



# Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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## Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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International Committee of the Red Cross

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides the background and rationale for a resolution proposed by the German Red Cross (GRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (Climate Centre) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to scale up anticipatory action so that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NSs), the IFRC and the ICRC, collectively “the Movement”, can better assist people in vulnerable situations in protecting themselves and their livelihoods from the imminent impacts of extreme events while at the same time maintaining and building on its role as a champion in this area. The proposed resolution aims to increase the capacities of the components of the Movement to act ahead of extreme events, by expanding anticipatory action approaches to more country contexts and hazards; improving existing approaches by ensuring that anticipatory action reaches more people, including those living in conflict-affected areas, and by addressing compounding risks; integrating anticipatory action into operational and legal frameworks and processes; increasing the availability of and access to financing so that it reaches those who need it when they need it; and strengthening knowledge exchange, learning, guidance and advocacy around anticipatory action, including enhanced community capacity, to ensure that people’s needs and priorities are better addressed.

## 1) INTRODUCTION

As highlighted by the [IFRC World Disasters Report 2020](#) and, more recently, by the [Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#), extreme weather and climate events, such as storms, heatwaves, droughts, flooding and wildfires, have become more frequent and intense. The climate crisis increasingly puts lives and livelihoods at risk, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings, as underlined by the [ICRC report \*When rain turns to dust\*](#). Extreme weather and climate events disproportionately affect certain groups and further increase their vulnerability to future hazards and longer-term impacts. As such extreme events increase in frequency and intensity, there is less time to recover. Moreover, when hazards combine, impacts can multiply in unprecedented ways that governments, civil society and humanitarian actors have never before had to face. These “compounding impacts” on communities were illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic as the dangers of climate and weather extremes did not diminish while the world was adapting to the pandemic.

The components of the Movement have committed to stepping up their efforts to prevent, anticipate, prepare for and respond to the growing humanitarian consequences of climate change, as reflected, for example, in the [Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis](#) and the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#). The technical progress of recent decades, including through digitalization, makes it possible to predict, with increasing accuracy, when and where extreme events will occur and what impact they might have. This gives the Movement time to act *before* an extreme event turns into a disaster, saving lives and livelihoods.

Building on decades of experience in disaster risk reduction and early warning early action (EWEA), NSs and the IFRC have been at the forefront of making use of technological progress and lessons learnt across all elements of EWEA with the development of [Forecast-based Financing \(FbF\)](#), which is an anticipatory action approach. Anticipatory action approaches such as FbF seek to reduce human suffering, losses and damage by enabling relevant actors, especially affected communities, to act ahead of a potentially harmful event. They typically link robust forecasts and risk assessments to action plans and are ideally supported by a pre-arranged financing agreement. These action plans are prepared well in advance and clarify who does what, when and how. Anticipatory actions (sometimes also called “early actions”) include, for instance, providing cash, sanitation and hygiene kits and shelter toolkits ahead of the shock and taking measures to safeguard livelihoods, such as the evacuation of livestock. These anticipatory actions seek to prevent or at least reduce the impact of a potentially harmful event and are set in motion when critical forecast thresholds or triggers are reached. Given the comprehensive work involved in developing anticipatory action approaches (such as developing trigger levels and action plans, providing equipment, setting up logistics chains) they sit between disaster preparedness and response and require a collaborative approach.

FbF is now being implemented by NSs in 38 countries (March 2022), addressing hazards such as heatwaves, coldwaves, storms, floods, droughts and volcanic ash flows. In 2018, the IFRC established Forecast-based Action by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (FbA by the DREF), a dedicated financing mechanism that releases funding for NSs once they have action plans (Early Action Protocols) in place and forecasts indicate an extreme event with a certain probability. The significant innovative potential of FbF has inspired many actors outside the Movement, including United Nations (UN) agencies and the Start Network, a consortium of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to fund and develop similar anticipatory approaches. Altogether, [anticipatory action approaches are being implemented in over 60 countries](#) and have helped to drive significant policy achievements that are building global momentum to scale up anticipatory action, including two UN Resolutions ([A/RES/74/218](#) and [A/RES/72/132](#)), the [G7 Famine Compact](#) and the [ECHO Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness](#) which all call on Member States to strengthen anticipatory action.

There is [growing evidence that anticipatory action saves lives and livelihoods](#) and can make humanitarian assistance faster, more cost-effective and more dignified. Moreover, the emerging “anticipation agenda” has spurred investment in meteorological and climate services, research and predictive analytics, governance and capacity-building worldwide and stimulated cross-organizational collaboration beyond the humanitarian sector, as evidenced by the launch of the [Risk-informed Early Action Partnership](#) (REAP) and [the Anticipation Hub](#). REAP is hosted by the IFRC and was established at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit with the aim of making one billion people safer from disaster. Bringing together the climate, development and humanitarian communities, REAP seeks to facilitate investment in early warning systems and improve coverage. The Anticipation Hub, launched in December 2020 and hosted by the GRC, the IFRC and the Climate Centre, promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience among anticipatory action practitioners and facilitates joint learning, efforts and advocacy for scaling up anticipatory action. It is supported by almost 90 partners, including humanitarian actors, governments and research institutions.

Despite these encouraging developments, the potential of anticipatory action approaches has not yet been fully realized. FbF, for instance, currently still focuses more on climate- and weather-related hazards with more immediate impacts, such as storms and floods, than on less visible and slower onset events, such as heatwaves or droughts. The COVID-19 pandemic has also amplified the need to look beyond climate- and weather-related hazards and include other hazards and crises and to consider the compounding impacts on vulnerabilities when multiple hazards coincide. The cascading impacts of extreme climate and weather events and fragility, conflict and violence may increase vulnerabilities or create new ones and, in combination with other factors, lead to food insecurity or displacement. Another major challenge is how to adapt anticipatory action to conflict-affected settings.

Moreover, with an increasing number of anticipatory action approaches and global initiatives gaining momentum, there is a pressing need to coordinate approaches and activities to ensure coherence, maximize impact and achieve the desired transformational change. For anticipatory action approaches to become more firmly embedded in the humanitarian system, they need to be integrated into existing instruments and legal and operational frameworks. This work must be driven and co-designed by local actors, including governments, with people in vulnerable situations being engaged in developing plans for anticipatory action to be taken when an extreme event is forecasted.

## 2) GOAL AND RELEVANCE

The purpose of the proposed resolution is to commit the components of the Movement to scaling up anticipatory action. Scaling up means firstly *doing more* by extending anticipatory action to slower onset and less visible climate- and weather-related hazards, such as heatwaves and droughts, and also to hazards and risks that are not necessarily linked to climate and weather, such as epidemics, food insecurity and displacement of affected people, and by ensuring its reach is extended to more people and more countries. Secondly, it means *doing it better* by improving existing approaches to address compounding risks, thereby ensuring that anticipatory action reaches people living in conflict-affected areas who are often disproportionately affected by extreme events, and by investing in increasing the ability and capacity of the system to respond collectively in a coordinated manner. Thirdly, it means *doing it together* by integrating anticipatory action into operational and legal frameworks and processes,

increasing the availability of and access to financing so that it reaches those who need it when they need it and strengthening knowledge exchange, learning, guidance and advocacy around anticipatory action to ensure that people's needs and priorities are better addressed.

Scaling up anticipatory action is in line with a number of relevant policies and processes within and beyond the Movement. [Resolution 33IC/19/R7 “Disaster laws and policies that leave no one behind”](#), adopted at the 33rd International Conference in 2019, encourages states to consider, as appropriate, innovative approaches to disaster risk management, such as the use of anticipatory finance, including forecast-based triggers for the early and timely release of response funding to rapidly mitigate the impact of disasters. [Resolution 33IC/19/R3 “Time to act: Tackling epidemics and pandemics together”](#), also adopted at the 33rd International Conference, reiterates the importance of prioritizing and investing in prevention and preparedness and providing catalytic funding to support anticipatory action. [The Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis](#) identify enabling access to funds and supporting governments in creating anticipatory mechanisms as ways to achieve climate-smart disaster risk reduction. One of the goals of the [IFRC Strategy 2030](#) is to support people in anticipating, responding to and quickly recovering from crises. Among other things, it calls for technology and innovation to be used to anticipate risks and disasters and provide proactive early action and predictable financing. As part of its [2021–2025 Plan and Budget](#), the IFRC has set a target to triple the size of its DREF to CHF 100 million, 25% of which is allocated to financing anticipatory action. The [ICRC's Institutional Strategy](#) seeks to support communities so that they are better able to manage future stresses caused by the combined effects of conflict and climate change. Two UN Resolutions ([A/RES/74/218](#) and [A/RES/72/132](#)) call for the support of Member States in strengthening anticipatory mechanisms to reduce the impact of disasters and humanitarian needs.

### 3) ANALYSIS: KEY ELEMENTS TO STRENGTHEN ANTICIPATORY ACTION

The proposed resolution commits the Movement to a joint ambition to scale up anticipatory action with the goal of improving its reach, quality and effectiveness, recognizing the different roles, responsibilities and mandates of each component of the Movement. Accordingly, the resolution calls on components of the Movement to expand, harmonize, align and consolidate existing efforts. This section explains the rationale for operative clauses 1 to 9:

#### **OP 1: Increase engagement on anticipatory action**

To scale up anticipatory action and ensure that more people are covered, an increase in the number of NSs engaging in anticipatory action is crucial. An increase in operational anticipatory action initiatives will also contribute to proving the concept and thereby result in a further shift towards anticipatory action in the humanitarian system.

#### **OP 2: Take stronger steps to address slower onset and less visible hazards**

Scaling up anticipatory action will also require a joint undertaking to explore anticipatory approaches and extend them to climate- and weather-related hazards that have not yet been sufficiently addressed by anticipatory action, such as heatwaves and droughts, which often have less visible impacts.

#### **OP 3: Increase the focus on compounding risks**

When different hazards happen at the same time or one as the result of another, they can multiply each other's impact in unprecedented ways that communities, governments, civil society and the humanitarian sector have never before had to face. As the Movement is operating in many multi-risk environments, anticipatory action approaches should reflect the complexity of the risks on the ground to better address them and the needs that individuals and communities face. Risk mitigation measures, such as Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approaches, can help to reach all people effectively and in a non-discriminatory manner.

#### **OP 4: Strengthen anticipatory action in conflict settings**

Protracted conflicts and chronic violence considerably limit the ability and capacity to cope with the impacts of extreme weather and climate events in an effective and coordinated manner, and people in

such situations are disproportionately impacted. Moreover, in such environments, early warning and anticipatory action tend to be particularly weak. Improving early warning systems, ensuring that they are being used and guaranteeing timely action and access to anticipatory financing in such situations can be critical to achieving a sustainable humanitarian impact.

#### **OP 5: Explore opportunities to anticipate other hazards and risks**

The impacts of extreme weather events have been the focus of many FbF projects so far. There are also other drivers of human suffering and losses, such as epidemics – a fact starkly underlined by the recent COVID-19 pandemic – food insecurity and displacement. Progress in improving early warning systems provides increasing opportunities to also anticipate and act ahead of hazards and risks other than those related to climate and weather.

#### **OP 6: Encourage the creation and adaptation of and access to funding mechanisms**

While a funding mechanism enabling anticipatory action by NSs ahead of extreme weather events has been successfully established with the IFRC's FbA by the DREF, greater efforts and political support are needed at national, sub-national and international level for the adaptation of existing anticipatory funding mechanisms and the creation of new ones to enable anticipatory action for hazards and risks that are not yet covered. Facilitating access to more funding mechanisms and advocating with state, private sector and other actors to allocate financing for anticipatory action is key to providing a sustainable way of reaching more people. Funding instruments for anticipatory action should be human impact-centred, ensuring that financing targets and reaches the people most at risk in the most efficient way so that they are able to take action to reduce the impact of the extreme event. They should be based on robust data and risk-oriented localized planning, be transparent, participatory and accountable to target communities, work in coordination with existing mechanisms and disburse funding in accordance with implementation capacity.

#### **OP 7: Integrate anticipatory action into National Society disaster risk management systems and processes**

The capacities of NSs are at the centre of successful anticipatory action. NSs develop anticipatory actions and systems for their implementation, work with hydro- and meteorological services on possible triggers and involve communities in planning and implementation. In many cases, however, NSs may need resources and technical support for their work in these areas. They should aim to integrate anticipatory action and FbF into their disaster risk management systems and processes so that they become part of normal business rather than a project-based approach. The ultimate goal of NS investment should be to develop the capacities of communities and empower them to take anticipatory action to protect themselves and build resilience.

#### **OP 8: Work with governments for the integration of anticipatory action**

Governments play a crucial role in advancing anticipatory action within their country in cooperation with other stakeholders, including NSs. The integration of anticipatory action into governmental disaster risk management frameworks, national adaptation plans and related policies and financing frameworks would enable concerted efforts and overcome sectoral silos if based on harmonized thresholds for the release of pre-positioned funds and coordinated (joint) action plans. NSs can play a leading role in supporting governmental planning and convening relevant stakeholders, by bringing in their experience in anticipatory action, data and information sharing and early action planning.

#### **OP 9: Use and contribute to the Anticipation Hub**

To scale up anticipatory action, it is helpful to have a cross-sectoral space to reflect on the effectiveness of different types of anticipatory actions, exchange learning and explore tools, guidance material, innovations and good practices. The Anticipation Hub is an online platform that brings together science, policy and practice with partners from across the Movement, universities, research institutes, (I)NGOs, UN agencies, governments, donors and network initiatives.

## 4) RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The resource implications vary depending on the existing capacities and resources of NSs, the IFRC, the ICRC and the Climate Centre and on the nature of Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes and operations and the context in which they are taking place.

The resolution may require components of the Movement to review the needs and possibilities of programmes and operations to achieve the desired scale-up, including using existing evaluations. This may include identifying targets, formulating a strategy, establishing and/or prioritizing specific measures, such as developing or scaling up a FbF project, providing technical assistance, supporting capacity-strengthening, and sharing knowledge and learning with budget implications.

Budgets should, where possible, be increased and/or funds reallocated to finance activities geared towards implementing the proposed commitments. Where there is an existing partnership or own resources are available, NSs may develop a fully fledged FbF approach. Complementarily, NSs may also develop alternative approaches with a “softer” decision-making framework (e.g. expert judgement) that links risk assessments and early warnings to anticipatory action. In other cases, technical or financial support from components of the Movement will be required to enable NSs to implement anticipatory action.

Consultations held show a need for components of the Movement to invest in strengthening their organizational capacities and expertise in anticipatory action. This may include ensuring adequate staffing to enable them to develop, implement and expand anticipatory action approaches, with increased attention to slower onset and less visible events, other hazards and risks, compounding risks and the application of anticipatory action in conflict settings, and facilitating coordination and technical support between Movement components. This will likely include activities such as data collection and analysis, trigger development, identification of anticipatory actions, the setting up of procedures and training of staff and volunteers, and the development of awareness-raising and guidance material on anticipatory action in general as well as more specific resources, tools and guidance to apply anticipatory action to other hazards and risks, compounding risks and conflict settings. It will also probably require staff and volunteer training on key concepts related to anticipatory action, including triggers, action plans and financing options to enable them to empower communities. The proposed resolution also calls upon components of the Movement to contribute actively to the Anticipation Hub. This may include sharing knowledge, evidence and best practices in anticipatory action and contributing resources to sustain and develop it further as a central platform for anticipatory action. The resolution encourages the components of the Movement to advocate for the creation or adaptation of anticipatory funding with state, private sector and other actors, such as multilateral actors, or initiatives to enable NSs to implement or expand anticipatory action for hazards and situations not covered by existing mechanisms. Activities may involve, among other things, financing studies, adapting procedures and enhancing human resources.

Integrating anticipatory action may not require significant resources, as the commitments should be largely consistent and compatible with existing strategies, programmes and frameworks. The components of the Movement already have access to many preparedness tools and resources that can be adapted to integrate anticipatory action, such as the Preparedness for Effective Response Framework, Community Early Warning Systems Guiding Principles and Cash Readiness. In some instances, additional work, especially with regard to engaging communities, raising the awareness of government authorities and advocating for integrating anticipatory action into disaster risk management strategies, and/or the establishment of an inter-agency coordination mechanism may be needed.

## 5) IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The success of this resolution depends on how well each component of the Movement reflects and applies the commitments in its own policies and procedures. With a view to reporting collectively on implementation progress, assessing existing gaps and consolidating further recommendations, in OP 10 the resolution requests a progress report to be submitted to the 2023 Council of Delegates, based on applicable frameworks to monitor and guide the implementation of anticipatory action such as IFRC’s

Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025, and the issue of anticipatory action to be considered for inclusion in the agenda of the 34th International Conference.

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## Conclusion and recommendations

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In light of the pressing challenges posed by climate change, conflict, food insecurity, displacement and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for the Movement to step up its engagement on anticipatory action. There is growing evidence that anticipatory action saves lives and livelihoods and can make humanitarian assistance faster, more cost-effective and more dignified than it is with a reactive response. It is therefore increasingly recognized as an important solution and is gradually being embedded in the humanitarian and disaster risk management space to reduce the impacts of extreme events. Despite these encouraging developments, much more can and must be done so that more people receive assistance ahead of predictable events.

The 2022 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity for the Movement to declare its commitment to scaling up anticipatory action with the goal of improving reach, quality and effectiveness. The proposed resolution seeks to expand the approach to more hazards and risks, strengthen the Movement's capacities and expertise and support its advocacy work in order to overcome barriers to scaling up at the required pace, with the aim of helping the Movement better address the needs and priorities of people in the most vulnerable situations. The resolution builds on decades of experience in disaster risk reduction and EWEA and the successful development of FbF. It will help consolidate and expand existing commitments, such as the Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis and several resolutions within and beyond the Movement (e.g. 33IC/19/R and 33IC/19/R3). By adapting and implementing its operations and procedures, the Movement will be better positioned to anticipate and mitigate the risks of extreme events and able to contribute greatly to reducing the suffering and losses of people in vulnerable situations.