



# FUTURE FIT

EARLY WARNING  
EARLY ACTION  
IN A WORLD OF  
CHANGING RISK

BRIEF FOR DECISION-MAKERS

- ◆ EARLY WARNING EARLY ACTION, OR ANTICIPATORY ACTION (AA) HAS PROVEN EFFECTIVE IN PROTECTING THE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES.
- ◆ HOWEVER, THE RISKS THAT THESE COMMUNITIES FACE ARE CHANGING DRAMATICALLY DUE TO THE INTERACTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE WITH SOCIAL INEQUALITY, ECONOMIC FRAGILITY, POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND CONFLICT.
- ◆ TO REMAIN EFFECTIVE IN THIS ALTERED CONTEXT OF RISK, AA INITIATIVES NEED NEW WAYS OF ASSESSING RISK, IMPROVED TRIGGERS, FLEXIBLE FINANCE AND NEW TYPES OF ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN AHEAD OF DISASTERS.
- ◆ FOR THESE SHIFTS TO BE SUSTAINABLE, A FUTURE FIT AA NEEDS TO BE EMBEDDED WITHIN GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND INTEGRATED WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION, CLIMATE ADAPTATION, AND WIDER RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACHES.

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# THE RISKS WE FACE HAVE MOVED WELL BEYOND WHAT HISTORY CAN TELL US

*We're confronted with a rapidly transforming landscape of risk*

The world is rapidly approaching a breach of the landmark 1.5°C global temperature threshold. Every fraction of a degree beyond this breach will result in a future where the impacts of climate change will be realized with increasing frequency and intensity. While climate hazards are changing, the degree to which people are vulnerable and exposed to climate impacts is also changing due to shifting socioeconomics, demographics, environmental change, and crises such as conflict and displacement. In essence, the events of tomorrow will not look like the events of yesterday – we are confronted with a rapidly transforming landscape of risk.

## ANTICIPATORY ACTION APPROACHES HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE BUT MUST EVOLVE FASTER THAN THE RISKS THEY NEED TO ADDRESS

Whilst major investments in disaster resilience and climate change adaptation will reduce risk, predictable disasters will continue to have major effects on society. Early warning systems are a critical part of the toolbox for managing these risks and protecting millions of the most vulnerable people. However, warnings alone are not sufficient: they need to be linked to action. Approaches such as anticipatory action (including adaptive social protection) can help ensure that early warnings translate into concrete actions (cash, evacuation, pre-positioning stocks, for example) that prevent or reduce impacts before crises fully unfold.

*93% of anticipatory action plans reviewed are based on a historical analysis*

There is ample evidence that AA has helped protect lives and livelihoods; evaluations indicate that anticipatory action is cost-effective. This is why the Sendai Framework underlines the importance of taking action in anticipation of events, and the Grand Bargain 3.0 prioritizes the scale-up of anticipatory action. The Paris Agreement reinforces this agenda through its focus on adaptation, early warning and risk management, while the salient Early Warnings for All initiative provides a vision and road map for achieving universal early warning coverage by 2027. Additionally, governments worldwide and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement jointly agreed Resolution 5 at its 34th International Conference aimed at strengthening AA by encouraging states to integrate anticipatory action into their domestic frameworks and systems.

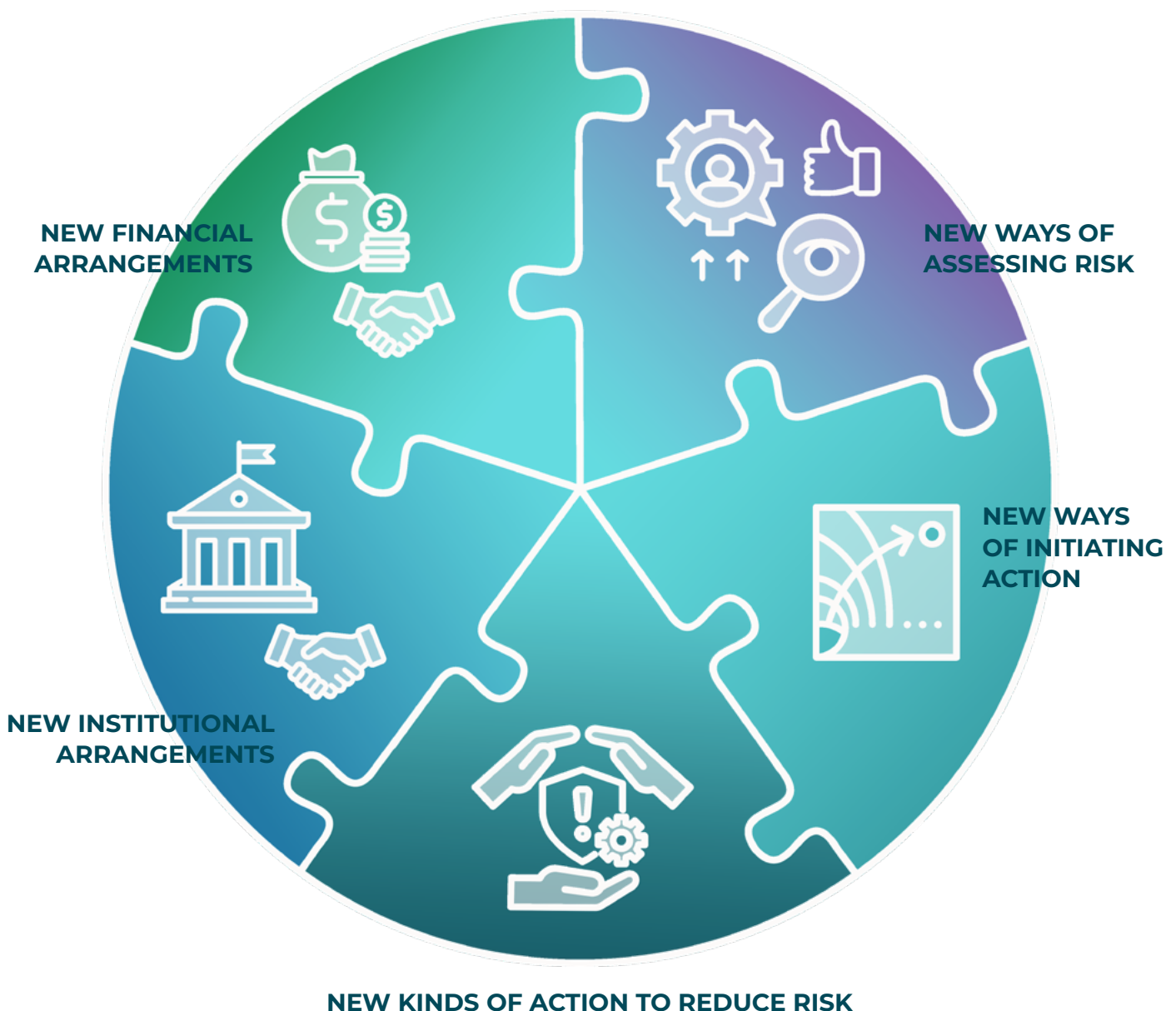
However, our analysis found that 93 per cent of anticipatory action plans reviewed are based on a historical analysis of risk, and less than a fifth assess or account for how risks may evolve in the future. Anticipatory action approaches need to be able to imagine and prepare for the events of tomorrow rather than being based on what happened yesterday.

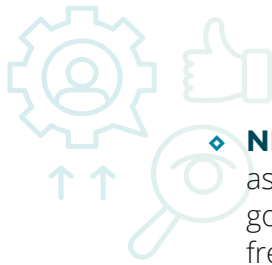
The forthcoming review of global development and disaster risk frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework, presents a timely opportunity to strengthen and future-proof early warning and early action. The 32nd UNFCCC Conference of the Parties to be held in 2027 in Ethiopia will also provide valuable entry points for ensuring that the narrative on a future fit AA is taken up by policy makers.

This in turn will help to ensure that early warning systems, anticipatory action plans and financing mechanisms are not only fit for today's risks but are also flexible, inclusive and sustainable enough to protect people and development gains in a risk landscape that is changing dramatically.

## AA THAT IS FORWARD LOOKING AND FLEXIBLE WILL KEEP PACE WITH CHANGING RISKS

Based on our research, we identified a number of opportunities to ensure that AA is future fit:



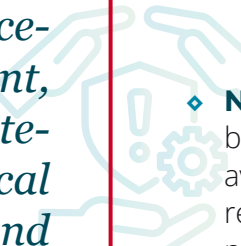


◆ **NEW WAYS OF ASSESSING RISK:** To be future fit, risk assessments need to look forward as well as backward. This means going beyond assessments of whether hazards are becoming more frequent or intense to understand all the ways in which future events may differ from past ones: their timing, duration, location, and sequencing, as well as compound and cascading impacts and the changing exposure and vulnerability of affected populations. Intergovernmental scientific collaborations, such as the IPCC, can produce decision-relevant evidence on how extreme events are changing, moving beyond frequency and intensity to assess compound extremes and other aspects of change.



◆ **NEW WAYS OF INITIATING ACTION:** For the events of tomorrow, existing ways in which AA plans initiate or 'trigger' support ahead of disasters may be too rigid to inform effective and timely assistance. These may be based on outdated assumptions about who is exposed and where vulnerable people live, or how severe an event needs to be before action is justified. Continued investment in monitoring of disease, displacement, hydrometeorological hazards and vulnerability is required so that triggers can be calibrated to the needs of the moment. There are actionable examples of how to transition to new ways of triggering action while managing financial exposure of funds.

*Continued investment in monitoring disease, displacement, hydrometeorological hazards and vulnerability is required so triggers can be calibrated for the moment*



◆ **NEW KINDS OF ACTION TO REDUCE RISK:** Early actions should be flexible enough to respond to changing conditions and should avoid creating longer-term risks. AA plans should identify actions that remain useful across a range of plausible future events and, where possible, contribute to longer-term resilience. Mechanisms for early warning, anticipatory action and climate adaptation should, therefore, encourage alignment between short-term action and longer-term risk reduction, rather than incentivizing parallel investments that solve immediate problems while leaving underlying risks unchanged. For instance, reinforcing local water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure ahead of a flood can deliver short-term gains and enhance long-term health resilience.



◆ **NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS:** Future fit AA also requires institutions that can work across sectors and borders. The strongest examples are not those where anticipatory action sits with a single institution but where it is anchored in public systems and supported by clear roles across government, development and humanitarian partners, civil society, knowledge institutions and local actors. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, regional and international support may be needed to underpin local early warning and anticipatory action capacity. Where risks cross borders, such as infectious disease, population movement, river flooding, or supply-chain disruption, investment in regional early warning initiatives is required to recognize the need for transboundary information-sharing and coordinated anticipatory action planning.





*It's not enough to expand warning coverage if there's no funding in place*

◆ **NEW FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** As risks change, it is not enough to improve forecasts or expand warning coverage if there is no flexible, sustainable and scalable funding in place to support timely action. This means moving towards layered financing arrangements (i.e. a combination of financing instruments that work together) that can respond to different levels of risk. It also requires establishing new domestic pools of funding or adapting existing national contingency funds, such as national disaster or response funds, so they can release resources on the basis of pre-agreed triggers. This should happen alongside the greater use of crisis modifiers and replenishment approaches, including insurance, to ensure that funds can be rapidly restored after activation. There also needs to be complementarity between sovereign and donor (multilateral, bilateral and philanthropic) finance to ensure reduced duplication and enhanced synergies. Financial arrangements should allow local actors flexibility in how funds are allocated and spent as conditions change.

## THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

It is critical that anticipatory action is future fit through constant innovation. This is because funding is tightening, there is pressure to deliver more with less, increasing pressure on organizations to demonstrate value for money and system-level impact rather than repeated emergency response. A key factor for success will be to ensure that these future fit approaches are country led and aligned with national priorities.

*Anticipatory action must be understood as one component of a wider risk-management toolkit*

While working to ensure that AA is fit for the future, we must remember that scientific analysis of changing risk must be grounded in lived experience of local drivers of changing risk, with national and community actors best placed to identify context-specific solutions with the greatest potential for impact. Concerns around scale, institutional capacity and delivery capability remain, but there are replicable examples that demonstrate ways in which we can start to make AA future fit without delay.

Finally, anticipatory action must be understood as one component of a wider risk-management toolkit, whose effectiveness and sustainability is strengthened when combined with longer-term adaptation and other approaches that are country-owned and target structural drivers of risk.

Achieving these changes is essential for ensuring that AA supports vulnerable communities to not only function but flourish in a transformed landscape of risk that is here, now.