's performance against the quantitative targets expressed in the Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action can be summarised in three main messages:

- The Red Cross Red Crescent network has successfully led and contributed to a paradigm shift towards anticipation in the humanitarian sector.
- The growing number of National Societies with s/EAPs and imminent DREF activities shows a promising expansion of AA country coverage.
- Population coverage and National Society capacity development leave room for growth, contingent on (a) budgets, (b) strategy and (c) overall model design, as discussed in the next chapter.

4. Evaluation Findings Across the Pillars of Action

The Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025 is built on seven 'pillars of action' to implement the scale-up ambition of the Red Cross Red Crescent network. These pillars cover thematic areas that serve as useful entry points for identifying strengths and challenges in the Red Cross Red Crescent network's approach to AA development, implementation, and mainstreaming. Consequently, the evaluation findings are organised accordingly. Each section briefly outlines the objectives or action items from the respective Operational Framework pillar and then evaluates its practical application to identify potential opportunities for improvement.

Human Resources and Ways of Working

Key findings:

- The IFRC secretariat has successfully established a comprehensive support network with substantial growth in personnel with AA responsibilities between 2021 and 2025. This has been complemented by PNS backing of numerous National Societies and the Climate Centre's technical assistance.
- National Societies acknowledge the well-intended presence of regional and country-level AA focal points but express frustration at multiple layers of intermediaries that are perceived to function as bottlenecks rather than facilitators at times.
- The evaluation reveals that the current ways of working can result in EAPs becoming stalled at IFRC delegation or regional levels for weeks, creating a situation where "people who don't have responsibility to take decisions on funding or outcomes are making decisions without realising it", representing a fundamental governance challenge because delays effectively constitute decisions for inaction rather than action.

- Consequently, the evaluation supports the recommendation developed by network stakeholders at the validation workshop to review and redesign the roles and responsibilities of IFRC regional and delegation personnel with AA responsibilities to leverage their potential as facilitators, and to invest IFRC resources that are derived proportionately from EAP budgets into ‘ecosystem support’ activities.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Ensure staffing at regional level (through National Societies’s own structures or IFRC) to implement the Operational Framework for AA in the region, including coordinating the capacity building support for National Societies.*
2. *Ensure coordination and technical expertise on AA are available in IFRC (international, regional, sub-regional and country levels) and National Societies.*
3. *Ensure staffing in the Climate Centre to provide technical support for anticipatory action.*

Staffing and Support Network Expansion

IFRC has successfully established a comprehensive support network with substantial growth in personnel with AA responsibilities between 2021 and 2025, complemented by PNS support to select National Societies. The IFRC secretariat expanded from a baseline of three global and two regional AA staff in 2021 to 4 global and 6 regional positions by 2025, representing a doubling in dedicated human resources. This expansion has theoretically brought AA support closer to countries requiring assistance, creating a more distributed support structure across the IFRC's five regional offices in Africa, Asia Pacific, MENA, Europe, and the Americas. However, it is also important to acknowledge that these AA-related support positions are not core resourced but dependent on continued PNS or project support which is not guaranteed to be sustained. The IFRC’s support network has been complemented by PNS directly providing financial and often hands-on technical staff support to the National Societies they work with. The assistance from PNS has been widely appreciated by the National Societies interviewed for this evaluation, although there is a realisation that some National Societies are more successful than others in attracting PNS support, resulting in an uneven distribution of help for AA across the Red Cross Red Crescent network.

National Societies generally perceive IFRC AA staff and focal points as wanting to be helpful. The evaluation found that National Societies acknowledge the well-intended presence by IFRC anticipation personnel. The expanded staffing has created multiple touchpoints for National Societies seeking support in developing EAPs and accessing the Anticipatory Pillar of the DREF.

Process Inefficiencies

The evaluation found a downside to the current organisational structure maintained by IFRC: it creates multiple layers of intermediaries that function as bottlenecks rather than facilitators in the EAP development and validation processes. National Societies consistently expressed frustration with a communication chain that requires coordination through delegations and regional focal points before reaching the IFRC Secretariat in Geneva. As one stakeholder noted, *"We have created so many middlemen,"* highlighting the proliferation of intermediary roles that were intended to provide support but instead are perceived to create delays.



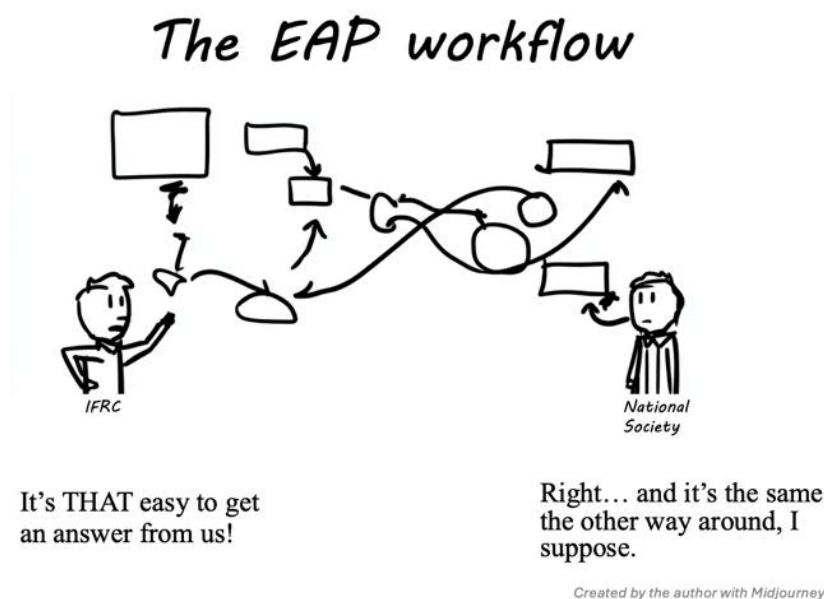
"Writing and developing the EAP is a proposal writing process. We have experience with this, but it has technical parts that we need support with. We requested IFRC for support but didn't get a response. We need a process for requesting and receiving this type of support so that we are not left hanging." (National Society key informant)

The National Society comment above highlights a mismatch between National Society expectations and what the IFRC secretariat can offer. In the past, the secretariat's role has not included supporting National Societies in developing EAPs. Instead, it has focussed on AA policy, advocacy, and approving or validating EAPs funded by the DREF. Only recently has the secretariat piloted EAP development support in the Africa region. This experience warrants evaluation to determine whether IFRC should continue or expand this support function, and to assess the required human and financial resources. Learning from PNS and the Climate Centre, who have assisted National Societies in writing EAPs, would be beneficial in this process.

Bottlenecks Create Delays and Lead to 'Accidental Decision-Making'

The hierarchical communication structure leads to significant delays and missed opportunities for timely AA. The evaluation revealed that EAPs can become stalled at IFRC delegation or regional levels for weeks, creating a situation where *"people who don't have responsibility to take decisions on funding or outcomes are making decisions without realising it"*. This unintentional decision-making through delay represents a fundamental governance

challenge, as postponing EAP development, trigger validation, or activation effectively constitutes a decision for inaction rather than action.



Process design inefficiencies result in "accidental decision making" that undermines the time-sensitive nature of AA. The well-intentioned principle of resolving issues at the lowest possible organisational level has created additional bottlenecks rather than streamlined processes. These delays occur not only due to IFRC staff limitations but also stem from National Society capacity constraints, creating a systemic problem that affects the entire AA ecosystem.

Financial Investment and Accountability Concerns

National Societies expect IFRC to strategically invest in system improvements given the organisation's financial stake in AA. The evaluation highlighted expectations that IFRC should utilise its 16.5% allocation per EAP to strengthen the support system.¹⁴ One National Society representative stated, *"IFRC get up to 16.5% per EAP. They should invest this in the system. They should use their money and their people to follow up with National Societies and everyone else involved"*.

Inadequate support and communication gaps create frustration among National Societies seeking assistance. Multiple National Societies reported instances of requesting support without receiving responses or their need being met. One National Society noted, *"IFRC shared the new EAP format but didn't give us any introduction, and when we asked for more guidance, we didn't get any"*.

Recent Improvements and Ongoing Challenges

Process revisions have shown promise in addressing some structural inefficiencies, but implementation remains inconsistent. The evaluation found recognition of efforts by the

¹⁴ The 16.5% per EAP are composed of the 10% that IFRC Delegations can include *on top* of an EAP budget to 'manage the s/EAP', plus 6.5% indirect programmes and services support recovery (PSSR) that is charged on any project activity.

DREF team to develop solutions, with one PNS respondent acknowledging, "*the DREF team is working hard on solutions*". Additionally, revised processes allowing National Societies to submit EAPs directly to Geneva have been recognised as making "a huge difference" in reducing bureaucratic delays.

The lack of designated responsibility for EAP shepherding creates gaps in accountability and follow-through. It also highlights the need for the IFRC secretariat and PNS to coordinate their National Society AA support. Multiple stakeholders emphasised the need for clear ownership of the EAP development process, with one noting, "*it should be someone's responsibility to see an EAP through with and for a National Society*". This absence of designated accountability undermines the continuity of support that National Societies require throughout the complex EAP development and validation process. This is further discussed in the section on technical support below. Some IFRC interviewees underscored that the responsibility to resolve this issue lies with the Red Cross Red Crescent *network*, not merely the IFRC secretariat. However, although PNS have played a prominent role in accompanying selected National Societies on their EAP 'journeys', most stakeholders ultimately look to the IFRC secretariat as the centre of gravity for AA leadership and decision making, given its command of DREF funding.

Recommendations

- **IFRC should review and redesign the roles and responsibilities of regional/cluster/country delegation personnel with AA responsibilities to leverage their potential as facilitators rather than bottlenecks, and coordinate with PNS and reference centres on National Society support.**
 - The evaluation recommends conducting a review of AA responsibilities across all organisational levels to ensure personnel facilitate rather than impede the EAP process. This review should focus on eliminating unnecessary involvement, sign-off and approval layers while maintaining appropriate quality control and technical oversight.
 - Beyond the narrow focus on EAPs, the IFRC secretariat should review and redesign how its staff can assist National Societies across the entire early warning and AA agendas.
 - Regarding National Society support in general, the IFRC secretariat should engage and coordinate with PNS to review roles and responsibilities, deciding where the secretariat and PNS can provide most value add, respectively. It is important to consider that the division of labour might differ by region or country, depending on where PNS have presence.
- **Implementation of tracking mechanisms and sponsor designation systems could significantly improve responsiveness and accountability.** The evaluation suggests establishing systems to track support requests and response times, creating measurable accountability for staff performance. Additionally, designating EAP "sponsors" – IFRC regional delegations' personnel or PNS staff who take responsibility for supporting specific National Societies on particular EAPs – could provide the continuity and ownership currently lacking in the system.

- **Performance evaluation systems could incorporate 360-degree feedback from National Societies to incentivise result-oriented support.** The recommendation to include National Society feedback in annual performance reviews for IFRC staff involved in AA would create direct accountability mechanisms linking staff performance to user satisfaction and operational outcomes. This approach would align individual incentives with organisational objectives of responsive and effective support delivery. It is on the IFRC secretariat to deliberate with PNS whether the latter could set up a similar mechanism.

Approaches, Guidance and Tools; Coordination, Institutionalisation and Mainstreaming

Key findings:

- Comprehensive guidance and tools on AA have been developed and made readily available, which is widely appreciated.
- National Societies often struggle to navigate and apply the wealth of material effectively in practice, pointing to a missing link between the volume of guidance developed and a strategic approach to National Society capacity development and technical support more broadly.
- Although the Operational Framework is conceptually open about the approaches to implement anticipatory action, the EAP model has come to dominate in practice, with limited programmatic attention and funding to other anticipatory approaches.
- The technocentric focus on EAPs appears to have adverse effects on coordination and harmonisation at country level, presenting an opportunity to strengthening early warning and AA harmonisation and integration by leveraging more system-oriented, locally-led strategies.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Review the current approach to FbF and current issues/bottlenecks to identify changes that would be required to reach the desired scale-up, including based on existing evaluations e.g FbA by the DREF pilot phase report.*
2. *Adapt/improve guidance materials and tools for FbF set-up and implementation in line with needs of National Societies implementing the approach.*
3. *Develop guidance on anticipatory action more broadly (beyond FbF and including smaller events and low-cost actions), linking to and building on existing FbF material where relevant.*
4. *Ensure alignment of new trainings with relevant IFRC existing frameworks, approaches and tools such as the National Societies Preparedness Framework, Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) and the Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) guideline.*
5. *Contribute to and disseminate, in collaboration with the Anticipation Hub, a catalogue (or set of national catalogues) of tested anticipatory action and triggers that are effective*

at reducing suffering, explaining what we know about what works in different settings for different hazards.

- 6. Review and adapt existing materials or develop new guidance and tools to apply anticipatory action for more types of hazards, with increased attention on slow onset events, less visible risks, compound risks and the application of anticipatory action in situations of conflict.*

This Operational Framework pillar of action focuses on ‘approaches, guidance and tools’. What has been developed and how it has been operationalised has implications for AA coordination, institutionalisation, and mainstreaming. Therefore, these aspects have been added to this section.

Comprehensive guidance and tools with limited uptake

Significant progress has been made in developing guidance, manuals, and tools for AA, but practical uptake remains limited due to insufficient support for users. The IFRC and its partners have produced a wealth of manuals, toolkits, briefs, and catalogues covering a wide range of AA topics. One [resource mapping created by IFRC](#), although not widely known or advertised, has helpfully structured the available materials by steps in the AA project cycle and by thematic area. It lists well over 100 references that can seem overwhelming even to the knowledgeable reader.

While these resources are comprehensive, National Societies often struggle to navigate and apply them effectively in practice, pointing to a missing link between the volume of guidance materials developed and a strategic approach to National Society capacity development more broadly. This has resulted in limited adoption and impact of the available guidance at the operational level.

More Than One Approach to AA? (Little) Anticipatory Action beyond EAPs

Although the Operational Framework is conceptually open about the approaches to implement anticipatory action, the EAP model has come to dominate in practice, with limited programmatic attention and funding to other anticipatory approaches.

National Societies have engaged in activities that are anticipatory in nature for much longer than the anticipatory pillar of the DREF exists. For example, National Societies have invested in disaster risk reduction, preparedness planning, or community early warning systems (CEWS). These initiatives were often small in scale, with specific approaches that might have been difficult to scale up, and at times perceived to be of lower quality because of absence of systematic support, funding or quality assurance that is afforded to EAPs, as mentioned by several key informants.



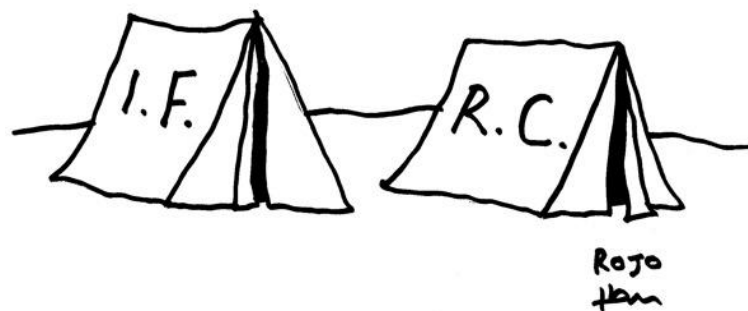
The advent of EAPs and the accompanying technical support and guidance offerings have incentivised National Societies to focus their efforts on this funding instrument and created a perception that AA is synonymous with EAPs. This has further sidelined other anticipatory approaches. As one informant noted, *“You cannot call it AA if it doesn’t fit into an EAP,”* highlighting the prevailing narrow conceptualisation.

The introduction of simplified EAPs was a widely welcomed innovation and has facilitated increased engagement by National Societies, while at the same time contributing to a further narrowing of the AA approach. National Societies have an incentive to favour simplified EAPs because of the lighter paperwork, speedier processes and, most consequentially, nearly identical proportions of readiness funding obtainable annually. This has made them particularly attractive over other approaches such as pursuing independent anticipation without DREF funding, Public Awareness and Public Education (PAPE) messaging, or PER.

What counts as anticipatory action?

Multiple key informants noted that there are perceived to be ‘two camps’ within IFRC and among other Red Cross Red Crescent network stakeholders over the definition and scope of AA and the seemingly artificial separation between early warning and anticipatory action, with calls for alignment around clear, inclusive standards such as those in the Grand Bargain. While the Operational Framework aspires to a holistic understanding of AA, some feel there continue to be “turf wars” over the “right or wrong way of doing AA”. While some

see EAPs as the only practical way of implementing AA in the Red Cross Red Crescent network, others wondered whether early response should also qualify for AA funding given frequent delays in assistance delivery. One key informant suggested: *“We have great definitions, like in the Grand Bargain Caucus document, or the G7 definition. They are fairly inclusive and clear-cut. Let’s use them!”* The Grand Bargain Caucus on Scaling Up Anticipatory Action proposes the following definition: “Anticipatory action is defined as acting ahead of a predicted hazardous event to prevent or reduce impacts on lives and livelihoods and humanitarian needs before they fully unfold. This works best when activities as well as triggers or decision-making rules are pre-agreed, and decisions are made to guarantee the fast release of pre-arranged funding”.¹⁵



Adverse Effects on Coordination

The EAP-centric model is seen as having had adverse effects on coordination, harmonisation, and integration with broader disaster risk management (DRM) systems. In the past, National Societies have led AA efforts in many countries, given the pioneering role of the Red Cross Red Crescent network in this agenda. As more actors—including UN agencies—enter the space, the risk of duplication and fragmentation grows. It becomes ever more important to build on what already exists. Although a recent IFRC review indicates that all EAPs include aspirational goals to coordinate and collaborate with government stakeholders, evaluation interviewees found that the current approach incentivises standalone EAP development rather than integration with existing national frameworks or government-led systems. As one interviewee observed, *“The DREF itself provides incentive for AA to not be integrated into other norms or systems for DRM”*. This siloed approach is further entrenched by the tendency to form working groups focused mostly on EAP development, with limited time and effort dedicated to broader, cross-agency collaboration. An external partner shared:

“The Red Cross usually sets up AA working groups to develop their framework. Then the groups run for a couple of years, and the TORs - I’ve seen a couple - are very inclusive, but they are very specific to EAP development. I’m not sure what the interest is to collaborate with other partners beyond their own EAP development.”

¹⁵ IASC (2024). Grand Bargain Caucus on Scaling Up Anticipatory Action Outcome Document: Commitments. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/GB%20AA%20-%20Final%20Caucus%20Outcome%20Document%20-%20New.pdf>.



Anticipatory action coordination at country level.

Created by the author with Midjourney

Coordination challenges are compounded by a lack of systematic engagement and alignment among AA actors, both within and outside the Red Cross Red Crescent network.

Informants described coordination as often being “upside down,” with agencies presenting their plans to government rather than co-designing approaches under a common framework. Coordination often defaults to agencies *“talking at the government about what you will do,”* rather than engaging in pre-implementation alignment or co-designing umbrella protocols that ensure complementarity, localisation and government leadership. The result is a fragmented landscape where multiple actors operate independently, increasing the risk of duplication and reducing the potential for collective impact.

Institutionalisation and Mainstreaming while Preserving Independence

Efforts to institutionalise and mainstream AA within government systems remain sometimes aspirational, with significant variation in practice across countries and a need to balance harmonisation and independence of the Red Cross Red Crescent. The degree to which AA is embedded in national norms, systems, and processes depends heavily on the initiative of individual National Societies and their partners. Even where a government-endorsed AA framework already existed, some external partners saw National Societies as not willing or not able to adopt or use existing triggers or framework arrangements because of formal EAP requirements. Although the latter issue is a misconception – ‘borrowed’ triggers are acceptable in EAPs as long as they are clear and functional – National Societies or those supporting them can still go their own separate ways in trigger development. There is also a concern among network actors to preserve the independence of the Red Cross Red Crescent network. As one key informant noted: *“There are political contexts or regimes where you wouldn’t want to be government-led and only be able to trigger when and where the government says so”*.

Sustaining progress in AA mainstreaming will require a shift in approach, moving from technocratic, productised models to system-oriented, locally-led strategies. This includes investing in foundational preparedness, building long-term relationships and alliances with government agencies, and developing flexible funding and technical support mechanisms that can adapt to local contexts and priorities. The experience of countries that have begun to institutionalise AA – by designating lead authorities, forming technical working groups, and

drafting national strategies¹⁶ – demonstrates that progress is possible, but only with sustained commitment, capacity development, and a willingness to compromise and adapt the humanitarian operating model to support government leadership. One donor representative summarised it as follows:

“You have to ensure complementarity. We cannot create the same sectorised mess for pre-shock [AA] as we have it for post-shock response. IFRC has a big responsibility to contribute to government-owned frameworks.”

In summary, the approaches, guidance, and tools put forth under the IFRC Operational Framework have proven fit-for-purpose to enable National Societies and their partners to anticipate disasters and prevent or minimise their impact. However, the over-reliance on EAPs, coordination bottlenecks, and limited integration with national systems constrain the potential for institutionalisation and mainstreaming. Addressing these challenges will require a shift towards more inclusive, harmonised, and system-oriented approaches that prioritise capacity development, government ownership, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Acknowledging such challenges, the IFRC has commissioned research on how governments have successfully institutionalised and mainstreamed AA and what has been the role of National Societies.¹⁷

Recommendations:

- **Provide systematic support to National Societies to navigate, adapt, and operationalise AA guidance and tools, linking this directly to a strategic capacity development approach.** The latter – a consistent capacity strengthening strategy – should be the starting point, building on National Society priorities, existing strengths and working towards locally-led, context-appropriate AA.
- **Consider broadening the operational and funding focus beyond EAPs to support diverse, quality-assured anticipatory approaches, including those outside the DREF mechanism.** A diversification of funding instruments would also enable National Society-owned and driven AA at different scales and levels of capacity.
- **Incentivise National Societies to coordinate with governments and other AA actors to harmonise EAPs and other anticipatory approaches with existing national frameworks and systems.**
 - This would require setting expectations that the development of EAPs and other anticipatory approaches can take time when harmonising them with existing frameworks from the start, and that it is not only acceptable but desired to ‘borrow’ EAP components – such as risk analyses or trigger models, assuming sufficient quality – from elsewhere instead of reinventing the wheel.

¹⁶ Anticipation Hub: Anticipatory Action in 2024: A Global Overview. <https://www.anticipation-hub.org/download/file-4973>.

¹⁷ The IFRC research on ‘government-led AA’ has not been completed at the time of writing.

- The IFRC secretariat should consult with PNS, National Societies and reference centres on what the incentive structure could look like.
- The incentive system could include an annual call for submissions or nominations. The call would help identify National Societies going beyond coordination lip service in their EAPs. They could be invited – along with their government and other counterparts – to international knowledge exchange fora or receive a top-up to their EAP budget.

Capacity Strengthening

Key findings:

- The capacity strengthening component of the Operational Framework has established important foundations through training development and broad reach across National Societies.
- The current approach to AA capacity development is perceived to be top-down and narrowly focused on EAP-related capabilities rather than recognising National Society priorities and nurturing holistic ownership of AA.
- Emerging solutions build on existing capacities and preferences and strive to empower National Societies to operationalise AA eventually independent of external support.
- Beyond National Societies, training packages have been developed that target government and other national and local stakeholders, aiming to support integration and mainstreaming of AA in country DRM systems.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Develop and disseminate (a) awareness raising material, (b) comprehensive, modular training packages, and (c) online training courses / modules.*
2. *Train key staff at national, regional and global levels.*
3. *Strengthen National Society capacity in readiness and pre-positioning activities.*
4. *Train and certify DRR / Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) focal points from National Societies to conduct trainings on anticipatory action approaches.*

Training Materials and Delivery vs. Capacity Outcomes

Training materials have been successfully developed and integrated into the IFRC Learning Platform, establishing a solid foundation for knowledge dissemination. The capacity strengthening efforts have delivered six face-to-face regional trainings that reached approximately 60 National Societies, demonstrating substantial geographic coverage and engagement across the network. This represents a significant achievement in terms of scale and reach, providing National Societies with access to standardised training content and resources through the established learning platform in official IFRC languages.

Despite these achievements, National Society capacity for anticipatory action is considered fragile or limited in many contexts. This finding highlights a critical gap between training delivery and actual capacity development outcomes. The challenge extends beyond simply providing training materials and workshops to ensuring that National Societies can effectively absorb, retain, and apply the knowledge and skills being transferred.

Challenges with the Current Approach to AA Capacity Strengthening

Partner National Society support, while highly appreciated, has inadvertently created substitution effects that undermine long-term capacity development goals. The evaluation found that the way PNSs have supported EAP development in the past has led to situations where National Societies become dependent on external support rather than developing internal capabilities. One key informant observed: *“Capacity building for National Societies can currently mean hiring a number of delegates to develop the EAP and 'run' the AA system for them”*. This creates a challenging



dynamic where National Societies work closely with PNSs through the protocol development phase but then struggle to integrate AA into their systems and processes. The disconnect becomes problematic when it comes to the activation and implementation phases that rely entirely on the National Society’s ability to translate the pre-agreed protocol into action.

Coordination challenges arise when multiple partners work in the same country, leading to fragmented and potentially conflicting capacity development efforts. The evaluation identified situations where different organisations provide support for AA initiatives without adequate coordination, creating confusion and inefficiency for National Societies trying to navigate multiple partnership relationships and requirements.

Evaluation stakeholders unanimously agreed that the current approach to capacity strengthening is perceived to be top-down and too narrowly focused on AA technical aspects rather than empowering National Societies holistically. This narrow focus contrasts with the broader need to build National Society ownership and integrate AA into existing organisational processes and priorities. The evaluation reveals that capacity strengthening efforts have been primarily technical in nature, concentrating on the mechanics of EAPs rather than addressing the broader organisational development needs that would enable National Societies to truly own and integrate the anticipatory action approach. As one Partner National Society representative noted, *“The EAP and funding is pre-approved in Geneva, but internally nothing has been pre-approved! Think of per diems, logistics, etc.”*

Capacity development is not sufficiently tailored to the diverse contexts, capacities, and priorities of National Societies. One-size-fits-all training and tools fail to address the unique

challenges faced by the Red Cross Red Crescent in fragile, conflict-affected, or low-resource environments. There is a need for more flexible, context-sensitive models that recognise and build upon existing strengths and address specific gaps.

A Project Approach to AA and Staff Turnover Limit Organisational Effectiveness in National Societies

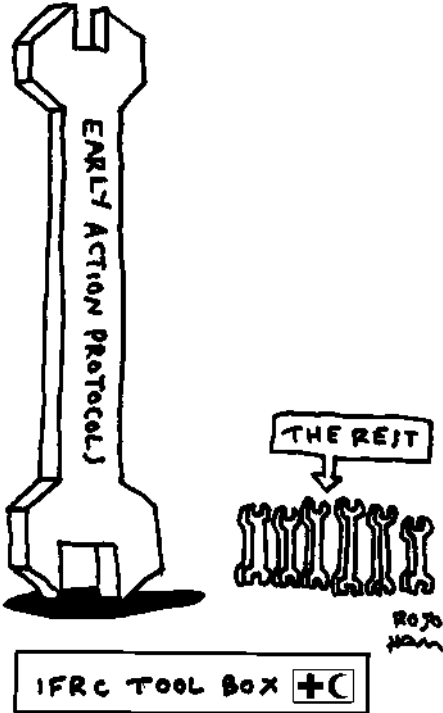
National Societies often view AA as a project rather than as a tool they can own and integrate into their broader disaster risk management approach. This perception problem stems partly from how AA has been introduced and funded, creating a project-based mentality rather than fostering understanding of AA as an integrated approach to DRM that can enhance overall organisational effectiveness.

Moreover, staff turnover and limited human resources in National Societies pose ongoing challenges to sustainable capacity development. This structural issue means that investments in individual training and capacity building can be quickly lost when trained staff leave their positions. The challenge is compounded by the fact that many National Societies operate with limited resources and may struggle to retain trained personnel over time.

Emerging Solutions and Promising Practices

A strategic shift toward starting with National Society priorities represents a promising new direction for capacity development. The evaluation highlighted that National Societies are typically in a recipient position with limited ability to refuse projects or articulate alternative priorities. However, emerging approaches recognise the need to ask about and potentially fund other National Society priorities as a foundation for AA work. This represents a fundamental shift from supply-driven to demand-driven capacity development. It can also mean that IFRC network actors driving the AA agenda will have to accept approaches beyond the current mainstream, as one key informant noted:

“National Societies should be allowed to articulate their priorities in AA, and if they want to do AA that’s totally different from an EAP, are we OK with delivering on that?”



The DREF, Netherlands Red Cross and French Red Cross teams, among others, are in the process of launching a pilot with small island states. The initiative demonstrates a promising model that begins from National Society priorities and capacities. This approach looks to identify specific opportunities and interventions for anticipatory programming based on existing National Society strengths and priorities rather than imposing external frameworks. This model could serve as a template for broader application across the network. It is also aligned with a more empowering approach to capacity development that many evaluation stakeholders advocated for. One person framed the issue like this: *“The question is: How do you really*

empower National Societies to own and run the AA system, rather than asking them to do a certain thing that you want? This will require really investing in people rather than capacity development as a one-off workshop.”

The American Red Cross AA Readiness Index offers another valuable tool for National Societies to self-assess their capacities and identify aligned investments. The index serves as a starting point for capacity development by helping National Societies assess what they want and are able to do independently, such as reading and understanding triggers or communicating with national hydro-meteorological agencies. The tool includes a financing component designed to demonstrate that National Societies can implement AA independently and provides options for identifying different financing mechanisms. Since the assessment part of the AA Readiness Index is conceptually similar to the PER process, which some stakeholders felt lacked traction, the question arises why the early examples of using the AA Readiness Index show more promising results. This could be due to factors such as who runs the process, how much they listen to National Societies, or how well they are able to navigate existing structures to do what the National Society wants. Exploring these questions further was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

The capacity strengthening component of the Operational Framework has established important foundations through training infrastructure development and broad reach across National Societies. However, fundamental shifts in approach are needed to move from technical training delivery toward holistic organisational empowerment that enables National Societies to truly own and integrate AA into their DRM systems. The emerging promising practices and strategic recommendations point toward a more sustainable and effective model for capacity development that starts with National Society priorities and builds long-term organisational capabilities rather than project-specific technical skills.

Recommendations

- **Capacity development should shift from one-off workshops to sustained investment in people and organisational systems.** As one key informant emphasised, true empowerment of National Societies requires *"really investing in people rather than capacity development as a one-off workshop."* This means developing longer-term relationships and support mechanisms that build internal capacity over time rather than delivering discrete training events.
- **Training and capacity strengthening should always be coupled with opportunities for practical application and implementation.** The evaluation strongly emphasised that *"there should be no training or capacity building without action,"* meaning that capacity development efforts must include funding and opportunities for National Societies to immediately apply what they learn through concrete initiatives and activities.
- **A more comprehensive learning approach should extend beyond EAPs to address broader organisational development needs.** This includes ensuring that AA capacity development is strategic and holistic, addressing the full range of organisational capabilities needed to successfully integrate and sustain AA approaches.

- **Coordination and harmonisation of capacity development efforts across partners could improve efficiency and reduce fragmentation.** The evaluation suggests exploring partnerships with other organisations to coordinate capacity development activities, potentially sharing costs and ensuring that training covers the needs of multiple organisations and their partners, including government agencies and various humanitarian actors.

Technical Support

Key findings:

- IFRC has successfully mobilised substantial project funding and technical assistance to support National Societies in establishing AA systems and EAPs, and enabled the emerging expansion of AA into new hazards and compounding risks.
- The evaluation identifies a clear need to find a modality for providing ongoing, operational technical support to National Societies beyond one-off support requests around EAP development or specific technical questions.
- There is room to strengthen and streamline how the ‘AA support structure’ of IFRC headquarters, regional and delegation focal points, and technical reference centres and hubs provide support to National Societies to ensure responsiveness and results-orientation.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Implement projects to support National Societies in setting up FbF systems, including technical assistance on the development of EAPs, capacity building, establishment of systems and procedures and readiness exercises.*
2. *Where FbF is not implemented, support interested National Societies in testing and developing AA plans to apply for other sources of funding (e.g. DREF)*
3. *Support National Societies in establishing/strengthening relationships and networks with relevant stakeholders e.g., National Hydrometeorological Services (NHMS) to facilitate the development and implementation of Impact-based Forecasting (IBF) for AA into National Early Warning and DRM systems.*
4. *Support National Societies to integrate “last mile” AA in larger hydrometeorological-focused investments/projects (e.g. CREWS, GCF).*
5. *Support National Societies in developing AA for non-hydrometeorological hazards through guidance, studies etc.*
6. *Support National Societies in adapting their EAPs or other plans for anticipatory action to compounding risks.*

Successful projects and partnerships to support National Societies

IFRC and PNS have successfully mobilised substantial project funding and technical assistance to support National Societies in establishing AA systems and EAPs. Major projects such as the ECHO PP (approximately 300,000 EUR for AA global components), Irish Aid

(nearly 4 million EUR for EWEA system strengthening), an Italian grant (5.3 million EUR), the American Red Cross project (200,000 USD annually), and the Dutch-funded Water at the Heart of Climate Action (23.5 million EUR over five years for the IFRC network) have provided targeted resources for technical assistance, capacity building, and readiness exercises. These investments have enabled National Societies to initiate and scale up early warning and AA activities, particularly in developing and refining EAPs, but also increasingly focusing on more holistic early warning and AA approaches.

Strengthening relationships with meteorological and hydrological services has become a common feature in EAP development, reflecting the Framework’s emphasis on collaboration with technical partners. Most EAPs now reference partnerships with national Met Services, which are essential for developing reliable triggers and forecasts for anticipatory action. This progress demonstrates the network’s growing ability to leverage external expertise in support of AA.

Efforts to integrate ‘last mile’ AA into larger hydrometeorological-focused investments are advancing, with IFRC poised to access new funding streams. The organisation is expected to secure Climate Risk & Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative accreditation, which will allow it to tap into both CREWS and Green Climate Fund (GCF) resources for scaling up last-mile AA interventions. This positioning enhances the potential for sustainable, long-term support to National Societies.

Progress in New Hazards and Compounding Risks

IFRC has expanded technical support for non-hydrometeorological hazards, establishing new working groups and piloting EAPs for emerging risks. Two new working groups – one on epidemics and another on population movement – have been created, with one EAP for population movement already approved, several for epidemics, and more in development. This reflects a strategic shift to address a broader range of hazards through AA, aligned with the CoD resolution commitments.

Work on compounding and multi-hazard risks is underway, though not yet fully realised, as analytical efforts and coordination structures continue to develop. A multi-hazard risk working group has been established under the umbrella of the Anticipation Hub, and analytical work is ongoing to better adapt EAPs and AA frameworks to complex, intersecting risks. While full delivery is pending, these initiatives indicate meaningful progress.

One-off vs. ongoing operational support

Despite these achievements, there is a need to find a modality for providing ongoing, operational technical support to National Societies beyond support requests around EAP development or specific technical questions. Current support is often one-off or ad hoc, focused on EAP development or specific technical queries, rather than sustained operational guidance. One key informant asked: *“Where is our operational support to the National Society? If we are funding a member of staff at the National Society through readiness costs to do anticipation, how can we support that person? ... At the moment, maybe those people are not really being*

supported by anyone. I wonder whether that could be done better, for example, through IFRC in its convening role. We [technical reference centres and hubs] definitely end up doing it in informal ways, like through WhatsApp chat groups.”

The need for right-sized, effective, and continuous support is widely recognised, especially as National Societies take greater initiative in AA. While self-driven EAP development is rare and commendable, the quality and success of these efforts often depend on access to technical support. One interviewee observed that *“we need to applaud when National Societies take initiative themselves to do AA, but also acknowledge that the quality might be lower and the National Society still may need support. There are examples where National Societies tried to develop EAPs without external support that then were rejected by the validation committee.”* This highlights both the complexity of EAP development and the ongoing need for expert guidance.

Demand and supply of technical support

Technical support structures across the network remain somewhat scattered, with PNSs often providing country-specific assistance, leading to uneven coverage and support. As another informant asked, *“How are we set up across the network to support the development of EAPs? It’s mostly PNS doing this, but this brings a narrow focus regarding the countries covered.”* This underscores the need for a more systematic, network-wide approach to technical support.

Feedback from National Societies reveals persistent challenges in accessing timely and adequate technical support, particularly for EAP development and trigger design. Several National Societies reported difficulties in developing EAPs for complex hazards like floods, citing a lack of technical capacity, high staff turnover, and delays or gaps in support from IFRC. One National Society stated, *“We are struggling to develop an EAP for floods. We asked for support from IFRC, but it takes time. We don’t have the technical capacity and we have other programme priorities to attend to.”* Others highlighted the need for clear processes for requesting and receiving technical support, especially for specialised tasks such as trigger development. Staff turnover in National Societies is another frequently cited bottleneck in the absorption of technical support and capacity retention. One representative explained, *“there is high staff turnover in our National Society, so those who developed the EAP and those with experience from a previous activation have left. This leaves us in a difficult position, especially if there is no technical support.”*

In summary, while the IFRC has made significant strides in delivering project and technical support for AA as outlined in the Operational Framework, the transition from project-based and one-off assistance to ongoing, operational support remains incomplete. Addressing this gap will require new modalities for continuous engagement, more systematic support structures, and clear processes for National Societies to access the technical expertise they need to deliver high-quality AA at scale.

Recommendations:

- **Priority: Establish a structured, ongoing, network-wide operational support mechanism for National Societies,** particularly for National Society staff funded

through readiness costs, to ensure continuous technical guidance beyond one-off EAP development or ad hoc requests.

- The design of the support mechanism should be fleshed out jointly by the IFRC secretariat, PNS, the technical reference centres and hubs, and in consultation with National Societies.
- Any modality will likely require the establishment of technical support positions, or funding staff time of existing positions to provide this assistance.
- Since IFRC indicates that it does not have funding to cover technical support requests outside of projects, dedicated fundraising and project development would be required. An alternative option would be to offer technical support on a cost recovery basis, i.e. National Societies who can afford it pay for the support services they receive.
- **Develop and communicate clear, accessible processes for National Societies to request and receive technical support from the IFRC network**, especially for complex tasks such as trigger development and adaptation to local contexts.
- **Expand and formalise the network of technical experts—potentially through a roster system—to provide right-sized, timely, and context-specific support** to National Societies, reducing reliance on informal channels and uneven PNS-led coverage. Technical support could be linked to capacity strengthening by pairing technical assistance with targeted training and mentorship, ensuring that National Societies retain institutional knowledge despite staff turnover and can independently sustain high-quality AA programming.

Financing

Key findings:

- The IFRC has largely delivered on its core financing objectives for the DREF as set out in the Operational Framework, but the Red Cross Red Crescent network has not yet managed to leverage a significant amount of other disaster risk financing instruments. IFRC is expected to secure CREWS initiative accreditation, which will allow it to tap into both CREWS and GCF financing, both important steps in the right direction. The evaluation identifies further opportunities to diversify and localise funding sources, strengthening National Society ownership and ability to be relevant in the given context.
- Validation Committee decision-making processes and outcomes are under tension between objective standards and subjective judgement, leading to variable demands to National Societies in terms of rigour and detail. There is room to strengthen decision-making through further standardisation and enhanced predictability.
- IFRC has an opportunity and plans to position AA more clearly within the humanitarian-development nexus, aligning funding sources with the distinct phases of AA by tapping development and climate finance for system-building and readiness activities, while reserving humanitarian funds for operational activations.

- Appropriate nexus positioning of AA would also require IFRC to clarify the relationship between early warning and anticipatory action in the Red Cross Red Crescent network, especially streamlining messaging around AA and the EW4All initiative.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Support National Societies to mobilise resources to finance AA systems setup through a full-fledged FbF project or by integrating AA into existing Contingency Plans.*
2. *Increase volume of pay-out for AA from the DREF according to the current target.*
3. *Enable access to other disaster risk financing instruments beyond the Movement to enable National Societies to implement AA e.g., through sovereign regional risk pools, government budgets, CERF, etc. in addition to DREF.*

Overall Progress Against Framework Objectives

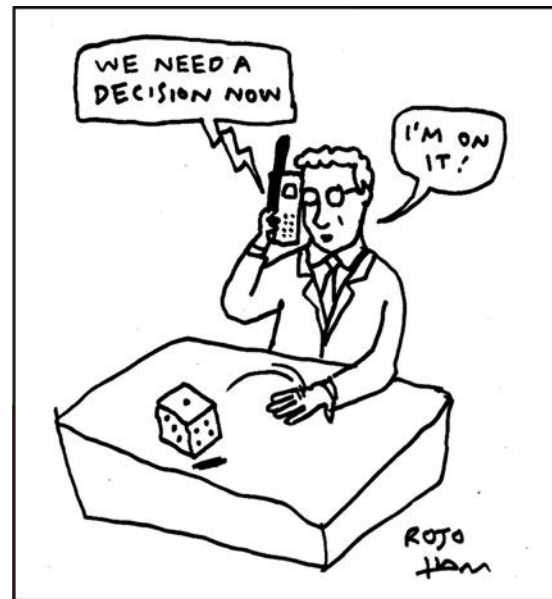
The IFRC has largely delivered on its core financing objectives for the DREF as set out in the Operational Framework, while alternative AA funding sources remain the exception. DREF funding for AA has nearly doubled over the past five years. The anticipatory pillar of the DREF accounts for 11–12% of total DREF allocations, with the fund reaching 85 million CHF in 2024. This signals a clear institutional commitment to AA. Although some National Societies have progressed in integrating AA into contingency or strategic plans, this has not resulted in substantial new investment from sources other than the DREF. Moreover, systematic data on AA funded through other channels is not readily available.¹⁸

The evaluation revealed opportunities for strengthening decision making and positioning around AA financing, discussed below.

¹⁸ There are some examples of non-DREF-funded AA, such as Ethiopia Red Cross accessing UN CERF country-based pooled funds, and GCF early warning early action projects in the Pacific Islands, among others.

Validation Committee Decision-Making about What Gets Funded: Assessment Against Standards vs. Judgement Calls

By approving EAPs (or not), the Validation Committee effectively decides what gets funded by the anticipatory pillar of the DREF. The evaluation reveals a tension between objective standards and subjective judgement in decision making. In theory, the committee applies standardised criteria to assess EAPs, ensuring consistency and accountability vis-à-vis the review checklist. In practice, however, the process is shaped by the backgrounds, expertise, and preferences of individual reviewers, leading to variability in what is approved. One key informant with insight into the matter summarised: *“There is great variation depending on whether [person A] or [person B] reviews an EAP, and when someone from [organisation C] does it, it’s even worse.”*

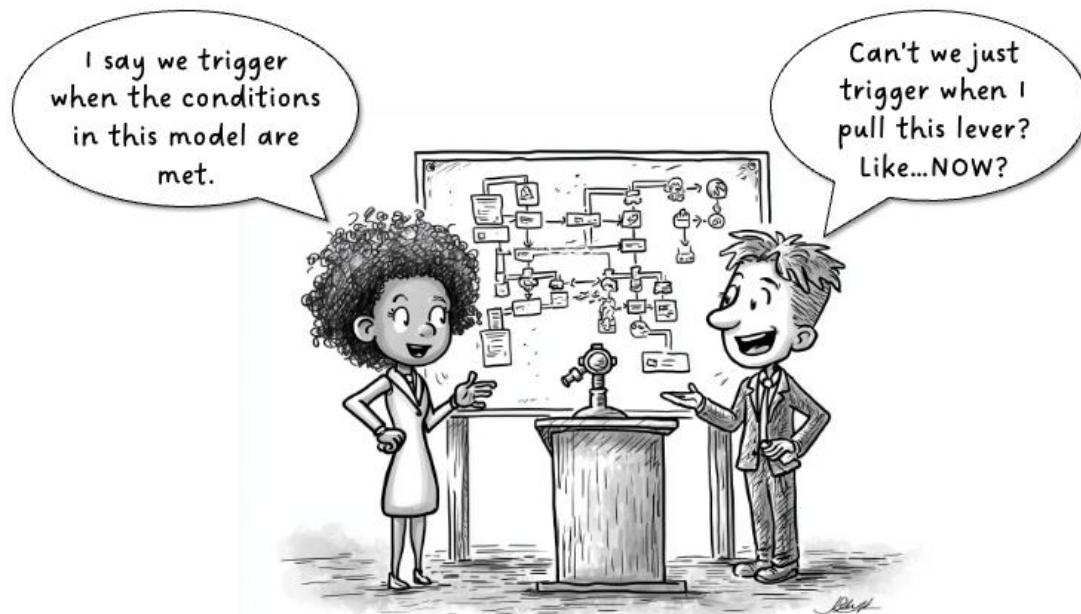


This subjectivity creates uncertainty for National Societies, who struggle to discern whether they are being assessed against minimum standards or an idealised model of AA. There is a clear demand for the committee to clarify grey areas, adhere more closely to minimum standards, and provide practical tools—such as pre-populated EAP templates—to show what constitutes an acceptable submission. As one informant asked, *“are we validating against minimum criteria or asking National Societies to do everything that’s possible or how we want it done?”*. Addressing this ambiguity is critical for fairness, transparency, and the ability of National Societies to plan for the AA process.

Triggers and Return Periods: Scientific Rigour vs. Flexibility?

Trigger models and their parameters are essential features of the AA funding process, but balancing scientific rigour with operational flexibility has emerged as an issue to be resolved. The current system is designed to prioritise scarce funding for above-average, less frequent events, using objective, scientific criteria to determine when AA is activated. It aims to ensure that resources are not diluted by recurring, seasonal hazards.

However, many National Societies and other stakeholders argue that this rigidity can undermine relevance, especially when significant humanitarian needs arise from events that do not meet strict trigger thresholds. There is a strong demand for more flexible triggers that can accommodate local context, government priorities, and past experience, even when scientific model thresholds are not met. The challenge is to avoid a system that is either so complex as to be unworkable or so vague as to lack credibility. As one informant put it, *“A flexible system will either be ‘hand-wavy’ or very complex.”*



Trigger rigour vs. flexibility

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There is no straightforward answer to this dilemma. The FbA by the DREF pilot phase review (2018-2020)¹⁹ already included two recommendations on trigger flexibility but significant progress has not been made since then. The IFRC may need to consider diversifying DREF funding instruments or to make existing funding mechanisms more flexible to better match different hazard types, return periods, and National Society capacities, thereby allowing for both scientific integrity and operational pragmatism.

Diversifying Funding Sources and Localising AA Finance

The sustainability and relevance of AA depend on diversifying funding sources and empowering National Societies to access and manage local finance. While the DREF remains the mainstay of AA funding, there is growing recognition that relying solely on this instrument is neither sustainable nor sufficient for the variety of hazards and contexts faced by National Societies.

Encouraging examples exist, but these are not yet the norm. In Bangladesh, the Red Crescent Society signed an agreement with WFP, effectively becoming a sub-contractor for a CERF-funded AA activation that used the Red Cross Red Crescent trigger mechanism developed earlier. In Ethiopia, the National Society accessed the UN country-based pooled fund for a drought activation. In Kazakhstan, the Red Crescent Society partnered with the private sector to deliver assistance ahead of cold waves.

Several key informants highlighted the need for National Societies to develop their own AA funds, potentially seeded by Partner National Societies and recapitalised through local fundraising as part of broader capacity building. Such localised funds could support smaller-

¹⁹ R. Roots (2021). Review of the pilot phase of the Forecast-based Action by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (FbA by the DREF) 2018 – 2020. Restricted.

scale, recurring events – like seasonal floods – at lower thresholds, enhancing the relevance and trust in National Societies and reducing dependency on external funding. A few stakeholders saw this shift is not merely about financial mechanics but about “decolonising AA” and building local ownership. Pivoting to localised AA funding is also aligned with the IC resolution which calls for “states to create, increase and facilitate timely, effective and equitable access to financial mechanisms enabling anticipatory action at the national and local level”. National Societies can use this as an advocacy and ultimately a resource to tap into.

The proposed ‘humanitarian reset,’ with reduced funding for AA and humanitarian action in general (see introduction for details), makes the transition to decentralised AA financing even more urgent. Key informants highlighted that, in this context, better collaboration and coordination is paramount, instead of outcompeting each other for funding. One external partner mentioned: *“We all need to have a profile, but with less money we need to coordinate better and not to compete better. We should be delivering AA impact to people, not to our organisations.”*

Positioning AA in the Humanitarian-Development Nexus to Unlock New Funding Sources for System Building and Readiness

There is growing recognition that AA operates across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, with distinct AA phases being suitable for different types of funding. The ‘build’ phase, which involves establishing systems, processes, and capacity, could potentially be funded through development or climate finance, while ‘fuel’ funding for operations and implementation could continue to come from humanitarian sources.

Currently, annual readiness activities and one-off repositioning of stocks are funded by the DREF, but this approach is under scrutiny as some argue these essential costs can be considered ‘build’ investments. Readiness comprises “any activity that is deemed indispensable to ensure a successful activation of an Early Action Protocol.”²⁰. For example, eligible readiness costs include salaries for staff, refresher training for staff and volunteers, annual simulations, coordination meetings, renewal of framework agreements, or any activity required to ensure that the National Society is ready to act early. These costs can be spread out over the five-year lifespan of an EAP and are allocated annually. Up to 65% of an EAP budget can be allocated to readiness activities and prepositioned stock, such as shelter kits or households items with a minimum shelf life that covers the entire EAP validity period.

Given the ‘humanitarian reset’ funding crunch and vast, immediate humanitarian needs at any given moment, multiple donors argue that humanitarian funding should not be “locked up” in readiness-like investments, especially in contexts where no activation may occur for years. Instead, IFRC is encouraged to present AA as a ‘nexus’ approach, embedded in government systems and supported by development actors. This would not only align with global trends in HDP programming but also open up new funding streams for the foundational work that enables AA at country level. As one donor representative explained: *“Development funding should finance readiness and the build phase, humanitarian funding should be reserved for*

²⁰ IFRC (2022). Practical information on the anticipatory pillar of the DREF for National Societies. <https://www.ifrc.org/document/practical-information-anticipatory-pillar-dref>.

action... *Humanitarian principles tell us to save humanitarian funding for saving lives*". However, current practice sees most readiness activities funded through humanitarian mechanisms like the DREF, despite arguments that this could and should shift to development funding sources. The IFRC secretariat has recently launched several project-funded initiatives that include work to promote the nexus positioning of AA.²¹

A simple first step to position AA in the HDP nexus could be to engage development actors in strategic dialogues like the annual AA Global Dialogue Platform (GDP), a forum currently perceived to be almost exclusively humanitarian. Key informants noted the limited presence of climate and development actors in important AA fora, such as the GDP in Berlin. This represents a significant missed opportunity, as development actors could play crucial roles in supporting government systems, investing in meteorological agencies, and helping to fund 'build' and readiness activities. One donor representative also suggested: *"Answering the question of how we finance AA will also require some donor reform to make this work well. Where does the funding coming from? It's important to get a steer from the operational agencies like IFRC about what needs to change. We can't just keep using the same humanitarian funds for this."*

Clarifying the Link Between Early Warning and Anticipatory Action

The majority of evaluation stakeholders finds AA and early warning initiatives to be insufficiently integrated, limiting their collective impact and funding potential. Several key informants pointed particularly to the IFRC's role in the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative where it leads the fourth pillar on 'preparedness and response capabilities'. In their view, IFRC has separated AA from EW4All and thereby inadvertently contributed to segmenting AA as a purely humanitarian concern, rather than a long-term, system-strengthening approach. However, this appears to be a misunderstanding, or rather an indication of insufficient communication. The programmatic framework of pillar 4 consistently integrates anticipatory action in all result areas.²² Therefore, it may be advisable to communicate even more proactively the relationship between early warning and anticipatory action to reduce confusion among stakeholders and better position AA as an integral part of national and international risk management systems.

²¹ Irish Aid climate finance project; Water at the Heart of Climate Action, GCF EW4All project, and CREWS (in the pipeline, once IFRC is accredited). Information provided by IFRC.

²² Early Warnings for All (2025). Programmatic Framework - Pillar 4. <https://earlywarningsforall.org/site/early-warnings-all/early-warnings-all-programmatic-framework-country-level-implementation/programmatic-framework-pillar-4>

Donor Perspectives on Prioritising Funding for Hazard Types and Evidence-Based Action

Multiple donor representatives advised IFRC to proceed with caution when pursuing the Operational Framework ambition to expand AA to more types of hazards, including for non-hydrometeorological events

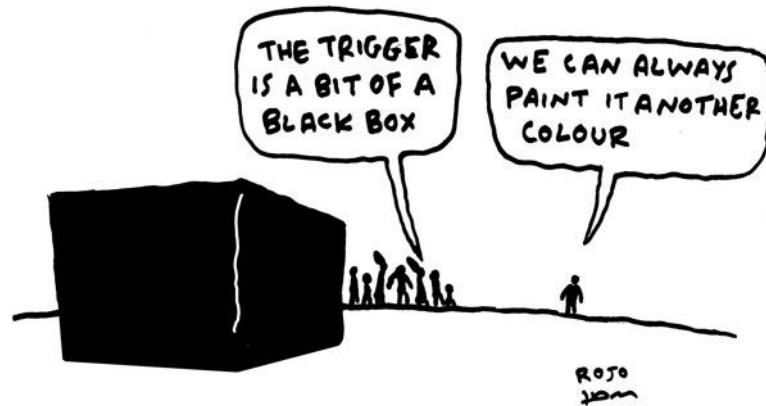
like conflict and population movement. A clear vulnerability focus and evidence base remain

paramount. Donors' main concerns were maintaining a clear focus on vulnerability while being guided by available evidence. *"It's good to expand to other contexts, like conflict,*

but we need convincing evidence and examples that it works there", said one donor staff member.

Another seconded this by sharing: *"Expanding AA to more hazard contexts is a balancing act. On the one hand, we want to tackle innovations. But when talking about ODA, it will be hard to justify experimenting with funding. We need to show that it works."*

In the same vein, all donors interviewed for this evaluation underscored the importance of expanding AA only to contexts where evidence shows that forecasts possess sufficient skill to justify acting under uncertainty.



Recommendations

- **Clarify and streamline the validation processes.** The EAP validation process should be made more transparent and consistent, with clear minimum standards, practical templates, and guidance to reduce subjectivity and build National Society confidence in the system.
- **Consider piloting a more diverse range of trigger models and funding instruments to balance scientific rigor with operational flexibility.** The IFRC could experiment with a range of trigger and funding options – such as hybrid scientific and contextual triggers as used for some imminent DREF activations, phased payouts, or differentiated return periods – to better match diverse hazard types, National Society capacities and demands, ensuring both credibility and relevance in AA funding decisions.
- **Diversify and localise AA funding.** IFRC and National Societies should prioritise the development of localised AA funds, leveraging government budgets, pooled funds, and local fundraising to reduce reliance on the DREF and increase sustainability and relevance. This will empower National Societies to act on recurring and locally significant hazards.
- **Position AA as nexus programming and tap into development funding for ‘build’ and readiness activities, using and further expanding recently launched initiatives like the CREWS accreditation process.** IFRC should explicitly define and communicate the division of labour between ‘build’, readiness and action (“fuel”) funding, and actively pursue development and climate finance for system-building and preparedness, reserving humanitarian funds for last-mile delivery.

Evidence Generation, Learning and Knowledge Management

Key findings:

- Moving beyond output-level data, there is a notable lack of outcome or effectiveness evidence on AA interventions within the Red Cross Red Crescent, and no established process for identifying and supporting research opportunities across the network.
- The Red Cross Red Crescent is widely credited for providing valuable “services to the AA ecosystem”, particularly by providing spaces for knowledge exchange and peer learning, such as the global, regional and national dialogue platforms.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

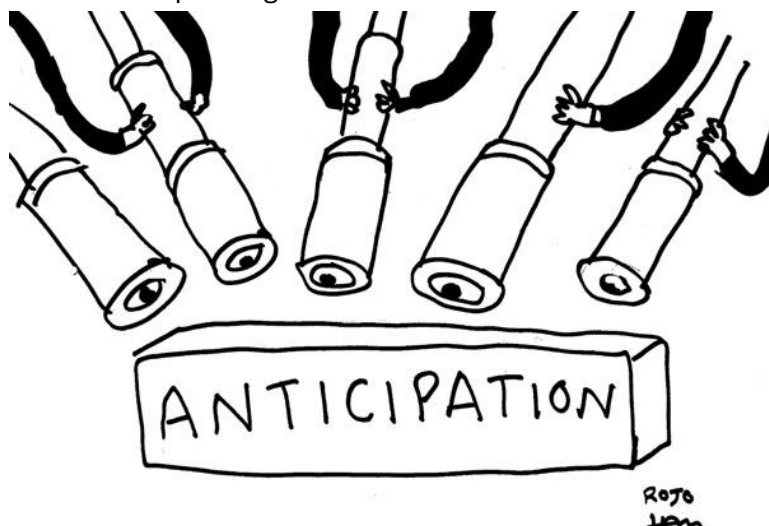
1. *Build further evidence of the benefits of FbF and other AA approaches by assessing the impact of activations, the co-benefits of the setup process and the evidence base for specific actions.*
2. *Develop and build upon on existing studies and research on AA on non-hydrometeorological hazards, including conflict.*
3. *Support feedback and learning within FbA by the DREF and the use of DREF for AA.*
4. *Enhance monitoring, evaluation and accountability strategy and methodology of AA.*
5. *Grow the participation rate and convening role of the National, Global and Regional Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for exchange and learning on AA and ensure the outcomes of the Dialogue Platforms feed into global (e.g., Global Platform on DRR, COP, etc.) and regional fora.*
6. *Strengthen knowledge and exchange of learning and best practices through the Anticipation Hub.*
7. *Increase partnerships with global south institutions to develop further activities related to research, policy and practice.*

Overall Progress and Approach on the Evidence Agenda: Strong in Knowledge Exchange, Muted in Evidence Generation

The Red Cross Red Crescent network has made partial progress on the Operational Framework objectives, with clear strengths in knowledge exchange but significant gaps in systematic evidence generation and research. The 2024 EAP implementation review²³, supported by the American Red Cross and led by IFRC, stands out as a positive step in process learning, but overall, there is a notable lack of outcome-level or effectiveness evidence on AA interventions within the Red Cross Red Crescent network. In comparison, agencies such as WFP, FAO, OCHA, and NGOs like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Save the Children have outpaced the Red Cross Red Crescent network by prioritising evidence generation and providing centralised research support to country offices.

²³ IFRC (2024). Assessing Early Action Implementation by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies: Desk Review and Qualitative Research Study. Full report (internal). The executive summary has been published and is accessible here: <https://www.ifrc.org/media/54461>.

Efforts to support research on AA have been opportunistic rather than systematic. There is no established process for identifying and supporting research opportunities across the network, resulting in missed chances to build a robust, diverse evidence base. The few pieces of AA-focused research that have come out of the Red Cross Red Crescent network were typically driven by the keen interest of individuals in a National Society, a PNS or reference centre to generate evidence around a specific EAP activation. This contrasts with the more structured research agendas observed in peer organisations.



Gaps in Outcome-Level evidence and Need for a Systematic Framework

The current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) budget lines in EAPs are primarily used for basic output-level accountability, with limited resources allocated to more in-depth outcome or impact evaluation. However, even seemingly trivial statistics like the number of people reached vs. targeted by an EAP activation are not readily accessible across the Red Cross Red Crescent anticipation portfolio. There is a strong case for conducting robust assessments on a subset of activations – such as one in every five or eight – to generate deeper insights and inform future programming. This targeted approach would help address key knowledge gaps and provide the kind of evidence needed to advocate for AA at scale. Donors and partners increasingly expect robust, outcome-focused evidence to justify continued investment in AA, particularly as funding environments become more competitive.

The FbA by the DREF pilot phase review (2018-2020)²⁴ already noted the need for a more systematic approach and recommended that ‘an over-arching IFRC framework for monitoring and evaluation of anticipatory action should be developed by IFRC leads on anticipatory action, in partnership with the Climate Centre and other Movement actors’. This was not done. Another evidence-related recommendation was recently implemented: to provide a standard format for EAP Lessons Learning Workshops to National Societies.

Feedback and learning mechanisms, particularly within the anticipatory pillar of the DREF, have improved but leave room for further growth. The updated lessons learned workshop

²⁴ R. Roots (2021). Review of the pilot phase of the Forecast-based Action by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (FbA by the DREF) 2018 – 2020. Restricted.

methodology is a welcome step forward. IFRC has also updated activation report templates to capture useful information such as the proportion of actions completed before the hazard, as well as the timing of funding flows in relation to hazard conditions. However, the quality of reports from National Societies varies widely, and it is unclear whether these new formats will be consistently adopted in practice.

Value for money is an area where IFRC network needs to strengthen its evidence base and communication. While cost-benefit analyses (CBAs) are recognised as useful, donors indicate that the focus should shift from generic CBAs to more granular evidence on the effectiveness and efficiency of specific actions. Donor views differed on whether there was sufficient value for money evidence on AA. While some think there is consensus that AA is generally more cost-effective than traditional response, others argued strongly for more robust evidence on the cost effectiveness of AA. All stakeholders expressed demand for concrete, relatable examples, human interest stories, and statistics that can be communicated to non-technical audiences.

The Tangible Value of Knowledge Exchange and Dialogue Platforms

The Anticipation Hub has emerged as an effective platform for knowledge sharing and learning within the AA ecosystem. Its working groups, blog posts, and document repositories are widely credited as valuable resources, facilitating the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. The Hub is recognised as a “service to the AA ecosystem,” supporting both internal learning and external engagement.

Dialogue Platforms – at global, regional, and national levels – are highly valued for their role in fostering peer learning, relationship building, and momentum for AA. These platforms have enabled National Societies to learn from each other, build confidence, and secure buy-in from government and management. Participants report that attending Dialogue Platforms has broadened their insights, strengthened partnerships, and in some cases, catalysed national-level action plans and government support for AA. The comment from one National Society representative underscored this point: *“Attending a Global Dialogue Platform gave me the confidence to talk to people and work with others, especially when back in country and working on this kind of AA scale up work with the other organisations. I couldn’t have done it without this experience.”*

Donor perspectives underscore the importance of continuing to make the case for AA, demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness, and expanding the evidence base beyond food security and cash interventions. There is a perception that the AA community risks operating in an echo chamber. One external partner cautioned: *“We overestimate to which extent AA is a given and accepted.”* Another stakeholder warned: *“There is a reprioritisation happening that focuses on what the [humanitarian] system will look like going forward. In an environment where we have less funding, we need to continue making the case for anticipatory action.”* Many interviewees felt that ongoing advocacy, grounded in robust evidence, is essential to maintain and grow support for anticipatory approaches.

Recommendations

- **Invest in systematic, outcome-focused evidence generation.** Allocate dedicated resources to conduct robust evaluations on a representative subset of EAP activations, focusing on outcomes and impact rather than just process, to fill critical knowledge gaps and strengthen advocacy for AA.
- **Strengthen and standardise knowledge management practices across the network.** Ensure consistent adoption of updated reporting formats and lessons learned methodologies by National Societies, and prioritise the identification and dissemination of a few critical lessons per activation to facilitate iterative improvement.
- **Expand research partnerships and support for studies on AA beyond hydrometeorological hazards.** Develop a structured approach to identifying research opportunities and collaborating with global south institutions, academic partners, and other humanitarian actors to diversify and deepen the AA evidence base.
- **Establish a systematic process for capturing concrete examples and human interest stories from EAP activations and AA effectiveness.** Moving beyond technical statistics on results, which are currently missing for the majority of EAP activations, policy and advocacy efforts stand to benefit from a bank of real-world examples and images of AA impact. This material can be used to tailor evidence communication to diverse audiences, including donors and policymakers, with clear and relatable messages.

Policy and Advocacy

Key findings:

- The successful adoption of the CoD and IC resolutions on AA mark significant policy achievements and are recognised as such by stakeholders, signalling strong political will to institutionalise AA.
- Despite strong global commitments, translating policy into coordinated country-level practice remains a challenge. The gap between global endorsement and operational integration locally is evident, and further work is needed to ensure that these commitments are realised on the ground. It should also be noted that this disconnect between high-level commitments and lagging practice at country level is not unique to AA but encountered in many policy spheres.

Operational Framework objectives and actions:

1. *Finalise and adopt a Council of Delegates Resolution on ‘Strengthening anticipatory humanitarian action in the Movement: Our way forward’.*
2. *Advocate for governments to take leadership and coordination such as through establishing/supporting mechanisms for inter-agency coordination on anticipatory action, to make available Impact-based Forecasting products and services, and to establish their own AA systems or integrate AA into their systems.*
3. *Advocate to donor governments to continue investing in AA based on the AA Task Force policy asks.*
4. *Advocate for baseline investments in NS capacity strengthening for anticipatory action.*

5. *Collaborate with other humanitarian organisations, development agencies, government, academia, private sector to jointly advocate to achieve a system-wide shift towards AA.*
6. *Develop communication materials to support awareness raising on AA and existing tools/approaches.*

The successful adoption of the CoD resolution (2022) and IC resolution (2024)²⁵ on AA marks a significant policy achievement. The IC resolution, passed during the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in October 2024, was widely praised for its clarity and its precise definition of AA. This high-level commitment by 196 governments signals strong political will to institutionalise AA in DRM and international humanitarian law, continuing a tradition of using such resolutions to drive major policy shifts, as seen historically with the Geneva Conventions and disaster relief guidelines.

Despite strong global commitments, translating policy into coordinated country-level practice remains a challenge. While advocacy has led to increased government leadership and inter-agency coordination – as reflected in the IC resolution and growing political willingness to embed AA in legal frameworks in some countries – this momentum has not yet resulted in consistent, practical coordination at the national and local levels. The gap between global endorsement and operational integration is evident, and further work is needed to ensure that these commitments are realised on the ground. It should also be noted that this disconnect between high-level commitments and lagging practice at country level is not unique to AA but encountered in many policy spheres.

Advocacy towards donor governments has yielded tangible results, but ongoing engagement is needed to address emerging issues. Donor support for AA has grown, as seen in increased contributions to the anticipatory pillar of the DREF, the establishment of a supportive Donor Advisory Group, and the successful Grand Bargain Caucus Group on AA. However, advocacy efforts must now address new challenges, including the expected funding cuts following the ‘humanitarian reset’, and the need to leverage development funding for anticipatory approaches, as discussed in the financing section of this chapter (above).



Investments in National Society capacity for AA are needed but require greater scale and strategic focus. Several donor-funded projects – such as ECHO PP, Water at the Heart of Climate Action, Irish Aid, the Italian grant, the American Red Cross project and EW4All

²⁵ See introduction for references to both documents.

‘accelerator’ projects – have included components to strengthen National Society capacity for AA. Future funding opportunities with the GCF and the CREWS initiative are promising. Nevertheless, these investments are still fragmented and insufficiently strategic, as highlighted in the chapter on capacity strengthening. Scaling up and aligning capacity development efforts remains a priority.

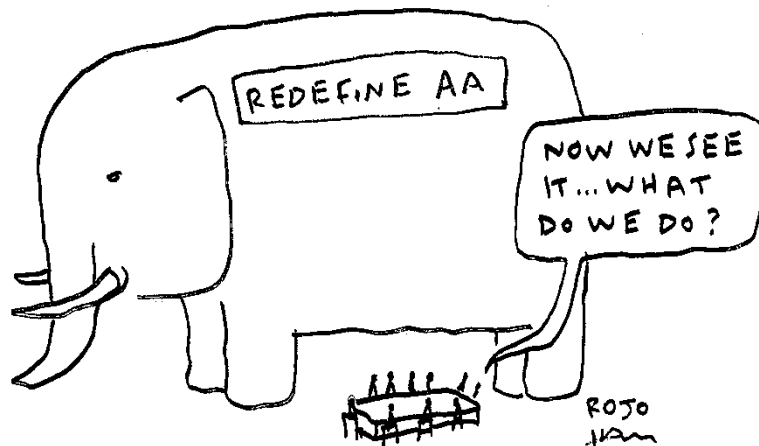
Recommendations

- **Continue and expand joint advocacy with external partners for a system-wide shift to AA.** Engage humanitarian, development, academic, and private sector actors in collaborative advocacy campaigns, leveraging the collective voice to influence policy and funding.

Developing a Vision for the Future of AA in the Red Cross Red Crescent Network

At the Geneva workshop to validate and further deepen the evaluation insights, a diverse group of Red Cross Red Crescent network stakeholders engaged in ‘blue sky thinking’. They discussed the basic parameters that should guide the network’s vision, strategic principles, and operating model for AA going forward.

The group proposed four steps to arrive at a comprehensive new AA strategy, based on the evaluation findings and overall learnings from the past 5 years of implementing the Operational Framework.



Step 1: Vision Statement

Formulate a Red Cross Red Crescent network vision statement for AA for the next 5 years. The vision must build on National Society knowledge and priorities and be:

- People-centred;
- Outcome- and impact-focused;
- Clarifying the Red Cross Red Crescent additionality;
- Building on the Red Cross Red Crescent humanitarian and volunteer foundation;
- Imagining what National Society-led AA can look like without external support.

Step 2: Strategic Principles

Formulate strategic principles, based on the AA vision (step 1), to guide a Red Cross Red Crescent approach to AA that:

- Puts National Societies at the centre;
- Integrates AA into the DRR/preparedness spectrum;
- Integrates community-level work;
- Integrates AA into government norms/systems;
- Links to external partners;
- Links AA to longer-term risk/programming;
- Builds on the CoD resolution, IC resolutions, and the Grand Bargain Caucus on AA outcomes.

While the vision statement provides the overall direction, the strategic principles constitute the basic design parameters that inform fleshing out the detailed operating model.

Step 3: Operating Model

Before jumping straight into defining a detailed operating model, the ‘blue sky’ group recommended (re-)imagining what a new or different Red Cross Red Crescent network operating model for AA could look like to put the vision and strategy into practice. This would mean asking the question: “What would an AA system look like without being prisoners of the past?”, imagining a future where an EAP is just one of several tools.

Using a standard approach in organisational development and design thinking, the group invited IFRC and its partners to re-imagine the operating model from the ground up, together with National Societies and accompanied by ‘critical friends’, such as the donor advisory group. This would enable the network to break down what operationalising AA means at different levels of organisation.

Step 4: Process Review

The working group acknowledged that AA does not function in a vacuum within the Red Cross Red Crescent network but must work with and through the existing organisational culture and processes. Therefore, the group suggested conducting an internal process review of all the touchpoints between AA and the Red Cross Red Crescent ‘system’, to optimise how IFRC, National Societies, PNS and reference centres work together to enable impactful AA, embracing processes that work but also challenging the status quo where it is dysfunctional. Based on this, step-by-step milestones should be defined to ensure incremental change can be operationalised.

5. Conclusions

A paradigm shift towards anticipation

The IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025 has helped galvanise a major shift in the humanitarian sector towards anticipatory action, and the Red Cross Red Crescent network has played a central role in mainstreaming AA, moving from pilot initiatives to a global scale-up. This expansion has been enabled by increased funding – DREF allocations for AA have nearly doubled since 2020 – with nearly 90 National Societies engaged, over 80 Early Action Protocols (EAPs) developed, and millions of people supported through anticipatory frameworks.

Strategic Opportunities for More Effective Anticipatory Action At Scale

The Red Cross Red Crescent network has successfully positioned itself as a global leader in anticipatory action, but the current operational model requires significant adaptation to achieve sustainable scale and impact. The network's achievements in expanding AA coverage, securing funding, and driving a paradigm shift in humanitarian action are clear. Yet, the over-reliance on the EAP model, process bottlenecks, and limited harmonisation and integration with national DRM systems constrain the potential for mainstreaming AA. A more flexible, system-oriented approach – one that values diverse anticipatory models and prioritises integration with government and community systems – is needed to fully realise the framework's ambitions and to achieve sustainability at scale beyond 2025.

Capacity strengthening should move from technical training to holistic, demand-driven organisational empowerment. Despite the development of extensive training materials and delivery of regional workshops, the evaluation finds that National Society capacity for AA remains fragile, often dependent on partner support and vulnerable to staff turnover. The current approach is too top-down and narrowly focused on technical aspects of EAPs, rather than building true ownership and integration of AA into broader organisational strategies. The evaluation recommends a shift towards sustained investment in people, starting from National Society priorities, and coupling training with practical implementation opportunities.

The IFRC network's technical support and financing mechanisms have enabled expansion but require greater flexibility, localisation, and diversification. Project-based and ad hoc technical assistance has helped many National Societies develop EAPs and establish partnerships with hydro-meteorological services. However, ongoing operational support is lacking, and the support system is marked by inconsistencies and delays. Financing through the DREF has grown and remains the mainstay of AA funding, with limited progress in accessing alternative sources such as development or local funding streams. The report calls for the development of localised AA funds, diversification of funding instruments, and positioning AA within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to unlock new resources and promote sustainability.

The Red Cross Red Crescent network is credited with investing heavily in knowledge exchange and peer learning platforms that generate tangible added value to the wider AA community, while internal evidence generation has remained limited. The lack of outcome-level data on AA effectiveness from the network also reduces options for advocacy and adaptive management. The evaluation highlights the need for a systematic approach to evidence generation around the Red Cross Red Crescent AA portfolio, targeted impact evaluations, and the collection of concrete examples to demonstrate value for money and inform advocacy. Without this, the case for AA risks losing momentum in a competitive funding environment.

The IFRC network stands to benefit from crafting a new vision and operating model for AA beyond 2025, grounded in National Society ownership, integration with broader risk management, and adaptive, locally-led approaches. The evaluation proposes a four-step process for developing a future AA strategy: crafting a people-centred vision, establishing strategic principles, reimagining the operating model with National Societies at the centre, and reviewing internal processes to optimise collaboration and impact. This approach aims to move beyond legacy models and foster a flexible, inclusive, and sustainable AA system that is responsive to diverse contexts and priorities.

6. Recommendations

This section consolidates the recommendations made throughout the report for easy reference.

Human Resources and Ways of Working:

1. **IFRC should review and redesign the roles and responsibilities of regional/cluster/country delegation personnel with AA responsibilities to leverage their potential as facilitators rather than bottlenecks, and coordinate with PNS and reference centres on National Society support.**
 - a. The evaluation recommends conducting a review of AA responsibilities across all organisational levels to ensure personnel facilitate rather than impede the EAP process. This review should focus on eliminating unnecessary involvement, sign-off and approval layers while maintaining appropriate quality control and technical oversight.
 - b. Beyond the narrow focus on EAPs, the IFRC secretariat should review and redesign how its staff can assist National Societies across the entire early warning and AA agendas.
 - c. Regarding National Society support in general, the IFRC secretariat should engage and coordinate with PNS to review roles and responsibilities, deciding where the secretariat and PNS can provide most value add, respectively. It is important to consider that the division of labour might differ by region or country, depending on where PNS have presence.
2. **Set up a tracking mechanism and sponsor designation system to improve responsiveness and accountability.** The evaluation suggests establishing systems to

track support requests and response times, creating measurable accountability for staff performance. Additionally, designating EAP "sponsors" – IFRC regional, cluster and country or delegation personnel who take responsibility for supporting specific National Societies on particular EAPs – could provide the continuity and ownership currently lacking in the system.

3. **Incorporate 360-degree feedback from National Societies in performance evaluation systems to incentivise result-oriented support.** The recommendation to include National Society feedback in annual performance reviews for IFRC staff involved in AA would create direct accountability mechanisms linking staff performance to user satisfaction and operational outcomes. This approach would align individual incentives with organisational objectives of responsive and effective support delivery. It is on the IFRC secretariat to deliberate with PNS whether the latter could set up a similar mechanism.

Approaches, Guidance and Tools; Coordination, Institutionalisation and Mainstreaming:

4. **Provide systematic support to National Societies to navigate, adapt, and operationalise AA guidance and tools, linking this directly to a strategic capacity development approach.** The latter – a consistent capacity strengthening strategy – should be the starting point, building on National Society priorities, existing strengths and working towards locally-led, context-appropriate AA.
5. **Consider broadening the operational and funding focus beyond EAPs to support diverse, quality-assured anticipatory approaches, including those outside the DREF mechanism.** A diversification of funding instruments would also enable National Society-owned and driven AA at different scales and levels of capacity.
6. **Incentivise National Societies to coordinate with governments and other AA actors to harmonise EAPs and other anticipatory approaches with existing national frameworks and systems.**
 - a. This would require setting expectations that the development of EAPs and other anticipatory approaches can take time when harmonising them with existing frameworks from the start, and that it is not only acceptable but desired to ‘borrow’ EAP components – such as risk analyses or trigger models, assuming sufficient quality – from elsewhere instead of reinventing the wheel.
 - b. The IFRC secretariat should consult with PNS, National Societies and reference centres on what the incentive structure could look like.
 - c. The incentive system could include an annual call for submissions or nominations. The call would help identify National Societies going beyond coordination lip service in their EAPs. They could be invited – along with their government and other counterparts – to international knowledge exchange fora or receive a top-up to their EAP budget.

Capacity Strengthening:

7. **Shift capacity development from one-off workshops to sustained investment in people and organisational systems.** As one key informant emphasised, true

empowerment of National Societies requires *"really investing in people rather than capacity development as a one-off workshop."* This means developing longer-term relationships and support mechanisms that build internal capacity over time rather than delivering discrete training events.

8. **Couple training and capacity strengthening with opportunities for practical application and implementation.** The evaluation strongly emphasised that *"there should be no training or capacity building without action,"* meaning that capacity development efforts must include funding and opportunities for National Societies to immediately apply what they learn through concrete initiatives and activities.
9. **Expand the approach to AA learning to extend beyond EAPs to address broader organisational development needs.** This includes ensuring that AA capacity development is strategic and holistic, addressing the full range of organisational capabilities needed to successfully integrate and sustain AA approaches.
10. **Coordinate and harmonise capacity development efforts across partners to improve efficiency and reduce fragmentation.** The evaluation suggests exploring partnerships with other organisations to coordinate capacity development activities, potentially sharing costs and ensuring that training covers the needs of multiple organisations and their partners, including government agencies and various humanitarian actors.

Technical Support:

11. **Establish a structured, ongoing, network-wide operational support mechanism for National Societies,** particularly for National Society staff funded through readiness costs, to ensure continuous technical guidance beyond one-off EAP development or ad hoc requests.
 - a. The design of the support mechanism should be fleshed out jointly by the IFRC secretariat, PNS, the technical reference centres and hubs, and in consultation with National Societies.
 - b. Any modality will likely require the establishment of technical support positions, or funding staff time of existing positions to provide this assistance.
 - c. Since IFRC indicates that it does not have funding to cover technical support requests outside of projects, dedicated fundraising and project development would be required. An alternative option would be to offer technical support on a cost recovery basis, i.e. National Societies who can afford it pay for the support services they receive.
12. **Develop and communicate clear, accessible processes for National Societies to request and receive technical support,** especially for complex tasks such as trigger development and adaptation to local contexts.
13. **Expand and formalise the network of technical experts – potentially through a roster system – to provide right-sized, timely, and context-specific support** to National Societies, reducing reliance on informal channels and uneven PNS-led coverage. Technical support could be linked to capacity strengthening by pairing technical assistance with targeted training and mentorship, ensuring that National Societies retain

institutional knowledge despite staff turnover and can independently sustain high-quality AA programming.

Financing:

14. **Clarify and streamline the validation processes.** The EAP validation process should be made more transparent and consistent, with clear minimum standards, practical templates, and guidance to reduce subjectivity and build National Society confidence in the system.
15. **Consider piloting a more diverse range of trigger models and funding instruments to balance scientific rigor with operational flexibility.** The IFRC could experiment with a range of trigger and funding options – such as hybrid scientific and contextual triggers as used for some imminent DREF activations, phased payouts, or differentiated return periods – to better match diverse hazard types, National Society capacities and demands, ensuring both credibility and relevance in AA funding decisions.
16. **Diversify and localise AA funding.** IFRC and National Societies should prioritise the development of localised AA funds, leveraging government budgets, pooled funds, and local fundraising to reduce reliance on the DREF and increase sustainability and relevance. This will empower National Societies to act on recurring and locally significant hazards.
17. **Position AA as nexus programming and tap into development funding for ‘build’ and readiness activities.** IFRC should explicitly define and communicate the division of labour between ‘build’, readiness and action (“fuel”) funding, and actively pursue development and climate finance for system-building and preparedness, reserving humanitarian funds for last-mile delivery.

Evidence Generation, Learning and Knowledge Management:

18. **Invest in systematic, outcome-focused evidence generation.** Allocate dedicated resources to conduct robust evaluations on a representative subset of EAP activations, focusing on outcomes and impact rather than just process, to fill critical knowledge gaps and strengthen advocacy for AA.
19. **Strengthen and standardise knowledge management practices across the network.** Ensure consistent adoption of updated reporting formats and lessons learned methodologies by National Societies, and prioritise the identification and dissemination of a few critical lessons per activation to facilitate iterative improvement.
20. **Expand research partnerships and support for studies on AA beyond hydrometeorological hazards.** Develop a structured approach to identifying research opportunities and collaborating with global south institutions, academic partners, and other humanitarian actors to diversify and deepen the AA evidence base.
21. **Establish a systematic process for capturing concrete examples and human interest stories from EAP activations and AA effectiveness.** Moving beyond technical statistics on results, which are currently missing for most EAP activations, policy and advocacy efforts stand to benefit from a bank of real-world examples and images of AA impact. This

material can be used to tailor evidence communication to diverse audiences, including donors and policymakers, with clear and relatable messages.

Policy and Advocacy:

22. **Continue and expand joint advocacy with external partners for a system-wide shift to AA.** Engage humanitarian, development, academic, and private sector actors in collaborative advocacy campaigns, leveraging the collective voice to influence policy and funding.
23. **Developing a new AA strategy for beyond 2025** by crafting a people-centred vision, establishing strategic principles, reimagining the operating model with National Societies at the centre, and reviewing internal processes to optimise collaboration and impact.

Acronyms

AA	Anticipatory Action
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CEWS	Community Early Warning System
CoD	Council of Delegates
CREWS	Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EAP	Early Action Protocol
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EW4All	Early Warnings for All
EWEA	Early Warning Early Action
FbA	Forecast-based Action
FbF	Forecast-based Financing
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Global Dialogue Platform
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace (Nexus)
IC	International Conference
IBF	Impact-Based Forecasting
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHMS	National Hydrometeorological Services
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PAPE	Public Awareness and Public Education
PER	Preparedness for Effective Response
PNS	Partner National Society
sEAP	Simplified Early Action Protocol

Annex

List of stakeholders consulted for this evaluation (interviewed unless noted otherwise):

National Societies:

1. Argentina (online survey)
2. Burkina Faso (online survey)
3. Burundi (online survey)
4. Chile
5. Costa Rica (online survey)
6. El Salvador (online survey)
7. Guatemala
8. Honduras (online survey)
9. Madagascar (online survey)
10. Malawi
11. Lebanon (validation workshop)
12. Lesotho
13. Kazakhstan (interview and validation workshop)
14. Philippines
15. Rwanda (online survey)
16. Sri Lanka (interview and validation workshop)
17. Tuvalu (online survey)
18. Uganda (online survey)

Partner National Societies:

1. Australia (validation workshop and online survey)
2. Belgium (online survey)
3. Denmark (online survey)
4. Finland (validation workshop and online survey)
5. France (online survey)
6. Germany (interview and validation workshop)
7. Netherlands (interview and validation workshop)
8. Sweden (validation workshop)
9. United Kingdom (validation workshop)
10. United States of America (interview and validation workshop)

Donor and Implementing Country Governments and Met Services:

1. Afghanistan (online survey)
2. Argentina (online survey)
3. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
4. Gambia (online survey)
5. Germany
6. Madagascar (online survey)
7. Sweden

8. United Kingdom

External Partners:

1. FAO (online survey)
2. Heidelberg Institute for Geoinformation Technology (online survey)
3. OCHA
4. WFP
5. Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

Other Red Cross Red Crescent Network Stakeholders:

1. Anticipation Hub
2. Climate Centre
3. Global Disaster Preparedness Centre
4. IFRC headquarters (interview and validation workshop)
5. IFRC regional delegates (Asia-Pacific, Europe, MENA)

In each stakeholder category, several anonymous online survey responses were received which do not appear in this list.