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# Pathways towards anticipatory action in Pacific Island Countries

Phase one summary: regional analysis

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The background of the page features a photograph of two women in traditional Pacific attire, likely performing a dance. They are wearing vibrant, patterned blouses and skirts with long, flowing fringes. The scene is set outdoors, possibly on a beach or a stage, with a bright, sunny atmosphere. The women are seen from the back, with their arms raised in a graceful pose.

## *Phase One: Regional Analysis*

# SUMMARY

- There is increasing demand to define and clarify how anticipatory action fits within the existing disaster risk management mechanisms in the Pacific region and how it can complement existing work, particularly for national governments.
- Anticipatory action components already exist in the Pacific. These can be scaled-up to support farming and fishing communities in taking action before disasters strike, and in managing slow-onset shocks like drought or rapid-onset such as cyclones.
- There is a need to build coordination mechanisms with regional and national level institutions involved in anticipatory action to agree on data and triggers that enable financing before a shock.
- Anticipatory action in the Pacific is a multi-agency task, leveraging the strengths and capacities of different groups to act upon one agreed trigger and established set of actions.
- Uncertainty in data and risk tolerance needs to be agreed upon by agencies financing anticipatory action, and local partners and communities implementing the actions.

# Introduction

Anticipatory Action refers to actions triggered before a crisis in order to mitigate the worst effects of the crisis, or even avoid crisis altogether (Figure 1). It is a rapidly growing concept used in humanitarian aid, climate change and disaster, and climate finance. The ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management provides a guide on how to break-down the approach further, organising it around three-building blocks:

1. Risk information, early warning and forecasts
2. Design, selecting and delivery of anticipatory actions
3. Pre-arranged financing

While there is much progress in East Africa and Southeast Asia on the approach, small island states in the Pacific face unique opportunities to develop context-specific anticipatory action systems.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, is undertaking a study determine the opportunities for anticipatory action in the Pacific region.

Importantly, the anticipatory action approach needs to fit within already established disaster risk management systems. The difference in anticipatory action is the establishment of pre-agreed triggers based on climate and weather data, pre-agreed and established finance systems to be released, and agreed roles and responsibilities of actions to take upon a trigger. Box 1 illustrates experiences in the Philippines in implementing anticipatory actions for a slow-onset shock.

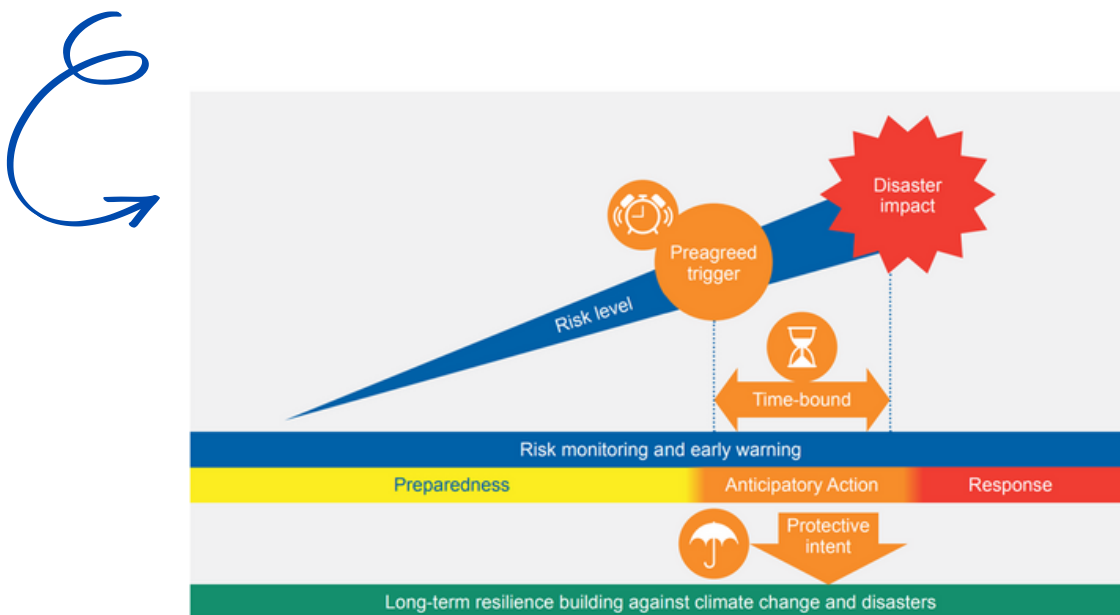


Figure 1: Anticipatory action (orange) within the disaster risk reduction process (ASEAN, 2022)

## Box 1. Slow and sudden onset anticipatory action

- Actions for slow-onset shocks such as drought or pests and diseases, require specific seasonal/monthly forecasts, observation data and when available food security information to paint the picture. Here, the lead time is often 1–3 months, but can be longer depending on the skill of data, but it is also critical to link climate and weather information to seasonal calendars. Actions can include the distribution of drought-resistant seeds or water management support.
- Actions for sudden-onset shocks, such as cyclones and floods, work differently to slow-onset. The window of opportunity to act is extremely short in comparison, often 5–10 days and based on short-time forecasts. Therefore, providing cash or in-kind support 5 days before a looming flood involves a different level of readiness and flexibility of funding to almost be automated once the alarm is issued.
- In both cases, though, missing the window of opportunity might render the value and nature of anticipatory interventions obsolete and there also needs to be willingness to take action despite uncertainty.



# Pacific regional anticipatory action institutional environment

Anticipatory action must fit within the wider disaster risk management environment in the Pacific region, and build from the existing expertise and capacities that are in place. Current regional frameworks and national development plans and legislations throughout the region seek to advance the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Regionally, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific 2017–2030 sets the foundations for the region’s resilience and disaster management. The framework does not make explicit mention of anticipatory action but does have a strong focus on multi-hazard early warning systems. Building from this and formalizing actions based on early warning systems would enhance the anticipatory nature of disaster management.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy highlights the Thematic Area of focus on Climate Change and Disasters, emphasising the need to better access climate finance and working with regional institutions and communities to support resilience. PIFS emphasises the need for anticipation through ‘Forecast Based Finance and Action’ . PIFS emphasises the existing risk reduction instruments, funded by various sources, as a way of financing disaster planning.

Very recent studies have pointed towards the potential of anticipatory action in sub-sectors such as energy in Tonga, infrastructure in Fiji, ports in Vanuatu, water in the Republic of Marshall Islands. Recent studies for a new Green Climate Fund project have been conducted into early warning early action experiences in Palau and Tuvalu . Another recent review emphasised a need to distil the multiple approaches to regional coherence for anticipatory action in Pacific countries.



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# Multiple pathways for Pacific anticipatory action

Interviews and workshops held in Phase 1 of this study have pointed towards a series of opportunities across regional, national, and community scales relating to anticipatory action. These are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Pathways across scales for anticipatory action in the Pacific**

Scale	Pathways
 <p>Regional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise regional technical leadership and coordination, building from the Technical Working Group on Disaster Risk Financing and the Pacific Resilience Partnership.</li> <li>• Coordinate an anticipatory action sensitization and 'Shared Understanding' session across agencies and government organisations</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for ASEAN–Pacific knowledge exchange on anticipatory action and resilience building</li> </ul>
 <p>National</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable options between agencies and sectors that rely on forecasts to mitigate risks (eg floods, droughts, cyclones).</li> <li>• Map and clarify agency roles and responsibilities (government and agencies) and the donors priorities in anticipatory action</li> <li>• Develop scenarios for the institutional risk–threshold for releasing funds after a trigger has been issued</li> <li>• Identify the right agency to 'house' anticipatory action within national legislations</li> </ul>
 <p>Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situate any new anticipatory action investments and pilots within existing community preparedness plans and community vulnerability assessments</li> <li>• Identify provinces within countries where plans can be co-developed with communities to test Anticipatory Action across sectors (eg water and agriculture)</li> <li>• Develop Gender, Diversity and Social Inclusion guidelines for managing the implications for communities of anticipatory actions across different delivery modalities</li> <li>• Identify perspectives from selected communities on their approach to anticipatory action based on customs and traditions</li> </ul>

Our study also identified themes of work across four clusters of work for advancing anticipatory action (Table 2 on the next page).

**Table 2: Areas of need for advancing anticipatory action in the Pacific**

Cluster of Focus	Types of Opportunities
 <p>Capacity building &amp; community support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidance and training on the principles of anticipatory action among: donors, country agencies, and regional agencies</li> <li>• Clarify with local partners how cash-based social protection and insurance systems can be linked to forecasts and triggers for anticipatory action</li> <li>• Upskilling agencies on the gender and social inclusion implications of anticipatory actions</li> <li>• Community early warnings in a credible and accessible way that different audiences understand, with impact profiles for different sectors</li> <li>• Support local champions within institutions to move anticipatory action forward and engage civil society organisations</li> <li>• Identify locally-based experts that can facilitate traditionally knowledge inclusion into anticipatory action planning</li> </ul>
 <p>Policy &amp; institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how anticipatory action is situated within regional frameworks, working groups, and national policies</li> <li>• Consider the design of anticipatory action investments with a multi-country focus, but ensure alignment with regional frameworks and processes</li> <li>• Embed anticipatory action into existing legislations and disaster management policies, rather than duplicate and generate new administrative processes</li> <li>• Developing a coordination mechanisms where civil society, donors, and multilateral agencies can complement each other's work</li> </ul>
 <p>Financing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse the fiscal space in Pacific countries (insurance, bonds, loss and damages) and how anticipatory action fits into these systems</li> <li>• Clarify how anticipatory action financing can from part of sectorial investments (eg agriculture, infrastructure)</li> <li>• Develop criteria for selecting triggers, the spectrum of uncertainty within them and the implications for financing actions.</li> <li>• Undertake modelling into the cost and benefits of anticipatory action across country-level sectors</li> </ul>
 <p>Data &amp; knowledge gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align the diverse early warning systems and forecasts to help support sector-specific decision making</li> <li>• Develop data sharing and coordination systems between agencies</li> <li>• Collect and monitor how communities and households respond to anticipatory actions</li> <li>• Undertake detailed analysis of how communities perceive anticipatory actions for their main livelihood sectors</li> <li>• Enable an ASEAN and Pacific leaders high-level forum on anticipatory action</li> </ul>



# Where to next? Advancing anticipatory action in the region

Pathways for advancing anticipatory action in the coming year and key steps to help foster its scale-up at the regional level include:

## Focus on partnerships and collaboration



Establish a resourced coordination and ownership group supporting anticipatory action mechanisms at regional and country levels. This includes working towards deeper engagement with governments and communities to understand their context specific anticipatory action needs. Connecting with national government will be of particular importance.

## Explore how anticipatory action can be financed

Clear finance mechanisms need to be agreed on to support trial anticipatory action projects that link data with agriculture and livelihood protection in selected communities. Socialising and agreeing on the uncertainty of triggers will be part of this.

## How does traditional knowledge come into this?

Identify how communities frame anticipatory action and how it links to their livelihood activities and relevant community disaster risk management plans. This includes determining how traditional knowledges intersect with anticipatory action mechanisms.

## Think about the long term

Align anticipatory action with resilience and longer-term planning in the region, including the existing work on early warning systems. Anticipatory action needs to be clarified as either a humanitarian-development nexus activity, and/or a long-term resilience building activity.

## Get everyone on the same page!

Conduct a multi-agency and government sensitization event to build a shared understanding of anticipatory action among regional and country agencies, and with communities in different regions who will undertake anticipatory action activities.

## Explore how anticipatory action can be governed & place national governments in the forefront

Create a governance matrix of the roles and responsibilities of different actors working in the anticipatory action in the Pacific and their role before a shock, and identify alignment opportunities between forecasting, finance, social protection, and humanitarian agencies.

## Get it right from the start with gender & social inclusion

Determine the gender, disability, and social inclusion implications of having established anticipatory actions and triggers for communities

## Review what is happening at community level already

Identify how communities frame anticipatory action and how it links to their livelihood activities and relevant community disaster risk management plans. This includes determining how traditional knowledges intersect with anticipatory action mechanisms.

## Talk to the experts! Technical rigour with early warnings & trigger development

Work with climate and weather experts in the region and national level to map out existing systems, potential indicators, their accuracy and potential trigger points for anticipatory action. Assess the level of 'risk' involved on acting upon them.



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