



Anticipate, Do Not Wait, For Crises

Analytical Paper on WHS Self-Reporting on Agenda for Humanity Transformation 4B

This paper was prepared by:¹



Executive Summary:

Significant early progress has been made in strengthening anticipation, especially with regard to strengthening policy frameworks and planning; data collection and multi-stakeholder partnerships. There are nevertheless challenges and gaps that should be addressed, in particular with regard to ensuring that the right financing is available and that there is the political will in place to invest in anticipation. There are also some aspects of the commitment, such as the development of comprehensive action plans for the 20 most risk-prone countries that are not on track. Meeting our commitments to anticipate and not wait for crises will involve addressing the financing gaps, while also making further progress on strengthening common analysis and coherence, ensuring that anticipation addresses conflict related crises and integrating a gendered perspective into actions and plans.

Most significant progress made across reporting on transformation 4B – Anticipate, do not wait, for crises

More than 70 stakeholders reported on progress in strengthening anticipation of crises. A wide range of actions were cited to work towards the commitments – which include increasing financial and human resources; the consolidation of data; strengthening risk analysis; providing financial incentives, and; developing a comprehensive action plan for the 20 most risk-prone countries.

Unsurprisingly, considering the wide range of actors reporting on progress – from donor countries, to the private sector, to risk-prone states and civil society organisations – progress toward achieving these commitments was varied and disparate. That being said, a variety of stakeholders reported efforts within the past 12 months to **develop or strengthen policy frameworks and strategic plans**, supported by improved analysis and mapping, to increase understanding of, and shift the emphasis toward, the anticipation of crises and to facilitate early response. Notably, these efforts primarily focused on the revision of existing frameworks and planning approaches to ensure that they are risk informed and multi-dimensional, rather than the development of stand-alone frameworks to address risk. This has resulted in an increased uptake of anticipatory approaches across the respective

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stakeholders’ and organisations’ portfolio of work. Sweden’s work in particular, of piloting the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-led **resilience systems analysis framework** across their Africa programmes to strengthen common risk informed analysis and dialogue and coordination between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, stands out as one of the more systematic approaches to strengthening anticipatory approaches through country strategies and programmes. The focus on policy frameworks and planning approaches is a crucial first step in laying the foundation for further progress in coming years.

Stakeholders also recognised that the success of strategy and planning in contributing to better anticipation of crises needs to be underscored by a strengthened evidence base, improved capacity to collect and use relevant data and the translation of early warning information into early action. There were a range of innovative approaches captured in the reporting – from Austria’s support for user-driven early warning systems and ‘now casting’ (short range forecasting), to the START Network’s online platform within the **ALERT project** to aggregate data on preparedness at a country level. However, two initiatives in particular stand out, namely the **INFORM global risk index for humanitarian crises and disasters** and the **International Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems Initiative (CREWS)**. These initiatives are notable both in terms of demonstrating support from a wide range of stakeholders, including government and multilateral agencies; as well as in demonstrating early progress in terms of uptake to support decision making processes, prioritise actions and inform the allocation of resources.

Progress in these areas was complemented by a number of stakeholders reporting on the development or strengthening of a range of new partnerships and cross-sectoral collaborations. Private sector partnerships in particular were identified as a priority and several stakeholders cited the **Connecting Business Initiative** – a demand driven, private sector driven mechanism supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) – as a key innovation to enable more effective strategic engagement of business in building resilient communities and meeting the needs of people in crisis.

The main barriers/ challenges to progress

While commitments included the strengthening of financial incentives and addressing political blockages, these two aspects received relatively little priority in stakeholders’ reporting. In addition, these issues were often cited by donor agencies, the multilateral system and civil society organisations as areas of significant challenge. With regard to financing, a small number of stakeholders, including Christian Aid, Cordaid, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Ireland, Malteser International, Norwegian Church Aid, Estonia and the United Kingdom reported on the use of financial targets or commitments to increase expenditure on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Despite this, many stakeholders reported that investment in risk reduction, early warning and preparedness remains relatively low. Furthermore, reporting suggests that many of the financing instruments that are available are short term, whereas anticipation activities require longer-term financing mechanisms.

“Funding for data collection and establishment of information systems to make possible the anticipation of crises is urgently needed in many developing countries. The problem is that this kind of investment straddles humanitarian and development programmes.”

Spain

With regard to tackling political blockages, this was mainly addressed in terms of the challenges associated with coordination and interoperability between agencies, as well as relatively weak commitments to strengthening capacity for anticipation. In particular, while it was clear that a number of multi-stakeholder platforms had been established to strengthen collaboration, several stakeholders made the point that moving beyond coordination remains challenging. This point was summarised by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, who reported that “it takes more than training and collaborative effort to ensure preparedness is up to standard. Governments and donors need to see the advantage of investing in DRRM [disaster risk reduction and management] to lessen impact and ensure continuity.” Similarly, the European Union emphasised that “capacity building requires engaging authorities and their political will” and Care International stated that “a critical element is focusing on the political pathways to change – our early warning is fairly good but we are as yet unable to transform that into early action.”

In addition to constraints associated with financing and political will, it was notable that much of the reporting focused on strengthening anticipation with regard to natural hazards, with very little focus on progress toward better anticipating conflict-related crises. In part, this might be explained by stakeholders’ commitments in aligning with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which itself does not include reference to conflict-related risks.

Finally, while there was notable progress in strengthening both partnerships and in the collection and use of data for anticipating crises, this has led to a proliferation of coordination platforms and challenges in ensuring coherence between various global initiatives. A number of stakeholders cited the increased collection of data as an increasing challenge, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for instance, reporting that “the humanitarian community is collecting and storing increasing amounts of data using a variety of methodologies and formats. Information management gaps, varying from insufficiently rigorous data collection and processing to a plethora of non-communicating systems and methodologies, limit interoperability of systems and the ability to aggregate data for analysis and modelling.”

Measuring progress

The focus of many stakeholders on developing policy frameworks and strategic plans to strengthen anticipation has resulted in a more systematic inclusion of risk analysis, data collection and early action measures into work plans and approaches. In the most part, progress in meeting these commitments has been incorporated into existing monitoring and evaluation systems and stakeholders are also committed to ensuring that they make use of, and report against global targets, including the Sendai Framework and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

That said, a small number of stakeholders reported on specific new initiatives to strengthen the measurement of progress. FAO, for instance, reported on progress to better track damage and loss from natural disasters based on a combination of quantifiable targets and a set of strategic goals. On disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate related risk commitments, progress is tracked based on co-benefits for policy making processes and resilience of rural livelihoods, such as integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. As part of their commitment to strengthen the link between early warning and early action, they are devising a monitoring and evaluation methodology specifically calibrated to derive the cost-benefit of the input-based early actions – in other words, to deliver a quantitative estimate of the cost of effectiveness of acting early.

Similarly, Oxfam has used a review of its 2016 response to El Niño to assess progress and highlight gaps and weaknesses with regard to improving anticipatory approaches. With a focus on twenty-countries, the organisation has undertaken real time evaluations of humanitarian response in the first six weeks of the crisis using a number of benchmarks including those related to effective risk management. These evaluations are synthesised on an annual basis to inform a baseline and to track progress over time.

“Putting funding into disaster risk reduction reduces the effects and is more cost effective in the longer term. It helps communities cope better and reduces the risk of them simply becoming victims reliant on help when disaster strikes.”

Oxfam International

Gaps between the actions of stakeholders and advancing the transformation

It is clear that reporting stakeholders have made early progress on incorporating anticipation into policy frameworks and strategic plans as a crucial first step in meeting the commitments of the Agenda for Humanity; as well as building capacity to collect and utilise data and to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships. There are, however, a number of gaps to advance this transformation. In particular, the report of the United Nations Secretary-General *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility* outlines the need to **develop a comprehensive action plan by 2017 to significantly strengthen the response capacities of the 20 most risk-prone countries by 2020**, yet there was little evidence in the reporting that stakeholders – either individually or collectively – are putting in place mechanisms to meet this commitment. In particular, little progress was evident that stakeholders are making adequate progress **joint analysis** or the development of **a common picture** of the most pressing risks that might facilitate the development of a comprehensive action plan.

“Getting the aid system to better work with national responders will require a change of mind-set. Success on this front will only happen if we carefully engineer change and support these efforts through very strong, persistent advocacy.”

CHS International

Further effort will also be needed to ensure that the right financing mechanisms are available to incentivise investments in anticipation, as well as actions to strengthen political will and tackle the political obstacles. There are, however, indications that stakeholders are aware of these challenges. Where there is little recognition of further actions that may be needed, is in addressing the **gendered dimensions** of strengthening anticipation. Notable exceptions to this include the UK and Switzerland, who reported on the imperative to address the needs of women and girls in adapting to climate change; and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment

of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who both recognise the need to increase the participation of women in disaster risk reduction activities and to further develop ‘engendered’ responses to disaster prevention and preparedness.

Highlights of good practice

While stakeholders’ reporting on progress toward meeting the commitment to strengthen anticipation is varied and disparate, there are several notable highlights in working toward this transformation. While many of these examples include technical or programmatic responses; **CARE International** has focused on ensuring that organisational perceptions and culture are being strengthened to ensure that staff are incentivised to work effectively and rapidly with risk. This has included deliberate efforts to incentivise and champion management staff to take active decision making to better manage risk, helping to ensure continuity in risk-affected contexts such as South Sudan. Addressing organisational incentives for change have also been

a priority for the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**) with the launch of a ‘data manifesto’ emphasising the need for data for people, data for decisions and data for partnerships. This initiative has helped to both incentivise their own organisational commitments to anticipation and also strengthened partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.

There are also a number of innovations emerging from the reporting, including, for instance **Slovakia’s** amendment of their income tax law to reduce the tax burden of companies engaged in humanitarian action and preparedness activities. Similarly, the **UPS Foundation** is actively committed to mobilising public-private partnerships and has involved more than 300,000 businesses in strengthening the supply chain through the ‘Saglam Kobi’ disaster preparedness platform in Turkey and the ‘Resilient America’ initiative.

“Every community is different. What works well in one community will not work in a similar community on the other side of the globe. Customising is key.”

UPS Foundation

Recommendations

Reporting indicates that good progress is being made by a range of stakeholders on integrating anticipation into policy frameworks and strategic planning. However progress in other areas is variable and further efforts will need to be made to both address gaps and to scale up efforts to strengthen anticipation:

1. **Financing:** Investment in risk reduction, early warning and preparedness remains relatively low and further efforts need to be made to scale up financing for disaster risk reduction and the translation of early warning information into early action in particular. This will require flexible, multi-year financing mechanisms, the development of ‘triggers’ and instruments such as early action crisis modifiers.
2. **Common analysis:** While there have been investments in strengthening the collection and use of data to build anticipation, this needs to be accompanied by better knowledge management systems and efforts to ensure that there is interoperability of data that can facilitate common risk-based analysis and planning.
3. **Coherence:** A range of multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms have been established to improve anticipation. While this is a positive development to ensure that there are cross-sector approaches to anticipating crises, it has also resulted in a more complex coordination environment. Further work should be undertaken to rationalise and simplify coordination mechanisms and also to ensure that there is coherence between the Agenda for Humanity and global agendas, including 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
4. **Integrating conflict analysis:** Much of the reporting focused on strengthening anticipation with regard to natural hazards, with very little focus on progress toward better anticipating conflict-related crises. Analysis, financing and early action needs to ensure that it incorporates conflict when strengthening anticipatory approaches to crises.

5. **Gender:** The gendered dimensions of strengthening anticipation require further effort. This should include strengthening the participation of women and girls in particular in risk reduction and preparedness activities and increased understanding of the gendered aspects of anticipation.

About this paper

All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2016 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (agendaforhumanity.org). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT, or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

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